

Wordsworth's Theory of Poetry : Arrival of a new School of poetry : The Romantic School

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Wordsworth revolted against the stereotyped moulds and excessively charged diction of the Eighteenth century poetry his famous pronouncement that "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and that takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquillity" heralded the arrival of new school of poetry - The Romantic School. Wordsworth lays emphasis on powerful emotion and intense feelings, the qualities which the poetry of the preceding age lacked, Wordsworth started from an interest in life rather in art.

In his poetry, Wordsworth has developed his literary vision of nature through various stages. In the first stage, the child Wordsworth looks upon nature as a source of and scene for animal pleasure like skating, riding, fishing and walking. Wordsworth's first love of nature is a healthy boy's delight in outdoor life. In the second stage, Wordsworth develops a passion for a sensuous beauty of nature. As he grows up his 'coarser pleasures' ("Tintern Abbey line 73) lose their charm for him and nature is loved with an unreflecting passion altogether untouched by intellectual interests or associations. Stage three refers to human heartedness. All the aching joys and dizzy raptures came to end with the poet's experience of human suffering in France. The French Revolution opened his eyes and made him realize the dignity of the common man. This stage is followed by a final stage of spiritual interpretation of nature. It is known as the age of Pantheism.

In the poem "Nutting" Wordsworth describes the circumstances under which a great chance comes in approach to nature. After his 'merciless ravage' (line 45) something Mysterious touches him, and he feels that there is a spirit in the woods. Henceforth, he realizes a divine principle reigning in the heart of nature. As Margaret Drabble puts it, "At this stage the foundation of Wordsworth's entire existence was his mode of seeing God in nature and nature in God" since the poet believes that the Eternal Spirit pervades all objects of nature on the health and well-being of the human's everyday life. If the individual, in his quest for well being, turns to nature, it is necessary to investigate on the relation between man and nature. Furthermore, in its healing process, we can note that nature may foster joy, love psychological and mental relief, and teaching that cannot be obtained without mystic forces pervading nature.

The bond between nature and man originates from the creation of the world as stated in the Bible:

"And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. [.....]"

In other words, God created nature and created man to preside over it. So the relationship between man and nature was established by God at the creation.

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth (The Holy Bible, Genesis 1, 11, 12, 26)"

Wordsworth shows how human beings fit into the midst of the interplaying forces of nature.

The impressions a part receives from the observation of objects are purged of their accidental ingredients and are spiritualized till what is left is the ideal essential truth. When, in tranquil moments, the poet recalls the original impressions, the feelings the emotions which accompanied them are also revived. Thus the faculty of recreating an emotion belongs to the poet; as he composes a poem, he lives through his original experience, now existing in an idealized form. The artistic creation, thus, to Wordsworth, represents a complex process of observations, impression, feelings, thoughts and their interaction. Some of his poems like Tintern Abbey And Yarrow Revisited stand as example of his principle that poetry is emotions recollected in tranquility.

Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey is a true Romantic poem because it describes communion with nature and focuses on the development of the individual, while providing a psychological escape from unpleasant and mundane realities. Nature is unifying them in this poem. Wordsworth revisits the place that he has not seen in five years and exclaims.

"Once again

Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,

That on a wild secluded scene impress

Thoughts of more deep seclusion; [Line 4-7]

Here the phrase, "thoughts of more deep seclusion" is interesting because it delves into the psyche of Wordsworth. Here in nature, is where he seems to be the most at peace. The word seclusion is synonymous with isolation and privacy, but also means shelter.

In Wordsworth's theory special emphasis is laid on memory. He blamed Scott for taking a note-book and making an inventory of all the pleasant object he found in nature and finally waving them into fabric: "He should have left his note-book at home", said Wordsworth, and taken all that he saw into a heart that could understand and enjoy. "He would have found that when the accidental had vanished what remained would have been ideal and essential truth of the scene. It is obvious that here Wordsworth is describing his own method, and that in defining poetry as arising from emotions recollected in tranquility he is simply generalizing from his own practice.

There were various reasons why Wordsworth chose incidents and situation from humble and rustic life as themes of his poetry. A poet according to him, essentially a man speaking to men. His first duty is to trace those primary laws of human nature which govern the manner " In which we associate ideas in a state of Excitement". The primary instincts and impulses which govern human behavior can be best studied in simplest and most elementary forms of life. In the simple and natural village life behavior is instinctive and passions find a sincere, uninhibited and unsophisticated expression. The rustic, free from all external influences, speak from their own personal experiences, and their passions are less under restraint. A close observation of the manner of the rural life provides greater opportunities to a poet for tracing in ordinary situations those primary laws of human nature which, in the artificialities of sophisticated life, are rendered complex. In the humble surroundings of rustic life man is more natural and unrestrained, and so a proper subject of study for a poet who must write "on man, on nature, and on human life". The city life, according to the theory, with all its artificialities inhibitions and restraints, is not suitable subject of poetry. The

feelings and passions of the humble village farmers, shepherds, wood-cutters, leech gatherers etc. are universal; they are not peculiar to them alone but are common to all mankind.

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