



Critical Appreciation of Wordsworth's and Robert Frost's Poems 'Solitary Reaper' and 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' in Comparison and Contrast

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Wordsworth and Robert Frost are well-known nature poets, but they vary from each other in the treatment of nature. They love to live in nature. Nature is their most important subject. Their love of nature persisted throughout their careers, and it is evident in their poetry. Their nature descriptions are minute and accurate, vivid, and elaborate to capture the reader's eye. Their love of nature is due to their temperament, liking and background. They describe the objects of nature: hills and mountains, vales and dales, birds and insects, thickets and trees, clouds and rains, flowers and fruits, rains and storms, lakes and brooks, woods, and snow and so on. They are nature poets, but one is not in the tradition of the other, marking a clear-cut contrast.

They both are therefore nature poets in distinctive ways. There is a lot of scope for comparison as well as contrast in the treatment of nature. Different poets look at nature and respond to its beauties differently. There are comparisons and contrasts in the treatment of nature. I would like to take Wordsworth's 'Solitary Reaper' and Robert Frost's 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' for my in-depth study and critical interpretation.

Wordsworth is a romantic poet for he gets engrossed into the beauty of nature to seek shelter in its bower and become one with it for equanimity and peace, bliss and solace. He loves nature for its music, scent, charms, touch and taste and he goes to it enthralled to have sensuous pleasures. In the poem, he honestly records his experiences in listening to a song sung by a solitary reaper, Highland Lass while reaping and binding the corn in the field. In the poem, 'Solitary Reaper', he expresses his profound feelings at the in the enchanting sight of the harvesting scene. On his way to his nature visit, he stops to enjoy the sight of the harvest field and the song of the solitary reaper in the nature lyric, 'Solitary Reaper'.

Behold her, sing in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chant
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides

Will no one tell me what she sings?--
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow



For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;--
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

Wordsworth, on one of his nature-visits in Highland, he finds the lass alone in the field reaping the harvest and binding sheaves while singing a melancholic song in her dialect. He listens to her song and gets engrossed in its beauty. He thinks that it is not in his language but understands its melancholic theme. He does not want any interruption or intermission in her song as he wants to listen to it and enjoy the beauty of its sonority. As a romantic poet, he finds it more delightful than that of the nightingale for the travelers to rest in the oasis of the Arabian sands. The song of the solitary reaper is also more thrilling than that of the cuckoo, sung in spring in silent seas, Hebrides. The beautiful setting with the song overflowing in the valley arrests his whole attention to her song that he has never heard and expresses his deep emotions on hearing it. He asks his absent passerby or follower,

Stop here or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

Poet Wordsworth expects someone to interpret the sense of the solitary reaper's song, as its language is incomprehensible to him. By the tone of her voice, he guesses it to be a melancholy song to narrate violent incidents like battles in the past, 'For old, unhappy, far-off things,/ And battles long ago', and day-to-day misfortunes, 'Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain'. As a poet, he shares with the reader soothing thoughts aroused from human suffering as expressed in the song.

As a romantic poet, Wordsworth withdraws from outer experience to concentrate on inner experience, the treasure trove of thrills as per his wills. He listens to the song inwardly and grasps its melancholy tone. In his romantic experience, he finds bliss in the aesthetic beauty of the song,

The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

On the wings of imagination, the poet flies in the wide expanse of nature landscape and beautiful setting. The beauty of the song transports him to the world of fancy and ideas, thoughts,



and emotions. He becomes one with the beautiful setting of nature and the song filled with verbal music, 'the vale profound overflowing with sound'.

Images in Love of Nature

For Wordsworth, Nature serves as mother to bestow on man bliss and solace or the teacher to teach the essentials of life. That is the pure relation of Nature to man.

Wordsworth employs the images of Nature to suggest her vastness and dynamic stature. The poet glimpses the beauty of a harvest scene with the backdrop of beautiful nature while listening to the solitary reaper singing a song replete with a melancholy vein in the description of past events. The depiction of the harvest scene is microscopic, making the reader in its beauty. All the poetic images shape the poem into a wonderful piece of literature.

Wordsworth is a poet of commoner. The poem, known for its simplicity and naturalness, is with the description of a solitary reaper and her feelings about the past events. There is the rhyme scheme of ab, cb, dd, ee to express his powerful feelings,

The lyric, 'Solitary Reaper' marks a clear-cut difference in the treatment of nature from that of Robert Frost, 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.'

Robert Frost's poem, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"

Robert Frost is a nature poet, but he is not a nature poet in the tradition of Wordsworth as he harps on boundaries that separate man from nature, 'Drama of Man in Nature'. Whenever he gets tired of the monotony of daily routine and mundane reality, he would go to nature like birches to swing with them to the top and get back on the ground and woods to watch them for his momentary contact. The contact with nature will refresh and rejuvenate him to face hardships with new vigor and enthusiasm. His momentary contact with nature keeps him free from the stresses and strains of reality and marks a clear-cut difference from Wordsworth's total engrossment into the beauty of nature as a romantic poet.

Robert Frost's poems are replete with New England scenes. The clearly reflects the linking of his moods with the seasonal cycle of nature. His snapshot details are so vivid and so precise that no one else writes in the way he does.

Robert Frost loves nature. His nature descriptions of woods, snowfall, bending birches, lakes, brooks, valley mists, spring thaws, storms, animals, birds, ants, seasons, and seasonal changes and so on are characterized by accuracy, minuteness and fidelity. The reader experiences the beauty in all objects of nature.

As poet and man, Robert Frost feels the sense of beauty in his momentary contact with refreshes and rejuvenates him with vigor and enthusiasm to mind the sense of duty indispensable and inescapable as man and the poem, 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' portrays the fact in the most befitting way:

Whose woods these are I think I know
His house in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow



My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake
The only other sound's sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

Woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep
And miles to go before I sleep

In the poem, the narrator, poet himself, travels on a horse-drawn coach. On his way, he comes across the woods covered with pure snow in sliver glitters. The sunrays are falling on them to look more enchanting in one of the evenings. The beauty of woods attracts him. He stops his coach at the lovely scene of snow-clad woods and enjoys their natural beauty. He gets engrossed into the beauty of woods, the realm of fancy,

Whose woods these are I think I know
His house in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow

As the poet has a keen eye for the pleasures in nature, he flies to fancy, the beauty of woods from the world of reality or the fact,

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year

The beauty of woods enchants Frost, the poet of nature on his visits to it. Frost, the speaker of the poem is likely to go to it enthralled for the revelry of sensuous pleasures in nature. Then the horse that pulls his coach gives a shake to his harness bells to know if there is some mistake when the poet is likely to lose in the world of fancy,

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake
The only other sound's sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

When the horse gives a shake to his harness bells, Frost as a poet and man of 'promises to keep', springs to life, the real world from fancy and realizes the sounds of 'easy wind' and 'downy flake' that enrich the natural beauty of woods. He at the same time realizes his promises to be kept and obligations to be fulfilled in life,



Woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep
And miles to go before I sleep

Frost might be lost in the beauty of nature with full of glorified charms and fanciful thoughts. It may enchant him by its sensuous charms for a while, but they are soon broken and he remembers the concerns of real life. He remembers his duties. Although he has fancy enjoying the sense of beauty in nature, he sacrifices it for the sense of duty in the form of promises and obligations in life and continues his journey in pursuit of his goal.

Frost is a humanist and realist to mind duties and responsibilities in life though he loves nature by contacting a while. His approach to nature is therefore pragmatic and realistic for he is more as man and less as a nature lover. He deeply feels that the earth is the right place for love and duty. Not to get lost in the beauty of nature, he draws a line separating him from nature as he pragmatically and practically loves duties and responsibilities. He has a momentary contact with it for pleasure and vigor.

Robert Frost's poem, 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' comes close to Wordsworth's "Solitary Reaper", as it is written in the tradition of romantic nature lyric. Nature here has a dramatic function. It acts as a background to the action. Hence, the poem is akin to Wordsworth's poem, "Solitary Reaper." Frost enjoys the beauty of woods covered with pure white snow until the horse gives a shake to his harness bells in the way Wordsworth enjoys the song of the solitary reaper though he cannot comprehend its language. He guesses the theme of her song. He enjoys the song of the solitary reaper as long as she cuts and binds the grain while singing. Later he realizes,

I listened motionless and still
As I mounted up the hill
The music in my heart bore

If the horse did not give Frost his alarm, Frost would be as much absorbed in Nature as Wordsworth.

Frost's poems are full of nature descriptions. He is successful in his elaborate nature descriptions that are apt in his nature lyrics like 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening'.

Imagery and Symbols

Frost draws images from the commonplace objects of nature. The symbols used in his poetry have a lot of significance as they represent life. The line in repetition, "And miles to go before I sleep" represents life journey. 'Promises', 'miles to go' are suggestive of responsibilities in life. 'Sleep' in the last line of the last stanza symbolizes the final sleep to mark the end of the life journey and the poet refers to 'sleep' in the third line as the reward of man at the end of the day after work. Woods are symbolic of beauty that fills the poet with enthusiasm and vigor in his momentary contact with them.

Structure and rhythm



Frost employs monosyllabic words in the poem to capture simplicity and naturalness in the description of commonplace objects of nature. The use of ‘stopping’ in the title is suggestive of his momentary stay at the edge of woods in watching the beauty of snow-covered woods.

Both Wordsworth and Frost are nature poets, but they treat nature in distinctive ways. They are similar in some respects. They are at the same time dissimilar in other aspects as their attitudes and approaches to poetry vary from each other.

Comparisons and Parallelisms

Wordsworth and Robert Frost are nature poets. They love nature as they have a keen eye for beautiful nature though they treat nature in different ways.

There is a focus on the common man in their poetry. Frost evinces more concern for the common man than Wordsworth.

Both write from personal experience. They express the deep emotions in the beautiful lyrics that are pen-pictures of their personal mood, thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Their nature descriptions are local, regional, and provincial as all poets are not free from their backgrounds. Their love for nature is local and regional. Both describe all objects of nature including seasons and seasonal changes. There is a clear-cut linking of their moods with the seasonal cycle in nature.

The two poets directly speak to the objects of nature to render their poems dramatic effect. Their addresses to the natural objects divert and arrest the reader’s rapt attention to the scenes they describe elaborately and microscopically.

Contrasts and individualisms

Wordsworth as a romantic poet loves nature. He is the worshipper of nature. He gets engrossed in the beauty of nature, becoming one with it. He goes to nature, the world of fancy on the wings of imagination, whereas Frost's momentary contact with the beauty of nature refreshes and rejuvenates him to attend his works with new vigor and enthusiasm. He springs from fact to fancy and from fancy back to fact as he has concerns for duties and responsibilities, realities, and actualities as he represents life.

Wordsworth reads man's nature in animal and plant worlds in a serious way whereas Frost speaks of the objects and creatures of nature, the animal and plant nature in a humorous way. Frost feels that man has animal-like and plant-like. The horse in the poem stands as a real character to remind him of his day-to-day duties and promises in life when he has fanciful desire to get engrossed in the beauty of nature.

Nature gives Wordsworth solace and peace as he finds harmony between him (man) and nature. Therefore, he gives the status of divinity to Nature. Nature is benevolent to him. He treats Nature as mother, teacher, or brother but Frost never feels any such relation. His momentary contact with nature, the snow-covered woods in the poem refreshes and rejuvenates him whenever he gets tired of monotony, the mechanism of life.



For Wordsworth, Nature is mother, teacher or brother with pure relationship. Frost does not feel any brotherhood for nature but his momentary contact with nature refreshes and rejuvenates him to have vigor and enthusiasm for the concerns of real life.

Conclusion

Wordsworth and Robert Frost are nature poets in distinctive ways. They present realistic descriptions of nature in their respective poems. They stand significant as they deal with a common man in their poems. They excel other poets as their poems have simplicity and naturalness to express their emotions and feelings. The poems excel other poems by virtue of their poetic merits.



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