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THE ROLE OF NATURE IN THE POETRY OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH AND JOHN KEATS

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Abstract

This paper examines how nature is portrayed and used in the poetry of two prominent members of the English Romantic Movement, John Keats and William Wordsworth. Though their methods and interpretations are very different, both poets saw nature as a source of inspiration, beauty, and emotional depth. While Keats concentrates on the physical and artistic experience of the natural world, Wordsworth's poetry expresses his belief in the moral and spiritual influence of nature on humanity. This study investigates how each poet's perception of nature exposes their philosophical approach and poetic style through a comparative analysis of their chosen works. The study emphasizes their contributions to the Romantic ideal of harmony between humans and the natural world as well as their lasting influence on later literary ideas.

Keywords: Nature, Romanticism, William Wordsworth, John Keats, Poetry, Imagination, Beauty, Spirituality

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1. Introduction

The Romantic Age of English literature, which existed in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, was the era of a tremendous change in terms of expression and sensibility of poetry. It was a time of the glorification of emotion, imagination, and the beauty of nature in contrast with rationality and order of the previous Classical period. Among all the poets that contributed to shaping this age, two poets William Wordsworth and John Keats can be named as one of the most significant poets who managed to ensure the human being-nature relationship in the form of a poem. Their poetry is indicative of the Romantic philosophy of thinking that nature is not simply a scenery upon which man performs and lives but a living breathing being that could evoke emotion, wind the soul, and create inspiration.

In Romantic poetry nature is often a representation of innocence, reality, and god. Although both Wordsworth and Keats share the same spirit of Romanticism, their failure to associate with nature in a similar manner is complemented. Wordsworth is spiritual and contemplative which

emphasizes on the power of nature to instruct and uplift the human mind. In his poetry, the author has shown that he has a strong moral relationship with the natural world and that he sees it as something that influences human ideas and actions. Keats, however, takes a more sensual and aesthetic perception of nature. To him nature represents the ultimate beauty and a manifestation of the temporary delights of life. Keats describes the moment in a very personal way using saturated imagery and passionate wordplay to preserve it in its essence and turn the experiences of nature to the cornerstones of artistic beauty.

The Romantic movement was the counter of industrial revolution and urbanization that human beings could not find themselves at the natural environment. The beauty and simplicity of the life in the countryside became the shelter of poets such as Wordsworth and Keats which found a feeling of peace, harmony, and truth in nature. Wordsworth was convinced that natural prayer might bring spiritual understanding and moral development whereas to Keats nature was a path to discovering the connection between beauty and the impermanent. The creators of both poems prove that nature can comfort, inspire, and transform and are defined by this idea.

Their literature also gives prominence to imagination which helps the poet to surpass the material world and see the underlying meaning of natural things. The imagination of Wordsworth spiritualizes nature and makes it a moral and emotional experience. However, the beauty and imagination possessed by Keats are romantic, and this world of perfection is beyond human misery. In this literary play, the two poets send nature as the reflection of the human soul and a manifestation of the eternal relationship between man and the universe.

Moreover, their poetry on nature also demonstrates the idealistic perspectives of Romanticism including individualism, emotional feelings and the desire of the infinite. The meditative poems of Wordsworth are inviting the readers to find inner peace and self-consciousness with the help of communion with nature, whereas the odes of Keats celebrate aesthetic pleasure of natural beauty and artistic works. In general, their poetry is significant to the Romantic belief that nature is a source of living as well as it is a moral and spiritual teacher that is able to influence consciousness of a person. The following paper seeks to look at how both poets depict nature, the feelings and thoughts that they attribute to the same, and how the poetic visions offered by the two poets work off and against each other.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

S. Sharma [1] (2002) discussed the concept of nature supporting the life of poetry written by William Wordsworth. The researcher highlighted the fact that to you, Wordsworth viewed nature as a physical location, but a moral and spiritual uninformed which informs the human psyche and feeds the soul. As Sharma pointed out, to Wordsworth the concept of nature was a representation of unity between human spirit and nature. On the same note, A. K. Singh [2] (2003) conducted comparative research of Wordsworth and John Keats in which both authors explored the natural world in various ways. As it is mentioned by Singh, the nature of Wordsworth was spiritual and reflective, whereas the nature of Keats was sensuous and overwhelmed with the aesthetic beauty. The researcher was able to conclude that the two poets had an intense emotion towards nature though they conveyed it in different poetic temperaments.

R. Pandey [3] (2004) looked at the poetic creation of the nature and said that imagination was what helped to both fill the gap between what can be seen outside and what the poet saw inwardly. Pandey noticed that Wordsworth spiritualized the naturalized landscape in the imagination and Keats imposed imagination to form a world of beauty and aesthetic perfection. Still in the same vein, M. Joseph [4] (2005) touched on the Romantic sensibility of nature and

clarified that Romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Keats felt that nature was alive and could elicit an act of creation and feeling. The researcher believed that the moral philosophy of nature described by Wordsworth was opposite to Keats who staffs with the symbolic and aesthetic image.

P. Verma [5] (2006) has examined the spirit of Romanticism in the writings of two authors and has proposed that the spirituality of Wordsworth and the sensuality of Keats were the two extremes of Romantic idealism. The paper has stressed that both poets were praising nature as a source of emotional emphasis and imaginative independence. S. Banerjee [6] (2008) has analyzed the interaction of imagination and reality in the works of Wordsworth and Keats, and has determined that Wordsworth imagination only enhanced natural experiences whereas the imagination in the plays of Keats was above reality giving rise to a world of fantasy where beauty is the king.

N. R. Sinha [7] (2009) concentrated on the topic of the spirituality in the Romantic poetry by stating that the nature is the medium of self-realization and divine perception. Sinha discovered that Wordsworth enjoyed in the harmony with nature, whereas the spirituality of Keats was manifested in the impermanent beauty of nature and art. Similarly, V. K. Sharma [8] (2010) examined the poetic expression of beauty and added that to Wordsworth, beauty was spiritual and moral, but in the case of Keats, it was aesthetic and sensual. The researcher noted that the two poets held the view that beauty was uniting and could link both physical and metaphysical spheres.

Taking a critical overview of Romanticism and glorification of nature, R. Gupta [9] (2012) noted how Wordsworth and Keats were two different waves, of Romanticism spiritual awakening and Romanticism aesthetic awakening, respectively. The paper has highlighted how the two poets transformed the relationship between human and nature using their feelings and imaginations. D. In a study on the spiritual aspects of nature (2013), Joshi [10] demonstrated that Wordsworth view of nature was a Divine aspect and moral guide whereas, to Keats immortality existed in the permanency of art and beauty. In his analysis, Joshi showed how these two poets aimed to transcend in three ways by having communion with the nature.

The Romantic imagination was examined by S. Das [11] (2014) who held that imagination plays the central role in how the two poets examine the world of nature. It was observed that the imagination of Wordsworth takes an ordinary scenery and turns into a moral, whereas the imagination of Keats is a romantic fantasy that deals with the ideals of beauty beyond the real world. M. R. Pillai [12] (2015) experimented with the beauty and transience in the pursuit of eternal beauty in the ode's song by Keats, especially the works titled Ode on a Grecian Urn and Ode to a Nightingale since these poems are based on the understanding of the transience of life by Keats. The paper has compared this to the time-less and religious essence of beauty as possessed by Wordsworth.

Lastly, P. Mehta [13] (2016) carried out a comparative analysis of Wordsworth and Keats idealism, finding out that the idealism of Wordsworth was based on spirituality and moral reflections, and the idealism of Keats on aesthetic perfection and senses. The scholar underscored that even though there existed these disparities, both the poets held a strong belief on the balance of power of the imagination and nature and their beauty, which was the key element in Romantic poetry.

3. NATURE

Nature holds a dominating place in the Romantic poetry and is one of the most important sources of its inspirations. In the Romantic era nature was not just considered to be the background of human affairs but rather of living nature that had a divine energy and moral truth. It was a symbol of innocence, liberty, and psychological reality in contrast to the unnaturalness and debasement of the industrial world. Romantic poets viewed nature as one that was an educator, a curer, and a friend that could help man and nature create an order once again.

Nature in the work of Wordsworth and Keats performs various functions - it can be a source of beauty; it can be seen as a guide toward morality and it can be treated as method to reach spiritual or imaginative heights. Wordsworth also saw the nature as a divine spirit which can affect the human mind and bring growth whereas Keats saw the nature as a world of aesthetic pleasure and everlasting beauty. In both poets nature is synonymously linked with human feeling, creativity and quest of truth.

4. ROMANTICISM

Romanticism was an artistic, philosophical and literary movement that came up in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century in response to the Enlightening stress made on reason, logic and order. Romantic writers praised feeling, personality, fantasy, and nature. They held the ideology that truth and beauty could be discovered with affections and intuition and not with reasoning.

Romanticism in literature placed a lot of emphasis on subjectivity and experience. Poets tried to engage in introspection of great feelings of love, sadness, amazement and wonder of nature. Romantic movement was also characterized by rebellion against the industrialization and urbanization and purporting the shift to simplicity, purity and spirituality of the countryside life. Wordsworth and Keats are the key representatives of this movement. The interest Wordsworth showed in the moral and spiritual power of nature, and the interest generated by Keats on the beauty and the imagination are two crucial aspects of Romantic thought.

5. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) is generally considered as the representative of the English Romanticism and the poet of nature. Both his poems reveal his strong emotional personal attachment to the nature and his conviction that it can teach and comfort and enrich human soul. The way of thinking developed by Wordsworth was predetermined by his idea that nature and man are interrelated, and the supreme wisdom and happiness are available to people who live in equality with nature and not oppose it.

Wordsworth in his poems like Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, The Prelude and Ode: Intimations of Immortality introduces nature as a spiritual teacher which carves the character and morality of human beings. He constantly explains how experiences with the beauty of nature can turn the banal into those that are full of deep awareness. To Wordsworth, nature is not lifeless but is a living and dynamic and Godlike. His attitude toward nature is very simple and at the same time very deep and this is the reason his poems remain eternal and enriching to many on spiritual basis.

6. JOHN KEATS

John Keats (1795 - 1821) was among the most renowned second-generation Romantic poets who looked at nature with a rather aesthetic and sensual approach. His poetry is distinguished by the

abundance of images, musicality, and the profound sense of beauty. Keats considered nature to be the source of aesthetic inspiration and emotional satisfaction unlike Wordsworth who considered nature to be an instructor and moral guide.

In some of his poems, Ode to a Nightingale, To Autumn and Ode on a Grecian Urn, Keats uses concepts of beauty and art in connection with the natural world. So, he constantly shares a desire to get rid of the burden of human existence by reflecting upon a natural beauty. Sensuous detail is abundantly scattered throughout his descriptions of flowers, birds, seasons and landscapes and we can see that Keats enjoyed the aesthetic and ephemeral nature of nature. That is demonstrated in his philosophy of negative capability, or the capacity to take uncertainty and beauty without seeking any rational explanation, and is indicative of his deep and imaginative encounter with nature.

7. POETRY

Poetry to the Romantic poets did not just constitute an art but communicated with the human spirit. It was used to express feelings, experiences, and facts that could not be expressed using the normal language. According to Wordsworth, poetry was the spontaneous overflow of strong feelings that was inspired by emotion remembered in calm state. This description is the reflection of Romantic poetry that cherishes purity, passion, and imaginations.

Both Wordsworth and Keats poets made use of poetry to discuss the relationship of humans to nature. Poetry served similarly to spiritual reflection and moral understanding to Wordsworth and to celebrating the beauty, the transience, and the imaginative experience of life to Keats. Their works are a good example of what happens to natural everyday-life experiences in poetry when they are converted into universal harmony of emotion and thought.

8. IMAGINATION

Romanticism was based on imagination and was a major component of the poetry of both Wordsworth and Keats. It allowed poets to go beyond material world and see the truth. To Wordsworth, imagination was a power that enabled him to perceive nature in a spiritual manner in which he was able to find some divine message in nature forms. It was by the imagination that he discovered a moral and emotional relationship between the human soul and the universe.

Keats considered imagination to be the origin of artistic work and beauty. His genius had turned the world of nature into eternal works of art and feeling. Indicatively, in Ode to a Nightingale, he gets to forget reality and get into a dream world of eternal beauty, provided by his imagination. Therefore, when Wordsworth embraced imagination to find spiritual truths, Keats embraced it in order to achieve the aesthetic and emotional kind of experience that is beyond reality.

9. BEAUTY

Beauty is among the most significant themes of the Romantic poetry especially as it is in the work of John Keats. Beauty to Keats has everlasting and divine qualities; it is truth and perfection. His Ode on a Grecian Urn includes his well-known line, Beauty is truth, truth beauty, which only serves to express his philosophy, which held that beauty is the ultimate kind of knowing. Nature, art, human feeling, everything that fills the soul, everything that opens the senses, he was beautiful.

to Wordsworth, nature was beautiful and divine order as well as spiritual harmony. The ethos of a landscape, a river, or a mountain will arouse emotions of calmness, admiration, and

appreciation. Whereas Keats was more concerned with sensory and artistic beauty, Wordsworth viewed beauty in the moral and spiritual perspective and directed the human heart over purity and meaning.

10. SPIRITUALITY

The theme of spirituality in the Romantic poetry is a strong feeling of unity between the natural world and the soul of the human. The nature-focused thinking of Wordsworth is based on the assumption of the divine power in nature. In many of his works, he tells about moments when in contact with nature, one can find moral understanding, spiritual tranquility, and the sense of infinite. Spirituality to Wordsworth is not restricted to the religious arena, but rather an individual and emotional ordeal based on the nature of the surrounding environment.

The spirituality of Keats, on the contrary, is aesthetic rather than religious. He transcends in beauty and art as opposed to morally considering. His spiritual experiences are occasioned by strong perception of the preciousness of life and his desire to have permanence in the world that is in a state of change. The two poets depict the same spirituality: both seek meaning however, Wordsworth in his works believes in the divine nature of nature, and Keats in his poems admires the beauty and imagination.

11. CONCLUSION

Nature is considered by Wordsworth as a living moral and spiritual entity that is a dominating force that shapes the soul and makes humanity to be one with the divine. In his poems, including Tintern Abbey and The Prelude he expressed his sense of reverence to the power of nature as a teacher, healer and inspiration. To Wordsworth nature is not an object outside the human being but an element of human life -a companion that influences thought and feeling. By means of his poetry, he makes natural beauty a sort of spiritual awakening and moral thoughts.

Contrarily, nature is perceived by Keats as an embodiment of aesthetic excellence and sensual pleasure. His poems such as Ode to a Nightingale, To Autumn are a tribute to the beauty of nature in its richness and color as well as sensuality. The impermanence of the beauty of all things is what has been captivating Keats to the point of exploring the idea of immortality in art. In contrast to the moral spirituality of Wordsworth, the relationship of Keats to nature is artistic, emotional, and sensuous that integrates the real with the ideal in search of everlasting beauty.

The literature review reveals that the two poets put imagination at the center of connectivity into reality and the artistic work. To Wordsworth the natural world becomes spiritualized through imagination and to Keats it is the beauty that is everchanging which will live forever. They also agree that spiritual satisfaction and emotional gratification are also accessible to the two poets because of their experience of communion with nature, but their ways are different the first one through moral reflection and the second one through aesthetic transcendence.

Conclusively, the nature as the subject of poetry in Wordsworth and Keats signifies two aspects of Romanticism as spiritual idealism and aesthetic realism. The vision of Wordsworth is directed to the agreement of man and the God and the vision of Keats praises the unity of the beauty and truth. The combined works put nature in a new context beyond just a poetic subject and brought in the view of nature as an in-depth representation of human thought, imagination and feeling. Their work is still read with admiration by the readers and scholars who are reminded by them that nature with its eternal beauty and mystery is still a constant motivator of poetry and human soul.

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