

SCORED DISCUSSIONS (ONLINE EDITION)

Instead of doing live scored discussions, we will complete online scored discussions via Blackboard. To accomplish this, I have broken you down into two groups: critics (writers) and observers (lurkers). Writers for discussion #1 will have to participate in the discussion while the observers will listen in and respond to their own set of questions in a separate board. Then, we'll switch up the sides and each group will then assume the opposite from which they started. Pretty simple.

Rules for Board #1

The teams are below. You may access the board anytime after 3:00pm today. You will have until Friday to complete the board. The specifics are below:

To earn 50 points as a **critic**, you must:

- ☞ Respond with at least three original posts;
- ☞ Respond to someone else's post in a thoughtful manner at least two times; and
- ☞ Raise at least one question for the group to answer.

To earn 50 points as an **observer**, you must:

- ☞ Respond by analyzing at least two critics' responses;
- ☞ Critically evaluate the effectiveness of the two critics' responses;
- ☞ Suggest how a third critic could refine his or her argument for better effectiveness; and
- ☞ Declare, in your opinion, which critic you felt was the most effective.

(You will have a total of at least six responses for each role)

| CRITICS <i>writers</i> | | OBSERVERS <i>lurkers</i> | |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Kristen | Lysenko | Clara | Fried |
| Michael | Kelley | Abigail | Belasen |
| Chantal | Little | Tara | Feeney |
| Allie | Funk | Dana | Lenseth |
| Seth | Beresford | Ryan | Allison |
| Brianna | Bissell | Kevin | Klembczyk |
| Katie | Pofit | Lizzie | Dawson |
| Anthony | Loccisano | Noah | Gorka |
| Jason | Freeman | Michelle | Cavanagh |
| Christine | Abelseth | Simone | Yingling |
| Josh | Glover | Chris | Hammer |
| Hannah | Gibson | Katrina | Nakao |
| Geoff | Roest | Tom | Cardinal |
| Suzanne | Thorman | Hilary | Edmunds |

Scored Discussion #1: Wordsworth (50 points)

Text: pp. 25-29 "...Tintern Abbey..."

Read the poem and the following excerpt from Heidi Thompson's article and respond to the following in your discussion board:

Wordsworth's "Lines Composed Above Tintern Abbey" is an exemplary piece of Romantic poetry. It is primarily Romantic due to its heavy reliance on its depiction of the natural world and its focus on the individual. Heidi Thompson argues otherwise when she states that the poem needs Dorothy there to act as a co-conspirator of sorts, a connection to the narrator's past that allows him to substantiate his definition of a past that is quickly vanishing.

Suggestions for your consideration:

Do you agree? Disagree? What about Dorothy and the role of memory in the poem? What is going on in the Wye Valley as Wordsworth writes this?

All of Discussion Board #1 posts are due by Friday, 01/04/08

"We are two": the address to Dorothy in "Tintern Abbey."

by Heidi Thompson

FEW READERS DOUBT THE PROMINENCE OF "TINTERN ABBEY" IN THE Wordsworth canon; yet despite an almost uninterrupted flow of critical interest since 1798, this poem continues to challenge readers to the extent that Alan Grob has recently described the poem as "that dark and bloody ground over which so many of the battles of Romantic New Historicist historiography have been fought." (1) The contested presence of "Tintern Abbey" in Wordsworth scholarship oscillates at present between two critical poles: one group considers the poem Wordsworth's most articulate expression of the egotistical sublime, based on the selfish exclusion of anything else that might impede his privileged vision into "the life of things" (49); another reads the poem as the all-embracing, "impassioned ode to joy" of a wise speaker who has heard and incorporated the "still, sad music of humanity" (92) in his argument. (2) The disparaging critics are outraged by what Wordsworth excludes from his self-aggrandizing prophecy (the poor, Dorothy), while the affirmative readers tend to understate how bewildered and disillusioned the speaker is in favor of a reading which emphasizes the "abundant recompense." Both the disparaging and the affirmative critics largely read the poem as if it is all about one particular character, an individual Self, closely identified with Wordsworth himself, who tries to come to terms with something, either by ignoring or belittling others, or, put positively, by incorporating Dorothy into his own picture. A reading of the poem

according to this model makes good sense, particularly since it ties in closely with the definition of a genre we have come to associate with this kind of romantic poem: the Greater Romantic Lyric. In M. H. Abrams' now classic definition the speaker starts out in a particular landscape, and in a sustained colloquy, which parallels the meditation triggered by the landscape, he "achieves an insight, faces up to a tragic loss, comes to a moral decision, or resolves an emotional problem." (3) However, the focus on the individual in this definition (and in modern readings of romanticism in general) and the lack of emphasis on "a silent human auditor, present or absent" (Abrams 77) have led to a certain neglect or an individual-biased reading of the final section of "Tintern Abbey," the address to Dorothy.

Not all critics, of course, celebrate or condemn the poem without qualification, but even those critics, like Susan J. Wolfson, who recognize the tension and the almost desperate sense of determination in the poem have not elaborated very much on the address to Dorothy. (4) Recently, the presence of Dorothy in "Tintern Abbey" has received most attention in an article by James Soderholm, who has pointed out that "disagreement about Dorothy's place in the poem encapsulates the positions of the major critics of romantic poetry." (5) It may be timely to explore the address to Dorothy further by considering the generic links of "Tintern Abbey" and the position of "Tintern Abbey" within the Lyrical Ballads volume as a whole. The web of interconnection among the poems in the collection is helpful for our recognition of the importance of Dorothy as the chosen conversation partner and companion to the speaker. Charles Taylor emphasizes how our obsession with individual difference has to some extent ruled out the Other:

Modern culture has developed conceptions of individualism which picture the human person as, at least potentially, finding his or her own bearings within, declaring independence from the webs of interlocation which have originally formed him/her, or at least neutralizing them. It's as though the dimension of interlocation were of significance only for the genesis of individuality, like the training wheels of nursery school, to be left behind and to play no part in the finished person. (6)

I would like to suggest that Dorothy's part in "Tintern Abbey" is not to serve as the speaker's nursery training wheels en route to individual selfhood. On the contrary, the poem affirms the continuous necessity for a web of interlocation between Wordsworth and his sister to substantiate *the myth of memory*.

Thompson, Heidi. "'We Are Two': The Address to Dorothy in 'Tintern Abbey.'" Studies in Romanticism 40.4 (2001): 531+. Questia. 12 Dec. 2005
<<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=5000951245>>.