

Preface to the Lyrical Ballads

by William Wordsworth

What is Preface to the Lyrical Ballads

Preface to the Lyrical Ballads Key Points

Wordsworth's definition of poetry:

- Theory of Poetry or Poetic process: Recollection, Contemplation
- Renewal of the original emotion, and Composition
- The aim and function of poetry:
- The subject matter of poetry:
- Wordsworth's use of common-man's language
- Wordsworth's concept of a poet
- Conclusion with Notes PDF

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Summary
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Aristotle Concept of Epic in
his Book Poetics Explained...

Key facts about preface to the lyrical ballads

Full title: preface to the lyrical ballads

When written: 1800-1802

Where written: grasmere, england

When published: 1800 (2nd ed.), 1802 (3rd ed.)

Lyrical ballads- a collection of 23 poems

William wordsworth(19) + S.T coleridge (4)

Four publication of lyrical ballads

1798 1800 1802 1805

Experiment

Purpose of writing a poetry

Literary period: romantic

Genre: essay, manifesto

Antagonist: late-neoclassical writers

Point of view: first person

Purpose of writing a poetry
Lecture by Uffaq Zahra

Outline:

Nature of poetry, function of poetry and Qualities of a true poet "is the Spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings "that "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility". Emotion and Feelings are more important

Theory of poetry

1.Observation

2. Recollection

3. Filtration

4.Composition

Imagination

Function of poetry Art for the sake of art v/s Art for the sake of life

Poetry and Prose are identical

Avoid poetic diction and abstract ideas

Favor Rhyme and meter

Poetry superior to science



Preface to the Lyrical Ballads Summary and Analysis:

William Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads" which was penned in association with S.T Coleridge turned out to be a milestone work in the history of English literature. In his "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" Wordsworth propounds his concept of poetry, the subject and theme of poetry, the purpose and function of poetry, and the language fitted for poetry. Wordsworth's ideas have changed the outlook of English literature in the 19th century and also announced the romantic period in the true sense.

Wordsworth's definition of poetry:

The definition that Wordsworth put forward in 1802 is crucial, he says: "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling, it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility..." (William Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads). From Wordsworth's definition of poetry, it is comprehensible that poetry is a subject of imagination and motivation. Poetry develops from the passion and emotion of the poet. Poetry's starting point is the emotions in the heart, not the reason of intellect. The foundational aspects of poetry are passion and emotion. Without these fundamental aspects, good poetry cannot be composed. The insistence on imagination, feeling, passion, and emotion is an explicit withdrawal from the neoclassical emphasis on "reason" and "objectivity".



Poetic process or Theory of poetry: According to Wordsworth, four stages are needed to complete a poetic process:

- Recollection
- Contemplation
- Renewal of the original emotion, and
- Composition

At the outset, the poet observes certain things, characters, or circumstances. It creates forceful feelings and emotions in the poet's mind. Then he lets these emotions bog down together with the sensation which it has stirred. After this, in the second stage, there will be recollection or remembrance of those emotions and sensations in tranquility and contemplated upon. There might be a gap of many years between the initial or primary sense of emotions and the contemplation of it. The emotions of the first phase hang in the mind of the poet until the unwanted emotions, which were random and secondary, precipitated. After contemplation, the initial or primary emotions and sensations get purified and filtered and what is left is considered as universal and all-important truth. The primary or initial impression has now been got rid of unneeded material. At this stage, memory plays a crucial role. This whole procedure works very slowly but it is only by way of such a procedure of "purification" that the personal feelings are reformed into the universal. The emotions that are left after contemplation are different from the emotions that a poet received in the first stage. The word that Wordsworth emphasizes here is "kindred". Wordsworth said that the emotions which are generated at the beginning and the emotions that are created after contemplation are both related but not identical because there is a filtration or purification of emotions. Therefore, at this moment of creation, 'tranquility' is no more there. It has been substituted by emotional excitement. The creative process at this stage carries with it pleasure, indeed "an overbalance of pleasure" as Wordsworth puts it. In this process of creativity, the mind is, altogether, in a state of pleasure and delight. The job of the poet is to share this pleasure and delight with his readers to communicate at an elevated level than other men.

The aim and function of poetry:

Wordsworth says that the purpose of poetry is to convey pleasure. But this pleasure is not superficial, trivial enjoyment that we get, for example, by watching rope dancing. Instead Wordsworth wished that with his poetry, he would be able to “console the afflicted”. The pleasure of poetry elevates and edifies readers.

The subject matter of poetry:

William Wordsworth states that his content has been events and circumstances from daily life. And he has associated them with a language really used by common man, simultaneously casting over them a shade of imagination. Wordsworth provides certain objectives for his choice of subject matter from common and rural life.

Human emotions and passions mature well in rustic and rural life.

The elementary emotions and feelings of the human heart correspond in a state of significant simplicity in the rustic and common situations of life.

In common and rural conditions of life, human emotions are contained with the pleasing and lasting shape of nature i.e., outer nature, and therefore the emotions are elevated and lasting than those of polished and aristocratic people of cities.

The attitude and behavior of the rustic people develop from those of elementary passions and feelings, which are more simply comprehensible and more permanent.

In short, Wordsworth’s explanation is that in the rustic and common situations of life “the elementary feelings” from an alliance with nature are unsophisticated, easy to comprehend, and simple.



Wordsworth's use of common-man's language

Wordsworth had used the common people's language after filtering it of rough expressions, out-of-order syntax, and other flaws.

Wordsworth has favored the common man language because common people live together and are always in contact with nature from which the greatest and the best portion of human language originally evolved. In addition, because the humble and rural people have a very low probability of connecting with cities, rustic people do not have a vanity in their language. They convey their sentiment and emotions by way of easy, uncomplicated, and basic expressions. Thus, their language is more intense, more authentic, and more vigorous.



Wordsworth's concept of a poet:

Wordsworth says that a poet should be a “man speaking to men”. The poet's foremost purpose should be communication. A poet should not write for his own fulfillment and delight but should share his ideas and emotions with his readers. Wordsworth says that the poet is distinct from common living persons not in kind, but in the standard and degree to which he owns certain qualities.

A poet is a person who has a higher sensibility in contrast to common human beings. A more active sensibility assists him to respond more firmly to outer impressions. Accordingly, his emotions and feelings are more passionate.

The imaginative power of a poet is greatly higher than that of other ordinary human beings. It allows him to expand his range of emotions. He can experience and react to those feelings that he has not personally confronted.

The poet possesses a more comprehensive soul compared to other common living persons. He portrays the passions and feelings of other human beings sharply.

The poet, thus, has the gifts of imagination, sensibility, fancy, observation, and judgment. Later William Wordsworth included that a poet should also acquire sincerity as well. By sincerity, Wordsworth intended that the poet should labor hard to revise his poem so as to obtain artistic simplicity and coherence. He should take pains to convey himself in unequivocal terms. Therefore, we can say that Wordsworth was not completely unsighted to the necessity of artistic finish.



Conclusion:

Wordsworth himself applied his own concept of poetic composition to write poetry. Wordsworth never wrote poetry immediately after he came across any sensation or situation. He used to give time to his sensations to bog down his mind, and as he asserts in his theory Wordsworth contemplates those emotions later in tranquility and composes poems. His well-known poems “The Tintern Abbey,” “The Solitary Reaper,” “The Daffodils” were written according to his theory of poetic composition.



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