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MASTER THESIS

THE CHANGING POLITICAL VIEWS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

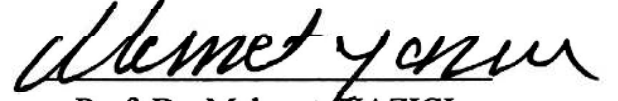
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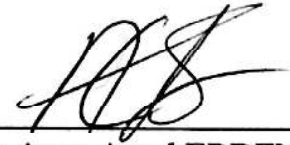
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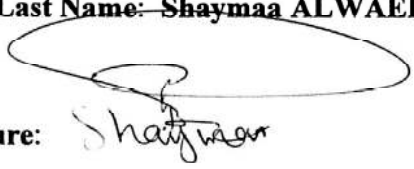


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ABSTRACT

THE CHANGING POLITICAL VIEWS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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William Wordsworth was a social thinker and a man thoroughly engaged in political debates throughout his life, contrary to the generally held perception that he became isolated and disillusioned. In fact, Wordsworth continued to discuss politics and remained informed about issues relating to social change. This study shows that these political discussions of his are also reflected in his late poems, and it will be argued that some of his less-regarded late poems merit more attention than they usually receive. His political ideas both in his poems and prose were well known to the people of his day and contributed to the new Victorian world view. The poems which will be considered include early works such as *An Evening Walk*, *Salisbury Plain*, *The Female Vagrant*, *The Last of The Flock* and *Michael*, in addition to the late poems such as *Ode to Duty*, and *The Excursion*, which is often seen as a public rejection of his earlier views.

Key Words: Wordsworth, Politics, society, Radical, and Conservative.

ÖZ

WILLAM WORDSWORTH DEĞİŞEN SİYASİ GÖRÜŞLERİ

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Yüksek Lisans İngiliz Dilive Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı

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William Wordsworth bir sosyal düşünür ve izole ve uzgun hayatı olduğu algının aksine hayatı boyunca siyasi tartışmalar yapan bir adamdı. Aslında, Wordsworth siyasi tartışmalara devam etti ve toplumsal değişime ilişkin konulara bilgili kalmıştır. Bu çalışmada onun bu siyasi tartışmalarının son şiirlerine de yansımış olduğunu gösterip, ve daha az dikkate alınan son şiirlerinden bazılarının olduğundan daha dikkate değer olduğu tartışılacaktır. Şiirlerine ve düzyazılarına yansıyan siyasi görüşleri kendi zamanının insanları arasında bilindikti ve yeni Viktorya dünya görüşüne katkıda bulundu. Dikkate alınacak olan şiirler arasında önceki çalışmalarından olan *An Evening Walk*, *Salisbury Plain*, *The Female Vagrant*, *The Last of The Flock* ve *Michael* gibi şiirlere ek olarak son şiirlerinden olan *Ode to Duty*, ve çoğu zaman önceki görüşlerinin toplum reddi olarak görülen *The Excursion* uşiiri de dikkate alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Wordsworth, Siyaset, toplum, Radikal, ve Muhafazakar.

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INTRODUCTION

Romanticism

Coles Dictionary defines Romanticism as a movement of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries that marked a reaction in literature, philosophy, art, religion and politics against the neoclassicism and the formal doctrines of the preceding period. It also can be described as a large complex of opposing philosophies, attitudes and directions. Its great influence appeared from the end of the eighteenth century and continued to about 1780. poetry was its main device of expression, its concern was the individual consciousness and in particular the individual imagination. One aspect is reflected in Victor Hugo's phrase 'liberalism in literature,' meaning the feeling of the artist and writer of resistance to the strains and rules of the Classicists, and also suggesting a spirit of individualism, which led to the encouragement of revolutionary political ideas.

Critical Survey of the Historical and Socio-political Background of the Romantic Period

The Romantic Movement did not emerge suddenly. In the first few decades of the 18th century, neoclassicism in England was dying and giving away to the emergence of a new movement which was growing steadily until it took its final shape under certain influences. These influences changed many of the ideals of society. The first and most important of these influences was the French Revolution, which broke out in 1789. The second factor that paved the way for the appearance of the Romantic Movement was the growing effect of the Industrial Revolution, which began in the later decades of the 18th century. In fact, the Industrial Revolution led to the emergence of a new labouring class in the industrial cities. Hence, England began to move from a farming economy to an industrial economy and the life of labourers was marked by starvation because of their low wages.

Moreover, the middle class began to rise and demanded political roles commensurate with their economic power. The industrial Revolution increased both the wealth of the rich and the misery of the poor. Nevertheless, there were the bright sides of the Industrial Revolution. The population in Britain began to increase as a result of introducing medical care. There were also discoveries in the scientific fields, and in the development of the social sciences. The whole outlook of Britain changed. However, in addition to these positive changes, there was also the disappear of the families patterns of rural life and the exploitation of children.

The outstanding representative poets of the Romantic period (1780-1830) are William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), Lord Byron (1788-1824), Percy Shelley (1792-1822), and John Keats (1795-1821). Those poets were highly individualistic. Nevertheless, there were some common characteristics among them. All of them wrote with enthusiasm for liberty, beauty and imagination. They were also interested in nature, which represented for them a symbol of beauty, purity and a vivid source of inspiration. They wrote about the feeling of man in solitude as opposed to man in society. Their poetry was one of the main principles of eighteenth-century poetry.

The Romantic poets rejected the use of the heroic couplet, which was the main technique used by John Dryden (1631-1700) and Alexander Pope (1688-1744), who were the most famous poets of their time. However, to the Romantic poets, the heroic couplet seemed artificial and unnatural. They used blank verse, the lyrical forms of all types and the ballad measure. One of these prominent Romantic poets is William Wordsworth who is mostly regarded as the singer of nature in which he sees new meanings reflected to the mind of man. He believed that man's salvation lies within himself, and in his ability to lift himself to higher spiritual perspectives. The glory of nature can be seen in most of his poems, especially *The Salisbury Plain*, *The Lyrical Ballads*, *The Prelude* and many other poems. In addition to that, Wordsworth is a sensitive thinker and he is one of the pioneers of the Romantic Movement in England. Politically, he could not close his eyes to what was going on in Britain and in other European countries. As he expressed his political opinions frankly in his youth, he says: "I disapprove of monarchical and aristocratically governments,

however modified". Also at the age of 59, he mentions in a letter to Gordon, that the "subject of the poor Law was never out of my sight." (Wordsworth, p. 534)

Much, at the age of 73, he states his hopes to prevent children from working and being exploited in factories. In order to give them the opportunity to attend schools, he says: "I grieve that so little progress has been made in diminishing the evils deplored or promoting the benefits of education." (Harris, 1996, p. 105) Moreover, Wordsworth was a poet and a man who considered the law to be sacred and wanted everyone to respect the laws which are applied to all citizens without any kind of discrimination. This is clear from his speech: "Every individual in this nation is equal to every other; there is no law for the noble, another for the commons of the land, one for the clergy, and another for the laity." (Wordsworth, p. 32) In brief words, he gave the entire meaning of law. He believed that there should be no difference between people in respecting and obeying the law, which protects all people without any kind of discrimination.

CHAPTER ONE

WORDSWORTH AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Most writers, poets and novelists like to write about real and great historical events that had happened or were happening during their lives. William Wordsworth wrote about the French Revolution in detail, its beginnings, and the consequences during its occurrence and the results afterwards. He did so not only because it was a great event but also because he witnessed the events of the Revolution with his own eyes and lived its events day by day. The French Revolution was an event which affected Europe and the whole world. It also affected Wordsworth. In fact, it caused him to pay attention not only to his traditional subject, which was nature and the beautiful landscape, but also to the problems of man and society. Thus, he became committed to political causes about which he had clear views and opinions. He was able to express them through his poetic talent. The Revolution lasted for ten years (from 1789 to 1799) during which many political changes occurred. It appeared in the form of a political coup against both the Royalty and the Church. Many events occurred during the Revolution, including the attack of the Bastille in 1789, the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the abolition of the old order and rules and the dispute between the Liberal assemblies and the Right-Wing which supported the monarchy, or at least a constitutional monarchy.

In this chapter, I will show Wordsworth's political point of view on the French Revolution and its significant impact upon the poet. The influence of Rousseau's ideas, which Wordsworth came to know through his friend Captain Beaupuy, will also be discussed. The chapter will also discuss the impact of contemporary philosophers such as Godwin and Burke in addition to their roles in developing the poet's political attitudes. The chapter will conclude that the French Revolution was the first and main motivation that made William Wordsworth a poet who had

considerable views on the political events throughout his life. The method followed in this chapter is a historical-biographical approach.

In 1791 and 1792, Wordsworth went to France to learn the language in order to become a French language teacher. Later on, his interest in politics appeared clearly, and he became influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution. (Mukherjee, 2055, pp.3-5) Like many of his European counterparts, he was attracted to these new great ideas and experiments of this revolution “which had wiped out the French monarchy and aristocracy and challenged all the previously held assumptions about the sacred and inviolable structure of society.” (Garrett, 1987, p. 94) Thus, this Revolution inspired people to work for a better future. Many people shared Wordsworth’s approval of what was occurring in France. They were watching the events with sympathy and great expectation. Some thought the revolution, in its early stages, was a repetition of the English Revolution of 1642 to 1659 such that it seemed as if a constitutional monarchy would result. (Adams, 1981, p. 27) Both of these revolutions hoped to free the people from extreme poverty and the tyranny of the Monarchy.

When Wordsworth stayed in France, he met many young French revolutionists who admired him for being an educated English man. They told him about the injustice in the social system in which the French were living. One of these prominent revolutionist leaders was Captain Michel Beaupuy.

Although Wordsworth knew the causes and the history of the French Revolution, he found it difficult to follow events from the beginning and he was uncertain and confused as to whether or not he should support the revolution. Therefore, he looked to someone to keep him informed, and with whom to discuss revolutionary ideas. He found all the answers in Michel Beaupuy (1755-1796), a young thirty-six-year-old republican officer who had spent twenty years in the army. Beaupuy was the first of Wordsworth’s friends who had a great influence on his beliefs for the next five years. (p. 10) According to the opinion of many literary historians, Beaupuy was the only officer in Blois completely loyal to the revolution, so he was rejected by others. In fact, he was a believer in Rousseau and had great faith in the noble aims of the revolution, namely liberty, equality and brotherhood. Wordsworth admired him as a

warrior and as a humanist. During their walks, Beaupuy talked about the social injustice which resulted in the revolution. Beaupuy was a well-educated man, familiar with the major writers of the French Enlightenment and schooled by his experience in the army. The most influential thing that attracted Wordsworth to him was his humanistic attitude. "In particular what initially seemed to have convinced him [Wordsworth] about the revolution as a worthy and winnable cause was the selfless dedication of such people as his friend Michel Beaupuy,"¹ in his *Residence in France*, Wordsworth describes him as:

. . . . A meeker man
Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
Meek though enthusiastic. (290-93((1994, p. 714)

Indeed, Beaupuy's ideas aroused Wordsworth's political sympathies and made him an ardent supporter of the Revolution. The social injustice which people had been suffering because of the Monarchy's illegal attempts to obtain money was an important reason for his enthusiasm for the Revolution. Wordsworth became aware of the meaning of the revolution and realized that the main purpose of the Revolution was "to renew the life of people." (Grierson , 1937, p.147) In fact, Beaupuy's impact on Wordsworth was great throughout his life although their friendship had lasted only for four months. The two friends parted on 27th July 1792 and they never met again as Beaupuy was killed in the battle of Elz in Germany four years later. Wordsworth considered Beaupuy to be a real hero who loved his country and people and defended them until his last breath. Thus, Wordsworth learned that every human being is great and capable of infinite development. Beaupuy supplied him with a vision of something finer in the possibilities of human society. Consequently, Wordsworth was passionately engaged in the revolution, and ready to fight and die for his beliefs. Even "his revolutionary ardour was such that he contemplated putting himself forward as a leader of the Girondins party." (Tilak, 2004, p.2) The Girondins were reasonable members of the Legislative Assembly, who considered constitutional monarchy necessary. Thus, Wordsworth believed in a new, right society and saw France as a torch that gives light to the whole of Europe:

¹ Studies in Nineteenth-Century British Literature, Hewitt, Regina, ed, Vol.12, New York, 1999.

But Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,
France standing on the top of golden hours,
And a human nature seeming born again.

(*The Prelude*, VI, 339-342)(1994, p. 204)

In this vivid descriptive passage, Wordsworth, emotionally and politically, shares with the French people their revolution and admires their strength and courage. He personifies France as someone who is standing on a summit and is going to leave everything behind him to witness the beginning of a new world. Allegorically, he describes this time as the time of celebration because of the coming of a new blessed child in a bright golden time. With this birth, there is the possibility of creating a new world based on reason and justice.

Wordsworth's hunger for knowledge and his aspiration to understand political and philosophical terms was not limited to his discussion with Beaupuy alone. Similar to most of his contemporary literary figures, he was interested and influenced by the French philosopher Rousseau (1712-1778), the French philosopher who was behind the emanation of the Revolution with their new revolutionary philosophy. His philosophy and writings spread beyond France and anticipated specific movements and ideas. His fundamental principles were influential in directing the movement of thought in the second half of the century.

These principles had a main rule in enlightening the young generation and other people to make changes in their conditions. Rousseau's writing is described as having "an arresting simplicity, together with an attractive energy and passion." (Watson, p. 33) They concentrate on freedom and have an interest in the self and the state of man in society. He created the motive for those who were interested in the idea of liberty. Rousseau believed neither in the idea of scientific progress nor in its speculative philosophy. He appealed only to the human heart and to the voice of conscience. Politically, he considered man as unaggressive and believed in the idea of the '*noble savage*' with '*natural compassion*' which is the pure emotion of nature. Rousseau's famous sentence had turned the world upside down, "man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains." He believed that man in modern society is ruined; he is no longer self-sufficient. He thought that the development of human society

brought about the appearance of two things: property leading to inequality, and slavery being caused by the domination of one man over another. He was the first of the Romantics and revolutionaries who announced his hope for a new world in which man could regain goodness.

The Romantic poets considered Rousseau the Godfather of the Romantic Movement and as an “idealist and poet who pointed out what was wrong with society and what was fundamentally good in man.” (Salvesen, 1970, p.157) Hazlitt revered both Rousseau and Wordsworth. Seeing Rousseau as the “father of sentiment,” and Wordsworth as opening a “finer and deeper vein of thought and feeling than any other poet in modern times.” There is no doubt, that Wordsworth put in practice most of Rousseau’s philosophy. Hazlitt found much resemblance between Wordsworth’s poetry and Rousseau’s prose believing that they: “Both create an interest out of nothing, or rather out of their own feelings; both weave numberless recollecting into one sentiment; both wind their own being round whatever object occurs to them.” (Park, 1917, p. 225) Both of them treated man as a sublime creature who deserves to live in dignity. Rousseau’s philosophy inspired most of the English thinkers in that period.

After the influence of Beaupuy and Rousseau came an Englishman named Godwin (1756-1836), a thinker who had a role in reforming Wordsworth’s political views regarding the French Revolution. He was a reformer and radical who had a very considerable impact on English Romantic poets. He led a group of writers whose main historical function was to translate the principles of French Revolution thought into England. The main reason for Godwin’s popularity in the late 18th century was his very idealism and his high notion of man’s nobility. He and Rousseau shared the same belief that property was the root of the evil in the world; they considered it the main reason for the exploitation and inequality between people. He believed that things would be well if this inequality was removed.

1. Anthony Adams states that Godwin considered man as a part of nature who ought to learn through rational argument in order to live together in an ideal society without the intervention of institutions and laws, which he regarded as being responsible for the corruption of society. For him, the most crucial thing that man has to do in order to live in peace and perfect society was to dispense with these

laws and institutions. Adams adds too, that in *Political Justice*, Godwin assumes that political methods of reform are useless, and as there is no sanction in the *New Testament* for the accumulation of wealth, it is everyman's duty to put his property at the disposal of the needy, and there will be no place for poverty or wealth. (Adams, 1918, pp.23-33) Thus, he based his main principles and ideas on justice, the rights of man and the power of opinion. He sought liberty that is not achieved through mob violence. "Wordsworth most probably met Godwin through the publisher Johnson in the summer of 1794." (Moorman, 1968, p.219) At this stage, Godwin's ideas were those which Wordsworth most needed; they inspired him that by writing and using his imagination and power of language, he would be able to achieve political justice. In the light of Godwin's opinions, Wordsworth came to believe that every poet should benefit from every opportunity to spread the general principles of a social order which are suitable for all times and places. He felt that he should help mankind to come out of darkness. Godwin's conceptions of the progress of truth also helped Wordsworth to overcome his confusion and to build up his own interpretation of history in general and recent events in particular..

Wordsworth was very enthusiastic about these parts of Godwin's work *Political Justice*, which were very similar to Beaupuy's conception; the passion for justice and equality, the humanitarianism, the rejection of privilege, the determination to judge all things by common heritage from eighteenth-century revolutionary theory. It is arguable that *Political Justice* assisted to illustrate and to design Wordsworth's ideas on these topics, and it certainly had a direct effect on his expressions, as reflected in the following lines:

But, speaking more in charity, the dream

Flattered the young, pleased with extremes, nor least

With that which makes our *Reason's* naked self?

(*The Prelude*, XI, 232-235, p. 730)

Wordsworth enthusiastically describes the hopes and dreams of his youth to achieve justice and equity and to spread reason and logic in the structure of society during a time when the common man's dignity and humanity was not valued.

Godwin's work was against the principles of monarchy, aristocracy and oppression. It gave priority to public good over special interest. Thus, Godwin influenced the poet's creative imaginative poem *Salisbury Plain*. In this poem, Wordsworth made his new character, the sailor, a perfect example of Godwin's theory that a man with a good personality may, under bad conditions, become able to commit a crime.

Wordsworth also reflected Godwin's work in his work *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*, which showed the radical and humanitarian opposition of the poet during this period. He thought too that general happiness would come from change in the form of government and society. In a letter sent to his friend William Mathews in June 1794, Wordsworth proclaimed his political beliefs in terms very similar to Godwin's:²

I disapprove of monarchical and aristocratical government, however modified. Hereditary distinctions and privileged orders of every species I think must necessary counteract the progress of human improvement, hence it follows that I am not amongst the admirers of the British Constitution. (Harris, 1069, p. 195)

They also show Wordsworth's "regard of himself as republican, that he was working on removing the political injustice that he had anticipated no good from king or aristocracy." (Woodring, 1970, p. 87) Wordsworth was convinced by Godwin's ideas and conceptions and identified "with many others in a crusade against the follies and corruption hidden within the apparently ordered and just structure of English society." (Gill, 1989, p. 5) This effect was powerful on Wordsworth's early production of poetry.

² See Wordsworth, "*The Philanthropist, and Political Justice*," Charles W. Roberts, Studies in Philology, Vol. 31, No. 1(Jan., 1934), pp. 85-88, Published by: University of North Carolina Press, Stable [URL:http://www.jstor.org/stable](http://www.jstor.org/stable), Accessed:11/12/2014

I. I The Shift in Wordsworth's Beliefs towards the Revolution

When the French Revolution grew into violence and chaos, the conflict intensified between the revolutionary ideas and the conservative narrow thinking of Wordsworth's people. Thus, the pitiful result of the Revolution led many to adopt opposing attitudes to the new regime. Richard Watson, the Bishop of Llandaff, bitterly attacked the excesses of the Revolution and composed an "indignant protest, larded with fervent praise of the British constitution." (Owen, 1974, p.2) Wordsworth, like many others, found it a strange attitude as Watson was always speaking of liberal causes. Besides a large number of publications all in a liberal vein, he had written in favour of the American war and the French Revolution in its early days. Wordsworth did not agree with Watson's letter. In *A letter for The French Revolution*, Wordsworth refuted Watson's letter and wondered about the content of Watson's new beliefs in his letter. Wordsworth defended the French Revolution and gave it moral and political justifications. He even saw that British society needed a similar revolution in order to change its structure and to reform. Wordsworth's revolutionary zeal may be clarified by quoting a short passage from this letter that was not published in his lifetime:

"We submit without repining to the chastisements of providence, aware that we are creatures, that opposition is vain and remonstrance impossible. But when redress is in our own power and resistance rational, we suffer with the same humility from being like ourselves, inferiority to our oppressors, that they were sent into the world to scourge and we to be scourged. (p. 23)

Wordsworth gradually became sceptical about the political developments of the revolution. When Wordsworth passed through Paris on his way back, he was troubled by the events of the September Massacres. Thousands of people from the upper class were killed for no reason or judgment. Moreover, Wordsworth was overwhelmed by the feeling of frustration when the Revolution sent its best men to the gallows. In a letter addressed to William Mathew dated in June, 1794

Wordsworth wrote: “I recoil from the very idea of a revolution to every species of violence. I see no connection, but what the obstinacy of pride and ignorance renders necessary, between justice and sword, between reason and bonds.” (Stephan, 1989, p. 18) What started as glorious and hopeful ended with violence and disaster. The French Revolution had failed as a revolution as Robespierre and his Reign of Terror turned the revolution to a bloody one in which he began to murder anyone whose loyalty he doubted. First, he ordered that the king be killed and after a speedy trial, the Assembly decided to execute the king, followed by the queen. Subsequently, he started executing the moderate Girondists party. Thus, the Revolution began to eat its own children and during one insatiable period of meaningless revolutionary fear, 1,376 persons were guillotined in less than two months. Fear of famine progressed through Paris and the other towns. Thousands of men and women crowded in jails without any kind of trial. The slaughter ran easier by guillotine, yet so quickly that the stench of the dead began to poison the people in the city. In March, 1794, death sentences by guillotine in Lyons reached 1,667, two thirds of which were of the upper or middle classes.³ Consequently, Wordsworth’s spirit of zeal came to suffer the disenchantment of young revolutionaries in all times who discover that the revolution, did not achieve its goals, instead it created a river of blood and made more evils than the Royalty did. Besides having the appearance of the common man and of democratic rights, it was also the beginnings of modern authoritarian government and large-scale executions of “enemies of the Revolution” by impersonal government bodies and Robespierre “Committee of Public Safety.”

Nevertheless, Wordsworth’s faith in man was never broken, now that he believes that the revolution was not the only way to achieve freedom and justice. All these reasons made Wordsworth believe things were not going the way Beaupuy anticipated:

Cheered with this hope, to Paris I turned.
The prison where the unhappy Monarch lay,
Associated with his children and his wife
(*The Prelude*, X, 48-50, p. 719)

³ Will and Ariel Durant, *THE STORY OF CIVILIZATION: PART XI THE AGE OF NAPOLEON A History of European Civilization from 1789 to 1815*, SIMON AND SCHUSTER, NEW YORK, 1975, p. 62-71.

This passage describes in a realistic image the conditions of the “bondage” of the Royal family when the national assembly ordered to imprison them until they charged them. This act was not approved by the Girondins party, who demanded to maintain the king’s life and give him some authority in order to maintain order in the country. After executing the king, the scene of the accumulating bodies becomes normalised and repeated every day in Paris. In fact, Wordsworth could never forget Robespierre’s conclusive and decisive action to remove the people who opposed him. He considered Robespierre as one of the first leaders who contradicted and betrayed the principles of the Revolution.

The goaded land waxed mad; the crimes of few
Spread into madness of the many; blasts
From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven

(The Prelude, X, 335-37, p. 723)

In Wordsworth’s eyes, the reign of this man represents the reign of dictatorship and tyranny. When England entered the Revolutionary wars, a development shocked him. At that time, the English people regarded the French Revolution as a real danger that could perhaps destroy Europe. At first, Wordsworth’s political views were divided; between his intense love for England, which paved the land of liberty, and with France the saviour of humanity. He desperately witnessed the transformation of France from the land of hope and liberty into the land of execution. The poet needed the vision of mankind that Beaupuy had, but he could no longer justify what was happening, and later he wrote of his struggle to keep his faith:

I had approached, like other youths, the shield
Of human nature from the golden side,
And would have fought, even to the death, to attest
The quality of the metal which I saw

(The Prelude, XI, 79-18, p. 728)

When Robespierre died on 27 July 1794, Wordsworth hoped that this would refresh the revolution and that the whole terrible situation would end. He described in the *Prelude* the moments that he knew the news, saying: "O friend few happier moments have been mine." (X, 511) However these moments did not last long and they finished quickly when Napoleon rose to power. The situation showed no improvement as "Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence for one of conquest, losing sight of all." (XII, 207) When Napoleon came to power, the revolution turned from search of liberty to that of conquest and national glory. A disappointed Wordsworth, out of pride for his former opinions and his determined faith in the triumph of reason still adhered to his faith that the revolution eventually would end for the good. As the French started wars of aggression instead of for self-defence, Wordsworth came to lose his faith in what he believed. Therefore, Wordsworth became hardened in his anger and bitterness not only against the political developments in France but also against the English Party, which considered Napoleon the achiever and protector of the aim of the French Revolution.

In *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff or Apology for the French Revolution*, Wordsworth expresses the excesses to which the French people were betrayed. While his *Excursion Sonnets* and other pieces afford abundant evidence of the abuse of power when Bonaparte declared himself Emperor, he rejected Napoleon utterly as a destroyer of humanity and portrays him as "That soul of Evil-which, from Hell let loose, Had filled the astonished world with such abuse."⁴ Wordsworth blames Napoleon's own behaviour, particularly his coronation in 1804, for provoking this change of mind. Indeed, Wordsworth states the occasion as an influential reason for his disappointment, arguing that Napoleon turned potential into new dictatorship.

Wordsworth was not the only one who was disappointed about the French Revolution. Thinkers and educated figures also denied the actions of Napoleon when he declared himself to be emperor, including the composer Beethoven, who famously rescinded the dedication of his Third Symphony to Napoleon when the composer heard of his becoming emperor. Beethoven was angered and regretted his support for

⁴ Ode: The Morning of the Day Appointed for a General Thanksgiving. L. 95-96 (1994, p. 330).

Napoleon. He renamed the work *Heroic Symphony to Celebrate the Memory of a Great Man*.⁵ In addition; Walter Scott rejected his old revolutionary beliefs.

Hence, Wordsworth, the poet, found that a political philosophy based on power, violence and hatred was a destructive one. In the unpublished *Essay on Morals*, he concerns himself with the relationship between writing and political justice, and, although he had explicitly rejected Edmund Burke's philosophy in his scorching *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*. Later on, he seems to have developed a Burkean idea of community in *Essay on Morals*.

Therefore, in 1798, Wordsworth was concerned about political justice. He was affected by the ideas of Edmund Burke, which he had rejected previously in his *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*. However, after the violence and pitiful results of the French Revolution, "Wordsworth was still in the middle of his shift from an idealistic republic Whig to a realistic conservative Tory." (Kevin M, 2001, p. 127) Certainly, by this time, Wordsworth was attracted to the philosophy of Burke and sympathised with the Tory cause.⁶ Wordsworth expressed the development of his beliefs about justice in an unpublished essay titled *Essay on Morals*. In this essay, Wordsworth provided reasons which had led him to change his political and social ideas. Thus, he no longer believed in the political philosophy which was based on power and violence and he began to prefer gradual change instead of revolution.

Burke is the most important figure that influenced Wordsworth's shifting political view of the French Revolution being the intellectual and political philosophy of Burke. Burke was a supporter of the rebellion in the American colonies; however, he denounced the French Revolution and considered its outcomes as most violent, particularly in his pamphlet *Reflections on the French Revolution*. Burke believed that the French revolutionaries with their democratic principles had put an end to all the distinctions of class and licence just in order to produce anarchy and disorder. He was not alarmed by the democratic beliefs themselves as much as he was by the

⁵ The Review of Politics, p. 388.

⁶ Charles W. Roberts, "The Philanthropist," and "Political Justice." *Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Jan. 1934), Univ. North of Carolina Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable2938484>. Accessed 11/12/2014.

violence and disorder of the new French state. Burke “believed in the doctrine of the inherited rights and opposed that of the *“rights of man”* which leads, as he posited, to more conflicts and anarchy considering all the chaos caused by the French Revolution. His fundamental principle was of organic evolution of the state and its institution rather than violent upheaval.” (Adams, 1981, p. 34) He called for gradual and continuing reform and not a sudden break with tradition or any kind of violent change or revolution.

Wordsworth adopted Burke’s sentiment and political philosophy because he found in his ideas a spiritual comfort and support. As a result, he became totally opposed to his old-creed Godwinism. “He remained a strong supporter of the right of property as the basis of the voting system and was afraid that the extension of the right to vote would change parliamentary representatives into mere slavish delegates” (p. 41). A fact is shown in his opposition to much of Godwin’s theories through his *Lyrical Ballads*. In *The Last of the Flock*, Wordsworth proves that a little property is the source of all man’s best virtues. It is in contrast to Godwin’s attack on property as the cause of vice: “A woeful it was for me / To see the end of my gain” (p. 115, L. 55-56). And in *Simon Lee*, Wordsworth praises the virtues of gratitude, again a quality much looked down upon by Godwin: “Alas, the gratitude of men / Has oftener left me mourn.” (Wordsworth, 1994. p. 482, L.94-95)

Consequently, in 1798, Wordsworth was more different from Godwin and had already lost faith in the Republican Movement. Wordsworth had rejected ‘*Godwinism*’ when he published his anti-Godwin *Lyrical Ballads*. Watson assures that Godwin’s influence on his friends and admirers lasted only for a short time. Hazlitt confirmed that Godwin’s extreme opinions carried “the most sanguine and fearless understanding.” Also he alluded that Godwin’s high standards of morality were the reason for his tripping. The fall from popular esteem to the great ambition he had for mankind, his standards of morality were high and beyond the reach of humanity. Godwin’s path, as Hazlitt stated, “was dangerous, solitary, and impracticable.” (Watson, p. 40) However, in spite of the contrast between Wordsworth and Godwin, their friendship lasted until Godwin’s death.

It is certain that the revolutionary fever and the doctrine of the age of reason had played their part in forming the poet's mind, but these ideas could not carry him further because revolutions, obviously, cannot be "permanent ideas, any attempt to make it so transforms it to something else." (Hough, 1965, p. 39) There is no doubt that Wordsworth's changing attitudes towards the French Revolution can be attributable to more than one reason. Firstly, Wordsworth's response to the French Revolution was based on sentimental abstract thoughts rather than logical concrete outcomes. Wordsworth concentrated only on the bright ideas of freedom and forgot that the result of such great changes in the political process might be a pitfall and a disaster. Secondly, after six years the poet becomes more sophisticated about the political process. Thirdly, he thinks that, after the Revolution, France will be a better country for his daughter Caroline. There is no doubt that Wordsworth had gained more experience and had gone through many events that made him a broader and more intellectual person. Additionally, Wordsworth's regret was justified by his fear of the rising mob, leading to fear of any social change, which exaggerated his political timidity and rigidity towards the end of his life. He saw the French Revolution as a dawning of a new order, but it were the chaos and disorder that led him later to change his views about the possibility of forming an order in that way.

It was easy for the younger of romantics to attack Wordsworth for his defection, but on the contrary to them, Wordsworth lived through the experience, after which he was disappointed when he saw all his hopes vanished and destroyed. It is certain that those sections of *The Prelude* deal with the period which represents anguish and impress and a breakdown of all his feelings and hopes. As he expresses it in one of the well-known passages in 1800: "The human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; moreover, he would have had a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity.

In Wordsworth's opinion, people followed gross and violent incentives, and as a result, they lost the sense with the human mind's state "beauty and dignity." Therefore, his poems proposed to counteract trend and to restore reader's sensitivity to their inherent beauty and dignity. In this sense, Wordsworth criticizes his contemporary culture and government as the causes of the violence that occurred in France. Indeed, Wordsworth believed in man's ability to live with his mind in peace

without the need for violent and massive agitations. He also believed that it is necessary to have the insight of his right to have dignity and beauty.

CHAPTER TWO

Suffering and Politics in Wordsworth's Early Poems

Wordsworth was concerned with the social and political conditions from the very beginning of his youth. Many of his early poems reflected revolutionary themes which were socio-political at heart. Rather than taking part directly in the revolution, he decided to use poetry as a medium to change people's attitude and to arouse their sympathy to help each other and to develop their moral values in order to build a better society. Therefore, Wordsworth was interested in the dignity of all without paying attention to their status. Most of his early poems dealt with the suffering of war or poverty and the social injustices which were based on them. Thus, these poems talk about the people whose undeserved suffering had been caused by a number of reasons. Such people are found in poems including *An Evening Walk*, *Salisbury Plain* and *The Female Vagrant*. In addition to Wordsworth's political attitudes towards the suffering created by war, he directs his pen to write about another kind of suffering, namely the suffering caused by poverty. This is discussed in his two poems *The Last of The Flock* and *Michael*. All of these sufferings created by war and poverty alike represented Wordsworth's greatest enemy and fear in his early poems. Throughout his early life, Wordsworth epitomized these social problems in his poetry to create the feeling of sharing the suffering of the other in his readers and accuse the government, which was responsible for such sad conditions.

Wordsworth had constantly put in mind the needs of both the social body and the individual. He had a great ability to "equate the condition of the poor in Britain with tyrannical oppression." (Wooding, p. 163) Hence, his early works were an interpretation and depiction of the miserable situation of humanity in every aspect and they were a rejection of the policy of his government. Moreover, Wordsworth during this time was surrounded by radical friends, such as Thomas Paine and Godwin, with whom Wordsworth mixed and communicated.

In fact, Wordsworth was interested in both nature and society by placing his socially deprived characters in landscapes that produce their pain. His themes vary from sentimental to realistic themes in which tales of misery might produce a valuable effect on the hearer's morale. His first inspiration was to improve the life of his people while composing his poetry. Although Wordsworth wrote about love, feeling and pleasure, he could not close his eyes from grief or evil in society. He always had a deep feeling of sadness and responsibility that occupies his mind even in times of happiness.

In fact, Wordsworth, like most of the romantic poets, wrote on the common assumption that tragedy creates virtues. In agreement with the eighteenth-century theorists of tragedy, Wordsworth believed that the moral growth by the tale of suffering was a true axiom. "Much of Wordsworth's poetry in his early decades is profoundly and prominently pre-occupied with the theme of loss, death, and destruction". (Liu, 1999, p. 61) This indicates his tendency to depict sentimental themes in which a tale of misery can achieve a beneficial outcome for the reader. These poems describe a wide variety of victims: the miserable homeless, the desperate, those who feel guilty, and the vagrant.

Another feature in Wordsworth's poetry is his effort to confirm that suffering may in fact accompany self-esteem and strength. However, he knew that the moral lesson and spiritual power of such figures cannot answer their social problems or needs. For example, it is impossible to save the sailor from execution, or bring Margaret's husband back. Thus, Wordsworth is a realistic poet whose world of human life is often embroidered with poverty, crime, despair, ruination, innocence and tortured hopes. Bradley suggests that if we only "ignore the manner in which Wordsworth treated his subjects and characters, so far as humanity is concerned, then his world is a dark world." (A. C., 1959, p. 124) it is through Wordsworth's use of the different images of nature, that the solidity of his stories of misery is reduced. Moreover, these subjects contain strong elements of political as well as social protest in poems such as *Michael* and *The Last of the Flock*, which deplore the effects of rural poverty and handle the theme of property and its effect on the individual. This theme is very important and occupied a place in Wordsworth's mind due to the experiences

through which he passed and due to his feeling of the suffering of others. The method which will be followed in this chapter is analytical approach.

II. I Wordsworth's Political Views Towards War

Wordsworth's political attitudes show war as a disaster that drives the poor into destitution and misery. However, Wordsworth was not always a pacifist who thought that fighting at all times was immoral. For instance, he never believed that the French were wrong when they wanted to preserve their frontiers. Ten years later, when England was threatened by Napoleon's armies, Wordsworth's political views were directed by the great love he bore for England and he believed that England should be defended. His true loyalty was to his country and his sonnets were calls for war.⁷ In his youth, Wordsworth recognized the pitiful outcomes of war presented by the returning victims who were often seen, particularly after the beginning of the American war, and later after the war between France and England. Those miserable people were dying of starvation and cold. Wordsworth wanted to record and interpret what he himself was witnessing: the bitter reality of war with social breakdown. Consequently, the poetry he wrote during that period was filled with sad images of suffering men and women. He constantly dug deeply inside human nature for influential material for his poetry. A common theme found in Wordsworth's early poems is that of abandoned women whose husbands were forced to enlist in the army in order to save their families from starvation. This theme is handled in *The Female Vagrant*, *An Evening Walk* and *Salisbury Plain*.

Starting with *An Evening Walk*, which contains many images from nature, shows the fact that the poet was still under the influence of the literary tradition of poets such as Cowper and Gray. However, Wordsworth loved nature as much as he loved human beings, as he says not only nature, but also the "mind of man is my hunt and the main region of my haunt."⁸ Therefore, in this work, he combines his love of nature and his love of man. Besides the images of nature, he gives images of the true sorrow of

⁷ Religion and Renunciation in Wordsworth: the progression of Natural Individualism to Christian Stoicism, Melawi, Geoffrey L, 2007.<http://digitalcommons.Colby.edu/honourtheses/279>

⁸ The prose work of William Wordsworth, p. 276.

humanity through telling the stories of the dejected widowed woman, whose sufferings come from the war sequences. In fact, much of the suffering about which Wordsworth wrote in his early poems had been the result of war.

The poet handles the theme of the pathetic results of the war and its tragic consequences. In *The Female Vagrant*, Wordsworth describes a wandering woman whose husband was killed in the American war. The absence of her husband forced her and her children to live without shelter. She wants her children to sleep but they cannot because of the cold weather. She is unable to lay down her head “on cold blue nights / in hut or straw built shed” (L. 56). She tries to comfort her children by telling them to look at a shooting star or play with glow-worms; she wishes to: Turn to a silent smile their sleepy cry. The poem continues:

When low hung clouds each star of summer hides,
And fireless are the valleys far and wide,
Oft has she taught them on her lap to lie
The shining glow-worm; or, in heedless play,
(258-65) (1994, p. 591)

In this stanza, the poet presents a very dark where no one can see anything, it is summer but all the stars are hidden. There is no light in the way that can be used to guide or help. This symbolizes the lack of hope in such situations where nobody cares for others. This touching picture is the earliest example of discussion of the consequences of war in Wordsworth’s poetry. He attempts to evoke pathos and grieves for the politicians and governments that are responsible for the outbreak of wars. Wordsworth creates a dramatic image of a suffering family in hurled by ‘torrent rears’ and ‘bitter showers’ turning their bodies into ‘frozen arms’ and ‘dying hearts.’

Oh! When the sleepy showers her path

And like a torrent rears the headstrong gale;
No more her breath can thaw their fingers cold, (269-71)

In this passage, the pessimistic description of the children symbolizes the real conditions they live in. These conditions are going from worse to worst. After they become without shelter and walk in the darkness, a strong storm comes to slap them. The allegory here can be evident when one can connect between the 'headstrong gales' to the blind society. With such circumstances, the weak frozen bodies of children submit to death.

The poet's attitudes appear through the use of dark images such as "silent smile," "sleepy cry," "cloudy weather," and "hidden summer," in order to make the readers feel the sorrow that the children felt. He introduces two moods in one image saying that the children are happy but there is no sound or sign of their happiness, since at the same time, they are crying, and in spite of their crying, there is no sound. The sky is full of clouds and no one can see or recognize any beautiful sounds of the summer. It is a very dark image that reflects the harsh conditions that the children suffer in the absence of their father or supporters. The image of the dying family is very effective as it presents a realistic picture of the state of the soldiers' families after the absence of their supporters, the father or the husband. Wordsworth employs the metaphor by comparing the mother to a roof because she is the only shelter for her infants. However, poverty turns her into a 'weak roof' and a 'cowering form.' "And faint the fire a dying heart can yield!" Her heart was broken and overloaded with misery and sorrow. Finally, the children lie dead in their dead mother's arms. Wordsworth realizes that a generation of war immensely increases the problem of poverty and suffering.

Gill states that Wordsworth's purpose in this poem was to address social problems such as alienation and the cruelty of society, which indirectly is considered to be one of the results of the war. Wordsworth's isolation resulted from his concern for his fellow citizens, which made him feel somewhat estranged from his native people. According to Turner, Wordsworth "is not simply alienated from his own passionate life, he is alienated too from the ongoing passionate life of his own civilization." As

already known in this period, Wordsworth had no admiration for his country's government. The reasons for his opposition came from his beliefs that an earlier, purer social order had been ruined and destroyed by an increasingly selfish establishment. He regarded the current government as being so dishonest and corrupted that it had failed to distinguish the current reason that inspired the French to remove their rulers. He considered that they only planned to destroy by force all attempts to reform and revive the ailing constitution of England. (William, 1989, p. 75)

It is certain that through this time, Wordsworth was engaged with political radical friends including William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Paine. However, Wordsworth's revisions of this poem in 1794 "had introduced the concept of social accents inherent in perception of the forms of life and pursuing it becomes the motor force of the later drafting." (Stephen, 2006, p.174) During this time, as a younger poet, Wordsworth was attracted to Godwin's inspirational thinking and his radical critique of the social and political order. As mentioned in chapter one, Wordsworth greatly admired Godwin's work *Political Justice* where he thinks that the political methods of reform, institutions and laws are useless. In this regard, Wordsworth translated Godwin's words in his next poems.

Wordsworth left France and returned to England in 1792. He wrote a number of poems that represented the characters of his tortured state of mind. He was deeply disturbed by the hard conditions of the poor people who were tormented by war. One of these poems is *Salisbury Plain*, (1793-1794). Wordsworth wrote this poem at that time he was suffering the agony of a man opposed to the national mood, yet he is powerless to change it. Turner emphasizes this and says that the poem "is commonly referred to the critical stage of Wordsworth's own life – to the enormous amount of unconscious guilt that he felt, perhaps, as an Englishman supporting the national enemy France." (Turner, 1986, p. 40) Thus, Wordsworth tends to address subjects that become important to him as consequences of the French Revolution by making the events of the poem at the time of the American War of Independence.

James K. Chandler states in his article, *Wordsworth Rejuvenated*, that Wordsworth wrote this poem at the time he had intended to establish a radical London journal

with William Mathews. Chandler asserts that this poem resumes the “large English radical movement of the early 1790s,” and as Gill suggests, “it probably deserves a place with the more famous literary products of the movement: Paine’s *The Rights of Man*, Godwin’s *Political Justice*, *Caleb Williams*, and Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Right of Woman*.” (Chandler, 1986, p. 198) In fact, at this time, Wordsworth’s political tendency was against the wrong policy of the government. The poem’s main theme is the fate of individuals trodden down by the existing social order. One more time, Wordsworth comments on this poem stating that its purpose was to show the vice of the penal and the results of war as they influenced on the society. He describes it as a tale of a guilty but essentially good man who ends on the gallows as a confessed murderer, and an innocent woman, who is suffering chiefly from the result of war. The poem opens with:

A traveller on the skirt of Serum’s Plain
Pursued his vagrant way, with feet half bare;
Down fell in the straggling locks his thin grey hair
A coat he wore of military red

(1-2)(6-8) (1994, p. 24)

The man has no place to sleep. He knew quite well that the wet cold ground would be his bed. Wordsworth depicts his characters very carefully in order to convey to the reader a clear image of the soldiers’ conditions when they returned from war. When he returned, he was in a very miserable state. He was sick and sad, his feet half bare and his clothes were ragged. He was press-ganged and penniless. Therefore, he murdered and stole from an innocent man wishing to provide something for his family. Feeling guilty, he fled out of sight.

In this regard, Wordsworth tackles one of the major evils in eighteenth-century society. He shows the crime in such a way to make the society understand the motive that pushed him to commit this crime. He wants to explain to a wider public the roots of the social problems. In this poem, Wordsworth used the sailor as a perfect example of Godwin's theory, which states that a man's good personality may, under bad circumstances, force him to commit a crime. Wordsworth, here, wants to

illustrate mankind's internal struggle between desire, conscience and intellect. "He met a traveller, robbed him, shed his blood; / and the miserable work was done / He fled a vagrant since, the murder's fate to shun" (L. 69-71). This sad image was common in that period when poverty, hunger, and hopeless state possess the weak men and lead them to commit wrong done like robbery or killing.

Now, the protagonist of the poem is haunted by his own guilt. The landscape, the sun, the fire, and the silence, through which he walked and which he sensed, are reflecting his own fear and despair. After committing this crime, he realizes now that his life will never be the same. In the middle of all this, he suddenly hears 'A sound of chains' and when he turns to see what it is, he sees 'upon a gibbet high / A human body that in irons swang'(78-9). This scaffold imagined in his mind rouses his "Shuddering pain" and 'a train / of the mind's phantoms.' (85-6) These images of horror, guilt and fear are associated with the memory of his crime. Stephen Gill states that the sailor's evil act is caused by 'the bitter craving of Hunger', and that it was despair that made him feel guilty. Thus, he blames the Government that judges the right of punishment without any consideration to the reason that led the man to commit the crime.

The theme of the abandonment of the dead soldier's wife is a stock one in Wordsworth's early poetry, such as the female vagrant in *Salisbury Plain*, the motif of which "sets within a traditional poetic at time when radical political thinking was prepared to challenge every aspect of traditional". (William, 1989, p.71) Other examples of this theme include Margaret in *The Ruined Cottage* and the theme also appears in certain poems of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Some critics have attempted to give these poems a personal explanation that relates them to his desertion of Annette, the French woman whom he loved and with whom he had a daughter. This subject is discussed by many critics such as Geoffrey Hartman in his book *Wordsworth's Poetry*, Mary Jacobs in *Tradition and Experiment*, and Albert Gerard, in *English Romantic Poetry*. All of them have asserted this fact. The idea is correct to some extent. This idea provides justifications to the differences between Wordsworth's treatment of the subject before he meets Annette and his later poems. For this reason, Wordsworth sublimates his protagonist, the vagrant, (when the female refused to knock doors to ask for some food), and clarifies his respect to the female's dignity

and self-esteem. (Turner, 1968, pp.12-13) Without doubt, the emotional and realistic features presented in his later poems reflect the influence of his personal experience by adding more strength and pathos to his poetic production.

Wordsworth narrates the story of another woman as one who suffers from the consequences of war in *The Female Vagrant*, which emphasizes the difficult social conditions of the poor in eighteenth-century England and requires the readerships' awareness and consciousness of it.

In *The Female Vagrant* (1798), Wordsworth shows his disagreement with the idea of war and its bad effects on people, especially the lower classes. He calls the victims of war 'miserable men' and he depicts the soldiers' misery as another form of the prevailing political oppression of the poor by the rich. In fact, Wordsworth "created a powerful illustration for the homily he addresses to the state of England on the corruption and the oppression that are ravaging the nation." (Gill, p. 3) Wordsworth narrates a story of many who had lost their place in society. Thus, Gill describes the poem as a work that "reveals the genuineness of Wordsworth's humanitarian concern and the intensity of his anger." (Gill, p. 97) Here, Wordsworth depicts a woman who lost her home through local tyranny and her husband in the American war and later also her children.

The protagonist of the poem is a woman who used to live with her father in a cottage 'By Derwent's side,' leading a calm and stable life. One day, a 'master' came and there 'rose a mansion' near their simple house. He bought all the lands around his mansion because he did not want to see the humble neighbors nearby. The woman narrates her story saying: "Then rose a stately hall our woods among, / and cottage after cottage owned its sway." (L.12-13) (Wordsworth and Coleridge, 2013, P. 143). Obviously, Wordsworth characterizes the tyrant as a proud, arrogant man in his actions towards the rural people. If any farmer refused to sell his land, he would face trouble and that is true of the female vagrant's father whose "troubles grew upon him day by day" (L.22) By the taking of his land, the old man was deprived even of his last hope that 'his bones might there be laid' (L. 32), near his dead wife 'in their native bowers.' Thus, the woman and her father lost the feeling of safety and were compelled to live a vagrant life. Later, by chance, they meet old friends whose son

married the girl later. Once more, they live a calm life. However, their peace did not last long due to war breaking out.

'Twas a hard change; an evil time was come;
We had no hope and no relief could gain
But soon, with proud parade, the noisy drum. (91-3)

Wordsworth personifies the change (the break of war) as an evil man who comes to disturb the peace of people. He also refers to the sound of drum that was used to recall men to join war as noisy. Thus, out of a need for income, the woman's husband joins the army. Wordsworth also shows that in practice, war involves taking men from their families. The vagrant's husband crosses the ocean to fight in America. She had no one else to provide for her, so she took her children and accompanied him. During the war, she loses her husband as well as her children. Her grief was so great that her tears dried up. The loss was too heavy for her to bear. When the woman lost everything, she returned to her country and believed it would be the 'resting-place' where she could 'weep in peace;' however, the greatest difficulty was that she found herself: " And homeless near a thousand homes I stood, / And near a thousand tables pined, and wanted food." (143-44). The 'thousands homes' symbolizes the society and government which ignore the question of its needy.

Here, the poet wants to direct the public to pay attention and be aware of real issues, such as the increasing numbers of the homeless being an important theme of his poems. Thus, he presents their suffering through images that discuss poverty, sorrow and death. (John, 2004, p. 142) He uses the similarity device to describe the female as: "Helpless as sailor cast on desert rock / Nor morsel to my mouth that day did lift, / Nor dared my hand at any door to knock." (146-148) In a dramatic picture, Wordsworth depicts the woman's misery and starvation when he compares the woman to a sailor who is abandoned by his crew. It is an oppressive feeling when one is an alien in his own country and among his own people. The woman is hungry and desperate but she is too proud to ask for help. She came across the "careless cruelty" of a hospital, and then found true help only among gypsies, where "For all

belonged to all, and each was chief.” (L.185) At the end, she becomes a vagrant woman who asks people to give her charity, and they either give it to her coldly or utterly dismiss her.

There is certain patriotism in Wordsworth’s care for the people of his country and the fact that this leads him to ask for justice. He is concerned with the fate of the soldiers’ families. The poem blames society and the government; however, it never blames the victims. Those soldiers and their families become prey to ‘pain, disease, and agony’ caused by unjust social and political policies. In this poem, there are “some signs of republicanism, but the militant opposition to war can hardly be overstressed.” (Woodring, 1970, p. 89) It also presents Wordsworth’s attack on landowners, on soldiering, on war and on social oppression.

The old father’s weakness under the oppression of the wealthy, the destruction of the woman’s family in the war and the inadequacy of the provision for the sick and needy are all facts that are expressed in the images of this poem to show the poet’s sympathy for those who suffer injustice. Wordsworth uses these images to encourage emotional and rational responses to think deeply about the pitiful results of the war and the injustices of society on man. Such subjugation always made Wordsworth grieve when considering the cruelty of man to his brothers. In fact, Wordsworth’s radical voice is very clear in this poem and during the time of composing the poem. He is protesting not only against war but also against the arrogant and unjust acquisition of property by landowners.

I I . II Wordsworth's political attitude towards Poverty

Most of Wordsworth's early poems discuss poor characters who are poor because their lives are subject to many incidents which put them suddenly under undeserved distress. His aim was not to glorify poverty but to invite us to sympathize with them. It is evident that he knows the dangers of the excessive poverty. In fact, Wordsworth was against the oppressive poverty which deprives the poor man of his sense of dignity and freedom. Certainly, he thought that the poor must be spiritually cared for. Therefore, he was able to show the depth of the feelings that lay in simple people when their primary instincts or emotions are shattered. In this section, Wordsworth reveals two types of poor character: those who are in destitution and in distress from loss of land, such as *Michael*, and the shepherd and those who need property, such as *The Last in The Flock*.

Wordsworth wrote *The Last of The Flock* mainly to express his protest against the system of parish relief, which was based on refusing charity to all but the completely destitute. As has been stated in the previous chapter, many critics believe that this poem represents an attack on William Godwin's anti-property idea, which states that property is the source of vice. On the contrary, Wordsworth frankly expresses his political attitudes through this poem, saying that property is necessary as it provides security and stability. Therefore, Hermann Wuscher considers that this poem "contains the most overt social criticism" of all the poems of the 1798 Ballades (Hermann, 1980, p.97) In this poem, Wordsworth presents an important problem that faces shepherds and small property-owners. These people were subjected to the 'speenhamland system' of supplementing agricultural wages from local poor rates, which demanded that the poor should live in destitute conditions in order to receive relief.⁹ As a result, the high demands increased the poverty of many of those people. The plot is about a man forced to sell his last lamb in order to feed his family. Wordsworth starts his poem with an astonishing observation:

In distant countries have I been

⁹ Celeste Langan, *Romantic Vagrancy: Wordsworth and the Simulation of Freedom*, Cambridge University Press, 2006. p. 100

And yet I have not often seen
A healthy man, a man full grown,
Weep in the public roads, alone.
But such a one, on *English* ground

(1-5) (1994, p. 23)

Here, Wordsworth uses the word 'English' either to emphasize that this story had taken place in England or to declare his disappointment that such a strong man is weeping because of the injustice of the English laws. "He saw me, and he turned aside / As if he wished himself to hide." (11-12) The narrator wants to know what made this man weep to this degree. In spite of his poverty, he is proud enough not to want anyone to see his miserable state. However, the narrator is very curious to know the reasons for such a strong man crying in the middle of the street. Wordsworth wants to prepare his readers' minds to be keen to hear the story. He makes the narrator follow the man and asks him "What ails you? Wherefore weep you so?" (16) Here, the shepherd relates his story of being once a happy and rich man who had fifty sheep. Then came a time of need, and the man had to go to the Parish and ask for relief. However, they denied him and said that he is not poor yet. The man continues relating his story and says: "It was a vein that never stopped-- / like blood-drops from my heart they dropped / 'Till thirty were not left alive." (73-75) Wordsworth compares the loss of the shepherd's sheep one by one with a wounded heart which makes him bleed drop by drop. This image is used to clarify the amount of damage that will occur when the shepherd loses his whole flock.

Wordsworth links the idea of poverty with evil. He thinks that the most important evil that comes from poverty is the spiritual disease as it makes man reflect on "wicked deeds." (81) It makes the shepherd think that everyone who meets him will think he is going to behave evilly. It is clear that this poem centres specifically on the mental and the spiritual rather than the physical effects of the poverty.¹⁰

And every man I chanced to see
I thought he knew some ill of me;

¹⁰ Wordsworth's prudent Conservatism: Social reform in the Lyrical Ballads, Kevin M. Saylor, 2001.

No peace, no comfort could I find,
No ease, within doors or without; (73-76)

In particular, what Wordsworth wants to emphasize is his desire to tell the reader that the problem of poverty is very serious and it brings other problems, such as mental disease and depression. The imageries of comparison in this poem continue as he describes the loss of his flock and says: "My flock it seemed to melt away." (89) Once again, the man compares the loss of his flock to something that is beyond his control, like the snow which naturally melts and vanishes, or like the candle which is used to light and gives hope, but in the end it melts and vanishes. The shepherd continues telling how much the flock means to him. He says:

"Sir! 'twas a precious flock to me
As dear as my own children be;
For daily with my growing store
I loved my children more and more. (91-94)

The most important comparison in this poem is when the shepherd evaluates the love of his children and his flock. Here, Wordsworth puts the readers in confusion as to whether they should feel sympathy with the man or whether they should be surprised. Indeed, all these comparisons reflect Wordsworth's public spirit. He is sad about the condition of life in his country and the injustices that made this man think that the lambs are as dear as his children.

The Last of The Flock criticizes the effects of rural poverty and the oppressive policy of the Tory government after Britain's wars against the American colonies and France. It presents a further view of social reform. However, it does not provide any solution to the problem, and it does not blame anyone but the social injustices. This point of view is shared by Kevin M. Saylor, who states that "This poem subverts nothing; it is truly radical only in its realism." (2001, p. 113) Wordsworth's main intention is to make readers, and ultimately the government, realize that the social injustice of poverty in his country can destroy relationships such as that between the father and his children.

Michael also is another poem which handles the subject of property. In his book, *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics*, Chandler suggests that Wordsworth begins to reject his youthful Republicanism and falls under the spell of Edmund Burke as early as 1798.¹¹ Moreover, Wordsworth's *Letter to Thomas Poole* in 1801 about the subject and intention of *Michael* is an additional fact, showing the possibility of Burkeanism in Wordsworth's belief about property. He says:

I have attempted to give a picture of a man, of strong mind and lively sensibility. Agitated by two of the most powerful affections of the human heart; the parental affection, and the love of property, landed property, including the feelings of inheritance, home, and personal and family independence.” (Blades, 2004, p. 85)

Wordsworth emphasizes that the love and ownership of property is essential to enhance the feeling of independence. In fact, he affirms that national independence offers people the feeling of being self-governed and “where this feeling has no place, people will feel they are not a part in the society, but a herd.”¹² Thus, Wordsworth describes Michael's own land as the paradise where “Hence had had learned the meaning of all winds / of blasts of every tone, and often-times / When others heeded not.” (48-50) (1994, p. 131-32) The poet considers man's living in his own land such a great grace that it enables him even to know the meaning of all that is around him. He knows the meaning of all winds, an allegory which means that he is an experienced man and he easily knows how to recognize the difference between right and wrong. Here, Michael is a clear example of a peasant who feels pride because he inherits this land from his fathers and he wishes to keep this heritage and give it to his son after him. This gives him the sense of self-government. In this regard, Wordsworth's opinion is identical to Burke's words in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1789), where Burke argues that continuity of:

¹¹ Chandler, James K. *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics*, Chicago, 1984.

¹² The Prose of Wordsworth p. 91

ownership is necessary to the whole constitution of the nation:

‘The power of perpetuating out property in our families is one of the most valuable and interesting circumstances belonging to [property], and that which tends the most to the perpetuation of society itself’ (Burke, 1989, p. 102)

The poet admires Michael’s older agrarian values of love of the land, predecessors, community, land and hard work. For example, the lines “those fields.../ had laid strong hold on his affections were to him / a pleasurable feeling of blind love” (74-76). This passage illustrates Michael’s love for his property; the whole place is very precious to him. People might see Michael as an isolated person who, with his wife, works very hard in order just to live and to keep his land. However, Michael finds this to be a very pleasurable thing which brings him happiness and the self-esteem that he will never find anywhere else. Besides, Michael’s cottage, “The Evening Star,” presents a particular large prospect, and the following description of the land’s boundaries seems to embody this independent attitude. The narrator says:

Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the lake; (131-135)

At first, he describes its design as being on the top of the ground with a beautiful view because it is the only cottage in the area. Then he names the areas around the cottage where it occurs in the hill of Tarn Crag up to Dunmail, to the west of the town and near the Lake District.

Unlike the previous poem *The Last of The Flock*, where the peasant has one choice to sell his flock in order to feed his family, Michael has two choices: either to sell his land (property) or to send his only son to work in order to save his land. The poet continues describing Michael as an old man who has only one son. Thus, this son indicates the hope of Michael’s name surviving in the world after he dies. Hence, Luke, Michael’s son, is very precious to his father and he is the light of his soul.

But to Michael's heart
This son of his old age was yet dearer
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all, (42-45)

Wordsworth tells the reader that in spite of Michael's description of life in his own land as living in paradise, his son represents "more than all other gifts." (L. 146) In the previously discussed poem *The Last of The Flock*, Wordsworth made an analogy between the peasant's blood and his flock in the line: "Like blood-drops from my heart they dropped." (73) In this poem, however, he draws a similarity between Michael's blood and his son. Certainly, it is the same problem which the poet presents in two images. In both poems, the poet wants to say that property and children are two essential elements for the continuity of life.

The man forcedly agrees to send his son to the city to raise enough money to free their farm from debts. Before Luke's departure, Michael designs a sheepfold and he makes Luke lay its foundation. Michael was going to the sheepfold day after day, hoping that his son would lay another stone when he came back. After many months pass, Luke's morale was ruined under the effect of the city. Thus, Luke did not fulfil his promise that he made to his father "And never lifted up a single stone." (L. 67) Michael finally dies and leaves the sheepfold unfinished. The poet strongly directs the readers to protect their domestic and independent life. He says that because of the loss of morale, such a nice house which was built with hard work and which was full with happy life can be destroyed because of the negligence of the new generation like Luke. More so than Luke, cities and the urban world are to blame.

The cottage which was named the Evening Star
Is gone the ploughshare has been through the ground
On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
. . . yet the oak is left (478- 481)

Throughout the poem, Wordsworth uses allegory, as when he named Michael's house The Evening Star, which means the ability to guide people through the dark and unknown roads. At the end of the poem, The Evening Star is gone, which symbolically means the death of happiness and morals. When moral values and hope are lost, then nothing worth living for will remain. However, Wordsworth is confident that there is still hope for the survival of conventions and culture. This is clear in his use of the word *oak*, which symbolically refers to strength and endurance. Moreover, it is the national tree of England. He concludes his poem saying that despite the unfinished work and despite the truth that Michael is dead and despite the place being deserted, the oak tree will still grow there.

At the end, the poem brings us back to "the unfinished Sheepfold" which "may be seen / beside the boisterous brook of Greenhead Ghyll." (484-485) Wordsworth passed by this place at the beginning of the poem, and it reminded him of Michael's story. Through his pleasure in his shepherd's calling, his deep love for his son and his courage in misery and suffering, Michael summarizes the "domestic affection" of which Wordsworth speaks in his letter (dated 1801 to Charles Fox). (Dorothy, 1971, p. 42) Unlike the previous poems, where Wordsworth blames the governors or the institutions, here he blames industrialization and the society it begets.

Consequently, the shift in Wordsworth's political view starts to move from left-wing radical to having moderate points that look for the gradual continuous change which can be achieved in the same system of government. Above all, it can be concluded that Wordsworth in this poem is no longer a radical poet and has begun to change his views and has become a conservative poet.

Through these poems above, Wordsworth acknowledges the lives of people who live beyond the injustice of the social order of identity and dignity and through an imaginative sympathy with human suffering. He addresses the social indifference and the ruthless environment and recommended people to recall their undeniable duty to help others. The existing suffering, Wordsworth holds, is chiefly caused not by oppression but by sins of default, such that if landowners and the nation performed their responsibility, those who suffer socio-economically could simply be helped. Therefore, Wordsworth revolts against every injustice and demands that

society and government pay attention to all these characters that have experienced separation, alienation and loss to varying extents, including the women who grieve the loss of their husbands in war. Consequently, the loss of their supporters, which make them poor and unable to cope with a harsh life, leads to yet another loss of their children. In fact, Wordsworth realized that the generation of war and terror seriously developed the problem. In this concern, most of Wordsworth's characters in his early radical period were victims of both war and poverty, who basically fade away from illness and starvation. Wordsworth reveals varying levels of alienation and saddening from the community, purpose or self, which followed the growth and materialism of industrialization, and the feeling of estrangement and separation between the man and the environment. He makes us know certain feelings that belong to human kind through giving a voice to those deprived, silent and ignorant people. In his evoking images of people, places and events from his early radical life, he develops a confidence that it is a stage needing further deep changes in the structure of the whole of society.

The chapter concludes with the result that Wordsworth's early poems express his indignation and hate towards his country's government. His causes are based on his beliefs that an early, and possible, social order is ruined and corrupted by means of a growing materialistic establishment. He believed that the government was so corrupt because it was unable to understand the causes that made the French remove the power of their rulers. They could only destroy cruelly all the efforts to reform and renew the ill constitution of England.

CHAPTER THREE

Wordsworth's Beliefs after the Collapse of the French Revolution

The series of events that occurred in European politics began to make a change in Wordsworth's personal and moral views that would seriously affect his own poetry and the Romantic Movement. However, Wordsworth's beliefs, which developed in his main poems of his early works, are the basis of the Christian stoicism that distinguishes his later work.

His dedication to causes, such as the establishment of republican government, belongs to his own desire to be free in body, mind and expression. Wordsworth could not negotiate over his own freedom and he fights with such circumstances where he considers the suffering of others. Hence, his philosophical position, which declares his early work, is best described as passionate individualism. In fact, this position is essentially incapable of achieving individual freedom of spirit and body. It contradicts the subjugation of human beings by one another through a common structure. Thus, on behalf of the others, Wordsworth tries to introduce himself boldly and to fight oppression. His position is based upon the radical republican ideology which was used by many Europeans after the collapse of the Bastille. This helped Wordsworth's transition to final Christian stoicism. Thus, the creation of Wordsworth's system of spirituality, which would move him from individualism to stoicism, is rooted in the philosophical crisis which he experienced after the collapse of the French Revolution.

The course of events in France after the French Revolution changed Wordsworth's expectations and hopes and the expectations and hopes of others. The disappointing results of the French Revolution, the slaughter, tyranny and injustice, made him change his political and ethical views in addition to his poetry. It is certain that the ideas of Wordsworth in his early poetry were about the common people, which he

admired and with whom he identified. Therefore, these poems and ballads reflected a revolutionary mood and the need to change the structure of society. Some scholars of this subject, such as Robert M. Ryan, argue that “Wordsworth does not abandon his radical views, but rather accommodates them to the importance of public religion in the national life”.¹³ Therefore, Wordsworth’s notions and beliefs later turned to another direction, focusing on nationalistic and patriotic feelings in poems such as *I Travelled among Unknown Men*, and *Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty*, which indicate his change to the support of the Tory Party.

Wordsworth’s earlier poems are scripted in a manner in which the mind is observing the world. As soon as he realized the evil and the good, he made his poetry an intermediate area between that which was perceived as objective and that which was perceived as subjective. The importance of Wordsworth lies in the attention he had paid to the discipline of subjectivity in his late poems, starting from “Ode to Duty,” which Geoffrey L. Meldahi describes as “Wordsworth’s main transition poem from individualism to a sort of stoicism he would hold in old age”¹⁴. He began choosing his themes carefully and introduced his opinions and judgments rationally, thereby distancing himself from misguided beliefs after the breakdown of the French Revolution. This poem conveys the poet’s belief that if one respects law and order, one may gain happiness and security.

Among the nationalistic poems, *Ode to Duty*, which can be given as an example that reveals the first sign of Wordsworth’s changing political and philosophical attitudes from liberal revolutionary to conservative. In fact, this poem presents a clear change in Wordsworth’s views in two main aspects. The first aspect is his use of both classical and sophisticated language, as he opens it with the classic line, “Stern Daughter of the Voice of God,” (1994, p. 492) which contrasts with his earlier beliefs in his *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*, when he mentions that the poet should use the simple, colloquial language that is used by the common people “as a state of vivid sensation that sort of pleasure may be imparted, which a poet may rationally

¹³ Robert M. Ryan, *The Romantic Reformation: Religious Politics in English Literature, 1789–1824*. Cambridge Studies in Romanticism <http://www.rc.umd.edu/reviews/back/ryan.html>

¹⁴ Religion and Renunciation in Wordsworth: the progression of Natural Individualism to Christian Stoicism, Meldahi, Geoffrey L, 2007. <http://digital commons.Colby.edu/honour theses/279>

endeavour to impart”¹⁵. Secondly, Wordsworth praises and glorifies the concept of duty, when he personifies duty as the daughter of God. He describes the word “duty” as the devotion to everything, as opposed to “the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion,” which the poet stated previously in the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*. Geoffrey Durrant refers to the poem and says: “the natural laws are shown as requiring a somewhat passive assent; men, perhaps ought to submit themselves to authority, as natural objects-flowers and stars are seen to do.” (Durrant, 1969, p.6) Thus, this poem exposes Wordsworth’s moral judgment and the beginning of wariness about his mission and role as a poet. His early political and philosophical views, which he had depended on before, “the genial sense of youth” (L. 11), are no longer considered reasonable nor reliable. Therefore, he had changed his hopes, and looked for “a repose that ever is the same.” (L. 40) From now on, he starts to apply a gradual and stable reform regardless of whether this direction is slow and requires commitment and patience.

Contrary to his early poems, the mood of this poem is clear and pleasant, creating a sense of safety and certainty. In this poem, Wordsworth argues for the reformation of society, instead of his earlier ideas to restructure society, which were based on the French Revolution as an example, and of his revolutionary ideas and statement about the institutions and the governments, “my hopes no more must change their names” (L. 41). He chooses a stable life, an established social and a settled order. What marks his later works is his desire for gradual continued reform, far away from a sudden break of the political-legal structure. In fact, Durrant emphasizes this saying: “The opinions and the religious views of Wordsworth’s later years may be taken as an expression of a love of order which cannot be dissociated from certain exhaustion”. (Durrant, 1969, p. 7) By stating “When love is an unerring light, / And joy its own security,” Wordsworth implies this metaphor to improve the similarity between love and light, joy and security. Thus, he explains that love of peace and wisdom could enable man to choose the right path, thereby making him live in dignity.

It is clear that Wordsworth had accepted the natural order of the universe, which led him to accept the established and stable order of Church and State. This poem is an

¹⁵ *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, p. 1

influential piece of work of Wordsworth where he powerfully expresses his new ethical ideas. Besides, it reveals the great images and devices he used to convey his ideas to the reader. It is a poem in which Wordsworth bravely expressed his feelings and ideas, believing that expressing one's self is better manners and being proper.

III. I The Excursion

Many poets and critics have claimed that Wordsworth suffered a gradual decline in his poetic powers, after he completed *The Prelude* (1805). Originally, what sensed this decline and aroused a criticism against him was the publication of his voluminous work, *The Excursion* (1814).¹⁶ Much of the criticism that was directed against him was political at heart as Wordsworth had changed in his later years; from his revolutionary attitudes towards the more conservative one and he became related to the wealthy Tory landowners.

Many young romantic poets, such as Byron, Shelly, and Hazlitt, criticized Wordsworth's poetry of the late period and even wrote parodies about it. Darbishire also states that Wordsworth's later poetry generally suffers from "it's extremely commonplace and timid sentiments and its great artificiality of language, and it was grounded, not in immediate sensation, but on ratiocination."

These points of views were not accepted by many critics who admire *The Excursion* and considered it a masterpiece in English literature. Charles Lamb prizes and admires *The Excursion* in his letter to Wordsworth, dated on 1814, describes it as "the noblest conversational poem I ever read. A day in heaven."¹⁷ Certainly, this letter stands as a precious acknowledgment from a man who is partly from the English literary circle and a great essayist. His letters were reporters of many famous literates and political figures such as Samuel Coleridge, Thomas Hood, and philosophers such as William Godwin.

Most of the criticisms that Wordsworth received in his time were directed from men who admired the policies of Napoleon. William Hazlitt was one of them. He was a radical republican figure who had a strong belief in the Revolution despite the errors and the destruction it brought to its people. Therefore, it is logical to reduce the value of Wordsworth's *The Excursion*, which he wrote after his conversion from the

¹⁶ Coleridge was disappointed by the *Excursion* because it did not live up to his expectation as "The first and only true philosophical poem in existence." (Jones, p. 1)

¹⁷ Works of Charles and Mary Lamb. VI-VII. Letters (Ed) E.V.Lukas, Vol.VI, (1796-1820). <http://lordbyron.cath.lib.vt.edu/monograph.php?doc=ChLamb.1905&select=Preface>

Radical Party to the Conservative Party, of not being of high quality as his early work had been written during the time he was supporting the Revolution.

In fact, Wordsworth's later poems are quite expanded, showing much more conscious experimentation, especially with detailed stanza forms than the earlier poems. John Keats shares this point of view, and said to Benjamin Robert that "I am certain that there are three things to rejoice at in this time; The Excursion, your portraits (Robert), and Hazlitt's depth of taste, and I am reading the poem with many tears and prayers, too." (Wordsworth, 2007, p.1) Hence, he regards Wordsworth not only as a poet but also as a preacher and prophet of God's new and divine philosophy in addition to being a man who lighted a candle in a dark time.

Additionally, *The Excursion* widely attracted the Victorians, who embraced it and regarded this influential work as a spring of divine strength in a doubtful world. They took from Wordsworth things more than poetry and through this poem, Wordsworth was recognized as much a philosopher and thinker as a writer. Thus, the Victorian regarded Wordsworth as the poet of the moral life.

The change in Wordsworth was the logical result of a number of factors: his loss of faith and hope for humanity as a consequence of witnessing the horrors of the French Revolution and Napoleon's conquests. Wordsworth's personal situation had also been difficult from the time he married in 1802 to eight years later when he was the father of five children. Tragedies in his family life also helped in making his later years mournful. There was the death of his brother, John, in 1802, the early death of his two children, Dorothy's illness, his separation from Coleridge, and finally, the unhappy marriage and death of his daughter, Dora. (Drabble, 1790 p. 132) All of these events reflected on the protagonist's stories of *The Excursion*.

In spite of the changes in Wordsworth's poetry in general in the late period, his political attitudes to the interests of the community and nation have still remained true and justified until nowadays. *The Excursion*, which is his longest and most philosophical poem, contains Wordsworth's more mature views on Man and Society. It supplied him with esteem and a reputation as a featured and prominent poet. Thus, Wordsworth deals with the essence of the structures of life, which consist of man and nature, in addition to the most important concern of Wordsworth: society.

It is divided into nine books, each of which contains messages, sermons and many moral touching stories. The whole purpose of the poem is to offer an invitation from the poet to his readers to understand the world in a deep sense and to incite man to live in peace with himself first then with others. In the most famous lines of the poem, he says: “who by adding love to peace / *Might live on earth* a life of happiness” (I, 517) (1994, p. 764) He continues to state that after all the conflicts and clashes that will lead to anarchy and mass, nothing will stay but kindness and a peaceful mind. Thus, Wordsworth becomes convinced that if: “We live by Admiration, Hope and Love” (III, 762) (1994, p. 812), we can obtain a stable and decent life. Therefore, Wordsworth is certain that it is not easy to follow his messages, or believe in them. Throughout the poem, he continues touching the feeling and moves the reader emotionally and mentally. In this poem, Wordsworth expresses his political opinions about the series of events in France and in England and tells how he is disappointed after the developments of the French Revolution. Wordsworth is not only an ordinary poet who writes solely to entertain or to express his ideas. He is more than this. In fact, he is a concerned poet who is interested in the real social problems of his society and of Man. He starts the longest poem with a protest against the unjust social conditions that surrounded him. *The Ruined Cottage*, which appears as a tragic story in the first Book, means to provide a defense against personal and social despair. It depicts human misery and warns of the dangers of relying on worldly hopes. Once again, Wordsworth tries to put his readers into a situation to receive from ordinary moral sensation a more effective impression. “The poem contains the first signs of Wordsworth’s later stoicism in the character of Armaytage, the Peddler, who acts as a role model and spiritual guide to the narrator.”¹⁸ Thus, in *The Ruined Cottage*, he begins to emphasize a connection between sympathetic emotion and moral improvement. The whole framework of the poem is based on a series of dramatic conversations between three old men: the Peddler, the Solitary and the Pastor, and the poet himself. Through these characters, Wordsworth resumes the account of the growth of his own mind.

²⁰ Religion and Renunciation in Wordsworth: the progression of Natural Individualism to Christian Stoicism, Melawi, Geoffrey L, 2007. http://digitalcommons.Colby.edu/honor_theses/279

In this poem, the poet is seen roaming until he arrives at a ruined cottage where he meets his preacher friend, (Armytage or the Peddler). He then gives us a description of the Peddler's education and way of life. Wordsworth's description of Armytage's character is an inspiration of his own character as a poet because of the various parallels between them. They are talented as poets; both of them value the human heart and its ability to sympathize with the suffering of others. However, the Peddler is not wholly Wordsworth; he is only one aspect of Wordsworth. He is Wordsworth in his old age. He seems in Wordsworth's imagination to be kinder and more sympathetic to human suffering than Wordsworth himself could be. In other words, the Peddler can be considered the other face of Wordsworth's responsible and mature aspects.

At the beginning of the poem, Armytage describes how weak the situation of society is by stating that:

Two blighting seasons, when the fields were left
With half a harvest. It pleased Heaven to add
A worse affliction in the plague of war:
This happy Land was stricken to the heart! (577, 581, p. 769)

In this stanza, Wordsworth mentions poor harvests that combined with England's continuing war with France as the reason for the population's troubles. Yet it is indirectly the ongoing industrialization that leads to declining condition of affairs in the countryside. The narrator personifies the happy land as someone who was suffering deeply from his heart, and he describes that time as a hard time. Additionally, Wordsworth is concerned about the children who were roaming in dirty streets every day asking for bread or parish help. He laments the industrialization which did not offer people a happy life. On the contrary, it helped to decline domestic life and separate family members by having them go to distant cities in order to work in the new factories. He compares them to birds as they keep their traditional way of living in intimacy and care for each other: "They, and their wives and children--happier far/ Could they have lived as do the little birds." (603-4) It is a creative analogy when he states the similarity between the happy children and the

little birds as the birds do not know the pain or anguished feelings due to their living in a calm and beautiful world. In his opinion, they would pass the time happily if they lived together at the bottom of nature and domestic life, away from the distractions of the hard life in industrial society.

With the meeting of the poet and the Peddler, the action of *The Excursion* begins. At first, the theme of death is given by the Peddler in an extended monologue. Addressing his friend, the Peddler sadly says: “I see around me here / Things which you cannot see, we die, my friend.” (*The Excursion*, I, 469-471) This line is similar to the poem of *Intimation of immortality*. In the ninth line, Wordsworth says “The things which I have seen I now can see no more.” (1994, p. 587) This emphasizes that the poet was hopeful in the past, when he was so enthusiastic for the French Revolution in its early days of promise. It is clear that Wordsworth had seen and experienced things that no longer existed. Here, the personal voice of Wordsworth is present when he experiences things that exist no more. He is convinced that nothing remains but ugliness and evil. This may be identical to the death of his friend Beaupuy, the ugly things including the bad leaders who came during the aftermath of the Revolution, such as Robespierre and Bonaparte. He thinks that such a situation leads gradually to the spiritual death of Man and humanity before physical death.

The suffering and death of the Peddler are important themes in *The Excursion*, recurring in various patterns throughout the poem. The feature of sadness, melancholy and gloomy meditation is also set through the Preacher’s words as the prevalent tone to the end of the poem. This reflects Wordsworth’s own character in his old age and his disappointment in the French Revolution, which he thought would be the golden age of humanity. Thus, he became more conservative and more brooding than when he was young. Looking at the ruined cottage and the scene around it, both the Poet and the Peddler lament the current situation.

In contrast to the younger man, the Poet, who finds the ruined cottage as a “cheerless spot,” the Peddler feels that the spot is “suffused with the sense of human pathos and loss (Darbble, 1970, pp.164-147) He identifies the state of sadness and frustration. Unlike the young man, he experienced and lived many real accidents that made him see things from many perspectives.

Thus, the Peddler feels the spring shares with him his sadness for Margaret's fate. Here, he narrates the pathetic story of "The last human tenant of these ruined walls". (I, 913) Margaret was happily married to a weaver, Robert, and had two children by him. However, depressed by poverty and unemployment, he enlisted in the army and never returned. Margaret went wandering on the roads to find him, but it was all in vain. She continued waiting for him for nine years as a "wife and widow." The Preacher narrates Margaret's story movingly and skilfully. At first, he makes good use of details in order to capture their attention, including the fallen stones of the cottage, the garden losing its tidiness, the overwhelming vines, and the bits of sheep's wool spread in the cottage. Then, he creates a sense of suspense by breaking off in the middle of the story saying that he does not want to disturb the calm nature with his restless thoughts. Thus, he makes his friends beg for the rest of the story. Through Wordsworth's ability of spontaneity of describing, the Peddler echoes Wordsworth's great ability of narration. Before continuing the story, Armistead states his belief that "there are often found / In mournful thoughts, and always might be found, / A power to virtue friendly." (632-634) The ideas of loss, suffering, endurance, and consolation obliquely in these lines form a pattern that is repeated in the whole poem. This certainly is connected to Wordsworth's own suffering from his distressing family sufferings.

Hence, Margaret's state in her miserable wandering can be identified with Wordsworth's despair and misery. He sensed the bitterness of social failure a number of times during his life: first when he was separated from Annette, his beloved and mother of his child, and second when he was disappointed in the French Revolution. According to this, it seems that Wordsworth had felt Margaret's situation. Margaret's is an incessant wandering motivated by her excessive love for her husband. Therefore, she symbolizes the lost hope of Wordsworth, she still wishes that maybe the next days will bring back her husband. She kept on waiting for nine years. As a consequence, of waiting for her husband, she dies in her cottage, which becomes a "wretched spot." Margaret's sad image and state is symbolic reflection in some degree to Wordsworth's lost hope in the French Revolution. When he thought that France would represent a new and a golden age for humanity; however, with the terror, violence and slaughter, he could not keep these expectations. Without doubt,

this feeling and agitation is the same as Wordsworth's. Like Margaret, he found himself torn between the past and the present, between staying on his revolutionary beliefs and growing up to enter life from a mature perspective. As it has been said before, when the French Revolution started eating its children and brought more killing and destruction to the French people than they had experienced previously, people began to lose faith in the revolution. It is important to say that Margaret's story can identify with many women at that time with whom Wordsworth met or did not meet. Therefore, Wordsworth, here, does not present a case of one woman. On the contrary, he handles the subject because of its relation to many women. This indicates that he is still concerned about the public interest of his nation. Although the story of Margaret is embodied as a unit, it is linked smoothly to the remainder of the poem through Armytage and through its theme.

In *The Solitary*, the Peddler tells the Poet that they probably met a "secluded person" whose name in the poem is the Solitary. Thus, the Peddler and the Author travel on to visit the Solitary's house, which is three days' journey from the ruined cottage. On their way, the Peddler describes the despondent Solitary's life to the Author. The Solitary, he says, comes from a good and educated family. He has shown signs of goodness and a great enthusiasm for study. When we listen to the Solitary, we hear Wordsworth, we hear the same problem, the feelings and the frustration and we hear the same concern for social conscience.

Consequently, he took the job of a wandering clergyman to a military troop and he "lived and roamed / where fortune led : and fortunate who oft proves / the careless Peddler's friend, to him made known" (II, 184-187) (1994, p. 774). In these lines, Wordsworth symbolically is describing himself when he went to France to understand the outside world better before graduating from university, when he met with the young revolutionists such as Beaupuy. Returning to the real story of the Solitary, his misery begins after his marriage for "Death suddenly overthrew / Tow lovely children – all that they possessed!" (II, 199-201) In simple narrative style, Wordsworth describes the death of the children and the state of their mother with words such as "miserably bare," "grave," and "anguish." All these words signify the sense of loss after the failure of the Revolution. In addition, this incident in the Solitary's life symbolizes the death of two of Wordsworth's own children. Therefore,

the Solitary leaves his work and makes a decision to have a quiet life in a rural house among the mountains with the choice to die forgotten there. Like Wordsworth, he has had too much hope in the French Revolution, but his disappointment and bitterness has no recovery. Consequently, Wordsworth's own experience can be sensed in the Solitary's despondency and frustration.

The Solitary's disappointment and bitterness drove him into a suspicious way of thinking which shows itself after reading Voltaire's book, which the Peddler and the Poet found. He accuses it as: "Than this dull product of scorn's pen" (II.484). This book is about an innocent young man whose teacher taught him to be optimistic and believe in goodness and to see life from a very bright perspective. In fact, this contradicts the Solitary's belief that the world is harsh and one should not build hopes on things and issues may hurt instead of help. This is the reason for using the word 'dull' when describing Voltaire's work. Both the Peddler and the Poet thought that the owner of this book was dead, but after some time, the owner of the book appears and introduces himself as the Solitary. The ill-fated Solitary here symbolizes the anti-social lesson to be taken from unity with nature. He has become an egotist and has learned from Voltaire's *Candida* the lessons that clearly do not survive in the best of all possible worlds. At the end of this book, the Peddler affirms an authority based on experience. In spite of the fact that philosophers perceive by the light of consciousness, Wordsworth sees it from the wider emotions of fear, awe and love.

The Solitary is very sad until he fell "Of a departing cloud."—"T was not for love"--/ Answered the sick Man with a careless voice—" "(II. 611-12). This reflects his bitterness and sorrowful feelings when he sees the glorious scene of clouds and mountains near his house as a gloomy scene of cloudy heaven. However, this symbolic denotes that the Pastor is not spiritually dead and that he possibly can recover. This is also confirmed when he envisions an experience of seeing a wonderful city in the valley during his search, along with other peasants for the old man who had been lost in the storm. The Solitary had been following the others when suddenly

The appearance instantaneously disclosed

Was of mighty city—boldly say. . . .

With alabaster domes, and silver spires.”

(*The Excursion*, II, 838-840)

In this vividly described passage, Wordsworth presents a symbolic image about the perfect city. He creates this city in his own imagination in order to heal his wounds and to have some rest. Thus, the Solitary goes through this vision partly because of the effect of the storm and partly as a result of his obsession with the idea of death. In fact, he has seen “Paradise as a jewelled and the holy city, as the New Jerusalem of Revelation.” (Jones,1954, p.171) This promised reward, for Wordsworth, can be seen nowhere except after death, or it can only be compared to *Jerusalem*, the holy and blessed city on Earth.

Nevertheless, the visionary experience of the holy city could not alleviate the Solitary’s despondency; he is very disappointed to be healed by one experience. Therefore, for him “Night is than day more acceptable; sleep / Doth, in my estimate of good, appear / A better state than waking; death than sleep.” (III, 277-279) (1994, P. 790). These lines mirror the poet’s deep anguish and feeling that he can only forget when he sleeps, and for this reason he prefers night more than day. Therefore, the Solitary needs someone to rescue him from his condition. Hence, the Peddler, as a companion, invites him to learn wisdom and endurance by “Measuring through all degrees, until the scale / of time and conscious nature disappear... in unsearchable eternity.” (III, 110-112). Wordsworth’s meditation goes farther than the present day; when the Peddler tells the Solitary that man should do all things until the scale of time and conscious nature disappear in a place of eternity which comes after death. Then, the Solitary, seventy years old, describes in detail the course of the French Revolution. He says:

With all the chambers in its horrid towers,
Fell to the ground:--by violence overthrown
Of indignation; and with shouts that drowned
The crash it made in falling! From the wreck
(III, 710-714)

In this part, the personal voice of Wordsworth is very clear. He directly, deals with the theme of the French Revolution and of the sensation associated with it at its beginning when he was deeply supporting the French Revolution as the reason for humankind to be free. For this reason, a golden palace rose instead of the symbol of bondage. Wordsworth had the narrative talent of transforming events into images. He portrays the scene of the Bastille's collapse and how people defeated its ghastly towers which were filled with prisoners. He uses the device of onomatopoeia when he said the sound of the scene was combined by the screaming and shouts of people in addition to the use of the word 'crash' to enable the reader to imagine the scene and the sound as the event was too great. Then he allegorically said, instead of the ugly building of the Bastille, 'a golden palace' rose. The poem continues: "The tree of Liberty.--My heart rebounded / My melancholy voice the chorus joined." (III, 725-26). In addition to Wordsworth's ability to convey events through images, he also had the talent to relate ideas through symbolic imagery. In order to tell the reader how necessary the revolution was to serve the people and to save them from poverty and the control of the monarchy, he uses the patriotic expression of the "tree of liberty" "to indicate that the idea of liberty is very strong and original to the extent it was like an old tree that has many roots in the ground, which means it has been existing in people's minds for a long time. Wordsworth himself believed that liberty is the right of everyone and everyone has the right to live free without being a slave or bound to any institution or government.

At the end of *Despondency*, the Solitary tells us about his trip to America, the country of liberty, hoping that he would find "that pure archetype of human greatness." (III, 951) Unfortunately, this leads him to another disappointment when he finds the red Indians to be "squalid, vengeful and impure." Here, Wordsworth creates an image of the miserable, retributive creature which is cruel and passive to no law and irrational with fear and horrible apathy. It is clear that he is referring to the mob and their bad actions in France, where robberies and random killings spread.

The clarity of the Peddler's arguments results from the fact that they depend "impatiently, ill-done, or left undone, / To the dishonour of his holy name." (IV 26-27) (1994, p. 801) At this point, Wordsworth indicates the great trauma about the deeds of the leaders of the French Revolution and how they kill people under the

pretext of protecting the revolution in addition to using their power to invade neighbouring countries such as Napoleon's attempt to invade Austria and Spain. For this reason, Wordsworth admitted he was wrong and disavowed himself of his old beliefs and dedicated himself to respect the traditions, institutions, the Monarchy and the law with the attempt to reform them. Eventually, the Peddler here reflects Wordsworth's conservative thoughts in his later years. Therefore, the Peddler argues that man is bound by the law of duty to endure suffering and pain and to have faith in the ultimate truth. This man is

Subject neither to eclipse or wane
Duty exists; -- immutably survive,
For our support, the measures and the forms. (IV, 72-76)

When laws exist in life, man becomes aware of that which he must respect and obey. By doing so, he will not be humiliated and subjected to the hidden laws that are expected of savage people. Stability is always combined with duty to enable man to live in peace. Wordsworth uses the word 'eclipse' to denote the darkness and the obscure things that man may face in the absence of law. The same idea applies when mixing duty with immutability. Without doubt, what Wordsworth means by duty is, in the first place, the duty of man to himself, his brother, and to humanity. At the same time, Wordsworth means, here, to commit to the law that is based to serve the interests of society.

The Peddler believes that man, as a part in the universe should understand the change of the world and himself and his suffering as part of it in addition to his subjectivity to "the transcendent truths" through his sense of right and wrong. The poem continues when the Peddler finally proclaims that "we live by admiration, hope and love; / and, even as these are well and wisely fixed, / in dignity of being we ascend." (IV, 763-765) The Peddler appeals to duty and to the "imaginative will" by which faith is supported, and expresses his confidence that the Solitary's healing is already beginning with his actions.

For that reason, the three characters leave the valley to visit the Pastor's dwelling. The Solitary, before reaching the Pastor's house, shows his inner hesitation by

staying behind his friends to pay “A parting tribute to a spot that seemed / Like the fixed canter of a troubled world,” (V, 15-16) (1994, p.8022). The Solitary’s local attachment to his home represents his reaction against any new involvement in the world’s distresses and disappointments. The symbolic image of the chaotic and messy house followed by the use of “troubled world,” reflect the disordered and confused world in which the poet lives.

Wordsworth was mainly concerned by the decline of the domestic system of industry and its consequences upon the poor. He thought that prior to industry and inventions, there was real social unity in society, in which each member of the family and society had been dependent upon others. Hence, the Solitary expresses his regrets about the past days where the simple and peaceful life of the poor and rustic people who lived supporting each other. Here, Wordsworth dedicates great interest to talk about “the blessings of domestic love” (V, 59). He connected the domestic life with sanctions and sacred ties, where people have strong relations as they pay attention to and aid those who need any help. Benjamin Kim emphasizes this saying that Wordsworth was “obsessed with the mysterious and ineluctable connection between the individual, the home and the state.”(Kim, 1790, p. 4) The Peddler agrees with the Solitary, so both of them lament the disappearance of social duty and the old days where one feels that there is another one caring for him. He laments the disappearance of the warm feeling between the family members as well as the neighbours. The subject of the domestic life is very common and important in *The Excursion* particularly and in Wordsworth’s poetry in general. This is clearer in the *Parsonage Book* when Wordsworth expressed his sorrows about the vanished domestic life and the peace that lost. He laments the despair of traditions and intimacy between the community and with great pain he asks where is the:

The old domestic morals of the land,
Her simple manners, and the stable worth
That dignified and cheered a low estate?

(VIII, 35-37) (1994, p. 877)

In this passage, which start with these warm words Wordsworth describes the past calm life, which was present before, then disappeared because of the growth of industry. The houses become empty because of the absence of the family members who work day and night and have nothing but very little wages. Unfortunately, this eventually leads to the separation of family members. It is significant to mention that the domestic life which he experienced in Grasmere after his crisis because of the fallen revolution had helped him to heal.

"Fled!" was the Wanderer's passionate response,
"Fled utterly! or only to be traced
In a few fortunate retreats like this; (227-229)

The Peddler advises the Solitary to 'flee,' this word has a dangerous influence on its hearing as if something fatal is running after him to devour him. This may be true to some extent for the fatal structure of industrial society goes to destroy the tranquil and peaceful land. Therefore, the Peddler tells the Solitary to run away to "Drink the pure water of its innocent stream / with lip almost as pure.--Domestic bliss." (VIII, 260-261) He compares life in the country in addition to the rustic peasants metaphorically to the life of paradise or heaven, where man can find innocence and intimacy.

On the Peddler's and Poet's way to the Pastor's house, the Solitary describes life after death. He says that the soul of man would go to Christ's Church and will reach "the fair land of everlasting." (V, 285) Then he defines the Christian rites, which he considered to be a means for elevating the fallen people, and he begins to think upon the man's destiny. Afterward, the Author expresses to the Solitary his faith in the soul's ability to be joyous and hopeful again for "what the soul perceives, if glory lost, / May be, through pains and persevering hope, / Recovered." (V, 305-307)

As soon as the Peddler and the Solitary meet the Pastor, they start to talk about such themes as life, death, good and evil. Meanwhile, hoping to hear something that can heal his wounds, the Solitary asks the Pastor to tell him about people, dead or living, who can exemplify human suffering and endurance.

Thus, in *The Church Yard among the Mountain*, which includes the Sixth and Seventh Books, the Pastor tells stories of dead people who are buried in Grasmere Churchyard. The aim of the stories that the Pastor tells are to provide consolation and hope to the hopeless Solitary, as well as to the people who have endured the same agony and frustration. The pastor takes the role of giving them an explanation of the lives of the dead people whose tombstone descriptions they read in the graveyard. At first, he begins to talk about a couple, the Youdells, who, in spite of their poverty, lead a happy and benevolent Christian life. Thus, the Pastor answers the Peddler's question of how to be meek and how to unite "with self-forgetting tenderness of heart / An earth-despising of soul?" (V, 577-578) (p. 831) The Pastor's answer mirrors Wordsworth's beliefs that life is "love and immortality" and the main aim of life is to love and care for the other. He reminds the Peddler that life is nothing but a moment of pain, frustration and joy.

. . . . human; exercised in pain,
In strife, in tribulation; and ordained,
If so approved and sanctified, to pass,
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy. (V, 1011-1016)

Wordsworth personifies the abstract idea of love that he describes as a strong man who has the ability to struggle in different circumstances, and in order to live peacefully forever, he has to conquer these difficulties. Thus, in brief lines, the Pastor summarises the meaning of life, which is to give love to everyone and to share the happiness and bitterness of others. Only in this way, man can pass through the difficulties and have a stable life. Thus, he believes in the eternal life in spite of the dark and melancholy time through which man may pass. Nevertheless, he always can cope with these times and survive.

The next story is about a sick young lover who is driven to madness by his deeply unanswered love. At the end, he controls his feelings by learning to be patient. However, unfortunately, he died of fever. The second story is about a miner who bears so much to obtain a buried precious stone; and when he finds it, he quickly

dies. The Pastor tells the Peddler that the path that connected the man's home to the mine of ores was named the 'path of perseverance,' so his story exemplifies hope and persistence. Then, the pastor and the Peddler stand by another grave belonging to an actor named "A Zealous Actor" and beside him is the grave of his wife and beside another one a chieftain. Another story is about Molly Fisher's sister-in-law and her thrift turning to thralldom. The memorials of a Jacobite and a Hanoverian are placed side by side to show the vanity of worldly wishes and political strife. Without doubt, Wordsworth wanted to emphasize here that the Churchyard is the final place that includes all kinds of people without paying attention to their social status, regardless of being rich or poor, noble or peasant, and regardless of age, belief or opinion. For instance, there is the chieftain beside the grave of the young lover or the actor. There is also the story of a widower who lost his wife, but found consolation in his paternal love for his six daughters.

The Solitary aspires to learn how philosophy and religion assisted these people in life. For this, the Pastor tells him the story of Ellen, whose grief for her baby's death leads her to her own death. He named her 'weeping Magdalene,' who was a devoted woman to Christ, after whose death she spent her life weeping near his tomb. Figuratively, Ellen is like this woman as she finds strength through her trust in God's mercy. As she says:

He who afflicts me knows that I can bear:
And when I fail, and can endure no more,
will mercifully take me to himself. (VI, 1046-1048) (p. 854)

In this passage, the sad woman is announcing her Christian faith and tells the public that only her creature, who took her child, can save her from this earthly world and invite her to His heaven. This can be symbolically reflected on Wordsworth's turning to the religious aspect. It is obvious that a religious tone embodies all these stories. They show Wordsworth's increasing religious devotions. These devotions become comprehensible when we think of his aim to support the church and institutions, mostly after the anarchy and chaos of the French Revolution. It is evident that the excesses of the Revolution in France made Wordsworth lose his faith in

revolutionary zeal and that he began to develop a political and religious philosophy which appeared clearly in the Pastor's character.

The Pastor symbolizes the social aspect of Wordsworth, the family man. He occupies himself with spending time at the middle of society. The tones of most of the Pastor's stories are dramatic ones. They contain poverty, madness, crime, painful hopes and despair. If the mode in which Wordsworth treats these poems is neglected, his world must look a sad one in spite of the fact that he was deeply impressed "through the experience of his own years of crisis [after the revolution], alike by the danger of despondency, and by the superficiality of the views it engenders." (A. C., 1972, p. 17) He believed in human reality and did not lose his faith; his answer for the world's disasters was strength and faith.

The Pastor's stories are designed to be fatherly messages to make his readers, the Solitary in particular, "...prize the breath we share with human kind; / And look upon the dust of man with awe." (V, 656-657) In impressive simplicity, Wordsworth tells how people should value the grace of life and share human feelings. The human stories model what the Pastor relates, though far from being happy, he leads a national life that is established on the principle of responsible living in society. With the experience of human mortality and suffering, there is also the hope of a happy life and social love.

Although *The Excursion* starts with Margaret's ruined family, it ends with the pastor's pleased family. Through the Pastor's happy home and the prediction of a happy national life, Wordsworth aspires to find the earthly paradise that he hopes for, namely a world not devoid of pain and suffering, but one in which they form a fundamental part of being human. Wordsworth is a strong and faithful poet; he always concludes his poems with hopeful conclusions depending on the fact that family and traditions are above all other interests.

In the Eighth and Ninth Books of *The Excursion*, Wordsworth makes important discussions of the varied social problems and issues of his day, including the Industrial Revolution and its consequences on people, national progress, the system of education, liberty, the exploitation of children and the treatment of man as a tool. All these are brought to light by the three protagonists, the Peddler, the Pastor, and

the Solitary in their conversation. M. Golden observes that in the last Books, “Wordsworth restates and expands the theme of community, the only hope against the encroaching, depressing, isolating, fragmentary march of material science and industry.”(Morris, 1927, p.120) This goes in contrast with the claim that Wordsworth becomes isolated and recluse. In *The Parsonage*, the Peddler contrasts the traditional community with industrial society and talks about the pitiable effects of the quick and damaging change to the environment and to society. He sadly describes the age as:

Is past for ever-An inventive Age
Has wrought if not with speed of magic
To most strange issue
A new and unforeseen creation rise
From out the labours of a peaceful Land (VIII,) (p. 875)

In this stanza, the poet illustrates in a few simple words the whole idea of this change. He is astonished at the effect that industrialization brought and how it replaced the calm life of the people. The word strange means that something irregular and unacceptable is around. The problem is that no one foresaw this danger and no one can control it. In a metaphoric image, Wordsworth describes this change as a new born creature which was born in the bottom of the peaceful earth. In order to be born, this creature should violate and penetrate his mother’s womb. In Wordsworth’s view, this change is the industrial spirit which took the place of the agricultural base and replaced it with industrial manufacturing. According to this, many manufacturing industrial units have been built in the peaceful countryside. Thus, these factories distorted the natural environment of the pastoral cottages which “Have vanished - swallowed up by stately roads” (VIII, 109), which pervade every district of the “Britain’s farthest glens.” (VIII, 110) The Peddler had become a good example for people to follow because of his knowledge and refinement. It is clear that Wordsworth was concerned about the bad effects of the Industrial Revolution. Thus, he made the Wanderer in his discourse touch upon one more effect of the

Industrial Revolution, which can be exemplified in the problem of exploitation or treating man as a tool. He sees in this a deviation from the normal course of life: "Our life is turned / Out of her course, wherever man is made." (IX, 113-14) What Wordsworth wanted most was to preserve the value of man, in particular the peasants and those who had no voice to reach the public.

III. II. The Theme of Childhood in *The Excursion*

Many critics claimed that, after Wordsworth converted from a radical party to the conservative side, had withdrawn from social and political reforms and had become convinced by the laws of the present institutions in the country. However, this claim is based not on facts but only on the theory that Wordsworth had changed his circle of friends who were revolutionists and radical members and at the same time he had abandoned all demands for change or reform. In fact, Wordsworth maintained his interest in public affairs more so than before and he never gave up his demand for reformation. This fact can be traced to *The Excursion*, when the poet dedicated the last two books to demand national education for his nation's children.

Wordsworth grieves the wrong done to children being employed as labourers for long hours. Moreover, robbing the child from his playtime had been usual for childhood and the Industrial Revolution deprived him of his chance of education. Destitute children are sent to work from early age, they work in factories, miming centres and they are utilized by their employers to the absolute limit for the lowliest of wages. Through *The Excursion*, Wordsworth exposes a picture of spoiled childhood:

His raiment, whitened o'er with the cotton-flakes
Or locks of wool, announces whence he comes.
Creeping his gait and, cowering his lip pale,

(VIII, 308-310, p. 887-88)

This sad image of the working boy is touching and it is regarded as a typical image of the labour child during that period. The appearances of all the boys who work in factories are the same. They are always exhausted and sick and spend all their time working in factories. The boy who works in the textile mill does not have the opportunity to attend school. He is exploited by the nation which deprived him of his basic right to be educated. The depiction of the boy perhaps basically belongs to John Thelwall, with whom Wordsworth had been acquainted at Alfoxden in 1797. Nevertheless, it is the problem of education that truly lies behind Wordsworth's

depiction of the factory boy, the gypsy children, and the poor lad whose eyes are “Wide, sluggish, blank, and ignorant, and strange.” (VIII, 410) Wordsworth handles the clashes between industrialization and rural society in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Peddler grieves the state of the poor children of the peasants. Indicating to the ignorant boy who works in the factory, he bitterly begins to ask:

What have they done for him? And, let me ask,
For tens and thousands uninformed as he?
In brief, what liberty of mind is here?

(VIII, 427-430)

Wordsworth ironically questions the system of the government of its responsibility to the boy and another thousand like him. He grieves “that so little progress has been made in diminishing the evils deplored or promoting the benefits of education”. (Harris, 1996, p. 105) Thus, he blames the government and urges for national education. He is not satisfied with the education system in his England, a nation which is regarded as the most economical one at this time. Thus, he attacks all the institutions and social factories which lead to the exploitation of children.

In *Discourse of the Wanderer, And an Evening Visit*, these questions expand with an immediate request for the state to be responsible for spreading national basic education, which should be offered for children. Thus, Wordsworth becomes enthusiastic about the necessity of national education because of the growing number of illiterate industrial-waged children. Addressing the state, he presents a petition for “An obligation, on her part, to teach/ Them who are born to serve her and to obey.” (IX, 96-297, p. 888) It is worth mentioning that Wordsworth himself worked as a teacher at Grasmere along with Dorothy, his sister. Therefore, his appeals came from actual experiences during his connection with rustic children. He had his own liberal attitudes about education, including his insistence on the equal treatment of children and on the necessity of education to be devoid of competition. Wordsworth considered that the lack of education could lead the child to misbehaviour and ultimately to criminal behaviour in adults. This reveals a deep sense of responsibility for children in different classes. This original and progressive thinking on the part of Wordsworth affected the direction of the next generation of Victorian writers. It is

known that many Victorian authors wrote about of the theme of childhood and education and how necessary reforms should be carried out in the education system. Most followed the same steps as Wordsworth of asking the government to produce national education and to replace the method of discipline and the old way of teaching. Examples include Coleridge and Southey, who wrote a protest against the use of children in the mills and factories.

Wordsworth believes that the lack of education leads children to be “A savage horde among the civilization, / a servile band among the lordly free.” (IX, 309-310) The poet’s choice of words to express his thinking is effective, as he used two contradicted meanings such as ‘savage’ and its opposite word ‘civilize’, ‘servile’ and ‘free’ to make his intention clear. He is very keen to tell his readers that the result of illiterate children would not be useful to themselves or their society. In contrast to this, Wordsworth draws a picture of two boys, the pastor’s son and the salesman’s sons, who exemplify the healthy influence of education. They are at times “The thriving prisoners of their village-school,” and other times, they are out of doors “to breathe and to be happy, run and shout / Idle, -- but no delay, no harm, no loss.” (IX, 206-264) Wordsworth’s conception of childhood is often thought to be historical and apolitical. He believed that childhood should be a period of education and delight. Children's minds and brains are considered to be chiefly released to experience. It is worth mentioning that his famous line from *The Rainbow*: “The father is the child of man” (L. 7) “becomes undoubtedly one of the central references for the whole nineteenth century in the attitudes of the child.” (Peter, 1976, p. 82) Without doubt, this poem marks a connection between Wordsworth and the development of Victorian education. Thus, Wordsworth established a treatment of the theme of childhood during this time, which continued well into the Victorian period. In this regard, Wordsworth’s beliefs and opinions about childhood affected the growth of English culture

At the end of the poem, everybody agreed with each other and expressed their attitudes of sharing such an excursion experience. The Solitary thanked them for their participation in curing and freeing him from disappointment in the societal debris, and fear of the future, which is a significant matter, for the Solitary’s problem belongs to Wordsworth himself in addition to his generation.

CONCLUSION

Although the narrators of *The Excursion* cannot always be judged as expressing the view of Wordsworth himself no matter how slight or great their presence in the poem, they represent Wordsworth's personal political beliefs. This is one of the reasons Wordsworth is considered the predecessor of all modern poetry, which is characterized by deep individual and self-conscious representation of the poet's thought and beliefs.

Wordsworth did not relinquish the problems of the real world. Rather, he paid close attention to the problems of the period and sensed deeply the concerns of society. He understood people's suffering, and considered the new challenges in people's lives. He continued writing poetry which dealt with different and essential issues, including industrialization and the decline of domestic life. Moreover, he dealt with different slices of society, such as his interest in providing national education for children and ensuring the rights of workers. All of this Wordsworth had produced by mixing his imaginative power and creativity. Hence, the social and political suggestion of his attitudes toward the purpose of his poems would not be lost on his readers. In fact, Wordsworth's influence on nineteenth-century cultural and political attitudes was deep and strong. He was the first poet who used simple and unaffected poetic language in conveying his ideas of reform to spread social justice.

William Wordsworth's emotional supremacy and poetic talent made him famous and influential. In fact, much of his importance comes from accounts by great Victorian thinkers, such as John Stuart Mill, Matthew Arnold and Leslie Stephen, about how much due they pay to Wordsworth for his emotional power. In 1879, Matthew Arnold said that Wordsworth was one of the glorious poets and England had nothing to be proud of more than the poetry of Wordsworth. Benjamin Jowett, an example of the Victorian writers, declared that: "No poet has done so much as Wordsworth for the instruction of mankind." (Benjamin, 1897, p. 52)

John Stuart Mill, a philosopher and political economist, said that: “There have certainly been, even in our age, greater poets like Wordsworth, but no poet could have done for me at that time what he did. Wordsworth is much more fitted to give than poets who are intrinsically far more than he.” (John Stuart, 1963, pp. 152-153) In fact, Wordsworth affected Mill’s views of liberty and liberal education. He, like Wordsworth, called for change in the old classical method that was the norm at that time between student and teachers, which is based only on logical and analytical exercises. Consequently, he followed Wordsworth’s hopes of establishing a philosophy that could surpass the restrictions forced upon them by culture and history on any possible reform progress and would advance the roles of sensation and imagination.

It is noticeable that Wordsworth’s poetry grows in a period of universal conflict between the people and their governments as well as between armies and their people, in addition to the affliction of these people with sickness and disease, which occurred due to their expulsion by their governments. Moreover, death based on economic changes helped to darken Wordsworth’s creative ability and perspective which included the rural population and the growing spread of mechanized labour and industry in addition to the discipline of the Church, government and institutions. Besides, the anarchy and the massive conditions that ruined human minds as did weapons of war. Through the crack of all these circumstances, Wordsworth’s characters appeared, are including the tragically alienated figures of the women who were abandoned by their husbands who went to enlist in the army. The social injustice and poverty in society led people to sacrifice their families. Consequently, their need and poverty further left them feeling rejected and alienated from society. In addition to the image of suffering from poverty and the fatal consequences of war, Wordsworth handles the theme of penalty and the wrong policies of his government which led men to commit crime.

Wordsworth had constantly put in mind the needs of both the social body and the individual. He had a great ability to connect the condition of the poor in Britain to oppressive tyranny. Therefore, his early works were an interpretation and depiction of the miserable situation of humanity in every aspect and they were a rejection of the policy of his government when put into consideration that Wordsworth’s early

poems were published by Joseph Johnson, a Republican and freethinker. Moreover, during this time, he was surrounded by radical friends, such as Thomas Paine and Godwin, with whom Wordsworth mixed and communicated. This makes him influenced by their thinking and opinions.

Wordsworth wished to keep his beliefs in the democratic ideal of the French Revolution. He deeply supported it as the reason to struggle against bondage and was even ready to sacrifice his allegiance to his country as it was against the revolution. However, after he knew of the revolution and the self-destructive policies inside and outside, he had to separate himself from France. Thus, the terror and fear of slaughter and disorder made Wordsworth turn towards the traditional and conventional despotic charity of the wealthy families, owners of lands, which could offer stability and order to the public. Confusing his relationship with radical politics, he rejected the early beliefs and drove himself to separation and despair. Then, he gradually turns to become conservative.

Wordsworth becomes concerned about the enormous changes in England and in the modern world at the end of the century. He bemoans the mass hostility, the increased extent of machinery, the rising of urbanization and the growing power of product forms in depictions of economic and social exchanges, which causes estrangement in human societies. By this point, he had come to believe that the only way to protect the virtuous and domestic life that he called for in his early poems was to maintain the traditional social instructions of English society. He did not stop from writing about reform and social injustice. On the contrary, his political views accompanied the new problems of the period, such as his demand for national education and the interests of factory workers.

In fact, Wordsworth's later poems are very much expanded, showing far more conscious experimentation with especially detailed stanza forms than do the earlier poems. Hence, Victorian writers regarded Wordsworth not only as a poet but also as a preacher and prophet of God's new and divine philosophy and as a man "who lights a candle in a dark time." This widely attracted the Victorians, who embraced it, regarding this influential work as a spring of divine strength in a doubtful world. They took from Wordsworth that which was more than poetry and through his

poems, Wordsworth was recognized as much a philosopher and thinker as a writer. Thus, the Victorians regarded Wordsworth as the poet of the moral life. Therefore, Wordsworth's later political views deserve attention. His late works are admirable, provided that they are judged according to the conservative world view of his time. They are also important for understanding the early Victorian and mid-Victorian period in addition to the writers who admired Wordsworth, such as Gaskell and George.

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