

**WORDSWORTH'S POETIC ENVIRONMENTALISM: *TINTERN ABBEY, THE PRELUDE,*
AND THE DEEP ECOLOGY PERSPECTIVE**

WORDSWORTH'UN ŞİİRSEL ÇEVRECİLİK ANLAYIŞI: *TINTERN ABBEY, THE PRELUDE*
VE DERİN EKOLOJİ PERSPEKTİFİ

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Abstract

With a focus on biocentric equality and the intrinsic value of all life, deep ecology provides the framework through which Wordsworth's poetry can be analyzed as pioneering ecocentric thinking. Wordsworth, as a prominent British Romantic, continues to challenge the world's anthropocentric attitudes and speaks to the industrial world's critique of nature. In *The Prelude* and *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, he imaginatively sees a relationship between humanity and the rest of the world that is positive, interconnected, and holistic, all of which is psychological, spiritual, and ethical. This study focuses on the deep ecology principles of the non-participatory value of living things and on Wordsworth's poetic imagery, blended philosophy, and nature-reflecting morality. In this light, the study emphasizes Wordsworth's initial commitment to a general lack of ignorance towards the environment.

Keywords: Industrialization, deep ecology, romanticism, interconnectedness, Wordsworth.

Öz

Biyomerkezci eşitliğe ve tüm yaşamın içsel değerine odaklanan derin ekoloji kavramı, Wordsworth'un şiirinin öncü bir ekosantrik düşünce olarak analiz edilebileceği çerçeveyi sağlar. Önde gelen bir İngiliz Romantik olan Wordsworth, dünyanın insanmerkezci tutumlarına karşı çıkmaya devam etmiş ve endüstriyel dünyanın doğa eleştirisi üzerine odaklanmıştır. *The Prelude* ve *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* şiirlerinde, insanlık ile dünyanın geri kalanı arasında olumlu, birbirine bağlı ve bütüncül, hepsi de psikolojik, ruhsal ve etik olan bir ilişkiyi hayal gücüyle ele alır. Bu çalışmada, doğanın insan kullanımına indirgenemeyecek içsel bir değere sahip olduğunu savunan derin ekoloji ilkeleri, Wordsworth'un doğayı kutsal ve bütüncül bir varlık olarak ele alan şiirsel imgeleri, felsefi düşünceleri ve çevreyle uyumlu etik anlayışıyla ilişkili olarak incelenmektedir. Mevcut çalışma, derin ekoloji çerçevesinde Wordsworth'un çevreye olan ilgisizliğe ve bilgisizliğe karşı mücadele etme çabalarının seçilmiş şiirlerine yansımalarını ele almayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sanayileşme, derin ekoloji, romantizm, birbirine bağlılık, Wordsworth

Introduction

Deep ecology largely originates from Arne Naess (1973). This school of thought emphasizes that a transformation in certain philosophical and ethical principles is necessary for humankind to appreciate nature in all its worth, as well as the biosphere and its constituent parts. A central element of this pedagogy is to reject human-centered cultures and cultivate nature-centered philosophies grounded in humility, respect, and ecological self-realization. Such pedagogy, articulated in literature, is a powerful tool for reflection and dissemination, and, for this purpose, British Romantic poets, especially William Wordsworth, conjoined poetic reverence for the environment in all its aspects with ethics and biotic interdependence long before the formal articulation of deep ecology.

Wordsworth's poetry came at a time when the world around him experienced tremendous, unprecedented shifts in landscapes and cultural environments. The Closing of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century marked the peak of the industrial revolution, a period defined by rapid changes in the conversion of rural landscapes and the mechanization of labor, and by unprecedented exploitation and availability of nature (McKusick, 2010). While Wordsworth's contemporaries basked in the revelations of industrial technological advancements, he pondered the spiritual transformation and ecological implications of such rapid industrial growth. Wordsworth's poetry expresses the lament over natural spaces and the degradation caused by the disruption of the more-than-human world. The sentiments expressed bear the marks of deep ecology, more industrialized societies, and an inability to ecologically bear the plight of a sustainably balanced and more integrated humanity within the earth's living systems. (Devall & Sessions, 1985).

In *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth presents a vision of nature as a vitality that empowers and sustains the human spirit and molds one's morals. He describes the landscape in careful detail, and his observations are philosophical regarding the landscape and the value of nature. He demonstrates in his poems that for a human to flourish, one must also sustain the environment. He suggests that nature should be seen as a partner for human development, not merely a surrounding landscape. His orientation in the piece demonstrates the case for expanding human identity beyond the individual self to the self of the ecosystem. This orientation demonstrates a self that is aware of and responsive to the intertwining of all life, as articulated by Naess (1973).

Likewise, in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth further enriches this vision by depicting friction with mountains, rivers, woods, and other forms of nature as encounters with the other world, in which personal enhancement, spiritual illumination, and the acquisition of moral depth accompany each such meeting. His vision of nature as a teacher and moralist somehow suggests an ethics of the relational, of a commandmentless sort, sustained with the other living world (Bate, 2000). Wordsworth's acknowledgment of the decline of nature, industrial disruption, the critique of nature disruption, and an emphasis on the other of nature in humility collectively predict a deep ecology of biocentric egalitarianism and the clutching of the key principles of deep ecology, the ethics of living simply and with less destruction (Devall & Sessions, 1985; Hoy, 2000).

Modern ecocriticism continues to emphasize Wordsworth as a major pioneer of contemporary environmental thought. His work, some scholars argue, provides a fundamental model of the various roles literature can play in fostering ecological consciousness, resisting exploitative cultural practices, and stimulating ethical discourse on humanity's place within the biosphere (Garrard, 2012). Wordsworth's poetry thus enriches the romance literary canon while also participating in the discourse on environmental ethics and the planet's sustainable future. In so doing, his poetry and reflections on the nature of civilization and on the civilization of nature also address the emotional, spiritual, and ethical aspects of environmental care.

This study aims to prove Wordsworth's anticipation of modern ecological thought by analyzing Tintern Abbey and *The Prelude* through the lens of deep ecology. Wordsworth's thoughts reveal the importance of appreciating natural surroundings in their own right; the need to honor the range and wholeness of different ecological systems; and the need to develop an environmental consciousness rooted in awe rather than control. Wordsworth can be seen as a profoundly modern literary voice to whom we can still ascribe, in ecocentric terms, and in particular, the environmental ethics, biocentric thinking, and moral interdependence of the biosphere.

Navigating the Concept of Deep Ecology

In 1973, Arne Næss, a Norwegian philosopher, identified deep ecology as a way of thinking about philosophy and environment that leads, one way or another, to a radical rethinking of how individuals appreciate and relate to the environment. Deep ecology is the antithesis of what Næss called shallow ecology, the brand of environmentalism that focuses on controlling pollution and using resources efficiently. Deep ecology, as the name suggests, develops a holistic view of the environment as ecologically interconnected, in which all its components (living and non-living) are of equal moral worth (Næss, 1973; Brennan, 2019).

Given the theory of Saren (2025), it is possible to conclude that deep philosophy embraces the value of every being, human and non-human included. It is worth noting that every being plays a unique role in the functioning of a complicated ecological structure. The value at issue in this case is not derived from monetization or any form of usefulness. On the contrary, it is a value that speaks to the wealth of life within the ecosystem and is anchored in the contributions of all life forms to the ecosystem's equilibrium and functioning. These schools of thought also go out to undermine anthropocentric explanations of value and collaborate with new and old ecocentric paradigms, as in the expression of Aldo Leopold's land ethic, which is a community that is interdependent with one another and encloses humans and the rest of the ecosystem as 'members of it' (Barman, 2017).

Deep ecology also demarcates the relational praxis of identity, as explained by Brennan (2019), drawing on Næss, who states that the human self is a knot in the biospherical web of life. In other words, personal identity cannot exist in a vacuum within the ecosystem. This concept is a departure from the mainstream view of the individual self as a solitary unit. It moves towards a relational self, an ontology of being that views a human as existing in and with a multitude of other entities that comprise the ecosystem. The self is relational, and expanding the self to non-human entities is what Næss referred to as the "ecological self," a self characterized by the positive attributes of empathy, solidarity, and interconnected flourishing with other living things. This is also what Valera (2019) describes as not simply a concept of depth in psychology, but as a depth in methodology, needing individuals to delve into the fundamental assumptions that underpin the human perception of the natural world.

Næss and Sessions' eight platform principles are foundational to the pragmatic implications of deep ecology. These principles involve reducing human impact on the natural world, advocating lifestyle simplification, protecting biodiversity, reorienting industrial economies, and promoting a qualitatively rich, rather than materially rich, life (Devall & Sessions, 1985; Barman, 2017). These principles exemplify deep ecology as a phenomenon that resonates closely with environmental justice and sustainable living. Saren (2025) characterizes deep ecology as the antithesis of consumerist culture and expansion, the advocacy of resource overuse, the critique of ethical neglect concerning the ecological equilibrium, and concern for the future of the world's inhabitants.

One of the most distinct aspects of this philosophy of deep ecology is that it proposes a change in worldview as a prerequisite for any environmental action. Since Næss was convinced, as Valera (2019) states, that no change in action, policy, or behavior would endure without a dramatic reassessment of the metaphysical and moral frameworks that govern human society, he sought such a worldview change. This particular point concerning the change in worldview resonates with certain spiritual and experiential traditions, particularly the Scandinavian lifestyle of *friluftsliv*, characterized by simplicity in living and deep interaction with nature. Such traditions, especially those that promote modes of being characterized by humility, deep attention, and identification with nature, were, as Brennan (2019) points out, central in the development of Næss's ecological thought.

Murray Bookchin, a social ecologist, claimed that one cannot understand environmental degradation in isolation from social, economic, and political hierarchies and inequalities. For Bookchin, deep ecology tends to overlook the fundamental sociopolitical arrangements that marginalize populations and push them to overexploit the environment (Barman, 2017). Similarly, Ramachandra Guha criticized deep ecology as rooted in the affluent West and argued that it is unrealistic and morally wrong for communities that rely on the environment to practice its principles. These criticisms highlight the necessity of various ecological ethics integrations to include social justice and the different expressions of environmental issues.

True enough, the impacts of deep ecology remain considerable, especially in areas such as environmental ethics, eco-spirituality, the philosophy of conservation, and nature writing. The principles of deep ecology remain relevant to discussions of the ethics of sustainability, restoration ecology, and international environmental policy. The deep ecology movement challenges the dominant, self-centered worldview of modern industrialized societies and calls for recognition of the interconnectedness of all forms of life, along with a required substantive moral and philosophical change. As Saren (2025) states, deep ecology offers a coherent

perspective for the intrinsic value of self-organizing systems and the interrelated equilibria of nature that can support responsible stewardship in the 21st century.

More than just a philosophical doctrine, deep ecology offers holistic paradigms for ethics, identity, politics, spirituality, history, and lived experience. It offers radical thinking and a deep sense of belonging within the greater community of the Earth by transcending the dualistic divides between nature and humanity. The theoretical and practical manifestations of deep ecology, rooted in radical respect, humility, and interrelationality, offer a vision of coexisting ecologies.

Wordsworth's Deep Ecological Perspective

The vision of the human-nature relationship presented by William Wordsworth in *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* and *The Prelude* resonates with the fundamentals of deep ecology. While others view nature as merely a backdrop to human experience, Wordsworth sees it as a living presence with intrinsic value, a view that deep ecologists greatly appreciate (Næss, 1973; Yu, 2019). His poetry demonstrates a self-relational understanding of one's identity to the whole; in this case, the ecologies woven together, which the deep ecology perspective describes as a vast living system in which humans are "knots in a larger web of life" as opposed to an isolated superior lifeform.

Having not witnessed a landscape in five years, Wordsworth reflects on his experience with it in *Tintern Abbey*. He does not simply mourn the change; instead, his reflections reveal sustained ecological change grounded in a consciousness of reverence, reciprocity, and attentiveness to the more-than-human world. He states early in the poem:

"Once again do I behold
The hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door, and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!" (Wordsworth, 1798/2008, p. 118).

Rather than viewing the wreaths of smoke through a prism of progress or imperialism, a deep ecology reading sees this as somewhere on the spectrum of human activity's umbra intrusion on, and interconnected ecosystems. Wordsworth does not dismiss this presence; rather, he takes the humble response deeply ecologically, seeing the beauty of the landscape and the fragility of the equilibrium between humans and other organisms.

Central to deep ecology is the notion that there can be no serious ecological caretaking, no care that has 'true value', without this identification with the living world, a self-expansion of self toward the living world (Næss, 1986). Wordsworth describes just this form of identification rather eloquently when he narrates his still-absent presence in the shaping of nature.

"...in hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration. Of kindness and of love." (Wordsworth, 1798/2008, p. 118).

That unique voice suggests the immersion of an ecological self, and one of those lines is not solitary but is instead integrated into and sustained by the natural ecology. Nature's recuperative influence is not an embodiment of utility; it is an expression of interrelatedness, which is the focus of deep ecology, and is essential for both human and nonhuman flourishing. The transformer's recognition of nature that "passes into" certainly echoes Næss's relational ontological self, where self-realization is not achieved in loneliness but in the act of being and becoming with the ecological whole. He indicates the mature reverence for nature's moral and affective presences when he speaks of hearing.

"For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
the "still, sad music of humanity.",
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue." (Wordsworth, 1798/2008, p. 120).

The still, sad music would best be thought of not as the anthropocentric commentary, but rather as acknowledging humankind's already existing estrangement from the ecosystem and the gentle acceptance needed to restore equilibrium, as a deep ecological view would. Indeed, this acceptance fits with the deep ecology precept that a singular human being ought not to diminish the plenitude and diversity of life, except in case of fulfilling essential requirements (Yu, 2019). Wordsworth's reflective sadness echoes this deep ecology attitude to signal a paleoclimatic grasp of the ethical implications of such a condition, of being part of a larger ecological system.

In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth pans out his ecological vision even further, seeing encounters with nature as foundational to one's ethical construction. He recalls one childhood moment when the natural world felt unified.

"I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led; more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved." (Wordsworth, 1850/2004, p. 231).

As a return to one's ecological home, this moment epitomizes a deep ecological sense of seeking refuge in. This moment recognizes nature as a source of wisdom and grounding. He describes youthful fear and exhilaration, which evokes what deep ecologists call a "relational-total-field" image, in which the human self is formed in relation to larger ecological systems. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth describes lamenting the consequences of human interference in the processes of nature:

"Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?" (Wordsworth, 1798/2000, p. 55).

A disregard deeply rooted in ecology goes unexamined here. Viewed through a sociological lens, the lament goes to the community of humans in contrast to the community of the living world; validation will be given to the vital world words that reflect its worth. The critique of deep ecology of industrial society is rooted in the separation of humans from nature, with Næss and Kvaløy reflecting on this in relation to the standard of life and death for other sentient beings.

Prior to the formalization of the poetic philosophy of environmental imbalance, Wordsworth captured the industrial depletion of the wild, the destruction of the tranquil, and the discordant landscapes in human imbalance. However, his poetry suggests a critique of mere descriptive despair. The living world in both Tintern Abbey and The Prelude is so dynamic and so full of life and moral worth that it will guide, deeply heal, and humble anyone willing to be present.

The poems reflect a worldview that aligns closely with the foundational principles of deep ecology: an appreciation for the richness of nature, an understanding of the interconnectedness of all biological communities, and an ethical responsibility to limit human presence and activity within natural systems.

Wordsworth anticipates the deep ecological call within the imagination to appreciate the quality of life rather than the standard of living, to ecological consciousness, and to the integration of human life with the larger biotic community, living in harmony. He deepens the vocabulary of the ecological self into new formulations that go beyond the exploitative and utilitarian toward a vision of respect, reciprocity, and relational emplacement. His is one of the first poetic expressions of the deep ecological ethos that calls for a life in which the flourishing of the human and the non-human are both in focus.

Dismissing critics who consider Wordsworth politically conservative, Jonathan Bate advocates for the inclusion of Wordsworth, arguably the first ecological poet, as one who advocates for a vision of politics that is enduringly 'green'. In Bate's estimation, Wordsworth's politics from a later perspective can be characterized as 'green'. Bate focuses on the gentle accommodation of ecocritical ideas and politics, including ecological interdependence, in Wordsworth's poetry. In the poetry of Wordsworth, as in Romantic Ecology, one finds the consideration of 'nature' as a complex, interdependent, life-sustaining web. For Romantic poetry in part of the 'Tintern Abbey' Structure and the Prelude, Bate speaks to Wordsworth's enduring vision of humanity's integration with nature and the interdependent relations that sustain life in nature. In Bate's estimation, the defense some critics have made, which attempts to deny Wordsworth an ecological orientation in his poetry, is rooted in contemporary ecocriticism. Rather, in his poetry, Wordsworth attempts to inspire his readers to consider nature as a source of moral and psychological dwelling in the natural world, thus, center dwelling. This has resonance with contemporary environmental ethics. Bate argues that Wordsworth was one of the first poets to have a vision that can be seen as an early form of 'ecological consciousness'. In that sense, Wordsworth can be seen as one of the first, if not the first, poets of the Romantic era, to understand what it meant to have an 'ecological consciousness'. For Bate, Wordsworth's poetry depicts a vision of humanity's eternal relationship with the natural world, which serves as the foundation/essence of ecocritical thought. For Bate, the essence of Romantic ecology lies in appreciating the interdependent relationships between human beings and the nonhuman, and in recognizing that these relationships are necessary for sustenance. Wordsworth's poetry certainly reflects that, as Bate argues, Wordsworth's poetry reflects an understanding of nature's moral and psychological significance. Bate counter argues criticisms of Wordsworth's poetic silence regarding ecology

by asserting that Wordsworth's poetry was. It is an invitation for readers to aesthetically engage with the natural world as a source of moral and emotional sustenance.

Conclusion

With a profound understanding of the spirit of the age and the analytical aspects of neo-ecological criticism, Wordsworth devoted himself to ecocriticism, seeking to assess the depth of his ties to the neo-ecological vision of nature. Through his lines, he demonstrates a deep understanding of nature to accentuate appreciation of nature, not a mere appreciation of aesthetic value, for nature undergoes time. Wordsworth seeks to capture the essence of the modern deep ecologists' spirit. Wordsworth understands and shares the vision of deep ecologists, capturing the spirit and essence of modern deep ecologists, without Wordsworth's intention toward them. Wordsworth displays nature's endurance, spirit, and appreciation of time, and reflects modern deep ecologists who believe nature undergoes the passage of time.

Wordsworth had a unique understanding, evident in the way he approached the nature around him, such as rivers, mountains, and the countryside, and this imagination of nature aligns perfectly with deep ecology's relational, total-field image (Devall & Sessions, 1985). It is this connection he made and the further implications of deep ecology that he believes will require a fundamental shift in one's values (Barnhill & Gottlieb, 2001). Wordsworth uses nature in his childhood remembrances and in his portrayals of the countryside to demonstrate self-realization, which is the essence of deep ecology. Self-realization is the expansion of the self around the ego that so many of us have to a larger sphere that includes the biosphere.

The tension Wordsworth depicts—revering nature's vitality and lamenting its degradation by humans—is akin to the ethical concerns of deep ecological thinkers and to modern society's critique of overconsumption and technological intrusion (Abakare, 2021). Keeping with deep ecology, Wordsworth's poetry warns of and confronts the consequences of collapsing equilibrium systems. However, he also believes that nature can heal, educate, and sustain those who approach spirit and nature with humility. The connection to nature's moral and spiritual emphasis aligns with Næss and ecocentric ethics beyond anthropocentric.

In addition, Wordsworth's poetic grasp of the interconnections of life foreshadowed deep ecology's focus on biospheric egalitarianism, the idea that every living organism has value, and every species has an equal right to exist and thrive. While deep ecologists advocate a radical shift in societal values toward an ecologically responsible framework (Barnhill & Gottlieb, 2001; Devall & Sessions, 1985), Wordsworth's poetry also calls for a shift in how humans are considered in relation to nature. Wordsworth's poetry suggests that ethical renewal starts with an appreciation for the natural world.

Wordsworth's poetry is more than just literary depictions of nature. There are also early philosophical forms of ecological awareness. The poetic imagination is a precursor to the aspects of deep ecology that challenge the hierarchical human-nature binary, advocating for a relational identity that recognizes the natural world's value. Wordsworth created a poetic ethics that deep ecology seeks to transform through his sensitivity to humanity's ecological interdependence and the landscapes he profoundly experienced. His deep ecological thoughts amplify the basis of relevance of contemporary environmental philosophy. Wordsworth's deep environmental philosophy motivates readers to embrace a worldview of respect, humility, and interconnectedness, sustaining the core virtues needed to confront the moral and ecological predicaments of our age.

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