

# THE FORMATION OF ENGLISH ROMANTIC POETRY IN THE WORKS OF SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE AND WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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## **Abstract:**

This article discusses the contribution and influence of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, the founders of the early English Romantic period, to the development of English poetry. The study also provides some insights into the impact of the environment on the growth of their thinking.

**Key words:** Lake School, German idealist philosophy, neoclassical theory, Romantic movement, *Biographia Literaria*,

The Lake School poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, who made important contributions to the founding of the Romantic period in English literature, jointly studied the mythology of the Eastern world and wrote unique poems with oriental motifs. Their co-authored *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) marked the beginning of the English romantic movement, while Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817) was a topical work on the general literary environment of the English Romantic period.

Coleridge has his own readers with his poems like *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), *Kubla Khan* (1816), and *Christabel* (1797-1800). His critical essays, especially those devoted to Shakespeare's work, were written with great skill, and he took important steps in bringing German idealist philosophy into English folklore culture. About him Professor M. Kholbekov writes: "Samuel Taylor Coleridge is not only a brilliant poet, but also a literary critic known as the ideological leader of English Romantic poetry. He has also conducted research in the fields of oratory, literature, art, philosophy, politics, and the natural sciences, particularly biology and medicine. Therefore, he knew both the reasons for the radical turn of European civilization and the crisis, as well as the current factors in its development" .

The poet's adolescence was marked by anxiety and depression. Perhaps the reason for the incomprehensible events that took place in his life was also related to this. As a child, he suffered from a number of illnesses and grew up physically weak. Instead of "enjoying children's games," he writes "constantly" reading and playing with himself. From an early age, Coleridge fell in love with books and was immersed in a fantasy world influenced by Oriental legends such as *A Thousand and One Nights*.

Some sources about him confirm that he was interested in oriental images, historical figures and legends. For example, in one of a series of autobiographical letters he wrote to his friend Thomas Poole, Coleridge says: “At six years old I remember to have read Belisarius, Robinson Crusoe, and Philip Quarll - and then I found the Arabian Nights' Entertainments - one tale of which (the tale of a man who was compelled to seek for a pure virgin) made so deep an impression on me (I had read it in the evening while my mother was mending stockings) that I was haunted by spectres whenever I was in the dark – and I distinctly remember the anxious and fearful eagerness with which I used to watch the window in which the books lay — and whenever the sun lay upon them, I would seize it, carry it by the wall, and bask, and read” . During his college years, Coleridge was also devoted to reading books, especially philosophy and myths. That is why his peers recognized his eloquence and strong memory.

The spiritual and political conspiracies surrounding the French Revolution led to topical and heated debates about the life of society. Coleridge began to devise a plan of action against the evil forces that had thwarted the ideas of the French Revolution. To this end, he realized the need to build a small self-governing society and educate children on high principles, unlike the old system. His alliance with Robert Southey led the poet to devise a “pantisocracy” plan and form an association along the Susquehanna River. To this end, Coleridge left the university and began working as a public counselor with Southey in Bristol. In Bristol in 1795, two friends married sisters Sarah and Edith Fricker , but Coleridge, who had agreed to the wedding on Southey’s advice, did not live happily with Sarah. Shortly afterwards, Southey abandoned the idea of pantisocracy and ended his career with Coleridge, with whom he had begun working together. After this friend’s blow, he was in a sense never able to fully take control of his personal life.

In 1795, Coleridge met the poet William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy. Here, in addition to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, he began writing the first part of *Kubla Khan* and *Christabel*. The oriental poem *Kubla Khan* is dedicated to the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan and his legendary palace Xanadu. He strengthened ties with Wordsworth and jointly explored the factors of human thinking. The two friends simultaneously stepped into the busiest creative period of English literature. Coleridge's belief in the power of “life consciousness” in all individuals and his intellect inspired the depressed Wordsworth and paved the way for new ideas that helped in the writing of the *Lyrical Ballads*, published in 1798.

The growing romanticization of Coleridge's works is mainly observed in the later mature period of the poet's work. During this period, the poet understands nature in harmony with God and strives for perfection in his works. It also attracts a branch of Gnosticism, i.e., Monism, which brings it closer to Eastern religious thought. According to the teachings of Monism, understanding the world is an expression of the fierce struggle of the forces of good and evil, the symbolism of the contrast between light and darkness, death and life. The poet's *What is Life* in poetry this symbolic meaning is expressed. A similar philosophical mood is embedded in the images of the oriental poem *Kubla Khan*.

He relied on Spinoza’s philosophy in creating his theory of romanticism. The unity of essence, harmony, the closeness of material and spiritual origin, philosophical monism, pantheistic tendencies, which were indirectly related to the romantic idea, attracted the poet. In 1799, a new idea was born in Coleridge: his love for Spinoza was unnaturally combined with an interest in Oriental motifs.

Around 1750-1790, literary critic Samuel Johnson took the lead in literature. Although Johnson was not a romantic poet, he was concerned with the content and methods of a neo-classical movement like Voltaire, and thought of ending it. In England, new forces ruled society and change began to take place. The party system in the government has been fully established. Public affairs were balanced, trade flourished, and the middle class of society gained its position. But the consequences and rules of the neoclassical theory still bound the literature. In Johnson's view, "cause and effect" still prevailed over imagination and emotion. His literary ideas, didactic prose, and poetry became an ax that completely cut the root of the opposing forces. His new works are described as "apologies" for the old methods. Thus began the period of farewell to tradition in poetry. Among the proto-romantics, only Cooper, Gray, Blake, and Burns did not refrain from using classical-style themes. They created in keeping with the old poetic methods, rather than expressing simple and natural things in plain language.

What became clear was that there was a stagnation in poetry. So the Romantics set out in search of new ways of expression. The slang used in the literature before they came to the literary scene was astonishing: it was considered rude to call a man like "a man", i.e. he was usually called "a lover". The time had come for very subtle and absurd analogies, to put an end to images, and to think brightly and sharply poetically. Finally, such works were created.

Wordsworth's philosophy of life, his theory of poetry, and his political beliefs were closely intertwined. He felt a strong sense of rage against the French Revolution in 1793, when the poet was left penniless and homeless, and even expelled from his relatives. Panic and insecurity envelop his body. He soon became a member of the Godwin Society in London. Journalist, political philosopher, and novelist William Godwin was concerned about the role of emotions in human relationships, arguing that the only way to maintain it would be through education. Wordsworth began to take seriously the works of the philosopher Godwin, and soon abandoned the simple beliefs of his inner world and began to look at the world with a deeper eye. He suffered from depression for almost four years and studied Godwin's teachings in depth. As a result of this philosophy, his poetry also suffers: the inaccuracy of the style of the poem *Guilt and Sorrow* and the fact that the image is "extremely artificial". The *Borderers*, which belong to the same collection, is also written in a very artificial style, as if under pressure.

From 1798 onwards, Wordsworth regained consciousness. The tone and style of his poems, such as *The Tables Turned* (1798) and *Expostulation and Reply* (1798), were anti-intellectual, indicating the poet's departure from the teachings of Godwinism.

The poem, "The Tables Turned," begins with the author urging a friend to stop reading. It also reminds readers that there is a risk of obesity as a result of sitting too much. Then he explains why it is necessary to be so serious at a time when the beautiful scenery of the evening is reflected outside:

UP! up! my Friend, and quit your books;

Or surely you'll grow double:

Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;

Why all this toil and trouble?

Through this, the author explains to his friend that nature teaches him more than books, reminding him to be in the bosom of nature without seeking refuge in dry pages. From the content of this poetic work it is possible to understand that the poet got rid of the influence of various doctrines and returned to his world.

This helped David Hartley, the founder of the School of the Association of Psychologists, who acknowledged that Wordsworth's views were now shifting to utilitarianism. At the same time, Coleridge's attention was also drawn to this doctrine. In his teaching, Hartley emphasizes that the role of the environment in shaping personality is unique. He was an empiricist who, like the philosopher Locke, preferred emotional perception. He had great skill in linking the theory of set of ideas with the psychology of learning. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was looking for such satisfying psychology and found it. Hartley teaches that emotions (basic ideas) create vibrations in the nervous system. According to Hartley and Locke, the mind remains a “blank slate” until emotions transfer simple concepts to it. Emotion was therefore the basis of all knowledge.

The indebtedness to Hartley is evident from the beginning to the end of the Lyrical Ballads. Nature, founded by Wordsworth, teaches humanity only knowledge. We have seen this in the analysis of *The Tables Turned*. Only a human being who possesses this vital knowledge will live in the bosom of nature in harmony with the peasants and shepherds of distant lands. Thus, he described the views of such people in Lyrical Ballads. Critics, meanwhile, denounced the poet, saying it was absurd to mix poetry with agriculture. Nevertheless, he republished his poems and added the critically acclaimed Preface. In it, Wordsworth proved to critics that none of them actually understood the true nature of poetry.

The poet's most famous poem, *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud or Daffodils*, was written between 1804 and 1807, based on his impressions of encountering flowers on the slopes of lake in Cumbria with his sister Dorothy. He hastens to describe in the first verse of the poem that he came across a flower by chance:

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

In the poem, the romantic elements are clearly visible: emotions, nature and personality. Through this poem, the poet wants to say that people are trapped in the city and cannot enjoy the beautiful scenery of nature. That is why they dedicate their lives, not to the nature that encompasses the world around them, but to the worries of ordinary life. Pamela Woof describes it as: “The permanence of the stars as compared to flowers emphasises the permanence of memory for the poet”.

In late 1797, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and his sister, Dorothy, planned to travel from the town of

Alfoxden, where they lived, to The Valley of Stones, near the village of Lynmouth in Devon. They plan to write a poem called *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* to cover their modest travel expenses and submit it to *Monthly Magazine* in London in hopes of earning five pounds. Wordsworth, who had previously been criticized, refused to being co-author the work. If he were a co-author, the poem was likely to be rejected by the publisher. At that time, he was about to finish his poems, and the two poets were constantly exchanging views on the world of poetry and poetic theories.

We believe that Wordsworth's achievement is that he realized from an early age that he needed to reform the poetic language immediately, as he had avoided artificiality. After all, poetry is a poetic form that requires great skill, both directly and indirectly. In this way, sophistication should become the symbol of poetry. Wordsworth made a unique revolution in poetry by combining his firm conviction and simple nature with his sincere words and actions.

Coleridge and Wordsworth seemed to complement each other in some way. While Coleridge thought quickly and clearly, Wordsworth thought deeply and in detail. Working together, they developed a romantic formula that revived poetry. Coleridge, who had already studied German transcendental philosophy, which embodied romantic features, intended to introduce new styles in poetry with his profound knowledge, and Wordsworth with his clever and curious movements. Thus, they brought a flood of creativity into literature. The two eloquent poets were constantly arguing about what poetry should be like, and what conclusions the audience reading their poetry collection might draw. They divided the work among themselves. According to them, Coleridge had to express the supernatural in a convincing poetic way, while Wordsworth had to go from the ordinary to the supernatural and describe everyday events with intelligence. In English literature, these efforts made great revolutionary changes. *Lyrical Ballads* became a symbol and a weapon of the revolution.

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