

Review

A Comparative Study of Wordsworth's "Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known" and Sepehri's "Reward"

Eyvazi, Mojgan¹ and Karimabadi, Hossein²

¹Assistant Prof. Department of English, Payame Noor University, Tehran, IRAN.

²M.A. Department of English, Payame Noor University, Tehran, IRAN. E-mail: hosein.karimabadi@gmail.com

¹Corresponding author's E-mail: mojganeyvazi@yahoo.com

Accepted 3 February 2015

Romanticism, a literary school in which pantheism and nature are key concerns, expresses that there is a divine "presence" in all creatures and as a result nature is regarded as a purification source. The present paper made an attempt to explore common grounds between William Wordsworth, the great English poet, and Sohrab Sepehri the eminent Iranian poet by examining "Strange Fits of Passion Have I known" and "Reward". The study demonstrated that the two poems under discussion share many romantic principles such as praising nature, individuality and feelings.

Keywords: Romanticism, romantic features, nature, individuality, pantheism

Cite This Article As: Eyvazi M, Karimabadi H (2015). A Comparative Study of Wordsworth's "Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known" and Sepehri's "Reward" *Inter. J. Eng. Lit. Cult.* 3(2): 37-41.

INTRODUCTION

The Romantic Period in English literature dates back to the early 1785- or alternatively 1789 (the outbreak of the French Revolution, or in 1798 (the publication of William Wordsworth's and Samuel Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballad* (Abrams and Harpham, 2014); a time when strict ideas regarding the structure of society and art are falling apart. The period of Romanticism rejects the second hand interpretation of tradition and religion and instead stresses on individual experiences and their own interpretation of the experience.

There are many characteristics featuring Romantic Movement such as individualism, the role of external and internal nature, glorification of the ordinary, freedom of expression and so on among them the internal world (nature) of the individual is most significant. The period is

marked by inclination toward the idea that God is a part of the universe rather than a separate identity (pantheism). As mentioned earlier, literature of this time emphasizes the value of individual experience and a new concept naming "the sublime" is introduced. This concept goes for emotions that are so good or beautiful that one is deeply affected by it. Logic and analysis gave their seats to feelings and emotion.

Poetry is considered to be the best and of course the highest form of literary works. William Wordsworth is one of the pioneers of romantic poetry whose works are marked by the notion of the sublime or the divine found in ordinary people and places. Wordsworth strongly believes in the power of nature and finds unexplored grounds in both people and natural things.

Romanticism finds its way to Iran through translations of books and the failure of Constitutional ideals. Romanticism culminates in Iranian poetry after the Constitutional Period. In fact, this school developed in its European sense and reached its complete form to some extent. Nevertheless, the roots of Romantic literature in Iran can be traced back to 'Araghi' style of poetry as Siroos Shamisa (1992) puts it:

This style is introvert in its aspects of thought and poetry. Because the internal issues are discussed and they are naturally more grief-oriented than joy-oriented. And they are as well more love-oriented than reason-oriented. Literary speaking this style is most fit for forms like 'Ghazal', 'Masnavi', and 'Robaie'. It has hyperbole and it is full of rhetorical figures.

Sohrab Sepehri the great romantic Iranian poet was born in Kashan, Isfahan, Iran, in October 7, 1928. He is known for his unique talent for art and poetry. He uses the New form of poetry known as "Shere No" which is featured by having neither meter nor rhyme. Sepehri is fond of nature and his poetry is characterized by profound use of natural imagery. His respect for nature finds a praising nature since he feels the creator presence in all creatures. In his poetry Sepehri mingles the western and eastern concepts making a kind of poetry never seen in the whole history of Persian Literature.

DISCUSSION

As it is mentioned Romanticism influenced Iranian poetry and as a result Iranian literature witnesses many great poems flourishing in this era like Sohrab Sepehri's poetry. Wordsworth on the other hand is one of the pioneers of this school whose "strange fits of Passion" is in many ways comparable to Sepehri's "Reward" based on the important features of Romantic poetry, and finding this common ground is rewarding.

Significance of Nature

Romantics strongly believe that truth is laid in the heart of nature. They see a divine presence in all the things related to nature. The romantic poets find nature as a place where they can purify their souls and make spiritual efforts. "The Romantics viewed science and technology skeptical, and stressed the beauty of 'nature' and individual emotion in their work." (Hacht and Hayes, 2009) The central view is that separation and alienation from nature is the cause of much trouble in the life; and humanity must make friend with nature to restore correctness and values (Abrams and Harpham, 2014).

Nature to Wordsworth (1965) is a better teacher than books. He believes as he states in his Prelude "...one finds one's lost identity with nature in moments of feeling in which one is penetrated by the sense of nature's 'huge and mighty forms'.

Sepehri, likewise, believes in Man's special place in the world and his direct relationship with nature. He reevaluates previous ideas and attains a closer relationship to nature. Therefore elements of nature are profound in the poets' works (Rafatjoo, 2005). In the poem "Strange fits of Passion" and "Reward", the poets are talking about a trip to their beloved. The whole poems are taking place in nature. The poets have to pass through the natural road to get to their beloved: "Strange fits of passion":

When she I loved looked every day
Fresh as a rose in June,
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an evening-moon.

"Reward":

I drank in the white cup of deserts moment by
moment
And in the breathing mirror of the mirage
I found your image more lively in every step
What radiations that fell on my eyes
And in my vessels what thirsts that sprang
I came to smell you

They constantly refer to other natural elements throughout the poems:

"Strange fits of Passion":

'Fresh as a rose'; 'evening-moon'; 'the wide lea';
'Those paths'; 'the orchard-plot'; 'the hill'; 'the
descending moon'; 'the bright moon'.

"Reward":

'plant of charm'; 'The purple hemlock of the sun';
'deserts'; 'the mirage'; 'long way'; 'The azure
mist'; 'the nights'; 'the moving sands'; 'My land';
'by-ways'; 'the shooting stars';

Self and Individuality

It is during romantic period that people become aware that there are parts of each individual's personality beyond the access of ordinary consciousness (Galens, 2002) which is expanded by modern psychology to its complete form. Also, self-exploration and special individuals' experiences come to focus. Wordsworth

proposes that poetry should begin with acts of self-expression and self-exploration (Leitch and Cain, 2001). Wordsworth (1979) in his preface to *Lyrical Ballads* makes his point clear "to choose incidents and situations from common life and to relate or describe them in a selection of language really used by men... tracing in them... the primary laws of our nature." No one can question the influence of French and American revolutions and the thoughts of the revolutionaries who believed ordinary people has the right and value as anyone in a high rank. Writers of the time are inspired with the idea and start to write about common people experiences as well as their own.

Here Wordsworth and Sepehri talk about their unique experience of going to their beloved. Both poets are displeased of their experience. Wordsworth's trip, a dream though, will warn him of losing his beloved, as he says:

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopped:
When down behind the cottage roof,
At once, the bright moon dropped.

The bright moon taken as a metaphor for his beloved is a shock to the poet as it falls and he cries if this event come to real one day:

"O mercy!" to myself I cried,
"If Lucy should be dead!"

On the other hand Sepehri is badly affected by the beloved. He has taken a long trip with different adventures and thought distortion but the beloved has poisoned him, probably by her words:

I came to smell you
And you are the bitter plant (grass) of charm
In reward of coming this long way
You poisoned my breath with your infernal venom
In reward of coming this long way

As mentioned earlier the subject of the poems is not politics, business, or any kind of trade but a unique experience of these two individual poets. Here is where poets inspire other people to talk and think about their unique self. Even when it comes to evaluating poems Wordsworth suggests people should avoid critics' interpretations and rely on their own feelings and imagination as they read the poems (Bressler, 2009).

Emotion and Feelings: The Sublime

An important aspect of each individual is his feelings and emotions. This point is not hidden from romantics' sight.

As they valued individuals to a great extent they valued their feelings and emotions as well. They hold the belief that logical abstractions are inferior to this special feature human beings. Romantics also search for a special, wonderful, and affective feeling called 'the sublime'- a state of being in which a person was simultaneously awed, frightened, and filled with a sense majesty and wonder (Galens, 2002).

Wordsworth defines poetry the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and highlighted poetry's emotional quality (Bressler, 2009). Wordsworth and Sepehri both are deeply affected by 'the sublime'- a powerful feeling. For Wordsworth it comes at the end of the poem when he is quite frightened by the dream of losing her beloved which is probably so frightening because losing her is losing his poetry, as he cries:

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide?

Into a Lover's head!
"O mercy!" to myself I cried,
"If Lucy should be dead!"

For Sepehri almost the same thing happens. He has gone a long way and a difficult path:

"What radiations that fell on my eyes
And in my vessels what thirsts that sprang"

However the beloved has rejected him by poisoning him with her "infernal venom":

I came to smell you
And you poisoned my breath with your infernal
venom
In reward of coming this long way

Sepehri is so wondering that he repeats these lines three times. It is not acceptable for him or probably he is full of wonder why an eager lover like him must be rejected.

Emphasis on poetry as an organic whole and rejection of old and rigid poetic forms

Romantics are very much interested in poetry. They are regarded as poets than any other literary titles. As discussed earlier feelings and emotion are fundamental features of their literary production and therefore poetry is a better bed to lie on.

The form of their poetry like themselves is affected by incidents of the time. At the time they are deeply influenced by the notion of freedom inspired by American and French revolution. Freedom is observable in their poetry as they reject old form and write in a freer way. As Cuddon (2012) points out one of the aspects of

romanticism is "a tendency to exalt the individual and his needs and emphasis on the needs for a freer and more personal expressions." Therefore Ode and verse narrative are often used. This choice of form is in fact quite opposite to their previous generation, neoclassic, which makes use of heroic couplet, for example. Romantics believe that the form of a verse should be shaped by the subject matter, in contrast to the neoclassicists who use rigid forms and shaped their material to fit them. (Galens, 2002).

Wordsworth and Sepehri are not exceptions. Following the spirit of the age they use freer forms of poetry. For Wordsworth' "Strange fits of passion" a simple ballad form with an ABAB rhyme scheme is seen and in "Reward" by Sepehri no classic rhyme pattern is used which is called 'Shere no'.

CONCLUSION

Romantic literature after starting its life in 1789 did not stay in England. Many countries like Iran got familiar with romanticism mainly through translation of books and traveling abroad. Wordsworth and Sepehri, one the pioneer of romantic poetry and the other a follower from east, are in many ways alike. The poetry of these two eminent literary figures is very often compared to each other. The researcher compared Wordsworth's "Strange fits of passion have I know" with Sepehri's "Reward" and observed that these poems share many romantic criteria like emphasizing on subjects such as nature, individuality and feelings. They also follow the same style of writing as they both put aside the old poetic forms of their age behind and tried their hands successfully at freer forms. These two poets had always been a source of inspiration for their own people and many poets around the world.

REFERENCES

- Abrams MH, Harpham G (2014). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Cengage Learning, Boston, USA, pp 91-255.
- Bressler CE (2009). *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. Prentice Hall, New York, USA, pp 35-36.
- Cuddon JA (2012). *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. John Wiley & Sons, New York, USA, p 769.
- Galens D (2002). "Literary Movements for Students, Vol. 1." Thompson Gale 319, Detroit, USA, pp 298-299.
- Hacht AM, HayesDD (2009). *Gale Contextual Encyclopedia of World Literature: Kr. Vol. 3: Gale* Cengage, Detroit, USA, p 1706.
- Leitch VB, Cain WE (2001). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Norton, New York, USA, p 646.
- Raf'atjoo H (2005). "The Reflection of Romanticism on Iranian Poetry." *Ketabe Mah*, Tehran, Iran, pp 58-60.
- Shamisa S (1992). *Literary Types*. Baghe Ayene, Tehran, Iran, p 126.
- Wordsworth W (1979). *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*. Greenwood Press (CT), Westport, Connecticut, USA, p 123.
- (1965). *The Prelude*. Oup/british council, Oxford, England, p 398.

Appendix

Strange fits of passion have I known

STRANGE fits of passion have I known:
And I will dare to tell,
But in the Lover's ear alone,
What once to me befell.

When she I loved looked every day
Fresh as a rose in June,
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an evening-moon.

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,
All over the wide lea;
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard-plot;
And, as we climbed the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
Came near, and nearer still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's gentlest boon!
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopped:
When down behind the cottage roof,
At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
Into a Lover's head!
"O mercy!" to myself I cried,
"If Lucy should be dead!"
Wordsworth

Reward

You are the bitter plant of charm
The purple hemlock of the sun
I drank in the white cup of deserts moment by moment
And in the breathing mirror of the mirage
I found your image livelier in every step
What radiations that fell on my eyes
And in my vessels what thirsts that sprang
I came to smell you
And you poisoned my breath with your infernal venom
In reward of coming this long way
The azure mist would capture the nights as well
And the clamor of the moving sands would disturb my
sleep
What dreams that went to pieces
What close things that went away
And I followed a string of voice

Which ended in you
I came to smell you
And you poisoned my breath with your infernal venom
In reward of coming this long way
My land is beyond the deserts
Its memory was in my company at the outset of the
journey
When her eyes saw the first purple layer of noon
Panicked and turned into dust (mist)
And I was left alone
What delusions I saw by the wink of horizons
What by-ways I found by the fingers of the shooting stars
I came to smell you
And you are the bitter plant of charm
In reward of coming this long way
You poisoned my breath with your infernal venom
In reward of coming this long way
Sepehri