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A Study on Conception of Nature in William Wordsworth's Poetry

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ABSTRACT
This Paper aims at studying the conception of nature in William Wordsworth's poetry. As one of the remarkable representatives of the romantic period, William Wordsworth played an incomparable significant role in the development of English romantic poetry, and also laid a foundation for its further development. Influenced by social background and personal experience, Wordsworth's natural poetry broke through the shackles of neoclassical literature and gradually formed his own unique conception of nature. Wordsworth's conception of nature was based on the relationship between man and nature, and it emphasized the role of nature in social life and spiritual redemption. By analyzing the relationship between man and nature and constantly seeking the essence of life in nature, the poet attempted to find a way to solve human's problems. Although there have been a lot of researches on Wordsworth and his poetry, there are few studies that systematically analyze the conception of nature in William Wordsworth's poems by integrating his natural poetry into a whole. Based on William Wordsworth's personal experience and social background, this thesis attempts to analyze the causes of the formation of Wordsworth's conception of nature. Through the careful interpretation of Wordsworth's natural poetry, this thesis summarizes his conception of nature and its characteristics. It was found that in William Wordsworth's natural poems, nature was the unity of human nature, rational nature and divine nature, and the combination of the three was the highest attribute sought by human beings. Mastering these characteristics is of great reference values for the study of romantic natural poetry and Wordsworth's conception of nature.
Keywords: conception, creation, influence, literature, nature, poetry, relationship, romantic

1.INTRODUCTION

William Wordsworth（1770-1850) was one of the main founders of English romantic poetry. From 1843 to 1850, William Wordsworth was regarded as the "Poet Laureate". This remarkable poet was born in the Lake District, and William Wordsworth always believed that he was fortunate to be born there. Unlike other famous English romantic poets, he enjoyed a short but happy childhood under the tender care of his mother. Unfortunately, his mother died when Wordsworth was only eight years old. Unable to bear the shock of his wife's death, Wordsworth's father passed away five years later. This tragic experience greatly influenced his later works. Of his five siblings, William Wordsworth had the best relationship with his youngest sister Dorothy, and she played a crucial role in his literature creation. After losing their parents, William Wordsworth and his siblings were sent off by their relatives to a grammar school at Hawkshead, and it was there that Wordsworth received an excellent education in art, literature, and mathematics. He showed a keen interest in the creation of poetry.

After graduated from grammar school, Wordsworth attended St. John's College at Cambridge University (from 1787 to 1790). He always returned to his hometown and to nature during his winter and summer vacations. Before graduating from Cambridge, he traveled to several Europe countries in 1790. It was an experience which influenced both on his poetry creation and political sensibilities.

The experience of living in French inspired Wordsworth's interests and sympathies for the common people. It was also the source of his latter works. And these works proved to be the most important works that influence Wordsworth's literature career. After taking his Cambridge degree, he returned to France in 1791 and fell in love with a French woman, Annette Vallon. Unfortunately, William Wordsworth had to return to England before his little baby was born.

The war between England and France was a trigger for Wordsworth's separation from his daughter and wife. It was not until his precious daughter Caroline was nine years old that Wordsworth met her for the first time. Those days back in England were the darkest moment of Wordsworth's whole life. Wordsworth lived in London and he had nothing to do but to express his deep sympathy for beggars, children, farmers and other people who lived at the bottom of the society. At the same time, Wordsworth studied numerous literary works of his contemporaries and analyzed their writing methods and styles. This also laid a good literary foundation for him to create his unique

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conception of nature. Wordsworth's first two poems, Descriptive Sketches and An Evening Walk, were published in 1793. And after that, he wrote several pieces over the next many years. In 1797, Wordsworth moved to Alfoxden House with his sister Dorothy. While living in there, Wordsworth made the acquaintance of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Equally significant thing in his poetic life was his meeting with Coleridge. And their lifelong friendship began at that time. They were the intimate friend and partner, and their partnership not only changed poet's personal life but also altered the path of English poetry. During this period, Wordsworth and Coleridge greatly improved and inspired each other's poetry. In 1798, the two poets joined together to publish the first edition of Lyrical Ballads, which was an excellent collection of poems, and it was regarded by many contemporary poets as a declaration of the Romantic Era. After their first time successful collaboration, the second edition was published in 1800.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The development of English romantic poetry could not be separated from Wordsworth's contribution. William Wordsworth published numerous poems which were strongly characterized by his incredible fascination of nature. Even these poems had been published more than 200 years ago, the ideas and concepts the poet formulated are still shared by many scholars, in particular in current times of progressing globalization, population explosion, and environmental pollution. Based on Wordsworth's passionate, authentic and remarkable way of illustrating nature's beauty and grandeur, this thesis will analyze and interpret selected poems to show Wordsworth's appreciation of nature as well as the characteristics of William Wordsworth's conception of nature.

As one of the founders of English romantic poetry, William Wordsworth's works has an important reference function for the study of English romantic literature. In this thesis, there is a study on William Wordsworth's poetry and his conception of nature, which is helpful to grasp the English romantic literature as a whole.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

Nature, as a traditional theme of literary writing, had taken its' place for a long time. It was prevailed especially during Britain romantic period. William Wordsworth was known as the representative of naturalism. Since his numerous poems took nature as the research object, he was also called "the son of nature" and "the nature poet" by Shelly and other romanticists. His poems described nature's beauty, and he claimed that mankind could gain wisdom and spiritual redemption from it. As one of representative figures of romantic movement, Wordsworth was often chosen by domestic and overseas scholars as the primary target for the study of the romantic movement. In Wordsworth's poems, the poet gave a deep thought to the behavior of human beings in pillaging natural resources and destroying the environment. The degeneration of human nature was also one of themes that the poet concerned about. And all these thoughts could be reflected from Wordsworth's poem Lucy Gray. In Wordsworth's poems, there existed the bright moon, fawns, hares, and any excellent things you could imagine. With the most common language and simple words, William Wordsworth described the pretty Lucy and her hometown-nature. William Wordsworth regarded little Lucy as the roses of June, which was pure, beautiful and flowery. The roses of the June were the most excellent gift for William Wordsworth, and he concerned that the excessive greed of human beings would make this beautiful thing suddenly disappeared from the world. In Wordsworth's poem I Travelled among Unknown Men, the poet wrote that "And she cherished turned her wheel, Beside an English fire" (1801). It was known to all that the textile machine was the symbol of the industrial revolution, and this poem revealed that the fruits of the industrial revolution have been deeply integrated into people's daily life. Lucy was the symbol of the nature, but Lucy was finally dead in England. For William Wordsworth, Lucy's death was the severest revenge of the nature, and the industrial revolution and human beings were the real murderers William Wordsworth was the spokesman of the nature. Human beings' greedy made him angry and he wanted to use poems to express his own indictment of human evil.

The over-exploitation of nature would eventually make man lose all hope. But William Wordsworth also had a glimmer of hope for nature. His love of nature prompted him to write poems to call people to care the nature. Human beings not only needed to concern their own interests but also the benefits of the next generations. William Wordsworth was convinced that the relationship between man and nature was intimate and indivisible, so his poems expressed his love of nature, his strong criticism of the destruction of nature and his desires to construct a harmonious society. His theories of nature also took many realistic enlightenment to modern life. With the rapid development of contemporary society and the increasingly tense relationship between mankind and nature, we should pay more attention to the significant of nature environment than economy. Adhere to the rational development and construct a harmonious ecological environment is very necessary, and which was illustrated in Wordsworth's works 200 years ago.

Conception of Nature

The Characteristics of Wordsworth's Conception of Nature William Wordsworth is regarded as one of pioneers of romanticism natural poetry. Wordsworth calls poetry "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling", and he

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is praised by Shelly as "a singer of nature". "Nature" is the central theme of Wordsworth's poetry. In the majority of William Wordsworth's poems, nature is the main element. It is proper to say that William Wordsworth is nature's spokesman in the romantic period. 4.1. Human Nature During the period of romanticism, nature was the significant theme which captured scholar's attention. William Wordsworth had a unique feeling for nature, which laid the foundation for him to become a master of natural poetry. For William Wordsworth, nature was like his mother, his teacher, his friend and his lover. Nature was the representative of perfect humanity.

Nature nourished and soothed the human mind, and provided pleasure and education. William Wordsworth's reflections on human nature began at an early age. After Wordsworth's mother died, Wordsworth's life was surrounded by the darkness. In William Wordsworth's view, nature was the creation of God. It was not only the landscape which opposite to the human world, but also the pure natural environment created by God before the birth of human beings. William Wordsworth believed that only by returning to nature could people possess divine human nature. Nature was the embodiment of perfect human nature. So the people who were perfectly human in his poems were common rural people who were close to nature. Most of these lonely people wandered in the wildness. In William Wordsworth's view, these marginal figures who were regarded as useless figures in the eyes of the world had rich connotations in the spiritual world. He claimed that these rural people who were isolated geographically from the polluted city lived an idyllic life. They were free from the interference of the civilized society.

William Wordsworth as a Poet of Nature

As a poet of Nature, Wordsworth stands supreme. He is a worshipper of Nature, Nature's devotee or high-priest. His love of Nature was probably truer, and more tender, than that of any other English poet, before or since. Nature comes to occupy in his poem a separate or independent status and is not treated in a casual or passing manner as by poets before him. Wordsworth had a full-fledged philosophy, a new and original view of Nature. Wordsworth believed that we can learn more of man and of moral evil and good from Nature than from all the philosophies.

In his eyes, "Nature is a teacher whose wisdom we can learn, and without which any human life is vain and incomplete."

He believed in the education of man by Nature. In this he was somewhat influenced by Rousseau. This inter-relation of Nature and man is very important in considering Wordsworth's view of both. Cazamian, a noted critic, says that

"To Wordsworth, Nature appears as a formative influence superior to any other, the educator of senses and mind alike, the sower in our hearts of the deep-laden seeds of our feelings and beliefs. It speaks to the child in the fleeting emotions of early years, and stirs the young poet to an ecstasy, the glow of which illuminates all his work and dies of his life." Three points in his creed of Nature may be noted: (a) He conceived of Nature as a living Personality. He believed that there is a divine spirit pervading all the objects of Nature. This belief in a divine spirit pervading all the objects of Nature may be termed as mystical Pantheism and is fully expressed in Tintern Abbey and in several passages in Book II of The Prelude. (b) Wordsworth believed that the company of Nature gives joy to the human heart and he looked upon Nature as exercising a healing influence on sorrow-stricken hearts. (c) Above all, Wordsworth emphasized the moral influence of Nature. He spiritualised Nature and regarded her as a great moral teacher, as the best mother, guardian and nurse of man, and as an elevating influence. He believed that between man and Nature there is mutual consciousness, spiritual communion or 'mystic intercourse'. He initiates his readers into the secret of the soul's communion with Nature. According to him, human beings who grow up in the lap of Nature are perfect in every respect. Wordsworth's attitude to Nature can be clearly differentiated from that of the other great poets of Nature. He did not prefer the wild and stormy aspects of Nature like Byron, or the shifting and changeful aspects of Nature and the scenery of the sea and sky like Shelley, or the purely sensuous in Nature like Keats. It was his special characteristic to concern himself, not with the strange and remote aspects of the earth, and sky, but Nature in her ordinary, familiar, everyday moods. He did not recognize the ugly side of Nature 'red in tooth and claw' as Tennyson did. Wordsworth stressed upon the moral influence of Nature and the need of man's spiritual discourse with her.

3.CONCLUSION

Wordsworth childhood was spent in close proximity of Nature. So, since his childhood, he developed a love for Nature. As a child, he enjoyed all the objects of Nature from flowing rivers, dancing flowers, green trees to huge beautiful mountains and thus he fell in love with Nature. In the poem, Tintern Abbey, Wordsworth traces the development of his love for Nature. Fist nature was a playground for him when he was a child, later on in his youth, he was attracted towards Nature for its sensuous beauty, and finally in his later life, his love for Nature acquired a spiritual and intellectual character and played the role of a teacher and guide in his life. In The Prelude, he records dozens of these natural scenes, not for themselves but for what his mind could learn through.

Thus we see that Wordsworth's love for Nature is totally different from other poets. He did not prefer the wild and stormy aspects of Nature like Lord Byron or Shelley. He also did not love Nature for its sensuousness like John

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Keats. He loved Nature for its ordinary, familiar and everyday moods. He did not recognize the ugly side of Nature but stressed only upon the moral influence of Nature. In short we can say that Nature was the source of all joy for Wordsworth. Nature for him was a living personality just like a teacher, a guide and a nurse.

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