

Romantic Subjectivity in the Mary Oliver's Selected Poems

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ABSTRACT

Self expression in the Romantic Age was one of the most important elements for the poets as well as the other artists. They gave values to the introspections of the individuals in any art be it painting or music or literature. Free from all the conventional rules which were dominating the Neoclassical age, it saw a drastic change in expressing the experiences in a very different way and manner that a writer had taken in his own life. Contradictory to the Age of Reason or Enlightenment or the age of Neoclassicism, the Romantic Age advocates free expressions of oneself, language of the common people, love for the natural world and its remarkable beauty etc. which not only dominated this particular age, but also the following ages. In this modern age, poets, scientists, environmentalists, philosophers, social workers, common people, and even the politicians have started looking back to the Romantic Age that teaches the race to love the nature and its beauty as well as its necessity for balancing the degrading ecosystem of the mother Earth. Here in this paper, "Romantic Subjectivity in the Mary Oliver's Selected Poems," Mary Oliver's selected poems will be observed as Romantic subjectivity including an outline about the Romanticism, Subjectivity, Classicism, Neoclassicism, Ecosystem.

1. Introduction

"Romanticism, a literary, artistic, and philosophical movement originating in the 18th century, characterized chiefly by a reaction against emotions, and marked specially in English literature by sensibility and the use of autobiographical materials, an exaltation of the primitive and the common man, an appreciation of external nature, a predilection for melancholy and the use in poetry of older verse forms." (Mirriam-webster). Not with the small "r," but with the capital "R," the Romanticism brought a revolutionary change into the every artistic field in which self expressions unlike the Neoclassical age were given a great priority.

Subjectivity is the central philosophical concept, related to consciousness, agency, personhood, reality, and truth, which has been variously defined by sources. Subjectivity is the quality or condition of "something being a subject narrowly meaning an individual who possesses conscious experiences, feelings, and desires." (Solomon 900), And "something being a subject broadly meaning an entity that has agency, meaning that it acts upon or wields power over some other entity (an object)." (Allen 131-149). For the writers, especially for the poets, it was a big weapon to express their inner feelings, their own experiences collected in tranquility or in loneliness.

Romantic Subjectivity which is a dominant element of the Romantic Age gives freedom to the poets to contemplate alone over their own experiences gathered through their personnel touch with the external as well as the internal objects. Wordsworth's best

definition of poetry "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility." (Wordsworth) helps us know the trend of self expression which gave poets liberty to use their imaginations freely.

Classicism "in its purest form, classicism is an aesthetic attitude dependent on principles based in the culture, art and literature of ancient Greece and Rome, with the emphasis on form, simplicity, proportion, as was the explicit appeal to the intellect." (Caves 112). The works of the classical age, as is well known, adhere to the form and rhythm of the poetry conversely to the age of the Romanticism. This freedom of self expression for the artists, and predominantly for the poets begot a new kind of form, i.e. free and blank verse in poetry to express their knowledge overtly and freely.

"Neoclassicism (also Neo-classicism; from Greek neos, "new" and Greek klasikos, "of the highest rank") was a western cultural movement in the decorative arts, literature, theatre, music, and architecture that drew inspiration from the art and culture of classical antiquity." (Wikipedia). After a long period, the literary figures of this particular era looked back to the classical age for their inspirations, and high rank techniques for their works.

Ecosystem "the simplest definition of an ecosystem is that it is a community or group of living organisms that live in and interact with each other in a specific environment." (Youmatter). According to the definition, the whole world functions as an ecosystem, that is, the whole world is an ecosystem where every

living organism making balance inhales. But these days, its degradation due to the overuse of natural reserves and the wastes of the industries into the land, river and air is at peak which is not a good signal for the race as well as the other living objects.

Mary Oliver a great American poet has a deep taste for the natural world. She loves the natural beauty. Her poetry reflects her intimacy with the wild flora and fauna. Comprising so many subjects all related to the society and the nature, her poetry also reflects romantic subjectivity which was one of the most important elements of the Romantic age. The following three selected poems are here for under consideration in the perspective of Romantic subjectivity.

- The Uses of Sorrow
- Praying
- Morning at Blackwater

2. The Uses of Sorrow

Only in four lines which Oliver in her own words dreamed it in her sleep, the poem "The Use of Sorrow" is a fine example of self expressions, self contemplations over the experiences which she has taken. The subjectivity in it unveils Oliver's personal experiences, and acquiring the knowledge.

Someone I loved once gave me
a box full of darkness.
It took me years to understand
that this, too, was a gift.

Far from the rules and forms of the conventional poetry of classical or neoclassical age, Oliver's own introspection through this short poem is overt here in its full prime. Her individual experiences of loving one and consequences of that which she has got are quite opposite; however, she takes it positively by calling it a gift show her gaining the wisdom through the self involvement into the treasure of world's knowledge.

3. Praying

This is another poem by her hand in which Mary Oliver sees the world with her inner eyes and perceives its mysteries which are hidden from anyone's reach. In the Romantic subjective points of view, it will not be wrong to say that the poem comprises every element of it. Her observation of the natural world becomes prayerful when she pays attention even to a smallest thing, like, small stones. This personal observation by the poet is an example of subjectivity. Through this observation, Oliver collects the hidden treasure of the non human world.

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just

pay attention, then patch
a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway
into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.

By using very simple and common words, Oliver portrays the natural world very overtly. And this use of common and simple words is a predominant tenant of the Romantic poetry. Through this technique, the poet feels free in portraying the nature and its hidden beauty and assets. She talks of "a silence" so that "another voice may speak": these words are definitely a symbol of self expressions where a person like Mary Oliver can get peace and pleasure.

4. Morning at Black Water

No doubt, Mary Oliver's poetry has multiple meanings. Her simple and lucid use of language throughout her poems attracts a worldwide reader to decipher the codes consisted in them. Being a great nature poet, she has also thrown the light on one's individual walk of life. She preaches those experiences which she had gained through her subjective mind.

For years, every morning, I drank
from Blackwater Pond.
It was flavored with oak leaves and also, no
doubt,
the feet of ducks.

Her drinking from Blackwater Pond every morning categorically shows the Romantic subjectivity in this great poem. Her touch with natural beauty unaccompanied brings her meditative mind to the readers.

What I want to say is
that the past is the past,
and the present is what your life is,
and you are capable
of choosing what that will be,
darling citizen. learn

The lesson or the knowledge the poet has learnt or gained by going there to the Blackwater Pond is being served here through this poem which is really propitious. She avows that one can mold one's present life according to one's will. In fact, it is a great finding by her which is very useful and worthy to the people.

So come to the pond,
or the river of your imagination,
or the harbor of your longing,
and put your lips to the world.
And live
your life.

Her call to the pond, or the river of imagination, or the harbor of the longing for anybody is truly a priceless call to shaping their mind to the right directions. For her the world is observable. One ought to observe it subtly so that one can live the life in a better way.

5. Conclusion

With multiple meanings in her poetry characterized by simple and lucid language, Oliver has been put into the top of literary circles. Her love for natural world and its beauty, and also the spirituality in

her poems give the human race a way to mull over the degrading ecosystem of the planet Earth. For the present world, it becomes requisite to think over it seriously so that within time something could be done for the coming generation.

The above discussed poems, that is, "The Uses of Sorrow," "Praying," and "Morning at Blackwater" comprise a lot meanings, but as far as the subjectivity or Romantic subjectivity is concerned in them, they are best example which talks of the personnel experiences by using simple words.

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