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Literary Theory of Sublime: A Materialistic Critique

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Abstract

The literary theory of sublime claims that man can transcend the human and the social world. The concept of transcendence in the sublime theory emanates from the lofty and elevated thought that disregards the socio-political thereby material existence of an individual. The exclusion of materiality --human and the social-- along with the individual difference in the perception of sublimity constitutes the concept as elitist that is looked at from the excluded pole so as to unravel its embedded politics. Wordsworth inherits claim of the literary theory of the sublime that man can transcend the human and the social. Particularly, in the description of the sublime force the poet camouflages the poverty of the Wye valley and the disillusionment of the people after the French Revolution in the poem *Tintern Abbey*. Exclusively, his sensibility marks the avoidance of the social-- materiality--at the cost of valorization of the beauty and sublimity of the nature turning the poem as unhistorical. The unhistoricity of the poem is manifested in its landscape prospect or loco-description whereby socio-historical context is excluded. Therefore, the poet's use of the sublime is grounded in the socio-historical analytic of his poem in the form in a way which reveals the politics of exclusion, which we can call the anti-sublime.

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I. Theories of the Sublime: Towards Anti-Sublimity

Longinus' Mimetic-cum-Rhetorical Sublime

Longinus' theory of sublime, which is primarily concerned with the elevated feeling of the author and his lofty style and the high effect it entails, needs to be looked at from the perspective of the mimetic and rhetorical modes in relation to the author, audience and the work.

The Longinian theory of sublimity in relation to the author turns to the mimetic mode concerning over a question of how to acquire sublime thought, an inevitable force for sublime art. Here, Longinus regards the author as contemplating the great subject in order to formulate the great conception. Great conception, in his focus, is a matter of forming ideas by miming the spirit of the canons coming all the way from Greek tradition, beginning with Homer, Aeschylus, Plato, Demosthenes, Herodotus, and so on. His primary emphasis on to imitate and emulate "the spirit of the great writers, values the truth, and reality" with "vehement and inspired passion" is to have sublimity in authors' subjective conceptual thought (Longinus 79). This is why Longinus draws examples of sublime passages in poems from "the epics of Homer through the tragedies of Aeschylus to a love lyric by Sappho" and passages in prose from "the writings of the philosopher Plato, the orator Demosthenes and the historian Herodotus" (Abrams 308). Moreover, Longinus' attention to the great conception and passion necessary for the sublime art are achieved by the direction of the author's mind towards the great objects. Elder Olson is dissatisfied with Longinus' essential focus on the greatness. He avers: "Longinus is saying that if you wish to nurture your soul to great conception you must contemplate great objects - gods, heroes, the

majesty of nature" (244). Longinus' insistence on the greatness of the author and of the conception formulates a touchstone to categorize the sublime art and the social art to propose that not every existed object is the product of art "(235). This is how he privileges the criterion of the greatness over the low and ignoble thoughts with the implication that the ignoble and the slave cannot produce sublime art because "it is not possible that man with mean servile ideas . . . [can] produce anything that is admirable and worthy of immortality" (Longinus 79).

This privileging of the greatness over the trivial follows the structure of Platonic theory of mimesis that has a strong bearing in Longinus' theory of sublimity. In Plato's mimesis the reality is located in what he calls the "Form" or "Ideas" that subjugates the phenomenal world. Like Plato, Longinus locates the source of sublime thought in the canons of the Greek tradition the tendency that marginalizes the art exclusive of the spirit of the canons. The Longinian notion implies that one has to follow necessarily the tradition to be accepted as a sublime author because "the greatness of thought is attained only by the imitation of the great authors" (Olson 247). So his idea of sublimity provokes a politics of exclusion. D.C. Innes' remark on the dispute between Longinus and Caecilius implies this politics:

The point of dispute is one of style. It is Caecilius' attack on Plato's rich style as such which seems to require specific defence . . . Caecilius rejected all rich style, Longinus approved it . . . Longinus thus exploits usual status to set up an analysis of the success and failure of his style. He does so in terms of the presence or absence of greatness of thought. (263 - 264)

The second factor of the sublimity is the impact of inspired author's conception and expression transmitted to the audience. In this regard too, Longinus celebrates the power of the author. Mimesis predominates the effect of sublime art on the audience. This effect is such high in intensity that transcends the human reaching to an elevation. Such effect for Longinus is a superior function to what is merely convincing and pleasing. In this case he makes a binary between the effect of elevation and persuasion:

The effect of elevated language upon an audience is not persuasion but elevation. At every time and in every way imposing speech with the spell it throws over us prevails over that which aims at usually control but the influences of the sublime brings power and irresistible might to bear, and reign supreme over every hearer. (Longinus 76)

Now the effect of sublimity needs to be looked at from the position of the audience. Longinus postulates that a sublime art pleases "all and always" (79). This argument does not incorporate any significance of the social, ideological, political, gender, racial etc. position of the audience. Rather Longinus demands "education and [good] taste" from the part of audience to judge the presence of sublimity in art (Olson 233). The demand results from Longinus' circularity of reasoning that the great authors produced the sublime art in the past and their imitation can equip the aspiring writers accordingly and the intellectual audience with the knowledge of the great writers of the past can judge sublimity in the new art.

In the third factor of sublimity, the work, Longinus highlights the power of language, thereby turning the rhetoric exclusively into the aesthetic

mode. The aesthetic notion of sublimity in that sense deals with the question of "how sublimity is achieved through the use of words" necessarily concerning over literary sublimity (Olson 242) . The focus at point is on "the formation of figures of speech, noble diction, and dignified and elevated composition" (Longinus 75).

In figure of speech, Longinus discusses about the rhetorical devices like Rhetorical Question; Asyndeton, Conjunction, Hyperbation, Amplification, Apostrophe, and the like. The function of these devices is to construct the art in the most effective mode. He also makes aware that misuse of the devices results the art into false sublime. His theory therefore becomes dogmatic in principle. However, his point is that these figures are the mediums to express emotion and the appropriate use of these devices remove the trivialities from the art so that it results into the novelty or sublimity. In nobility of diction, Longinus insists on the appropriate choice of words vis-a-vis the thought. Since "great conception" form the great thought, diction, hence, must be accordingly as "thought and diction are . . . mutually interdependent" (Macksey 922). His logic of noble diction is weakened by his own belief that "familiar, everyday language can . . . [also] be effective" (Macksey 922). This is how he makes an effort to divide sublime language and the common. But his effort to categorize the sublime diction by privileging noble over the familiar comes at failure in his own argument. And this resultant failure is because of the characteristics of the language being sublime and the common at the same time.

Lastly, the dignified and elevated composition concerns on the word order, rhythms and euphony. The focus at point is on the unification of the

text that, according to Longinus, results from harmony of all the factors. This notion of unification of the text is also undermined from the deconstructive stance of the notion of inherent contradiction in the language itself. Moreover the notion of language in Longinus is presumed to be free from the impact of the society which is at odd with the new historicist notion of language as socially constructed "orientation to language as such . . . is itself--always already-- an orientation to language that is being produced from a position *within* "history, culture, society, politics, institution, class and gender condition" (Montrose 397).

In promoting the classical writers and the lofty thought, Longinus is very much close to the heritage of Aristotle's emphasis upon the elitist genres like tragedy and the epic and Horace's theory of decorum. Subsequently, Sir Philip Sidney continued the spirit of Aristotle and Horace. And Longinus' became the limelight in the neo-classical period when Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux translated his *On the Sublime* in 1674. The Longinian idea turned to be the spirit of the neo-classical period as the period conceived art as

a set of skills which, though it requires innate talents, must be perfected by long study and practice and consists mainly in deliberate adaptation of known and tested means to the achievement of foreseen ends upon the audience or the readers. The neoclassical ideal . . . is the craftsman's idea, demanding finish, correction, and attention to detail. (Abrams 175)

So the neo-classical ideals embodied the emphasis upon the rules in art so as to impart a sublime effect to the audience. The Longinian primary focus upon the tradition to attain the sublime spirit has the bearings in T.S. Eliot's notion

of tradition as he "urged the individual writer to subordinate himself to tradition to the mind of Europe which itself enabled and set the archetypal patterns of the individual insight into his own present" (Habib 459).

To sum up, Longinus' theory of sublime from linguistic and mimetic discourse valorises canonicity and the tradition coming from the Greek tradition over the social and the newness particularly emphasizing on rhetoric. However, his argument of maintaining the sublimity in art is undermined by the inherent instability in the nature of language itself.

Burke's Empirical Sublimity

Edmund Burke's theory of sublime marks a decisive shift from the Longinian focus on the mimetic and rhetorical aspects of the sublime to the observer's perceived experience of nature thereby empirical in essence. This empirical sublime is largely rooted in the Burkean theory of empiricism, taste, judgment, and imagination.

Burke's empiricism holds the principle that experience is the primary source of human knowledge. This idea largely influences the Burkean notion of sublimity that needs to be looked at as a resultant of the experience through sense perception. The empirical overtones of the subjective experience in the Burkean sublime necessitate its discussion not in terms of the work of art as in Longinus but how the experience of nature moves the observer. Thereby the primary focus is to investigate and explore the question of how we make sense of our experience: why and how the object moves the subjective perception of the object. In that sense, the Burkean sublime is not a set of qualities just inherent in the objects but in the mental effect as an experience of the perceiver that marks the sublimity in objects. Such experience of sublime is

something that:

fit[s] in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operate in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. (Burke 305)

This definition of source-focused idea divides the human experience into two aspects: emotion of pain and emotion of pleasure with the valorization of the former over the latter. The valorization is the cause of the emotion of pain as a powerful force that overwhelms the observer as a result of his or her "sense of limitation and ultimate value of that experience" (Ryan 266). So this experience that arouses the heightened response is the experience of pain that gets highlighted in the concept of sublimity at this turn.

With the argument of primary emphasis upon the experience of pain, Burke believes in the capability of the mind to feel sublimity even though the object's force is vast and larger than the subject. The emotion of pain culminated from "the natural forces", thereby empirical, contains the force sufficient to control the observer because the natural force is more powerful than the observer's position so it overwhelms the observer. (Ryan 274). With regard to the power of natural force, Burke opposes the sublime "to what is subservient, safe, and useful writing that whatever is conformity to our will in never sublime" (Ryan 274). The sublime experience is thus necessarily one of the domination, as the sublime object remains impervious to human effort at conquering, domesticating, and exploitation the natural environment. This power of sublime, empirical in nature, in natural force is the limelight in

Jonathan Lamb who argues with the concern of sublime as "a force that desires quite simply the destruction of anything that resists it" (556).

The power of the sublime, then, is a force of mastery and self-exaltation because it is something that elevates the experience of the observer. While privileging the role of experience over the role of reason, Burke reduces the role of conscious and reflective mental activity in sublime judgment. Even if the role of reason is diminished; the observer is enlarged and exhilarated by the experience of the sublime object. Burke, in this stage, turns out to show that the fundamental effect of the sublime so as to discount the role of reason in the effect of elevation:

The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is the state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasoning, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. (qtd. in Ryan 270)

The empirical note of sublimity is further strengthened by the demand of "certain distances" between the observer and the objects conducive to terror in sublime experience (Burke 306). This demand of physical distance turns the terrible experience of sublime force into "delightful horror" (qtd.in Abrams 308). It suggests that the observer who perceives the terror should be in safe position from the danger of the terrible objects. Otherwise the observer

cannot perceive the sublime experience with the knowledge that his or her existence is at stake of the violence or threat of the terror.

The impact of the terror to the observer with pain gets highly pronounced in Burke's theory when he contrasts sublime with the beautiful. In this regard, the Burkean principle of the sublime differentiates it from the beautiful in fundamental ways. The division gets bifurcated in the objects themselves in two poles: objects with joy, tenderness and affection underlying the effect of pleasure belonging to the horizon of beautiful and the sublime found in the objects of terror and fear belonging to the sublime underlying the effect of pain:

For sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones are comparatively small; beauty should be smooth, and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates, it often makes a strong deviation; beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive. (Burke 306)

The division turns out to be possible for Burke because of his principle of ahistoricity thereby universality of the judgment.

The universality of the judgment is deeply integrated with the Burkean idea of taste, judgment and imagination. Regarding the taste, Burke investigates whether there is a standard of taste supposed to be the same in all human beings. He argues that since the physical organs have been equivalent in all human beings the same sensations also must be common. Because the sources

of ideas are bound with sensation, all men have common conceptions: "for as the senses are the great originals of all our ideas, and consequently of all our pleasures, if they are not uncertain and arbitrary, the whole ground work of taste is common to all" (qtd. in Rayn 271). This is how the Burkean notion of taste highlights on the universality of taste that makes the idea of sublime aesthetic in nature: "Burke distinguishes between the many feelings, passions, and desires and their attendant pain and pleasure *self-preservation* and *Society (of sexes)*, conceived as separate categories of passion which must be incorporated within aesthetic, are the foundation for Burke's thesis" (Armstrong 215).

That is why the judgment of taste does not differ in terms of changes occurring in the situatedness of the observer, so the socio-historical cultural differences have no account in the Burkean notion of taste and judgment. This idea of taste leads to the claim that the judgment of sublime too is universal. Having established correspondence between taste and judgment, Burke proceeds to valorize the faculty of imagination in characteristic fashion of empiricist philosophy because this faculty is also ultimately grounded in the sense perception. Burke's orthodox belief in empiricism keeps his definition of imagination away from creativity, allowing for the role of collecting and combining the impressions of the outer world derived through the senses. M.A.R. Habib is dissatisfied with this principle as he remarks:

Burke denies that the imagination can produce anything absolutely new . . . since the imagination is merely "the representative" of the senses, the pleasure or displeasure it derives from images must rest on the same principle as the pleasure experienced by our senses. (338)

This lack of creative faculty in the Burkean sense of imagination does not turn the sublime experience of nature into something else, so whatever the senses extract the data of sublime remain constant even after the schematization of the faculty of imagination. By defining imaginative faculty imprisoned with senses, Burke subsumes everything into empirical categories where the idea of sublimity does not turn out to be an exception.

To wrap up, Burke's notion of sublime is integrated with his theory of empiricism, taste, judgment and imagination. Empirical sublime demands that knowledge of sublimity results from the experience through sense perception. This experience in the Burkean sense is the experience of the natural force with terror that entails pain to the observer. However, pain culminates into elevation thereby in pleasure when the observer knows that he or she is not going to be physically hurt by the terror of the sublime object. Empirical sublimity is further strengthened by diminishing the role of reason thereby emphasizing the demand of physical distance between the observer and the terrible force of the nature. Burke's idea of sublime is also impacted by his notion of taste, defined in correspondence to the sense organs which he attributes in the universality of taste. This uniformity of taste in all human beings makes the idea of sublime aesthetically imprisoned because his idea of the judgment of taste does not take into account the socio-historical situatedness and the differences of the observer. Imagination is another faculty of judgment in Burke--explained in terms of sense impressions. This lack of the creative faculty in the Burkean notion of imagination does not turn the sublime experience of nature into something else so whatever the senses give the data of sublime remains constant even after the schematization of the faculty of imagination.

Kant's Reason Privileged Sublime

Immanuel Kant's account of the sublime gets defined in its intricate relationship with the faculty of human reason thereby going beyond the Burkean sense of empirically imprisoned sublimity. The valorization of the reason enables Kant dividing the sublime into two aspects: the mathematical and the dynamical. With the help of the division, he distinguishes the aesthetics of the beautiful and the sublime.

By way of bifurcation of the judgment into the aesthetic and the teleological, Kant builds up groundwork for defining the idea of sublime. The Kantian idea of aesthetic judgment marks an opposition to the teleological judgment. In the former, the object is judged without any basis of an ulterior purpose or interest whereas the latter is based upon the subjectivity of the observer. Since there is no purpose or interest involved in the aesthetic judgment, Kant calls it universal "stress[ing] that aesthetic judgment must be universally communicable, suggesting even at times that aesthetic pleasure is the consequence rather than the ground of such communicability" (Shapiro 218). The aesthetic judgment is the pivotal for the discussion of the idea of the beautiful and the sublime because both of them are aesthetic judgment for Kant. This is the basis to make a point that "the beautiful and the sublime please on their own accord" (Singh 89). So the Kantian formulation of the aesthetic judgment of the beautiful and the sublime "neither presupposes a judgment of sense nor judgment logically determined, but a judgment of reflection" (Kant 386). The idea of the aesthetic judgment established by Kant paved the way for the emergence of the notion of interest-free discourse under the term disinterestedness. The ideals of disinterestedness presuppose that an

individual can liberate himself or herself from the ideology of the society thereby celebrates the human transcendence. However, the embodiment of the transcendence in the aesthetic judgment contradicts with the ideas of the materiality and the subjectivity of the human mind. In such notion everything is understood as a matter of the act of judgment influenced by the subjective position of the individual:

Representations of the world . . . participate in the construction of the world: they are engaged in shaping the modalities of social reality and in accommodating their writers, performers, readers, and audiences to multiple and shifting subject positions within the world that they themselves both constitute and inhabit. In such terms, . . . [each] practice is . . . a production of ideology . . . so . . . the individual's values, beliefs and experiences -- his or her socially constructed subjectivity -- and also that it actively -- if not always consciously, and rarely consistently -- instantiates those values, beliefs and experiences.
(Montrose 396)

As the subjectivity is constructed by the social position of the individual, hence, such position does not allow the universality of aesthetic judgment to get its success.

The Kantian establishment of the idea of the sublime and the beautiful, aesthetic in nature, posits a principle that in the sublime judgment the observer investigates the presentation of nature to himself or herself. This is a moment of the mind that is bound up with the judging of the object. In this judgment the observer turns out to be overwhelmed by the power of the nature because

of his or her inability to present it to the self as the observer's "finite human mind bumps into an infinite power of God or the vastness of the universe" (Pandey 65). This infiniteness along with the power of nature leads the Kantian sublime to be categorized into the dynamic and the mathematical sublime.

The aesthetic judgment of the mathematical sublime underlies the predominant focus upon the vastness of the sublime object in its magnitude. The vastness of the object transcends the level of comparison ultimately "beyond all comparison" (Kant 387). When the object is so vast thereby beyond comparison, it negates the issue of cognition too because of the limited cognitive power of human mind. That is why the mathematical sublime is not the matter of knowledge to be perceived from the external world by means of comparison of the boundless and vastness object to the other phenomenon. Rather it is simply the reflection of the observer about the nature's vast and limitless like the starry system of Milky Ways or the shapeless mountain. Such objects, by nature beyond comparison, turn to be

in commensurate with our abilities to "comprehend" them sensibly as one: they are too "formless" or "crude" to be understood as falling under a concept; but we are unable sensibly to "comprehend" . . . all the intuited, extended parts of the object into one "intuition". (Zuckert 218)

In this mathematical sublime experience, the observer is not posed with threat or fear to his or her existence rather with pain and frustration. The consequence of the pain and frustration is because of the limitation of the

cognitive power. The resultant cognitive inability is the culminated sublime experience of aesthetically judged object in the sense that mind does not attempt to compare vastness of the object with any other object. So, the ego of the cognitive human self is undermined because of "inadequacy to comprehend [the object in] totality [but with] the boundlessness or seeming infinite of natural magnitude" (Abrams 309).

Similarly, the dynamic sublime in Kant focuses on the aspect of desire on the part of observer where the sublime object is marked by its might and power. In that sense the dynamic sublime experience is the consequence of the power or the violent force of the nature. This exhibited power exerts the observer with the fear that leads him or her to the realization of a sense of insignificance human existence in comparison to the force of the object or nature. So, in the case of dynamic sublime, we encounter the object physically more powerful than we are, forceful enough to harm our physical well-being. The dynamic sublime thereby results from the objects "conductive to terror" due to "the overwhelming power of nature" (Abrams 309). Such underlying might or power conductive to fear vibrates in the Kantian definition of the dynamic sublime: "*might* is that which is superior to great hindrances. It is called dominion if it is superior to the resistance of that which itself possesses might . . . If nature is to be judged as dynamically sublime, it must be represented as exciting fear" (Kant 390).

Now the question arises: how the dynamical and mathematical experience turn into the sublime experience of pleasure. In this case the Kantian emphasis gets upon the valorization of the power of human reason in

understanding. With regard to mathematical sublime, the observer's mind is repelled in the initial stage of the perception of the boundless phenomena. It is because of the inadequacy of the mind to comprehend the totality of the object. Such state of mind comes to be dominated by the vastness of the object as an effect of diminishing force to the mind. It happens due to the power of might and magnitude of the nature that is beyond the reach and control of our mental apparatus. Such inadequacy of the mind directs us, according to Kant, towards the recognition of the faculty of human reason that surpasses the magnitude of limitless and vastness of object that implies the transcending capability of the observer. This is how the function of the vastness of nature in terms of magnitude and might of in the sublime experience leads to the excitement of the realization of an infinite power in us namely the power of reason. Robert Wicks remarks: "in the experience of the natural (pure) sublime, incomprehensively large or the mighty objects stagger the imagination and make us aware of an infinity (i.e., rational idea) that transcends human experience" (191). Ensuing this principle, Kant proposes, "true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the subject judging, not in the natural object the judgment upon which occasions this state" (Kant 389). The awareness of infinity of human reason hence leads to have the experience of pleasure, i.e., the sublimity, because of the available faculty for resistance in us. So, Kant comes at the conclusion that sublime experience marks the initial pain and final pleasure therefore the amalgamation of the both.

Likewise the dynamic sublime in Kant seeks to differentiate between the two effects of the sublime, differentiating positive empowerment from the negative, freedom-denying violence. The attempt is to dissociate the power of

the sublime from the violence of the sublime as the power of the object, full of might, entails threat to the observer so the observer fears for being inferior on the one hand, threatening on the other. Kant's example of such objects ranges from the threatening rocks, lighting flashes, volcanoes, hurricanes and the like. However the experience of the observer results in pleasure because of the distance between the subject and the object. So the pleasure is the product of the "self-presentation [of the observer which is] entirely different from that which can be attacked and brought into danger by external nature" (Kant 391). The object also facilitates the observer to have an awareness of the "rational faculty" that transcends the limitation of the experience of the subject (Kant 390). The transcending empowerment enables the subject to encapsulate the infinity of the sublime object thereby extract the pleasure from the experience.

The resultant pleasure from the experience of the dynamical and the mathematical sublime necessitates a discussion about the relationship between the pleasures of the beautiful and the pleasure of the sublime. In the experience of the beautiful "the object in nature seems to be pre-adopted to our cognitive powers, producing a harmonious interplay between our imagination and understanding that, in turn gives rise to our feeling of pleasures" (Habib 376). In other words the beautiful objects consist of definite boundaries that exert a feeling of charm to the perceiver. In the beautiful objects, in that sense, apprehension contains no threat in cognition of the shape and size of the object. But the opposite is the case in the experience of the sublime. In the sublime, the objects themselves turn to be "formless" thereby exert the repulsion to the observer's mind. However, the ultimate realization of the faculty of reason and the distance –between the subject and

the object – turns the experience into an amalgamation of pain and pleasure. Unlike the harmony of the cognitive faculties in the beautiful, they get threatened in the sublime experience as "the sublime presents a challenge to our cognitive faculties" (Habib 376).

So in the Kantian sublime the essential focus gets upon the reason in absence of which experience of sublimity is entirely impossible. His insistence upon the reason is historically influenced as it emerged at a time when Europe was obsessed with the primary emphasis upon reason regarding the scientific development and enlightenment. Kant himself was the major philosopher to talk about the enlightenment through the project of reason so as to establish a free society. This subjective position influences his idea of the aesthetic judgment of sublime that embodies the principle of freedom from the awe and boundlessness of the object. Viewed the Kantian notion of the aesthetic of sublime in the light of subjective position of Kant himself, it seems much relevant to question the universality of the aesthetics of beautiful and sublime. Because his own theory is constructed by his own historical and social context, so the Kantian idea of aesthetics to be free from such phenomena seems entirely irrelevant.

All in all, the Kantian notion of sublime draws upon a feeling of pain and pleasure seeking to transcend the power of the might and magnitude of the nature. The accomplishment of the experience turns out to be conceivable from Kant's valorization of the faculty of reason, despite the helplessness of the human mind coping with the infinite and terror-rendering force of the nature. However, Kant's essential emphasis upon reason, in talking about

sublime, turn out to be historically determined so the principle of transcendence in sublime judgment gets undermined. The faculty of reason in the human mind and the safe situation of the observer transform the terror and fear into pleasure for Kant. This ultimate pleasure wraps the Kantian sublime aesthetically showing the possibility of transcending the human and the social.

Anti-sublime

Literary theory of sublime claims that man can transcend the human and the social in speech and feeling. The essential emphasis upon the transcendence stemmed from the majestic and the awesome force of the nature and its representation in art camouflages the trifle, frivolous and the ugliness of the society. While doing so the aesthetics of sublime creates a binary between the transcendental and the immanent thereby social experience by way of privileging the former over the latter. The notion of anti-sublime moves towards the subversion of the binary structure of the sublime-source and the source of mere experience. The critique is particularly directed towards the transcendence, universalism and canonicity with the equal footing of immanence, particular and the non-canoncity.

The implication of transcendence lies at the heart of the notion of sublime exploring the attainment of pleasure avoiding the hatred and trivial social experience. In that sense, the sublime experience exerts the harmonious interplay between the observer's feeling and the perception by “disclos[ing] a pleasurable accord between the nature and mind” (Betz 377). The sublime experience avoids in taking into account the mere experience resultant of the common socio-cultural aspect as being negligible phenomena with the assumption that they should be laid aside. The politics of sublime, thereby, is

to exclude the negative and the fall of the social phenomena. Frances Ferguson is critical of the Kantian emphasis upon the nature at the expense of the exclusion of the artificial and the social:

The sublime Kant-- unlike most commentators-- limited strictly to the experience of natural, as opposed to human-made, objects. By means of this restriction, he established the term *sublime* as a counter and opposite number to a concern with objects as vehicles for someone else's intentions. . . . By confining the term *sublime* to the natural world and by explicitly excluding the social, artificial world, Kant indicated that his questions lay with what one can think of as the fundamental improbability that comes to constitute the possibility of aesthetic experience. ("Studies" 108)

So the implicit assumption of the sublime in the spirit of transcendence excludes the trivial and the common that pervade the society. This is why John R. Betz calls the aesthetics of sublime as "ultimately negative"(377) because of "other -signifying beauty of the world is reduced . . . to an aesthetic occasion for auto affection"(378). If the sublime produces transcendental experience, it turns to be paradoxical because "a natural object [is invested] with transcendental attribute" (Pandey 66). The possibility of sublime transcendence emanated from the notion of the distance between the terror and pain rendering force of the nature and the position of the observer also needs to be looked at critically. The demand of the distance is fictitious in the anti-sublime theory because of the impossibility of the common people's experience to withdraw from the terrible and painful force of the nature.

Hence, the activity of "the beautiful and the sublime embody two necessary dimensions of the classical bourgeois conception of the moral and social life"(Shapiro 218). It marks the sublimity as the taste belonging to the elite. The demand of the distance implied in the transcendence of the sublime sense also avoids the immanent position of the observer. David Punter destabilizes the essential claim of transcendence out of sublimity: "If by sublimity . . . we mean anything like human transcendence . . . then we would now need to see this as a 'supreme fiction'"(524). So the projection of the aesthetics of sublime into cultural and the social reduces the its limelight transcendence with the rise of the immanent.

The immanent impetus of the anti-sublime also undercuts the universal taste, the principle of sublime theory. The assumption of the Longinian mimetically enriched and rhetorically embellished art, empirically perceived fear and terror in the self perseverance of the perceiver in Burke and the universalization of the aesthetic judgment in Kant shape the sublime theory in universal contour. This principle of universal sublime taste avoids the perceiver's particular individual situatedness marked by the differences in terms of the class, race, gender etc. John Turner critiques the notion of the essential homogeneity of sublime taste with the overtone that the passions are "differently aroused in different people according to their different experiences of the world"(22). He also shows his dissatisfaction in the Burkean sublime for "disregarding the social construction of the passion" and towards Kant as

[i]n speaking of the universal, Kant neglects the local; in speaking of the community of taste implicit in aesthetics

judgment, he neglects the emotional need to belong to, or to reject, such community; and in speaking of the demand for assent, he neglects the coercive power of ideology which, however gently, is always active within aesthetic discourse. (22)

Hence, the valorization of the sublime universal taste gets threatened by the unraveling of the particular individual experience, determinant of whether something is sublime or mere experience.

Similarly, the notion of sublimity beginning with Longinus, exerted the idea of high art and low art with the valorization of the former at the exclusion of the latter. In this division, the former got impregnated with the sublime force and the latter with the mere socio-cultural realities. Moreover the sublime author, as the Longinian sublime construes, has the power to attain the spirit of the canons coming from the Greek tradition that focused on the brightness of the society to "orient the public towards the high" and "protect[ing it] from the assault of the vulgar"(Swann 19). Similarly, the idea of sublime proceeded towards the notion that sublime genres like the tragedy and the epic, "must represent the characters of the highest social class (king and nobility) acting in a way appropriate to their status and speaking in the *high style*" (Abrams 61). So the problematic of the sublime sense is that the authors dealing with the majestic, profound and elevated subject matter mark him/her canon by virtue of being different from the writers dealing with trivial social matters. At the heart of this notion of sublime, essentially that of the Longinian, lies the exclusion of the then writers with the common subject matter.

Summing up, the repercussion of the sublime as the theory functions at the exclusion of the individual taste, social reality invested with the non-canoncity. The concept of anti-sublime thereby attempts to display the exclusiveness of the other side of the sublimity by projecting the human and the social.

II. Politics of Sublime in Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*

There is a strong bearing of the notion of sublime in romanticism in general and Wordsworth in particular. The idea of sublime marked by its lofty feeling pervades Wordsworth's poetry. The description of the nature in the poem *Tintern Abbey* concerns with the majestic and the lofty feeling of the poet. By dealing with the sublime thought of the nature, the poet camouflages the human and the social world of the Wye valley pervasive of the poverty and the suffering of the poor people. Equally overshadowed are the political circumstances of the French Revolution and the subsequent ruin of the people's hope in it. By way of ignoring the social and the political as well as the plight of the rural poor people living near the Abbey, the poet accomplishes a development of fiercely private vision of the nature shaping it in the contour of the sublime thought.

Private vision of the nature's beauty and serenity leads the poet for revisiting the banks of the Wye. In this sense, the recognition of Wordsworth as a nature poet is stemmed from his poetry marked by his eulogistic sense of the nature. The nature is the source of sublimity for the poet through which he immerses his poetry. The overwhelming force of the nature leads him to capture a sense of brightness and majestic feeling throughout the surrounding. But the problem with majestic sense is that it leads the poet overlooking the hurdles, poverty, anxiety, suffering, ugliness of the society -- the factors in which the poor and the common people live with. To put it more clearly, Wordsworth eschews his attention of the society as the dramatization of the subject matter of the poem because of his awareness that the lack and ugliness or the fall of the society do not invest

his perception with sublime thought. This is why Wordsworth is often critiqued for “seeing things chiefly through the rosy spectacles” (Long 379). The inherent tendency of creating the binary between the nature and the society with the valorization of the former over the latter embeds the structure of the poem *Tintern Abbey*.

Wordsworth’s transposition from the society to the richness of the nature marks the beginning of the poem. In this juncture he avoids the description of the societal phenomenon though it gets pronounced in the information that he is revisiting the banks of the Wye after the five years long gap. The poet asserts three times in the first two lines that “five years have passed.” Historically five years earlier refers to 'July 13, 1793.' The historical time frame is noteworthy because it refers to the year when England and the republican France declared war on each other. The war was very progressive at the time (1798) when he revisits the Wye. It was also followed the French Reign of Terror (1793-94). Moreover, July 13, 1793 was the day on which Jean Paul Marat, the incendiary Jacobin Journalist was assassinated in his bathtub by Charlotte Corday. The assassination marked the period at which a tide began to turn against Marat's enemies and Wordsworth's friends, the moderate Girondin party leading to their mass execution in October of that year. But the poem does not refer all these political circumstances rather the poet spends his whole spirit on the description of his perception of the beauty and sublimity of the nature. So the external beauty of the nature extracts his vision from talking about the social experience in those years because he affirms the experience of the nature not that of the society. The poet's reaffirmation of his faith in nature

makes him to return to the beautiful landscape of the Wye valley above Tintern after a five-year absence. But he does not talk about the experience of the society. By avoiding the description of the social experience the poet attempts to conceal the ugliness of the contemporary society. It makes the poet somebody who "loves the country and hates the city: a common enough preference, though by no means a universal one, and a preference, furthermore, that is very conventional" (Johnston 178). So the poet takes a shift suddenly towards the description of sublime experience derived from the nature:

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! And again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain- springs
With a soft inland murmur [. . .]. (1-4)

These lines are in the mode of Thomas Weiskel's bifurcation of the Romantic sublime into two categories: the negative sublime and the positive sublime:

[I]n the negative sublime, the subjective reaction runs toward narcissism; in the positive, towards pantheism. In the negative mode, it moves away from the threatening object toward self-identity; in the positive, it moves away from self- insecurity towards unity with nature or supernature. (Rader 254)

Both kinds of sublime have presence in the poem *Tintern Abbey*. Viewed the Wordsworthian sublime in this light, the poem *Tintern Abbey* begins with the negative sublime. This negative sublime is emanated from the poet's confrontation with the nature's overwhelming force-from the mountain

waterfall: “These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs/ With a soft inland murmur” (3-4). As the negative sublime is concerned with the self-identity of the observer, the poet attempts to identify himself by way of dividing phenomena into the subject and the object. The subject, that is the self of the poet, gets overwhelming force of the nature where the nature is marked as the object. The nature in that sense is the object containing sublimity that is vast in magnitude. The vast magnitude of the nature, at the center of the Kantian notion of the dynamical sublime, precedes the perception of the Wordsworthian sublimity into deeper level. The deeper involvement into the nature’s power is marked by “steep and lofty cliffs” (5). The images of the steep and lofty cliff, mountain- springs, and waterfall make the poet's perception of nature embellished with the sublimity. The vision of the poet in these images

belong naturally with . . . [the] familiar transcendence of epistemological dualisms. That is, it is impossible to say whether such images are transferred to the mind from *nature* or whether nature borrows her dimensions from the mind. But precisely *because* the configurations of inner height and depth intermesh so closely with features of the landscape, they tend to gesture towards a mental topography that is here perfectly arbitrary. There is no qualitative or moral distinction between the loftiness of one’s sentiments and the depth of one’s zeal, and the joyfully elevated thoughts are as profound as the deep power of joy is uplifting. (Jarvis 51)

The poet's perception of all these scenery, hence, attempts to transport the

reader's experience in the light of the poet's vision of the nature.

Having established the sense of sublimity in the beginning part, Wordsworth moves towards the manifestation of the transcendental vision of the sublime. It means that the poet seeks to shape the vision in such a way that the rest of the figure would perceive in the mode of his perception. In other words, he does not configure the social position of the observer as the determinant of one's judgment. Rather he is highly influenced by the transcendental spirit of the sublime theory. In this sense the poet is a follower of the Burkean as well as the Kantian notion of sublime. The idea of human transcendence is that the self of the perceiver gets exalted by the magnitude of the poem is marked by "a wild secluded scene" (6). The impression of the scene leads the poet to have a sense of sublime transcendental thought with the "more deep seclusion" (7). Clearly, the pressures of the trivialities, hurdles, suffering of the Wye valley on the one hand, do not affect the Wordsworthian perception; he takes for granted the perception of the vagrant and the hermit on the other:

With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone. (19-22)

In these lines the poet seems to be having the social experience because he includes the vagrant dwellers and the hermit – economically downtrodden people. Furthermore he points out that there are "sneers of selfish men" (129) in the society. But though the vagrant dwellers seem poor the selfish men mean, men seem do not have much of a historical dimension. Rather

the social problems of the vagrancy is muted by the slightly oxymoronic phrase "vagrant dwellers" However, as we find closely the speaker progresses towards his closing affirmation that "this green pastoral landscape" (58) is still very clear to him. In this concept two things are apparent about the poet's worship of nature: firstly the poet defines the nature in sharp contrast and positive differences from the society, and secondly he represents nature with profound faith that shows a healing force of nature. In other words it heals the poet's doubts and anxieties of the society. So the overwhelming sense of the purity as well as the serenity of the nature camouflage or conceal the negative aspects or the fall of the society. He even attempts to inject a high dose of sublime impetus to the figures like the vagrant and the hermit. Its implication is that though these figures are homeless, they should get lofty and transcendental vision of the nature. But such elitist taste of the Wordsworthian sublime fails to accomplish it. It is because of their poverty, they cannot live with the sublime impression of the nature. Rather they are concerned with the management of the subsistence. This is why "the Hermit sits alone" (22) though he is in amid the nature. Rather than focusing upon the difficulty of the vagrant and the hermit life, the poet embarks on the description of the beautiful forms of the nature. At this state the Wordsworthian rationale of poets having more sensibility than the other people gets contradicted:

[Poet] is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among

mankind . . . [A man] affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present. (Wordsworth 441)

But in the poem the poet is not concerned with the absence of the politics and the society when he is in the lap of the nature. It seems that the poet is affected by the pleasing moments even if such moments are absent in the immediate perception of the poet. This is why the poet shows his indifference towards the suffering of the people from poverty and the failure of the French Revolution. But the beauty thereby pleasure of the nature remains with the poet taken in the five long years ago:

These beautiful forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye;
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them, (23-27).

Philosophically the poet argues that a poet is supposed to deal with the language of common men or the language of the day-to-day life. In other words, the poet proposes that there is no difference between the language of the daily life of the common human beings and the language of the poetry. So the poet is supposed

to adopt the very language of men . . . so as to reject . . . the mechanical device of style, or as a family language which writers in meter seem to lay claim to by prescription . . . [So the ultimate aim is] to keep the reader in the company of flesh and blood [by the use of the] language near to the language of men. (Wordsworth 439)

But with regard to the poem *Tintern Abbey* the poet hardly accomplishes it. Rather the lofty style in communion with the Longinian notion of the sublime wraps the sublime content of the poem. On the surface level the poet seems to be dealing with the common people's activities and the language as the representation of the poetic matter. So the lofty or the sublime thought is in tandem with the Longinian notion of high style in Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*. S. B. Mukherji shows his dissatisfaction about the Wordsworthian theory of language of poetry and the reality in his own poem: *Tintern Abbey* abandons all theories of diction, language and subject set forth in the ambitious *preface* and goes back to the lofty tone and style of verse "(108). Not only in the poem *Tintern Abbey* the poet violates his own principle of the language of the poetry, the same appears to be in the case of the poem "The White Doe of Rylstone." David Daiches makes a strong critique to the poet's nature of upholding the eighteenth century's decorum and rejecting his own principle:

The poem is by no means a failure, and some critics have considered it one of Wordsworth's greatest, but while Wordsworthian in feeling, it is not truly Wordsworthian in treatment or at least it shows some of the poetic feature of the later Wordsworth, the Wordsworth who achieved poetic success, when he did, in a tradition much closer to eighteenth-century rhetorical poetry. (882)

So the subject matter of lofty thought and the lofty style of the poem *Tintern Abbey* marks the poetic sensibility of the poet as that of elite in tone.

The elitist perception and treatment of the Wordsworthian poetic

nature is stemmed from his division of human sensibility into sublime and the trifle. By way of dividing human sensibility in this way, he attributes the sublime sensibility to the realm of the poet's vision and the trifle to the realm of the common people. With the help of the division he engages on the power of the sublime sensibility of the poet. His attribution of elitist sensibility to the poet reverberates in his definition of the poet:

[A poet is a man], endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be a common among mankind, a man pleased with his own passion and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life than is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings on of the universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. (441)

The poet finds a hermit amid the nature living "by his fire" but "alone" (21-22). According to his sense of sublimity the hermit is supposed to be accompanied by the nature, which is not. Because of the lack of the intense sensibility of the common men like the vagrants and the hermit, they are alienated in the poet's vision. But the hermit might have been living with more sublime thought than the poet has. The poet's definition of the poet does not allow it to be pronounced. In that sense, the Wordsworthian sense of sublimity makes the lofty thought as a possession of a certain group, group of the elite where he himself tends to incline.

Another issue in the poem is the issue of universality of sublime

thought chimed loud in the Wordsworthian sublimity that is the resultant of the nature. The problem raised in the anti-sublime theory is that sublimity cannot remain implanted in the mind eternally. Otherwise it would not have been dependent on the perception. But the poet finds sublime memories remaining forever in him as he “owe[s] to them/ In hours of weariness, sensations, sweet” (26-27).

Likewise the poet upholds the principle that the content of the poetry should be selected from the humble and rustic life with the language of the common people. However, such humble and rusticity do not project an experience of sublimity to the reader. Because of which the poet moves further proposing that the common subject matter and the language of day-to-day life should get transformed through artistic coloring so that the ordinary things turn out to be extraordinary thereby sublime:

[The poet is supposed] to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as . . . possible, in a selection of language really used by men and at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspects, and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting . . . Humble and rustic life . . . [is] generally chosen, because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity. (Wordsworth 438)

At this juncture too, the poet himself contradicts with his own principle regarding the subject matter of the *Tintern Abbey*. If the subject matter were

selected from the realm of humble and rustic life, then the life of the vagrants, the hermit and the common people would be the limelight in the poem. Rather they are overlooked persistently. So his attitude of overlooking the condition of the common people of the Wye valley undercuts his own principle of the common subject matter to be dramatized in the poem. Instead of the common social life “the best part of our life is shown to be the result of natural influences” (Long 384). So in the poem the Wordsworthian notion of humble and rustic life turn out to be his own self because he privileges his own secluded life and that seclusion belongs to the poet alone: “That on a wild secluded scene impress/ Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect/ The landscape with the quiet of the sky” (6-8). In the secluded life the poet may expand infinitely and then contract to the scope of a thought of himself. So the reader of the poem *Tintern Abbey* is an eavesdropper, or at most a passerby in the mind of the poet. Moreover, the second person, his sister, to whom he bequeaths the beauty and sublimity he has gained, is treated with a reserve that is sometime severe. Here both the reader as well as Dorothy is supposed to stand to inherit what the poet has found and nothing more. The poet's sense of the sublimity hence attempts to transport the perception of the reader as well as his sister accordingly: [I]n his vision, the poet is imaginatively united with his former self, with his sister, and with nature itself, as it is Nature that has taught him thus to see” (Rand 151). Such attitude makes the poet an intensely self- regarding poet. The self-regarding sense marks him seeing only himself and the nature. The exclusiveness attitude of the poet makes the poem imprisoned with his own individual mind and the mind's relation to nature, an almost “impersonal

testing of the relations between memory and idea of immortality” (Richey 201).

Similarly, the poet makes a point of being overwhelmed by the touch of nature in the poem. The nature for him is “Felt in the blood, felt along the heart” (28). It explicitly exposes the self-regarding infatuation of the poet to the nature . It makes the tone of the poem more about self-regarding avoiding what goes outside the nature society. So the poet’s description of how his memory of the “beauteous forms” (23) has functioned upon him in the absence of the five long years turns his taste as that of an elite. He further describes the implication of the memory of the woods and cottages that offered him “tranquil restoration” (30) to his mind even at a time of his awareness of the memory influencing deeds of kindness and love. His elite sense is stemmed from the identification of his self as of “purer mind” (29) in comparison to the mind of the vagrant and the hermit. His pride of having pure mind shows his negligence to the socio-economic and political realities and the suffering of the people living in the Wye valley. The lack of pure mind on the part of the poor people is because of the problems and tensions of the society. Those laborers and the beggars do not receive a note of sympathy from the poet neither they are favored by the modern economic system. So they are doubly displaced. The poet does not attempt to deal with the displacement of the poor people because he is much concerned with his transcendental sublime thought. In such vision,

the homeless becomes the palimpsest on which the individual meditation is superimposed, the privacy of Romantic thought becomes clear--and clearly corrupt; the personal meditation

comes to look like a willful refusal to see a world outside of oneself, an engagement of alternately weary and triumphant self-scrutiny when there are people with real problems.

(Ferguson 36)

Otherwise the poet would have stationed himself in a place of symbolic interest at the site of a ruined abbey, relic of a medieval life which survives only in the fragments.

Further the poet is far more removed from the local place. His locatedness does not entrap his visit in the Wye valley. This is why; he attempts to title the place as an important location as the object of mind. So the poem engages with the geographical situation and picturesque placement so as to put the subject of the French Revolution out of his mind. In other words, the poet's engagement with the natural scenery conceals the disillusionment of the people after the failure of the French Revolution. In that sense, as we go through the poem "[w]e are not permitted to remember 1793 and the turmoil of the French Revolution, neither its 1793 hopes nor--what is more to the point for Wordsworth-- the subsequent ruin of those hopes" (qtd. in Richey 197).

The absolute focus upon the nature is explicit in the use of the word "again" four times in the first fifteen lines. It shows his intense attachment to the nature. This attachment to the nature creates a hierarchy between the perception of the nature and the perception of the society. And his inclination and preference towards "the visual scene, and emotion, the memories, the moral ideas, the benedictory attitude towards his sister, are bound up with one another with the special kind of the Wordsworthian

relevance that enabled him to extract the sense of sublime from the nature" (Daiches 875).

Such essential focus upon the nature prevails the poem. The poet time and again refers to the earlier visit and its comparison to the present visit that imprisons the perception and the experience of the reader totally within the heightened sense of the nature. This heightened sense exalts the perception with the principle of the Wordsworthian notion of *pleasure* in the poem. Wordsworth believes that:

[the] poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessary of giving immediate pleasure to a human being . . . It is an acknowledgement of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere, because not formal, but indirect; it is task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves. (442)

The poet's primary focus on the pleasure principle of the poetry is problematic with regard to the pleasure principle focused in the poem *Tintern Abbey*. He believes that the poets' have only one compulsion in writing poetry is to impart a sense of pleasure. It is supposed to be understood as the ultimate purpose or goal of the poet. Such purpose determines the poet's selection of the subject matter. In the poem *Tintern Abbey* the poet selects his subject matter from the realm of the nature by othering the society because he finds that society is not prevalent with the pleasurable stuff. This is why the poet describes only the nature with

primary pleasure at the expense of the exclusion of the social ugliness. The society of the Wye valley contains the beggars and the “vagrant dwellers,” (20) as well as “the sad music of humanity” (91). But the poet’s description of the sublime nature subdues or overshadows the pain and the suffering principle of the society represented by the beggars, vagrants, hermit in the poem. The sublime theory also rejects the pain to be the source of sublime as

[t]he sublime is . . . a pleasure . . . [as well as] a desire, the hunger of the mind after its own greatness; and in this sense the true source of the sublime is not outside us but within, freeing us from the dominion of sense and directing our attention towards religious and philosophical grandeur of our own intellectual conceptions. (Turner 22)

So the spirit of the pleasure has been operated in the poem as a strong impact of the sublime nature. However, the pleasure that the poet finds in the nature solely belongs to his realm of his perception rather than upon the nature itself. So the poor beggars, vagrants, hermit etc. do not perceive the pleasure or sublimity out of the nature otherwise the hermit would not have been suffered from alienation. But the reality is “The Hermit sits alone” (22). It seems that the poet’s rejection of the social suffering as the subject matter of the poem is justifiable in the light of the sublime theory because it focuses upon the pleasure but it is irreducible tension in the light of the anti-sublime theory. The spirit of the anti-sublime thereby moves towards the foregrounding the camouflaged suffering, tension, fall or the ugliness of the society that imprisons the life of the common people.

The above-mentioned idea also undercuts the universality of taste implicit in the essence of sublime theory and its application in the poem *Tintern Abbey*. The common people's perception of nature is not marked by the sublime sensibility rather the nature, for them, simply exists there. It allows us to understand the spirit of the anti-sublime that it is not something that is inherently sublime but the socio-economic, historical situatedness of the observer determines whether the object is sublime or not. So except the speaker in the poem, other figures seem to be unaware about the poet's lofty thought derived from the nature. In other words those figures are othered contextually. The failure of the sublime vision on the perception of the vagrant and the hermit undercuts the sublime theory's universality of judgment with a challenge so as to destabilize the notion of sublime itself. Clive Bell makes a critique of "the aesthetic experience of the sublime state of mind" that shows "no relation whatever to the significance of life" (335). Viewed the Wordsworthian sublime in Clive Bells' spirit, the perception of the poet turns out to be useless in the light to the human and the social.

The focus on the pleasure found in the perception of the nature makes the poet to be indifferent concerning the social life of the people because except the sublime impact of the nature everything is "unremembered pleasure" (31) for him. So the pleasure of the nature is the Wordsworthian sublime perception is "characterized by awe approaching fear and an experience of the greatness of what is observed both physically and emotionally" (Townsend 370). The experience of the greatness of the nature leads the poet overlooking insignificant aspects of the society because they "have no slight or trivial influence/ on that a best portion of a *good man's* life"

(my italics 32-33). In the categorization of good man, the poet attempts to identify himself with the term because of his belief that he has “purer mind” (29) than others. Such sense of the distinctive personality leads the poet to despise the fall and the suffering of the society. The permanent sense of the sublime vision makes him disregard the “little, nameless, unremembered” (34) thereby insignificant aspects of the common people living in the Wye valley. Therefore, the poet's elite sense makes him proud of having sublime perception:

Of unremembered pleasure; such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime, [. . .]. (31-37)

Such sublime vision culminates into "the blessed mood" (37). This blessed mood enables the poet to be in solitary life escaping the worldly affairs. The worldly affairs mark the entrapment from having the transcendental vision. On the one hand, he gets exalted by the serenity stemmed from the perception of the nature; on the other, the mental exercise that he operates in the landscape that enlightens him. The enlightenment is source of the “serene and blessed mood”(41) amidst the nature. But such enlightened vision cannot lead the poet to an action: “Almost suspend, we are laid as asleep” (45). It is because the enlightenment coming from the perception of the beauty of the nature ultimately turns just to the lofty thought. This stopping or suspense of

all actions, are social responsibilities that entrap the position of each member of the society. But the poet wants us to know that for him the transcendental vision has become consoling. Accordingly, it is to nature conceived as something a little apart from human nature that he conceives in the divine power so as to pray to it. The enlightened blessed vision of the nature transforms all the mysteries into habitual territory:

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, (37-41)

Wordsworth also exhibits the harmonious interplay of human faculties in his description of the mystical vision of the nature. Such harmonious relationship is the reverberation of the Burkean notion of sublime. More than the Burkean sublime, Wordsworth harmonizes the sense of individual perception with the nature's strong impact. Anyway, the harmonious relationship between the subject and the object entails joy in the poet's perception:

In body, and become a living soul;
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things. (46-49)

The harmony into the poet's perception gives a sense of pleasure because nature is all the good and positive aspects for him. Otherwise the subjective representation of the poet does not contain a sense of pleasure. So the resultant harmony is enabled by the poet's one-sided emphasis upon the

nature. However, the harmony would not have manifested if the ugliness and the tensions of the poor people's lives were taken into account. Rather the poet contemplates just through the meditation:

Mystic realization is based on meditation, on a mystical perception of the true character of the universe--after listening to 'the still, sad music of humanity.' That mystic realization is 'a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused' a vision into the all- pervading spirit of Nature, a vision of a grand unity and harmony.' (Mukherji 111)

Wordsworth also attempts to detach himself from the memory of the societal experience with the mystic realization. However, the attempt gets impeded in the third stanza of the poem. His vision of the nature becomes "unprofitable" (53). As he expresses his belief that the memory of the woods has affected him so strongly, may be "vain" (50) but if it is so, he has still preserved the memory often in time of "fretful stir" (52). Even though the poet doesn't leave his focus upon the heightened sense of the nature. So the poet cannot live without containing the transcendental sublime perception of the nature: "How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee, / O sylvan Wye!" (55-57).

In the fourth stanza, the poet returns to the adulation of the nature. He proceeds with the comparison of his present state of mind with that of the past. It is to show how the perception of nature is enriched into the maturity that exhibits "two different visits to the same location" (Richey 202). To put it more clearly the poet had visited the place earlier during his childhood state and the present visit that he describes in this stanza attempts to show his

maturity. Although we know from the full title and opening lines that the poem describes such revisit, it is only here that the poet begins invoking the convention of this sub genre. Stephen Knapp marks the earlier visit as the imperfect because of the childhood stage: “temporal gap between the moment of powerful error and later moment quiet knowledge is not essential to the Wordsworthian sublime” (1010). Rather the later moment implies deeper significance in his sublime perception of the nature because of the perception determinant of sublime in Wordsworth.

The valorization of the perception in the fourth stanza focuses on what is called “the negative sublime” in Thomas Weiskel’s sense (Rader 254). In that sense the subjective reaction of the subject’s perception of the nature runs towards narcissism. In other words in the negative mode, subjective experience moves away from threatening object towards self-identity. The nature in the poet’s perception is threatening because it posits terror to the perception of the poet. Since the poet contains the faculty of reason his self-identity gets emanated from the perception of the nature showing that the object entails a sense of pleasure. Unlike the Kantian dynamic sublime and the Burkean sublime which focus on the terror rendering force of the nature; the poet here is just overwhelmed by the pleasing thoughts not by the threatening force of the nature:

While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years[. . .]. (62-65)

Now the poet moves deeper into the more pleasure of the nature as he

confronts with its vast dimension and magnitude that exerts a threat to the cognitive power of his perception. This is what Kant calls the mathematical sublime. And the sources of the mathematical sublime in the present moment are the “hills”, “mountains”, “deep rivers”, “streams”, “cataract”. But the power of reason buried in the poet's perception exalts him reinforcing the impetus of cognition. As a result of the recognition of the faculty of reason, he imaginatively comprehends the magnitude of the nature. This state of the poet is marked by a sense of pleasure:

The sounding cataract

Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock'

The mountain' and the deep and gloomy wood'

Their colors and their forms, were then to me

An appetite; a feeling and a love. (76-80)

The resultant pleasure pervading of the fourth whole stanza divides the phase of Wordsworth's vision of nature into the three stages: boyhood stage, the adolescent stage and the matured stage. The first stage is marked by the pure physical sensation stage, the stage of getting animal like pleasure. He calls such pleasure: "The coarser pleasures of my boyish days, / And their glad animal movements" (74-75). In the second stage the poet perceives the nature in the form of more intense passion like that of sexual infatuation. Mukherji calls it

[t]he adolescent and early-youth stage of pure feeling when Nature was 'all in all', its colours, forms and phenomena 'a passion', 'an appetite', 'its aching joys and dizzy raptures' grounded in the senses with no need of a remote charm by

thought supplied. It was a feverish, unreflecting, sensuous
absorption into Nature. (111)

Likewise the stage of the maturity with which the poet perceives the nature makes him more thoughtful concerning the perception of nature. This is no more the stage of “thoughtless youth”(90). Because of thoughtful state, he seeks to have a distinct vision of the vast territory of nature. This sort of vision is mystical perception of the universe characterized by a “sense of sublime” (95).

And I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of *elevated thought*; a sense of sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round *ocean* and the living air,
And the *blue sky*, and in the *mind of man*:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All *thinking* things, all objects of all *thought*,
And rolls through all things [. . .] [my italics] (93-103)

In these above-mentioned lines the poet plunges into the thinking subject, what Kant calls the recognition of the faculty of reason in human being:

In the analytic of the sublime, Kant expands the role of imagination even more by considering it in relation to reason rather than to the understanding. Whereas the understanding is the faculty of finite knowledge, reason strives to comprehend the infinite. The mere ability to think the sublime shows a faculty of

mind surpassing every standard of sense . . . The imagination, of course, cannot encompass the infinite, yet in the sublime it is induced to strive for a kind of completeness that calls for reconsideration of its relation to time. (Makkreel 307)

Such comprehension of the infinite in the Wordsworthian perception makes the sublime mathematical, in terms of the Kantian notion of the sublime. In Wordsworth's faculty of reason, the perception of the ocean turns to "the round ocean" (98). Normally the boundlessness of the ocean makes the perceiver failure in perception because of the vast magnitude of the oceanic realm. As the poet is startled by the power of his faculty of reason that makes him encompass the vastness and boundlessness of the ocean's area. This is why the poet calls it "the round ocean" (98). Similarly his vision of sky also gets impacted with the perception through the power of reason:

Of elevated thoughts; a sense of sublime
.....
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man [. . .] (95, 98-99).

As a result the thinking power that leads him to elevate the spatio-temporal location enriches him. Now the Wordsworthian subjective superiority because of the power of rationality moves him towards the pleasing and loving sense of the vision of the nature. In this perception of the nature in pleasing sense marks the valorization of the beauty of the nature over the ugliness of the society. In other words the excessive focus on the beauty that the poet finds in the nature by avoiding the ugliness of the society from the representation in the poem *Tintern Abbey* William J. Long eulogizes the Wordsworthian

perception of the beauty inherent in the nature:

[N]o other poet ever found such abundant beauty in the common world. He had not only sight, but insight, that is, he not only sees clearly and describes accurately, but penetrates to the heart of things and always finds some exquisite meaning that is not written on the surface . . . Nothing is ugly or common place in his world. (383)

The past self of the poet i.e. the childhood days, could not escape the overwhelming sense because of the lack of human faculty of reason. So the pleasure of the earlier state could not be that of sublime. Rather it was like that of the pleasure that the animals derive from the perception of the nature. When the poet's "thinking"-- reason-- is charged, the perception of the nature turns into sublimity. From the viewpoint of the state of perception too the present one is marked by the maturity hence the faculty of reason accompanies him. This is why the poet still preserves the sublime perception of the nature by being "a lover" of it:

Therefore am I still

A lover of the meadows and the woods,

And mountains; and of all at that we behold

From this green earth; of all mighty world. (103-106)

Such empirical perception of the nature in the fashion of the Burkean sublime, the poet avoids the observation of the trifle and ugliness of the society. So the perception has been restricted to the beauty of the nature because of which socio-political reflection remains conspicuously offstage.

Furthermore the excessive focus on the private vision of the nature

makes the Wordsworthian vision of nature more mystical. The mysticism in the poem is marked by the poet's contemplation and meditation over the nature without diversion:

In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being. (108-111)

Otherwise the poem would have been the integrated whole as the reflection of the nature as well as the society. The mysticism is the prime concern of the poet that makes him to see the nature in terms of the pantheism. The belief in the pantheism leads the poet towards the submission of the self to the redemptive vision of the nature. Now the vision of the nature has been transferred into the universality and the omnipresence of the God:

[In the] natural philosophy of man Wordsworth adds a mystic element, the result of his own belief that in every natural object there in a reflection of the living God. Nature is everywhere transfused and illumined by spirit, man also is a reflection of the divine spirit . . . In *Tintern Abbey* the spiritual appeal of nature is expressed in almost every line. (Long 385)

The mystical vision of the nature leads the poet to have a sense of the universal hopes of redemption for mankind. So he descends the universality into the private realm that is the banks of the Wye. The self-regarding and the private vision of the poet leads him to transform his private vision to his sister, Dorothy in the last part of the poem. The poet begins with the other side of the teaching of nature. In other words, he attempts to envision a situation of being

away from the teaching of the nature: "If I were not thus taught, should I the more/ Suffer my genial spirits to decay" (113-114). It gives a slight implication that if he were not in the shelter of the nature he would have suffered from the society's problem and poverty. In other words, the hurdles, ugliness, tensions of the society would have entrapped him -- the life with which the poor, the vagrants and the hermit live with. He includes these figures in the poem in the other pole of the sublime vision of the nature. It enables the poet to his self-identification with the sublimity at the expense of the fall of the vagrant, the beggars at the hermit. McGann calls such vision as that of Romantic ideology of false consciousness. The false consciousness of the poet is stemmed from his absolute faith in the sublime vision of the nature by isolating from the society. But since the poet himself is the part of the society the poet's notion of the detachment from it is impossible so "McGann relies on a procedure that essentially analogies and equates the relationship between an individual perceiver and the object of perception with the relationship between an individual and society" (Ferguson 107).

The last section of the poem clearly undercuts the universal taste, the essence of the sublime. However the poet attempts to accomplish it. In the Wordsworthian theory, the poet perceives the pleasure and he imparts it to the reader. In this section of the poem the poet does it to his sister, Dorothy. He gets obstruction in pleasure principle because of his old age. This old age hinders the poet to have heightened or lofty thought out of the nature. It makes clear that the sensibility of the sublime thought or the judgment depend upon the condition of the individual. So the same nature that was the source of the lofty thought in the past is not the same at the present old days. This is why he

calls an intense desire to have the sensibility of the past days, that is, the days of the youth. Such is the desire as such because it is impossible to make a return in the days of the lively youth so the only option for the poet is to attempt to compensate the vision by projecting it to the self of his sister Dorothy:

My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! And this prayer I make [. . .]. (116-121)

William Richey rightly remarks that the relationship between the poet and his sister is significant for the poet because of his inability to absorb the sublimity in nature:

Rather than acquiring philosophical wisdom through the exertions of the individual mind, Wordsworth had regained his mental bearings through his relationship with “dear, dear sister” the reciprocal sympathy they share. In essence, he holds up the natural and non-natural relational bond between himself and his sister . . . [by] explor[ing] the personal and symbolic significance of this brother-sister relationship. (210)

The whole attention of the poet, however, remains within the realm of the perception between himself and his sister. So the area or the subject matter of the poem does not turn to the reflection of the social circumstances. This is marked as the exclusiveness of the poet. Exclusively, the poet’s sense of

eternal beauty is inherent in the nature. Such perception has wrapped the fall or the opposite of the sublime embedded in the society. And the poet's eternal joy seems to have been shaped by him but in the elitist tone:

Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy [. . .]. (122-125)

The attachment of the poet's youth makes him feel very difficult to separate himself from sublimity of the nature. But he does not show any concern about the difficulty of the poor people in the Wye valley as well as the failure of the French Revolution. Rather he wants to be away from:

.evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against, us or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold. (128-132)

These lines exert that the poet can transcend the dreariness of the human and the social tensions, and ugliness. But all such circumstances imprison the poor and common people's life. They can never celebrate the freedom of transcendence. The examination of his poetic sense of transcendence in the light of the anti-sublime everything of the poet's perception turns out to be elitist in essence. It means that the person who can isolate himself/herself from the difficulty and the suffering of the society must be an elite because he or she is not affected by such phenomenon. Such elitist position of the poet

allows him to have the perception of sublimity in nature eternally. The problem with such vision is that the poet tends towards the concealment of the fall of human beings. The fall marks or imprison the life the poor beggars, vagrants who live in the Wye valley.

With . . . [the] move[ment] from the physical to the mental Wordsworth expands the relevance of [his] speech beyond himself and his sister and applies it metaphorically to his entire generation. Physical homeliness was something with which both he and Dorothy had some personal experience; “intellectual” vagrancy, though was something that was the common experience of all those who were . . . alienated from the mood and policies of their own country and who had become uncertain about how they could fully employ themselves. (Richey 214)

But the poet still attempts to camouflage the negative aspects of the social phenomenon by the self-regarding vision of sublimity. As a result the life of the poet and his sister gets transcended from the social and political turmoil of the contemporary period. This is why the poet addresses the nature to exert sublimity and appeals his sister to enjoy with such pleasures:

Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let misty mountain winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure [. . .]. (134-139)

The private vision of the nature is thus manifested in the poet’s absolute faith

on the nature. This is why the poet believes that his sister's suffering will be healed by the pleasure of the nature. Such healings of the social experience by the memory of the nature creates a binary between the nature and the society. In this binary the former operates to conceal the evils of the latter. Thus the nature's pleasure is injected to the sensibility of Dorothy's experience that in a way makes the essence of the poem closely attached with the Longinian mimetic sublime. Longinus focuses upon the classical writers with the belief that their spirit is sublime by nature. And the imitation of their spirit gives sublimity in the aspiring writers. In this regard Wordsworth also makes his experience of nature as sublime and his sister, who is supposed to imitate the Wordsworthian spirit, will get similar kind of experience. Such life with the nature's beautiful vision makes living full of pleasure, the principle that the poet constantly emphasizes throughout the poem: "The natural pleasure, which a man so easily neglects in his work, are the chief means by which we may expect permanent and increasing joy" (Long 384).

Still in the very last part of the poem, the poet gives an emphasis upon the delight and the pleasure that he derives from the nature. His concern in these lines marks the private vision though his sister accompanies him. But the role of his sister is primarily secondary in the poem. Not only the poet project the secondary role to Dorothy, but the poet attempts to impose his visionary, thereby sublime, experience to his sister:

Thy memory be as a dwelling place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief
Should by thy portion, with what healing thoughts

Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! [. . .]. (141-146)

William Richey remarks about secondary role attributed by the poet to his sister in dissatisfactory tone:

[In] “Tintern Abbey,” Wordsworth makes it clear that it is something more than Dorothy’s conversation that he values since, of course, she never gets a word edgewise. What is most important [for him] is her human presence that has restored him from his earlier “intellectual confusion” and that promises to lure him out of his disillusioned self-pity. (216)

Wordsworth ends the poem in the tone that he bequeaths everything to his sister: “these steep woods and lofty cliffs,/ And this green pastoral landscape, were to me/ More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!” (158-160). But he does not refer to the poor and disillusioned people of the French Revolution. Therefore by way of focusing upon the beauty and sublimity of the nature the poet attempts to conceal all the vices, poverty and ugliness that mark the fall of the society.

In nutshell, the primary emphasis upon the pleasure in the poem *Tintern Abbey* is stems from the beauty and the sublimity that the poet finds in nature. However, the pleasure of the nature and self-regarding vision of the poet conceals the socio-political context of the contemporary period along with the poverty of the Wye valley and the failure of the French Revolution. Such private vision of the poet follows the spirit of the sublime theory of human transcendence. The poet’s transcendental experience of the nature

hence overlooks materiality of the human existence.

III. Conclusion

Beginning with Longinus, the concept of sublime gets introduced in the linguistic discourse. His idea of sublime concerns with the issue of how to acquire sublimity in literary texts. In response, he argues in the mode of mimesis and rhetorics. Regarding the former, Longinus engages with the question of the selection of the subject matter of literary texts. He believes that a writer acquires sublime thought by following the spirit of the classical authors that he calls "the ability to conceive great thoughts" (Macksey 918). In the rhetoric, he puts emphasis on the presentation of the lofty and majestic subject matter in embellished manner presuming that an author imparts sublime experience to the audience as well. Besides, he also regards sublimity a matter of innate quality of the author. The innate notion of sublime constitutes the sublime author, in Longinus, as "transcendent genius" enabling him "to express the nobility of . . . [his or her] character" (Abrams 308). The notion of noble author supports the division of writing into canonical and non-canonical with the dismissal of the latter. So the Longinian concept of sublime creates a binary between the sublime author and the material author, privileging the former over the latter. In this binary the authors are dehierarchized in anti-sublime approach.

Literary text imprisoned concept of the Longinian sublime is extended to the empirical experience in Edmund Burke. Sublimity in Burke is conceived as the quality inherent in the natural objects-- the scenes and occurrences of the world. Moreover the relationship between the observer and the object is also extensive in the Burkean sublime. The sublime object, according to him, is conducive to terror so as to exert an experience of pain

and danger despite the fact that the observer should not be physically hurt, hence, necessarily demands the physical distance between the observer and the object. Such distance implies the perception of sublimity in comfortable position of the observer thereby elitist in tone. Burke also universalizes the sublime experience disregarding the changes occurring in the materiality of the observer.

Coming to Immanuel Kant, the notion of the aesthetics of sublime is shaped by human transcendence and freedom. The primary emphasis on the overwhelming power of nature limits the Kantian notion on the realm of it, if not, exclusive of the society. The attitude of the negation of the social world and the universality of the aesthetic judgment are interrogated in the Kantian sublime. However, the emphasis on reason in sublime judgment stems from the result of Kant's own position of enlightenment philosopher. Essentially, the power of human reason is the determinant of sublimity in Kant.

The culmination of the notion of sublime in Wordsworth is profound. Particularly in the poem *Tintern Abbey*, his vision is impacted with the lofty and majestic perception of the nature. He presents such lofty and majestic perception in artistically embellished manner that follows the Longinian notion of rhetorically wrapped sublimity. In description of the sublime force the poet attempts to camouflage the poverty of the Wye valley and the disillusionment of the people after the French Revolution. Exclusively, his sensibility marks the avoidance of the social-- materiality--at the cost of valorization of beauty and sublimity of the nature turning the poem as unhistorical. The unhistoricity of the poem is manifested in its landscape prospect or loco-description whereby socio-historical context is excluded. The

exclusion marks the poem as "more metaphysical and more personal" (Johnston 176). So the worshipful attention of the poet towards the nature does not encompass the social experience which McGann calls universalizing tendency of Romanticism "false consciousness because the very notion of the collective culture or idea running through an individual [is] what is attack[ed] in addressing the Romantic Ideology" (Ferguson 107). Likewise, the poet neglects the common people like the vagrants and hermits' lives in the society that undercuts the Wordsworthian principle of common people's lives to be dramatized in the poetry. Therefore, the poet's concealment of the then socio-political realities by privileging the sublime is unraveled through the approach of anti-sublime.

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