

Romantic Imagination: Creation of New World Order

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Abstract

The Romantic imagination paves the path for the creation of New World Order and Literature in Future. The destruction and devastation of existing world order is the result of literature devoid of creative imagination. The imaginative angle and conception of the Romanticists is the model for the contemporary and future literature. The love and affection of fountains, mountains and streams are to be the order of New Literature and New World Order.

Key Words: Eternity, Metaphysics, Abstractions, Inspiration, Transdental and Tranquility

The imagination is the single characteristic which differentiates the English Romantics from the poets of the eighteenth century. Imagination sustains a deeply considered theory of poetry of Romantic era. In eighteenth century, imagination is not a cardinal point in poetical theory. For Pope and Johnson, as for Dryden before them, it has little importance. When they mention it, it has a limited significance. They approve fancy, controlled by judgment and admire the apt use of images, by which they mean little more than visual impressions and metaphors. What matters most in poetry is its truth to the emotions, or, they prefer to say, sentiment. They wish to speak in general terms for the common experiences of men, not to indulge personal whims in creating new worlds. For them the poet is more an interpreter than a creator. They are more concerned with showing the attractions of what we really know than with expeditions into the unfamiliar and unseen. They are less interested in the mysteries of life than in its familiar appearance. Their task is to display this with as much charm and truth as they can command. But for the Romanticists, imagination is fundamental. Poetry is impossible without imagination. The present paper is an attempt to explain Romantic imagination creating New World Order and New literature in future.

This strongest belief in the imagination is part of the contemporary belief in the individual self. The poets are conscious of a wonderful capacity to create imaginary worlds. The

imaginative world is not a false or idle. To curb the powers and intensity of imagination is to deny something vital necessary to their whole being. Imagination strengthens the poets. The meaningful exercise of imagination makes them far better than other poets.

The power of poetry is strongest when the creative impulse works untrammelled. They shaped fleeting visions into concrete forms and pursued wild thoughts until they captured and mastered it. Just as in politics men turned their minds from the existing order to a vast prospect of reformed humanity, so in arts they abandoned the conventional plan of existence for private adventures which had an inspiring glory. As in the Renaissance, poets suddenly found the huge possibilities of the human self and expressed them in a bold and far-flung art, so the Romantics, brought to a fuller consciousness of their own powers, felt a similar need to exert these powers in fashioning new worlds of mind.

The future of literature is imaginative in thought and expression. The spontaneity of feelings and imaginations are the foundations of best literary creations. The present mankind faces the turbulence and turmoil. The serene environment has been lost. The tranquility of atmosphere has been declined. The Romantic imagination is expected to revive the glory and glamour of the environment.

The world of imagination is the world of eternity. It is the divine bosom into which we shall go after the death of the vegetated body. This world of imagination is infinite and eternal, whereas the world of Generation, or vegetation, is finite and temporal. There exist is the Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in the Vegetable Glass of Nature. All things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the divine boy of the Saviour, the True Vine of Eternity, and The Human Imagination.

The Romantic Imagination is strengthened by the religious and metaphysical conceptions. For a century English philosophy had been dominated by theories of Locke. He assumed that in perception the mind is wholly passive, a mere recorder of impressions from without a lazy looker on an external world. His system is well suited to an age of scientific speculation which found its representative voice in Newton. The mechanistic explanation which both philosophers and scientists gave of the world meant that scanty respect was paid to the human self. Thus both Locke and Newton found a place for God in their universe, the former on the ground that 'the works of nature in every part of them sufficiently evidence a deity', and later on the principle that the great machine of the world implies a mechanic.

This was not all what the Romantics demanded from religion. For them, it was a question less of reason than of feeling, less of argument than of experience. They complained that these mechanistic explanations were a denial of innermost convictions. So too with poetry. Locke had views on poetry, as he had on most human activities, but no very high regard for it. For him it is a matter of 'wit', and the task of wit is to combine ideas and thereby to make up

pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy. Wit is quite irresponsible and troubled with truth or reality. The Romantics rejected with contumely a theory which robbed their work of its essential connection with life.

Literature of the future is devotional in spirit and emotion. The materialistic approach of the literature has lost its true objective. The spiritual vision is the prime goal and attempt of the writers. The inclination towards God, environment and humanity are the central themes of literary creations. For Blake, the imagination is nothing less than God as He operates in the human soul. It follows that any act of creation performed by imagination is divine and that in the imagination man's spiritual nature is fully and finally realized. Coleridge does not speak with so apocalyptic a certainty, but his conclusion is not very different from Blake:

‘The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.’ (*Romantic imagination*, 4)

It is true that he regards poetry as a product of the secondary imagination, but since this differs from the primary, it remains clear that for Coleridge the imagination is of the first importance because it partakes of the Creative activity of God. Creation of the supernatural order is a part of the Romantic imagination. The new world order is the world of mystery, beauty and awe. This is a tremendous claim which is not confined to Blake and Coleridge. It is some degree held by Wordsworth, Shelly and Keats. Each is confident not only that the imagination is his most precious possession but it is somehow concerned with supernatural order. Never before has such a claim been made, and from it the Romantic poetry derives much of its most magical in it. The poet is so absorbed in his own private universe and in the exploration of the remoter corners that he may be unable to convey his essential experience to other men and fail to convert them to his special creed.

The Romantics certainly created worlds of their own, but they succeeded in persuading others that these were not absurd or merely fanciful. In this respect, they were closer to earth and common men than some of their German contemporaries. They have not the respect for unsatisfied longing as an end in itself or the belief in hallucination or magic which play so large a part in the mind of Brentano, nor have they that nihilistic delight in being detached from, of which Novalis writes to Caroline Schlegel:

‘I know that imagination is most attracted by what is most immoral, most animal, but I also know how like a dream all imagination is how it loves night, meaninglessness and solitude.’ (*Romantic Imagination*, 4)

This is not the English Romantics thought. They believed that imagination stands in some relation to truth and reality, and they were at pains to make their poetry pay attention to them. The controversy arises on the imagination linked to truth and reality. If a man gives

free play to his imagination, what assurance of truth is there? Can it tell us something that we do not know, or is it so removed from ordinary life as to be an escape from it?

The question is answered by Locke in one sense when he deals cavalierly with poetic wit. A similar answer is given by Blake's revolutionary friend, Tom Paine, in his *Age of Reason*:

I had some truth, and I believe some talent for poetry, but this I rather repressed than encouraged as leading too much into the feeling of imagination.' (*Romantic Imagination*, 5)

This is a valid point of view and it is not new. The creation of imagination are mere fantasies and, as such, divorced from life. The problem troubled the Elizabethans and Shakespeare, as a prominent playwright speaks in the mouth of Theseus:

'The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
And, imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turn them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and name.' (*Mid-Summer Night's Dream*, 45)

The New World Order and Future Literature is a blend of imagination with truth, imagination with reality. This blend is a unique faculty of the writers, poets, especially creators. They can present the life, its aspirations, imaginations, complexities and vitalities with an aura of imagination and realism.

In rejecting Locke's and Newton's explanation of the visible world, the Romantics obey to an inner call to explore more fully the world of spirit. The goal of their passionate search is to analyze the order of things in different ways that we see and know normally. They wish to penetrate to an abiding reality, to explore its mysteries, and by this to understand more clearly what life means and what is its worth. They are convinced that the visible things are the instruments by which we find this reality. The visible things are not everything and have little significance they are related to some embracing and sustaining power. Most of us feel that a physical universe is not enough and demand some scheme which will explain why our beliefs and convictions are valid and why in an apparently mechanistic order we have scales of values for which no mechanism can account.

Locke and Newton explain what the sensible world is, but not what it is worth. In explaining mental judgements by physical processes, they destroy their validity. The only assurance for the truth of our judgements is the existence of an objective truth which cannot be determined by casual or subjective processes. Such systems embody a spirit of negation, because in trying to explain our belief in the good or the holy or the beautiful, they succeed only in explaining it away. That is why Blake dismissed atomic physicists and their like as

men who try in vain to destroy the divine light which alone gives meaning to life. , and proclaimed that in its presence their theories cease to count:

‘The Atoms of Democritus

And Newton’s Particles of Light

Are sands upon the Red sea shrine?

Where Israel’s tents do shine so bright. (*Romantic Imagination* 9)

The Romantics are concerned with things of the spirit and hope that through imagination and inspired insight they can both understand them and present them in compelling poetry. It is this search for unseen world that awakens the inspiration of Romantics and make poets of them. The power of their work comes partly from the driving force of their desire to grasp these ultimate truths. Unlike their German contemporaries, who are content with thrills of longing, the English Romantics pursue their lines of imaginative enquiry until they found answers which satisfied them. Their aim is to convey the mystery of things through individual manifestations and thereby show what it means.

The Romantics appeal not to the logical mind but to the complete itself, to the whole range of intellectual faculties, senses and emotions. Only individual presentation of imaginative experience can do this. In them we see examples of what cannot be expressed directly in words and can be conveyed by hint and suggestion. The powers which Wordsworth saw in nature or Shelley in love are so enormous that we begin to understand them only when they are manifested in single and concrete examples. Through the single cases, we apprehend something of what the poet has seen in vision. The essence of Romantic imagination is that it fashions shapes which display these unseen forces of work.

The invisible powers which sustain the universe work in the visible world. Only by what we see, hear and touch can we be brought into relation with them. Every poet has to work with the world of senses, but for Romantics it was the instrument which set their visionary powers into action. It affected them at times in such a way that they seemed to carry beyond it into a transcendental order of things. This would never have happened if they had not looked on the world with attentive and loving eyes. One of the advantages which they gained by their deliverance from abstractions and general truths was a freedom to use their senses and to look on nature without conventional propositions. More than this, they were all gifted with a high degree of physical sensibility and sometimes so enthralled by what they saw that it entirely dominated their being.

This is true of Wordsworth and Keats who brought back to poetry a keenness of eyes and ear which it had hardly known since Shakespeare. But it is no less true of Blake, Coleridge and Shelley. The careful, observing eye which made Blake a cunning craftsman in line and color was at work in his poetry. It is true that he seldom content with mere description of what he

saw, but, when he used description for an ulterior purpose to convey some vast mystery, his words are exact and vivid and make his symbols shine brightly before the eyes. Though Coleridge found some of his finest inspiration in dreams and trances, he gave to their details a singular brilliance of outline and character.

Though Shelly lived among soaring ideas and impalpable abstractions, he was fully at home in the visible world, if only because it was a mirror of eternity and worthy of attention for it. There are perhaps poets who live entirely in dreams and hardly notice the familiar scene, but the Romantics are not of their number. Indeed, their strength comes largely from the way in which they throw a new and magical light on the common face of nature and lure us to look for some explanation for the irresistible attraction which it exerts. In nature all the Romantic poets found their initial inspiration. It was not everything to them, but they would have been nothing without it. They found the exalting moments when they passed from sight to vision and pierced to the secrets of universe.

Future literature is expected to be the supreme literature with the imaginative conceptions of Romanticists. The poets, writers and thinkers of tomorrow are to create and creation enlightens the whole sentient and conscious self of man. Waking imagination, delving reality and rousing from the deadening routine of custom to a consciousness of immeasurable distance and unfathomable depths is inspired institution of tomorrow's literature.

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