

# Politics of Sympathy and Outrage in Wordsworth's Abolitionist Poetry

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## Abstract

William Wordsworth has written a number of poems dedicated to abolition of slave trade. His sonnets *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807) — *To Thomas Clarkson*, *To Toussaint L'Ouverture*, *September 1st, 1802* —, *Humanity* (1835), and *The Prelude* (1850) deal with the issue of slave trade and slavery explicitly. These poems show Wordsworth's anger on the attitude favoring perpetuation of slavery for economic reasons. This paper seeks to show that Wordsworth's abolitionist poetry stem from the affective circumstances and not from his genuine feeling for the predicament of the slaves. His sympathy for them verges on the capitalistic and the effect of outrage evoked is not so for the plight of the slaves as much it is for the oppressive ordinance of expansionist Napoleonic France. The outrage at the French villainy translates as the British honesty about the issue of slavery in Wordsworth.

**Keywords:** abolition of slave trade, British honesty, French villainy, outrage, politics of sympathy, Wordsworth

## 1. Introduction

Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey in the Lake District of England became close friends with Thomas Clarkson who was writing on behalf of the abolition bill in early 1790s. Clarkson has commented about Wordsworth's poetry through the "Quaker perspective" — Quakers as the religious society of friends and the movement for Christian reformation that also played significant role in the abolition of slavery — though he was not himself a Quaker: he was "the spirit of God ... given to men ... spiritual teacher or guide" (qtd. in Woof, 2001, p. 94). Clarkson saw spiritual teacher in Wordsworth who dealt with material world through spiritual eyes, which is, for Clarkson, more effective technique than general teaching. The technique could move the reader more effectively than treating nature merely as material entity. Wordsworth published a sonnet *To Thomas Clarkson*: on the Final Passing of the Bill for the Abolition of Slave Trade, March, 1807, for Richardson (1991, p. 503), "a congratulatory sonnet" published by Wordsworth, as tribute to Clarkson, a leader of anti-slavery movement, as the house passed the abolition of slave trade bill in 1807.

Wordsworth wrote a sonnet *To Toussaint L'Ouverture* dedicated to freed slave and revolutionary abolitionist hero Toussaint who resisted Napoleon's attempt to re-establish French rule in San Domingue but was arrested and killed in detention under severe torture in 1803. At that time Toussaint must be a terrorist in the eyes of empire but it is questionable that Wordsworth made him revolutionary hero by writing a sonnet dedicated to him. Richardson (1991) comments, by writing the sonnet, Wordsworth "countered widespread demonization of the Haitian revolutionaries" (p. 503). But Wood (2002) contends that it was not Wordsworth's valorization of Toussaint rather "he was just being fashionable, he was contributing to anti-Napoleon propaganda currently flooding the nation" (p. 231) by making him revolutionary hero, Wordsworth secures his position within the propaganda. Wood further elaborates about British government's failure to control San Domingue and surrounding French colonies after six years attempt fighting against Toussaint and the revolutionaries. After the withdrawal of the British troops, the French went to the expedition with British consent, but Wood (2002) argues

“the fatal entrapment and imprisonment of Toussaint by the French had provided the British with the chance to create the myth of a noble black, who had been fighting, and winning, against the common enemy” (p. 231), Napoleon’s France. This attitude has generated a surprising query how the barbarous and wild rebel suddenly turned into a noble figure in British imagination.

Carey (2005) reads Wordsworth’s *To Thomas Clarkson* and *To Toussaint L’ouverture*, written in the year 1807, as “more than merely lukewarm” (p. 85), for the abolition of slave trade cause. Wood (2002) does not find the proportion between compassionate logic and pity or pain felt for the slaves. Rather, in Wordsworth, he finds “egotistical empathy” (p. 203) that slaves were not in the centre of British imagination, but their personal circumstance was in the centre. Wordsworth’s two great poems on slavery *The Prelude* and *To Toussaint L’ouverture* are also about the “process of imperial chaos” (p. 231), especially after the French revolutionary wars. Toussaint had been fighting and winning against the common enemy, so Wordsworth’s sympathy Wood would call “egotistical” (p. 231).

The autobiographical self created by Wordsworth in *The Prelude* is the blend of subjectivities. Nichols (1998) has evaluated the “dramatized cultural self” in *The Prelude* as the “politics of self representation” (p. 132) and Wordsworth’s “disillusionment with revolutionary politics”. He further argues that the adult subject in the autobiography senses “multiplicity of voices” drawing “strength from the cultures, legends, tales, and experiences around him” (p. 136). Wordsworth’s efforts have been seen in renovating virtue through recollection. Hartman (1975) discusses the “Prelude theory of development” (p. 124), that is, accepting the world of everyday than the “mythical heaven from where the child fell” (p. 135), and developing the child in most humanistic way possible according to the teachings of the nature. Wordsworth also believes in gradual development of a child, which is also his liberation what Hartman calls “bildungsroman” (p. 124). Hartman also finds Wordsworth’s expectation high on reader, as he provokes him for criticism from this worldly imagination. In the tenth book of *The Prelude*, according to Wood (2002), Wordsworth writes about slavery but only confining it to “gauze the moral health of the nation” (p. 231). The moral health of the nation, as Wood finds in Wordsworth, depended on the success of the abolitionist movement. Primo Levi, as quoted in Wood, has similar contemplation: “Compassion itself alludes logic. There is no proportion between the pity we feel and the extent of the pain by which the pity aroused” (p. 229). Slaves were not in the center of Wordsworth’s imagination. The circumstance in which the British had been and upgrading their moral health were seen to be his principal concern.

William Wordsworth also wrote poems on antislavery theme. Carey (2010, p. 85) explores a “confessional passage” in Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*, and finds like “lukewarm about the abolition campaign”. Lee (1997, p. 41) also states ecological metaphor used by Wordsworth in *The Prelude*, to refer to slavery, “the most rotten branch of human shame” that ought to “fall altogether with its parent tree”.

For the poet like Wordsworth who had been raised and brought up in the Lake District among rustic humble people and its vernacular, the virtues that shaped him was sublime and against the grain. According to Morse (2000), these “virtues” are the “sublimity of his character” (p. 264). Robinson (2006, p. 247) alludes Hazlitt’s evaluation of Wordsworth, in him “a power of raising the smallest thing in nature into sublimity by the force of sentiment ... he has no fancy, no wit, no humor, little descriptive power, no dramatic power ... yet sublimity in simplicity”. Brett & Jones (2005) also write of Wordsworth’s visionary style giving “charm of novelty to things of everyday” by “awakening the mind’s intention to the lethargy of custom ... loveliness and wonders of the world” (p. xx). He has amazing power of raising sympathy of the reader to the sublimity of nature. Nature and everyday rustic life are portrayed in Wordsworth in sublime manner. Williams (1996, p. 102) furthers the argument, in Wordsworth, incidents are colored through character; the feeling developed through the incident gives importance to action, and Wordsworth repairs “false opinions and contentious thoughts” by writing poetry in order to renew and restore virtue to freshness. In his abolitionist poetry, imperial notions and contentious issues related to slave trade and slavery are renovated. For doing this Wordsworth has created typical character and incident also in order to stir the reader to action.

Wordsworth travelled to France in 1790 and 1791. In 1793 England declared war on France, and in the same year Wordsworth travelled to West Country and Wales at his growing youth of 23. According to Walker (2010, pp. 168-169), Bristol at that time had been the trading centre; its merchants prospered through slave trade. Wordsworth met Southey, Joseph Cottle, Coleridge, and a circle of intellectuals with radical ideas. Wordsworth also encountered ruins of the massive castles, factories, beggars at the tourist sites, wealthy merchants getting prospered, massive and widespread poverty, unemployment, picturesque scenes and so on that moved him greatly. Radical politics affected public awareness as well. O’Neill (2010, p. 259) argues that Edmund Burke, the MP for Bristol lost his seat due to his conservative views when Bristol had been radically forward. Bristol radical intellectuals displayed revolutionary ideals while the nation was in no mood to tolerate dissenting libertarianism due to the bloody things happened in France then recently.

Wordsworth’s golden age ideals, however, were based on conservatism, Burkean ideas, and countryside agrarian

ideals. He was against revolutionary radical ideas and against Napoleon's expansionism. He was against modernist ideals of change during industrial revolution in England, in favor of rural life and agrarian society, what Keay (2001, p. 85) has called the late eighteenth century "golden age theories". London, the centre of state authority and widespread corruption with power in the hands of few landowners and aristocrats, declared war against France on the pretext of stopping Napoleonic expansionism. Wordsworth's emphasis in this context could be seen in preserving moral ground of the nation. Nation's unnecessary spending in a long war against France also provoked middle class reformers. They were against slave trade and for the free labor. Wordsworth was intellectually indebted from Edmund Burke (1910) and hence he rejected radical politics in favor of conservatism. Burke's conservatism affected many high Romantic writers.

## 2. Lines of Contention and Theoretical Notions

Robinson (2015, p. 141) has claimed that Wordsworth's public sonnets respond to the "public events of great national significance ... [from] historical, social, political or cultural importance". But the questions arise: whether the prolific poet like Wordsworth writes much on abolitionist cause. Do his abolitionist poems raise the issues related to slave trade and slavery, atrocities being committed against the slaves, directly and effectively? Why did not he publish a single of his abolitionist poems before the passing of the abolition of slave trade bill in 1807 while he was in touch with radical ideas since the early 1790s? Did he write few of his abolitionist poems only to register his name in the list or with serious purpose? Perhaps Wordsworth wrote with imperial colonial mindset and not with the true humanitarian agenda. He was only worried about moral upgrading of British society, the conservative minded project of reforming the situation rather than going against the prevalent ills in revolutionary ways. It all reveals the confused state of mind of the society as the confused mind of the poet. Theoretical notions from affect theory have been utilized for the vindication of the argument. Wordsworth's efforts have been noticed for the cultivation of sympathy in his poems. McCarthy's (1992) idea of writerly capacity and use of imaginations for the development of sympathy and Barzilai's (2009) ideas on the cultivation of sympathy have been used in the paper. In the same way, Reiser's (2009) terms, writer is the "culture's shared nervous system" writing from "affective circumstances" (p. 79) and Nussbaum's (2001) ideas on sympathy directed to the benefit of the self or the other have been used effectively as theoretical notion for strengthening the argument. Arel's (2016) theorization on writing shame, Massumi's (2015) critique on capitalism and surplus motif guided by "our situation" (p. 14) and "immediacy" (p. 62) are perfectly effective tools for dealing with Wordsworth's abolitionist discourse. Further, Rai's (2002) postulations on "bourgeois humanism" (p. 67), "colonial governmentality" (p. 15), and Gayatri C. Spivak's notion of "fantasy of imperial paternalism" (qtd. in McCann, 1999, p. 51) have been used effectively in dealing with Wordsworth's abolitionist discourse.

## 3. Textual Analysis

Wordsworth published his *Poems in Two Volumes* in 1807 in which we find his poems dedicated to liberty and with public events of historical, social, political, and cultural significance. Among the poems, very few deal with the issue of slavery and slave trade. The poems also highlight British-French rivalry and upgrading the moral character of the nation. These poems have been analyzed in detail here.

The first volume of the *Poems in Two Volumes* by Wordsworth published in 1807 has a collection of abolitionist sonnets dedicated to liberty: *To Toussaint L'Ouverture, September 1st, 1802, London 1802* among others. Another sonnet *To Thomas Clarkson* has been collected in his second volume. Wordsworth honors abolitionist figures like Toussaint and Clarkson in his famous sonnets *To Toussaint L'Ouverture* and *To Thomas Clarkson* respectively. Wordsworth creates incidents and characters; delivers the moral spiritual message slightly in sublime way.

*To Toussaint L'Ouverture* can be categorized as Wordsworth's one of the greatest sonnets dedicated to liberty. Toussaint, the freed slave who also become the governor of Haiti and who resisted Napoleon in his attempt to reestablish slavery in the island, has been valorized and praised in the poem. Readers can find Wordsworth's admiration for the public figure, his efforts in the construction of public figure must have been praiseworthy for the abolitionists. The sonnet can be read as the turning point in the contemporary discourse also because it countered the widespread demonization of the rebellion in the colonies. The poem made Toussaint the revolutionary hero, cosmopolitan spirit, universal truth of righteousness, love and liberty. This poem appeals for love to humans, nature, and God; teach mankind to become more virtuous and moral.

Wordsworth's effort in the sonnet has been directed to inculcate benevolence and compassion in the readers for the revolutionary hero by awakening their imagination for him. This sensational twist, the shift of emphasis from the savage black forces to the rightful rebels, is the eye opener, the evidence of the transformation in the character of the British. Wordsworth's (1807, "Toussaint") confidence in his poetic power could only do this; the sestet part of the poem announces thus:

Thou hast left behind

Powers that will work for thee, air, earth, and skies;  
 There's not a breathing of the common wind  
 That will forget thee, thou last great allies;  
 Thy friends are exultations, agonies,  
 And love, and man's unconquerable mind. (Lines 9-14)

Through the lines Wordsworth has made Toussaint, a Negro revolutionist, the heroic and immortal figure. Toussaint resisted bravely the Napoleonic efforts of reinstating slavery in San Domingo. Wordsworth sets Toussaint so firmly in the unconquerable mind of the public that he is everywhere in the "air, earth, and skies". He will never be forgotten for he is in every breath people would take because of his association with liberty, love, and righteousness. The manner Wordsworth valorizes Toussaint is significant especially in the context when Haitian revolutionaries had been demonized in the public discourse and in the eyes of the empire.

Britain invaded San Domingo in 1793 and began to suffer heavy casualties there. France outlawed slavery in 1794 and stood with the Haitian revolutionaries. As a result of this British forces withdrew from there in 1798. Toussaint and the revolutionaries had full control of the island till 1801. It was a great blow to the civilized self of the British. Toussaint became the governor, promulgated constitution, ended slavery in the entire island. Britain and France made peace treaty in 1801. It was Britain's strategic move. Britain allowed Napoleon to send large expedition to San Domingo to restore French authority. It was the treaty of the empires for securing benefits of both parties. Toussaint was captured by the French by treachery in 1802, and in 1803 he was killed in detention under severe torture. These are the historical records from Davis (1999). Violent resistance of the revolutionaries had destroyed British navy. Toussaint and his allies were demonizing, savage forces, and barbarous blacks in the eyes of the empire at that time. Wordsworth did not write a word in praise of Toussaint. None of the High Romantic writers did that. But as the Napoleonic France captured Toussaint and he was almost about to die, suddenly Wordsworth wrote a sonnet valorizing Toussaint, published the sonnet about four years after the revolutionary figure's death, only when the abolition bill was passed by the parliament in 1807. Gayatri Spivak's phrase "fantasy of imperial paternalism" (qtd. in McCann, 1999, p. 51) can be used here for Wordsworth's voyeurism, valorization of Toussaint the revolutionary figure. Wordsworth moves with the current, not venturing to go against the grain; since he represents the "culture's shared nervous system" writing from particular "affective circumstances" (p. 79), using Reiser's (2009) terms. This trend of sympathy to the revolutionary figure can be pointed out as "bourgeois humanism" (p. 67), borrowing Rai's term, sympathy not out of sympathetic identification with the victim but out of changing nature of capitalism, sympathy for the suffering other and learning to gain benefit by it, a new type of political economic relationship due to the character of capitalist market. This type of sympathy cannot empower the victim; rather it makes him even vulnerable and weak.

Toussaint has been portrayed as "unhappy", "miserable", yet "chieftain", the leader of his barbarous culture, locked up in confinement, mythological political construct, the poet seeks to establish in the octave part of sonnet. Has Wordsworth been successful in developing readers' sympathy for the revolutionary hero? Sympathy has been highly circulated emotion in Romantic abolitionist literature, writer's effort in attracting reader's sympathy to characters. The success of the writer depended on the "capacity to enter imaginatively into the lives of others" (McCarthy, 1992, p. 121). Development of sympathy had been the indicator for popular discourse from the perspective of Romantic texts. Barzilai (2009) remarks that sympathy was not something permanent, rather it can be cultivated through pedagogic process; it "enlarges our perspective and refine our judgment" (p. 164). But Rai (2002) comments, capitalist anti-slavery discourse, gothic sympathy, missionary discourse are all pedagogic strategies of "bourgeois humanism" preparing ground for "colonial governmentality" (p. 15). In such case sympathy engenders benefits from the suffering others. Wordsworth sets sympathy to motion through imagination. Wordsworth shows that Napoleonic France is responsible for pushing Toussaint to the sympathetic situation. This way of extending sympathy to the victim can be beneficial on the part of the sympathizer but not the victim. It must have been national ideology to win the sentiment of the blacks and use it against the French and for the benefit of empire. Otherwise, French might use slaves against the British. Massumi (2015) also critiques changing colors of capitalism, "controlled walking" and "balancing act of affect" (p. 17), which are more powerful than ideology. Ideology is rarely permanent in capitalism, since it functions flexibly and tangibly, concerned with "immediacy" (Massumi, 2015, p. 62) which is more affective. In capitalism, Massumi postulates, "we are our situations" (p. 14) with flexible ideology guided by benefit. Wordsworth has written other sonnets like *King of Sweden* and *September Ist, 1802* in which Napoleonic France has been blamed as wicked. Reader gets surprised whether Wordsworth has honored Toussaint and the King of Sweden only because both of them fought bravely for liberty and patriotism against Napoleon's expansionism.

*September Ist, 1802* is about an unnamed Negro woman, banished from France by the Government ordinance,

the hateful and disgraced act of tyranny, who travelled as fellow passenger together with the speaker of the poem:

Was silent, motionless in eyes and face.

She was a Negro woman driven from France,

Rejected like all others of that race,

Not one of whom may now find footing there;

This the poor out-cast did to us declare,

Nor murmured at the unfeeling ordinance. (Lines 10-14)

These lines portray not only the sympathy of the speaker to the banished Negro woman but also the speaker's anger, hatred, and dissatisfaction to France, its out-casting and banishing slaves, its "unfeeling ordinance". The Negro woman's pathetic portrayal, "silent", her "motionless" state, her "languid speech", "dejected", "meek" appearance have been imagined to set reader's sympathy to character in motion, and at the same time severe hatred to the victimizer. The main subject of the poem is not to arouse sympathy to the victim but to highlight the "unfeeling ordinance". In all the poems described, Wordsworth has imagined the juxtaposition of French slavery and English liberty. Wordsworth's historical critical approach in these poems suggests his effort in making positive image of the self and villainous image of the Napoleonic expansionist France. According to Nussbaum (2001), compassion is sad and painful emotion directed to other person's misfortune, and the purpose may be making the subject of sympathy beneficiary or for the sympathizer's self benefit (p. 10). She further premises that shame, envy, and disgust are the impediments to true compassion (p. 47). Compassion without any condition or selfless benefit is rare, and that is true compassion, obviously directed to the benefit of the victim. Compassion developed for the victim out of envy and disgust to the victimizer may be guided by the speaker's "affective circumstances" (Reiser's term used above) and national prejudices. Shame also "diminishes the self" (Arel, 2016, p. 23) and hence less desirable emotion, but for the healthy spiritual wellbeing for the future it must be replaced with compassion, pity, and benevolence. Otherwise, shameful state may haunt or chase a person throughout life. Healthy transformation of the past collective shame of history into spiritual wellbeing, however, is very rare. Generally, it is guided by rationalization, also overpowered with envy and disgust. Wordsworth's abolitionist poems were written with the purpose of developing compassion, pity, and benevolence to the victim, but these emotions appear masked when the speakers' efforts seen directed to self beneficiary motive, shame seen to be masked, envy and disgust directed to the traditional enemy, France.

Sonnets like *September Ist, 1802* and *To Toussaint L'Ouverture* got published in the same year 1807 when Wordsworth's another famous sonnet *To Thomas Clarkson* was published in the same collection, *Poems in Two Volumes*. In such a situation described above, abolition of slave trade and slavery was very difficult task that Britain accomplished, Wordsworth establishes. On the one hand France had been banishing and out-casting slaves inhumanely from the country, and on the other hand, Britain was struggling very hard for the freedom of the slaves. He wrote the sonnet in honor of the English abolitionist *To Thomas Clarkson* who "Didst first lead forth this Pilgrimage sublime" (line 5), though there had been controversy even in Britain at that time on the message the line wishes to deliver, especially when Wilberforce Sons objected to it, the author himself makes a long footnote comment in 1838 that the publisher Poppins Printers edition of the volume for the poem includes:

This honor has, I am told been denied to Mr. Clarkson by the Sons of Mr. Wilberforce, in account of his life lately published by them, and priority of exertion in this cause — (public exertion, I suppose, for with private, I have nothing to do) — claimed for their father ... Although in fact who might be first and who might be second, where such rare and high qualities were put forth by both laborers is of little moment; yet ... I shall avail myself of some future occasion to make public the grounds of evidence upon which I first entertained, and still retain ... every part of this humble tribute to the virtues of my honored friend. (P. 5)

Of course, if Wordsworth's abolitionist poems read together, Clarkson, Wilberforce and all actors for the cause, represent Britain. Wordsworth's *To Thomas Clarkson* was written on 'the Final Passing of the Bill of the Abolition of Slave Trade', since Clarkson was the social activist, Wilberforce was the political activist fighting for the same cause, the author's main argument has been analyzed here not in terms of persons but in terms of public attitude, the circumstances that shaped the British subjectivity with respect to abolitionist consciousness.

The octave part of the sonnet *To Thomas Clarkson* seeks to establish that abolition of slave trade bill that the British parliament passed after too much of public and political activism "was an obstinate Hill to climb" (line 1), "toilsome" and "dire" (line 2) act that the British knew "feelingly" (line 3). It was so difficult a task that the British could only have accomplished because they were the "true yoke-fellow of time" (line 8). With the passing of the bill "The bloody writing is forever torn" (line 11), and with this the British became the "firm friend of human kind" (line 14), whereas the rivals to the British, the French, had been forming the ordinance for

banishing and out-casting slaves from the country. Wordsworth seems to portray in *September Ist, 1802*, the French racist policy, Napoleonic ordinance during San Domingo campaign that banned colonial blacks from France.

Some portion of the tenth book of Wordsworth's *The Prelude* also contains contemplation on the issue of slavery and its abolition. According to the information in the footnote, the text was written in 1805 during the abolition controversy. The revised text appeared in the version of *The Prelude* published in 1850 in America, perhaps to energize the abolitionist movement in the United States. This text has nothing to do with British abolitionist movement, because it was published in America in 1850, neither to affect British abolition of slave trade (1807) nor the emancipation of slavery (1833). Wordsworth wrote another poem with abolitionist theme, *Humanity*, which was again written in 1829 but published in 1835, long later than it was actually expected for the British abolitionist movement. But Wordsworth's abolitionist ideas in the poems are worth-analyzing in the context.

The abolitionist text in the tenth book of *The Prelude* summarizes the British experience and reminds reader of the need of humanity and moral character:

Twice had the trees let fall  
 Their leaves, as often Winter had put on  
 His hoary crown, since I had seen the surge  
 Beat against Albion's shore, since ear of mine  
 He caught the accents of my native speech  
 Upon our native country's sacred ground. (Lines 239-244)

The speaker tells his experience about the abolition of slave trade and slavery, "twice had the trees let fall" "upon our native country's sacred ground". From the spatial-temporal context of the poem's publication it can be inferred that Wordsworth might be sharing his native country's experience to the American readership.

The abolition of slavery had not been easy task as has been previously mentioned when dealing with sonnet addressed *To Thomas Clarkson*. It was "obstinate Hill to climb", "toilsome", "dire" act. *The Prelude* has also similar spirit:

first memorable onset made  
 By a strong levy of humanity  
 Upon the traffickers in Negro blood;  
 Effort which, though defeated, had recalled  
 To notice old forgotten principles" (lines 250-254).

It took almost 50 years to "notice" the "old forgotten principles" in England, from late 1780 to the early 1830s. The speaker has strong faith to share in *The Prelude* that prosperity is nothing in the absence of moral character, humanitarianism, and liberty. In the absence of the ideals prosperity would "fall together with its parent tree" (line 265), just like the fall of the system of human trafficking. Prosperity in the absence of justice, righteousness, liberty, and morality would corrupt "the minds of all ingenuous youth" (line 270) and push them to the state of guilt and shame. Such ideas must have influenced American readers with strong affectivity.

Wordsworth's very powerful poem *Humanity* also argues against all kinds of bondage, chain, and walls slavery could create. He has raised powerful questions: "Shall man assume a property in man? /Lay on the moral will a withering ban" (lines 79-80)? Man is not the object to be bought and sold as others' property. So slavery is shameful. Wordsworth also highlights the 1772 famous maxim in order to forward his argument in the poem: "Slaves cannot breathe in England/ Yet that boast/ Is but a mockery! When from coast to coast,/ Though fettered slave be none, her floors and soil" (lines 83-85). The speaker of the poem does not seem to be satisfied with the existing situation when old maxims are but hypocrisy and human conduct about slave trade are mockery to the old principles. It is surprising that Wordsworth, the epochal mainstream poet, uses popular old maxims from the late eighteenth century, from 1772 court trial of the slave, Somerset, Thomas Paine's basic premise from *The Rights of Man*, and then contentious issues at that time like division of labor and free labor in place of slave labor, free market based on laissez faire economy with reciprocal benefit in place of mercantilist agrarian economy with protective market based on extra tariff and duty, from Adam Smith's 1776 ground breaking book *The Wealth of Nations*, in writing the poem *Humanity*, much later, in 1829 (published in 1835), than they provoked the public with agitation and movement.

Wordsworth, in his poem *Humanity*, advocates for Adam Smith's classic book *The Wealth of Nations*, published at the beginning of industrial revolution, the path breaking venture that suggested division of labor, free labor, productivity, free market based on reciprocal profit and so on in the context when the failure of the previous

model of capitalism, based on mercantilist agrarian economy protected by slave labor, tariff and duty, was observed. It was the brilliant capitalist shift to an alternative model of modern free trade, the shift of interest from North American and West Indian slave colonies to the new colonies in the East. Whenever problem appears in existing order, capitalism finds alternative path for the growth and continuation of the system leaving some contentious topics. Capitalism keeps changing, according to Massumi (2015), it moves forward through “controlled walking” and “balancing” (p. 14) its pace.

#### 4. Conclusion

From these analyses it can be postulated that Wordsworth was not a risk taking poet. He wrote on the contentious issues only when they were settled and got resolved, much later than the issues really stirred the society with forceful current. Such a great revolutionary change like the abolition of slavery took place in the history of mankind during the age, yet the silence of the mainstream high Romantic poet like Wordsworth has been observed as surprising. Wordsworth raised the voice of the rustic people in the countryside in common people’s vernacular, issues of the poor when there had been widespread counter public culture and oppositional politics in 1790s, yet very little and slightly about racial slavery. Abolitionist movement got accelerated through popular agenda, middle class and black uprising, the movement from below. Readers expect mainstream writer’s contribution in the ground breaking change in the transformational history of human kind, but the close study of such movements reveal that they are initiated and accelerated not by the mainstream established writers, instead, backed up by low profile writers. High Romantic writers like Byron, Shelley, and Keats did not write a single line on the issue. Rather it was supported by radical press, feminism, dissenting church, oppositional network of clubs, social activism, journals, pamphlets, debates (McCann, 1999, p. 2). Widespread conservatism among the established strata of society can be referred to as the product of black rebellion monstrosity and people’s disillusionment with radical politics due to the failure of emancipator promises in French Revolution.

Wordsworth’s abolitionist ideas are the product of British perspective, the influence of his “affective circumstances”. Through the sentimental poetry Wordsworth extends sympathy to the slaves, like a capitalist pedagogy learning to benefit from the suffering of another. In Wordsworth, there is anger directed not to the slaves and their savagery, neither is it directed to the British who were involved in the inhuman act of slave trade, but to the oppressive and “unfeeling ordinance” of the expansionist Napoleonic France. The French perspective in this area in further research would satisfy the reader with better understanding and would reveal Wordsworth’s politics more vividly. Wordsworth’s anger directed to France is meant for developing blacks’ hatred to their “unfeeling ordinance” and also an appeal to join hands with the British who address the issue “feelingly”. Wordsworth deals with the issue in smart and strategic way to pace with the changing nature of capitalism, depicting France as villain; Britain as friend to slaves, and keeping British society in beneficiary position. He publishes his abolitionist poems only upon the settlement of the anxiety, after 1807 and 1833. Wordsworth’s conservative project seems to be smart technology to cool down revolutionary radical instinct in quiet and spiritual manner, and at the same time empower and enlighten the British with moral back up for the future dealing.

Wordsworth’s anti-slavery poetry registered abolitionist issue as historiographic record. Since the writer writes from his “affective circumstances”, writing with the consciousness of his society, one must not expect negative portrayal of his own image from the writer like Wordsworth, from privileged position of his society. He does not highlight atrocities being committed against slaves; neither does he depict the inhumanity that really took place in the case of Negro trafficking in detail. Writers should maintain high level of moral sense and dignity of one’s society through their writing so that future generations would get moral strength in place of humiliation and collective structural shame from the historiographic records. We cannot redress and compensate fully for the historical wrongs only we can bring about transformation for the future course of conduct and action. We need much more love, hope for the shared future, and determination to combat the corrosive forces of disgust, hatred, and rage. Has Wordsworth been successful in delivering all these attributes through his abolitionist poems? Fear, the overwhelming emotion in Wordsworth, leads him to create the other, as a way out. But the way Wordsworth others France only diverts the issue from abolitionism and leads the argument somewhere else. Fear is good because it makes us think, be careful, wise. It is useful; it makes us sincere, dutiful, and humane. If anger is directed against oppression it can be vital force. Institutional collective anger can be source of energy and political tool to combat social ills. But Wordsworth’s concern seen to be directed to the upgrading of British moral health, defiled due to the inhuman trafficking and treatment to the slaves, so that the accumulated moral strength could be moral back up for overcoming shame, and energy for Britain’s future course, for the perpetuation of imperial leadership, which is bourgeois humanism guided by benefit in which sympathy’s main concern is to accumulate benefit not to the victim but to the sympathizer.

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