

Nostalgia for Childhood: A Study from a Romantic Perspective

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It was not until the last decades of the eighteenth century that childhood emerged as a major theme in English poetry. There were, of course, reference to children in seventeenth and eighteenth century verse but these were scanty and occasional. It was usually the birthday or the death of a child of quality that suggested a few lines of verse. The child was not so much the subject as the occasion of the poem.

With the advent of Romanticism, childhood became the leading theme of several works, for it began to attract the attention as a subject. Various causes contrived to increase interest in the theme. Most important among these causes was the growing concern with the theories of education during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At one pole stood the theory suggested by Locke and his supporters. Opposing to it were Rousseau's views on education expounded in his great educational treatise, *Emile* (1762). Unlike Locke, Rousseau treated the child as a "self – active soul, inclined to virtue from birth, and not as a passive creature of external perception."¹ It was Rousseau's concept of childhood that informed the works of the romantics, to whom the theories of Locke, which had dominated English philosophy for a century, were a "deadly heresy". Another major cause that led to the growing interest in childhood was the miserable condition of many children at that time. This was one of the undesirable by – products of the Industrial Revolution which introduced new problems with regard to child labor. The straitened circumstances under which many children were living gave to the works of several writers such as Thomas Gray, Mrs. Trimmer, Hannah More and John Aikin in the eighteenth century and inspired some poems of the Romantics like those of Blake and Wordsworth.

What first strikes the reader of seventeenth and eighteenth – century verse on childhood is its general tendency to regard childhood as an acute nostalgic attitude. Few examples would suffice to illustrate this tendency. William Cowper, for instance, on receiving his "Mother's Picture out of Norfolk" expresses nostalgia for the "joys that once were mine." In "The Task" (1785) he remembers, "not without regret," his childhood's hours that sorrow since has much endeared". In his "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" Gray is touched with similar nostalgic feelings:

Ah, fields beloved in vain,
Where once my careless childhood strayed,
A stranger yet to pain.

Another feature that distinguishes seventeenth and eighteenth – century verse about childhood is the treatment of a child as a diminutive adult. Most often the poem focuses only momentarily on the child, while the greatest part of the dwells upon the child's feature prospects which are usually exaggerated and coloured with flattery: The little boys and girls are seen as the beaux and belles of the future with their intellectual faculties already developed. William Whitehead's poem "On the Birthday of a Young Lady (Four Years Old)" is a case in point. The poet asserts that the tongue of the four – year – old "young lady" could "lisp Downing of the mind." One can also find that emphasis is laid on the parental obligation of nourishing and accelerating the child's intellectual powers. At the close of "spring" in *The Seasons*, Thomson observes how "infant reason grows apace" and finds it a "delightful task" to "pour fresh instruction O'er the mind." Long borne in his "On his Mother" (1759) thanks his mother for the way she brought him up. He remembers how she "nursed my infant through" when he was a child and how she "taught my mind to grow".² It should be remembered that such views were expressed with in the age of Reason, an age that generally favored the intellect than the imagination as the guiding power in man.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century there could be discerned a deviation from its attitude. In the poetry composed within the last decades of that century one finds an exaltation of simplicity and realism in descriptions of children who are not necessarily connected with the nobility or the royal household. The hyperbolic

virtues that contemporary poets had been attributing to newborn infants began to be criticized. Well-worn sentiments and stock phrases in birthday odes tended to disappear. The set imagery of traditional verse on childhood was replaced by images drawn from nature. These shifting attitudes played an important part in laying the foundations of the Romantic concept of childhood.³

The Romantic concept of childhood could be said to be a blending of the nostalgic attitude of the seventeenth and early eighteenth – century poets, and his shifting attitude of the late eighteenth century. However, the main contribution which the Romantics made with regard to the child motif in poetry was the association of childhood with wisdom. In this respect they provided a re-interpretation of the theme of childhood. To them, childhood constituted the period of visionary experience during which the mind is most capable of accepting an imaginative and animated concepts of the universe. Moreover, the ability to imagine and create visionary worlds is especially evident in children. Fantasy in children is a means of compensation for what is unobtainable in reality. More importantly, it is a "precursors of creativity".

The Romantic was interested in all these forms of imagination – vision, fantasy dreams, and daydreams. In childhood they found the fertile soil where all these faculties could be developed. What appealed most to them in childhood was not its unproblematic and peaceful state, but its visionary experience which they regarded as one of the essential pre-requisites for the composition of

poetry, and which they consequently sought to restore.

The first Romantic poet to associate childhood with vision was William Blake, whose own childhood had been a period of visions and fantasies. When he was a little boy, he used to take long walks into the open country and bring back stories of angels claimed that he had seen with his own eyes, and of prophet he had conversed with. At the age of eight he asserted that he had seen a tree full of angels.⁴ His father's immediate reaction was to give the little liar a Sound whipping. On this occasion, he was saved by his mother's intervention, but it was she who later beats him for running in and saying he saw the prophet Ezekiel under a tree in the fields. As Mona Wilson in her biography of Blake put it, "the

boy's visionary faculty was perplexing to his truth-loving parents".⁵ These visions which characterized Blake's childhood remained with him as he grew older. This visionary quality outlasts childhood and becomes part of adulthood, as Blake states in a note written in 1808 on Sir Joshua Reynolds's idea that "the forms of childhood and age differ exceedingly," and affirms his belief that "Childhood and Age are equally belonging to Every Class."⁶

Such beliefs found utterance in Blake's poetry and may even have inspired his Songs of Innocence. (1789), which, in addition to being poems about children, could be said to have been written from a child's point of view. In other words, Blake had entered a childlike visionary state of mind before he put pen to paper. The poems are written by a man who was also a child because his visionary powers enabled him to live for a time in the Age of Innocence.

The Songs start with the "Introduction" poem in which the speaker is introduced as a "Piper"

Piped songs "down the valleys wild". He then encounters a child sitting upon a cloud. The latter asks speaker to write down the piped songs, which immediately obeys

And I plucked a hollow reed,
And I made a rural pen,
And I stain'd the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child my joy to hear, (16-20)

There is no doubt that the speaker here is a child, or at least an adult with a childlike mentality, for the simple manner in which he relates his story is typical of a child's way of telling a tale. This style is maintained throughout the following songs, in most of which the speakers are children.

Most of these child-speakers experience a vision in one way or another. In the "Introduction" poem for instance, the speaker sees a cloud-borne child whose imperative utterances reveal his inspirational character or his symbolic nature as inspiring vision that compels the speaker to compose. In the next poem the vision is revealed in the form of a dream. In "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found" taken from the Songs of Experience (1794), the vision takes the theriomorphic shape of a lion that is in fact called "a vision". In the latter poem "The Little Boy Found," the vision this time assumes an anthropomorphic shape. In "The Chimney Sweeper," a child behold an angel unlocking the black coffins in which children are imprisoned and taking them to sunny fields to sport in. "Night" a similar vision is attained in which a host of angles are seen on their nocturnal mission of pouring blessings over the slumbering creatures of the night. In the same poem the heavenly fields are described where the lion. After having cast away its wrath, is able to sleep

beside the bleating lamp and even act as its guardian. This association of vision with children is one of the characteristics which run throughout the Songs of Innocence whose main theme, as C. M. Bowra remarks, is "the childlike vision of existence" .⁷

The visionary power enjoyed by Blake's children enables them to animate the otherwise lifeless objects of nature. In "Laughing Sons", for instance, the rippling of the stream and the blowing of the wind through the meadows are interpreted as sounds of laughter. The world of the Songs of Innocence is that of talking animals, plants and objects; an emmet could have a conversation with a glow-worm. A lion could speak to children. In the Songs of Experience a similar outlook to nature is presented – though a quite different tone is evoked. The earth speaks to the bard and a cloud and a pebble are quoted as they offer contradictory definitions of love.

To accept Blake's world and enjoy his poetry, it would, therefore, require a childlike state of mind on the part of the reader, a state which Blake himself achieved when he composed his poems. It would also demand the sloughing off of one's rational faculty of reason which, according to Blake, could only hamper the power of the imagination.

Blake's concept of childhood, therefore, lies at the core of his poetic theory. He not only drew attention to the relationship between childhood and the experience of vision, but also found it indispensable for the poet to experience a childlike mentality which could enable him to attain the inspiring vision.

Like Blake, Wordsworth's concept of childhood began, as a critic once remarked with himself, and this Concern with his own childhood became the means of establishing truths about childhood itself, and that,

in turn, only for establishing about the whole nature of man .His childhood, like that of Blake too, was characterized by its visionary moments. In the first book of The Prelude, an autobiographical poem published posthumously in 1850, he refers to that early period of his life as "Those recollected hours that have the charm / off visionary things." In the second book he remembers how he used to stand

Beneath some rock, listening to
notes that are,
The ghostly language of the ancient
earth.
Or make their dim abode in distant
winds.
Thence did I drink their
visionary power? (308 – 11)

Ordinary objects of nature, like sparrows' nests in the poem "The Sparrow's Nest" would seem to Wordsworth "like a vision of delight". He not only gave nature a "double vision" as Blake did, but also went a step further to identify himself with it.

This attitude to nature was reflected in his well – known ode "Intimation of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (1807), the poem to which Wordsworth attached great importance when he decided to place it at the end of his collected poems, thus regarding it as the crown of his work.

The ode begins with the poet's awareness of a sense of loss. There was a time, he says in the opening stanza, when every object of nature was "appareled in celestial light". But that time seems to have gone forever, and the visionary power which he had possessed during his childhood has never been restored: "the things which I have seen I now can see no more". The expected question concerning the whereabouts of the vanished vision

poses itself at the end of the fourth stanza:

Writer is fled the visionary
gleam?

Where is it now, the glory and the
dream? (56 – 57)

With this unanswered question he discontinued the ode. At this point it is quite obvious that the greatest loss felt by the poet after he had grown into manhood is the loss of vision, a fact which is clearly revealed in the very title of the poem.⁸

Resuming the ode in 1806, Wordsworth attempted to answer the question at the end of the fourth stanza by having recourse to the theory of pre-existence. Heavenly vision, he states in the fifth stanza, accompany us to earth when we are born: "Heaven lies about us in our infancy". As we grow up, however, we begin to lose touch with them. But not quite so, for despite the fact that "Shades of the prison – house begin to close / upon the growing boy, "he still "beholds the light". At the threshold of manhood, he can still experience vision and is "by the vision splendid ... on his attended". Then, unfortunately,

... The Man perceives it [the vision]
die away.
And fade into the light of common day.
(75 – 76)

Despite the poet's keen awareness of his loss, he chooses not to sink into pathos by concluding the poem with a mere lament over an irretrievable loss. Rather, he tries to put a brave face on it by finding solace in the gains of maturity which compensate for the losses of childhood. Therefore, the poem does not, or at least does not seem to, end on a regretful note: "We will grieve not, rather find / Strength in what remains behind". Nevertheless, "the most

intense emotion of the poem is one of regretful loss," in spite of the consoling conclusion of the poem.

It is more characteristic of Wordsworth – a "worshipper of Nature," as he called himself in "Tintern Abbey" – to succumb to nature's law of growth than to sneer at it. Accepting age is part of the wisdom he has come to learn in his mature years, as he writes in "The Fountain":

The wiser mind
Mourns less for what age takes away
Than what it leaves behind. (34 – 36)

This is a lesson he has learned from his very gospel of nature, from birds, as he says in the same poet.

With Nature never do they [birds]
wage
A foolish strife: they
see
A happy youth, and
their old age
Is beautiful and free,
(41 – 44)

But his regrets for what age leaves behind never seem to forsake him, for the fact remains that

... we are pressed by heavy laws
And often, glad no more,
We were a face of joy, because
We have been glad of yore.
(45 – 48)

The speaker is totally convinced here that the laws of nature are "heavy". However, they must be endured, for to oppose them would result in a foolish strife. In other words, any attempt to recapture the state of childhood would prove of no avail. Unlike Blake, who has succeeded in re-entering the visionary state of childhood, Wordsworth expresses his wish to regain his early visions but cannot manage to fulfill this wish. This probably accounts for the lake of descriptions of actual visionary

moments in his poetry as those found in Blake; his poems reveal the necessity of visions rather than depict or present one to the reader.

However, Wordsworth's critical premises, stated in both his poetry and prose, indicate that his childhood and its visionary quality are important in the making of poetry. In his preface to his second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), he asserted his intention to write about incidents from common life and to "throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way."⁹ This "certain colouring of imagination" is undoubtedly attained in the visionary, childlike state of mind, a state he had longed for all his life, as he says in the following lines in his "Intimation of Immortality from Recollection of Early Childhood":

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:

So was it when my life
began:

So is it now I am a man:
So be it when I shall grow
old,

Or let me

die!

The child is father of the
man. (40)

The friendship which bound Wordsworth and Coleridge may have stemmed largely from the various affinities in their intellectual interests. This could explain the fact that Coleridge's attitude towards childhood is quite similar to that already found in Wordsworth, an attitude characterized by its nostalgic tone, this is explicit in a number of Coleridge's poems. In his sonnet "On Quitting School for College." Written in 1791, Coleridge bids a sad farewell to his childhood days, expressing his wish that "those happy days" would "return again." In

"Absence," a poem written in the same year, he sees childhood as a period "when Peace, and Cheerfulness and Health / Enriched me with the best of thought". In his sonnet "To the River Otter," composed two years later, he contemplates the lasting impressions that his childhood has impinged upon his mind: "so deep impressed / Sink the sweet scenes of childhood".

At their face value, these musings over childhood could lend themselves to traditional interpretations; Coleridge may only be attempting to recapture a happier state in his life. A closer analysis, however, reveals that what nourished such nostalgic feelings was the visionary experience which Coleridge with the period of childhood and which he aspired attain.

In childhood Coleridge found the fertile ground to plant the seeds of vision and imagination. In "To the River Otter," there is an apostrophe to the "Visions of Childhood," which he believes have "oft ... beguil'd / Lone manhood's cares, yet waking fondest sighs". It is this visionary aspect he finds in childhood that leads him to conclude the sonnet with the desire to be a child" once more. In "Frost at Midnight," written in 1798, he remembers how, when he was a child, he used to dream "with unclosed lids" and how he "brooded all the following mom" over the things he dreamt of.¹⁰ It is the Romantic tendency of daydreaming which is here associated with childhood and because of which he says that his childhood haunts him "with a wild pleasure". In Hartley, his son, he finds the ability to

See and here

The lovely shapes and sounds
intelligible

If that eternal language, which thy God
Utters. (58 – 61)

In he second part of "Christabel" he again speaks of him as "such a vision

to the sight". That Coleridge's concept of childhood is closely associated with his concept of the poet is shown in his lectures on Shakespeare:

"The poet is one who carries the simplicity of childhood into the powers of manhood: who with a soul unshackled by habit, unshackled by custom. Contemplates all things with the freshness and wonder of a child."¹¹

Such a belief is exemplified in "Something Childish, But Very Natural," a fly poem written and sent by Coleridge to his wife in 1799, in which he wishes for a pair of wings to help him fly to her. As of course his wish could not be granted, he chooses to dream of her in his sleep. The title of the poem is quite telling. The conjunction "but" both defines and defends Coleridge's attitude towards childhood against conventional views: what other people might regard as "childish" and hence inappropriate for adults is believed by the poet to be "natural". Against the traditional views which sneered at the wishful thinking of children. Elsewhere he describes infants as "Untaught, yet wise!". Like Blake, he mistrusts experience which could destroy the innate virtue found in the state of childhood. In his poem "Progress of Vice," composed in 1790, he says that "inborn Truth and Virtue" guide the child who might otherwise be inclined to vice as he grows up and gains more experience. Experience is never the path to truth, for "all truth," Coleridge contends "is a species of revelation," which is yet another Blakean belief.

Whether Coleridge was successful in carrying his childhood into his manhood is beside the mark that suffices to say that he desired to achieve it. This desire is clearly echoed in his poem "To an Infant" in which he identifies himself with the addressed child: "A Babe art thou – and such a Thing am I".

The nostalgic attitude found in the early Romantics like Wordsworth and Coleridge is adopted by the later Romantics. In "To Wordsworth" (1816), Shelley assures the older poet that they are both weighed down by the burden of the loss of their childhood days. "Childhood and youth," he says:

Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving
thee to mourn
These common woes I fell.

The carefree, unproblematic state of children is brought into sharp contrast with the troubled state of adults in "Julian and Maddalo," a poem which was composed in 1818 and which takes the form of conversation on the power of man over his mind. Julian, pointing at a little girl, tells Maddalo:

See
This lovely child. Blithe. Innocent.
And free,
She spends a happy time with little
care.
While we to such sick
thoughts subjected are, (165 – 8)

Again in "A Vision of the Sea," a poem written in 1820, one finds a similar contrast while his mother in the poem is assailed by worries about "the pang that awaits us [i. e. death]", the child in her lap is smiling without a care. In "Stanzas," dated 1818, Shelley contrasts his perfect past with the embittered present he has come to know:

Alas: I have nor hope nor health.
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The age in meditation found, (19 – 22)

Therefore, he wishes he could

Lie down like a
tried child

And weep away the life of care
Which I have born and
yet must bear. (30 – 32)

He laments the fact that he has "too soon grown old". In his "Letter to Maria Gisborne," he writes, "I Yield to the impulse of infancy," though this provoke the sarcasm of some people who "laugh at me".

Joy in the absence of worry, however, are not the only attractions of childhood which foster such feelings of regret in Shelley. What further augments his regret is the loss of his childhood visions, as he states in "Epipsychidion," written in 1821. He recalls how "in the golden prime of my youth's dawn "he used to have "visioned wanderings" (191 – 2). In "Alastor," a poem that has the quest of a poetic ideal for its main theme, Shelley starts with an account of the childhood of the hero, whom he names "a poet". The first thing the reader knows about his childhood is his visionary habits:

By solemn vision, and bright silver
dream.

His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth
and ambient air.
Sent to his heart its choicest
impulses (67 – 70)

But age robbed him of this visionary power, so he resolved to regain it and his attempt to retrieve the lost vision takes the form of a literal quest: the whole journey made by the character in the poem is to find a "vision" which he once beheld in his sleep. The vision is that of a maiden who is the embodiment of "poesy". As he flings his arms around her, she vanishes, leaving an "empty space" behind. Resolved to regain the vision, he chases it "beyond the realms of dream" but finally perishes in the attempt.

Another character, whose childhood abounds in visionary moments, is Cythna in *The Revolt of Islam*, a poem written in 1817 and published in the following year. Cythna's was a happy, innocent as well as a visionary childhood. She used to be "free and happy". When she was "a child of twelve years old" she used to behold "shaping visions [which] o'er her swept". This is the state she lost as she grew up and was awakened to the sorrows of the real world when she heard

A mother's desolate wail
O'er her polluted child, from innocent
blood
Poured on the earth. (II,743– 5)

The restoration of the state of childhood and vision, which is denied in "Alastor", forms part of the conclusion in *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). The action in that four – act lyrical drama which is the liberation of Prometheus who stands for man, is complete by the end of the third act. The final act does not serve the action of the poem; it is rather intended as a song celebrating Prometheus's eventual freedom. One of the major themes of the poem is "man's transformed perception of the universe, "a theme which is conveyed in the narrative form of the first, second and third acts of the drama, and in visual form in the final act. As Richard Cronin explains, "Act I represents the new man by representing how he sees."¹² The whole act is a new vision of the world which Prometheus has come to attain after his liberation.

This vision is associated with the state of childhood in the final act when Panthea describes the Spirit of the Earth, a child slumbering within the sphere which she sees before her "Man," sings the Earth, has finally become "a child restored".

In Keats's poetic thought, as in that of Shelley, the experience of vision is an indispensable requirement for the poet; for he believes that it takes a vision to compose a poem. In "I stood tip – toe," the first poem in his first volume of verse, *Poem* (1827), he states that "What first inspired a bard of old is sing" were "Shapes from the invisible world" which came to him from a "wondrous region," that Keats links with a transcendental realm.

In the same volume, Keats expresses his fear of a possible loss of vision. He writes in his "Epistle to George Felton Matthew," that he is

Oft in doubt whether at
all
I shall again see Phoebus in the
morning;
Or flush'd Aurora in the roseate
dawning;
Or a white Naiad in a rippling stream.
(56)

The experience of vision is here associated with the world of classical mythology with which Keats was greatly concerned throughout his writing career.

Keats's references to childhood are not, or do not seem to be, autobiographical as for instance Wordsworth's are. This might be due to Keats's silence about his own childhood; a silence which is attributed to the death of his mother which is a painful experience from which he hardly recovered. He always recoiled from her memory and seldom discussed his childhood in his verse or letters. This could also account for the lack of such nostalgic feelings for the lost state of childhood as one finds in Wordsworth. On the other hand; Keats's untimely death might have been another reason for the lack or such a nostalgic attitude. He actually never grew old enough to have the

time ponder, feel and lament the loss of childhood.

However, from what one can infer from his poetry, one could fairly say that Keats; shared the nostalgic attitude with his fellow Romantics. He states in "Sleep and Poetry," written in 1816 that childhood is a period "without grief or care". The state of childhood is contrasted with that state of childhood not only in its characterized joy and absence of care, but also in its presence of imagination and vision. Keats speaks of his "present ... manhood" as a period in which "the high / imagination cannot freely fly", and in which "the visions all are fled ... into the light of heaven" lines which echo Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*.

In Keats's poetry, one finds the wish to restore a childlike state – a wish has characterized the poetry of his fellow Romantics as well. In *Endymion* (1818), Keats's longest poem to which he devoted one quarter of his active writing life. The hero tells his sister Peona how he often goes to a "deep hollow," where he would "bubble up the through a reed / So reaching back to boyhood. When he later steps into the bowers of the "child" Adonis, he feeds upon plumps which could easily "melt between an infant's gums". The bowers themselves are called "visions". Again a sort of childlike vision is attained when Endymion is led by peona into her own power where her attempts to comfort her slumbering brother are compacted to "Dryope's lone lulling of her child". At the same time he feels the presence of "shaping visions all about my sight". At this moment he experiences vision: he beholds Cynthia, the goddess of the moon, who herself presents the ultimate vision that lies at the end of Endymion's quest, and whom he later calls "my sovereign vision".

In the Glaucus – Circe episode, which follows the Adonis episode, this desire to restore childhood is revealed in the character of Glaucus, a fisherman doomed to endless decrepitude by Circe, and is now waiting to be delivered and restored to youth. His consent to her blandishments is mainly due to her willingness to restore him to childhood as he explains the reason for his submission to her:

Who could resist? Who in this
universe?
She took me like a child of suckling
time
And cradled me in the roses. (III,
453 – 7)

It would be inadequate to conclude this discussion of Keats's concept of childhood without a reference to his "T is the Witching Hour," a poem he included in a letter sent to his brother and sister – in – law in October 1818. He pictures a little child in its cradle with a lyre – the musical instrument of Apollo. The classical god of music and poetry – hanging close by. The child reaches out its hand to hold the lyre and "Paddles a little tune and sings". Keats hails the child as a poet "bard art thou completely". In Keats's apostrophe of the child one finds his belief in childhood as the only period in which the poets is made: "A Poet now or never, little child".¹³

The seventeenth and eighteenth century poets expressed an acute nostalgia for childhood which they saw as a period of joy, peace and security, a period which, once lost, could not literally be regained. In this respect, their attitude towards childhood was a conventional one. Furthermore, as a result of their reliance on reason as a guiding power in man, they welcomed its acceleration

in children and hailed its presence in adulthood.

The Romantics' revolt against the age of Reason and its rationalism and enlightenment, and their exaltation of the power of imagination and vision, enabled them to re-interpret the theme of childhood which they regarded as a state of mind rather than a transient period in an individual's lifetime. The Romantics believed that vision and imagination are most exuberant during the period of childhood and are therefore most liable to be experienced then, for the child's mind lacks the intellectual and rationalizing capacity of that of the adult, and is for that reason most prone to an imaginative and visionary conception of the universe. Not only was this Romantic view on childhood new in its approach, but it was also helpful in making childhood itself a retrievable state that could be experienced by the poet.

Such a re-interpretation of the Romantic concept of childhood paves the way for a revolution of the Romantic theory of poetry in general, for the Romantics' concern with the theme of childhood seems largely from their concern with poetry. The ability to compose – as Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelly and Keats believed – is dependent on the ability to perceive vision which is in turn dependent on the poet's power to restore a childlike state of mind that helps him enter a visionary experience. The theme of childhood, therefore, forms one of the most vital aspects in the poetic theory of the Romantic poets.

Notes

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