

THE PLACE OF POETRY

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This paper seeks to trace the lines of kinship between the genius of an individual, that guiding spirit believed in by the Greeks and Romans, and genius loci, the guiding spirit of a place. It seeks to do so from a developmental point of view through the practice of what may be called environmental biography.

To achieve depth of vision, a developmental point of view must come to its focus from two angles, just as physical sight requires two eyes. The eyes, the angles, which tell developmental history are inseparably two: the unique personal history of an individual, and the enveloping history of culture and landscape in which an individual is embedded. In a broad sense, all well-focused developmental histories must be histories of both person and place.

To gain greater depth of insight, this paper will focus on its subject from two perspectives in another sense, as well. It will use a comparative method. To consider relationships between individual genius and genius loci, the lives and work of two geniuses, in the modern sense of the work, have been chosen for study. The people chose, William Wordsworth and William Carlos Williams, lived at opposing points in the history of modern Western society's relationship to its physical setting. By looking at the world through their eyes, a wide span of cultural and environmental history can be surveyed. The birth of Wordsworth, in 1770, brings us back to the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution; the death of Williams, in 1963, brings us close to the present, to a time and place in which industrialization is pervasive.

Both writers are well known for their awareness of economic and political conditions, in which a culture's relationship to the environment is so much embodied. Only Wordsworth, however, is famous for his awareness of childhood. Closer familiarity with both men's writing effaces this distinction. Although only Wordsworth elaborated a philosophy of childhood, both men continued to write feelingly of places and things first loved at the beginning of life right up until the point of death. Therefore, a theme which can be traced through both men's work is that a sense of the environment first formed in childhood carried through into their adult perception of the world.

It is not a static theme, however. On the level of personal history, each individual, at any point, is an intersection of currents of personal, environmental, and cultural change. The creative person in particular, to continue his craft, must be open and adaptive to these changes. In moving from Wordsworth to Williams, across individuals, environments,

and historical epochs--in discovering similarities and differences, and in turning the light of cultural history upon personal history--this process of change has been thrown into high relief. The theme of this paper must be simultaneously a study of the persistence of memory, and a study of the ways in which differences in temperament, landscape, and culture condition the uses to which a childhood sense of place is put.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

Any examination of the influence of encounters with the physical environment on creative themes must consider Wordsworth. In Wordsworth three interconnected, central factors in this issue intersect: The Industrial Revolution, the Romantic Era, and the modern concept of childhood. Wordsworth was born in 1770, at the beginning of the decade in which many of the inventions were made which enabled the Industrial Revolution to create its revolution in landscape, society, thought, and ways of feeling. He also stands at the origin of the Romantic movement and the Romantic concept of childhood.

We still live in the world the Industrial Revolution created, and we still face it with a Romantic state of mind. No matter what offshoot we may belong to, our modern Western mind is rooted in the Romantic mind. To each of us, as to Wordsworth, lies the task of securing a sense of order within a chaotic society. The beginning of the Industrial Revolution was connected to the break-up of the previous social and economic order, as modern capitalism formed. These economic and social changes, combined with the intellectual changes of the Age of Reason, demolished the universe constructed and maintained by the church. From the Romantic Era dates what has been termed the demythologized imagination. For centuries before this time, church myths of heaven and hell, the sacred and the profane, dominated the Western vision of the world. Theology attributed the projection of reality to God. Romanticism attributed the projection of reality to a person's creative imagination. With this new personal power came self-consciousness, and vulnerability. Just as technology began to decrease people's physical involvement with the world, and above all with the natural world, self-conscious isolation increased people's experience of separateness from it.

As a result of this separateness, the Romantic Era also marks the beginning of a changed perception of the natural world. The development of the scientific mind led to a new intense observation of natural things. In a few people, such as the early Romantic poets, this close observation and description of individual elements of nature, which requires a detached observer, was combined with a projection of personal feelings into them. A person who felt his own gentle nature threatened by an uncaring, materialistic society could feel a new sympathy for nature, which was also threatened.

At the same time that increasing separation from the natural environment created nostalgia for it, the modern concept of childhood developed, and with it nostalgia for the lost world too. Until this time, children were viewed as diminutive adults, with a focus upon their bearing the mark of original sin--not the promise of divine innocence. Rousseau spread the revolutionary concept that childhood is a distinct world, with distinct, and redemptive ways of perceiving, thinking, and feeling.

The concept of childhood was appropriated as their own by the English Romantics. Peter Coveney (1967), a literary historian, saw a concern for childhood as a reaction against economic and social forces of the time:

In a world given increasingly to utilitarian values and the Machine, the child could become the symbol of Imagination and Sensibility, a symbol of Nature set against the forces abroad in society actively de-naturing humanity (p. 31).

Wordsworth integrated this Romantic sense of childhood with the Romantic sense of nature, to create a philosophy of the influence of the natural environment on childhood which still pervades our thinking today.

In his own environmental history, Wordsworth was, by his own recognition, most blessed. He was born in Cumberland, northern England, along the River Derwent. His father was business agent for the local nobleman, so that the family lived comfortably. Wordsworth describes himself as a naked savage during his early childhood, freely playing in the river or ranging the fields. Such a state of grace had just been ennobled by Rousseau.

Wordsworth believed that the most profound influences on his personality, sinking into him from infancy, were his mother and nature. He believed that his mother's accepting love opened up the world to him. He came to identify her good nature with the beautiful surroundings which she gave him liberty to explore. His play centered upon the river, and he absorbed its presence too. To its music, murmuring ceaselessly in the background of his early life, he credited infant thoughts "composed...to more than infant softness, giving...a foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm that Nature breathes among the hills and groves" (*The Prelude*, Bk. I).

When Wordsworth was eight, his mother died. His father sent William and his elder brother to grammar school at Hawkshead, which was on Esthwaite Water in the heart of the Lake District. Wordsworth lived there nine years, joined in time by his two younger brothers. The boys boarded with a villager. School hours were long, but when school was out the students were let free to roam the countryside at will. *The Prelude* lovingly recounts play among the mountains, hills, lakes, rivers, woods, and fields of this imposing valley.

At age 17, Wordsworth enrolled at St. John's College in Cambridge. He was a desultory student, who went on walking tours when he should have been studying. On graduation, he went to France. It was 1791, when the idealism of the French Revolution inflamed minds. Wordsworth was ardently in sympathy with the Revolution. When news of the Reign of Terror followed him after he returned to England in 1793, he reacted with dismay and depression. He eventually regained peace, he wrote in *The Prelude*, through "Nature's self, by all varieties of human love assisted."

The human love that, with Nature, assisted Wordsworth to regain peace and to achieve his following great period of writing was that of his younger sister, Dorothy, and of his new friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In 1798, *Lyrical Ballads*, the fruit of his collaboration with Coleridge, appeared, and he began work on *The Prelude*. One year later, he and Dorothy moved to Grasmere, a valley not far from his former boarding school, which he had roamed through and loved as a boy. *The Prelude* begins, in imitation of the ancient genre of the pilgrimage of life, with the poet setting out for the home from which he has wandered. True to genre, in the interval he has suffered the pain of a fall into experience, but the wisdom he brings back with him outweighs the innocence lost. Returning now, recovery of home is simultaneously a discovery of paradise. Here he can recover the wholeness which he had experienced nowhere else except "as it found its way into my heart in childhood."

Wordsworth is renowned as the celebrant of nature and of childhood. When his poetry is looked at closely, however, it is found to be full of ambiguities with regard to both subjects. A struggle to reconcile the value of childhood innocence with the value of mature wisdom can be seen in much of his writing. It parallels a paradox in Romantic philosophy: a belief in the divinity of nature combined with a belief in the divinity of the creative imagination. The one is perceived through innocence; the other is achieved through maturity.

In the beginning of his career, Wordsworth confidently believed in both Nature and Imagination. Outward things in nature formed the language of God, to which the human spirit responded. In "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," written in 1798, a return to a scene of childhood play inspired his most famous description of the gifts that the memory of nature's beauty, first thoughtlessly absorbed in childhood, may confer on adulthood. Its revived scene could bring peacefulness. More than this, feelings of pleasure there may have encouraged acts of kindness and love. More than this:

To them I may have owed another gift,
Of spect 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 my 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.

The love of nature first unconsciously learned in childhood is seen as the catalyst of transcendent vision. As the author loved nature, nature impressed its beauty on his mind and spirit.

The early period of Wordsworth's writing struck a momentary balance between nostalgia for the glories of childhood sensation and feeling and appreciation for the achievement of the mature, philosophic mind. His great period of poetry, from 1798 to 1805, was written before he had lost confidence in the perfection of nature and confidence to lose himself in perception of it. Poems from this early period are what Coleridge termed panentheistic: the spirit of God is in everything. When Wordsworth was older, and had become orthodoxly Christian, he came to believe that whatever was benign was not in, but beyond nature. Outward objects of nature were no longer the direct language of God, but signposts pointing the mind to a metaphysics that was. His later poetry separated mind and nature, and gave superiority to artifice.

It can be suggested that Wordsworth was originally able to believe in a perfect fit between the mind and nature because he lived in the Lake District, a combination of well-tended valleys and awesomely beautiful mountains and lakes. In this humanized natural landscape, people and nature had come to appear to fit each other perfectly. When Wordsworth was 35, his favorite brother's death by drowning must have shaken his faith in the benignity of nature. Nor could nature offer peace in the face of the persistence of human suffering. Wordsworth himself suffered much, and he was always keenly aware of the plight of the poor. His poem The Recluse, which contained the argument that the divine purpose by which human suffering is justified is revealed through the medium of nature, was never completed --perhaps because he himself had become sceptical.

As Wordsworth came to doubt the perfection of nature, he came to doubt the perfection of childhood also. In "Ode to Intimations of Immortality," composed in 1805, the assurance of his earlier writing has given way to a language of paradox. The glory of his childhood vision of the world is compared to a dream, something both vivid and insubstantial. The child who is addressed as "Thou best Philosopher," is next addressed as blindly struggling to join the blind, in earnest pains to take up the inevitable adult yoke, to sink his splendid vision in the light of common day. The poem closes with a refusal to grieve for what is lost. The "primal

sympathy" which once bound the child to nature now supplies sympathy for human suffering. The years bring the philosophic mind. Yet this conclusion cannot belie the nostalgia that pervades the poem. Most critics date Wordsworth's decline in creativity from this poem, in which he bids farewell to childhood vision.

William Carlos Williams (1882-1963)

Industrialization and metropolitan expansion, whose beginnings Wordsworth had observed with apprehension, were the pervasive facts of life which William Carlos Williams confronted. The transition from Wordsworth to Williams can also be seen as the period during which intellectuals lost faith in God as an effective explanation of the universe. By the twentieth century, it was no longer commonplace to write of the world as either the message or manifestation of God. Reality consisted no longer of eternal universal truths, but a flux of atomistic, unique perceptions. Poets no longer sought to perceive the philosophical reality behind outward objects, as Wordsworth had done, but to perceive reality in outward objects themselves.

Williams was born, lived, and died in Rutherford, New Jersey. Over his span of life from 1883 to 1963, he saw it change from a rural town to a suburban reserve in the midst of industrial blight. His childhood gave him a graceful natural world to contrast with the world that grew up around him. In his childhood, his family owned two homes: the family house in Rutherford and a farm in East Rutherford. His autobiography brings the quality of his childhood encounter with the environment vividly to life.

On the one hand, there were secret pleasures. Williams collected wildflowers. A neighbor's woods near the farmhouse was his wilderness. This personal world was never forgotten.

There is a long history in each of us that comes as not only a reawakening but a repossession when confronted by this world. To look up and see on a tree blooms, yellow and green, as large and heavy as the tulip, was something astonishing to me. The tassels of the chestnut--young and old trees, beggar's lice, spiders, shining insects--all these things were as much part of my expanding existence as breathing. I was comforted by them (Williams, 1951a, p. 20).

By some people, Williams is thought of as a poet of trees and wildflowers. He never lost his feeling for them, and they became the subject of many of his poems.

On the other hand, there was the daredevil life of boisterous play with other children. His autobiography conveys the rough sensuality of a child's encounter with his surroundings.

"Run, run, run, that is all I wanted to do." He describes the excitement of the game of hare and hounds (the same game which Wordsworth recalls in The Prelude), or of running and hiding with a whole pack of kids coming after him. "Those were the days and the excitement which I remember!" It was the exhilaration of getting "brusied, scratched, and mud-caked." This freedom of abandon in interacting with the environment is uniquely children's.

When Williams was 14 and his brother 13, their mother took advantage of their father's being away on a yearlong business trip to return to Europe, her own girlhood Eden. The boys were put in boarding school in Switzerland. It was an idyllic year--athletics, a new close friend to roam with, mountain streams to plunge in, Alpine flowers to collect. He noted that the green-flowered asphodel made a tremendous impression on him. Fifty-seven years later, when he was 72, this flower's name was chosen as the title of one of his most balanced, reverent poems.

By the end of high school, Williams knew that he wanted to be a poet, but he also knew that he didn't want to be "food for bugs." He enrolled in medical school at the University of Pennsylvania.

There Williams made friends with a classmate, Ezra Pound, and his girlfriend, Hilda Doolittle. They were advocates of the Imagist movement, and Williams joined them. By Pound's definition, an image was "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." Central to Imagist dogma was clear perception of an object, combined with strong feeling. It emphasized accurate rendering of an object through the use of sensory detail. As a movement, Imagism was short-lived, but its influence on Williams was permanent.

On graduation from the University of Pennsylvania, Williams interned in different hospitals in New York City, including one in Hell's Kitchen. The violence that he describes in his writing was personally experienced by him in his hospital practice. After a final year of medical studies abroad, he accepted a position as obstetrician and pediatrician at Passaic General Hospital, married, bought a house in Rutherford, and settled down to a productive double life. During 45 years as a doctor serving a working-class population, he estimated that he delivered 2,000 babies and saw one and one-half million patients. In addition, in space between patients, and late at night, he was always prolificly doing what he termed "scribbling."

Williams saw any retreat by a poet from the life around him as a betrayal of his role. New Jersey was his home, and as industrial ugliness spread around him, he must search out what of value survived pollution, or lose the value of his own life. The modern American artist must conceive "the possibility, the sullen, volcanic inevitability of the place" and be willing "to go down and wrestle with its conditions (Williams, 1956, p. 225).

"The greatest creations, like those of the past...arise from the close tie between the poet and the upsurging (or down surging) forms of his immediate world" (Williams, 1946, p. 208). Any retreat to a gentler place must be self-defeating, because to uproot oneself is to lose the source of one's strength. In the poem "Morning," Williams describes himself scratching with a stick in a scavenged and rescavenged wasteland for something of value:

Spirit of place rise from these
repeating secretly an obscure
refrain:

This is my house and here I live.
Here I was born and this is my
office--

At age 25, Williams had begun a long narrative poem about the wanderings of a noble prince in a debased landscape whose brutal inhabitants do not speak his language. He became disgusted with the poem and burnt it. By age 30, he had begun to describe his confrontation with his environment unflinchingly. Over a period of more than 40 years, he developed this theme, from the long poem "The Wanderer" published in 1914, to the last book of Paterson, published in 1957.

The character of "The Wanderer," a ragged redoubtable old woman who initiates the young poet into his art, is identified with the spirit of the earth, the Goddess Demeter, when she disfigured herself and wandered her realm unrecognized, searching for her daughter, the spirit of beauty and springtime, who had been stolen away. Although the old woman lives in filth and beggary, she still controls fertility and power. She initiates the poet by immersing him in the Passaic River, "Till I felt the utter depth of its rottenness/...And dropped down knowing this was me now." In the age-old myth of rebirth, only in death can new life be born. Only from this mud, can the poet's creation grow.

In the longer form, the poem Paterson tells the same story. The poet must find a language, drawn directly from the world about him, which redeems his world. Paterson was part of Williams' life. It bordered the Passaic River and Garrett Mountain. As a boy, he had trampled its mountain and swum in its ponds. He remembered when the upstream part of the river was known for its scenery and wild game, and when the Great Falls in the middle of the city were a famous tourist site. He knew the city's local history. He often visited it, and treated its women and children as a doctor. In Paterson, the beauty of the falls and mountain, which also symbolize man and woman, are contrasted with industrial hideousness. SUM (the Society for Useful Manufacture) chains the power of the falls by a hydroelectric plant, just as the industrial present chains all natural human effort. As the river progresses, it becomes increasingly polluted, and its pollution is reflected by the brutality and alienation of the people along its banks.

It is a case of vulgarity and usury versus beauty and love. Those opposing forces that are manifested in the landscape are at work in people's minds. Williams described the poem explicitly as being about the resemblance between the mind of modern people and a city:

...the city,
the man, an identity--it can't
be otherwise--an
interpenetration, both ways...

The whole body of Williams' work may be seen as a repeated juxtaposition of images of ugliness and violence with images of the soft, but tough beauty of natural things. This contrast existed in Williams' own life between the rural environments of his childhood which first formed his affections, and the urban violence, to person and place, that he was immersed in, in adulthood. Among people, women, children, and the most dispossessed poor often represent the vitality of innocence.

By the very act of writing, of creating a language to illuminate life, a poet shows which forces he has faith in. Just after completing the grim fourth book of Paterson, Williams was able to assert in an interview that "basic faith in the world, and actual love for the world...is the basic ground of a poet's make up...He believes in his world, he believes in his people, and that is the reason he is a poet" (Williams, Autumn 1951, p. 92). Through an uncompromising observation of his world, combined with this faith, Williams was able to write powerfully of the survival of life's beauty in the midst of decay eight up to his death at the age of 80.

Reflections on Poetry and Place

A review of these two writers suggests that, connecting the spirits of genius and genius loci, is another presence introduced to us by the Greeks: Mnemosyne, goddess of memory, who for the Greeks was mother of the Muses. Any artist is driven by a desire to fix fleeting experience. Art is a labor to carry the past or present into the future. Like all myths, however, this one too is rich in ambiguity. Does the myth say that memory is the mother of inspiration because the artist is driven by a desire to remember, or because he or she remembers well?

All famous artists have successfully immortalized their experience. At least in the case of the two men studied here, the second interpretation, that they remembered early experience well, is also true. Each retained memories of places and things first loved in childhood, and for each man these memories became reverberant images that continued to be used even up to the point of death.

In another sense also, these poets remembered childhood. Many similarities can be drawn between the relationship to the world of both poet and child. The first sentence of William Carlos Williams' Autobiography

is, "I was an innocent sort of child and have remained so to this day." It could be said of both men. They seemed to retain into adulthood the ability to see the world in a childlike way, without a veil of moralism and habit. It has been argued that as Wordsworth lost this ability, he lost the ability to write well.

Perhaps making possible this vision, both the child, by necessity, and the poet, by personality, stand somewhat apart from their world, as observers rather than full enlisted participants. Another similarity between child and poet is a sense of potentiality, a sense that the world shimmers with possibility. For a child, all is potential because all lies ahead. For both of these poets, the world was seen with a sense of the potential of what it could be. The present was seen within an epic sense of the nobility that should endow life. Child and poet are also alike in the sensuality of their encounter with their world. Children must engage with the world physically to grow. Their active movement brings them into intense physical involvement with it. The poet is renowned for sensitivity to the sensual touch of the world. Not least among their similarities, both child and poet have taken on the task of creating the personal world in which they will live. Children do it in their play: poets in their art: the one is no less serious than the other.

But to say that these poets were like children is only a half-truth. They are more accurately described as well informed children with a lot on their minds. One seizes on the dichotomy of Innocence and Experience first elaborated by William Blake to explain the similarity and difference between children and poets. If we interpret Mnemosyne as experience that is held in the mind and reflected upon, then in this sense too memory is mother of inspiration. In the breadth of their experience, and their reflection upon it, these poets are distinct from children.

The innocence that these poets shared with children is the quality of their perception of the world. They remained able to lose self-consciousness in a fresh, full experience of the thing itself. Such a loss of oneself in experience of the other was enunciated as a working creed by the first Romantics. Wordsworth termed it "wise passiveness," and, in the lines already quoted, we saw that this "blessed mood" was the greatest gift which Wordsworth attributed to a love for place first formed in childhood. This insistence on a clear experience of the thing itself can be seen in the Imagist manifesto which Williams never forgot. It is acutely sensual perception, and it is expressed in the sensual images of their poetry.

But the poet does not then record perception with the innocence of a camera or tape recorder. Williams may be famous for having said, "No ideas but in things," but it could just as well be said of him, "No things without ideas."

Wordsworth stated poetry's requirement that innocent perception be combined with experienced reflection in his Preface to the Lyrical Ballads:

Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects, but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility had also thought long and deeply.

When innocence combines with experience, our environment becomes myth. It is a question to what extent mythic perception of the world is inherent in this clear perception of the world itself. Perhaps when a thing is perceived fully in itself, it reverberates with such significance that it possesses mythic proportions. For, in fact, myth is significant things. Certainly, after the first perception, to be able to capture and record significance requires experience.

To better understand the relationship between innocence and experience and the creation of myth, it is useful to turn to another model of the progression of life--this time taken from biology. Jean Piaget, a Swiss epistemologist whose first discipline was zoology, saw all development, cognitive as well as physical, as a process of assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation may be described as experience reshaping what has been taken in. They are the processes by which all living things sustain themselves and develop.

To begin then, one assimilates one's environment. It is inevitable. There is no escape from one's place. What impresses someone reading the autobiographies of these two poets is that the places that they assimilated in childhood, to which they continue to return in adult imagery, were thrilling and satisfying to them. They evoked love rather than defenses. They were beautiful in themselves, and their value was consecrated by the other people about the child. One form that adult acceptance of the environment took was the granting of freedom to the child to explore and to use his environment as he wished.

At the instant of assimilation, accommodation begins. It is part of Piaget's model that there is never one without the other. What one learns is interpreted by what one knows, so that the older one grows, the more is one's perception interpreted through experience. The achievement of these writers was to put experience, in the form of reflection and skilled technique, to the service of innocence. The essence of a thing had to be captured in the very act of discovering the means to express it. Both men saw the indispensable role of artists in society as this capturing and communication of the essence of things.

Mythologizing one's world seems to be an inescapable part of accommodating one's experience of place to oneself. The demythologized imagination immediately begins

to create its own mythology. What separates these poets from most people is the quality of their myths. Most people unthinkingly accept a myth of place, which is largely handed down by others, which obscures a clear perception of things. The poet struggles to form a new mythology which draws life from an alertness to things. Nevertheless, whether conceived dully or with ardor, mythology is born out of what one knows. Williams liked to repeat the statement of John Dewey, that "The local is the only universal, upon that all art builds."

To fulfill this role of capturing the essence of things and, in them, a mythology, a poet must be acutely alert to language. Both men saw language as embodying a people's relationship to their surroundings. For both, a primary challenge was to evolve a new use of language to make possible a new relationship. The style of both was revolutionary in his own time. Theories of language were of central concern. Both men in their theories described a relationship which has been expressed most tersely by another poet:

The landscape and the language
are the same,
And we ourselves are language and
are land.

(Conrad Aiken, A Letter from Li Po and Other Poems)

In the context of the two lives studied here, a question presents itself regarding untroubled ease of assimilation and accommodation, and achievement. Wordsworth's original optimistic acceptance of his environment inspired his finest outpourings. When he began to doubt the perfection of fit between mind and outward things, his creativity declined. Williams, child of a later time, could never conceive that his world was perfect. From the outset of his career, he had to struggle to perceive the survival of the things that he had first learned to love. One can assimilate Grasmere, but how does one assimilate Paterson? Once Williams had found a way, he was prepared to write untiringly.

By reaping visions of sturdy beauty from the modern industrial world, Williams pointed the way for a succeeding generation of poets to follow. Yet Williams as well as Wordsworth was formed by a rural childhood. The poetry of both men is rich in images of the natural environment. These images are often used as metaphors for features of human life. Most often, they express features of loveliness. If the relationship between people and their environment is "an interpenetration, both ways," what will happen to our image of ourselves if we do not have acquaintance with natural things to compare ourselves to? Will someone who from childhood encounters only a place like Paterson know him or herself differently?

Individual, environment, and culture--each

impress its form upon the other. Culture can be defined as a style of relating. Widely known creative artists like Wordsworth and Williams, whose role in communication and who have a large audience, have particular power to influence their culture, including its manner of relating to the environment. They distinguish themselves by their receptivity to their environment, and by their media-magnified responsiveness to it. If childhood environments consistently leave an enduring mark upon artists, as they were found to do in the two cases studied here, then the environments known by the children of one generation must stamp their qualities upon the culture of the succeeding generation, which in turn struggles to mode its environment according to its vision. In the process of change, a work of art strikes a momentary yet enduring balance between the conservatism of personal history, embodied in memory, and the drive of cultural and environmental history.

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