



UIT

THE ARCTIC  
UNIVERSITY  
OF NORWAY

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

# Wordsworth's Naturalistic Spirituality:

*The Effects of Romantic Paganism in William Wordsworth's Poetic Works*

**Sara Barosen Liverød**

*Master's thesis in English Literature, ENG-3992, 2018*





## **Abstract**

Paganism flourished during the end of the Romantic period and the younger Romantics were considered to have been influenced by this. However, the pagan aspects that influenced several of the younger generation's work were also around when William Wordsworth wrote his poetry. My thesis explores an unnoticed or neglected aspect of William Wordsworth's poetic works, his nature-worshipping and pagan language, symbolism, and references. His naturalistic language has often been seen with a Christian undertone and it became a part of Christianity. However, I argue paganism serves as a replacement of several Christian elements and doctrines because his language is religious and he uses similar terminology to describe both God and Nature. In doing so he sometimes rejects Christian doctrines and provides Nature with the same divine aspects as God. His references and use of pagan language is ambiguous because of his lacking references to God and excessive use of Nature.

## Acknowledgements

I would first like to sincerely thank my thesis advisor professor Cassandra Falke of the Department of Language and Culture at the University of Tromsø. I would like to thank her for her encouraging words and guidance. Her knowledge about the Romantic period and Wordsworth has proven incredibly valuable and when the occasion did arrive that she could not answer my questions she was dedicated to helping me find a solution. Her in-depth comments on my early and final drafts have been essential to my thesis as she helped me get a clearer understanding of my argument, steered me in the right direction, and in the end her constructive and supportive comments helped strengthen it. Her guidance has made me want to push myself and strive for perfection. Thank you.

I would also like to thank associate professor Minna Niemi for excellent guidance in her thesis seminars, both at the beginning when I was unsure of what I was doing and at the end when the thesis was coming together. Being able to attend lectures with fellow students and share both what we found difficult and the things we were satisfied with has been a great help and comfort.

Finally, I wish to thank my family for their support and encouragement throughout my study. Their continual faith in me has made this a very enjoyable and rewarding experience.

Sara Liverød

# Table of Contents

Abstract .....	II
Acknowledgements .....	III
Table of Contents .....	IV
1 Introducing the Romantic Period .....	1
1.1 Defining Paganism .....	6
1.2 The Argument for Paganism.....	13
1.3 Scholars of Wordsworth .....	16
2 Poems, in Two Volumes .....	23
2.1 “Ode” .....	24
2.1.1 The Two Epigraphs .....	24
2.1.2 The Glory, Lost and Found .....	27
2.1.3 The Shepherd Boy.....	34
2.1.4 Comfort in Nature .....	35
2.2 “The World Is Too Much with Us” .....	42
2.2.1 The World .....	43
2.2.2 Spiritual Life in Nature .....	46
2.2.3 Comfort in Nature #2 .....	47
2.3 “With How Sad Steps, O Moon, Thou Climb’st the Sky” .....	53
2.3.1 Love and Devotion .....	53
2.3.2 Life in Nature .....	55
2.3.3 Comfort in Nature #3 .....	57
3 The Prelude: Growth of a Poet’s Mind (1850).....	60
3.1 Nature as a Spiritual Guide.....	62
3.2 Mother Nature.....	70
3.3 Rejection of Sin and Christianity.....	77

3.4	Ambiguous Language.....	79
3.5	The Tree Representing the Lost and Regained.....	84
3.6	Returning to Nature .....	86
4	Conclusion.....	88
	Works cited .....	92

# 1 Introducing the Romantic Period

“Not just beautiful, though – the stars are like the trees in the forest, alive and breathing”

– Haruki Murakami (145)

The Romantic period was an intellectual movement, a challenge to the ideas of the Enlightenment, and the importance of nature was significantly increased as it touched the poets' souls. Logic and facts were replaced by the imagination and strong emotions were often provoked by the sublimity and beauty of nature. The relationship between the poets and nature allowed a shift from the science of the Enlightenment to a personal and spiritual transcendence, observable in literature of the time. This spiritual transcendence has connections to Christianity, the dominant religion in England during this period, but also to paganism and nature-worship as an alternative. There was an increased interest in Greek antiquities and Greco-Roman mythologies, which “at times clearly signalled an active imaginative preference for pagan polytheism over Christianity,” according to Martin Priestman (56). This was particularly important to some of the younger romantics, such as John Keats who wrote his “Hymn to Pan,” and Percy Shelley whom Suzanne Barnett reminds us adopted the figure of Pythia, Dionysus and other gods who embodied the pagan ideals (4).

Paganism and the revival of Greek antiquities were more prominent in the works of the younger romantics, and thus researchers tend to overlook the pagan tendencies in the earlier romantics but Shelley and his circle were not the only ones who were drawn to the pagan ways. William Wordsworth introduces nature in his poetry as a sanctuary from the chaos of the modern world. It is a place of beauty, sublimity, peace, and spirituality, and it ultimately serves as a replacement for the divine. Wordsworth's terminology is often spiritual and religious, sometimes in accordance with Christian doctrine and sometimes not. In one of his unnamed sonnets, which begins “It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free” (Wordsworth, *Poems, in Two Volumes*<sup>1</sup> p. 117), he states this “holy time is quiet as a Nun” (line 2), but the holy time is not related to God, but to his “adoration” (line 3) of the “tranquillity” (line 4) of the “broad sun” (line 3) and that the “gentleness of heaven is on the Sea” (line 5). The language is divine and spiritual, but directed towards nature. His naturalistic references are dedicated to much more

---

<sup>1</sup> Henceforth referenced as *Poems*.

than physical nature, as it is a way for him to experience the divine, as if the holy and spiritual exists within nature without God. In this thesis I will explore how paganism, and nature-worship, has affected three of Wordsworth's poems, "Ode," "The World Is Too Much with Us," and "With How Sad Steps, O Moon, Thou Climb'st The Sky" from his collection *Poems, In Two Volumes* from 1807, and *The Prelude (1850)*. Wordsworth is known both for his naturalistic poetry and his religious language, but I will argue that his naturalistic images and the spiritual experiences that come with nature are related to the pagan religions of the world, and that they serve as a substitute for the doctrines and faith of the English Church. To do so I will begin this chapter by shortly explaining the major changes during the period within Britain because they all affect the Romantic movement and make way for the coming of paganism.

During the Romantic period there were many events which changed the way people lived, and the way Romanticism acted as a rebuttal to the Enlightenment, a change from the focus on reason to emotions, was particularly important to the poets of the time. "Enlightenment rationalism," as David Shi calls it, saw the "emergence of reason as a powerful force in shaping thought and culture," as opposed to the emotional Romanticism ("Religion, Romanticism, And Reform"). Rather than the strict control of the church and monarchy, the Enlightenment valued "free intellectual life" and wanted "to understand the laws of nature" unrestricted by religion (Shi). The Romantic period, on the other hand, was a sanctuary for thoughts and emotions, as Geir Uthaug puts it, as opposed to the focus on reason which was the driving force of the Enlightenment (17). The Romantic movement was also opposed to the strict rule of church and monarchy, through the French Revolution, which will be mentioned later. They were individualists and "believed the individual human being was capable of perfection" "by allowing the individual to flourish and flower in all directions," which could be done through exploring our emotions and spiritual side (Shi). It was a period for retreat, to get away from something, but also to reach for that which seemed too far off and unobtainable (Uthaug 23). Unlike the Enlightenment where intellectual knowledge was of the utmost importance, the romantic poets were able to bring nature's miracles to our attention, such as its sublime mountains, the supernatural aspects of both the mythological creatures living there and of nature itself, and nature's ability to transcend any mortal beauty. They were "bohemian intellectual[s]," as Marilyn Butler says (3). This admiration for the natural, be it physical nature or the natural human emotions, also made way for ancient religions where the focus was on nature and the gods residing within it.



By exploring our spiritual side and allowing it to flourish we will be able to become the best version of ourselves; however, the notion of humans being capable of perfection is in opposition to the Christian doctrine of original sin, since the only way to repent is through Jesus Christ and salvation. Nature, which was closely connected to ancient mythology and religion, became a way to question the hegemony of Christianity. Barnett invokes Edward Gibbon's description of this old religion, "the pleasant and absurd system of Paganism" (5). The revival of mythology provided the romantic poets "with a touchstone of religious skepticism that informed their later explorations into the faults of Christianity and the attractions of paganism" (Barnett 5). Though Barnett uses this to describe the younger romantics, scholars have yet to recognize that this is what Wordsworth does. He sees nature as the core of humanity and when overlooking nature he realizes "It moves us not" (Wordsworth, "The World Is Too Much with Us"<sup>2</sup> line 9) and comes to the conclusion that: "Great God! I'd rather be / A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn" (lines 9-10). Indeed, Wordsworth saw the process of spiritual development, which was part of the Romantic movement, in a system consisting of two terms, nature and mind, according to M. H. Abrams (*Natural Supernaturalism*<sup>3</sup> 90). There is no need for God in some of Wordsworth's texts because he elevates nature to a divine state and replaces God with it. The pagan ways of natural worship and veneration of nature is what he appreciates and the lack of connection to nature within Christianity attracts him to paganism.

The importance of nature becomes one of the major definitions of the period and it did not only arise as a counter to the Enlightenment but also because of the industrial revolution, which was happening by the time Romanticism arose in Britain, according to Brandon Haynes ("Romanticism and Urbanization"). People started to move from the countryside to the cities to find work, which made cities, particularly London, the heart of the economic and social life (Haynes). As a result, poets of the time, Wordsworth being one of the most prominent in this area, "fostered a sense of nostalgia for the times in which nature was more accessible" (Haynes). Society became more consumer-based and as a reaction many poets turned their attention towards that which was unavailable but people had a longing for, namely nature and the rural countryside (Haynes). Much of Wordsworth's poetry features the humble life of the rural countryside, exploring everyday experiences which many could relate to. Though his writings

---

<sup>2</sup> Henceforth referenced as "The World."

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Abrams' references are to his *Natural Supernaturalism*.

usually counter the industrial life by portraying naturalistic scenery as grand, beautiful, peaceful, and divine, some of his poems feature the city, and in his “Composed Upon Westminster Bridge,” also found in *Poems*, nature has such a strong power that it is able to change his view of London.

Earth has not any thing to shew more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This City now doth like a garment wear  
The beauty of the morning (lines 1-4)

The city is not usually described as beautiful because compared to the beauties of nature it does nothing for the heart. What he does here is equip London with the grandeur and beauty of nature, in this case the sun. London wears the morning sun and becomes more beautiful, as if it is a piece of clothing to change its appearance.

Changes within the city did not only stem from the industrialization, but also from a change within eighteenth-century England regarding the public sphere. Clubs and salons were meeting places for various people, but there were also secret places dedicated to pleasure which became “anti-Christian” (Barnett 51). These places were called, Barnett quotes Evelyn Lord, “Hell-Fire Clubs” in which people went for sexual and sensual pleasures (51). These places were seen as challenges to make Satan known, flirtation with what Lord calls “the forbidden fruit offered by the Devil,” a blow against the Christian society (Barnett 51). Much of their scandals did not stem from speculative rumours that they organized orgies and “dined on sulphur,” but rather their questionings of the Trinity and doctrines of the church (Barnett 58). Some groups, such as the Medmenham Monks, were devoted to pagan gods, such as Bacchus, the lower or half-god of “intoxication” and often connected to “wild orgies” (Duthie 64), and Venus, the “Earth Mother” and goddess of love (Duthie 33). Wordsworth also introduces his readers to Mother Earth, as we shall see in both *The Prelude* and *Poems*. By the close of the eighteenth-century the word *pagan* was associated with the sinning of the Hell-Fire Clubs and some even went as far as saying Britain was coming close to moral ruin because of this (Barnett 82). Paganism became an umbrella term for anything non-Christian, which was rarely beneficial to its reputation because “the manifestation of a classical world that suggested beauty, sensuality, and sexuality, instead of mere reason and republican virtue” became

dangerous and radical (Barnett 82). Barnett believes younger romantics would have been well aware of this and I claim Wordsworth would have been too since this happened during his period of writing as well and since Wordsworth does introduce a divine similar to Mother Earth (83).

Many of the major events of the late eighteenth century changed the English people's lives, and Wordsworth's, such as the French Revolution, which was not only a turning point politically but religiously. The revolution established hope for a new and renovated world, and it was said that there were hopes that this world would be "a restored paradise [or] a recovered Golden Age," according to Abrams (332). The Revolution was a battle against the privileges given to the nobles and clergymen of the Church, but also for more "abstract concepts of freedom and equality," according to Shannon Heath ("Romanticism and Revolution"). They were rebels against authority (Shi). It was also an intellectual, moral, and imaginative crisis for many romantic writers, such as Wordsworth, because the millennium of a new age did not come. The hope for a new age and their pattern of thinking, freedom and equality for all, persisted, but with a difference: "the external means was replaced by an internal means for transforming the world" (Abrams 334). They saw the coming of a new heaven and earth within themselves, rather than through a physical revolution. This becomes rather prominent in my chosen Wordsworth poems, as they explore his religious development as a change within himself, particularly his autobiographical poem *The Prelude*. The mind of man possesses the power to transform heaven and earth into this long-lost paradise, rather than it happen externally (Abrams 334). It helped shape the romantic writers as the focus was on humanity, equality, and the self, rather than on the doctrines of the church, and they became less orthodox and more free-thinking.

The continental treatment of paganism was different from its treatment in England, and Wordsworth's ideas can be compared to some of their philosophers'. There was a reattachment of the "historical and poetic qualities of scripture" to an epistemological and moral understanding of "transcendental argument," according to Colin Jager (108). Germany and its version of Romanticism provided an "institutional toleration" which England could not provide (Jager 108). The German philosopher Friedrich Schlegel, quoted by M. H. Abrams, claimed there was a need for "new mythology" which everyone must invent for himself (*Natural Supernaturalism* 67). He was hoping for a "universal mythology that would harmonize Greek myth and the seemingly antithetic claims of Christianity" (qtd. in Abrams 67). This seems to

be the case with Wordsworth, as he often combines non-Christian and Christian myths and terminology, but also uses religious, oftentimes Christian, language in expressing his faith, yet the focus is more often on nature than a Christian element. Wordsworth does, for example, refer to Triton and Proteus as an escape from the material world in “The World Is Too Much with Us,” instead of asking God for help. He is focusing on the divine aspects of nature alive in Greco-Roman gods, and in doing so they replace the element of divine within Christianity.

Paganism also came into play because the Romantic period became a crucial turning point in the “relationship between the classical world and modern England” (Barnett 39). The period witnessed “the opening of the British Museum in 1759, the rediscovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799, [...] and continued investigations into the location of Troy, the discovery which was thought to ratify Homeric myth” (Barnett 39). The old world was becoming more interesting and the poets began to use Greco-Roman myths in their works. John Keats wrote an “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” and Wordsworth dedicated a poem to the moon Goddess Cynthia. There was an “increased visibility of alternatives to orthodox Christianity,” which provided options, particularly for the younger romantics, to explore their emotions and beliefs in light of something different (Barnett 39). Though paganism is often associated with the younger generation such as Percy Shelley and John Keats, they were clearly not the only one feeling the effects of the classical world. There are other poets who express a more pagan tone within their poems, but Wordsworth’s nature-worship has not been considered in such a way. To argue Wordsworth’s pagan undertone I must have a working definition of paganism, since it can be seen in association to the revival of Greco-Roman myths and could have stemmed from the French Revolution; the spectra is far too wide, and needs to be narrowed down.

## 1.1 Defining Paganism

To narrow it down I asked a practicing pagan from today for a working definition of *paganism*, but his answer was: “When you say a sheep is white you will never find a reference.” The reason for this answer is that there is not one given practice that determines if one is a pagan or not. At best, we can “determine a range of possibilities that we might expect to find in any bona fide pagan example,” according to Michael York (13). These might include “polytheism, animism, idolatry, [...] perceptions of soul duality, and either nature worship or nature as chief metaphorical register expressive of the divine” (York 13). The key element in

York's statement is that pagans worship nature and elevates it to a position of something divine. This will be one of the main aspects of defining paganism in this thesis, as several sources claim that pagans elevate nature, one of them being the Oxford English Dictionary<sup>4</sup>.

The word *pagan* comes from the Latin *pāgānus* meaning “of the country, rustic,” most likely originating from the 4<sup>th</sup> century (“pagan” OED). This meaning most likely developed when Christianity became the major religion in “towns and cities of the Roman Empire” which forced the non-Christians to practice their beliefs elsewhere (“pagan” OED). Though “of the country” is a less used definition, the connection between paganism and the rustic becomes more apparent in another definition which claims pagans are followers “of a pantheistic or nature-worshipping religion” (“pagan” OED). This latter definition was used for the first time in 1854, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. However, it will be of interest and focus because of the connection between it and the definition from *pāgānus*, as they both focus on nature. Indeed, nature-worship is an important aspect of paganism, as Martin Priestman notes how “crucial the substitution of ‘Nature’ for ‘God’ was in atheist discourse” (156). Priestman’s *Romantic Atheism* explores atheism in the period 1780-1830, before the Oxford English Dictionary associates paganism with nature-worship. Thus, it seems Priestman is claiming this substitution happened before 1854 when OED claims it was used first. He even notes that there were several founding texts associated with this, such as *On the Nature of Things*, written before the birth of Christ by Lucretius, and *The System of Nature* by Paul Henri Thiry d'Holbach from 1770 (Priestman 156). Though atheism is the belief that there is no deity, missing the religious background for this substitution, the replacement of God with Nature serves an important role in paganism as well, though with a religious undertone. This also implies an underlying connection to Christianity, as their God is being dismissed.

The most important factor in defining paganism lies in its nature-worshipping aspect and because a *pagan* is a “person not subscribing to any major or recognized religion, esp. the dominant religion of a particular society; spec. a heathen, a non-Christian” there are many religions that can be dismissed from my definition of it (“pagan” OED). Agnosticism for example, being the belief that the existence of God is unknown or unknowable, and atheism, the absence of belief in the divine, are sometimes defined as pagan religions because they were

---

<sup>4</sup> Henceforth referenced as OED.

not considered major religions and did not believe in the Christian God. However, they will be excluded from my definition of paganism since, as York stated, paganism often included nature worship and an elevated view of Nature, while agnosticism and atheism do not believe in any kind of divine power. In addition, by understanding what a *heathen* is, which is part of the pagan definition, we arrive at a somewhat deeper understanding of paganism. A heathen is “one who holds a religious belief which is neither Christian, Jewish, nor Muslim; a pagan” (“heathen” OED). To come to a more specific definition I will also exclude Buddhism and Hinduism as pagan religions for two reasons: they are both major religions, though not in the west during the Romantic period, and Buddhism is a non-theistic religion. Since I am focusing on pagan attributes within a Western world, specifically England, during the Romantic period, Eastern major religions and Eastern pagan religions, such as Shintoism, are also excluded from this paper. And because of the society in which Wordsworth lived in, being a Christian one, the claim that a pagan is a non-Christian will be important. Not only because of society but because Wordsworth include both pagan and Christian references in his texts, which indicates a connection between both the two. However, if being a pagan means being a non-Christian then paganism should be defined in comparison to Christianity.

In order to define paganism against Christianity, or compare it to, we need a close understanding of the Christian doctrines. *The Book of Common Prayer* from 1760, the short title of the Anglican Church’s book containing liturgical guidelines, declares the “true Doctrine of the Church of England, agreeable to God’s word” (679). Wordsworth would certainly have been familiar with its content and in school he would have likely possessed one of his own, according to Duncan Wu (*Readings* 18). I will present those guidelines, or articles, most important in relation to paganism, as they clearly differ in these aspects. Many of the guidelines not mentioned explain these in more detail. The first one states we need “Faith in the Holy Trinity,” explaining that there is only “one living and true God,” and within this unity we find “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost” (Church of England 681). Within this I will include monotheism, as claiming there is only one God affirms this. The second article asserts the importance of Christ, who died “for actuals sins of men” (681). We can also achieve salvation through “our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith; and not for our own works or deservings” (683). *The Book of Common Prayer* also insist the “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation” (681). That books “of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church” (681). The last article states that we are born into sin.

Because we are the descendants of Adam we are “far gone from original Righteousness, and is of [our] own Nature inclined to evil,” thus “every person born into this world, is deserveth God’s wrath and damnation” (683). If paganism then is considered non-Christian, then it should dismiss these articles, such as Holy Trinity since paganism often revolves around polytheism.

Furthermore, if there is no Christ there is no need to rely on the concept of salvation because salvation comes from Jesus. If there is nothing to be delivered from it implies that there is no fall of man, meaning no original sin because in paganism there was no Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. The idea that there is no original sin is important in working with Wordsworth, as his view of children as sin-free and closest to the divine results in a rejection of the notion of sin. Children are closest to God, particularly the Shepherd boy in the “Ode,” where Wordsworth also says there is a lost glory within nature, a glory which belonged to God. Ultimately, he concludes that there is still glory within nature, and that the Shepherd boy is still closest to divinity, though the divinity now comes from nature. Even though some of Wordsworth’s references are Christian, the removal and dismissal of original sin, a prominent Christian doctrine, does not simply suggest unorthodoxy but heterodoxy. His religious values either reshape some Christian elements, such as the divine, or God, which was replaced by nature. Thus, Wordsworth’s religious creed becomes closer to paganism than Christianity. The reason for this becomes clear in the comparison between paganism and Christian doctrines as there is no original sin in paganism, and without original sin there is no need for mediation between humans and the divine.

Wordsworth’s distancing from Christianity continues with the first article, monotheism, since Wordsworth invokes other gods than the Christian one. Recall a pagan was also a *heathen*, and they were considered people “of a primitive or polytheistic nature” (“heathen” OED). Polytheism is in clear opposition to the Christian monotheism, as monotheism says there is only one true God, while polytheism thinks there are several. Thus, because polytheism is a non-Christian idea, and a pagan is a non-Christian, it will be part of how I will define paganism when analysing Wordsworth. I am also including polytheism because Wordsworth lived in a period where there was a “growing interest in ancient Greece,” and Virgil was one of the classics read during that period (Hebron *British Library*). Wordsworth did indeed “receive a thorough grounding in Greek and Latin as part of his general education” and was very familiar with Virgil, who is clearly featured in his “Ode: Intimations of Immortality” where the epigraph is a passage from Virgil’s *Fourth Eclogue* (Hebron *British Library*). In addition, is it worth

noting that the passage from his *Fourth Eclogue* tells the story of the birth of a child who will bring back the Golden Age, a reference to polytheistic ancient Greek mythology.

Furthermore, the scriptures, or the Bible, are non-existent in paganism because there are no sacred texts to adhere to. The scriptures are also part of the path to salvation, though without sin there is nothing to repent nor be free from. There are, of course, some more modern religions and belief systems that are considered pagan which do have important texts, such as Wiccans. However, these texts are not similar to the Bible. Wiccans' texts often include spells and rituals, though are not sacred, but of "historical importance rather than a roadmap to modern pagan practice," according to John Bruno Hare ("Wicca and Neo-Paganism"). It is difficult to find peer reviewed information about paganism because, as mentioned by York, there is not one correct way to practice paganism. However, Hare's claim that pagan texts are of historical importance rather than a guide is also what David Sand, creator of the website "Isle of Avalon," claims, as "the bible and gospels are the guiding rules for Christians" while "Pagans are responsible for their own actions" ("What is Paganism"). Since two different sources agree that there are no sacred texts in paganism I will assume their information is correct to an extent. Paganism then, does not require sacred texts to teach them about their deity, how to practice their religion, how to be saved, nor how to save us from damnation because there is no original sin.

The distinctions between paganism and Christianity become clearer when examining the differences between their teachings, but despite nature's importance in paganism, it serves a particular role in Christianity as well. Thus, some might argue there are naturalistic images and a strong connection to nature in Christianity, which is correct. Nature is the creation *of* God and is not divine in itself. Pagans, however, often revere nature and see the divine *within* it, rather than created *by* the divine. There are references to nature within Christianity, but the nature *of* humanity, nature *of* God, rather than physical nature and any feature attributed to it. The reason for this is that nature is the creation of God and it might be beautiful and powerful because God created it. John 1.3 says that "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (King James Version<sup>5</sup>). Comparing pagan reverence of

---

<sup>5</sup> All of my Bible references come from King James Version (KJV), if not otherwise stated, as that is the version Wordsworth most likely would have read.



nature to the nature of Christianity is rather difficult considering pagans do not have a sacred text to refer to. One way to examine the difference between the two is to look at a description of nature from Wordsworth and see how it relates to the Christian idea of nature.

Yes, there is holy pleasure in thine eye!

—The lovely Cottage in the guardian nook

Hath stirr'd thee deeply; with its own dear brook,

Its own small pasture, almost its own sky!

But covet not th' Abode—oh! do not sigh,

As many do, repining while they look,

Sighing a wish to tear from Nature's Book

This blissful leaf, with worst impiety (Wordsworth, “Admonition” line 1-8)

Wordsworth states this poem is intended for those who have been “enamoured of some beautiful Place of Retreat,” assuming the reader has already felt what it feels like to be captivated by the beauties of nature (*Poems* p. 200). The first sentence includes a reference to a religiously connoted word, *holy*, which is “set apart for religious use” of something “sacred” (“holy” OED). This religious reference is not directed towards God, but the person experiencing the pleasure. What stirs the listener to holy pleasure is the beauty of the brook, pasture, and the sky. There is no reference to God or any Christian reverence of nature within Wordsworth “Admonition” because nature cannot be divine within Christianity, unless it is seen as a creation of God. By attributing divine power to nature it becomes an idol of worship, something holy, which God would disapprove of: “Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, [...] for I *am* the LORD your God” (Leviticus 26.1). Indeed, even the “very flowers are *sacred* to the Poor,” and *sacred* is often used in relation to religion, instead of using the word cherished (line 11, my emphasis). It implies a religious devotion to nature rather than a simple love for it. The mentioning of “Nature’s Book” and that removing oneself from it would be the worst *impiety* suggests there is a religious connection between the two, and the reverences of nature so far suggests a pagan one, since it is nature who is able to produce holy pleasure within the listener (Wordsworth, “Admonition” lines 7-8).

The importance of Wordsworth naturalistic awe and adoration might suggest that nature is something divine in itself for being able to produce such strong emotions, a more pagan

perspective than Christian. There are strong emotions within the rural countryside where the cottage lies, similarly to paganism's strong nature-admiration, which produce holy pleasure. By the nineteenth century, according to Sabina Magliocco, "both "pagan" and "heathen" had acquired nostalgic, Romantic associations with nature and the rural world left behind" (151). This associates well with Wordsworth as he elevates not only nature, but the rustic life and rural population of farmers and peasants, such as the Shepherd boy we meet in the "Ode." The Cottage in "Admonition" is placed in a rural setting, as the sky and brook almost belongs to the cottage, suggesting it is removed from society, similarly to where pagan practice would occur. The listener might be a peasant, as he turns away from the cottage, longing for it, the speaker says to him the cottage could be his, but the listener is so poor he cannot afford it, and all he needs is a "Roof, window, door," even the "flowers are sacred to the Poor" (Wordsworth, "Admonition" lines 10-11). This also marks a clear difference between paganism and Christianity as nature is the producer of these emotions and not God.

Even though Wordsworth rejects several Christian doctrines, he is not completely removed from it, as there is a religious association to his nature references. Though Wordsworth might include Christian terminology the meanings behind them are pagan in nature. This is not universally agreed upon, and some critics argue the underlying tone of the poems are Christian, though unorthodox. M. H. Abrams acknowledges parts of Wordsworth's work as less Christian, such as the coming of a new heaven and earth within oneself rather than on earth (*Natural Supernaturalism* 33) and the tendency the romantics had to "greatly diminish, and at the extreme to eliminate, the role of God" (91). However, he often comes back to the idea of a Christian undertone because God serves as a "formal reminder of His [Wordsworth's] former self" (Abrams 90), and though Wordsworth's refers to Urania in *The Prelude*, a pagan muse from Greek mythology, Abrams notes that she is often associated with the Holy Spirit (24). Instead of pagan, Wordsworth seems to be rather unorthodox according to Abrams, as he often includes Christian values and references within his works. In "Admonition," however, nature is "blissful" and that removing oneself from it would be "impiety" (line 8). This suggests an elevation of nature to something religious, though clearly non-Christian. I argue that Wordsworth's naturalistic awe and admiration defines something which does not have an institutional religion. In contrast to Christianity, paganism does not have an institutional home and Wordsworth's devotion to nature presents unmediated access to the divine, through nature and the personal self, rather than through a priest and prayer to Christ. This also shows he does

not remove himself from the religious aspect of Christianity, but re-establish the religious elements to fit his ideas of religion and spirituality, one closer to nature.

There will be religious passages in Wordsworth's works in which there is no mentioning of pagan references but Christian ones, tempting us to assume Wordsworth's position is that of an unorthodox Christian because he uses religious language and sometimes refers to God. However, I will, unlike Abrams, argue the underlying tone will be one of pagan origin as they often contradict the Christian doctrines, and because the language is often directed towards nature. The one time God is mentioned in the "Ode," for example, is before he reaches his conclusion that there is indeed something divine within nature without the presence of God. It is as if he needs to work through his feelings and himself to discover what exists around him because whenever there is a strong otherworldly presence in the "Ode" it is connected to nature and not God. Though nature can be a Christian topic, as it is created by God, we will see that Wordsworth's use of religious language elevates nature to a position which is not suitable within Christian doctrine, particularly because of its monotheism.

Paganism is non-Christian, though spiritual which is often through an elevated view of Nature, and nature worship is of great importance as it can be considered a substitution for the Christian God. Because paganism is considered non-Christian and one of the most important doctrines of Christianity is monotheism, I will argue that paganism is often polytheistic as a counter to monotheism. I will be looking to the Christian doctrines to define whether Wordsworth's references are more pagan than Christian, since opposing the doctrines means opposing Christianity which could suggest a pagan influence. A final point to make is that I will not try to define which type of pagan religion Wordsworth is closest to, nor am I suggesting he is a pagan worshipper. The goal of this thesis is to illuminate and illustrate that Wordsworth was also affected by pagan values, like the younger generation whom I will introduce more thoroughly later, which shines through his poetry.

## **1.2 The Argument for Paganism**

William Wordsworth dismissed John Keats' *Endymion* as "a Very pretty piece of Paganism," yet he elevates nature to a divine state, includes pagan references, and portray pagan values in his own poetry (Barnett 2). There is currently no scholarly work which examines paganism in Wordsworth's poetry, despite his many unorthodox and non-Christian references,

though there are indeed many books and articles written on the religious aspects of his work. This thesis will be exploring a new topic related to Wordsworth's works, a topic often overlooked by scholars because the theme of paganism within the Romantic period was mostly seen through the younger romantics. They used paganism as a tool, it represented nature-worship and the Romantic notion of the rural country, but also expressed freedom from governmental control as it was opposed to Christianity (Barnett 89). However, this is what Wordsworth does as well. He exhibits pagan, non-Christian, free-thinking ideas which are concerned with religion and nature-worship. His language is spiritual and divine, often directed towards nature, but scholars seem to overlook his pagan tendencies in favour of unorthodoxy. These scholars are not incorrect in their assumptions, but I think they might be neglecting certain aspects of Wordsworth's language. What I want to question is Wordsworth's pagan language in his poetry because I believe it is not simply there as rhetoric nor symbolism. He was particularly interested in nature and by analysing it in light of paganism we will get a sense of his beliefs but also how pagan values has affected him like we will see it affected the younger generation.

I argue Wordsworth needs paganism to express his emotions and relationship with nature because Christianity does not offer the same veneration of it due to their monotheism and belief that such reverence is meant for God only. Wordsworth's language is rich in religious, sometimes Christian, terminology and references, however, it is usually used when describing Nature and not God, or any Christian element. This is, I argue, one of the main examples which shows Wordsworth's pagan tendencies because he is using language meant for the divine to express what he sees in nature. Nature becomes something divine in itself because of the terminology used. Wordsworth uses the word *glory* when explaining the lost celestial light of God in the "Ode," but also uses it to explain what is still within nature. What this does is replace elements of Christianity with paganism, implying there is something missing or needing to be changed within Christianity, as it alone is not able to explain Wordsworth's feelings. The missing element seems to be their lack of veneration of nature, which paganism can provide because the way they experience nature is different from Christianity's. Thus, when Wordsworth's idea of the divine and spiritual does not correlate with Christianity's, he needs to turn to other means, namely paganism.

One of the effects of paganism in Wordsworth's poetry is that it opens a new world of natural veneration and adoration, which Christianity does not encompass, which is unrestricted

and direct. In his poetry nature is often the centre of attention and the centre of his emotions. Unlike Christianity, paganism does not have any set way of worshipping the divine because there is not one definition of what being a pagan is. Thus, Wordsworth is free to invoke the gods that would suit him best. In “O Moon” he prays to the moon goddess Cynthia, while in “The World” he summons the images of Triton and Proteus. What such invocations encompass is not only the gods themselves, but their connection to nature. His feelings surrounding nature are more similar to paganism than to Christianity because of the divine aspect they see in nature. This also allows Wordsworth to experience the divine directly in nature, without a mediator in between.

To argue paganism’s worth in Wordsworth’s poetry, my following chapters will be exploring themes related to Wordsworth’s use of nature as something more than its physical form. One of the main examples of this is the way Wordsworth elevates nature to the position of a god through his religious language. This becomes apparent in his search for the lost celestial light and the importance of the Shepherd boy in the “Ode.” His introduction of gods and goddesses innate in nature, such as Cynthia the moon goddess and Triton and Proteus also add to this idea. Another point I will be making is that there is also a comfort in nature, which Christianity does not provide. Nature is able to soothe and comfort him when he feels a “thought of grief” (“Ode” line 22) and brings out “Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears (“Ode” lines 206). Wordsworth also claims he would rather be a pagan in “The World” because the alternative lacks the naturalistic adoration and connection he seeks. This is also linked to Wordsworth’s descriptions of nature as a feminine character, another main argument of mine. Through his anthropomorphising and elevation of nature he creates a Mother Earth figure, relatable to its ability to soothe and comfort Wordsworth. In relation to Nature’s role as a mother and a divine being, Wordsworth also explores nature’s role as a spiritual guide, somewhat a replacement of the spiritual and religious guide God could have been, as he looks to nature in order to understand himself, his mind, and his relation to the world. In doing these things he rejects some of Christianity’s doctrines, particularly its monotheism by acknowledging other gods and goddesses and the divine in nature, but also the notion of sin. He seeks out children, and his younger self, in order to understand himself better, as if they are pure and able to guide him, despite the *Book of Common Prayer* saying that we are “by nature born in sin” (371). Wordsworth shows us that he strays from the tradition Christian path in different ways and the end results seem to always be his happiness in relation to nature.

### 1.3 Scholars of Wordsworth

Considering no one has written on Wordsworth's pagan language it is rather difficult to find not only good secondary material, but any secondary material. There are three major sources that focus on religion, free-thinking, and Christian unorthodoxy within the Romantic period, which is the closest one can get to an analysis of paganism during the period. The first one is M. H. Abrams *Natural Supernaturalism* from 1971, in which he explores the romantic writers' connection between the mind, nature, and religion, through Christianity, both secularly, unorthodox and orthodox. Abrams' work is fundamental in understanding the Romantic period's traditional values but also the poets' revolutionary ideas, as he covers a vast amount of the influences religion and spirituality had on the romantic writers. It is also influential and both my other main critics refer to him, possibly because of the depth of his scholarly work. Secondly there is Martin Priestman's *Romantic Atheism* from 1999, more recent than Abrams' book, which focuses on the free-thinkers of the period, both religious, such as dissenters, and non-religious, such as atheists. Though his focus is on atheism, his ideas and arguments are helpful in understanding Wordsworth's religious creed, as there is oftentimes a sense of doubt within his work, particularly because of the ambiguous language. Lastly is Suzanne Barnett's recent book, *Romantic Paganism: The Politics of Ecstasy in the Shelley Circle* from 2017. This is an essential new study in which she explores paganism in the Shelley Circle and the younger generation. What is rather interesting about her book is that it explores what this thesis will explore, only she focuses on the younger generation who were more known to use pagan language as a force to express themselves in relation to the events in Britain.

Abrams, in his *Natural Supernaturalism* explores how the romantics worked out "certain human problems," and his focus to uncover how the romantics worked out these problems lies in their relation to the "secularization of inherited theological ideas and ways of thinking" (12). Though, unlike Abrams, I argue Wordsworth's reinterpretation of Christianity is founded on pagan or natural spirituality. The Christian theologians were not able, Abrams emphasise, to remove themselves completely from the "classical and pagan thought," and the movement away from it has not meant a replacement of ideas but rather a reinterpretation which becomes founded on secular ideas (13). We shall see, in my chosen Wordsworth poems, that he also struggles to distance himself from Christianity, as it and paganism are closely related, though the end result is a dedication to nature. Wordsworth's longing for religious faith causes

him to look back to his childhood in the “Ode,” as he believes by turning towards children, particularly the Shepherd boy, he can become closer to God. However, he calls him “Nature’s Priest” (“Ode” line 72), elevating Nature to the status of a god as it is given a religious devotee. What this shows us is that Wordsworth replaces important Christian elements with pagan ones. He is not completely removed from Christianity because of the religious connotations behind the *priest*, but the faith he was initially searching for becomes a natural and pagan one based on an elevated view of nature. This replacement also shows Wordsworth’s resolutions to his human problems are not based on secular, or non-religious ideas, but on a different spirituality which celebrates the divine within nature.

Similar to the German romantics, such as Friedrich Schlegel, the English romantics also saw a revival of ancient Greek. Wordsworth, however, did not use as much mythology as other fellow writers of the period, such as John Keats, but more Christian terminology. This might be one of the reasons Abrams points out that the romantic writers

undertook to save the overview of human history and destiny, the experimental paradigms, and the cardinal values of their religious heritage, by reconstructing them in a way that would make them intellectually acceptable, as well as emotionally pertinent, for the time being (66).

The revival of Greco-Roman myths was thus integrated into the poets’ religious heritage. This suggests that Wordsworth and other writers of the period might be making a collaboration of mythology and orthodox Christian theology, making it fit for their time period and for themselves. Though not Greek mythology, Abrams also notes that Wordsworth has been referred to as a “Chosen Son” and a “youthful Druid,” which do not agree with each other, one being a more Christian term and the other being decidedly more pagan (Abrams 22). Despite this revival of mythological terminology, possibly non-Christian terminology and myths, Abrams argues that the romantics would try to save “traditional concepts, schemes, and values which had been based on the relation of the Creator to his creature and creation” but reformulated into the human mind’s connection with nature (13). Unlike Abrams, I would argue this is part of showing Wordsworth’s pagan language because it is far from the only reference to his connection to paganism or nature. Examples such as this are oftentimes overlooked by scholars, yet Wordsworth says he “walked with Nature “To feed the spirit of religious love”

(*The Prelude* II lines 357-8). If Wordsworth was seen as a Chosen son and a Druid there is no reason for him to be more Chosen son, or Christian, than he is a Druid, or pagan.

What seems to be the case, however, is that most scholars seem more interested in his Christian language, whether it is seen in relation to nature, as a religious statement on its own, or simply as imagery. Thomas Raysor claims Wordsworth's references in the "Ode," such as "visionary gleam, the glory and the dream of childhood, which once rested upon nature but does so no more," is proof of the child's intimacy with God (863). Wordsworth speaks of fear and love, and says that

To love as first and chief, for there fear ends,  
Be this ascribed; to early intercourse,  
In presence of sublime and lovely Forms (*The Prelude* XIII line 144-46)

This love is a "higher love," which Abrams claims is a statement "in the traditional idiom of Christian theodicy" because it mimics Adam's statement to Michael in *Paradise Lost* (111). Yet Wordsworth does not mention God and states other places in *The Prelude* that his early intercourse was with nature, "the fairest of all rivers, [and] loved / To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song" and makes "ceaseless music that composed my thoughts," affecting or changing his being (*The Prelude* I lines 270-1, 277). Abrams seems to see the Christian undertones of Wordsworth's poetry as more prominent, but also more important. Unlike Abrams, I believe passages like this shows Wordsworth's love towards Nature and not God because of lack of references to Him and because the language is religious though not about God.

Martin Priestman's *Romantic Atheism* looks at atheism during the Romantic period, but also explores the blurred lines between religion and atheism, where we might find paganism or nature-worshipping religions. Though there is little talk of paganism, the line between atheism, other non-Christian or nature worshipping-religions, and Christianity is often blurred. Even atheist poetry, according to Priestman, wants to elevate nature, but how can they "do so without borrowing from the religious imagery which in most cultures invests that position of elevation" (44)? This opens the way for an investigation of pagan, or non-Christian though spiritual, imagery, but Priestman himself does not pursue this opportunity. Indeed, Priestman observes that Wordsworth's nature-worship was often considered to be "a harmless expansion of our



poetic vocabulary” which makes us forget “how crucial the substitution of ‘Nature’ for ‘God’ was in atheist discourse” (156). Thus, it becomes difficult to distinguish non-religious or even non-Christian poetry from the religious because they both rely on spiritual language.

I agree with Priestman, to an extent. I do not think Wordsworth’s language implies an atheistic undertone because unlike atheists, who do not believe in the divine, Nature becomes Wordsworth’s idea of the divine. However, Wordsworth does, as Priestman claims, use religious terminology to explain something which normally would not be described using such language, similar to atheistic poetry. Wordsworth’s nature veneration is taken to the same level as one would worship a God, through his use of religious imagery and terminology, though used in a pagan setting.

These blurred lines between religion and spirituality are distinguished in Wordsworth’s poetry. Priestman believes Wordsworth’s pantheism, the belief that “God is everything and everything is God” often considered “nature worship” (“pantheism” OED), became “a mildly idiosyncratic variant of Christianity” (Priestman 2). However, unlike Priestman, I do not consider Wordsworth’s sporadic Christian language in relation to nature as a variant of Christianity because he does not refer to God, or any other clearly Christian subjects, but to something different from it, something spiritual and natural at the same time. Indeed, the poet and close friend of Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, said something similar in a letter to Wordsworth from 1820:

I will not conceal from *you* that this inferred dependency of the human soul on the accidents of Birth-place & Abode together with the vague misty, rather than mystic, Confusion of God with the World & the accompanying Nature-worship, of which the asserted dependence forms a part, is the Trait in Wordsworth’s poetic Works that I most dislike, as unhealthful, & denounce as contagious: while the odd occasional introduction of the popular, almost vulgar, Religion in his later publications [...] suggests the painful suspicion of worldly prudence” (qtd. in Priestman 156-7).

Wordsworth “confuses God with the world and worships nature purely in terms of its specific manifestations; and that his occasional references to God as a separate being are so crudely conventional as to patently insincere” (Priestman 157). Wordsworth’s spiritual language

becomes something spiritual in itself, and is seen as opposed to Christianity because when he does include Christian language it is seen as highly conventional and thus almost as a lie.

Despite Wordsworth's Christian and non-Christian language, Priestman claims he is masking or withholding parts of what he is trying to say in his poetry (157). I agree with Priestman, Wordsworth's use of religious language in a naturalistic setting makes it difficult to understand the few occasions where he uses the same language to describe his relationship with God and Nature, such as the example with *glory* in the "Ode." Or concerning "Nature's Priest," as a priest is a relatively Christian word, particularly since Wordsworth grew up in a Christian society, though it is used referencing someone who serves Nature as a god ("Ode" line 72). The early Wordsworth who "wrote for freedom [...] and] 'the language of the sense' – was a non-Christian," (Priestman 236) and the one who "that he then entered a period of deliberate and much-noticed enigmatic silence which still left his Christianity in doubt [...] – and that he then somehow finessed this into a reputation as a great religious poet" (Priestman 236). Indeed, it seems Priestman is claiming Wordsworth is not as much of a devoted Christian as his readers might think, but rather that his silence about the matter has pushed him towards a more Christian audience, unlike his fellow poets of the time who openly talked about their disbelief. These silences give me the opportunity to see Wordsworth in light of both sides, the Christian and pagan, and how Wordsworth does not necessarily remove himself from Christianity but replaces elements within it.

Paganism is usually associated with the younger romantics which Suzanne Barnett talks about this in her *Romantic Paganism: The Politics of Ecstasy in the Shelley Circle*. She explores the history of paganism and its implications into the works of some young romantic poets, such as Percy Shelley, but also the history of paganism and the way it affected Britain. Paganism did not start when Shelley started writing, it had been active in Britain before that but was predominantly used by the younger romantics. The younger poets "filled their religious needs (such as they were) not only with science and philosophy but with joy, music, celebration, and other characteristically pagan pursuits, often enjoyed communally" (Barnett 10). This is also something Wordsworth portrays in his "Ode," where he feels a sense of joy and spirituality by watching the children dancing to "the tabor's sound" (Wordsworth, "Ode" line 21) during their "festival" (line 39) and their close connection to nature. If the younger romantics were influenced by the revival of Greco-Roman gods and atheistic free-thinking it is highly likely

that Wordsworth wrote during the period of its emergence, thus the information Barnett provides will be valuable despite her focus being on Shelley.

To understand the increasing interest in myths and legends, and paganism, Barnett also looks at what the younger generation might have read. She uses the comte de Volney's *The Ruins, or a Survey of the Revolutions of Empires* as an example to one of the eighteenth-century figures revered by the younger romantics. In his work, Volney claims that "mythology sprang from mankind's observations of nature, and that religion sprang from the corruption of that mythology into tyrannical doctrines used by power-hungry men who sought to beguile and imprison mankind" (Barnett 35). This, Barnett says, "reflects the late-century climate of religious questioning and mythological admiration" (35). Duncan Wu also notes that Volney's *The Ruins* is one of Wordsworth's possible readings (Wu, *Wordsworth's reading* 160). Thus, Wordsworth referring to mythology and paganism, as they too observe nature closely, could be a way for him to express himself because Christianity, and the symbolism and language it entails, is not adequate to portray his love for nature.

Another one of the major critiques Barnett says the younger romantics read, was Paul Henri Thiery, Baron d'Holbach, who had knowledge about the ancient world and mythology. In his, *The Systems of Nature or, the Laws of the Moral and Physical World*, what Joseph Priestley called "the Bible of Atheism" (qtd. in Priestman 15), Baron d'Holbach claims the events of the Bible are not derived from God, but from mythological understandings of the natural world, attempts to describe the natural processes and incident (Barnett 35). The ancient worlds animated nature, where earth, fire, water, and air were given intelligence or life and became our first gods (Barnett 36). Wordsworth seems to understand this in some of his poetry by invoking the power of Triton and Proteus, gods of the sea. Holbach believed mythology was "destined to describe nature" but "theologians divorced nature itself from the power of nature, named that intangible power 'God'" (qtd. in Barnett 36). Wordsworth does invoke mythology to express his experiences in nature, but also includes a single divine unit from time to time, which does separate him from Holbach's ideas. However, Holbach, as Wordsworth, urges people to "return to EXPERIENCE – to NATURE – to REASON" and "Let him study Nature, let him study himself; let him learn to know the bonds which unite him to his fellow creatures" (qtd. in Barnett 36). A very similar admiration for nature and the natural experiences as Wordsworth has, that there is such a strong connection between nature and man that people need to return to it.

I will be using Barnett's information about what affected the younger romantics and their view on paganism, and what they thought paganism was, to understand Wordsworth's relation to paganism better. The younger romantics got their inspiration from Holbach, and Wu claims "it is likely that [Wordsworth] was acquainted with its content" because his father passed down his copy of Baron d'Holbach's *The Systems of Nature* to him (Wu, *Wordsworth's reading* 75). Barnett's close attention to what affected the younger romantics' paganism is extremely valuable because it turns out that Wordsworth also read what they read and could have been affected by what he read, similar to the younger poets. If reading this affected the younger romantics and Wordsworth read it as well we can assume he made himself familiar with the content, particularly since Holbach sees the importance of nature. Thus, these pagan values are not restricted to the younger generation, but possibly easier to take notice of in their work. As Priestman noted, Wordsworth had non-Christian tendencies and the revival of mythology and non-Christian religion during the period was part of it. These connections Barnett makes between the Romantic period, paganism, and the young poets, are similar to Wordsworth's experiences within nature, though he might be experiencing some of it with a single divine unit, such as a god, yet the primary ideas of nature-worship, also paganism, are still present.

Barnett also reminds us that there was a political difference between the older and younger romantics. To the younger, paganism was a tool, it represented nature-worship, but also expressed freedom from governmental control as it was opposed to Christianity (Barnett 88). Barnett claims, however, that "[a]ccording to Wordsworth, paganism is merely an initial step on mankind's path to Christian enlightenment," and that the younger romantics were against the understanding that nature was another term for God (89). Yet Greco-Roman myths were based on nature, and the gods were found within nature. Triton and Proteus are referenced by Wordsworth and they are lesser gods of the sea, thus have control over it, according to Alexander Duthie (43). Unlike Barnett, and the younger romantics, I argue that paganism is not simply the action of worshipping nature, but that there is a divine presence within it, whether it be Nature itself, Poseidon, nymphs, the river, the sun, or a different form, but the idea is that there is something divine there which is not the Christian God.

## ***2 Poems, in Two Volumes***

The shepard's lost  
And his home is far  
Keep to the stars  
The dawn will come

– Trevor Morris

There are two main reasons for me choosing Wordsworth's *Poems, in Two Volumes*, the first one is because several of his poems include pagan references and secondly the personal elements it contains. The collection also includes Christian elements to challenge my ideas, which I incorporate to show the reader that there is still a sense of paganism there. The collection was initially rejected by his contemporaries for containing poetry too personal and too mystifying, according to Richard Matlak (13). In trying to uncover Wordsworth's religious creed, or his preference for paganism, it is important to look at poetry which expressed who he was and what he believed. Clearly, there is no way of knowing whether his poetry express his real emotions, though considering the reason why the collection was rejected there could be hints to his beliefs.

This chapter will provide evidence for Wordsworth's devotion to Nature and his elevation of it to the same level as a god. I argue that the selected poems present Wordsworth's devotion towards nature which exceeds a simple admiration for it. One of the main issues Wordsworth has when exploring his faith is that Christianity oftentimes demands more attention and effort than natural spirituality or paganism. Wordsworth believes he needs to regain his lost connection to God, though in doing so discovers he can experience an immediate communication between himself and the divine through nature. Via paganism's close attachment to nature, Wordsworth can explore how his emotions and soul are affected by flowers, mountains, the anthropomorphised Sea and Moon. His connection with nature becomes religious and spiritual to the extent that he worships nature, rather than worshipping the Christian God. However, he calls out to both God and the Moon, as if he is struggling to separate the two, yet the feelings attached to this are not similar. His cry to God in "The World" is much more like a cry of despair and a loss of hope, while his call to the Moon, or Cynthia the Greco-Roman goddess, in "O Moon," seems a dedication, as if she is taking the role of God. Enjoying the beauties of nature is taken further than a simple physical appreciation, by elevating Nature to something similar to God.

In acknowledging and dedicating himself to the Moon as a goddess, Wordsworth rejects and distances himself from the Christian doctrine of monotheism. Rather than dismissing her as he does with God in “The World,” he admires her. This strengthens his claim and wish to be a pagan which he exclaims to God in “The World.” Throughout the three poems I have chosen, there is a sense of something missing within Christianity, as if the Moon provides him with a closeness to the spiritual and divine which God cannot. Trying to figure out what is missing, Wordsworth turns to paganism, in both physical- and anthropomorphised nature, and Greco-Roman gods and goddesses, and in doing so becomes closer to nature though distancing himself from Christianity in the process.

Within this collection is what many readers today claim to be one of the most “rewarding reading experiences in the canon of English literature,” namely his “Ode” (Matlak 13). However, his “Ode” as it was named in the 1807 edition of this collection, the one I will be using, previously called “Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood,” was also one of the most criticized pieces. Since his contemporaries thought his poetry was personal, it could suggest that the mystifying elements are too real and revealing, closer to his beliefs than one might think, and the personal elements might complement the evidence found in my analysis.

## **2.1 “Ode”**

### **2.1.1 The Two Epigraphs**

Wordsworth’s “Ode” begins with an epigraph which introduces the exalted pagan theme of the poem, the coming of a Golden Age. The epigraph from the 1807 version is a line taken from Virgil’s *Fourth Eclogue*, one of the classics of Latin literature, and goes: “paulo majora canamus,” translated to “let us sing a somewhat loftier strain” (Matlak 223). The epigraph also serves as “a succinct preface” and the reader should be able to deduce some information about the theme of the poem from it, according to Gerard Genette (153). Since Wordsworth received a thorough education in both Greek and Latin, we might assume others with a general education would already be familiar with the epigraph, which would have given them a clue as to where the poem is headed. Virgil’s *Fourth Eclogue* celebrates the birth of a “child who will bring back the Golden Age” (Matlak 223), of “innocence, peace, and happiness,” which is what the Golden Age was according to Alexander Duthie (8). The translation Matlak provides suggests the

theme of the poem will be exalted, hence *loftier*, and Duncan Wu translates it to “let us sing of somewhat more exalted things,” both translations complement each other and work with the tone of the poem (“Romanticism An Anthology” 549). It is interesting that Wordsworth should have chosen a passage from Virgil rather than other writers, such as John Milton, since Wordsworth often compared himself to him and saw himself as a “successor to Milton,” according to Abrams (22). In using Virgil, however, Wordsworth is implying the theme of the poem will be the coming of a new age and because of the pagan characteristics of Greek mythology there is a pagan undertone to this new world.

In 1815 Wordsworth changed the epigraph to a passage from his sonnet, “My Heart Leaps Up,” which portrays the speaker’s love towards nature as a child and adult. The beginning of the sonnet implies a strong affection towards nature, his “heart leaps up when I behold / A Rainbow in the sky” (Wordsworth, “My Heart Leaps” lines 1-2) and this began “when my [the speaker’s] life began” (line 3). This follows him into his adulthood, as “So is it now I am a Man” (line 4), and the speaker wishes that his devotion to nature will stay with him as he grows old, “Or let me die!” (line 6). The speaker would rather die than not feel his heart leap at the sight of nature’s beauties. The final three lines are included in the 1815 version of the “Ode” as the epigraph, where he states that “The Child is Father of the Man;” (“The World” line 7). From what the sonnet has said so far, the child can be father of man because the speaker still feels what he felt as a child. His love for nature followed him into adulthood, thus the child has influenced his older self, becoming a father, or teacher, to the adult version of himself. However, this is not only a wish from one human being, but the capitalized *Man*, *Child*, and *Father* emphasises these words and gives them more power and significance since they seem to serve as a general truth rather than the truth of the speaker, as if a connection between man and nature is natural.

The lines included as the epigraph also encompasses a religious reference, as Wordsworth’s language sometimes does. The semicolon at the end of line seven implies there is a close link between that and the upcoming lines, especially line nine which draws it all together by his wish for “natural piety” (line 9). *Piety* normally has a religious connotation, as a pious man is someone following the doctrines of their religion and is devoted to God, especially in relation to Christianity (“piety” OED). There is no mentioning of God in this sonnet, only nature, yet Manning claims that to begin the “Ode” with a passage from “My Heart Leaps Up” is “to write in the language of divine sanction rather than of nature, to throw the

emphasis on the enduring presence of that covenant against destruction rather than on the ode's experience that "The Rainbow comes and goes" (540). Indeed, the language Wordsworth uses is divine, though directed to nature. He is referring to a section of Genesis where God says to Noah that: "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and earth [... and] between me and you and every living creature of all flesh" (Genesis 9.13-15). A reference to this rainbow and wishing he could see it every day would certainly be a pious way of life.

Without any reference to God, *piety* needs to be seen in relation to nature and the rainbow, which intensifies nature's meaning as something religious or spiritual detached from its Christian relation. The religious experience could be a reference to a natural religion, hence "*natural piety*," and natural worship rather than controlled ("My Heart Leaps Up" line 9, my emphasis). The doctrines and rules of this religion Wordsworth is adhering to are looser, or possibly non-existent, making devotion a personal subject rather than being dependant on a priest, or the Church, to experience the divine. There is an instant gratification of his spiritual or religious needs by looking at the rainbow. I also wish to recall what Priestman said about atheistic poetry, that they used religious imagery because that is what most cultures use to provide "that position of elevation" (44). Similarly, Wordsworth is borrowing religious words, *piety*, to express his devotion to nature. Because of this the spiritual encounter seems similar to that of experiencing the divine in any religion, though natural piety refers to experiencing the divine within nature.

Though these epigraphs are rather different, the underlying tone is a devotion or dedication towards nature. Virgil's passage implies there will be a change in the world towards something better, a Golden Age, because of a child, which becomes related to paganism because of its connection to a non-Christian religion, ancient Greek mythology. "My Heart Leaps" shifts the focus to how the child is affected by experiencing nature and how this affects his older self, through a pious way of life. They both work together to present theme which will occur throughout his ode, a connection between child and nature, which will eventually affect the adult's relationship with nature, and a connection between nature and the divine. By beginning the "Ode" with a passage from the *Fourth Eclogue* there are certain expectations needing to be met. As Peter Manning puts it, it forces the reader "to recall a poet whose "Christian" allusions are always subject to debate" because the "Ode" does include a loftier or exalted theme, though most often dedicated to the divine Nature (Manning 538). Because the clearest references he



makes are towards nature the Christian language is weakened and the poems connection to paganism becomes greater.

### 2.1.2 The Glory, Lost and Found

Both epigraphs serve as a reminder as to what will come and Wordsworth's concern about losing contact with nature comes to pass in the first stanza of the "Ode" when he has lost the ability to see celestial light, or glory. In losing celestial light, which means "of or penetrating to the sky or material heavens," Wordsworth is implying a lost connection to something religious, arguably Christianity, which he wishes to regain ("celestial" OED).

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
To me did seem  
Apparell'd in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.  
It is not now as it has been of yore;—  
Turn wheresoe'er I may,  
By night or day,  
The things which I have seen I now can see no more (Wordsworth, "Ode" lines 1-9)

Wordsworth's use of the word *apparell'd* suggests nature is draped in celestial light and that it does not spring from nature itself, but from God, as if God is casting a spell or a blessing upon earth which will clothe it. Thus, when Wordsworth claims he has lost this sight he seems to suggest he has either lost his faith in Christianity, because he cannot see the beauty of God within nature, or that he doubts it. It could also imply that nature itself is nothing without the light of God shining through it.

Wordsworth thinks, however, that there is a way to regain this lost glory he once saw, possibly regain his connection to God, through children, or the Shepherd Boy, because of their closeness to God. In the fifth stanza Wordsworth hears the children calling to each other and sees that "The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee" ("Ode" line 38). The Shepherd boy is a "happy" (Wordsworth, "Ode" line 35) "child of joy" (line 34) and Wordsworth wishes him to shout for him to hear. He seems to think that these emotions the children feel when running

around in nature are derived from their ability to experience the celestial light. The younger the child the closer to God he is because their closeness comes from their soul's past recollection of Heaven. Our soul "cometh from afar" (Wordsworth "Ode" line 61), from God because "Heaven lies about us in our infancy" (line 66). Because he is so young he still has remembrances of it, thus why he sees such joy within nature. He is trying to tap into the feelings of the Shepherd boy, as he believes he will then be closer to God, or experience God's light upon earth. The Shepherd is very often used as an allegory to Jesus Christ, "The Lord is my shepherd" (Psalms 23.1), which connects well with why the child can see the celestial light and why Wordsworth might think the child could guide him back to it. These references are clearly religious and Wordsworth does seem to be seeking out that which he has lost in the child. Because of this, the impact and the importance of the celestial light to Wordsworth becomes important to point out and to keep in mind since he wishes to regain it.

Wordsworth's combination of *celestial* (line 4) and *glory* (line 5) implies a religious undertone directed towards regaining his faith in Christianity. *Glory* is considered a divine and religious word and in relation to Christianity glory is often associated with God and Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament *glory* means heaviness or weight, according to Euan Fry, and was also used to "express the ideas of importance, greatness, honour, splendour, power," and so on (422). It is interesting that it means heavy because the meaning of the word becomes loaded due to the powerful attributes attached to it. When used in the Bible as a reference to God it refers to all the qualities mentioned above, according to Fry, possibly because He is almighty (422). Carey C. Newman also explores the term *glory*, but in relation to St. Paul, and observes that he often entitles Jesus Christ as the "Lord of Glory," "Father of glory" (4), but also that the "knowledge of Glory is discovered in Jesus" (5). Thus, all the qualities would likely be applied to Jesus as well, since he is given titles showing his divinity in relation to glory, as shown by Newman. Fry claims, however, that there are some main components attached to *glory* when it is used in reference to God and Jesus Christ. They are "Brightness or splendour," often seen in the same sentence as the word *shine*, "Great power and strength" because of his difference from mankind both in character and nature, and "Majesty and honour" (Fry 423) because of his "high position" (424). Indeed, R.G. Bratcher also notes that the meaning of *glory* in the Bible often refers to "divine nature" and "the divine One" (407). Thus, Wordsworth's use of *glory* in this way implies a direct link to Christianity, however, as the "Ode" progresses we experience a change in the meanings behind the word and a detachment from its Christian context.

Despite that the Christian meaning of *glory* fits Wordsworth's use of it he follows his first disheartened stanza with a hint of positivism as he is able to see beauty in nature but is still saddened by that which is lost.

The sunshine is a glorious birth;  
But yet I know, where'er I go,  
That there hath pass'd away a glory from the earth (Wordsworth, "Ode" lines 16-18)

He has just claimed something has been lost to him, which we know from line eighteen is the glory of God because it refers back to celestial light, however, he also sees something within nature and not simply beauty but something *glorious*. He uses the same word to describe both that which is lost and that which is still alive within nature. Note that it is also *a* glory and not *the* glory which has vanished. There might be more than one glory on earth, but the one which caused him to see it all cloaked in "celestial light" (Wordsworth, "Ode" line 4) is gone. Nature's power to amaze him is not lost because even the sunshine is still glorious, meaning, that it possesses glory, implying there does not have to be a connection between nature and God for glory to still exist, despite its previously Christian significance ("glorious" OED).

Since the lost glory was celestial, then the remaining glory should be a pagan one, or directed towards nature, as it still exists in the glorious sun.

And while the young Lambs bound  
As to the tabor's sound  
To me alone there came a thought of grief:  
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,  
And again I am strong (Wordsworth, "Ode" lines 20-24)

It is a naturalistic image and considering the importance of nature in pagan religions, this scene is more pagan than Christian. James Cooper even believes these lambs are an indication of the ode's "pantheistic perspective" (126). After this he is in communication with nature, he hears "Echoes through the mountain" (Wordsworth, "Ode" line 27), listens to birds singing "a joyous song" (line 19), and the only other human relation is also in close relation to nature, the happy "Shepherd-boy" (line 35). There is a struggle between joy and grief. He is saddened by earth having lost the glory of celestial light, but joyous from experiencing nature, and the child within it. As John Mathison puts it, Wordsworth is "stimulated" by this natural sight, and the sight of

the happy child in the following stanzas (437). This grief arrives abruptly and vanishes in the same way, making him strong again. His newfound strength, presumably from still seeing joy and that there is a different glory within Nature, despite having lost the celestial light, will make him forget his grief. And interestingly he states, “No more shall grief of mine the season wrong” (Wordsworth, “Ode” line 26), as if he is worrying about how his grief is wronging Nature and not the loss of celestial sight. Thus, it is important to note that:

In its central tradition Christian thought had posited three primary elements: God, nature, and the soul; with God of course utterly prepotent, as the creator and controller of the two others [...] The tendency in innovative Romantic thought [...] is greatly to diminish, and at the extreme to eliminate, the role of God (Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* 91).

God could be represented as the creator through Wordsworth’s reference to the celestial light, as this light is also a glory, which we discovered to be related to God and his greatness, loftiness, and power, meaning it shines on earth because it was created by God. However, Wordsworth says the world has *lost* the celestial light, which implies a lost connection between it and God. In addition, Wordsworth’s discomfort does not come from his lack of connection to God, but rather his unjustly feelings towards Nature. Wordsworth is separating Nature from the celestial light and the newfound glory becomes related to Nature and not God. In doing so, Wordsworth is also diminishing God’s role by assuring himself and the reader that there is still something glorious within Nature.

The loss of celestial light changes from something sad to something rather positive towards the end of the ode, as he confesses that his “Perpetual benedictions” (“Ode” line 137) are devoted to the loss of celestial light, continuing the idea that there is divinity in nature. It might seem odd that he, after declaring the grievous loss of his sight, should praise it for going away, but the thought of humanity’s “past years” (line 136), our time in Paradise, breeds in him “Perpetual benedictions” (line 137). They are enduring “eternal; never ending” (“perpetual” OED), a “devout expression of a wish for [...] happiness” (“benediction” OED). But not for “that which is most worthy to be blest” (“Ode” line 138), which would be the simple life of childhood and how he was hoping he could recollect his time in heaven or where we came from. But rather

for those obstinate questionings  
Of sense and outward things,  
Falling from us, vanishings (lines 144-146)

He is expressing his happiness for his senses and that which is vanishing from him, his ability to see celestial light. Wordsworth has grieved over his loss of celestial light and I would assume he would be extremely pleased with being able to experience this again through the Shepherd boy, but that is not the case. His newfound happiness is derived from the loss of celestial light. The reason for this could be that he has understood that there is still a glory within nature, as he notes in lines sixteen to eighteen, through the glorious sunshine, which allows him to still see beauty within it without the presence of God. Indeed, J. Robert Barth notes that this implies Wordsworth is celebrating a time when “his perceptions were not limited” to outward things and sense (118). Wordsworth is able to experience more within nature than its physical shape, the divine aspects innate in it.

Despite Wordsworth finding his consolation, or perpetual benedictions, in the loss of divine light, there is also a connection between the perpetual benedictions and Christianity. However, Wordsworth’s benedictions are directed towards those fallings and lost things, the loss of celestial light and not to God. A benediction is typically a blessing received when leaving the church, or a blessing given to someone, “as pronounced by officiating minister at the conclusion of divine worship” (“benediction” OED). Perpetual too is used in reference to Christianity and can be found in the Requiem Aeternam, being the opening of the Mass of the Dead in the Catholic Church, according to Barbara Lane, where it says: “et lux perpetua luceat eis,” meaning “let perpetual light shine upon them” (176). It is a mass dedicated to the souls of the dead and here it says to shine everlasting light upon them. When using such language, it is easy to assume that Wordsworth’s position is that of a Christian. However, it is an odd choice of words when his *perpetual benediction* is dedicated to that which comes out of losing touch with celestial light, the realization of the powers of Nature as the divine, rather than connecting with God. Indeed, if there is a connection between the Mass of the Dead and the “Ode” it would imply that there is an everlasting light shining upon earth, even without the celestial light of God. However, it was God’s light earlier which caused him to see glory on earth and the way he directs his attention to Nature in exploring the new light on earth seems to imply it is Nature’s light rather than God’s.

Wordsworth is desperately trying to hold onto the lost memories of Paradise, but they are *shadowy recollections* because he cannot remember them clearly and can only be experienced through the children.

Those shadowy recollections

Which, be they what they may,

Are yet the fountain light of all our day,

Are yet a master light of all our seeing (Wordsworth, "Ode" line 152-155)

He claims that even though they are shadowy they will be the light of our day and a master of all other lights. As the child grows older he might eventually move to the city, or at least become acquainted with it. Wordsworth's childhood was devoted to Nature, running through the fields, bathing, and basking in the sun, and his soul was in "direct engagement with nature" (Abrams 97). And when he was younger he saw nature "Apparell'd in celestial light," which this child also does according to Wordsworth's attempt to tap into that connection ("Ode" line 4). However, Wordsworth cannot see this light anymore, and the memories surrounding it are shadowy because he, after spending time in society, has lost his spirituality. He even says the child will grow and "Shades of the prison-house" will close in on the boy ("Ode" line 67). Simply remembering having had those memories of Paradise is enough for Wordsworth to consider them the light of his day at this point.

Christianity becomes a hinderance for his spiritual development, as Nature is the one portraying divine attributes, yet he continues to hold onto these memories of Paradise. Barnett notes that the younger romantics saw Christianity as "a gloom cast over the world, a veil that obscures mankind's recognition of the truth and beauty of nature" (8). Barnett calls this view a "shadowy system," which is interesting considering Wordsworth calls these memories shadowy, and that they overshadow, and block, his view of nature and spirituality as he does not want to shift his focus (8). The "Ode" is a great example of this, as those shadowy recollections he is chasing are that which caused him to forget the true beauties within nature, which he eventually understands are still there. Christianity has clouded his vision, even when the light is gone he needs help to distance himself from Christianity as it continues to distract him from the natural world. This is also relevant to "The World Is Too Much with Us" where Christianity becomes the cause of Wordsworth's lost connection to nature.

In the beginning Wordsworth claimed there was nothing that could bring back this glory of God, but suffering from the loss has changed him, allowing him to see nature the he wishes, though detached from God.

And oh ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves  
Think not of any serving of our loves!  
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might; [...]  
I love the Brooks which down their channel fret,  
Even more than when I tripp'd lightly as they ("Ode" lines 190-2, 195-6)

He loves "the Brooks" more now than when he "tripp'd lightly as they," arguably when he was a child since they too trip lightly ("Ode" line 196). Throughout the ode he has tried to regenerate himself, though realizes he cannot do so with God but can with Nature. Wordsworth's answer as to how to renew his spirit involved "a concept of nature, [which] modifies the personalistic and apocalyptic view of divine agency, but without approving the deistic God," according to Geoffrey Hartman (*Wordsworth's Poetry* 290). Wordsworth has rejected the idea of God and focused on nature as a way back to the glory he thought was lost, since focusing on the child as a pathway back and those shadowy recollections did not suffice. As James Chandler puts it, the first part of the ode is a "series of apparent false starts" and Christianity is not able to overcome the obstacle at hand ("Wordsworth's Great Ode" 150). Wordsworth's responses are somewhat delayed, since he figures this out at the end of the ode, and Hartman calls his soul "shy" and a resolution might rise unexpectedly from "almost forgotten depths" (*Wordsworth's Poetry* 4). Though he has shown his adoration and veneration for nature this is the sudden conclusion where he realizes that Nature is enough. He has replaced God with it, given it similar attributes as God by being able to soothe his soul and the grief he feels, but never realized that this was what he was looking for as he was too focused on returning his lost sight of celestial light. Lionel Trilling argues that Wordsworth's way "To speak naturalistically of the quasi-mystical experiences of his childhood does not in the least bring into question the value which Wordsworth attached to them, for, despite its dominating theistical metaphor, the Ode is largely naturalistic in its intention" ("The Liberal Imagination" 148-9). I agree with Trilling that the "Ode" is mostly naturalistic to an extent, as throughout the poem Wordsworth reaches the conclusion that the loss of divine light is not negative but rather positive. He puts an end to his search for celestial light, arguably his search for God, and welcomes something else. This something else is not completely naturalistic, however, since after Wordsworth realizes the

might of the mountains and fountains, it brings *back* the awe and glory he used to see in nature, replacing the influence of God. He feels the might of the mountains, and powerful mountains were often deemed sublime during the Romantic period, as they were often considered awe-inspiring and terrifying, yet beautiful. However, the fountains and meadows lack sublimity but are equally mighty. It is not only the spectacle alone which makes them mighty, but the feelings surrounding them, arguably the divinity of Nature which he can experience once again.

In thinking there is a need to regain the lost sight of celestial light, Wordsworth underlines his wish to stay close to God, but in doing so discovers a different light detached from God and Christianity and focused on Nature. He is not able to hold on to the lost memories, and instead turns his gaze to that which is already there, Nature, and rediscovers his attachment to it. He elevates nature to a position similar to that of God, by claiming there is still a glory within, though removed from God the same way the child grows up and removes himself from the memories of Paradise.

### **2.1.3 The Shepherd Boy**

Wordsworth's Shepherd boy is of great importance in the "Ode," but his role is rather ambiguous at times as he serves as a way back to Christianity in the beginning of the ode but also represents the person closest to nature. I noted earlier that the Shepherd boy was closest to God because of his soul's memories of heaven, allowing him to see celestial light. These connections between the child, God, and Christianity are diminished and weakened when Wordsworth continues to describe him and his role.

The Youth, who daily farther from the East,  
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended;  
At length the Man perceives it die away (Wordsworth, "Ode" lines 71-75)

Though the child now sees this splendid vision of celestial light, when he travels away from the East, which could be the place where Heaven lies since as travels away from it he will forget it, eventually the light will die away. He will remove himself from God, similarly to what Wordsworth and all adults have done. The references to Christianity are remarkably prominent,



the light of God, and the child as a Shepherd, like Jesus Christ, becoming a Messiah-like character able to bring him closer to God, but here he is also a representative for Nature as her priest. Rather than creating a connection between the child and God the Christian undertones are challenged and disrupted by the direct reference between the child and divine Nature and by giving him the title of Nature's Priest.

Wordsworth elevates both the personified Nature and the Shepherd boy by making him a servant of hers, implying a divinity within Nature and that the Shepherd boy is her devotee. This does not seem to be one of Abrams concerns and he ultimately rejects the pagan tendencies in favour of the Christian ones. He argued that Wordsworth general "insight into the grandeur of the lowly and into the heroic values in ordinary life derives from the religious tradition, and ultimately the Bible" (Abrams 392). The priest in Nature's Priest does indeed connect to Christianity, particularly since a *priest* is "a person whose office is to perform public religious functions", and mostly seen "with reference to the Church of England" or the Western Church ("priest" OED). There is, however, no reference to the Church of England, and he is Nature's priest, not just a *priest* which would be more easily connected to Christianity as the primary meaning of the word would have connected the two. The capitalized *Nature* suggests a personification or elevated image of nature often found in paganism. Wordsworth sees the grandeur of lowly life, as Abrams said he would, such as elevating the role of a shepherd but the naturalistic elements surpass those that could have been related to Christianity. I would consider a shepherd, in general, as a natural and rural profession, as he is always in contact with nature and animals. Thus, when the Shepherd boy is given the title of a priest his person is exalted, but also shows that he is the closest relation to the divine. This also suggests that Nature is god-like as there is a priest devoted to her and providing religious service to Wordsworth through his joyous singing which allows Wordsworth to experience the divine through him.

#### **2.1.4 Comfort in Nature**

The divine is important in understanding Wordsworth's pagan tendencies, but another trait found in nature is her ability to comfort and soothe Wordsworth's soul, and provide him with that which Christianity cannot. One way he does this is by anthropomorphising Nature into a motherly figure. He refers to earth as a feminine subject and through his veneration of

nature, and attributing her with divine powers, he is creating a Mother Nature type of divinity. He claims that

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;  
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,  
And, even with something of a Mother's mind  
And no unworthy aim,  
The homely Nurse doth all she can  
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,  
Forget the glories he hath known ("Ode" lines 77-83)

This passage supports my claim that Nature becomes something comforting which Christianity does not provide. Earth fills her lap with pleasures, arguably natural elements such as trees, mountains, and rivers, which caused Wordsworth to realise there was still a glory within nature and was able to soothe his grief. Nature provides Wordsworth with what he needs to live on earth after having lived in Paradise. Nature is a mother, homely, a nurse, proving pleasures, while God, the father, is essentially never mentioned, and if he is there it is not a direct connection between the two, only a vague memory. God is not able to contribute to the feelings of joy on earth the way Nature is because what he can give are only memories and nothing direct. Nature's motherly mind is unmistakably an important part of the comfort she offers to Wordsworth, as she is trying to take care of her "Foster-child" ("Ode" line 82). She acts like a mother to humanity; but foster-child implies humans are not her children, arguably because Wordsworth believes our souls come "From God" ("Ode" line 65). However, in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth notes that we are "children of the earth" (*The Prelude* V line 97), meaning there is a sense of home and family between humanity and earth. Whether she is our natural mother or our foster-mother, she is the who provides Wordsworth with what he needs for his time on earth to be as joyful and beautiful as possible.

In relation to Christianity the idea of a motherly divine is quite heretical and this replacement of the father for a motherly divine is not unknown in pagan religions. In neopaganism, a spiritual movement in modern society which revives pagan themes, symbols, and goddess figures, according to Carol Matthews, there is also the use of priest and priestesses who worship natural elements and not the Christian God (339). Eugene Gallagher reports that there are both priest and priestesses of the Craft, pagan religions, and they worship "the

Goddess” (855). One pagan priest “entered a Protestant seminary at nineteen” (Gallager 858) but became, as Margot Adler reports, serious about the “concept of the deity as feminine, not just as a subsidiary Virgin Mary, but THE big one” (qtd. in Gallagher 858). Virgin Mary is clearly not God, but she serves the role of the mother of God, or Jesus who is part of God. She is an important mother figure, and God serves as the father figure and creator. Thus, it is interesting that they claim the feminine deity is a substitute for the big one, God, and not simply a reference to something motherly within religion, such as the Virgin Mary. This seems to be what Wordsworth is doing, referring to Nature as something more than her physical form, through her actions as a mother and as a replacement for glory. This also implies that Nature’s Priest could be a priest of Mother Nature, which Wordsworth made divine through the newfound glory within. Wordsworth also does this in his “With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb’st the sky” where the moon becomes a substitute for God, as Cynthia, one of the many names for “the Cretan Mother Earth” which we will get back to (Duthie 28). He is not simply worshipping nature, but creating a divine being from it, and since paganism is not restricted to a monotheistic god such as Christianity, it would also allow for feminine goddesses. Ancient Greek mythology proves this with their multitude of goddesses. It seems Wordsworth is not only applying pagan language to explain and explore his religious beliefs and affections, but showing us that there is something more within Nature than what meets the eye.

Nature provides Wordsworth with something which Christianity does not, a feeling of comfort and natural piety unclouded by doctrines deciding what makes man pious. Abrams notes, however, that Christianity has an advantage against other religions, as “paganism is hopeless, but Christianity gives man hope; hope is not only an obligation but also a reward for Christian faith,” since the Biblical scheme is symmetrical with a clear ending with paradise (37). However, Wordsworth does not follow the Christian faith, he has lost the ability to feel and see God’s glory, yet does not wish to atone nor seek salvation for his actions of crediting natural beauties to Nature herself and enjoying her without God’s light. Also, he does not seem to consider that his life will end with Paradise but is focused on his time on earth. What Wordsworth does is diminish the role of God but keeping the divine aspect within nature. There is a sense of godliness in nature alone, without the need of any God to justify it. Indeed, he claims that we come by “trailing clouds of glory” (Wordsworth, “Ode” line 64), yet we know God’s celestial light and glory has disappeared from earth, meaning what we follow is Nature’s own glory and power. Even this idea is heterodox as we are giving the divine status to something

which is not God. Christianity does not give Wordsworth hope, only Nature is able to bring that back through, as we have seen, her motherly aspects and being in direct engagement with her. It is Nature who removes his timely utterance of grief and nature which is connected to the happy child and his bliss, not God.

This comfort Wordsworth finds in nature also becomes clear in his rejection of Christian doctrines through the happy Shepherd boy. By examining the traditional concept of salvation it becomes clear his relationship with nature is essentially pagan and not Christian. Wordsworth is losing hope and faith in God, since it is his celestial light and glory which is lost, which should make him want to seek salvation and redemption to find his way back to God. Instead of repenting Wordsworth is in direct engagement with nature and is joyous over the children playing.

My heart is at your festival,  
My head hath its coronal,  
The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all (“Ode” lines 39-41).

Similar to the Greeks, who, according to Barnett, “had a wide variety of gods, goddesses, and spirits that animated the natural world, they [and Wordsworth] had no need for a single monolithic symbol of evil or human error” (7). There is no expression of human error or evil in Wordsworth’s “Ode,” and instead of repenting his loss of celestial light it sounds like he is entitled to enjoy the Shepherd boy’s natural closeness to nature, his blissful state, without any sacrifice being required. However, according to *The Book of Common Prayer* the only way of “obtaining eternal Salvation” is “only by the name of Christ” because the scriptures only gave us his name (686). Nature allows Wordsworth to dismiss this need and focus on the natural beauties around him which the child encounters. Indeed, Wordsworth said: “I can feel more sympathy with the orthodox believer who needs a Redeemer,” but also added that he himself had “no need of a Redeemer” (qtd in. Abrams 120). As we have witnessed, despite Wordsworth growing further away from his memories of Paradise and losing track of the celestial light, he finds something else to replace it and comfort him when thoughts of grief might strike him, which Christianity seems to be lacking. There is a divine power within Nature which does not require any sacrifice to experience, which is what Wordsworth turns to.

Wordsworth clearly loves and admires Nature, her powers, her motherly aspect, the glory residing within her, and the natural world even manages to somewhat replace Paradise, or remove his longing for it. I would dare to claim that Earth alone should not be able to serve as a replacement for Paradise, but Wordsworth says: “Behold the Child among his new-born blisses” (“Ode” line 85). The child is born into the earthly world of *bliss* which could mean “ethereal, spiritual: perfect joy or felicity, supreme delight,” suggesting there is something divine about nature (“bliss” OED). The ambiguity prevails and we are given more evidence for divinity within nature without God’s light despite Wordsworth’s effort to regain it in the beginning. Indeed, recall Priestman’s point that “Wordsworthian ‘Nature-worship’” became harmless, as if it was used simply as symbolism, that we eventually forgot how important “the substitution of ‘Nature’ for ‘God’ was in atheist discourse” (156). Though clearly not atheistic poetry, there is a pagan meaning to Nature’s Priest as the child becomes the priest of Nature and not the priest of God, through the natural *blisses* around him. Indeed, Mother Earth is able to make us forget other glories by simply giving us her pleasures. Her divine abilities are heightened when Wordsworth concludes that the agonies of losing this sight will also, contradictory though it might seem, be healed by growing up. Nature is again showing her soothing and comforting side to her inmate. Nature is the one who is able to cure the loss of celestial light, which could suggest that nature is even greater than where we came from.

Though nothing can bring back the hour  
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower,  
We will grieve not, rather find  
Strength in what remains behind,  
In the primal sympathy  
Which having been must ever be (Wordsworth, “Ode” lines 180-185)

What has been lost was special to Wordsworth, as nothing can bring back that particular splendour. But there is a different strength found in our more primal sympathies which brings out a different greatness in nature. Regaining his strength in that which is left behind, Nature and the primal sympathies, and human emotions, implies there is something strong enough to help him overcome the loss of celestial light. This is supported by the idea that the child is *still* Nature’s Priest. As he grows up and loses his sight, like Wordsworth did, he will see the beauty and greatness of Nature, indicating that even though there is nothing celestial left there is something divine with nature as it becomes a replacement for heaven, as there is still glory on

earth and the emotions derived from Nature are able to cure his grief. These sympathies are connected to Nature, hence glorious flowers and grass, and serve as a comfort to Wordsworth as he finds strength within it.

Human emotions in contact with Nature allows him to overcome his grief, and the final four lines suggest there is something more to nature which can only be brought out my human emotions, creating a deeper connection between his humanity and Nature, allowing a more pagan lifestyle. Considering this is the final stanza this is also his conclusion to the loss of his sight of celestial light.

Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,  
To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears (Wordsworth, "Ode" lines 203-206)

His strong emotions, mixed with the "might" ("Ode" line 192) he feels from Nature portrayed through the "Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves" (line 190), allows him to perceive nature in a different light. Wordsworth elevates the lowlier forms, just as he did concerning the Shepherd boy, though now he elevates the *meanest* flower, which could mean a flower of "low social status" and "not of the nobility or gentry," though is mostly used as an exaggeration ("mean" OED). It is a simple flower, but thanks to his human emotions nature becomes something greater than the physical aspect of it. Despite the loss of celestial light he looks to his humanity and uses it, and the primal sympathies, to elevate nature. But Nature also brings out those feelings that "lie too deep for tears," arguably the strongest emotions available to humans since nature has also caused him to praise the loss of celestial light (Wordsworth, "Ode" line 206). There seems to be a mixing of his own emotions which affects his relationship with Nature, but Nature also provides him with strong feelings which affects him. Through a change in himself Wordsworth gains an understanding of what is truly right in front of him, Nature, rather than seeking out that which he cannot have, the celestial light.

There is a connection between our humanity and nature which allows Wordsworth to see nature as something comforting in times of need, because "in our embers / Is something that doth live" ("Ode" lines 132-3), the soul's connection to the divine, which "nature yet remembers" (line 134). There is something divine within nature which makes Wordsworth

remember a blissful time, like that which the soul remembers, which causes him to remember his love for Nature rather than his time in Paradise. The transformation happens to Wordsworth as he embraces the “earthly freights” given by nature (“Ode” line 129), the human emotions, or “primal sympathies” (line 184), and the feelings that “spring / Out of human suffering” (lines 186-7), rather than focusing on the lost divinity of childhood. The Christian divinity found in the child is replaced by a natural one, which also includes human emotions. Margaret Homans claims, however, that in the final part of the “Ode” the flower is given “an effect disproportionate to the thing itself” (55). Considering the effect the flower has on Wordsworth it seems to have spiritual properties, producing emotions and thoughts that are beyond human emotions, innate in Nature. Somewhat similar to what he is looking for within the child’s link to God, something beyond us. These thoughts are like those he felt as a child, seen in the earlier stanzas of the poem, they are each on their end of the emotional scale, one producing happiness the other something which is “too deep for tears” (“Ode” line 206). Both produce the strongest type of emotion, and if it was the thought of God and Paradise within the child that produced happiness it would not be unlikely that Nature also produce divine emotions. God, and the emotions that follow him from early in the ode are replaced by Nature and her divine effects on Wordsworth.

This replacement of God for Nature also affects Wordsworth’s view of Heaven, or Paradise, and the possibility that the natural world he lives in could serve as a replacement. Adding an epigraph with Greek mythological connotations implies it is not the Christian Paradise that will come, but a Golden Age, a pagan heaven. In this case the child bringing the new age is the Shepherd boy who is Nature’s Priest, at first bringing with him his connection to Paradise but in the end guiding Wordsworth to Nature, and possibly his Paradise.

Though inland far we be,  
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea  
Which brought us hither,  
Can in a moment travel thither,  
And see the Children sport upon the shore,  
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore (Wordsworth, “Ode” lines 165-170)

What Wordsworth has experiences throughout the “Ode” has been Nature’s ability to soothe and dazzle him. There are few examples of Paradise, God, angels; nothing symbolising or

affirming any connection to Christianity within this passage, but rather a description of his joy within nature and mighty water, suggesting Nature is becoming his paradise. Wordsworth's paradise can "be achieved simply by a union of man's mind with nature," making his nature references more pagan than Christian because of the predominantly pagan undertones within Greek mythology (Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* 95). Wordsworth introduced the lowly flower and the emotions it brought out in him. He introduced the mighty mountains, and the glories that still reside on earth after the celestial light has gone. This is the common day which celestial light fades into, and the primal sympathies brought out by Nature. It fades into the light of Nature, that which surrounds him every day, a Paradise on earth to him. Wordsworth began his ode seeking out paradise and divine light, but ends it with feeling the might of divine Nature, and knowing that paradise can come to earth he might already be feeling it through his regained connection with Nature.

As I have shown, Wordsworth's language is rather ambiguous, sometimes he mentions God and the importance of where our souls come from, but other times he completely dismisses him and focus on Nature instead. Like Hartman noted, his language is shy and it seems he is not fully aware that the powers he dedicates to Nature seem to replace God. As Trilling puts it, he does not fully "realize his hopes for these new powers" ("Immortality Ode" 151). Instead of, like many critics claim, this being a song sung to the loss of powers, I have provided evidence that suggests the opposite as he does conclude that Nature is even more beautiful without God's light. Nature is a caring mother, a divine power able to soothe him in his grief and does not require anything in return. It is a dedication to the powers gained from this loss, which evolves Nature, allowing her to take the role of a divine being. This results in the dismissal of rules and doctrines of Christianity and allows Wordsworth to worship the way he feels will benefit him and improve his life.

## **2.2 "The World Is Too Much with Us"**

Wordsworth's wish to connect with the divine without the strict rules of religion becomes even clearer in "The World Is Too Much with Us." He struggles at the beginning of the "Ode" with accepting the change within divine power, though in earlier poems in this collection his acceptance of Nature as divine is much clearer. Christianity is not enough to serve his religious needs in his ode, which becomes evident in "The World Is Too Much with Us" as



well. “The World” has, according to Arnold Fox and Martin Kallich, a “simple appeal, a theme that strikes a responsive chord in most readers” (327). Perhaps “it is too familiar,” as Karl Kroeber says (183). This sonnet has simple language which continues to grasp at the subject of exaltation of nature and in doing so rejects Christianity.

### **2.2.1 The World**

The poem begins with the narrator, possibly an alter-ego of Wordsworth himself, addressing his fellow humans about the wrongdoings of man in the world since “The world is too much with us” (“The World” line 1). The meaning behind *world* can be more than the physical earth, and it appears several places in the King James Version of The Bible. In this section I will discuss two of these references to the *world* in the Bible, since they appear more prominent and descriptive than others. The first one is from the Gospel of Luke and tells of the event where Jesus was led into the wilderness and tempted by the devil. The devil takes him high upon a mountain, shows him the “kingdoms of the world” and says: “All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it” (Luke 4.5, 4.6). The world becomes the physical world, possibly the world in which humans live. Despite the world being created by God, it seems He does not rule it entirely according to the devil. And since it is a world focused on “getting and spending,” according to Wordsworth, rather than religious devotion to God, it is not a good world to live in (“The World” line 2). In this case, the devil appears to hold dominion over earth, or he could be lying, which could imply it is not a place of joy. It is not the place Wordsworth is seeing it as at the end of the ode but rather the opposite.

There are some clear connections between the negative aspects of the material world in which we live and Christianity, as the devil rules it, and Wordsworth’s comment to the “Great God” (Wordsworth, “The World” line 9) and the claim he would “*rather be / A Pagan*” (line 9-10, my emphasis) continues the negative view of Christianity. By stating he would rather be pagan, he is also saying that what he is now, arguably Christian, he would rather not be. This is the case not only because Wordsworth is directing his speech to the Christian God but also because people in the society, or world, he lived in were predominantly Christian. He is complaining to God about how life has evolved from the Pagan ways of spirituality to the materialistic life in which we lose sight of the beauties of nature. Indeed, “the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word,

and it becometh unfruitful” (Mark 4.19). The world in which humanity lives distracts us from the spiritual truth of God and Jesus because of getting and spending, the riches we lust for. Christians have followed the world, which encompasses all those bad things that distract us from God’s word, hence why the “world is too much with us” (“The World” line 1). However, in Matthew it is said that Jesus “went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers” (Matthew 21.13) because his “house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matthew 21.14). Wordsworth’s wish to remove himself from a world of getting and spending by removing himself from Christianity is thus ill founded since Jesus also condemned both greed and materialism. This strengthens Wordsworth’s own claim that he would rather be a pagan, but also my argument since he is clearly showing preference to paganism by criticizing the Christian society for not following the gospels.

The end of naturalistic adoration is caused by materialistic lust, and Wordsworth wishes to remove himself from the material world to connect to the natural world so he can have glimpses of Nature which would make him “less forlorn” (“The World” line 12). But Karl Kroeber claims the opening phrase, “The world is too much with us; late and soon” (“The World” line 1), is not self-explanatory, as it could mean the natural world and a materialistic world, seen in line 2 where the *world* is a life of “getting and spending.” This, Kroeber claims, does not limit the *world* to the natural one but one which references “human affairs in industrial centers” and “more general interchanges than those involving money” (184). He claims it is so because the world is not damaged by the materialism of “getting and spending,” as “Wordsworth does not assert that natural beauty is spoiled by the encroachment of urban civilization” (Kroeber 185). Industrial affairs are important within the poem because the circumstances causing Wordsworth’s depressed state is that we are too focused on material goods than we are on natural ones. Wordsworth is not, however, discussing the impact of industrialization in the sense of physical changes, but in spiritual changes which removes him from the world he wishes to see. Line three provides enough information for the reader to understand that it is the natural world, and not the industrial one, which is in focus: “Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;— / Little we see in Nature that is ours;” (Wordsworth, “The World” lines 2-3). We are losing our powers by getting and spending, the actions of materialism, choosing it over the natural world. In a sense Kroeber is right, we become integrated in an industrial and material world. But what Wordsworth does, is make a reference

to a material world and uses it as a contrast to make it clear that by wasting our powers on material goods, we waste our true powers which we could have used to be dazzled by Nature and see something divine within her, which becomes clear at the end of the poem when he sees Triton and Proteus.

Wordsworth is seeking out paganism because it changes his perception of the world, as they make better use of that which already exists around them, namely nature. His pagan references come from the veneration of nature which also lies at the core of pagan values. Fox and Kallich, however, claim that paganism is a poor answer to Wordsworth's dilemma, since paganism existed at the time but in a more "primitive culture" in a "less demanding, confusing, and distracting world," which made them "more sensitive to the beauty and spirituality of nature" (329). They claim that if this is "what Wordsworth had in mind, then it was not the religion of nature which he sought but cultural primitivism" (Fox and Kallich 329). If paganism is found in a primitive, less demanding, and less distracting world, then what is the world in which Christianity exists? Arguably the world of "getting and spending" which distracts Wordsworth from Nature's spirituality ("The World" line 2). Fox & Kallich claim Wordsworth's sonnet "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge" shows that Wordsworth's love for nature is not as simple as seen in "The World," since the city can "wear / The beauty of the morning" ("Westminster Bridge" lines 4-5). They claim this "disproves the assertion of the second poem, for even the world has beauty in it if properly perceived," and that the escape into paganism is not an adequate response, but similar in balance to "excessive materialism" (Fox and Kallich 329). Although they do make a good point claiming beauty can be found in more places when properly perceived, it is not the city which is beautiful, but with the addition of the morning sun it could be. The city *wears* the sunlight to make itself look better, somewhat similar to how nature was apparelled in celestial light in the "Ode." This is also relative in relation to Wordsworth's wish to be a pagan. It is not the primitivism Wordsworth is looking for in the pagan lifestyle, but their veneration for the natural, also seen in how Triton and Proteus evokes positive feelings rather than those that make him "forlorn" ("The World" line 12). It is the natural phenomenon of the morning sun rising that changes Wordsworth's perception of the city to something beautiful.

## 2.2.2 Spiritual Life in Nature

The world is too much with us because we follow it blindly, in doing so we forget and neglect our spiritual self, but Wordsworth is aware of this and seeks to restore the lost spirituality through nature and not God. In restoring his spirituality, he looks to Nature and those gods that inhabit it, in this case Triton and Proteus: “Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea; / Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn” (“The World” line 13-14). Wordsworth’s use of them is, according to Fox and Kallich (330), inconsistent as he has mentioned the Sea with feminine features earlier when she “bares her bosom” (“The World” line 5). However, I would argue the inclusion of Triton and Proteus is a way to draw his earlier mentioning of the Sea together with the spirituality of nature. Her feminine features and their masculine features do not clash, but are part of the natural way of life, thus whether they be male or female are not important, but that they are someone rather than something. They are pagan gods and Wordsworth, as a Christian, hence his call to God earlier, includes them as an opposing force to the Christian God as a way of showing the reader the spirituality hiding within nature. Because he is living within a materialistic society he is not able to see these gods, but by turning to paganism he is opening up a lost part of himself, the power we lay waste to in line two of “The World.”

The idea of divinity or spirituality within nature continues and creates a link between nature and humanity, which is intensified in lines 5-7 where Wordsworth transforms “the natural world into a *human* landscape” (Kroeber 186).

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers; (“The World” lines 5-7)

The howling winds, sounds of the sea, and Triton’s “wreathèd horn” (“The World” line 14) are contrasted to the sleeping flowers, and represent the “glimpses” and actions of nature which will make him “less forlorn” (line 12). Furthermore, the sea, the moon, and the “pleasant lea” (line 11) are examples of “opposing scenes of serenity and storm” (Fox and Kallich 328). These contrasts provide a way for Wordsworth to show his readers “the two extreme kinds of spirit that nature exhibits,” but also “the presence of life in nature” (Fox and Kallich 328). This presence of life becomes alive in the Sea, who is somewhat anthropomorphised by being

referred to as a *her* and by describing her with a capital S. She is, however, not given a name, making the personification more in tune with Nature than humanity, and in this case “The “human” adjective blends back into the “natural” noun” (Kroeber 186). By blending human and natural we return to a place where they are naturally linked. In doing so Wordsworth keeps us “aware of the human in nature and the natural in human” (Kroeber 187). By personifying the Sea, Wordsworth is making a connection between humans, nature, and the spiritual.

The Sea is a combination of natural forces and a human, connecting both the natural to the human and the human to nature. This is also what would be the case when humans personified the gods and made them closer to humanity. Triton and Proteus are examples of this, as they are both sons of Poseidon, yet not as godlike as they are lesser gods of the sea (Duthie 43). They inhabit the powers of nature, as the Sea does, but often become shaped as humans, as Wordsworth also does to the Sea by giving her the female pronoun *she*. This might make them more relatable since the connection between humanity and gods becomes somewhat similar to what Wordsworth has done with the Sea. As Homer said, if human beings are not sufficient in explaining the unknown it will be displaced to something else, a personification of the powers needed which is “more or less, according to the imaginative ability of their worshippers” (qtd. in Duthie 1). Thus, if humans tend to think of themselves as the most divine and grand form on earth, it would be natural that gods should look like them. It is also worth noting that many families, both “mythical and historical, claimed Poseidon as an ancestor” (Duthie 44). The idea that one can be related to a god brings humanity closer to the divine, similarly to what Wordsworth is doing here, he is making humanity closer to nature, and by also including the divine shortening the distance between the spiritual world and earth. The wish to see Proteus and Triton, and possibly doing so, serves as a way for man to experience the divine through the same means which “the ancient pagans achieved,” and through this we can become in tune with nature (Kroeber 188). This close connection allows for a flexible relationship between Wordsworth and the divine because he can worship the element which will bring him the most joy and pleasure in the moment.

### **2.2.3 Comfort in Nature #2**

Instead of having to follow the doctrines of Christianity, as opposed to the close to non-existent ones in paganism, Wordsworth turns to paganism to find comfort and joy. By

complaining to God that nature does not move his heart anymore and claiming “Great God! I’d rather be / A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn” (“The World” lines 9-10), Wordsworth seems to be implying that there is something about Christianity which is troublesome to him. It is a plea for a different way of relating the world to earth without the bad connotations that follows them in the New Testament. He follows up his claim that we are too much for the world with a description of how the Sea “bares her bosom to the moon” (The World” line 5) and that “The winds that will be howling at all hours” (The World” line 6), which ends the octave, the first eight lines of an Italian sonnet. Furthermore, he begins the sestet, which could serve as a resolution to the poem as they are the final six lines, with a remark claiming we do not feel anything when we see nature, even the way he has just described it makes no difference to us, and nature becomes “up-gathered now like sleeping flowers” since a sleeping flower does not show all of its beauty (“The World” line 7). This makes Wordsworth so heartbroken that he complains to God that he would rather be a pagan so he could be able to see these beautiful images in nature. This God he complains to may not be able to inspire the appreciation of the world, as earth, nature, and pagan gods could. Indeed, we shall see this in his other poem “With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb’st the sky” that the way to experience Nature and her divinity fully is to see the moon in light of pagan gods. If he was a pagan he would be able to see Triton and Proteus, he would be in direct contact with the spiritual life within nature, which would make him hopeful again. The solution to the dilemma of material goods is to become a pagan and thus be able to see the divine in nature and appreciate it.

Indeed, Christianity becomes closely related to the issue of lost admiration for nature, meaning turning away from it would be a pathway to regaining the spiritual aspect Wordsworth is looking for. As Kroeber puts it, it is “better to be a simple pagan than a money-grubbing modern,” an interpretation he claims “could not have persisted did it not contain much truth” (183-4). In Kroeber’s comment, the Christian is the “money-grubbing modern” (183-4), while the pagan is simple, arguably more natural, thus it is only natural Wordsworth would seek out the pagan lifestyle rather than the Christian one connected to the “getting and spending” he is trying to get away from (“The World” line 2). To this lifestyle of getting and spending, “We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!” (“The World” line 4), however, giving our hearts away should be a positive dedication to that which we love, hence a boon, but it has become sordid. Richard Matlak claims *sordid* can mean “of despicable character” often related to “monetary gain” (117). This would certainly add another link between Christianity and the

material world Wordsworth wishes to escape. However, I do not think Wordsworth, nor Kroeber, is implying that Christians are avaricious but that the modern man has left the natural world, which from Wordsworth's point of view is the pagan world, and entered one where materialism is central and Christianity happens to be significant. Indeed, most people in England were Christians during the Romantic period when "The World" was written. Unlike what Abrams would argue, that Wordsworth's language implies a Christian undertone, or that his paganism is merely a step "on mankind's path to Christian enlightenment" (Barnett 92), as Barnett claims, it seems paganism allows Wordsworth an escape, a comfort, from the modern materialistic society. It does not seem Christianity is able to provide this escape, from Wordsworth's wording, despite the Gospels preaching the negative aspect of materialism and greed.

Giving our hearts away to materialism made us lose sight of the importance of Nature, which Wordsworth considers "a sordid boon!" ("The World," line 4). The word *boon* comes from Old Norse and means "prayer," but during Wordsworth's lifetime it could also be considered an "unpaid service due by a tenant to his lord" ("boon" OED). But the boon is *sordid*, meaning "Dirty, foul, filthy" ("sordid" OED) and as Edward Proffitt noted, it is a "foul gift," and since giving is the basis for the action it becomes negative (75). The way Wordsworth positions the giver and the taker of the boon suggests it is *we*, humans, who are paying our due to the lord by giving our hearts away and pledging our loyalty to a world of getting and spending, replacing God with the material world. The world becomes the receiver of this boon, as we are giving our hearts away to it, a gesture which should have been a boon, though it has been contaminated by getting and spending. The giving becomes a filthy prayer and a bad replacement for the service we owe our lord, God. We have failed God, following the world rather than him. Thus, Wordsworth's cry to God, "I'd rather be / A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn," is a confession that he would rather be a pagan, in a well-worn, comfortable creed, rather than a failed Christian who has replaced God with the material world (line 9-10). Despite the fact that Christianity and Wordsworth reject the materialism of the world, Christianity does not offer an immediate consolation. Within paganism, however, there is comfort within the natural world because of the divine powers residing within it. Rather than having to wait for the coming of Paradise, Nature can provide instant gratification. The idea that the prayer is foul could also be an indication of its heretical undertone, as Wordsworth knows Christianity does not offer a solution to his problem and feels the need to turn to paganism to regain his lost

spiritual connection to nature. Paganism becomes the positive solution, as counter to what Christianity cannot provide, with immediate consolation for his pains with the spirituality within nature.

Wordsworth's prayer to God is more of a complaint to than anything else, and by introducing God followed up by the wish to be a pagan Wordsworth is contrasting his wish for natural love and the "getting and spending" we do which results in laying "waste our powers" (Wordsworth, "The World" line 2). What Wordsworth is doing is showing the reader where he seeks resolution and comfort. Fox and Kallich do not think that juxtaposing God and pagan is appropriate in the way Wordsworth does. They find his exclamation to God, that he wants to be a pagan, to be the characterization of "loose thinking which undermines this poem and leaves it a disappointingly sentimental work" (Fox and Kallich 328). *Pagan* is the key word in Wordsworth's exclamation to God saying, "I'd rather be / A Pagan" (Wordsworth, "The World" lines 9-10), but the introduction of *Great God* before it is the "inappropriate" part (Fox and Kallich 328). They claim it gives the reader "a sense of carelessness" as it introduces an "irrelevant and unintegrated monotheistic conception which clashes with polytheistic paganism" and gives the reader an "unresolved irony" (Fox and Kallich 328). I would argue that Fox and Kallich has underestimated the relevance entirely, as this clash is not irrelevant but relevant. It is indeed, as they say, inappropriate, because Wordsworth lives in a Christian community but completely rejects Christianity as a solution to his problem. He would rather dedicate himself to a "creed outworn" ("The World" line 10) because it serves his needs better than Christianity and brings him closer to nature. Remember Coleridge's comment on Wordsworth's use of God, where Priestman claims he means the references are "crudely conventional as to patently insincere" (157). He is invoking God for the sole reason of rejecting him and not because he believes he can help since he already knows paganism can bring back the spiritual aspect through the gods he wishes to invoke. This is also what happened in his ode, as he searches for the celestial light because he believes it will bring back the glories of nature, but concludes that it cannot. Here, he already knew that Christianity would not be able to serve his needs, and turns to paganism instead. This juxtapositioning allows Wordsworth to show his readers what paganism can offer, namely a close relationship to nature, and a comfort that Christianity cannot offer in return because of its connection to a materialistic lifestyle which removes us from nature. It is a daring comparison, as he completely rejects Christianity and any



relation between it, nature, and a peaceful heart, but it is what Wordsworth needs to prove his point, similarly to how he needs paganism to show his devotion to nature.

When Wordsworth makes a comment to “Great God” (“The World” line 9), that he would rather be something else, he is implying not only that he is a Christian living in a Christian society, but also that there is something he does not accept about Christianity. Indeed, as Donald Rackin notes, Wordsworth’s cry to “Great God” is here an “expression of despair rather than a cry of hope, faith, or worship” (67). Arguably, Christianity is not naturalistic enough, the ways Wordsworth describes the Sea is not common for man to see, “For this, for everything, we are out of tune” (Wordsworth, “The World” line 8). At best, Wordsworth’s cry is ambiguous, as it could be a blasphemous expression of dissatisfaction by calling the Lord’s name in vain, or a genuine call to God. However, it seems the pagan ways of anthropomorphising nature and finding spirituality within it, feeling and seeing “Proteus rising from the sea” and hearing “Triton blow his wreathèd horn” (“The World” lines 13-14), is more appealing than the opposite, “getting and spending” (line 2) which in this case is related to Christianity. Wordsworth is, according to Rackin, searching for a “passive experience” with spirituality, probably because he wishes we could still see the beauties of the world simply by glancing at it and not having to do a specific action to see it (67). Unlike within Christianity where one prays to God to connect, Wordsworth seeks out a natural way of connecting with the divine, and by including more than one pagan god he is giving himself the opportunity to communicate with whichever divine might be most suited to his needs at the moment. The shift from paganism to Christianity within cities increased the pagan connection to nature, but might also have increased Christianity’s connection to the more material world, simply because of their urban location. As mentioned, paganism became a more savage and uncultured religion because of this, causing its connection to the natural to grow, which is why Wordsworth’s references are more often directed towards it rather than Christianity.

Wordsworth is, in a way, replacing contemporary Christianity with paganism, as the references are similar to Christian ones, though dedicated to Nature. David Ketterer argues he is not replacing Christianity with paganism, but that the “alternative extreme, the pagan adoration of natural elements in the form of anthropomorphic gods, is preferable” (122). If the possibility to change from the undesirable to the preferable should come it would be natural to do so. As seen in his “Ode,” he replaces his naïve hope of regaining celestial light with nature and the emotions she conjures up within him are the “Thoughts that do often lie too deep for

tears” (line 206). He also devotes himself to the moon in “O Moon” because she is his both his “Goddess” (line 9) and his “Queen both for beauty and for majesty” (line 14). Wordsworth’s adoration and veneration for nature surpasses that of a casual preference for nature. Contrary Ketterer’s argument that Wordsworth is not replacing Christianity with paganism, the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote a direct response to “The World Is Too Much with Us,” called “God’s Grandeur,” in which he says: “The world is charged with the grandeur of God” (Hopkins line 1) and ends by saying that the “World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings” (Hopkins line 14). Donald Rackin notes that Hopkins is “ironically counterpointing Wordsworth’s cries of impending despair with his own assertions of faith” (Rackin 66). The final lines of the poem “parallel each other too closely” as “Wordsworth concludes yearning for some sight of pagan gods rising out of his monolith,” while Hopkins presents “the Christian God rising alive” (Rackin 66). By comparing the two poems the difference between the two becomes clear and Wordsworth’s language becomes even more pagan. Hopkins wrote his “God’s Grandeur” as a counter to “The World,” implying that Wordsworth’s Christian reference to God is not enough to satisfy a Christian’s religious connection and that the poem’s function as a religious piece is pagan in nature rather than Christian despite his use of religious, often Christian, words such as *glory* in describing his relationship with nature.

It seems Wordsworth is using paganism as a way out of the material world, which he implies is closely linked to Christianity. In calling to God that he wished to escape he also implies the wrongs within either Christianity itself, or the Christian society; Christianity is not able to soothe his soul, nor help him experience nature the way he wishes. Nature provides Wordsworth the comfort he needs on earth and a way to express himself in “Ode,” while Christianity caused him despair because he could not remember his time in Paradise. Similarly, “The World” shows us that Christianity is not close enough to nature to serve Wordsworth’s need as a spiritual platform, but paganism is. This becomes clearer in “With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the sky,” as Christianity is again diminished and his trust in paganism strengthened as it allows him a closer connection to the divine nature.

## 2.3 “With How Sad Steps, O Moon, Thou Climb’st the Sky”

These powers we lay waste to, which Wordsworth eventually regains in the final part of the ode, the appeal to nature as something greater, is also prominent in his fifteen-line sonnet “With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the sky.” It also appears before both the “Ode” and “The World” in his collection *Poems, In Two Volumes* and brings out his inner pagan. Both the other poems analysed so far explore a side of Wordsworth which he does not fully understand himself. He is searching for that lost connection to nature, but in “O Moon” he clearly has no trouble connecting to Nature, nor perceiving the divine within it.

### 2.3.1 Love and Devotion

One of the aspects of “O Moon” I find to be most important is Wordsworth’s love and adoration for the moon, which is both pagan and emotional. This becomes easier to understand by understanding the reference within the first few lines of the poem which are taken directly from a love sonnet by Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophel and Stella* sonnet 31, according to Wordsworth’s own notes (Matlak 93). It almost serves the same role as a preface, as any reader familiar with Sidney’s sonnet would have known that *Astrophel and Stella* is a sequence of sonnets which together tells the story of Astrophel, the lover, and Stella, his beloved. In sonnet 31 Astrophel consults the moon because he sees her sad face and sees that even in heaven the archer tries his sharp arrows, referring to Eros or Cupid, and states that if her “long-with-love-acquainted eyes / Can judge of love, thou feel’st a lovers case” (Sidney, “Sonnet 31” lines 5-6). The moon is here, as well as in Wordsworth’s poem, anthropomorphised. She is not only able to feel love and emphasise with Astrophel, hence her “long-with-love-acquainted eyes” and how she can feel a lover’s cause, but she is the judge of love (Sidney line 5). Her status is elevated from being a natural object to a moral judge, almost like a god or goddess. The sonnet following the one Wordsworth used explains how Morpheus has stolen the image of Stella from the dreaming lover, according to A. C. Hamilton (66), which is interesting considering Wordsworth has felt himself distanced from nature, as if it was stolen, or lost from him because he followed the world rather than nature and Christianity rather than Triton and Proteus. Indeed, Astrophel says when Stella is lost to him he “could not, see my blisse” (Sidney, “Sonnet 33” line 2). Similarly, Wordsworth thought he had lost the glory of nature but realizes the child is born into a world of “new-born blisses,” as if he before, when divine nature was lost to him,

like Astrophel, could not see the bliss on earth (“Ode” line 85). Astrophel’s speech to the moon is, according to Hamilton, a “renunciation of earthly in favor [*sic*] of heavenly love” directed to his lost Stella and not the moon (64). This is arguably somewhat similar to Wordsworth’s loss of admiration for nature, which he clearly states in “The World” is gone. Knowing that Sidney’s sonnets tell the story between two lovers makes Wordsworth’s poem seem much more dedicated to a deep love towards Nature and the moon, the same way Astrophel is dedicating his love to Stella. A sonnet dedicated to the love between two lovers, and one with a similar love directed towards God, are not usually questioned about their authenticity. But when Wordsworth declares his love for Nature some critics seem to consider him to be using it as symbolism of something else. This is seen in Abrams’ comments on Wordsworth’s religious language, as there is often a Christian undertone in his comments. However, when comparing “O Moon” to Sidney’s sonnet, the love he feels becomes one of the most important aspects, and implies his love is genuine as he compares it to two star crossed-lovers.

Wordsworth dedication to the moon and admiration for her is strengthened in the final two lines where he claims that she is the most beautiful of all, and to express this he declares the palm be given to her. There has to the extent of my knowledge never been any scholarly work done on this poem previously, and no edition of *Poems, in Two Volumes* seems to be concerned about Wordsworth’s palm reference. I argue there are two ways to look at it, the first showing off Wordsworth’s knowledge of the Greco-Roman, or pagan, world, and in doing so he expressing his devotion to the moon. He is defending her beauty claiming she is the most beautiful of all: “But, Cynthia, should to Thee the palm be giv’n, / Queen both for beauty and for majesty” (Wordsworth, “O Moon” line 14). Firstly, he is referring to her as a female goddess, Cynthia. I will explore this further when discussing her in relation to the divine aspects of nature, but for now it is important to note that she is the Greco-Roman goddess of the moon. In addition, Wordsworth shows his admiration for nature, personified as a female character yet again, which also relates well to the love between Astrophel and Stella. This passage could also be a reference to the Apple of Discord from Greek mythology. The myth is that all the goddesses and gods, except for Eris, the Goddess of Discord, were invited to celebrate a wedding (Duthie 108). Infuriated by this, Eris decides to turn up and throw a golden apple, hence the Apple of Discord, down among the guests which was inscribed “For the fairest” (Duthie 108). The goddesses Hera, Aphrodite, and Athena called upon Zeus to decide who was the fairest, which he would not, instead he said they should ask the shepherd Paris, who was “in reality the second

son of [...] the king of Troy” (Duthie 108). The goddesses did so and offered him gifts in return for choosing them, Aphrodite offering him the hand of the most beautiful woman on earth, which he agreed to, and thus Paris was to be married to Helen of Troy. However, all the chieftains of Greece “had been suitors for the hand of Helen” (Duthie 110) and the Trojan war began as they felt betrayed by her father for making that decision for her. Though Wordsworth does not mention the Apple in his sonnet, Roger Boase notes that the “palm-tree is a symbol of victory,” hence to Cynthia the palm be given (40). Wordsworth is saying that Cynthia, the moon, is as beautiful as Aphrodite, the most beautiful of all, dedicating the palm and victory to her. Using the palm as a reference shows Wordsworth’s knowledge of Greco-Roman myths, but also allows him to express how strong his love and dedication is to the moon. Though I do not think Wordsworth is saying he would go to war for her, the underlying tone implies that she is important and he would fight for her, as we would for those we love. Indeed, there is a love connection within this reference, particularly since Wordsworth borrowed from Sidney’s love sonnet. This reaffirms his awe and love for nature as there is no other person or divine aspect referred to.

### **2.3.2 Life in Nature**

Life within Nature is strengthened by the divine traits Wordsworth attributes her through his veneration of nature and anthropomorphisation. She is anthropomorphised through her actions, but also through her relation to nuns and nymphs.

With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the sky,  
"How silently, and with how wan a face!"  
Where art thou? Thou so often seen on high  
Running among the clouds a Wood-nymph's race!  
Unhappy Nuns, whose common breath's a sigh  
Which they would stifle, move at such a pace! (Wordsworth, “O Moon” lines 1-6)

Astrophel in Sidney’s poem looks at the moon and feels her pain because he “feel the like” (Sidney, Sonnet 31 line 8). Similarly, Wordsworth sees the pain of the moon and emphasises with her. There is a connection between him and the moon and he can communicate with her through emotions and empathy, the same way he communicated and connected with Nature in the “Ode.” The moon travels silently, slowly, as opposed to racing with nymphs, arguably not

stirring in Wordsworth those emotions he usually feels, emotions that would make him happier than he is now. Instead, she is unhappy, like the nuns contemplating their unhappy existence, sighing but not doing anything about it. This is opposed to racing and running, an activity similar to playing in engagement with other creatures. Wordsworth has shown his love for nature earlier, and this is no exception. He wishes to see her as happy as she used to be, though now he sees her wan face and how she moves differently than she used to. The way he usually saw her is in a delighted manner, running with the clouds and nymphs, hurrying to light up the night sky, as counter to the dull and grey everyday life of nuns. He is showing his concern for her, but also showing us that the moon is not simply the moon, he is giving Nature the same traits as humans have, a face and emotions.

The Moon Goddess Cynthia works as a medium for the connection between spirituality and nature but also nature and humanity as Wordsworth can empathise with her. York believes what “ultimately distinguishes paganism from Christianity is not the number of its gods but the nature of its deity” (13). They are inherent, Cynthia in the moon, the nymphs in nature, allowing for the perception of the divine in nature, but also that they are more human than the Christian God through personification and connected to the natural world in a way similar to ours. In one way, York says, “pagan gods are human. Their superhuman qualities, whatever they may be or symbolize, are secondary to their essential human nature” (13). This is because they are all gods but also because they have, as York claims, an essential human nature and humans make mistakes. Indeed, it is said that Zeus himself was “subject to the mysterious Fates and necessity,” as humans are (Duthie 15). By introducing her as Cynthia he is creating a link between those aspects which he has not been able to experience with the Christian God, despite how much he might have tried in the “Ode.” Cynthia’s humanity comes from the anthropomorphisation of her, the physical form she is given through her feminine name, and her spiritual aspect through her title as the goddess of the moon.

These connections are again strengthened by the fact that Cynthia is considered Mother Earth. Greco-Roman gods and goddesses often have many names, and Cynthia is an epithet for Artemis, and Diana, all attributed with similar traits and symbolism, one of the main ones being the form of “the Cretan Mother Earth” (Duthie 28). The pagan connection to nature is different from Christianity’s, and much more alive and organic. Mother Earth is not simply earth where flowers grow, it is the basis for all life. The divinity of Nature and her motherly character is also found in Wordsworth’s “To the Same Flower,” being to the daisy, where the daisy is “A

Pilgrim bold in Nature's care" (line 2). It is a pilgrim related to Nature, serving Nature as a deity by travelling to sacred places, namely through nature itself, but it is also being taken care of by Nature, similar to how a god would take care of its creations. The child in Wordsworth's "Ode" is also seen as "Nature's Priest," possibly similar to the daisy, being a servant of Nature following her wishes (Wordsworth, "Ode" line 72). And the motherly aspect of Nature is also present in his "Ode," where she fills her lap with pleasures and tries to soothe her foster children's minds. Earth nurses us, brings us pleasures which are natural, suggesting the pleasures are innate in nature and because of our connection to nature, which Wordsworth promotes in several poems. These properties would naturally extend to humans if mankind is part of nature at their core. Indeed, in "The World" Wordsworth is mournful for losing touch with Nature and losing the ability to see the glories within it because it should have been natural. Priestman states that sometimes Wordsworth "determinedly avoids religious reference, preparing us instead for the idea of a life-energy which connects nature and consciousness" (181). In this case the only religious reference is to the unhappy nuns, and there is certainly a life-energy flowing through the poem which attracts Wordsworth towards Mother Earth, the moon.

### **2.3.3 Comfort in Nature #3**

Wordsworth's only religious, and Christian, reference is to unhappy nuns, while the rest of the sonnet is clearly dedicated to the moon, with references to nymphs in a delighted manner. He could have included Christian terminology, such as angels, instead of nymphs, but the idea behind an anthropomorphised moon is not connected to Christianity, but to something pagan. With the one Christian reference being towards something sad and unhappy there could be a sense of favouring one to the other and in this case it would clearly be a pagan preference. By juxtaposing the nymphs and nuns, their actions have more meaning; nuns move at a slow pace as if they are tired and weary of life, as if there is nothing that will make them happy. The nymphs, on the other hand, are actively engaged in life and enjoying the company of others in nature. It is as if the nuns do not want to admit their depressed state as they repress their sighs but their movements cannot hide it, just as the moon's movements cannot hide her pale and weak face. This negative view verifies what Wordsworth has shown us through the "Ode" and "The World," that God and Christianity cannot provide Wordsworth with what he needs, even the nuns seem to feel it with their unhappy demeanour.

Wordsworth's use of Cynthia seems to stem from how Christianity does not have the language to express his emotions, nor does it have the comforting notions he is looking for, arguably a direct and natural spirituality. According to Abrams' observations, many romantic writers used myths and legends as "metaphors for poetry" because this "older view of the world" would help them "define the malaise of their own time" (*Natural Supernaturalism* 172). This could imply that Cynthia might not be Wordsworth's goddess. The moon was a creation of God, as was the sun, and it was "the lesser light to rule the night" (Genesis 1:16). Wordsworth could have referenced it as the light of God and explained his spiritual journey through God's powers in creating such a beautiful aspect of heaven. However, this does not diminish the fact that he chose to evoke the name Cynthia, rather than finding other fitting, and more Christian, imagery. When calling to her Wordsworth becomes her subject and it is as if he is worshipping her: "Had I / The power of Merlin, Goddess! this should be" ("O Moon" lines 8-9). Wordsworth has clearly rejected God throughout these poems and now directly calls her his goddess, rejecting the Christian God yet again.

It is worth emphasising that though Virgin Mary is not associated with the moon, she is similar to Cynthia. She is the virgin, Mother of Jesus, and God in a way due to the concept of the Holy Trinity, somewhat relatable to being Mother Earth. Mary Shelley even suggested "that there is no essential difference between Christian theology and ancient mythology, that both are simply second-hand, figurative interpretations of the great mysteries of the universe" (qtd. in Barnett 5). I am not proposing a direct correlation between Virgin Mary and Cynthia or Artemis, but it is important to note that there are some similarities between Christianity and paganism, thus there might have been other symbols and terminology for Wordsworth to use. Cynthia was often depicted, according to Christopher Hart, with "highly symbolic jewels" as the "Virgin Goddess Cynthia/Diana" (140) and Artemis was also considered "an austere virgin" (Duthie 29). It might have been possible to compare the moon to the Virgin Mary, as a virgin mother, though Wordsworth chooses not to. It is interesting that she is considered a virgin goddess, the moon, and mother earth, as they all share a connection to fertility. Mother earth is our mother and nurse as seen in Wordsworth's examples earlier, the virgin goddess as a virgin, and the moon tying them all together through her connection to the female body. The mystical cycles of the moon came to represent pregnancy, since it "gradually grew larger, before declining again" (Webster 4) but also women's menstrual cycles, and thus she became the "Mother Goddess" (Webster 4) and the "great mother" (Webster 5). Nature as Mother Earth



and Artemis/Cynthia's role as Mother Goddess, both our mother, also relate to the moon. These references add to Wordsworth's pagan preferences as they are coherent to the information he provides in his poetry, particularly since he often refers to the earth as a woman, but also as a caretaker and mother. Recall Gallagher's observation about the Protestant becoming a pagan priest and that he saw the "concept of the deity as feminine, not just as a subsidiary Virgin Mary, but THE big one" (858). The moon becomes a Greco-Roman virgin, as opposed to the Virgin Mary. Earth serves the role as mother and takes the place of the Christian God and Father.

Wordsworth does not forget that the moon also "played an important role in ancient magic," as he calls to the moon that if he had the powers of the wizard Merlin he would be able to help her reach her place in heaven and find stars to accompany her, according to Stephen Benko (24). Invoking the power of Merlin is mystical and magical but also in opposition to the Christian doctrine and allows for a pagan reading of the poem.

#### Had I

The power of Merlin, Goddess! this should be:  
And all the stars, fast as the clouds were riven,  
Should sally forth, to keep thee company,  
Hurrying and sparkling through the clear blue heaven ("O Moon" lines 8-12)

The King James Bible says, "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I *am* the LORD your God" (Leviticus 19.31). Contrary to what is written in the Bible, Wordsworth clearly encourages a supportive view of paganism, as he does not seem to mind the pagan associations in this passage. Indeed, not only does Wordsworth seek a wizard's power, he imagines himself possessing that power and then serving a pagan goddess. In contemporary paganism, according to Robert Wallis and Jenny Blain, it is not uncommon to be in "direct engagements with 'nature' as deified, 'sacred', or otherwise animated and containing 'spirits'" (309). Nature, or the moon, becomes deified by Wordsworth explicitly elevating the moon to the status of a goddess and his wish to serve her, similar to the Shepherd boy's role as a priest in the "Ode."

Wordsworth is always in direct contact with the divine when it is portrayed in nature, as opposed to complaining to God, or trying to regain a lost divine power. Paganism allows Wordsworth to explore his emotions, whether they be connected to divine adoration of the

moon, or the divine bringing out strong emotions within him. In nature he can experience divine emotions within flowers, or mountains, or the divine gods by anthropomorphising nature, such as Proteus, the feminine Sea, or the moon goddess Cynthia. Indeed, his call to the Moon and suggests he experiences something special when seeing her, as he was experiencing disappointment when calling to God in “The World,” but the Moon might also be a representation for the divine as a substitution for God. Wordsworth looks at the moon and calls out “But, Cynthia!” (“O Moon” line 13), which is a direct reference to the Greco-Roman Moon Goddess. Enjoying the sight of the moon and the beauties of nature is taken a step further, and Wordsworth puts himself in direct opposition to the strictly monotheistic Christian doctrine by acknowledging the moon as a goddess. The Bible clearly states that one shall only worship God and that we shall not worship “either the sun, the moon, or any of the host of heaven” (Deuteronomy 17:3). It is somewhat similar to his earlier exclamation to God when he wishes he was a pagan, but rather than dismiss her like he wanted to do to God, he wishes the Moon to ascend the sky quicker so he may witness her beauty. There is always a sense of something missing within Christianity, though it might be difficult to pinpoint what that is, while trying to find that missing piece Wordsworth becomes closer to nature and the divine within it, and ultimately rejects Christianity in favour of the natural divine.

### **3 *The Prelude: Growth of a Poet’s Mind (1850)***

And in this twofold sphere the twofold man  
(For still the artist is intensely a man)  
Holds firmly by the natural, to reach  
The spiritual beyond

– Elizabeth Barret Browning, VII line 777-780

Just as he expressed his admiration and devotion to Nature by somewhat replacing the Christian God in *Poems* and exploring his relationship with the natural and spiritual world, Wordsworth “bend[s] in reverence / To Nature” yet again in *The Prelude* (XIII lines 224-25). *The Prelude* (1850) being Wordsworth’s autobiography links it to *Poems, in Two Volumes*, which was considered too personal for some of Wordsworth’s critics. Using poetry which expresses Wordsworth’s personal thoughts could make it easier to understand, or at least explore, Wordsworth’s spiritual experiences and preferences. He was also re-writing *The Prelude* throughout his life, bringing it up to date, meaning there might have been changes within him we can pinpoint in this work. Wordsworth’s changes are, according to Ernest de

Selincourt, mostly “to tame or diffuse expressions,” to make them clearer and to give “form and outline to a thought” which was vaguely there in the thirteen-part prelude which was drafted by 1805 (lvii). He carried the ideas which were “at the back of his mind in 1805” (Selincourt lviii). Since *Poems, in Two Volumes* came out in 1807 a lot of them were composed alongside the first near-complete draft of *The Prelude*, but the 1850 version features the older Wordsworth’s modifications of the early ideas expressed in both *Poems, Two Volumes* and the 1805 Prelude. Thus, examining them together might show us that Wordsworth’s ideas, and faith, though somewhat changed, still had nature in focus, in a similar manner to which they are portrayed “Ode.”

Wordsworth begins *The Prelude* with a dedication to Nature, lacking Christian references, though later refers to Christianity and God, which might be an expression of him growing up and changing in his life. However, there is a continuous use of ambiguous language making it difficult to decipher his religious creed, making it an interesting piece to analyse. In trying to provide evidence for Wordsworth’s pagan preference over Christianity I have chosen to focus on smaller passages from *The Prelude*, showing that Wordsworth’s religious devotion to nature is continuous, though ambiguous. In the “Ode” and *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, one of his most famous nature poems, Wordsworth was accused “of not distinguishing ‘Nature as the work of God and God himself’, and he felt it incumbent on him to remove from *The Prelude* all that might be interpreted as giving support to the heresy” (Selincourt lxxi). I will examine categories similar to those found in the “Ode,” “O Moon,” and “The World,” to show that there is a consistency in Wordsworth’s pagan language and nature devotion. Wordsworth is also using Christian language as symbolism to express his emotions and opinions, though from my understanding it seems Abrams would like to argue that the Christian undertones are of greater importance than his pagan, or nature-devoted, references. However, the examples I present will provide some evidence that Wordsworth rarely invokes God, but often invokes the power of Nature, suggesting a stronger connection between him and Nature than between him and God, possibly why there was a need to change some passages that seemed more likely to result in accusations of heresy.

The first sub-chapter will be focusing on nature’s role within Wordsworth’s life, in this case its role as a spiritual guide guiding him towards a path he wishes to travel, separated from the materialism found in urban lifestyles. Secondly, I will examine nature’s role as a mother, Mother Nature or Mother Earth, and how she has affected his upbringing. Nature becomes a

sort of replacement for the filial connection between mother and child, which also creates a deeper understanding of Wordsworth's elevation and admiration for nature, transgressing the general admiration for it as his relationship with it becomes closer. The third sub-chapter will explore Wordsworth's rejection of Christianity and sin. Nature possesses the ability to purify us, like the powers of Christ, yet instead of replacing Jesus with Nature Wordsworth seems to reject the notion of sin. This will be followed up by the fourth sub-chapter, in which I will be considering his ambiguous language. Here Wordsworth claims he walks with Nature to feed his religious love, but also uses religious language in describing God. The fifth sub-chapter will examine a tree Wordsworth sees in the "Ode," as it is a reference to a tree he saw during his time at Cambridge. The composition date for book VI, in which the tree occurs, is 1804, according to Janette Harrington (1144). And the British Library states that "Some or all of stanzas one to four [of the "Ode"] were written on 27 March 1802; most of the last seven were completed in early 1804" ("Manuscript"). This draws a direct link between the "Ode" and *The Prelude* because the tree represents that which he lost and regained, and the compositions also suggest Wordsworth was aware of the importance of the tree as he wrote them in the same year. It also reminds him of the supreme existence, which he thought to be God in his youth, though as he grows older he turns to Nature. The sixth, and final, sub-chapter will look at the end of *The Prelude* and how the ending ties everything together and favours the pagan spirituality rather than the Christian.

### 3.1 Nature as a Spiritual Guide

Throughout my analysis of the three poems from *Poems, in Two Volumes* it has become clear that Wordsworth has a special relationship with nature, which continues in *The Prelude* book I through nature's role as his guide. Nature guides him into a new life of freedom and joy, away from a materialistic and non-naturalistic world, which Christianity cannot do. The poem begins when Wordsworth has just "escaped / From the vast city" and he is grateful for the feel of a gentle breeze as it reminds him of freedom (*The Prelude*<sup>6</sup> I lines 6-7). Through nature he can attain a mental harmony which cannot be achieved in an urban lifestyle. Recall that in "The

---

<sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise stated, further references will be to the 1850 version of *The Prelude*, and will be referenced with the book number, i.e. I-XIV.

World” the only way out of the world of getting and spending was through nature-worship, demigods, and paganism. Arguably, as we have seen in “The World,” the reason for this is that Christianity does not offer the naturalistic spirituality which Wordsworth seeks. Indeed, remember that in the “Ode” we were “trailing clouds of glory” (“Ode” line 64) rather than God, and in this part of *The Prelude* Wordsworth chooses his guide to be a part of nature:

The earth is all before me. With a heart  
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty,  
I look about; and should the chosen guide  
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,  
I cannot miss my way. I breathe again! (I line 14-18)

In escaping the city there are no limits to his freedom, the earth is his to explore and to be a part of. As Abrams puts it, Wordsworth’s “mood is joyously confident, and he entrusts his guidance not to Providence but to nature” (*Natural Supernaturalism* 115), providence meaning “The foreknowing and protective care of God (or nature, etc.); divine direction, control, or guidance,” according to the Oxford English Dictionary (“providence”). If Abrams is correct then the freedom he has acquired does not scare him because he knows nature, since there is no mention of God, is there to guide him through whatever may come. As seen in the earlier poems examined in this thesis, nature provides him with what he needs. Indeed, it is a wandering cloud that is there to guide him and not God. However, Wordsworth notes the guide is “nothing better than,” implying there could have been a better option (Wordsworth, *The Prelude* I line 17). That could be because the cloud is *wandering*, meaning it is fleeting, always in movement, and could possibly move away from him. However, this does not bother Wordsworth as he cannot miss his way in nature, as if he feels at home and is unable to lose his way. Interestingly one of the definitions given by the Oxford English Dictionary to *wandering* is in relation to “pre-industrial peoples” who were “nomadic” (“wandering” OED). This would suit the setting of the poem, as Wordsworth feels trapped by the city and would rather be part of nature, which he also notes in “The World,” and that he takes on several journeys throughout the ode. The industrialization has destroyed our relationship with nature, and thus even the simplest of guides, one who might leave him by wandering off, is able to bring him to a point where he knows his path because it always turns him towards nature, his home, rather than turning towards God.

However, as we have witnessed in his “Ode,” Wordsworth’s language is rather ambiguous, and though he often uses religious language frequently relatable to Christianity, it becomes directed towards Nature rather than God. In this case the breeze he felt as he escaped the city in the beginning also contains a *blessing*: “O there is blessing in this gentle breeze” (*The Prelude* I line 1). This blessing makes it seem like a spiritual guide, as it is given divine powers. A blessing is something “sacred” and in later times considered “a prayer committing it to God for his patronage, defence, and prospering care” (“blessing” OED). It is a religious term, though not directed towards God, in fact God is not mentioned once in the first book of *The Prelude*. By including such a reference, it is difficult to know where he stands in relation to the religious aspects of the text. Either he is, as Priestman noted, borrowing from religious imagery, and terminology in this case, in order to present a “sublimely elevated view of nature and man’s place within it” because that is where most cultures invests a similar type of elevation (44). Or he is using this terminology because he truly believes there is something sacred in the breeze relatable to God. In fact, the cloud Wordsworth sees as his guide could also be relatable to God as He went before his creation “in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way” (Exodus 13.21). However, if Wordsworth was implying that this is a blessing from God carried in the wind, and that the cloud is a specific cloud, it would be natural to mention God once, or make the reference clearer. Instead, it is capitalized Nature which is mentioned five times (I lines 351, 465, 545, 587), “Nature breathes among the hills and groves” (I line 281), suggesting the blessing and sacredness is coming from nature alone. Nature becomes synonymous with something divine, something similar to God, distanced from God though the lack of Christian references and the inclusion of nature is an important aspect of escaping the city.

Rediscovering Nature allows Wordsworth not only physical freedom, in escaping the city, but mental freedom, as if it is guiding him towards a better path, both represented in him being able to “breathe again” (Wordsworth, *The Prelude* I line 18). This scene brings to mind “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,” in which the speaker imagines himself as a wandering cloud, possibly similar to Wordsworth’s guide, discovering that the daffodils can fill his heart with pleasures as Nature has been able to fill him with strong emotions in poetry we have already looked at. Now the wandering cloud serves as his guide and provides him with the assistance needed to rediscover, hence being able to breathe *again*, a life he can enjoy. Similarly, the “meanest flower that doth blow” (Wordsworth, “Ode” line 205) makes him emotional and now his heart is joyous. Nature allows Wordsworth’s emotions to flow. He can “breathe again,”

physically because he has escaped the industrial life of the city, and the physical earth is all before him, but also mentally. The wind or a breath, according to Abrams, can become “a vehicle for radical changes in the poet’s mind” (“The Correspondent Breeze” 37). Interestingly, this change can often be linked with “the renewal of life and emotional vigor” (Abrams, “The Correspondent Breeze” 37). By breathing again Wordsworth is implying that he has been able to breathe before, but that the urban life of the city has halted it. His breath becomes a symbol of his renewal of life and emotions. This is rather similar to how Nature is able to cure his malaise in the “Ode” and brings back the divine within “The World,” as it is Nature which has assisted him in being able to breathe again, guiding him to the right path.

The form of the guide is also manifested as a human in Wordsworth’s dream about the Arab, and the two items he presents to Wordsworth, which he calls “books,” represent his earthly and spiritual journey connected to Nature (*The Prelude* V line 102). His earthly journey in discovering and understanding himself collides with the material world he does not appreciate; thus he turns to nature instead and the spiritual renewal appears in his connection with nature. Wordsworth falls asleep and sees before him a wilderness of dark and void, it frightens him, but at his side he sees an Arab which makes him “rejoice, not doubting but a guide / Was present” (V lines 81-2). In his hands, the Arab holds a stone and a shell, the stone being “Euclid’s Elements” (V line 88), “a paradigm of rigorous mathematical reasoning” concerning itself with geometry, the history of mathematics and its foundations, according to Ian Mueller (289). Wordsworth rejects science in the second book, as it “appears but what in truth she is, / Not as our glory and our absolute boast” (II lines 212-13), but is careful not to discard geometry because it is part of nature’s laws, and in it he “found / Both elevation and composed delight” (VI lines 119-20). The reason for this, Sunil Kumar Sarker argues, is that geometry “deals with abstractions – abstractions that transcend the sensuals” (567). This would certainly become Wordsworth’s view of nature as it often surpasses its mere physical state and becomes something divine, for example when Wordsworth is standing on a ridge in book I, he hears the wind and says: “the sky seemed not a sky / Of earth – and with what motion moved the clouds!” (I lines 338-9). The sky becomes something more than a physical sky and it does not belong to Earth, implying its divine aspect. In addition, he questions how the clouds move in the sky. It is likely that this is not a scientific question as he has just stated the supernatural or spiritual aspect of the sky, thus he wonders what powers are moving it and sees the sky as something transcending his senses. Geometry was important to Wordsworth as it and poetry

both produced “truth” and the “high privilege of lasting life” (lines 65, 66). The Arab is then holding one of the key elements to Wordsworth’s understanding of the world, nature’s laws. In a way, the Arab is guiding Wordsworth by showing him this object and reminding him of his beliefs, which might have been forgotten during his time in the city, also seen in the “Ode” where city life distances him from nature’s pleasures.

The second item the Arab holds is a shell, and considering how important Wordsworth’s spiritual journey has been so far it could be representing his spiritual journey as an object relatable to rejuvenation in both Christianity and Greek mythology. Wordsworth does hear things within the shell, meaning it could be a conch or curly shell, but there is no description of it, and scholars have suggested different types. Melvyn New argues it is a tortoise shell representing a lyre which “catches the wind” and “breathes the wisdom and the passion of prophecy” (280). New also quotes David Perkins, who argues it is a sea shell retaining “the sound of the sea,” representing poetry (qtd. in New 275). If we consider the spiritual regeneration it seems Wordsworth is seeking, the shell could be a scalloped one representing a spiritual journey which can be found in both Christianity and non-Christian religions. However, Wordsworth’s focus is turned towards Nature, changing the underlying Christian aspect of it. According to the Arab, it is “something of more worth” (*The Prelude* V line 89), implying it is worth more than the stone representing Euclid’s *Elements*. In Christianity the scalloped shell represents the completion of a pilgrim’s journey to “the shrine of St James de Compostella” in Spain, according to Roberta Gilchrist (130). And it poses challenges for the pilgrims to overcome, according to Nancy Louise Frey (192). She also notes that many travellers saw a change in themselves after following the trail of St James; that they were compelled to confront the challenges in front of them with “a new attitude or resolution” (Frey 194). Frey calls this a “spiritual awakening” (34) because it leads people to “feelings of physical, spiritual, personal, and social renewal” (221). Wordsworth has, in his own words, “escaped” (I line 6) the city, as if living there has been a challenge for him he has now overcome, and returning to nature provides him with newfound life, hence being able to breathe again. He speaks of himself as a “Pilgrim resolute” (I line 91) as he takes on the journey of returning to “the chosen Vale” (I line 93). It does indeed seem to be a similar spiritual journey Wordsworth sees himself on as his soul has made “trial of her strength,” suggesting this journey will be a challenge to his soul (I line 95). Another one of the journeys he undertakes is considered a “pilgrimage” (VI lines 763), where he is “Bound to the distant Alps” (VI line 326), “in sight of Heaven” (VI line 390).



Yet he is not searching for a monastery or church, but for experiences within nature itself. He sees himself as a traveller towards something greater than himself, like how the pilgrims travel to the shrine of St James to renew themselves and experience the divine. Wordsworth, being a Christian, is making a direct reference to a Christian pilgrimage, yet what he mentions are the Alps and the vale. There is a Christian structure because of the pilgrimage, but the Christian element is replaced with pagan ones showing his dedication to nature. The passage is filled with naturalistic expressions; he is a pilgrim, but a pilgrim journeying towards a vale where there are “silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass” (I line 68), or the surroundings of Como’s lake that brings the “fairest, softest, happiest influence” in the Alps (VI line 726). Rather than taking on this journey to become closer to God he is doing it to understand himself and his connection to Nature, as if it is his god.

Furthermore, the shell has a similar meaning in Greek mythology, and considering Wordsworth’s knowledge of Greek myths is so prominent in “O Moon” and “The World” it is not unlikely that he would have had knowledge about this. Jenna Marie Newberry says that Venus or Aphrodite was said to have been “blown to the island shore of Cyprus” upon a scallop shell (7). Newberry also claims the shell is a symbol for “femininity and purity of generating new life” (17). Newberry is likely on to something, as Aphrodite was also considered a goddess of human procreation, as noted by Rachel Rosenzweig (30). Pagan religions existed before Christianity came to be and though Christianity became the dominant religion they often borrowed imagery from other religions, such as paganism. Indeed, Abrams notes that “Secular thinkers have no more been able to work free of the centuries-old Judeo-Christian culture than Christian theologians were able to work free of their inheritance of classical and pagan thought” (Abrams 13). Thus, it is not unnatural that there would be symbols similar in Christianity and paganism as one cannot be rid of the other. Indeed, that is part of my definition of paganism, that there is a connection between them and even though one is defined against the other the other will also be affected. Both the Christian and Greek symbolism are in accordance with each other. Both declare the shell is a symbol of something renewed, arguably a spiritual restoration as Wordsworth is trying to understand himself. Wordsworth has seen Nature as a helping hand in understanding himself in the “Ode” and “The World,” suggesting Nature’s importance here is great, diminishing God’s role.

Since Wordsworth grew up and lived in a Christian community this could be a reference to the trail of St James, but God is not mentioned in relation to these “books,” as the Arab calls them and they are more in tune with nature (*The Prelude* V line 102). The one book

held acquaintance with the stars,  
And wedded soul to souls in purest bond  
Of reason (V lines 103-5)

This sounds like the stone as geometry is a form of reason. The second book seems to be the shell, which

was a god, yea many gods,  
Had voices more than all the winds, with power  
To exhilarate the spirit and soothe,  
Through every clime, the heart of human kind (V lines 106-109)

I will not claim that God is not able to exhilarate and soothe the human spirit because to a believer He most likely will. However, what I can deduce from Wordsworth’s poetry is that these feelings are present within him though brought out by Nature rather than God. It is curious that the Arab corrects himself, saying first it is a god but changing it to several gods. It is not, however, curious that Wordsworth accepts this notion of multiple gods represented in the shell, or speaking through the shell, since he has already wished to invoke the powers of the two water gods Triton and Proteus in “The World,” and recognized Cynthia as the queen of the Moon, beauty, and majesty in “O Moon.” Indeed, Wordsworth says “strange as it may seem / I wondered not” (V line 110-11) but had “perfect faith in all that passed,” despite there not being any connection to God (V line 114). He also claims he is not put on earth to speak “of Christian Hope” (III line 85) which bows her head to before Faith, as the “mightier” of the two (III line 87) but to “Bear witness Truth” (III line 88). Not only does this imply a religious connection, but it is not related to Christianity. Faith and Christian hope are not the same and Wordsworth says he has faith in what is being presented before him, despite there not being a reference to Christianity. He believes the shell to either contain or be a god, many gods, arguably because he has experienced more than one god throughout his life and put his faith in them. Instead of invoking the power of God, Wordsworth is able, through paganism, to invoke different gods depending on what he needs from them. Indeed, he even elevates Nature itself to something

more powerful and it is that which Wordsworth constantly returns to. He uses it for both its physical purpose but also the spiritual. The breeze is physical as it “fans my [Wordsworth’s] cheek” (*The Prelude* I line 2) but also connected to higher powers as it is “half-conscious of the joy it brings” (I line 3). Despite the Christian connotations to the scalloped shell it is Nature who produces these feelings within him and Nature who was able to soothe his mind when he wanted to revive his spiritual self in “The World,” and in trying to regain the light of God in the “Ode” it was Nature who became the light of the day, and when leaving the city in book I the breeze was there to guide him.

Nature’s power as a guide serves as a replacement for a guide that might have led him towards a more Christian poetic undertone. The naturalistic elements, such as the breeze or the shell, become something supernatural guiding and assisting him, also noted in his use of Proteus and Triton instead of God in representing the spirituality he wishes to see. Wordsworth even notes that

Great and benign, indeed, must be the power  
Of living nature, which could thus so long  
Detain me from the best of other guides (*The Prelude* V lines 167-9)

Nature’s powers are strong enough to detain him from following other guides, who could possibly be Shakespeare or Milton as they are mentioned just before this passage and considered “labourers divine” (V line 165), or even Miguel de Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote* which Wordsworth is reading as he falls asleep and dreams of the Arab. Esther Bautista Narajo claims Wordsworth’s use of the “semi-Quixote” Arab (V line 143), as Wordsworth calls him, as a solitary wandering prophet “echoes the Romantic view of the poet as a *vates* (prophet)” (181). Indeed, Wordsworth did see poets as prophets but prophets of Nature rather than God’s as I will explore further later. It is also interesting to note that Milton was considered “the great poet of Biblical history and prophecy” (Abrams 32). Thus, if Wordsworth had not been detained by Nature he might have followed a different guide more thoroughly, such as Milton, and his poetry might have been more focused on Christianity than Nature. However, the best of other guides could also have been God because Nature detains him even in “infancy” (V line 170) and “childhood even” (V line 171) where God might have been able to intervene. Nature has been with him all his life, as a power watching over him, soothing him, and exhilarating him through his interest in Nature and its beauties.

## 3.2 Mother Nature

Wordsworth's use of Nature as a guide began in his childhood and followed him throughout his life, and if we look closely at his references to nature in relation to his upbringing we will find that nature is not only a guide, but a mother, teacher, and a nurse, someone who educates and nurtures him. He said he wanted to "fetch / Invigorating thoughts from former years," hoping it would help him understand himself (*The Prelude* I lines 620-1). His initial idea in the "Ode" is similar to this as he wanted to be able to experience the glorious light of God and thought he would be able to do so through children because they are closer to Him. However, here he turns to his invigorating thoughts of Nature to understand himself. He begins in the earliest days of his life and explains that the river Derwent, which runs through Cockermouth in England where Wordsworth was born, is "the fairest of all rivers, [and] loved / To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song" and makes "ceaseless music that composed my thoughts" (I lines 270-1, 277). Because Wordsworth says this is all "A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm / That Nature breathes among the hills and groves," I will argue that Wordsworth's nurse is Nature (I line 280-1). He is fostered by nature, she is his nurse, but it is also through her he is able to grow. The river Derwent is anthropomorphised and in doing so Nature becomes something relatable and the river's murmurs are part of composing Wordsworth's thoughts, shaping him into the person he will become. Instead of being "the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (Isiah 64.8), Nature is a mother to him, shaping him from his earliest moments.

This wish to regress, or experience childhood again, is a way for Wordsworth to renew himself, also seen in the scalloped shell through understanding how he was shaped and by what means. Wordsworth seems to understand that his adoration for nature has played an important role in his upbringing, he says there is a place of "Bare hills and valleys, full of caverns, [and] rocks" (VIII line 635) which "Was thronged with impregnations like the Wilds / In which my early feelings had been nursed" (VIII lines 632-4). Nature, even wild nature, has nursed his feelings and affections which in turn has unfolded his love and adoration for nature. Marjorie Nicolson, quoted by Abrams, said that mountains, as a vast and awful form of nature, "were looked upon as 'symbols of human sin,'" yet Wordsworth sees them as nourishing (99). Wordsworth is also, throughout *The Prelude*, on a journey to places such as the Alps, experiencing nature. The combination of wishing to regress to an earlier stage and travelling

could be, according to anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner, quoted by Jeanne Moskal, seen as “performing a pilgrimage” because of the “self-definition involved with it” (Moskal 268). This religious pilgrimage does not affect Wordsworth’s relationship with God or the Church but with nature. Even the negative feelings we encounter in life, such as “The terrors, pains, and early miseries, / Regrets, vexations” (I lines 345-6), were important because they were a “needful part, in making up / The calm existence that is mine,” possibly his soul and whole being (I lines 348). The positive and negative aspects are all part of making him who he is and he follows this by saying his “Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ” (I line 351). Nature is a powerful source able to employ the means which change Wordsworth as if she is a creature divine, a replacement for a spiritual guide but also as a mother as the up bringer of the child allowing for both negative and positive emotions.

Through nature and the natural world Wordsworth was able to learn more about himself as a child, and by regressing to a state of childhood he is in need of nurturing and Nature is the one providing this. Wordsworth’s mother died when he was around eight years old, according to Jonathan Wordsworth (J. Wordsworth viii). Nature is not a direct replacement of his mother but a recreation of that bond, though with Nature at the centre. Kathleen Blake says that “having known the filial bond, it seems he [Wordsworth] is able to forge others. He becomes a lover of nature” (392). Wordsworth says, “blest the Babe, / Nursed in his Mother’s arms” who “Drinks in the feelings of his Mother’s eye!” (II lines 234-5, 237). This description seems to be of a human mother and her child as he is physically nursed and drinks from the mother, being breastfed and thus their eyes meet, and the child can experience the mother’s feelings through this intimate action. The love between two humans, or the filial bond between mother and child, is recreated between the child and nature. Indeed, the fact that Artemis, or Cynthia, was considered the Mother Goddess and Wordsworth’s devotion to her as the Moon supports the idea that mother Nature is something divine and able to nurse and care for him as they all affect his emotions and help him understand who he is. Evidently Mother Earth is much more connected to nature than the Christian God, and her role as mother is similar to his as being humanity’s father suggesting she might serve as a replacement for God.

However, not too long after, Wordsworth’s says this is a “filial bond / Of nature that connect him with the world” (II lines 243-4). Nature might also be human nature and thus connects him with the world through his earthly being, however, the child then points to a flower, and

already love

Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him

Hath beautified that flower (II lines 246-8)

Nature becomes beautiful through the child's relationship with his mother. This was also the case in the "Ode," where our human connections were part of connecting us with nature, those "primal sympathies" which cause Wordsworth to see the "meanest flower" as something more than its physical form ("Ode" lines 184, 205). Wordsworth's ideas are similar to Schelling's, a German romantic, as H. A. M. Snelders notes that for Schelling "nature was not a product of the mind; rather the mind was a product, if also a culmination, of nature," which seems to be what Wordsworth is claiming as well (197). All the natural elements Wordsworth implements in his poetry and their symbolism serves as a language which "encompass larger areas of human experience," according to Herbert Lindenberger (70). Arguably, Wordsworth's use of the sea, through Triton, the scalloped shell, Aphrodite, the moon in "O Moon," and the guiding breeze, are ways of experiencing himself in relation to the physical and spiritual world of nature. There are often spiritual elements connected to the physical images and the physical images often lead him somewhere, the breeze for instance, while the spiritual side allows him to understand himself. Human emotions shaped his love for nature and recall that nature was able to compose his thoughts, creating a symbiotic relationship between him, his human connections, and nature. The webpage Neo-Paganism notes that the Goddess as Earth Mother "draws our attention to how we are immersed" in an interconnected world, which "affirms our bodily reality and relationship with each other and the natural world" (Neo-paganism.com). Although this is clearly not a peer-reviewed site, the beliefs they advocate are interesting and important because they are essentially identical to those Wordsworth presents in his works, and possibly an extension of Wordsworth's personal beliefs as well, considering they can be found both in his "Ode" and *The Prelude*. Wordsworth's connection to nature becomes important, if not as important, as filial and human connections.

Through Wordsworth's general devotion to nature, as a spiritual guide, and by comparing the filial bond of a mother and child with the bond between Wordsworth and nature, nature is given many roles to fill and one of them could be Mother Earth. Recall that Wordsworth has referred to nature as a mother in "O Moon," though indirectly through his worship of Cynthia or Artemis, representing one form of "the Cretan Mother Earth" (Duthie 28). In addition, the Wordsworthian child often acts like a child of nature, notable in the "Ode"

but also in *The Prelude* as Wordsworth seeks to understand himself through his younger years which he portrays as closely connected to nature in more ways than just the physical.

From Nature and her overflowing soul,  
I had received so much, that all my thoughts  
Were steeped in feeling; I was only then  
Contented (II lines 397-400)

Remembering back to his “seventeenth year” (II line 386) he understands that it was nature who gave him what he needed spiritually. This anthropomorphising of Nature forces us to see and confront her as transformed and active rather than passive. Indeed, as Carl Woodring claims, book II traces the a “development from unconscious intercourse with Nature to active awareness” (98). It is only through nature that Wordsworth’s mind seems to come alive, as nature provides his mind with thoughts and emotions. Remember that in the “Ode” it is not the idea of God which brings him joy but nature and his wish to regress to childhood which resulted in experiences related to nature. Robert C. Hale observes that “Children’s development of a sense of self and other occurs through their interactions first with mothers and then with others” (145), though Wordsworth’s interactions are often first with nature, or so he describes. Both the mother and Nature inspire and influence Wordsworth. The mother through the child drinking his mother’s feelings (II line 237), implying an emotional bond, sharing feelings, and physical bond through breast-feeding. However, Nature is also remarkably similar to the mother as through his interactions with “the changeful earth” (I line 559) he is “drinking in a pure / Organic pleasure” (I lines 563-4), just like the child is drinking in his mother’s feelings. Nature is anthropomorphised, being able to spread her emotions, becoming a mother providing Wordsworth with the mental, emotional, spiritual nurture he needs, and only by being soaked up with Nature’s emotions and pleasures does Wordsworth become satisfied as if Nature is the only one able to fulfil his desires.

The motherly aspect of Nature is very much present, but for her to be Mother Nature requires a divine aspect in relation to her motherly status, and there are places that speak more clearly of how the divine affected Wordsworth as a child which seems to be directed towards nature. He is speaking to, or directs his speech towards, the “Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!” whose “Soul that art the eternity of thought” (*The Prelude* I lines 401-2). Arguably, he is communicating with a supreme being, or divine ruler, since its spirit is not only *of* the

universe, implying celestial and otherworldly, but because its soul is *eternity*. This could be the supreme being, meaning one with power like that of God because the Nature he speaks of is the one who assisted in the upbringing of his soul, possibly his creator or guiding force. At first, this could certainly seem to be a reference to the Christian God as he is speaking to someone otherworldly and eternal. However, just before this Wordsworth recalls his time in a lake where

No familiar shapes  
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,  
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;  
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live  
Like living men (I lines 395-99)

There are multiple somethings alive in nature beyond the things that we see as sea, sky, and green fields. Somewhat similar to the way he sees something alive in the Sea in “The World,” and how the Moon becomes something more than her physical form but also more than a woman in “O Moon,” possibly something that does not live like “living men” (I line 399). From what we already know of Wordsworth’s childhood, being nursed by Nature as if she was his mother, and how Derwent’s murmur was combined with his nurse’s song, and the following speech, Nature seems to be taking God’s position. The spiritual language is still there, describing Nature with similar terminology as how God would have been described.

By day or star-light thus from my first dawn  
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me  
The passions that build up our human soul;  
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,  
But with high objects, with enduring things –  
With life and nature, purifying thus  
The elements of feeling and of thought,  
And sanctifying, by such discipline,  
Both pain and fear, until we recognise  
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart (I lines 405-414)

There is great power able to intertwine passions within the human soul it, and we know Nature has been a great influence in Wordsworth’s upbringing suggesting this great power is Nature.



One of the things intertwined are emotions, or *passions* of the human soul, which Wordsworth has found before within nature's ability to soothe his soul and in "the meanest flower" ("Ode" line 205). Our emotions are, among several things, not connected to what mankind is able to produce, which is "mean and vulgar," but to high objects (*The Prelude* I line 408). At first high objects might be spiritual and religious objects, at least something beyond our natural and earthly life, those objects that exhilarate Wordsworth. Following this statement is what seems to be a description of what these high objects are, they are things that endure, which makes me think of something spiritual such as the soul because it does not wither and is always present. However, what follows this passage in *The Prelude* was also published in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Friend: A Series of Essays*, before the publication of *The Prelude*, under the title of "Growth of Genius from the Influences of Natural Objects, On the Imagination in Boyhood and Early Youth" (Coleridge 303). This suggests that these high objects are in fact natural objects, possibly high mountains as we have witnessed are able to produce strong emotions within Wordsworth which again praises the force contained within nature. Indeed, Wordsworth notes that this power is able to change his perspective of pain and fear. Wordsworth says earlier in *The Prelude* that

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up  
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear:  
Much Favoured in my birth-place, and no less  
In that beloved Vale (I line 301-4)

This passage, considered in relation to nature's importance to Wordsworth, signifies that it is Nature who is able to affect him in such a way. The first thing that connects these passages is that they both are concerned with Wordsworth's soul and his upbringing. He is *fostered* by beauty and fear, which has several meanings attached to it. From the setting it seems he has been educated or nursed by it these feelings. Though it could suggest that he is brought up by a "foster-parent," though the Oxford English Dictionary claims that definition is obsolete ("foster"). However, it could mean "To 'nurture', tend with affectionate care," which would certainly be suitable considering they can be found in his birth-place and in a vale, which would be Grasmere where Wordsworth lived ("foster" OED). He is brought up *by* nature and *in* nature. Since he claims in both passages that there is something which impacts the way he sees fear, and in this passage it is nature, the divine power in the previous passage could be nature as well. Furthermore, the high objects are also connected "With life and nature," creating a link

between the supreme power in which this passage is dedicated to but also nature, and humanity, hence its connection to life (I line 410).

Nature becomes something greater than itself and the spiritual aspect becomes relatable to a religious experience through nature's ability to sanctify and purify. Wordsworth's use of *thus*, in "purifying thus," asserts that it is because of these objects' connection to life and nature that it can purify feelings and thoughts (*The Prelude* I line 410) and sanctify "Both pain and fear" (I line 413). This divine power, arguably Nature, connects the human soul with nature and life which allows our thoughts and feelings to be purified, being made "ceremonially or ritually pure" ("purify" OED), and sanctifying, to "ascribe holiness to," negative emotions such as pain and fear, which are important in understanding our hearts ("sanctify" OED). Both these words have religious connotations to them and are particularly prominent in Christianity. Using such religiously loaded words implies a religious connection between Wordsworth's soul and the divine power, however, from what I have deduced from his poetry this power is not God. Abrams' argument, that elements such as myths and imagery were used "as symbolic conveniences" and "metaphors for poetry," could also suggest that Wordsworth's use of such language is merely symbolic (172). Like Priestman said, atheistic literature borrowed language from religious literature to visualize the "elevated view of nature and man's place within it" because religion can be found in most cultures and displays a similar elevation, though directed to a God in Wordsworth's poetry (44). He is using language with religious connotations to express the powers of nature and his place within it. It is easier to do so implementing language already used for a similar purpose. To purify something is not only a Christian word but using it in relation to the soul and the spirit of the universe suggests a spiritual and religious undertone, and because Wordsworth lived in a Christian society he could have been aware of it. Indeed, growing up in a Christian society myself the action of purifying someone or something makes me think that it will allow the purified into heaven because there has been a removal of that which is evil or bad. This also brings to mind the actions of Jesus, who "had by himself purged our sins" (Hebrew 1.3). Instead of using a Greek god or a myth Wordsworth is using language which implies a Christian reference to express how Nature affects his soul. Thus, the way Abrams claims the romantics were using myths as symbolism is what Christianity becomes to Wordsworth in this example. The divine presence Wordsworth was directing this speech to is still present and becomes particularly clear through the religious connoted words, though detached from Christianity through the lack of reference to God and the indication that it is

Nature who affects him in such a way. This reaffirms my idea that Wordsworth does indeed experience something spiritual within nature as it can connect his human soul to high objects that are able to purify and sanctify both positive and negative emotions, similar to the powers of Jesus Christ as an extension of God.

The term *mother earth* is not used in relation to Christianity, nor by Wordsworth himself. However, these passages I have explored do seem to support my claim that there is a divine Mother Earth, or Mother Nature, within Wordsworth's poetry. The idea of a higher motherly power is counter to the Christian Father in Heaven who is God. It also dismisses God's blessing upon Adam and Eve, as they were told to "replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Genesis 1.28). By incorporating a divine presence on and in earth there is no need for man as keepers of nature since there is a god assigned to that task. Wordsworth's combination of a divine presence in Nature and her ability to purify his emotions and soul seems to imply a significant power within her, like that of God, yet not the Christian God.

### **3.3 Rejection of Sin and Christianity**

The idea that there is a power able to purify and sanctify our feelings and pain leads us to the Christian doctrine of sin as humanity is in need of purification of our sins. In the passages we have looked at it becomes clear that Nature serves a different role to Wordsworth than simply the physical earth we walk on. And because of Wordsworth's choice of words in describing Nature's powers it is worth examining his relationship with sin since it is no longer Jesus who could save us from it. However, Nature is not the one to save us either because Wordsworth seems to reject the notion of sin. Throughout his poetry, Wordsworth sees children as glorious creatures worthy of joy and esteem. Wordsworth is looking back to his childhood hoping to learn about himself, suggesting he considered himself a good, or close to good, human being as a child since that is where he started looking for answers. And the child in the "Ode" is closer to God than man because of his childlike innocence, without any sin to adhere to. As Lionel Trilling also notes, Wordsworth's sense of sin took no account "Of evil in the Christian sense of the word, a sin as an element of the nature of man" ("Wordsworth and the Rabbis" 109). Indeed, the human soul is not inherently linked to sin at all, in "The Old Cumberland Beggar" Wordsworth writes that

'This Nature's law  
That none, the meanest of created things,  
Of forms created the most vile and brute,  
The dullest or most noxious, should exist  
Divorced from good – a spirit and pulse of good,  
A life and soul, to every mode of being  
Inseparably linked (“*The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*” lines 73-79)

The human spirit is always connected to the good, even the most evil of characters are inherently good, arguably because there is nothing to repent. If the spirit is always good then Wordsworth is providing a sin-free child and man. Yet, according to the *Book of Common Prayer* humans are “by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath” (371). The Christian path to salvation is the purging of our sins through Jesus Christ, yet throughout *The Prelude* Wordsworth comes back to his childhood memories and they are always filled with joy and glee, without a trace of sin, evil, or the redeemer Christ. As seen in the “Ode,” the child is in direct contact with his soul, nature, and the supreme being, implying there is nothing notable sinful in the child. As he grows up, he learns “of truth, / And the errors into which I fell” (*The Prelude* XI lines 286-7) and that he has strayed from his path, a “heart that had been turned aside / From Nature’s way” (XI lines 290-1). He has made mistakes, possibly wronged Nature the way he wronged her in the “Ode,” though there is still no sense of repentance or wish to be purified. Another point to take notice of is that he has strayed from Nature and not God. Wordsworth’s idea of sin is non-existent and there is no need for salvation because there is nothing to save him from. Remember Wordsworth was fostered by both beauty and fear (I line 302) and that nature purifies him, which results in an understanding of the human heart. Not only does Wordsworth’s poetry suggest a rejection of sin but rejects the notion of God by replacing him with Nature, allowing her to access the same powers God would have had.

Despite rejecting the notion of sin and replacing God with Nature, dismissing two Christian teachings, Wordsworth adopts the idea of pilgrimage though the focus is still on Nature rather than God. His wish is to explore and understand nature, possibly his idea of the divine, can be compared to another pilgrim’s wish to connect with his or her divine being, such as a Christian wishing to connect with God. Pilgrimage is often used in relation to the major religions, such as Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, though Wordsworth seeks out places of nature with nature as his guide. The word *pilgrimage* is defined as a journey “made

to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion” and there are records of it being used in such a manner back in year 1300 (“pilgrimage” OED). From the examples given above Wordsworth seems to consider Nature as a powerful guiding force capable of both soothing and exhilarating his soul and it seems Nature is the goal of his journey. If a pilgrimage is a religious act to show one’s devotion to the divine then Wordsworth seems to be showing his to nature. Around the middle of the book VI, Wordsworth and a fellow mountaineer are “Bound to the distant Alps” (VI line 326). We get the impression that there is no specific location they are seeking but the nature of the Alps in general as Wordsworth states that “Nature then was sovereign in my mind” (VI line 333). Victor and Edith Turner claims one of the pilgrim’s goals on such a journey would be “salvation or release from the sins and evils of the structural world” (8). As we have seen, this is not the case for Wordsworth as he dismisses the ideas of Christian sin, though it could be seen as an escape from the material world. As such, the underlying tone becomes one where Nature is in focus, meaning the religious aspect of this pilgrimage is to experience Nature as a divine force rather than God. Thus, Wordsworth redirects the religious idea behind a pilgrimage towards an experience of Nature, similar to what he did concerning sin. Schelling “figured redemption, mankind’s return to a lost unity, as a journey home,” possibly something Wordsworth could have considered it as well (qtd. in Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* 223). Indeed, from what we have seen in Wordsworth’s poetry so far, it seems reconciling with nature is a way to find himself, arguably his home. He says at the beginning of *The Prelude* that he wonders where in nature “Shall be my harbour? underneath what grove / Shall I take up my home” (I line 11-12). Schelling, like Wordsworth, thinks his journey will take him “to a pagan source” rather than the Bible (qtd. in Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* 223). Wordsworth is using religious terminology and symbolism to express his spiritual and religious experience of Nature and taking on a journey similar to that Schelling describes, one that will take him closer to home, closer to his true self, which does not end in the Bible, but in nature.

### **3.4 Ambiguous Language**

Wordsworth rejects the idea of sin, yet uses religiously loaded words and sometimes makes Christian references, such as the blessing within the breeze, showing us his ambiguous language. Despite this, the undertone of the poem shows his dedication towards Nature because of the lacking references to God. To continue with his pilgrimage, on such a journey the pilgrim would often encounter “powerful religious sacra (shrines, images, liturgies, curative waters”

and so on (Turner 8). Considering Nature is his goal on this pilgrimage the sacred elements he could encounter would be nature, such as mountains, groves, rivers, or the likes, though one of the most notable experiences he encounters is when he reaches the Convent of Chartreuse. This would certainly qualify as a *religious sacra* in a Christian pilgrimage. As he reaches the convent he sees it is under military control and hears Nature's voice "uttered from her Alpine throne" (*The Prelude* VI line 431): "'Stay, stay your sacrilegious hands!'" (VI line 430). *Sacrilegious* is usually used in reference to a "crime or sin of stealing or misappropriating what is consecrated to God's service" ("sacrilege" OED). This is befitting as it is a convent being robbed, yet it is Nature speaking. There is such a close symbiosis between the convent and nature, according to Dennis Taylor, that "to destroy one is to destroy the other" (43). Indeed, "The stripping of the altars becomes a stripping of nature" (Taylor 43). Rather than speaking of Nature as separated from religion and Christianity Wordsworth is replacing elements within it with nature. The religious sacra we were expecting, the convent, is related to Nature and not to God, as Nature continues to speak:

'Your impious work forbear, perish what may  
Let this one temple last, be this one spot  
Of earth devoted to eternity!' (VI line 433-5).

One of the first things notable is the religious language: impious, temple, and eternity. However, these words become detached from Christianity as there is no mentioning of God and it is Nature's voice calling as if she becomes God. *Eternity* is not in itself solely a religious word but has been used earlier by Wordsworth when describing the Spirit of the universe whose soul is "eternity of thought," which I concluded was Nature, thus this passage seems again directed towards Nature, it is even her speaking (I lines 401-2). Yet, placing this speech within a convent with such precise and religious language makes me doubt whether it is Nature or God who is speaking. Such instances are what Priestman calls silences, where Wordsworth's language is so ambiguous that it is difficult to interpret. He says that, "In many of his most striking uses of the word [Nature], Wordsworth is simply silent on any such signifying function; one of the greatest difficulties his work presents is in the interpretation of these silences" (Priestman 156). I agree with Priestman, one of the problems with Wordsworth's language is his use of Nature because of the language surrounding it. He mostly uses religious language in relation to Nature and nothing else, making it seem Nature is the only receiver of divine language, for example, nature is seated in her Alpine throne. A throne is a seat for a powerful person, such as a monarch,

however, the first entry in the Oxford English Dictionary refers to a throne as “The seat of God or Christ in heaven” (“throne” OED). By providing Nature with a throne and from the previous descriptions of nature in relation to glory and the divine presence around it, Wordsworth places Nature in the same position as a god.

Nature becomes divine through Wordsworth’s use of religious language and when he thus follows Nature’s speech with a reply concerning God he is diminishing the role of God since he has already attributed Nature with similar properties. To Nature’s voice Wordsworth replies: “Honour to the patriot’s zeal! / Glory and hope to new-born Liberty!” (VI lines 441-2), and that this shall “equalise in God’s pure sight / Monarch and peasant” (VI line 455-6). As to Priestman’s note on silences, this makes Wordsworth’s language and references even more difficult to understand. It is as if Nature and God are connected, which could be the case considering he is the creator of it all within Christianity. This happens several times towards the end of *The Prelude* as “God delights / In such a being” (XII line 171-2), a maid, and Wordsworth says he is like this maid suggesting God is delighted with him as well. He is loving more intensely and worships “The first diviner influence” (XII line 182) and feels “all this glory filled and satisfied” (XII line 190). However, the way Wordsworth has elevated Nature and shown that it does not require God nor his glory to affect him in ways beyond a mortal’s understanding, hence “Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears” (Wordsworth, “Ode” lines 203-206), suggests there is no need for God because Nature fills the role of a divine being. Instead of eliminating the role of God he replaces Him with Nature and thus the occasional references to God are diminished or weakened because we have seen Nature take his place.

The occasional references to God and religious expressions are building up our expectations that he is speaking about the greatness of God, when he is talking about Nature. I do understand why Abrams sees Wordsworth’s religious references as relatable to Christianity, which I would suggest are based on passages like these. He claims his poetry “reflect not only the language and rhythms but also the design, the imagery, and many of the central moral values of the Bible” (Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* 32). I agree to an extent as some of his passages include biblical language, or simply religious language, and in this case there is a sense of a Christian moral value as we are all equals in front of God. Yet, when this passage ends with Wordsworth “In Nature’s presence stood” the presence of God is again diminished (XII line 206). It is as if Wordsworth is using Christian references as symbols to express his love and devotion to Nature as if she is his Goddess. In continuously using religious language

to describe Nature and only the occasional reference to God, he is changing our expectations about the religious references. Instead of them being dedicated to God they become more relatable to Nature because of the frequent use of nature rather than God.

Despite Wordsworth's ambiguous language, I would argue that the earlier omission of God, the presence of elevated nature, and the naturalistic spirituality he experiences in nature, rather than the Christian aspect hidden within his references, signifies a preference for pagan religion. Abrams would, most likely, not agree with this claim as he argues some of the major romantic poets incorporated esoteric myths and imagery into their poetry as "metaphors for poetry" (*Natural Supernaturalism* 172). The reason for this is that:

The older view of the world helps them to define the malaise of their own time, and they sometimes adopted its mythology to project and dramatize their feeling that they did not belong in the intellectual, social, and political milieu of their oppressive and crisis-ridden age. This sense of being an alien in a world which had been made by man's own unhappy intellect also manifested itself in a wide-spread revival of the traditional plot-form of the wanderings of an exile in quest of the place where he truly belongs (Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* 172).

I agree to an extent, Wordsworth seems to be using myths and legends to both explore and explain his emotions in relation to the world more thoroughly, though not purely as metaphors. What Abrams claims is that Wordsworth's use of mythological references is used as symbols, but what does it mean when Wordsworth uses Christian terminology and symbolism to express his devotion for nature? If mythological references are purely symbolism then referring to Christianity in a naturalistic setting could be considered symbolism. On his pilgrimage through the Alps he visits Locarno's Lake and says it is "spreading out in width like Heaven" (VI line 567). And during his residence in France says that "blasts / From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven," using Christian references to explain his malaise of the happenings in France (X line 337-8). It is unlikely that a lake is as wide as Heaven and that there were blasts coming from hell in France. And recall his use of *glory*, often associated with God and Jesus, in relation to nature in his "Ode" without it being relatable to God as there is "glory in the flower" (Wordsworth, "Ode" line 181). Pagan imagery is able to bring him closer to the religion he wants to experience, whether it is through invoking pagan gods such as Triton, invoking the powers of the gods through items, Aphrodite's power of renewal through the shell, or through



Nature's physical appearance. Indeed, to "To feed the spirit of religious love," Wordsworth says he "walked with Nature" and not God (II lines 357-8).

Because of the elevation of Nature in other passages, both before and after his direct references to God, I find it difficult to dismiss his much more pagan remarks and elevations of nature as merely symbolism. The way Wordsworth elevates nature did not go by unnoticed by his fellow poets either, remember Coleridge said that Wordsworth had a "vague misty, rather than mystic, Confusion of God with the World & the accompanying Nature-worship" (qtd. in Priestman 156), which was what he disliked the most and that when Wordsworth did refer to God his references were almost insincere (Priestman 157). This insincerity becomes obvious in "The World" as well, where he rejects God in favour of paganism and in "O Moon" where he openly wishes to serve the Goddess of the Moon. Wordsworth's adoration of nature, and nature-worship, is not enough to satisfy his audience's spiritual needs. Despite including references to God, they tend to sound insincere because of his use of Nature. Listening to Nature in her divine throne suggests divinity within Nature but then mentioning God as if he is the Supreme, because of his ability to equalize all man, and then deliberately moving back to standing in Nature's presence seems to imply a preference for the one above the other.

By including God Wordsworth is certainly creating a stronger case for the Christian undertones but Wordsworth's "omission of so many elements apparently essential to the genre in which he is working, coupled with an obsessive repetitiveness about one or two others, ensures that the emphasis falls where he wishes" (Priestman 167). His repetition of Nature as something grand and beautiful, rather than mentioning God, suggests he wants us to see the beauties of nature without God accompanying it. Recall Hopkins' "God's Grandeur" and how the world is changed by "the grandeur of God" (Hopkins line 1). If Wordsworth wanted us to see the grandeur of God the focus should have been directed towards Him rather than Nature. And when he in some passages intentionally lets the focus fall on God, he also shows his return to nature, as if he cannot connect with a god without it. It is rather similar to the "Ode" and "The World" where there is something holding him back, namely Christianity, from the spirituality he wishes to have. The connection between paganism and nature is stronger than the one between Christianity and nature, thus he tends to move towards paganism. It could be that, as Coleridge suggested, Wordsworth is confused about his relationship with God and Nature as if he is struggling to separate the two, or that he cannot completely separate them because Nature is his God. In the 1805 edition he once stated that he gave himself to God since

he comes to us “Through nature” (1805 X line 387), while in the 1850 edition, arguably the one closest to what he would have liked to see published since it was the latest revised version, he yields himself to Nature, a “holy passion” (X line 418) and calls her “O Power Supreme” (X line 420). Because of passages like this it seems Wordsworth was somewhat able to separate Nature and God because he makes it very clear that Nature is a supreme power and does not mention God for the rest of book X.

### 3.5 The Tree Representing the Lost and Regained

In describing the experience of both losing and regaining the glory within nature in the “Ode” Wordsworth refers to a tree which reminds him of that which is lost, arguably God as he has turned to Nature. This tree “speak[s] of something that is gone” (Wordsworth, “Ode” line 53) and Richard Matlak claims this is a reference to a tree in *The Prelude* book VI (226). Both poems explore the issue of spirituality and religious beliefs and both express Wordsworth’s difficulty in knowing where he finds his spiritual peace, thus, making a direct reference between the two would be appropriate. However, book VI does not mention anything specific being lost, only a change within Wordsworth and what the tree means to him and what he experiences when looking at it. The tree is decked with “outlandish grace” (Wordsworth, *The Prelude* book VI lines 79), a word often used as a “quality of God” which shows his “benevolence towards humanity” (“grace” OED). From this tree and its magical properties he understands the “universal sway” and “the one / Supreme Existence” (VI line 131, 133-4) which “hath the name of, God” (VI line 139). Wordsworth is clearly referencing and acknowledging God as a supreme being; however, he ends this stanza saying this was a “frequent comfort to my [Wordsworth’s] youth” (VI line 141). The tree reminds him of the same loss as in the “Ode,” the loss of celestial faith. He saw God as the supreme being once, in his youth, though as he grows he realize there is something else out there, arguably Nature as a supreme being.

Indeed, nature has been part of this change within him because as he grows up he sees nature in a different way, rather similar to the changes he experiences in the “Ode.” He

watched the forms  
Of Nature, in that knowledge I possessed  
A standard, often usefully applied,

Even when unconsciously, to things removed,  
From a familiar sympathy (VI lines 101-105)

Within nature he found knowledge about his “standard” (Wordsworth, VI line 103). Synonyms for standard could be guidelines, principles, or a value. This standard he applied unconsciously to even unfamiliar things that he would not normally sympathized with. Recall that Wordsworth claimed nothing could “bring back the hour / Of splendour” (“Ode” lines 180-181) which he felt as a child but in the end something could bring back a different splendour and glory. By finding his new *standard* his view of the world changed. This could be the reason he can see the beauty in nature without the innocence of childhood he thought he needed in the “Ode.” As Priestman notes, Wordsworth had, or has, his own *ism* which “generally has to do with rediscovering the truths of religion through Nature or the Imagination, or else a particular fusion of the two” (1-2). Indeed, the ending of the “Ode” suggests Wordsworth found a way to elevate nature to something divine and here nature seems to be the answer to what “is passion, what is truth, / What reason, what simplicity and sense” (VI line 113-114). Before discovering his *standard* in his youth, he did not understand nature the way he does now after examining it thoroughly, suggesting there is a connection between his *standard* and the way he sees nature. His values become clearer when in close interaction with nature and if read in relation to the “Ode” this could suggest a movement from one belief to another, arguably from Christianity to paganism, particularly since he makes it clear God was present in his youth, same as in the “Ode,” though he becomes removed from it and moves towards Nature.

The tree becomes a reference to both that which is lost in childhood and youth, the celestial light and the superior power of God and the faith he gains in Nature. The tree is so beautiful it becomes magical and represents the “hemisphere / Of magical fiction” (*The Prelude* VI lines 87-88). This tree is such a tranquil vision that “scarcely Spenser’s self” (VI line 89), the author of *The Faerie Queene*, could have imagined this tree as he stands there “beneath this fairy work of earth” (VI line 94). Although *The Faerie Queene* has its Christian undertone, by referencing Spenser Wordsworth is suggesting there is something so magical and supernatural about it which Spenser would not have been able to imagine. Particularly since *The Fairy Queene* creates, according to A. C. Hamilton, “its own reality in faery land rather than reflecting ordinary reality, being much closer to myth than to realism” (1). The tree also stirs his imagination and creates “human forms with superhuman powers” (VI line 92), somewhat similar to what his imagination in communication with nature does in both “The World” and

“O Moon” where the sea and the moon are anthropomorphised but also inhabit supernatural abilities relatable to the natural elements which surrounds them. Nature is the strongest force in Wordsworth’s life, able to stir his imagination and provide him with supernatural experiences.

### 3.6 Returning to Nature

Wordsworth tends to return to Nature, as seen in the “Ode” even after recognizing the presence of God, and in the beginning of *The Prelude* his sanctuary from city life is Nature, it even ends with a dedication to it. As a conclusion to his journey, not only the physical journeys he has been on, but the spiritual understanding of himself as a child and adult, he says that he feels a “transcendent power” which conducts “to ideal form” (XIV lines 75, 76). This power

Nature thus  
To bodily sense exhibits, is the express  
Resemblance of that glorious faculty  
That higher minds bear with them as their own.  
This is the very spirit in which they deal  
With the whole compass of the universe (XIV lines 87-92)

Not only is Nature a transcendent power, she is an ideal form, as if she encompasses the whole of the universe. Nature resembles divinity, which our immortal souls encompass, a divinity we have seen early in the “Ode” though it came from God and not Nature. However, Wordsworth also notes to the reader that such minds “are truly from the Deity” (XIV line 112). Wordsworth’s language is religious and if Nature had not been mentioned it would have been seen as directly dedicated to God. Our minds, possibly our souls as they are often connected, as Abrams puts it, are “in search of a spiritual father or mother or home”, like our souls are searching for whence it came (Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* 313). Furthermore, all around us are “rising flowers / And joyous creatures” (XIV lines 171-2) and within it resides “The One who is thy choice of all the world” (XIV line 178), who lifts the soul “with the purest, best, / Of earth-born passions” (XIV line 185-6) as a tribute to “the Almighty’s Throne” (XIV line 187). Ambiguous language hints to a religious experience, particularly Wordsworth’s use of the *One* and *Almighty Throne*. Though there has still not been any reference to God, suggesting

it is from divine Nature we come, even the passions he experience are earth-born and not heavenly. And while the throne could be a reference to the seat of God, recall that Nature sat on her “Alpine throne” as well (VI line 431). Though Wordsworth makes other throne references they are mostly to the fallen king Louis XVI of France during the French Revolution and not to the Christian God.

Despite his use of religious language often befitting of God, Wordsworth’s language is directed towards Nature. Wordsworth describes true happiness, faith, and love in the final stanza of *The Prelude*, directed towards Nature, similar to how he expresses his devotion to Nature in the conclusion of the “Ode.”

Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak  
A lasting inspiration, sanctified  
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved,  
Others will love, and we will teach them how;  
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes  
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth (XIV lines 444-49)

As Abrams predicted, Wordsworth saw the process of spiritual development in a system consisting of two terms: nature and mind (*Natural Supernaturalism* 90). Wordsworth has overcome the separation of mind and nature by connecting the two. Kathleen Blake argues that this ending shows that “human love has been important for providing a relatively secure ground for the next, more difficult step of establishing the poet's proper bond with nature” (Kathleen Blake 394). Indeed, Nature and humanity are connected as one. Wordsworth’s religious and spiritual encounters with Nature helps him understand the beauty of the mind, even to the extent that it surpasses her own beauty, and in doing so he understands Nature better. Recall how nature caused him to feel emotions too deep for tears but also that his humanity allowed him to see nature in a different light. In connecting with Nature, Wordsworth becomes a like the Prophets of Nature, as he says *we* who will speak to *them* and guide them towards a spiritual enlightenment, possibly what Wordsworth has achieved. This could also include the Shepherd boy as he too was a Priest of Nature and helped guide Wordsworth towards Nature in the “Ode.” It is connected to Nature, but also reason, faith, and love, words that might also have be used to describe a relationship with God. Ultimately, Wordsworth’s experiences are initially from Nature, which forms his understanding of the mind and the divine, turning him towards

paganism rather than Christianity in search for religious love and devotion. Indeed, to re-discover his roots, Wordsworth “returned consciously and devotedly to Nature” (Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* 6).

## 4 Conclusion

and this prayer I make,  
Knowing that Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
From joy to joy

– William Wordsworth, “Tintern Abbey” line 121-25

Wordsworth’s poetry shows that the importance of nature was significantly increased during the Romantic period and that it touched his soul. His regression into his childhood and in trying to understand the Shepherd boy has allowed him to see how strongly nature has affected him. It becomes clear nature is far more important to him than purely its physical form. Her motherly aspect was there from his early years, possibly touching his soul as she shaped him and composed his thoughts in *The Prelude*. Nature’s role also becomes important to the Shepherd boy and Wordsworth as the Shepherd is his guide back to a natural pious life, as he is Nature’s Priest. What paganism does is allow Wordsworth to understand himself in, like Abrams said, a system consisting of two terms, mind and nature (*Natural Supernaturalism* 90). Nature’s significance in Wordsworth’s life is similar to the relationship between a human and its creator, arguably God. A relationship much more similar to paganism because they too apply the same elevation and adoration to Nature, unlike Christianity.

Wordsworth’s ambiguous and religious language also relates to an adoration of nature because in using such language he elevates nature to the same position of God. He elevates nature to the position of a divine being in several ways, such as using *glory* to describe both that which came from God and that which exists in Nature without him from the “Ode.” Though the world has lost its celestial glory or light, the glory which God adorn nature in to show the world this is his creation, Wordsworth discovers a different light which he also calls a glory. *Glory* becomes detached from its Christian meaning, though the spiritual and religious aspects of it, it being able to bring out the divine in nature and strong emotions within Wordsworth, are transferred to Nature.

After having given Nature the same status as a god, through the residing glory within it, he continues to connect it to the divine and himself by anthropomorphising it into a feminine deity, a Mother Earth or Mother Nature character. Nature becomes a motherly character to the children of earth and in doing so also replace the heavenly Father. He then turns towards the pagan mother rather than God because there is something within her which Christianity does not provide; a home on earth, rather than a vague memory of a lost Paradise, even to the extent that earth can become a paradise in itself. Replacing Christian elements with pagan ones demonstrates that there is a spiritual side to Wordsworth's relationship with nature because he does not completely reject the religious aspect within Christianity, though the underlying tone becomes pagan. Indeed, Nature can serve as a way out of a materialistic lifestyle as Wordsworth shows in "The World," though that also means a rejection of some Christian elements.

This replacement could also suggest a dissatisfaction with some of these Christian elements because Wordsworth rejects the notion of sin, increasing the pagan influence as Christianity does not offer exactly what he needs. He says he has no need for a redeemer, possibly because there is nothing to be redeemed from as children seem sin-free to Wordsworth in the "Ode," and in *The Prelude* he seeks to understand himself through his younger self, despite Christianity claiming we are all born into sin. These replacements of religious aspects show a rejection of some Christian doctrines, suggesting there is something Christianity does not offer which paganism does, and in discovering this Wordsworth replace those elements with pagan ones, such as replacing the sin we are born into with happiness when experiencing nature in all her glory.

In elevating nature to the status of a divine being Wordsworth is also diminishing the role of the Christian God, as nature itself and the manifestations within it, such as the Moon and the Sea, serve as replacements for him. Instead of following Christian monotheism paganism allows Wordsworth to experience the divine in numerous ways, through his own emotions when looking at nature, through the moon's emotions which he can sympathize with, and through nature itself which brings out images of pagan gods.

Christianity is not able to provide Wordsworth with all of the examples above because of its monotheistic nature but also because it does consider nature as divine as Wordsworth does. There is a particular comfort in nature which allows Wordsworth to express himself, feel the divine all around him without considering doctrines. Yet, Christianity is of great importance

to him as it is only through it that he is able to discover the divine in nature, and through religious, arguably Christian, terminology is he able to express it, though replacing parts with pagan elements. The extensive use of nature and natural images as something wonderful, beautiful, and glorious suggests his religious creed lies in a pagan world as opposed to the few occasions God or any Christian element is mentioned, often in a negative and disheartened setting.

What I have done in this thesis is to address an element within Wordsworth's poetry which is oftentimes overlooked in favour of his Christian language. Though there are clearly scholars who have taken an interest in a similar topic, such as Trilling and his naturalistic view of Wordsworth's poetry, I believe his love for nature surpasses that of simple admiration, that there is a religious element within it which is rather similar to other religions. This also shows that even though the younger romantics were the ones considered pagan, there are hints of it within Wordsworth's poetry as well. Following my definition of paganism there is a religious and spiritual level within it, and whether it replaces elements within Christianity or express a whole new idea is not the main concern, but that there is an elevation of Nature to something more than her physical form, which Wordsworth does.

For future research I think it would be interesting to examine and compare Wordsworth's religious language in more of his poetry, to see if he applies the same religious imagery and symbolism to God and Nature in more than the places I have examined. It would also be interesting to compare Wordsworth's language and symbolism to those poets of the Romantic period who were considered more pagan, for example Percy Bysshe Shelley or John Keats, those Barnett introduce as having been highly influenced by paganism. I believe that would show similarities, as they were all influenced by similar external forces, but also differences as it is difficult to define paganism and that there are many ways to practice it and because they claimed nature was not "simply another word for 'God'" (Barnett 89).

Because, despite Wordsworth's comment to John Keats' "Hymn to Pan" that it was "a very pretty piece of Paganism" (Wu, "Romanticism: An Anthology" 1399), Keats also felt himself "enchanted by the moon," according to Ronald Hutton, like Wordsworth did (33). Keats writes "What is there in thee, Moon! that thou shouldst move / My heart so potently?" (Endymion, Book III line 144), which is what the moon does to Wordsworth, and he does not seem to mind the pagan aspects. As Barnett notes, "Keats was hardly alone with his 'pretty



Paganism” (4). His Hellenism is not an unknown subject either and for him “paganism offered a more celebratory, enlightened form of natural religion without Christianity’s violent and repressive aspects” (Barnett 12). Despite his exclamation that Keats’ work is pagan, I think we ought to consider Wordsworth’s pagan and nature-references as sincere as his Christian ones because we do so with other poets.

If the naturalistic devotion Wordsworth expressed in the endings of *The Prelude* and the “Ode” are not only symbolism, they could serve not only as a conclusion to those works but to this thesis. He begins by searching for the divine, who he thinks will be God, thus looks to the children closest to him but seems to realize that it is Nature who has had the greatest impact on his life; through nurture, as a guide, as a mother, as his divine. Despite Wordsworth’s Christian references, the occasional reference to God, and his ambiguous religious language, his naturalistic adoration, elevation of Nature, his soul and mind’s connection with Nature are all part of him expressing what a pious way of life is to him, namely close encounters with Nature. Paganism allows and encourages this because it too believes there is something more to Nature than its physical form and worship her whether it is as a goddess, Mother Earth, or as something divine. Truly Wordsworth was correct when he said,

That on the banks of this delightful stream  
We stood together; and that I, so long  
A worshipper of Nature (“Tintern Abbey” line 151-3).

## Works cited

Abrams, M. H. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971.

---. "The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor." *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism*, edited by M. H. Abrams, Oxford University Press, 1975, 37-55.

Barnett, Suzanne L. *Romantic Paganism: The Politics of Ecstasy in the Shelley Circle*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Barth, J. Robert. "Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode" and Hopkins' "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo": In Pursuit of Transcendence." *The Fountain Light: Studies in Romanticism and Religion*, Edited by J. Robert Barth. Fordham University Press, 2002, pp. 111-127.

"benediction, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2017, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/17651](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/17651). Accessed 07.11.2017

Benko, Stephen. *The Virgin Goddess: Studies in the Pagan and Christian Roots of Mariology*. Koninklijke Brill, 2004. *Google Books*. Web. Accessed 20.02.2018

Blake, Kathleen. "Elizabeth Browning and Wordsworth: The Romantic Poet as a Woman." *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 24, no. 04, 1986, pp. 387-398. *JStor*. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40002126>. Accessed 12.05.2018

"bliss, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2017, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/20286](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/20286). Accessed 31.10.2017

Boase, Roger. *Secrets of Pinar's Game*. Koninklijke Brill, 2017. *Google Books*. Web. Accessed 03.03.2018

"boon, n.1." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2017, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/21486](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/21486). Accessed 04.01.2018

Bratcher, R.G. "'Glory' in relation to Jesus." *Practical Papers*, vol. 42, no. 4, 1991, pp. 401-408. *United Bible Societies*. [www.ubs-translations.org/tbt/1991/04/TBT199104.html?num=401&x=0&y=0&num1](http://www.ubs-translations.org/tbt/1991/04/TBT199104.html?num=401&x=0&y=0&num1). Accessed 26.02.2018

British Library. "Manuscript of 'Intimations of Immortality' by William Wordsworth." Web. <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/manuscript-of-intimations-of-immortality-by-william-wordsworth>. Accessed 07.05.2018

Browning, Elizabeth Barrett. *Aurora Leigh*. Edited by Margaret Reynolds. Ohio University Press, 1992.

Butler, Marilyn. *Romantics, Rebels & Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

"celestial, adj. and n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2017, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/29434](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/29434). Accessed 24.10.2017

Chandler, James. "Wordsworth's great Ode: Romanticism and the progress of poetry." *The Cambridge Companion to British Poetry*, edited by James Chandler, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp.136-154. *Cambridge University Press*. [doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521862356.008](https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521862356.008). Accessed 21.11.2017

Church of England. *The Book of Common Prayer, And Administration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church*. Cambridge, 1760. *Internet Archive*. Web. Accessed 15.03.2018

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *The Friend: A Series of Essays*. London, 1812. *Archive*. Web. Accessed 12.05.2018.

Cooper, James. "What role does religion play in Romantic period writing?" *Innervate*, vol. 4, 2011-2012, pp. 125-32. *University of Nottingham*. [www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/documents/innervate/11-12/1112cooperromanticism.pdf](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/documents/innervate/11-12/1112cooperromanticism.pdf). Accessed 26.02.2018

Duthie, Alexander. *The Greek Mythology: A Reader's Handbook*. Greenwood Press, 1949.

"foster, v." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2018, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/73857](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/73857). Accessed 08.05.2018.

Fox, Arnold B. and Martin Kallich. "Wordsworth's Sentimental Naturalism: Theme and Image in 'The World Is Too Much With Us.'" *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1977 pp.

327-333. *ProQuest*. [search.proquest.com/docview/1300166083?accountid=17260](http://search.proquest.com/docview/1300166083?accountid=17260). Accessed 05.12.2017

Frey, Nancy Louise. *Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago, Journeys Along an Ancient Way in Modern Spain*. University of California Press, 1998. *Google Books*. Web. Accessed 12.05.2018

Fry, Euan. "Translating 'glory' in the New Testament." *The Bible Translator*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1976, pp. 422-427. *United Bible Societies*. [www.ubs-translations.org/tbt/1976/04/TBT197604.html](http://www.ubs-translations.org/tbt/1976/04/TBT197604.html). Accessed 23.02.2018

Gallager, Eugene V. "A Religion without Converts? Becoming a Neo-Pagan." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 62, no. 3, 1994, pp. 851-867. *JStor*. [www.jstor.org/stable/1465216](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1465216). Accessed 27.02.2018

Genette, Gerard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Cambridge University Press, 1997. *Google Books*. Web. Accessed 27.11.2017

Gilchrist, Roberta. "Magic for the Dead? The Archaeology of Magic in Later Medieval Burials." *Medieval Archaeology*, vol. 52, no. 01, 2008, pp. 119-159. *Taylor & Francis Online*. <https://doi.org/10.1179/174581708x335468>. Accessed 12.05.2018

"glorious, adj." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, January 2018, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/79119](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/79119). Accessed 26.02.2018

Hale, Robert C. "Wordsworth, Revision, and the Blessed Babe: Reading the Mother in Book 2 of *The Prelude*." *Mosaic*, vol. 33, no. 03, 2001, pp. 145-163. *ProQuest*. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1300045008?accountid=17260>. Accessed 12.05.2018

Hamilton, A. C. "Sidney's *Astrophel and Sella* as Sonnet Sequence." *ELH*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1969, pp. 59-87. *JStor*. [www.jstor.org/stable/2872143](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2872143). Accessed 02.03.2018

Hare, John Bruno. "Wicca and Neo-Paganism," *Internet Sacred Texts*, [www.sacred-texts.com/pag/](http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/). Accessed 16.11.2017

Harrington, Janette. "Wordsworth's Descriptive Sketches and the Prelude, Book VI." *Modern Language Association*, vol. 44, no. 04, 1929, pp. 1144-1158.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/457715>. Accessed 07.05.2018

Hart, Christopher. "The English Christian Hero: Nelson of Trafalgar." In *Heroines and Heroes: Symbolism, Embodiment, Narratives & Identity*, edited by Christopher Hart. Midrash Publications, 2008. *Google Books*. Web. Accessed 19.02.2018

Hartman, Geoffrey H. *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*. Yale University Press, 1964.

---. *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*. University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Haynes, Brandon. "Romanticism and Urbanization". *Romantic Politics*.

[web.utk.edu/~gerard/romanticpolitics/urbanization.html](http://web.utk.edu/~gerard/romanticpolitics/urbanization.html). Accessed 08.02.2018

Heath, Shannon. "Romanticism and Revolution." *Romantic Politics*.

[web.utk.edu/~gerard/romanticpolitics/revolution.html](http://web.utk.edu/~gerard/romanticpolitics/revolution.html). Accessed 08.02.2018

"heathen, adj. and n.1." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2018,

[www.oed.com/view/Entry/85157](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/85157). Accessed 12 May 2018.

Hebron, Stephen. "The Romantics and Classical Greece," *British Library*,

[www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-romantics-and-classical-greece](http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-romantics-and-classical-greece). Accessed 15.11.2017

"holy, adj. and n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2017,

[www.oed.com/view/Entry/87833](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/87833). Accessed 20.11.2017

Homans, Margaret. *Women Writers and Poetic Identity*. Princeton University Press, 1980.

Hutton, Ronald. *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

Keats, John. "Endymion: A Poetic Romance." *Project Gutenberg*, 2008.

[www.gutenberg.org/files/24280/24280-h/24280-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24280/24280-h/24280-h.htm). Accessed 24.01.2018

Ketterer, David. "Glimpses in "The World Is Too Much with Us"." *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1979, pp.122-23. *ProQuest*.

[search.proquest.com/docview/1300158892?accountid=17260](http://search.proquest.com/docview/1300158892?accountid=17260). Accessed 04.12.2017

*King James Version*. King James Bible Online, 2017, [www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/](http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/).

Accessed 20.12.2017

Kroeber, Karl. "A New Reading of "The World Is Too Much with Us"." *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1963, pp. 183-188. [www.jstor.org/stable/25599587](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25599587). Accessed

13.12.2017

Lane, Barbara G. "'Requiem aeternam dona eis': The Beaune "Last Judgement" and the Mass of the Dead." *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1989, pp. 166-180. [www.jstor.org/stable/3780717](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3780717). Accessed 01.03.2018

Lindenberger, Herbert. *On Wordsworth's Prelude*. Princeton University Press, 1963. *Ebook Central*. Web. Accessed 12.05.2018

Magliocco, Sabina. "Neopaganism". *The Cambridge Companion to New Religious Movements*, edited by Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein. *Google Books*. Web. Accessed 15.11.2017

Manning, Peter J. "Wordsworth's Intimations Ode and Its Epigraphs." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 82, No. 4, 1983, pp. 526-540. *JStor*.

[www.jstor.org/stable/27709236](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27709236). Accessed 27.11.2017

Mathison, John K. "Wordsworth's Ode: "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." *Studies in Philology*, vol. 46, no. 3, 1949, pp. 419-439. *JStor*.

[www.jstor.org/stable/4172896](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4172896). Accessed 26.02.2018

Matlak, Richard, ed. *Poems in Two Volumes*. By William Wordsworth. Broadview Editions, 2016.

Matthews, Carol. "Neo-paganism and witchcraft." *America's Alternative Religions*, edited by T. Miller. State University of New York Press, 1995, pp. 339-45. *St. Francis Xavier University*.

[people.stfx.ca/kpenner/rels225/Neo-Paganism%20and%20Witchcraft.pdf](http://people.stfx.ca/kpenner/rels225/Neo-Paganism%20and%20Witchcraft.pdf).

Accessed 29.03.2018

“mean, adj.1.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, January 2018, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/115438](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/115438). Accessed 28.02.2018

Morris, Trevor. “The Dawn Will Come.” *Dragon Age Inquisition*, EA Games Soundtrack, 2014.

Murakami, Haruki. *Kafka on the Shore*. Vintage, 2005. *Google Books*. Web. Accessed 01.05.2018

Naranjo, Esther Bautista. “On The Trail of Don Quixote: The Route Followed by Romantic Travellers” in *Current Trends in Anglophone Studies: Cultural, Linguistic and Literary Research*, edited by Javier Ruano García. University of Salamanca, 2011, pp. 180-191. Web Accessed 06.05.2018

Neo-Paganism.com. *Neo-Paganism.com*. 15.09.2014. [neo-paganism.com/beliefs-of-neo-pagans/neo-pagan-gods/mother-earth-goddess/](http://neo-paganism.com/beliefs-of-neo-pagans/neo-pagan-gods/mother-earth-goddess/). Accessed 19.02.2018

New, Melvyn. “Wordsworth’s Shell of Poetry.” *Philological Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 2, 1974, pp. 275-281. *Proquest*. [search.proquest.com/docview/1290929685?accountid=17260](http://search.proquest.com/docview/1290929685?accountid=17260). Accessed 06.05.2018

Newberry, Jenna Marie. *Venus Anadyomene: The Mythological Symbolism From Antiquity to The 19<sup>th</sup> Century*. Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 2011. Web. *Minds University of Wisconsin*. Accessed 12.03.2018

Newman, Carey C. *Paul’s Glory-Christology Tradition & Rhetoric*. Brill, 1992. *Google Books*. Web. Accessed 23.02.2018

“pagan, n. and adj.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2017, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/135980](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/135980). Accessed 17.10.2017

“pantheism, n.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, January 2018, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/136995](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/136995). Accessed 13.02.2018

“perpetual, adj., adv., and n.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2017, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/141340](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/141340). Accessed 07.11.2017

“piety, n.” OED Online, Oxford University Press, March 2018,  
[www.oed.com/view/Entry/143641](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/143641). Accessed 30.11.2017

Priestman, Martin. *Romantic Atheism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Proffitt, Edward. “This Pleasant Lea”: Waning Vision in “The World Is Too Much with Us.” *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 11, no. 02, 1980, pp. 75-77. *ProQuest*.  
[search.proquest.com/docview/1300157544?accountid=17260](http://search.proquest.com/docview/1300157544?accountid=17260). Accessed 04.12.2017

Rackin, Donald. “God’s Grandeur: Hopkins’ Sermon to Wordsworth.” *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1980, pp. 66-73. *ProQuest*.  
[search.proquest.com/docview/1300157507?accountid=17260](http://search.proquest.com/docview/1300157507?accountid=17260). Accessed 04.12.2017

Raysor, Thomas. “The Themes of Immortality and Natural Piety in Wordsworth’s Immortality Ode.” *PMLA*, vol. 69, no. 4, 1954, pp. 861-875. *JStor*.  
[www.jstor.org/stable/459935](http://www.jstor.org/stable/459935). Accessed 21.02.2018

Rosenzweig, Rachel. *Worshipping Aphrodite: Art and Cult in Classical Athens*. University of Michigan Press, 2007. *Google Books*. Web. Accessed 16.03.2018

“sacrilege, n.1.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2018,  
[www.oed.com/view/Entry/169585](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/169585). Accessed 08.05.2018.

Sand, David. “What is Paganism?” *Isle of Avalon*, [isle-of-avalon.com/pagan.htm](http://isle-of-avalon.com/pagan.htm). Accessed 17.10.2017

Sarker, Sunil Kumar. *A Companion to William Wordsworth*. Volume II. Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2003. *Google Books*. Web. Accessed 12.03.2018

Selincourt, Ernest de. Introduction. *The Prelude: or Growth of a Poet’s Mind*, by William Wordsworth, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford University Press, 1959, pp.xix-lxxiv.

Shi, David. “Chapter 13: Religion, Romanticism, and Reform.” *America: A Narrative History*. W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Oral Presentation. Video.  
[wnorton.com/college/history/america9/full/ch/13/studyplan.aspx](http://wnorton.com/college/history/america9/full/ch/13/studyplan.aspx). Accessed 08.02.2018



Sidney, Philip. *Astrophel and Stella*. University of Oregon, 1995. PDF. *Scholars Bank*. [scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/794](http://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/794). Accessed 02.03.2018

Snelders, H. A. M. "Romanticism and Naturphilosophie and the Inorganic Natural Sciences 1797-1840: An Introductory Survey." *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1970, 193-215. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25599763>. Accessed 12.04.2018

"sordid, adj. and n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2017, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/184862](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/184862). Accessed 04.02.2018

Taylor, Dennis. "Wordsworth's Abbey Ruins." In *The Fountain Light: Studies in Romanticism and Religion*, Edited by J. Robert Barth. Fordham University Press, 2002, pp. 37-53.

"throne, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2018, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/201349](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/201349). Accessed 12 May 2018.

Trilling, Lionel. "The Immortality Ode." *English Romantic Poets*, edited by M. H. Abrams. Oxford University Press, 1975.

---. *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society*. The Viking Press, 1950. *International Psychoanalysis*. Web. Accessed 01.12.2017

Uthaug, Geir. *Romantikkens Univers*. Dreyers Forlag, 2017.

Wallis, Robert J. & Jenny Blain. "Sites, sacredness, and stories: Interactions of archaeology and contemporary paganism." *Folklore*, vol. 114, no. 03, 2010, pp. 307-321. *Taylor and Francis Online*. [doi.org/10.1080/0015587032000145351](https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587032000145351). Accessed 24.01.2018

Webster, Richard. *Magical Symbols of Love & Romance*. Llewellyn Publications, 2006. *Google Books*. Web. Accessed 25.01.2018

Woodring, Carl. *Wordsworth*. Harvard University Press, 1968.

Wordsworth, Jonathan. Introduction. *The Prelude*, by Wordsworth, Penguin Books, 1995. Print.

Wordsworth, William. *Poems: In Two Volumes*. Edited by Richard Matlak, Broadview Press, 2016.

---. *The Prelude: The Four Texts (1798, 1799, 1805, 1850)*. Edited by Jonathan Wordsworth, Penguin Books, 1995.

---. *The Pedlar, Tintern Abbey, The Two-part Prelude*. Edited by Jonathan Wordsworth. Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Wu, Duncan, editor. *Romanticism An Anthology*. Fourth Edition. Blackwell Publishers, 2012.

---. *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799*. Cambridge University Press, 1993.

York, Michael. *Pagan Theology: Paganism as a World Religion*. New York University Press, 2003.