

The Role of Nature in Romantic Poetry

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Abstract: The debate surrounding romantic poetry often revolves around whether poets use nature as a direct subject or as a metaphorical vehicle for other themes, a topic that ignites fervent discussions among students. This paper examines the role of nature in Romantic poetry through an educational analysis of two iconic poems: Daffodils by William Wordsworth and Ode to the West Wind by Percy Bysshe Shelley. The study delves into the ways in which nature is portrayed in these poems and how it serves as a source of inspiration, reflection, and transcendence for the Romantic poets. The paper also explores the thematic and stylistic elements employed by the poets to convey their deep connection with nature and the profound impact it has on human emotions and experiences. Through this analysis, the paper aims to provide a deeper understanding of the significance of nature in Romantic poetry and its enduring influence on literary and artistic expression, and provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the diverse manifestations of nature in romantic poetry.

[Bhupinder Kaur. **The Role of Nature in Romantic Poetry**. *N Y Sci J* 2025;18(3):11-14]. ISSN 1554-0200 (print); ISSN 2375-723X (online). <http://www.sciencepub.net/newyork>. 02. [doi:10.7537/marsnys180325.02](https://doi.org/10.7537/marsnys180325.02)

Keywords: Romantic poetry; nature; role; education

Introduction:

“Nature” has taken an important and significant role in poetry of different periods of literature and countries of all over the world. Nature is present not only in English literature but also in French, Spanish, Irish, Persian and Urdu poets. But in English literature the critics and poets mainly focus our attention in Wordsworth and Coleridge treatment of the topic of romantic poetical imagination and the vision of nature in romantic imagination. According to Wikipedia, not essential to Romanticism, but so widespread as to be normative, was a solid belief and interest in the importance of Nature. However, this is particularly in the effect of nature upon the artist when the poet is

surrounded by Nature, preferably alone.

Nature has long been a source of inspiration for poets, particularly during the Romantic era. This paper seeks to explore the role of nature in Romantic poetry through an educational analysis of two iconic poems: Daffodils by William Wordsworth and Ode to the West Wind by Percy Bysshe Shelley. Both poems showcase the poets' deep connection to the natural world and their use of nature as a vehicle for expressing profound emotions and ideas. By delving into the themes, imagery, and symbolism of these poems, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the significance of nature in Romantic poetry and its enduring impact on literature and the human

experience.

Romanticism elevated the achievements of what Nature perceived as heroic individualists and artists, who are pioneering examples, would elevate the society. It also legitimized the individual imagination as critical notions of form in the art of literature. There was a strong recourse to historical and natural inevitability, a zeitgeist in the representation of its ideas and feelings. Imagination was originally considered similar to memory as it was thought to mediate the reproductive images of mental realities rather than those of sensory realities that exist in the real materialistic world. This conceptualization highlights some facets of imagination that were developed later when imagination distinguished from memory. This position associates the poetical imagination with mental reality rather than sensory ones. The early distinction between memory and imagination stresses the fact that memory refers to the past while imagination does not. This also emphasizes that imagination cannot be defined in terms of time and place; we can say that it is non-temporal which distinguishes between images that belong to the past compared with images that are associated with imagination and are not from the past. Emotions were also conceptualized as secondary impressions that are received from the actual feeling of things in the real world (Hume, 1978). In Hume's terminology, "impressions" are directly received from the senses and are reproduced as "ideas" under the process of poetical imagination. The interconnection of imagination to the notion of the soul forms one of the main distinguishing characteristics of imagination in romantic English poetry and literature. This interconnection highlights the emergence of the poetic imagination from the poet's soul rather than the poet's mind. The early exploration of the existence of a

connection between soul and imagination conceptualized imagination as a medium of soul and spirit that comes on the part of psychology. In other words, any work that embodies greatness, uncommonality and beauty as the elements of a true creative work according to the judgment of aesthetic taste permeates soul with revelation and newness, which raise unique pleasures in the poetical imagination (Addison, 1712).

Background

Poets and writers in previous eras such as the middle ages and Renaissance period tended to look to God and heaven as the ultimate sources of meaning in human life and also described the role and influence of 'Nature' on human beings' life. The Romantics were more likely to stress man's ideally close connections with 'Nature', or at least with the more beautiful, lovely, aweinspiring, sophisticated and appealing aspects on Nature. Nature is the key central point in the Romantic poetry but the concept of love with it differs from poet to poet. The concept of Wordsworth about Nature especially in the famous poem "Lines Composed Few Miles above Tintern Abbey", we find three different stages of his love with Nature. The main point is that whatever the idea Romantics have about Nature, it is, indeed, clear and comprehensible that they are strongly addicted to it. "Nature" meant many things to the Romantics. As suggested above, it was often presented as itself a work of art, constructed by a divine imagination, in illustrative language (Wuraola, 2011). While fastidious perspectives with regard to nature varied considerably--nature as a healing power for human, nature as a source of subject and image, nature as a refuge from the artificial constructs of civilization in the real materialistic world and , including artificial language--the prevailing views accorded to nature the status of an organically unified

whole. It was viewed as "organic," on the other way side, as in the scientific or rationalist view, as a system of mechanical laws, in the romantic age, for Romanticism displaced the rationalist view of the universe as a machine in the universe with analogue of an "organic" image, a living tree or mankind itself. Simultaneously, Romantics gave greater attention to describing natural phenomena accurately, with clarity and to capturing "sensuous gradation", and this is as true of Romantic landscape painting as of Romantic vision of nature in poetical imagination. Accuracy and correctness of observation, however, was not sought for its own sake. Romantic nature poetry is essentially poetry of meditation and of poetical imagination.

Romantic poets are all fascinated by nature and also fascinated by nature as a kind of vehicle for something else, but there are usually some differences in their views about nature when they described it in their poems. As two outstanding romantic poets, William Wordsworth and Percy Shelly both wrote many poems about nature but presented it in different ways, which captivates every students studying romantic poetry. As a romantic poet in early nineteenth century, also one of Lake Poets, William Wordsworth preferred pure themes and plain language to show nature in his poems[1]. Maybe because Wordsworth Lecture Notes on Language and Literature (2024) Clausius Scientific Press, Canada DOI: 10.23977/langl.2024.070120 ISSN 2523-5869 Vol. 7 Num. 1 124 experienced living in countryside and being friends with nature when he was young, he emphasized the combination of nature and mind and mainly presented the influence of natural scenes on one's inner world to express his complicated spiritual feelings. In his poems, human feelings and natural beauty are often showed in simple, plain, and vivid diction with the application of lower-class people's daily language[2] . Compared to

William Wordsworth, Percy Shelly preferred to express more complicated themes in his poems, in which his knowledge of science, his symbolism, his philosophical and political thoughts were often reflected[3]. Shelly loved nature, and regarded nature as his stage on which he could express his feelings and even ambitions. The language he used to describe nature was more resplendent than Wordsworth. He felt familiar with strange and powerful nature force, and he thought the universe is his real home, so he was given a name of "nature's lover" [4]. Shelly often humanized nature in his poems, because he considered human beings were part of it. And he also often used nature to symbolize other things, which made nature become magic and attractive.

Concept of Nature

The concept of nature was connected to imagination in romantic poetry, stressing the faculty of imagination to get access to a kind of knowledge that cannot be provided by other means the senses or rationally. This concept was initiated and developed only during the Romantic period. Nature's elements discussed as important and significant in developing poetical imagination from a perceptive power to a creative and poetic power in romantic poetry (Zalipour, 2011). The Romantic concept of the connection between nature and imagination explore several facets of creative imagination in English poetry and literature. The researcher says that creative imagination is a source of energy that can regenerate nature in the artistic creation in the form of poetical imagination especially in romantic poetry. This notion associates creative imagination of the poet as being capable of conveying the intuitive and transcendental knowledge in the poem or verses. In a similar stratum, the unifying power of imagination is one of the important features that were only explored and developed in the

Romantic period. The unifying power of imagination is a “synthetic magical power” that reconciles the opposites of two poles and forms a whole (Coleridge, 1817). The significant aspect of imagination as a unifying power is to provide forms of knowledge that are intuitive and subjective.

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2/12/2025