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Nature and Ecological Consciousness in Wordsworth's Poetry: An Ecolinguistic Analysis

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Abstract

Existing studies tend to describe Wordsworth's ecological imagination either through ecocritical exegesis or by quantifying the frequency of nature-related lexicon, rather than by closely analysing ecological constructions in language. Drawing on Arran Stibbe's ecolinguistic framework of "stories we live by," this paper qualitatively explores how Wordsworth's poetry constructs, supports, questions, or complicates the cultural stories humans tell about our relationship to nature, and whether and how these patterns support ecological flourishing. Four poems were chosen to represent a range of Wordsworth's ecological "positions" (*The Tables Turned*, *The World Is Too Much With Us*, *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*) and closely analyzed via a transparent coding process identifying recurrence across lines of evaluation, agency, metaphor/frame, identity/relationship, and salience/erasure. Results show that Wordsworth habitually constructs productive re-storying through endowing nonhumans with agency and aliveness, praising receptive modes of engagement with the more-than-human world over exploitation, and connecting material reality to ethics and affect. Conversely, the poems are also suggestive of an underlying tension: Nature is often legitimised through anthropocentric comforts of consolation and psychological well-being, indicating the reach of an anthropocentric boundary in what would otherwise be ecocentric language. The analysis above showed how ecolinguistics may offer a testable approach to literary interpretation and clarify Wordsworth's ecological vision at the discursive level.

Introduction and Background

Growing environmental crises have drawn renewed attention to how cultural texts shape people's imaginations, valuations, and care for non-human worlds (Shaw, 2016). Scholars across the environmental humanities continue to revisit Romantic literature and culture, given its co-emergence with early phases of industrial modernity, and its persistent staging of questions about what counts as "nature," what kinds of attention to place matter, and what ethical orientations toward land and nonhuman life a culture normalizes (Gravil & Robinson, 2015). William Wordsworth is pivotal among Romantic poets because his verse repeatedly returns to familiar landscapes and quotidian encounters with fields, rivers, and hills, plants, and weather, and interrelates them with perception, memory, and moral life. Wordsworth's nature',

as ecocritical studies have detailed, is seldom if ever a backdrop. On the contrary, it provides a relational field through which the human subject is formed and tried, wronged and repaired; it is through engagement with this ostensibly nonhuman world that modernity's disruptions (commercial living, alienation, instrumental thought) become evident. (Sayre & Löwy, 2019) However, while ecocriticism has produced sophisticated readings of Wordsworth's environmental imagination, it often proceeds through close interpretive readings without specifying how linguistic patterns systematically create ecological meanings. This matters because "ecological consciousness" is not only a theme or a set of images; it is also a *discursive achievement*—constructed through choices of agency, evaluation, metaphor, and the positioning of the human self in relation to the nonhuman. Recent developments in ecolinguistics provide a methodological framework for examining these features in a controlled, replicable way by asking what kinds of "stories" a text promotes about human–nature relations and whether those stories are ecologically beneficial or harmful (Stibbe, 2010, 2015). Yet, as reviews of ecological discourse analysis indicate, canonical Romantic poetry remains underexplored as a sustained ecolinguistic corpus, despite the maturity of available tools and concepts (Chu et al., 2024).

Problem Statement

The gap that this study aims to fill is thus a lack of methodologically explicit ecolinguistic account of Wordsworth's poetic construction of ecological consciousness. Though much existing "ecolinguistic" work on Wordsworth has amounted to little more than lexical counting of nature-related vocabulary, purely quantitative lexical analyses can only ever go so far in accounting for the deeper-level discursive processes by which poems distribute agency, encode value, and bring forth an ecological worldview. Conversely, though ecocritical scholarship can persuasively argue that Wordsworth cultivates feelings of connectedness, care, and ethical attention, it sometimes fails to show how these meanings accrue from patterned linguistic choices across poems. One study closes this gap by applying Arran Stibbe's theory of "stories we live by" as an organising framework (Stibbe, 2015). This approach is particularly well suited to Wordsworth because his poems do more than talk about the land: across hisoeuvre, Wordsworth habitually re-orients human interaction with the world by praising particular forms of attention, criticising quotidian materialism or modes of instrumental interaction with the world, and characterising the natural world itself as ethically substantial. Furthermore, using Stibbe's work to analyze Wordsworth aligns this discussion with current ecolinguistic projects that assess the impact of certain kinds of discourse on ecological wellbeing and allows for the identification of both environmentally "beneficial" stories as well as unexamined assumptions of anthropocentrism.

Aim and research questions

The purpose of this study is to explore ecologically themed construction of ecological consciousness in Wordsworth's poetry through language, by way of the analytical framework of Stibbe's ecolinguistics. Wordsworth stages sets of complementary orientations to ecology through four poems about nature as a moral teacher, a critique of consumerist alienation, the healing presence of nature, and joyful solidarity (memory-mediated) with the more-than-human.

To achieve this aim, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What ecological "stories" about human–nature relations are constructed in the selected poems when analyzed through Stibbe's "stories we live by" framework? (Stibbe, 2015)
2. How do the poems build these stories through recurrent discursive patterns, especially in relation to evaluation, agency, metaphor/framing, identity/relationship, and salience/erasure?

3. What tensions or contradictions emerge across the poems—particularly where ecological value is promoted yet the nonhuman may still be filtered through human-centered benefit?

Scope and significance

The study is intentionally narrow in scope, examining four Wordsworth poems: *The Tables Turned, The World Is Too Much With Us, Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, and I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud.* This curated dataset enables comprehensive, text-sensitive analysis while facilitating comparisons among poems that exemplify various registers of Wordsworth's nature writing (didactic address, social critique, meditative recollection, lyric joy). The study employs qualitative and interpretive methodologies, enhanced by a transparent coding procedure based on Stibbe's ecolinguistic categories, thereby linking assertions about ecological consciousness to distinct textual patterns rather than vague impressions. This study makes three main contributions. One is to Wordsworth studies and Romantic ecocriticism more generally. In emphasizing how ecological significance is produced through language in Wordsworth's poetry, this study supplements broader 'cultural' or historical-philosophical accounts of Romantic ecology with explanation at the level of discourse. Second, it contributes to ecolinguistics by developing the "stories we live by" framework into a body of canonical literature that, to date, has rarely, if ever, been treated in sustained ecolinguistic terms. This advances the methodology of ecolinguistics by responding to calls in reviews of ecological discourse analysis to expand into less frequented terrains. Finally, the study presents a replicable approach to the poetic grounding of ecological consciousness that goes beyond mere inventories of vocabulary in seeking explanations at the discourse level. This advances broader interdisciplinary studies that seek to understand how texts inform environmental values and ethics.

Literature Review

A substantial body of ecocritical studies positions Wordsworth at the centre of "Romantic ecology" and of environmental thought more broadly. If early ecocriticism was sometimes prone to read Romantic nature poetry as somehow idealising "Nature" (with the attendant criticism of escapism), more recent work has complicated this view: just as nature is not mere backdrop in Wordsworth, but a dynamic field of relation in which mind, memory, labour, and place mutually produce value, so too has the ecocritical conversation expanded to include conversations about affect, embodiment, ethics of care, questions of political economy, and so on. So today, Wordsworth appears not only as celebrant of the Lake District but as a writer intimately involved with modernity's ecological entanglements. One strength of this particular strand then is that it has a longer history and philosophical background: scholarship here can relate poetic representations to land use/tourism, enclosure, industrialization, and emergent modern subjectivities, for example. Works gathered in some of the major reference venues on Romanticism/ecology imply that at least some iterations of the field have moved past reductive "nature worship" accounts to attend to the textures of Wordsworth's environmental imagination as well as its complex reception history (recovering the ecological afterlives of Wordsworth, Romanticism more broadly, in subsequent literary cultures). The Oxford Handbook of William Wordsworth also indexes this range and explicitly names ongoing areas of interest such as "Wordsworth and ecology," while tacitly calling for less siloed or "holistic" approaches rather than thematic analyses in isolation (Gravil & Robinson, 2015). Tying closely to this latter point, Romantic anti-capitalism and nature reads Romantic-period writers (Wordsworth included) as both entrenched within capitalist modernity and as participating in its critique, further bolstering the case that Romantic texts have resources to speak to the structural aspects of environmental crisis beyond individual feeling or experience (Sayre & Löwy, 2019). However, much ecocritical Wordsworth scholarship relies on interpretive close reading that leaves its

categories implicit in the language used to describe them. "Interconnection", "dwelling", "more-than-human agency", or "ecological self" can remain methodologically vague: we are often told what the poems mean ecologically, but not how they come to mean it through recurring patterns of language (grammar, pronouns, allocation of agency, evaluative language, systems of metaphor) across multiple poems. Here ecolinguistics could make an intervention: its toolkit allows us to make such interpretive claims more formally while remaining qualitatively attuned.

Ecolinguistics and ecological discourse analysis

Ecolinguistics has developed into a strong analytical tradition focused on identifying patterns in how language relates humans to the more-than-human world. One influential framework has been Arran Stibbe's concept of the "stories we live by". Under this approach, texts can be seen as circulating narratives (about modern progress, consumption, human separation from nature, exceptionalism, etc.) which we can evaluate as ecologically harmful or regenerative (Stibbe, 2015). Earlier work by Stibbe also linked concepts from ecolinguistics to globalization and linguistic/discursive patterns that either disconnect or reconnect humans to the natural world (Stibbe, 2010). Some of this work overlaps with critical discourse analysis but tends to go beyond it by asking a specific question: Does this discourse support life? Does this discourse promote ecological flourishing? That evaluative bent has led to work on "positive discourse analysis" (seeking out helpful/enabling discourses rather than just problem-focused discourses). Two other areas of emerging ecolinguistics/EDA research notably engage with ideas of agency and grammar (who/what is agenced as active/passive, animate/sentient, etc.) and recognize that literary works can redistribute agency to nonhumans. Work on intersections between ecolinguistics and positive discourse analysis attends to how grammar can construe nonhuman agency and discusses Wordsworth as an example (Ponton, 2022). Likewise, an overview of conceptual connections between CDA and positive discourse analysis helps authors articulate where interests align/diverge and conclude that researchers interested in literature can draw from its criteria for "beneficial discourse" should we want to treat Wordsworth as constructing alternative ecological narratives (Abbamonte, 2022). A recent review of ecostylistics, which does not explicitly focus on literary applications, details how marker words and "environets" can aid ecological empathy and offers a method that can be applied to poems. (Virdis, 2024). Although the tools are advanced, Romantic poetry, particularly the canonical Wordsworth, remains underrepresented as a long-term ecolinguistic corpus. A systematic review of ecological discourse analysis (2014–2023) underscores the swift advancement and diversification of EDA/ELDA methodologies; however, such reviews also suggest the necessity to expand textual domains and refine the operationalization of “ecological awareness” (Chu et al., 2024). Ecolinguistics is prepared for Wordsworth; however, studies on Wordsworth have only partially engaged with it.

Wordsworth Ecolinguistics: Promise and Method Limits

A smaller corpus of scholarship explicitly self-defines as ecolinguistic regarding Wordsworth. Here, the most conspicuous trend is the identification of ecological lexicon: scholars identify nouns/adjectives pertaining to nature and compute frequencies in selected poems. For instance, Rizqan identifies “ecological lexicons” in Wordsworth's poems about nature and subsequently breaks them down by word class/phrase type (Rizqan, 2019). This method has benefits on two levels: it is easily understood/replicated/transmitted, and it can demonstrate that Wordsworth populates his poetic world with natural beings.

But lexicon counting has obvious limitations for a study of ecological consciousness as well. Word counts don't tell us:

- how poems allocate agency (who or what is acting, speaking, teaching, resisting, suffering?),

- how texts represent value and evaluation (tenderness, awe, grief, duty, remorse),
- how metaphors and narrative frames construct "stories" about human–nature relations, or
- how grammatical constructions position the human subject (viewer, participant, caretaker, violator, dependent).

Lexical approaches risk reducing "ecology" to a topic rather than a worldview. Hence, 'ecological consciousness' becomes equivalent to 'lots of nature words.' But this blunt instrumentality is too coarse-grained for a Romantic poet whose ecological significations often arise through registers of memory, temporality, ethical attention not naming of flowers, or rivers, hills etc. therefore, Wordsworthian ecolinguistics should move beyond vocabulary inventories to fuller ecolinguistic toolkits: transitivity, pronouns, modality, appraisal, metaphor, narrative 'stories we live by,' and perhaps corpus stylistics for scale effects.

Toward Integration: Ecostylistics and Beneficial Discourse

The connection between ecocriticism and ecolinguistics is increasingly evident as the two fields have begun to overlap in their attention to how texts shape perceptions, ethics, and habits of action. Ecolinguistics offers analytical rigour and evaluative frameworks ("good" vs "harmful" stories), while ecocriticism offers historical context and philosophical sophistication. Special issues and monographs in "wild Romanticism" and related ecocritical movements have opened exciting new venues for Romantic scholarship interested in reading Romantic texts as ecological in the senses of being embodied, affective, and ethically engaged (Poetzsch & Falke, 2021). Such scholarship can provide interpretive predictions that can then be tested and made rigorous through ecolinguistic analysis: for instance, do Wordsworth's poems repeatedly afford agency to nonhuman persons through grammatical constructions? Do they tell stories of human thriving as learned dependence instead of learned dominance? Do they frame attentiveness and restraint as ordinary virtues? Nonetheless, even the most synthetic of these books rarely provides a repeatable, line-by-line linguistic methodology. The result is that while many critics will say that Wordsworth is significant for ecological thought, and while many will say that ecolinguistics can uncover patterns of ecological storytelling in his language, relatively few studies actually combine these ideas into a unified methodology at a significant scale applied to Wordsworth's poetry.

Research Gap

There does not yet exist a theoretically cohesive, methodologically transparent ecolinguistic study of Wordsworth's poetry that surpasses the cataloguing of nature words to instead analyse Wordsworth's oeuvre regarding how patterns of language (agency/transitivity/grammar, pronouns, appraisal/evaluation, metaphor, story or "stories we live by") shape ecological consciousness throughout his collected works (or systematic selection of poems or corpus slice of oeuvre). The significance of this gap in scholarship is that absent such research, "ecological consciousness" with regard to Wordsworth's work is defined as either: (a) something that must be claimed via ecocritical reading practices but admits no consistent linguistic derivation or, (b) something that can only be measured by a word count of certain terms which themselves fail to account for aspects of worldview, ethics, and ontology of relation. Grounded in Stibbe's narrative construct of "stories" and the EDA/PDA resources charted by Ponton and Abbamonte, ecolinguistics offers a method for replicably illustrating how and where Wordsworth both constructs ecological attentiveness and care through language, as well as where he reproduces human-centric assumptions.

Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative textual research design, operationalized as an ecolinguistic analysis using Stibbe's (2015) "stories we live by" method. The purpose of this study is to examine how Wordsworth constructs ecological consciousness in his poetry. The sample includes four poems (*The Tables Turned, The World Is Too Much With Us*, *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, and *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*) and were chosen because together, they "stage" four complementary orientations toward ecology: nature as teacher, critique of consumerist disconnection, nature as salve, and joyful interrelation (memory allowing) with more-than-human nature. Each poem is analyzed as a holistic discourse unit, allowing for both intra-poem interpretation as well as comparison of the dominant ecological "stories" and tensions across texts. Poems are prepared for analysis by numbering lines/stanzas and being broken into linguistic units where possible/clause/clause-like units at minimum while maintaining poetic form in order to track foregrounding/emphasis. The analysis methodically combines repeated close reading with coding according to a fixed Stibbe-based codebook across five story-building analytic dimensions: evaluation, identity/relationship, metaphor/framing, agency, and salience/erasure. Coded excerpts are aggregated into a short "story profile" document for each poem then synthesized across poems in the data set both to see what story or stories they have in common, how they shift ecological orientation, and what tensions/contradictions in the stories allow them to exceed a unitary "green" interpretation. This work maintains rigour through consistent application of categories, record of coding decisions (audit trail), occasional re- coding (second-reader if possible), and explicit attention to negative-case analysis. Ethical considerations do not include human-subject considerations, as poems are published texts, though care has been taken with interpretive responsibility by grounding ecological evaluation in the text rather than reading modern environmental ideas into the poem.

Theoretical Framework

The following is the chosen theoretical framework for this study.

Stibbe's ecolinguistics ("stories we live by")

This research paper will take Arran Stibbe's ecolinguistics framework, "stories we live by," as its sole theoretical perspective because it is best suited to an ecolinguistic study of Wordsworth's ecological vision. Practicalities and poetry synthesis aside: your selected poems do more than merely describe "nature"; they promote, politicize, and re-imagine ways of living through repeated narrative arcs (learning from nature, resisting consumer culture, healing the self through immersion in place, etc.). Stibbe's methodology aims to identify these implicit "stories" and analyze them from an ecological standpoint do they promote ways of relating that allow for more ecological flourishing (care, kinship, mindfulness, restraint) or do they reinforce exploitative worldviews (anthropocentrism, commodification, dismissal of the more-than-human world)?

"A story" can be defined as any repeated pattern of meaning that organizes discourse and influences how readers make sense of the world and their role in it. For Wordsworth many of these stories take the form of explicit statements. When The Tables Turned tells us to learn wisdom from nature "Let Nature be your teacher" that's an overt ecolinguistic "story" about where knowledge and value come from and how we should approach the nonhuman world. When The World Is Too Much With Us creates a counter-story demonizing consumer lifestyles "Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers" it situates that story as one of spiritual/ecological alienation from nature.

Key categories (how ecological consciousness will be identified)
Ecological consciousness present within the chosen poems will be analyzed using a limited number of predetermined ecolinguistic categories (Stibbe's fundamental elements of story analysis). By maintaining a small set of analytical categories, the inquiry will remain focused and replicable, all while operating inside one theory.:

Evaluation (beneficial vs destructive orientation)
The study attempts to characterize how the poems praise the natural world and evaluate human approaches towards it. This valuation is the crux of the dataset: Wordsworth extols positive receptive attention in Tintern Abbey ("tranquil restoration", "joy", "life of things") and scorns detached intellect in The Tables Turned ("Our meddling intellect / Mis-shapes… / We murder to dissect."). Evaluation will be operationalized as the poem's ecological "moral vocabulary": what is described as good, harmful, healing, or corrupting.

Agency (who/what is made active and influential)
One criterion for measuring ecological consciousness linguistically is whether language allows the more-than-human world to have agency rather than objectifying it as scenery. *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* references the daffodils as "Fluttering and dancing," and even describes the waves as having "danced", foregrounding liveliness and activity, both human and nonhuman. Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey likewise describes nature as animating the speaker ("nurse," "guide," "guardian") his interiority and ethical self. The study analyses how these systematic patterns distribute agency.

Salience and erasure (what is foregrounded vs backgrounded/absent)
Stibbe's framework also includes noticing what texts bring to the forefront, and what they leave out. Wordsworth often emphasizes sensory experiences and emotional connections with the landscape (Tintern Abbey; Daffodils), while the role of human economic activity is more prominent when cast as a problem in *The World Is Too Much With Us* ("getting and spending"). This analysis will consider how such choices affect our ecological awareness. Does it make visible our impacts on land? Does it give prominence to nature's own rhythms? Is nonhuman suffering/incapacity visible or obscured?

Metaphor and framing (how nature is conceptualized)
Metaphor matters in Stibbe's ecolinguistics because it covertly constrains ecological relationships. Through language, nature can be cast metaphorically as a teacher, a home, a companion, a resource, a spectacle, or a spiritual presence. The corpus features powerful ecologically framed passages: *The Tables Turned* explicitly casts nature as teacher; *Tintern Abbey* addresses nature as a sustaining moral-spiritual presence ("motion and a spirit... rolls through all things"); *The World Is Too Much With Us* critiques modern life as being "out of tune" with nature. This study categorizes these metaphors according to recurringly themed story-frames to evaluate their ecological underpinnings.

Identity and relationship (how the human self is positioned)
Ecological awareness encompasses the sorts of "self" each poem constructs as well: observer, consumer, humble member, kin, worshiper, learner. In Tintern Abbey the speaker evolves from gluttonous youth toward a steadier, morally-aware self who has learned how "to look on nature" . *The World Is Too Much With Us* lambasts "we" for its collective alienation while yearning for another form of belonging. The critique determines what sorts of selves are solicited, what modes of relationship (belonging, communion, stewardship, reverence) are normalised.

How the framework fits this dataset (what was produced)

Applying Stibbe's framework of ecolinguistics to the four poems chosen revealed a comparative map of ecological "stories" Wordsworth creates and challenges throughout his work. From patterns found in the analysis, four main story-candidates were tested and revised: nature as teacher/source of wisdom (*The Tables Turned*), consumerist modernity as alienation from nature (*The World Is Too Much With Us*), nature as restoring force which shapes one's ethical nature (*Tintern Abbey*), and blissful communion/remembered togetherness with nature (*I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*). Crucially, the framework also **enabled the study to identify** tensions inside apparently "green" meanings especially moments where nature is deeply valued yet remains filtered through human psychological consolation, indicating a potential anthropocentric limit within otherwise ecologically affirmative discourse. In this way, the Stibbe-based analysis clarified not merely that Wordsworth values nature, but *also which human nature relations his language repeatedly persuasively presents* across the set.

Analysis

Applying Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistic framework of "stories we live by", this section analyzes how the four poems draw from/reproduce culturally available stories about human–nature relations through discourse. This poetic discourse either challenges or promotes these stories. Reading each poem through the lens of stories we live by and organizing comments following the present study's codebook (evaluation, agency, metaphor/framing, identity/relationship, and salience/erasure) the section highlights stories poems communicate which seem ecologically helpful (promoting interconnectedness and flourishing) and points where their ecological narrative stays ambivalent (particularly when validating nature for humans psychologically/spiritually) (Stibbe, 2015).

Sample 1: I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud (William Wordsworth, 1770 –1850)

William Wordsworth 1770 –1850
I wandered lonely as a Cloud
  That floats on high o'er Vales and Hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
  A host of golden Daffodils;
Beside the Lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
Continuous as the stars that shine
  And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
  Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
The waves beside them danced, but they
  Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A Poet could not but be gay
  In such a jocund company:
I gazed and gazed but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:
For oft when on my couch I lie
  In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
  Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the Daffodils. (Academy of American Poets, 2000)

From an ecolinguistic perspective, *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* constructs a strongly beneficial story of more-than-human companionship, but it also reveals an ambivalent story of nature as an inner "resource" for the human subject (Stibbe, 2015). The opening metaphor frames the speaker as *"lonely as a Cloud / That floats on high o'er Vales and Hills"* (Wordsworth, n.d.-a, lines 1–2). This "cloud" self-positioning is significant: it places the human subject initially in a state of separation, aloof, drifting, and solitary. The ecological turn occurs *"all at once"* when the speaker encounters *"a crowd, / A host of golden Daffodils"* (lines 3–4). The metaphor of the daffodils as a "crowd" and "host" linguistically confers social presence on them, framing the nonhuman not as scenery but as a collective capable of relationship. In Stibbe's terms, this is a shift toward a story of belonging rather than alienation: the more-than-human is constructed as a community into which the human is affectively drawn (Stibbe, 2015). The poem's grammar repeatedly assigns agency and liveliness to nonhuman entities: the daffodils are *"Fluttering and dancing"* (line 6), later "Tossing their heads in sprightly dance" (line 12), and even the waves "danced" (line 13). This matters ecolinguistically because the distribution of agency is a key site at which discourse either reinforces human exceptionalism or opens space for ecological relationality (Fill & Penz, 2017). Wordsworth's pattern does not merely describe flowers; it animates them through verbs of movement and joy, producing a story in which nonhuman life is active, expressive, and affectively contagious. The speaker's emotional state is explicitly shaped by this nonhuman agency: *"A Poet could not but be gay / In such a jocund company"* (lines 15–16). Here, the poem models an ecosocial relation: the "company" is nonhuman, yet it produces a shared affective field.

However, Stibbe's framework also prompts critical attention to *what kind* of ecological relationship is being normalized. The poem contains a clear **instrumental valuation** of the scene: *"I gazed—and gazed—but little thought / What wealth the show to me had brought"* (Wordsworth, n.d.-a, lines 17–18). The metaphor of "wealth" frames the encounter as a gain accruing to the speaker, and the phrase "to me" centers human benefit. The final stanza intensifies this inward turn: the daffodils "flash upon that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude" (lines 21–22). Nature becomes portable as mental image, used for private restoration: *"my heart with pleasure fills, / And dances with the Daffodils"* (lines 23–24). In Stibbe's terms, this can be read as an ambivalent story: on one hand, it promotes attentiveness and joy in the natural world (beneficial discourse); on the other, it risks construing nature as a **psychological commodity** valuable because it enriches the human interior (Stibbe, 2015; Ponton, 2022). Notably, the daffodils' own ecological being, growth, vulnerability, and seasonality remain largely **erased**; they are not threatened or fragile but endlessly abundant ("never-ending line," "ten thousand") (Wordsworth, n.d.-a, lines 9–12). The story is therefore ecologically affirmative, yet it also tends toward an aestheticised and human-centred ecology of feeling.

Sample 2: The World Is Too Much With Us (Williams Wordsworth, 1770-1850)

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
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,
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

(Academy of American Poets, 2000a)

Where *Daffodils* narrates reconnection, *The World Is Too Much With Us* constructs a counter-story: modern consumerism produces ecological and spiritual estrangement. Stibbe identifies *"stories of consumerism"* and *"unlimited growth"* as central destructive narratives in modern discourse (Stibbe, 2015), and Wordsworth's poem directly attacks this orientation: *"Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers"* (Wordsworth, n.d.-b, line 2). The collective pronoun "we" assigns responsibility broadly; the destructive agency is human and social rather than individual. Importantly, the poem's ecological critique is expressed as a critique of perception and value: *"Little we see in Nature that is ours; / We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!"* (lines 3–4). The problem is not only material consumption but an ethical-emotional misalignment of hearts *"given away,"* a relational impoverishment.

At the same time, nature is represented with pronounced more-than-human vitality and agency: *"This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon; / The winds that will be howling at all hours"* (Wordsworth, n.d.-b, lines 5–6). The sea is personified ("her bosom"), and the winds "howling" implies continuous activity. The poem thus stages a contrast between nonhuman dynamism and human numbness: *"For this, for everything, we are out of tune; / It moves us not"* (lines 8–9). The key framing metaphor is musical: being *"out of tune"* suggests disharmony between human life and ecological rhythms. In ecolinguistic terms, the poem challenges a destructive story by exposing its affective consequence: disconnection becomes the very condition of modern *"worldliness"* (Stibbe, 2015).

Yet the poem's alternative is deliberately complicated. The speaker's wish *"I'd rather be / A pagan suckled in a creed outworn"* (Wordsworth, n.d.-b, lines 9–10) invokes mythic perception as a cure for alienation, culminating in imagined encounters with Proteus and Triton (lines 13–14). This can be read as a re-enchantment strategy: the poem seeks a worldview in which nature is again alive with presence and meaning. But a Stibbe-informed critique would note the risk of replacing consumerist estrangement with a different anthropocentric desire, in which nature serves as a provider of *"glimpses"* that make the speaker *"less forlorn"* (lines 11–12). The ecological story remains partly routed through human consolation. Even so, the poem is strongly beneficial in its diagnosis of consumerist ideology and its insistence that estrangement is neither neutral nor inevitable (Stibbe, 2015; Rigby, 2022). This could be described as an enchanted narrative: the poem seeks to articulate a view of reality in which nature attains presence and significance once again. However, a critique informed by Stibbe might observe that we risk trading consumerist alienation for another story centred on human-centric cravings: nature is desired here because it provides "glimpses" that render the speaker "less forlorn" (lines 11–12). The consolation offered by nature remains anthropocentric in this poem. Ecological agency is still partly mediated by human comfort. Despite this, the poem performs valuable anti-capitalist work by critiquing consumerist ideology and asserting that alienation is neither natural nor unavoidable (Stibbe, 2015).

Sample 3: Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur. Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.

The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.
These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.
If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, not any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue.—And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense

The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.
Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! 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: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me

More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

(LitCharts, n.d.)

Tintern Abbey formulates Wordsworth's ecological awareness most fully, weaving an intricate narrative of reminiscence, ethical nurture, and interanimating life. Throughout the poem landscape emerges relationally as an animating agent upon the self: recalled *"beauteous forms"* upon returning *"after ... long absence"* do not confront the speaker "as is a landscape to a blind man's eye," but have been there *"in hours of weariness"* to which he *"owed /...something"* (Wordsworth, n.d.-c, lines 23–29). It narrativizes one of Stibbe's fundamental stories about how the natural world operates in human life: the nonhuman environment is not a stage upon which the plot of human life unfolds, but part of a relational field that sustains us and fosters who we become. Ecological memory comes with a strong connection to ethical practice in the poem: sensations remembered later *"as have no slight or trivial influence / On that best portion of a good man's life, / His little, nameless, unremembered, acts / Of kindness and of love"* (lines 33–36). Ecological awareness is here constructed as ethically generative. Nature, furthermore, is not only aesthetically valuable but useful: nature becomes bound up with the ability to care. Agency is central to this discourse. The poem personifies the river *"O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods"* (Wordsworth, n.d.-c, line 58)—and later represents nature as an instructive power: *"for she can so inform / The mind that is within us, so impress / With quietness and beauty"* (lines 128–130). These verbs ("inform," "impress") linguistically confer educative agency on nature, aligning with a beneficial ecological narrative of learning from and with the more-than-human (Stibbe, 2015). The most expansive framing arrives in the famous passage describing *"a presence"* and *"a motion and a spirit, that impels / All thinking things… and rolls through all things"* (Wordsworth, n.d.-c, lines 96–104). This language constructs an ecological worldview of interrelation: the nonhuman is not inert matter, but an animated process, and the human mind is included within (not outside) the field of "all things." However, Stibbe's approach also invites scrutiny of ambivalence. A recurring tension in *Tintern Abbey* is that nature's value is often articulated in terms of what it does **for the human subject** restoration, consolation, moral anchoring: *"The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of my heart"* (Wordsworth, n.d.-c, lines 111–113). The relational story is clearly affirmative, but it can slide toward an anthropocentric logic in which nature's significance is validated by human benefit. In addition, the poem's landscape includes signs of human habitation, "pastoral farms" and "wreaths of smoke" (lines 16–18), yet the ecological costs of rural life, extraction, or enclosure are not directly present. This is a form of **salience/erasure**: the poem foregrounds harmony and restorative perception while backgrounding material environmental conflict. From a critical ecolinguistic perspective, this does not invalidate the poem's beneficial stories, but it marks the limits of what the discourse makes visible (Stibbe, 2015; Chu et al., 2024).

Sample 4:The Tables Turned

Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books;
Or surely you'll grow double:
Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun above the mountain's head,
A freshening lustre mellow
Through all the long green fields has spread,
His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:—
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

(Poetry Foundation, n.d.)

The Tables Turned is Wordsworth's most overtly programmatic ecological discourse in the dataset. Its central story is explicit: "Come forth into the light of things, / Let Nature be your teacher" (Wordsworth, n.d.-d, lines 15–16). In Stibbe's terms, this is a direct attempt to displace a potentially harmful cultural story knowledge as domination or abstraction—and replace it with a story of receptive, embodied learning (Stibbe, 2015). The poem constructs evaluation sharply: "Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife" (Wordsworth, n.d.-d, line 9), while birdsong offers "more of wisdom" (lines 11–12). Nature is framed as generous and ready: "She has a world of ready wealth, / Our minds and hearts to bless" (lines 17–18). The discourse positions ecological consciousness as a practice of attention: "bring with you a heart / That watches and receives" (lines 31–32). This aligns with ecolinguistic "beneficial discourse" in that it models a relationship grounded in openness, care, and responsiveness rather than instrumental control (Ponton, 2022; Stibbe, 2015).

Yet the poem is also the most controversial from a contemporary ecological standpoint because it appears to reject "Science and… Art" as "barren leaves" (Wordsworth, n.d.-d, lines 29–30). A critical application of Stibbe's framework can hold this tension without flattening it. On one reading, the poem critiques a reductive epistemology "Our meddling intellect / Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:— / We murder to dissect" (lines 25–28) where "dissection" becomes a metaphor for dominating and fragmenting the living world. There is power in the ecological implications of the metaphor too: it presents modes of knowing that fail to honor ecological holism as acts of violence. Yet, read another way, the poem potentially shores up

one of those anti-intellectual narratives that would surely be ecologically damaging if it encourages us to discount the scientific knowledge upon which much environmental stewardship depends. The poem, in short, demonstrates why I think Wordsworth's ecological mind is far more interesting than his ecological footprint: it enacts conflicts between stories of knowledge, value, and proper human orientation to the more-than-human world. Taken together, there is a cross-cutting pattern I'd like to draw attention to: Wordsworth's poems repeatedly imagine positive narratives of re-connection by redistributing agency to natural objects (flowers dancing; sea and winds participating in action; nature itself "informing" the mind), foregrounding receptivity over extraction, and framing attention to ecology as morally constitutive (Wordsworth, n.d.-a; n.d.-b; n.d.-c; n.d.-d). At the same time, there is a throughline of anthropocentrism in tension with these claims: the value of nature is articulated repeatedly in terms of its capacity to impact the human experiencer (through joy, consolation, moral grounding, restoration, freedom from "forlorn" isolation). To borrow Stibbe's phrasing, poets repeatedly tell damaging modern stories ("consumerism," alienation, narrow rationality) even as they resist that master narrative by telling a story about nature (Stibbe, 2015). This contradiction is exactly what the current study forces us to recognise methodologically: rather than coding Wordsworth's poetic ecology as either green or romanticised, my analysis reveals how the poems negotiate both desirable ecological stories and constraints, even as they reinscribe them through patterns of salience/erasure and human-centred ascriptions of value.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to illustrate that ecological awareness in Wordsworth develops not just from "nature content," but is cultivated through ecological "narratives" contained within his use of language, and what they encourage us to live. An ecolinguistic analysis was applied to *Wordsworth's I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud, The World Is Too Much With Us, Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, and *The Tables Turned* to argue that Wordsworth repeatedly models reconnective ecological orientations: communion and emotional connection with the more-than-human world, recognition of consumerist alienation, restoration grounded in memory and moralistic living, and receptive understanding from nature as opposed to destructive forms of knowledge. In each poem, nature is portrayed as agentic and intentional, not passive backdrop, and ecological understanding is derived from language use patterns of agency, appreciation, metaphor, and relation. Conversely, however, this discovery also points toward another problematic-yet-central thread running throughout Wordsworth's environmental language: frequently nature's worth is made by way of its impact upon the human subject (joy, consolation, grounding, escape from modernity's ills, etc.) so the verse can celebrate our ecological unity even as it defaults back toward anthropocentric utility and subjective bias with regard to what is emphasized/demphasized. Bringing these tendencies to light methodologically further substantiates eco-critical claims while responding to the failures of purely thematic and lexically-based analyses.

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