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ВОЗВЫШЕННОЕ В ПРИРОДЕ  
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**Аннотация:** В статье рассматривается связь двух понятий, относящихся к области романтического возвышенного (возвышенное в природе и возвышенное в человеке) и воплощенных в образах восьмой книги поэтической автобиографии У. Вордсворта «Прелюдия, или Становление сознания поэта» (1805, 1850). Наше внимание сосредоточено на последней редакции поэмы 1850 г. Сопоставляя текст поэмы с фрагментарным эссе Вордсворта «О возвышенном и прекрасном» (ок. 1811–1812), мы прослеживаем, как компоненты возвышенного, встречающегося в природе (Вордсворт указал на три таких компонента: *могущество, долговечность, особая форма*), видоизменены поэтом в восьмой книге «Прелюдии» и превращены в характеристики возвышенного образа человека. Предлагаемое здесь эстетическое толкование помещает в новый ракурс заглавие восьмой книги — «От любви к природе — к любви к человеку», смысл которого по-разному трактуется исследователями. В отличие от бёрковского возвышенного, вызывающего благоговейный ужас, вордсвортовское возвышенное может порождать у наблюдателя восхищение сродни любви. Это четко прописано в восьмой книге «Прелюдии», особенно в эпизоде, когда обычный человек «возвышен был» в глазах поэта и «в сердце рождались преклоненье и любовь к природе внутренней его».

**Ключевые слова:** британский романтизм, Уильям Вордсворт, возвышенное в природе, возвышенное в человеке, фантастическая пастораль, возвышенное и воображение, образы пастухов, «места времени», «любовь к человеку».

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## THE NATURAL SUBLIME LEADING TO THE HUMAN SUBLIME (ON BOOK 8 OF WORDSWORTH'S *THE PRELUDE*)

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**Abstract:** This article seeks to trace the connection between two kinds of the Romantic sublime envisaged in Book 8 of Wordsworth's great autobiographical poem *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind* (1805, 1850). Our focus is primarily on the 1850 text. I read Book 8 against passages from Wordsworth's fragmentary essay "The Sublime and the Beautiful" (c. 1811/1812), attempting to grasp how the components of the *natural* sublime, highlighted by Wordsworth, — power, duration, individual form — got modified in Book 8 to produce the sensation of the *human* sublime. My interpretation posits a new pattern of emphasis on aesthetical issues encapsulated in the title of the Book 8 "Love of Nature Leading to Love of Man": unlike the Burkean sublime, arousing fear and awe, the Wordsworthian sublime is capable of inspiring heartfelt adoration akin to love, when, in the course of *The Prelude*, an ordinary human being appears "ennobled outwardly before <the poet's> sight".

**Keywords:** British Romanticism, William Wordsworth, natural sublime, human sublime, the fanciful pastoral, the imaginative sublime, images of shepherds, 'spots of time', 'love of man'.

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The link between ‘Love of Nature’ and ‘Love of Man’<sup>1</sup> announced by Wordsworth in Book 8 of *The Prelude*, and especially his notion that the former is supposed to lead to the latter, has always provoked a great deal of interpretative controversy.

One of the most famous statements questioning this love’s progress can be found in Steven Gill: “The difficulty with Book VIII, however, is not that this thesis is inherently implausible (though many will think that it is) but that there is a disjunction between what Wordsworth asserts as thesis and what he offers as supporting evidence. <...>. Wordsworth certainly declares that he loved shepherds from his earliest days, but in suggesting why he found them heroic beings, the verse repeatedly discloses the activity of Wordsworth’s literary imagination, so much so that one might infer that the truer thesis would be, ‘Love of Books leading to Love of Humankind’ ” [7, p. 74–75].

Even though S. Gill’s commentaries saw print decades ago, the sentiment is still fresh. Besides, many readers of *The Prelude* hesitate to take Wordsworth at his word where ‘Love of Man’ is concerned. The notorious Wordsworthian ‘egotistical sublime’, to borrow Keats’s phrase, does not help much to resolve the issue.

Nonetheless, the scholars of Wordsworth did attempt to account for the mind’s progress in Book 8 and for the deepening of hero’s affection, when certain emotional attachment to natural things blossoms into a higher feeling: adoration of human beings.

1 In *The Prelude* of 1805, Book 8 is entitled “Retrospect – Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind”. In the later version of the poem (1839/1850) Wordsworth slightly changed the title, replacing “Love of Mankind” with more personalistic “Love of Man”.

One of the ways to look at Book 8 is offered in *The Encyclopaedia of Romantic Literature* published in 2012, where Bruce Graver states: “In book 8, ‘Love of Nature leading to Love of Man’, Wordsworth looks directly at the pastoral tradition. <...> For Wordsworth, the georgic shepherds whose labours he witnessed as a boy became, at least in retrospect, the crucial means by which he was able to transform his love of nature into a love of humankind” [8, p. 989–990]. Here, the scholar distinguishes between two literary modes, the pastoral poetry (modelled on Theocritus and supposed to be recreational) and georgic tradition (harks back to Hesiodic poem *Works and Days* and implies description of the toil of farming). The usual method of Wordsworth, according to Graver, is to crossbreed “the pastoral and georgic genres, to give them new life in the contemporary world” [8, p. 990]. Thus, to take this reading a step further, ‘Love of Nature’ might correspond to pastoral mode, while ‘Love of Man’, to georgic.

To draw a line between pastoral and georgic when discussing Wordsworth is a feature of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century criticism. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century — for instance, in 1963, — Herbert Lindenberger in his study, *On Wordsworth's Prelude*, read Book 8 as “devoted to the affirmation of pastoral values” in their own right. Lindenberger pointed out three distinct types of pastoral, two of which (“literary pastoral” of a Corin of the groves and “the shepherd’s life in Goslar”) Wordsworth allegedly had rejected, and the third, “the harsher pastoral of his native territory,” had invoked [10, p. 243–245]. That harsh pastoral, one might note, in some respects foreshadows Grave’s account of georgic mode in Wordsworth.

As I wrote elsewhere [1; 9], I side with those who recognize Wordsworth’s break with pastoral tradition altogether — the break, which enables him to move beyond the fanciful and towards the imaginative.

Thus, Paul Alpers in *What Is Pastoral*, says unequivocally that “in Book 8 of *The Prelude*, <...> Wordsworth surveys and, in some sense, dismisses traditional pastoral” [2, p. 8]. Robert Barth also writes of the modification of the pastoral vision in Book 8: “The people here [below Helvellyn] ‘move about upon the soft green turf’ (VIII, 58), and ‘all things serve them’: ‘them the morning light / Loves as it glistens on the silent rocks’ (VIII, 63–64). The poet is still charmed by the myth of pastoral simplicity (VIII, 173–339), and it colors his view of the simple life of the countryside. But his view of country life is more realistic, for he adds to the traditional poetic pastoral myth the ‘snows

and streams ungovernable' and 'terrifying winds' that are part of the real shepherd's life (VIII, 219–220). Thus the real-life shepherd can, in the poet's imagination, bring together man and Nature, for the poet has felt the shepherd's presence 'in his own domain / As of a Lord and Master' (VIII, 257–258). For the poet, man and Nature were first experienced together (VIII, 312–316), and so are always thereafter — at least when imagination is active — seen in light of one another" [4, p. 29].

The sublime human forms, which loom large close to the end of Book 8, seem to belong not to fanciful and pastoral landscapes, but to sublime regions of imagination. I am taking my cue from Wordsworth himself, who does not apply the word 'pastoral' to his sublime shepherd stationed above all height on the peak of a mountain and explicitly inveighs against associating this figure with the simplistic and charming Corin dancing with Phyllis in the groves "for his own fancies":

Or him [a shepherd] have I descried in distant sky,  
 A solitary object and sublime,  
 Above all height! like an aerial cross  
 Stationed alone upon a spiry rock  
 Of the Chartreuse, for worship. Thus was man  
 Ennobled outwardly before my sight,  
 And thus my heart was early introduced  
 To an unconscious love and reverence  
 Of human nature <...>.  
 <...> this creature — spiritual almost  
 As those of books, but more exalted far;  
 Far more of an imaginative form  
 Than the gay Corin of the groves, who lives  
 For his own fancies... .

(Book 8, ls. 279–94)

To clearly see the shift from the *beautiful pastoral* sketches of shepherds (the so-called "Grasmere Fair spot of time"<sup>2</sup>) to the *sublime* visions of the "moun-

2 On the list of spots of time see [12, p. 295–297; 1, c. 757–759].

tain shepherds” (the next spot of time) and to recognize the respectful shift in sensibility and tone, I suggest reading Book 8 of *The Prelude* against Wordsworth’s fragmentary essay “The Sublime and the Beautiful” (c. 1811/1812).

Here I will not be rehearsing the theories of the Romantic sublime: the subject has been covered extensively. I’ll start by calling to mind just one quality of the sublime object: it overwhelms the lookers-on by appearing either boundless or huge, out of all proportions (see, for instance: [II, p. 29–30]). This is exactly the impression the readers of Book 8 get from the description of Helvellyn (one of the hills in the Lake District), when envisioning the Grasmere Fair. The landscape and the country fair are beautifully pastoral. Only Helvellyn is not so: the hill dominating the landscape inspires sublime admiration. The pastoral folk at the hill’s feet live, bloom, enjoy themselves, and pass away in due time, much like grass.

The sheer size of Helvellyn, its eternal presence, and its dominance over horizon — all of this contributes to the sublime impression it creates. In other words, the image of Helvellyn projects *power*, and is endowed with particular *form* and *duration*. Form, power, and duration are exactly the three major characteristics of the sublime as Wordsworth specifies it in his fragmental essay on “The Sublime and the Beautiful.” The passage merits quoting it:

And if this is analyzed [the grand impression the mountains make], the body of this sensation [of sublimity] would be found to resolve itself into three component parts: a sense of individual form or forms; a sense of duration; and a sense of power. The whole complex impression is made up of these elementary parts, & the effect depends upon their co-existence. For, if any one of them were abstracted, the others would be deprived of their power to affect.

I first enumerated individuality of form; this individual form was then invested with qualities and powers, ending with duration. Duration is evidently an element of the sublime; but think of it without reference to individual form, and we shall perceive that it has no power to affect the mind. Cast your eye, for example, upon any commonplace ridge or eminence that cannot be separated, without some effort of the mind, from the general mass of the planet; you may be persuaded, nay, convinced, that it has borne that shape as long as or longer than Cader Idris, or Snowdon, or the Pikes of Langdale that are before us; and the mind is wholly unmoved by the thought... Prominent individual form must,

therefore, be conjoined with duration, in order that Objects of this kind may impress a sense of sublimity; and, in the works of Man, this conjunction is, for obvious reasons, of itself sufficient for the purpose. But in works of Nature it is not so: with these must be combined impressions of power, to a sympathy with & a participation of which the mind must be elevated — or to a dread and awe of which, as existing out of itself, it must be subdued [14, p. 351–352].

Wordsworth is not explicit about the specifics of *human* sublimity in this essay: he dwells primarily on the *natural* sublime, and mentions in passing the works of art. We have it on the textual evidence of *The Prelude*, that when the poet speaks of the human sublime in Book 8, he endows it with all three component counterparts of the natural sublime: power, duration, and form.

When speaking of men (and in Book 8 Wordsworth has the shepherds of the Lake District in mind), *power* can be described as the ability of human being to tower over a severe landscape like its lord and master. The shepherd is powerful so long as he is free and unconquered by all natural climatic vicissitudes.

In the beginning of Book 8 of *The Prelude*, the poet mentions no human power. Only later in the book and gradually, by moving away from the traditional pastoral mood of different pastoral places and times, he approaches the awful and terrible sublimity of his Lake District. There the poet continues to show shepherds absorbed in their cyclic activities, even though those activities are much more toilsome and occasionally dangerous, as they would be in real life. Nature and her imagery led as far as they possibly could on the way to sublimity. But then Wordsworth makes his next move: he gives initiative to man, saying that *human presence can make landscape even more powerful and sublime*. Thinking of the shepherd the poet says:

A rambling school-boy, thus  
 I felt his presence in his own domain,  
 As of a lord and master, or a power,  
 Or genius, under Nature, under God,  
 Presiding; and severest solitude  
 Had more commanding looks when he was there.

(Book 8, ls. 256–261)

Thus the 'powers' of the poet's native region, its 'awful solitudes' yield center stage to man. Finally, it is man, whose presence is felt, and it is he who exerts sublime 'power'.

The second component of the natural sublime — *duration* — also has its counterpart in the constituents of the human sublime. The concept of duration (different kinds of time) is also brought into play as the book unfolds.

In Book 8, it is possible to single out three kinds of time, according to which the narration proceeds. The first kind is historical, or linear. When the poet relates events, it is historical time, which rules his chronicling. The pastoral scenery connected with the second kind of time: the seasonal, or circular. It counts seasons, months, and days in a yearly round. Sometimes the pastoral time seems to come to a stop, producing a pleasant moment, which is worth relishing and remembering. However, this frozen pastoral moment does not break the circular pattern of pastoral season's changing. It is like a dot on an orbit, a genuine part of it. Andrew Ettin's explanation of the idea can be helpful; he writes: "The notion of making time pause, even stop, or circle back to the beginning (stretching duration, in other words) is basic to the pastoral instinct for enclosure. Being absorbed in a moment of blessed, privileged time means being settled into an emotionally comfortable experience. Whether attained or not, the desire for that is at the heart of the pastoral. <...> Time stops in this moment. And then the moment is over. <...> The natural passage of time and the requirements of a society that lives according to its own sense of the temporal proprieties and responsibilities reassert themselves. History returns with a rush, and with a metaphysical puzzle for the pastoral dreamer who has imagined the world halted for an instant into an ideally arranged picture" [6, p. 142–143].

Frozensness of the pastoral moment — or tiresome dwelling on one and the same unchangeable pattern — often goes hand in hand with make-believe and escapist wishful thinking. The pastoral often strives to arrest a moment in the flow of life, much like Keats's 'cold pastoral' captures youth, with its beauty, music, ever-to-be-plucked kisses and never-to-be-sacrificed heifers, into the beautiful marble of a Grecian Urn to remain there deathless, "because it is lifeless," as Cleanth Brooks once brilliantly noted [5, p. 157]. Also, when the flow of time is frozen, solidified, it can be set in stone, as with the monumental Urn. That which used to be temporal is turned into an inanimate spatial object, void of life.



History can serve as an antidote to pastoralism, when it wakes the dreamer from the pastoral fixedness back to reality, but it also brings the awareness of separateness of moments scattered over the linear time, giving rise to nostalgia and utopian hopes.

Historical time in its most linear, without much comforting circularity of the pastoral, rules the London sections of Book 7 of *The Prelude*. People's names, faces, scenes of life, once met, are never to be seen again; they flow by the poet in an endless stream. The moment is not the happiest in Wordsworth's life story. And the poet feels the urge to return to the countryside, to the pastoral, which happens in the opening of Book 8. But the pastoral time with its rounds and dead stops does not satisfy the poet for long. The further we move into the book, the more intensive is the thirst after yet another kind of duration.

In contrast to both historical and seasonal times, with their awareness of the passage of minutes, days, seasons, years, and centuries, there is time, which does not need any timepiece that ticks off separate moments. In this other time, everything comes together, and all experiences, the former and the future, manifest themselves simultaneously in a person's life in one unifying vision. Some describe such moments as the fullness of time; others think of existential or visionary moments; still others speak of 'inner time'.

Jeffrey Baker describes 'inner time' as follows. "There is in Wordsworth's time schemes a distinguishable, qualitative order. Thus the lowest time is clock time, mechanical in the narrowest sense, inflexible and uncreative. Next there is nature's time, Newtonian, a mathematical continuum, and also inflexible, but less artificial than clock time and more conducive to spiritual well-being. Above these two is inner time, felt by the nerves and brain and lodged, as Woolf put it, "in the queer element of the human spirit." This time is liberating and creative. And there appear to be occasions when inner time obliterates not merely the two inferior schemes, but itself also, bringing the mind to a visionary moment, an eternal present where "we see into the life of things" [3, p. 16-17].

Wordsworth's term for such intensive visionary moments was the 'spots of time'. The 'spots of time' suggest moments which have a perceptible separateness from the general flow of time (from both the linear and circular), a suggestion strengthened by the phrase Wordsworth uses to describe these special moments — 'distinct pre-eminence' (*The Prelude*, bk. 12, ln. 209), meaning 'distinguished and discernable superiority'.

Obviously, the duration of the visionary moment opens up into infinity of the spirit and of inner time. And so the poet declares in *The Prelude*,

The human nature unto which I felt  
That I belonged, and revered with love,  
Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit  
Diffused through time and space.

(Book 8, ls. 608–611)

The fullness of time in the passage, where the shepherd appears as “a solitary object and sublime, Above all height! like an aerial cross / Stationed alone upon a spiry rock / Of the Chartreuse, for worship”, is suggested not only by fusing together such remote images from different past experiences as the English Lake District and the cross of the Grand Chartreuse in France, but also by sheer absence of fragmented time: different seasons, weather conditions, times of day are interwoven here to produce the unified vision. When the poet observes the aerial shape of the human on an inaccessible mountain top, it can be any time of year and of day. No categories of seasonal and historic times can account for that vision, because the cross-like shepherd is not “a punctual presence”, but poised outside of the flux of time.

The third component of the sublime, according to Wordsworth, is specific individual *form*. Wordsworth does not give a crisp definition of form, especially of human form, in his essay “The Sublime and the Beautiful”, but it is possible to look closely at his careful wording in *The Prelude* and to try to gather the idea from the text.

In the course of Book 8 Wordsworth seems to change his sketching technique. From very tangible and full-blooded figures of pastoral folk by the foot of Helvellyn he proceeds to the crisp and impalpable silhouettes of the “worthy” shepherds “above all height”.

The poet starts out with a sensuous description of a blooming maiden of the Grasmere Fair:

Some sweet lass of the valley, looking out  
For gains, and who that sees her would not buy?  
Fruits of her father’s orchard, are her wares,

And with the ruddy produce, she walks round  
Among the crowd, half pleased with, half ashamed  
Of her new office, blushing restlessly.

(Book 8, ls. 37–43)

This sketch is lovely and erotically suggestive, in sharp contrast to the almost ascetic figure of the cross-like shepherd. Contrasting as they are, these images are linked by an elaborately wrought chain of shape transformations. The last links of this chain intricately illustrate a very fine difference between several nearly perfect human forms, which keep getting more and more focused till the human figure sharpens into “an index of delight.” Here is a series of sublime human images, where the fruitful season of the pastoral is not celebrated any longer. The cheeks of shepherds in this sketch do not pick up the highlights in any “ruddy produce,” and the flageolets are left alone.

A rambling school-boy, thus  
I felt his presence in his own domain,  
As of a lord and master, or a power,  
Or genius, under Nature, under God,  
Presiding; and severest solitude  
Had more commanding looks when he was there.  
When up the lonely brooks on rainy days  
Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills  
By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes  
Have glanced upon him distant a few steps,  
In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,  
His sheep like Greenland bears; or as he stepped  
Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,  
His form hath flashed upon me, glorified  
By the deep radiance of the setting sun:  
Or him have I descried in distant sky,  
A solitary object and sublime,  
Above all height! like an aerial cross  
Stationed alone upon a spiry rock  
Of the Chartreuse, for worship. Thus was man

Ennobled outwardly before my sight,  
And thus my heart was early introduced  
To an unconscious love and reverence  
Of human nature; hence the human form  
To me became an index of delight,  
Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.

(*The Prelude*, Book 8, ls. 256–281)

The figure of a shepherd encountered by the hero on a rainy day seems very massive because of the natural trick on the poet's eyes played by the mist. The giant shepherd stalking through the fog, with his sheep seeming huge as Greenland bears, inspires awe and fear. If this shepherd is sublime, he is naturally – not humanly – so. The next figure of the sun-lit shepherd 'flashed' upon the poet's eye is perceived as bounded by the sun's radiance. The form of that shepherd is less awful: that man does not overwhelm the poet; his image attracts the eye and imparts glory. Finally, there are three crisp lines sketching the cross-like shepherd on a spiry rock. Geometrically, this is the most perfect form of all depicted in the poem. This well cutout shape, which stands out against the background of firmament, inspires religious feelings, joy, love and utterly delights Wordsworth. The heart-felt delight signals the triumph of the human sublime over the fearful natural sublime.

If in the opening lines of Book 8 the pastoral bunch of blossoming folk – much like the grass – whiled away time by the foot of Helvellyn and, later in the book, the stern shepherds of the Lake District tread on the grass and crushed out "a livelier fragrance from the flowers / Of lowly thyme, by Nature's skill enwrought / In the wild turf" (Book 8, ls. 242–244), then by the end of the book it is the sublime shepherd who ends up on top of the mountain and dominates the landscape, leaving all the heights, including Helvellyn, below his foot.

The natural sublime, as we have seen, has given place to the human sublime in *The Prelude*.

I believe, that the thesis Wordsworth announced in Book 8 (ls. 69–80) is sustained. Indeed, the poet remained true to his word, as stated: "My present theme / Is to retrace the way that led me on / Through Nature to the love of human-kind" (Book 8, ls. 587–589). The poet has demonstrated how Nature

led him to the love of humankind by ennobling the human form before his eyes. First, Nature ennobled the human beings who live in the severe regions of the Lake District by strengthening their will and purifying their character. Then, Nature literally showed the well-outlined sublime human shape to the poet by flashing it on his eye and by distancing it. Only then, independent of the frames provided by the weather, the poet did internalize the ability to perceive the sublime: he learns to recognize the human form when no fog or sunshine assists him. Finally, it is the natural sublime, with its three components – individual form, power, and duration – that, in Book 8 contributes to understanding the human sublime.

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