



An Eco-Critical Review Of British Romantic Poetry

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Abstract: Nature and earth has invariably been an outlet for emotions offered to artists and writers as an enormous expanse of indulgence further as submersion. This increased feeling of attachment, loss and immortality towards nature, has typically been mirrored and explored by the poets and novelists that gave them the title of a 'Romantic'. However, once this sense play attention from a vital school of intellectuals, it came to be referred to as inexperienced Studies or Eco-Criticism.

The Romantic poets tried to re-discover the mystery and marvel of the globe, and tried to ascertain a purposeful relationship between literature and nature. To them, nature was the principal supply of inspiration and non-secular enlightenment. Wordsworth is taken into account to be the representative of the movement. He celebrates the wonder and mystery of nature in a number of his most noted lyrics, including 'Michael' that portrays a simple shepherd who is deeply connected to the natural world around him. He viewed nature as a living entity blessed with feeling and purpose. The poetry of Coleridge, John Keats, and Shelly conjointly enclosed emotional descriptions of the natural world and opt a number of the most effective far-famed nature verse in English.

Keywords: Ecology, Nature, Poetry, Criticism, Romantic

Eco criticism, also known as environmental criticism and green criticism, is a rapidly emerging field of literary study that considers the relationship that human beings have to the environment. Eco criticism is a broad way for literary and cultural scholars to investigate the global ecological crisis through the intersection of literature, culture, and the physical environment. Eco criticism originated as an idea called "literary ecology" (Meeker, 1972). Eco criticism expanded as a widely used literary and cultural theory by the early 1990s with the formation of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment. Eco criticism is often used as a wide-ranging term for any aspect of the humanities e.g.,

media, film, philosophy, and history addressing ecological issues, but it primarily functions as a literary and cultural theory. Eco criticism has been divided into 'waves' to historicize the movement in an exceedingly clear trajectory. The 'first wave' of eco criticism tended to take a dehistoricized approach to nature, usually dominating a lot of political and theoretical dimensions and tending towards a social function approach of wild and nature writing. The "second wave" of eco criticism expanded to include new approaches to literary analysis, such as theorising and dissecting humanist scholarship in eco studies, as well as concepts such as agency for plants and animals, gender and race as ecological issues, imperialism and ecological degradation, and scale-related issues. The 'third wave' advocates for a worldwide understanding of eco crucial follow through issues like global warming; it combines components from the first and second waves but aims to move on the far side American prominence.

The discovery of a new dimension for nature writing at the end of the 20th century caused a paradigm change in literary studies. Prior to it, historical, psychological, or socio-centric issues were defended by modern criticism. With the publication of two seminal works- Environmental Imagination and Eco criticism Reader, each in 1996, an innovative theory observed as eco-criticism came out as an academic discipline. Nature writing prevailed long before eco-criticism came into existence and it got its momentum throughout the Romantic Age once most of the poets wrote exploitation the framework of "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". (Lyrical Ballads, 2003) Being discontented with the encircling world, the Romantic poets looked back to the fantastic ages of the past and search imputes for writings once their imagination got recollected in tranquillity. Thus its nature and its quintessence that became a crucial nexus for the romantics. The foundation of eco-criticism are found in the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelly and many other poets of the romantic age.

Jonathan Bate's influential study Romantic Ecology: 'Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition' was among the first to examine the ecological elements of British Romanticism, arguing that Wordsworth articulated a powerful and enduring vision of human integration with nature. (Jonathan Bate, 1991) William Wordsworth together of the foremost English Romantic poets, is taken into account as a key icon of eco critical studies, attributable to his observation points and belief towards the purposeful relationship between Nature and human's treatment of Nature. It's a well-known, William Wordsworth saw Nature as superior to mankind, and his aspiration to attach the long-lost kinship and unity between human and Nature. Together of the primary ecologist Wordsworth's works of literature stress human's dependence of Nature; Nature as a source of knowledge, life teacher, and more necessary than educational attempts to grasp the planet we tend to reside in. His poetic volumes are packed with striking passages on Nature or its objects. His great poem entitled "The Prelude" is considered to be his autobiography in verse. It is a long poem divided into fourteen books. In it he represents himself chiefly as a poet of Nature and Man. In The Prelude, Book I he tells Coleridge that in his childhood, he was super-sensitive to every impact of nature. The gentle breeze affected him as if his heart were an Aeolian harp. His love for Nature was actually a passion. Thomas De Quincey traces the roots of his passion for Nature in his blood and remarks, "Wordsworth had his passion for Nature fixed in his blood. It was a

necessity of his being, like that of a mulberry leaf to the silk-worm, and through his commerce with Nature did he live and breathe."(Thomas De Quincey, 1950)

In Tintern Abbey and The Prelude, Wordsworth gives us the impression that his love for Nature had passed through four stages. At the first stage, he got a delight from walking, bathing, basking and leaping in the lap of nature, like:

A naked savage, in the thunder shower. (The Prelude, Book I, 1969)

At this stage he was a child of five or ten years. At the second stage, the outward appearances of Nature began to fill him with delight. It happened when he was a teenager and at school. At that time the beauty of Nature began to attract him for its own sake. He writes:

And all that I beheld

Was dear, and hence to finer influxes

The mind lay open to a more exact

And close communion... (The Prelude, Book II, 1969)

The third stage occurred years later but during the same school days. What happened was that his love for Nature turned into a kind of religious love. An auxiliary light would emanate from his own mind, and bestow new beauty upon the objects of Nature. To use own words:

An auxiliary light

Come from my mind, which on the setting sun

Bestowed new splendour, the melodious birds,

The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on

Murmuring so sweetly in themselves storm

Grew darker in the presence of my eye. (The Prelude, Book II, 1969)

The fourth stage began from such absorptions. And he began to attain a state which did not take any help or colour from his imagination or thoughts. The state filled him with:

.....a feeling and a love

That had no need of a remoter charm

By thought supplied, nor any interest

Unborrowed from the eye.... (Tintern Abbey, 1958)

Gradually the fourth stage reached its maturity, when his soul began to see the soul of nature.

A critic observes that Wordsworth is remarkable for the highly religious quality he gives to his interpretation of Nature. But William Blake and later many other critics questioned the validity of his spiritual interpretation of Nature. Those who believe in the supremacy of the human mind regard Nature as something inferior to the mind of man. So they attach no value to his spiritual interpretation. But the latest trend considers the human mind part of Nature. According to it, we think because our mind is in harmony with Nature. The Vedanta also approves of Wordsworth's spiritual interpretation of Nature. In all modesty we agree with his conception of Nature. J.C. Bose has proved that plants have life. Long before him, Wordsworth had written:

And 'tis my faith that every flower

Enjoys the air it breathes. (Lines Written in Early Spring, 1958)

William Wordsworth looks at Nature as worshipper. In Tintern Abbey he recalls that he perceives a universal soul in Nature. Then in a poem published in 1809, he virtually identifies the Soul of Nature with God. Addressing it, he writes:

Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe!

Thou Soul, that art the Eternity of thought!

And giv'st to forms and images a breath

And everlasting motion! not in vain. (Influence of Natural Objects, 2009)

Thus his conception of Nature is that it is permeated by a Universal Soul which is the first principal of life, intelligence, and motion in the universe. Presumably such soul is also the creator, the ruler, and the destroyer of the universe and its objects.

As a poet of Man, Wordsworth is essentially a poet of the poor who live in the lap of Nature. In many of his poems he has represented characters who are shepherds, dales men, wandering pedlars, cottage men, peasants, workers etc. All of them live in the heart of Nature. For example, Michael, the hero of a long poem after his name, is an old shepherd. In Resolution and Independence, the leech-gatherer is also a poor rustic. He is dwarfed in body. But he is a giant by grandeur of his nature. Besides, Wordsworth has also represented the simple life of gypsies, idiots, peasants, salesmen, and other sons of Nature. His intention has been to show the essential elements of human nature in them, their desires are little. And their emotions have been represented as pure and their hearts, full of innocence, fortitude, and moral strength. Thus, Wordsworth's greatness as a poet are the huge bulk of his poetry, his high seriousness, his sincere sympathy with man, his mystical pantheism, the healing power of his poetry, and the simplicity and naturalness of his poetic style. Matthew Arnold observes, "I firmly believe that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan Age to the present time." (Matthew Arnold, 1865)

Like Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge also is a great lover and close observer of Nature. He sees minutely the landscapes, the sky cape, the colours, the elements and beauties of Nature. The moon is his most favourite friend and occurs nearly in all his poems. Almost all of his poems he shows respect and praises the beauties of the natural world from an eco centric perspective. Coleridge's landscapes are always humanized. "The Landscape," says S.G. Dunn, "is always seen through the human atmosphere." (S.G. Dunn, 1918) Even in the supernatural poems the loveliness is never unearthly, and we are always in the presence of:

Love, and the thoughts yearn for humankind. (Fears in Solitude, 1989)

The harmony between Nature and human being is also present in the outlook towards Nature. His characters look at Nature from their own angles, so does the poet look at Nature according to his varying moods.

The following pen picture of the poem in the "Ode to Dejection" reveals the brush of the painter behind the pen of the poet. The picture is remarkable for its minuteness and accuracy of observation and vividness of presentation:

And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars

That give away their motion to the stars;

Those stars, that glides behind them or between,

Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen;

You crescent moon, as fixed as if it grew

In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue. (Dejection: An Ode, 2012)

In *The Ancient Mariner*, we have the pictures of the sun shining brightly at the outset, the mist and fog surrounding the ship, the icebergs green as emerald, the white moon shining through the white fog, the broad bright sun resting upon the western waves, the stars rushing out immediately after sunset etc. The nature description of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* are at once accurate, imaginative and of wide range. Their range extends from the quiet scenery of a country wood to the fierce scenery of the tropics, and to that of the polar zone.

Since Coleridge always wrote about supernatural objects, he wove a web of mystery round his descriptions of Nature also. In *Kubla Khan*, for example, the romantic chasm is given a very mysterious look with a reference to the demon-lover. The opening lines of *Christabel* that describe the hooting of an owl at midnight strike a note of mystery by just mentioning that, disturbed by the hooting of the owl, the cock starts crowing drowsily. The thin grey cloud covering the sky and the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree overgrows with moss and with just one leaf hanging on its topmost twig have a definite uncanny air about them. The description of the ice in the polar region and the intense heat in the tropics in *The Ancient Mariner*. Thus, his sensitiveness to Nature was twofold: in the first place, he noticed in the objects and movements of nature evanescent and minute details, in the second place, he often felt in himself moods induced by nature, but yet subjective; Coleridge would not be thought of as a poet of Nature except in so far as describes what he observes in the way of record or gives a metaphysical interpretation to phenomena.

John Keats is a major figure in Romantic Movement. He principally talks regarding mortality and diversion from the fact through natural beauties. He relates his literary practices within the quality of human life and also the subjects that outline human condition. Keats in his poetry invariably relates his urgency to be immortal to relish the wonder of the world. However, he dies in a very young age. As he says in his literary work "Ode on a Grecian Urn" that art hold the time forever. His poetry can invariably holds his idea of life and expression of beauty. Keats concepts and thoughts will simply be connected with the thought of eco-criticism. His literature is usually connected with the character and also the human condition. Mortality, death, sex and transience of life of these things are the topics of his poetry. The idea he principally talks regarding is that the mortality/immortality. In the selected literary work he talks regarding life and death moreover because the immortality of art. He typically associated with the term love in his poetry he principally talks regarding the character and its relation with individual.

Keats began some of his early poems with a powerful description of Nature. The beginning indicates that the poet had a keen sensuous perception of the objects of Nature. He was endowed with a very lively sensibility and his observation and presentation have a truthfulness. 'Sleep and Poetry,' his first serious attempt, begins with the following lines:

What is more gentler than a wind in summer?

What is more soothing than the pretty hummer

That stays one moment in an open flower

And buzzes cheerily from bower to bower? (Sleep and Poetry, 1946)

He describes sleep and the charm of sleep but he cannot do it without seeking help from Nature. Thus he brings in 'poppy buds and weeping willows'. His poem 'I Stood Tip-toe Upon a Little Hill' also begins with a pretty detail of a little hill with sweet buds, tapering stems and the pure and white clouds. The poet observes birds and beasts also and gives us a dramatic presentation. In the views of Keats people generally prefer Spring and find no beauty in Autumn. But Keats observes fruitfulness, richness and melody in Autumn. The first stanza of his 'Ode to Autumn' is rich in fruitfulness. It seems Autumn has conspired with the maturing sun to load and bless with fruit and vines, and

To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,

And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;

To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells

With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,

And still more, later flower for the bees. (Ode to Autumn, 1985)

The poet describes that the Autumn season combines with the sun to load the apple trees that grow near the cottages with a good load of apple, ripen all the fruits wholly, to make the gourd large and fat and to plump the hazel-shells with a sweet kernel. Again this season conspire with the sun to bloom more and more flowers so that the honey-bees may think that Summer will always be there and they have already filled their honey-combs up to the brim.

Keats also presents Nature as a background for human emotions and feelings. Human life is presented in the cyclic order of Nature as in his sonnet 'Four Seasons Fill the Measures of the Year'. He believes that there is permanence and immortality in Nature while human life is mortal and transient. In his 'Ode to a Nightingale,' he clearly tells us that youth grows pale and a beautiful woman cannot maintain her charms beyond the next day. On the other hand, the beauty of Nature will go on forever. Thus, the poetry of Keats shows that the presence of nature and human life are united along and their relationship is certain by the natural forces driven naturally. So, human existence is seen as an area of the entire ecosystem. It shouldn't derived from the thought that we humans aren't the pivot of everything however a part of an outsized ecosphere.

Eco criticism is an interdisciplinary science, which involves biology, geography, physics and other scientific knowledge. It is committed to changing the asymmetry between man and nature,

unbalanced status and the mentality of human arrogance, and makes the planet truly become a home for all of life. However, in the context of the worsening global ecology, ecological criticism has been very positive in improving the ecological consciousness of contemporary people, changing people's way of life, making it towards a healthier, more rational paradigm shift in the process. And in this process Romantic poets contributed a lot that depicts in their poetry. William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge and John Keats presents the serious issues of the environmental crisis. The author present us with an ecological critique of the dire consequences that human influence has on Nature and through their poetry they tried to spread awareness towards Nature. Therefore, the Romantic Poetry plays a very important role in eco criticism and nature preservation.

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