

Theme of Nostalgia in Major English Poets

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Abstract. Focusing on the mention of emotion-words and pathetic touch, this paper deals with the theme of previous sentimental memories of human mind. Literature is a subject to be dealt with heart. Verses as one of the streams of literature get more highlights. Mentioning different authors as Tennyson, Spenser, Jonson, Wordsworth, Shelley, Longfellow, and many others, the present paper discusses the abundance of subjectivity. Replicating human problems both socio-economic and psychological, it enlightens many dark parts as we find in different poems of different poets, they speak what they perceived in their life. Presence of sentimental feelings and records in literature, clarifies the nostalgic presence and its effects.

Keywords : linked perspective; self-glorification; emotional touch; relation with environment.

Society and its affairs find their appropriate reflection on the pages of literature. In different sects – subjectivity, objectivity and escapism, we find the growth of subjective approach that speaks the unbiased throat and provides a link of conversation between intellectual minds. Both the first and the second person maintain an amiable decorum by entertaining the differences on their different understanding. Nostalgia is all about the past happenings as Coleridge mentions his acute mind and became the first to term it 'fancy' in his famous *Biographia Literaria*. It was the maturity that made Milton consider about the maturity in writing and consoled him to pause till he acquires enough growth, but it was his feelings and attachment that made him nostalgic enough and provoked him to run his pen again. As he writes :

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
Yet myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due.

(Milton 1975 : 1-6)

But, further he laments over his haplessness when he was mature enough and had matters to write :

When I consider how my light is spent,
 Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
 And that one talent which is death to hide,
 Lodged with me unless, though my soul more bent.
 (On His Blindness, 1-4)

Nature of literature goes parallel with the nature of life, in the sense of memoriam. The sense is equal with mood or moment. Death of Edward King shook Milton from his core. How deep the loved one went inside the earth, the pain of loss penetrated the caring hearts (authors) who gave their emotion a shape of worth. Tennyson, too, gives "In Memoriam", his masterpiece that compiles his memory, all dedicated to Arthur Hallam, his bosom friend. The tearing-trauma that scorches Tennyson's heart with the suffocating ligatures, has been mentioned; as,

Than if thee the roaring wells
 Should gulf him fathom-deep in brine,
 And hands so often clasp'd in mine,
 Should toss with tangle and with shells. (Tennyson, 17-20)

Two plates of balance have been rewarded with equal honour on the free-will of the doer. One of them advocates the authority of man on his destiny, while the next one declares man to be nothing but a slave of his own situation. In Indian Mythology, Lord Krishna once asks to leave the decision on an individual and terms his individual decision as 'his religion'. T.S.Eliot also in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent", writes about those facts which he experiences. When he discusses the chemical proportion and his established definition of tradition concludes the limits of human reaches.

The channel of thought links one with another. Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience* highlights the change of innocence into experience, in which Blake says that experience kills innocence. Literature paves the way of light, though it inculcates both the stories of higher and lower emotions. Blake's Chimney Sweepers were left only with the memory of dust and smoke. Tennyson was left with his non-recited poems to his dear friend. Milton recalls the charm and might of his friend and nature of demise. Literature of the world is highly influenced by the fancy and nostalgic experience of authors/poets. Even William Wordsworth, along with the admiration of Nature, pens down five Lucy Poems and his Lucy is still a guess. One of the Lucy poems is being mentioned :

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
 Beside the springs of Dove;
 A maid to whom there were none to praise
 And very few to love.
 A violet by a mossy stone
 Half-hidden from the eye!

-Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky...
(Wordsworth, 202-213)

W.B. Yeats's poem "Among School Children" is all about the recollection of his young age. The girl-child, who resembles his beloved, makes him recall all those palmy-days. "Sailing to Byzantium" is also about the finding of previous space for the old and experienced people. He says,

An aged man is but a paltry thing...
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.
(Yeats 1999 : 9-16)

Human emotions want permanence like Tennyson's "The Brook", that repeats :

For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.
(Prasad, The Brook:23-24)

Shakespeare understood it very well and uttered the decaying power of time through his sonnet "Not Marbles, Nor the Gilded Monuments". Yet he wanted the presence of his loved one by giving a room in his verses. "Shall I Compare Thee" is about the transfer of self via generation that he, in order to make W.H (Shakespeare's friend and Earl of Southampton) understand and convince for marriage. Shakespeare, being very artistic, writes :

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st;
(Shakespeare, Shall I Compare Thee : 9-12)

Spenser, also, pens down the temporary mood of man-carved things, and permanence of love and life through poetry. The very opening stanza of "One Day I wrote Her Name" conveys the meaning :

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washed it away;
Again I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tide and made my pains his pray.
(Prasad, One Day I Wrote Her Name : 1-4)

"One Day I wrote Her Name" is the 75th sonnet in Spenser's "Amoretti", a sonnet sequence that celebrates a successful love, unlike other Petrarchan sonnets which usually celebrated adulterous love and impossible romances. The theme of this

sonnet is – poetry will bring permanence to love and life and this theme was echoed by Shakespeare in his sonnets. Sestet of this poem ensures the eternity of his love,

To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse your virtues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens write your glorious name. (10-12)

Where forgiving is divine, forgetting is somewhat indifferent for human-being. Jonson's heart aches with the pain of his son's death as leaving all his sweet memories, he departs. Here Jonson's pain is deeper than that of Wordsworth's disguised Lucy or Gray's "Ode on the Death of a Favourite cat". As Tennyson, in memory of his friend writes with tears in his eyes;

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the lost which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So, sad, so, fresh, the days that are no more.
(Tears, Idle Tears : 6-10)

Sir Thomas Wyatt was a love-poet and satirist. He introduced the sonnet and many other lyrical forms into English from Italian literature. He used his everyday experience and words to express his mind. He, too, like other poets, draws his emotions and past memories, when he writes "Forget Not Yet" :

Forget not yet the great assays,
The cruel wrong, the scornful ways,
The painful patience in delays,
Forget not yet! (Prasad, Forget Not Yet : 9-12)

Jonson also can't forget his son and laments at the loss :

Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy,
My sin was too much hope of thee, loved boy.
Seven years thou wert lent to me and I thee pay,
Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.
(On My First Son : 1-4)

And A.G.Swinburne's Pre-raphaelite influenced poem "The Garden of Proserpine" highlights the stoic element and being so indifferent to worldly pain and pleasure, he asks his empirics with these words :

I am tired of tears and laughter,
And men that laugh and weep;
Of what may come hereafter
For men that sow to reap:
(The Garden of Proserpine : 9-12)

But Christina Georgina Rossetti seeks a place after death and wants to be remembered. Here are some extracted lines from her poem :

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
(Remember : 1-3)

And Spenser in his "Prothalamion" says that,

Against the bridal day, which is not long:
Sweet Thames ! run softly, till I end my song.
(Prothalamion : 35-36)

There is a strong attachment between human-beings and plant-kingdom. Somehow they are supplementary to each other. Apart from this, trees, surrounded by human society, are like the dear ones as they make them reflect all sweet days of life. They are the witness of many adorable incidents. Romantics in literature were highly influenced by the charm of Nature. Where Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper" reminds us of some deep thought of that lonely lass, his "Daffodils" sketches a dancing and gay picture of golden daffodils. H. W. Longfellow depicts Nature's attitude as a loving and caring mother who knows well when to take away all the toys of her child, to wake him up and take him to permanent sleep. Thomas Campbell, one of the minor romantics, appeals to save the tree, as he has the same nostalgia as Toru Dutta. In "Our Casuarina Tree", the tree is the symbol of remembrance that struck Toru Dutta's mind with the beautiful faces of her brother and sister (of childhood period). For the same attachment Campbell writes;

Thrice twenty summers I have seen
The sky grow bright, the forest green;
And many a wintry wind have stood
In bloomless, fruitless solitude,
(The Beech Tree's Petition : 13-16)

Same theme is found in George Pope Morris's "Woodman Spare that Tree" :

When but an idle boy
I sought its graceful shade;
In all their gushing joy
Here too my sisters played. (HSES : 5-8)

Thomas Hardy, to whom 'happiness is nothing but an interval in the general drama of pain', has composed some short poems in which he described particular situations. In his poems, natural background helped him to create or contrast with the feelings of human-beings in whom he was interested. The poem, "Neutral Tones"

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reflects the mood of lovers who are no longer in relation. Their love is dead. Hardy writes to elaborate and express the ongoing thoughts in his mind :

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.
(Prasad Neutral Tones : 13-16)

Pouring his emotions and feelings P.B. Shelley, one of the five romantics, portrayed a heavenly object with a lady's-art. In his poem, entitled "The Moon", he says,

And like a dying lady lean and pale
Who totters forth, wrapped in a gauzy veil,
(The Moon : 1-2)

William Wordsworth praises Mary Hutchinson (his wife) in his beautiful poem. She was a Phantom of Delight and recollecting his thoughts. About her Wordsworth mentions :

She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleam'd upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
(She was a Phantom of Delight : 1-4)

Thus, it would be appropriate to say that literature is an authorized advocate of human feelings, emotions and perceptions. It not only reflects, but mends the broken bridges to communicate with every creed and class. Emotion-words in literary works serve many purposes as to define motivation or personality of the character or author himself. As Paul Laurence Dunbar knows 'what the caged bird feels (in Sympathy)'.

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