

## THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES OF THE STYLISTIC LIBERATION OF WORDSWORTH

By

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### Abstract

*This paper aims to delineate the stylistic richness and liberty prevalent in the texts of the poet, Wordsworth, which are rarely manifested by the contemporaries of Wordsworth grouped as the Romantics due to their distinct thematic and stylistic features. The paper, owing to its quality of content, affords to exhume the metrical discordances, socialized dictions laid by the poet in the body of the poems that the other romantics could not afford so abundantly. It intervenes with the hypothesis that the poetic style exercised by Wordsworth nears to the taste of social stylistic patterning of everyday usages rather than all other romantic poets in the light of poetic style and diction. It aims at interpreting and critically analyzing the content of the poems by Wordsworth and those by the other contemporaries. The study involves theoretical analysis and explanatory interpretation, that claims the development of the facts through researching archives of public libraries, courtrooms, and published academic journals. It is a qualitative content analysis-based research at which secondary data from secondary sources are incorporated. Thus, the paper culminates with the content analysis where it paves to show how distinctively Wordsworth creates the dictions of the poems in order to make them socially inclusive and make the style as free as a fountain that other romantics do not tread.*

**Keywords:** *Diction, liberation, romantic, sociolect, style, wordsworth*

### Introduction

The word 'Romanticism' is denotatively specified with a special genre containing very contrastive subject matter apart from the arena of theorization of what is classical. But the inception of this period, the very stern theorization is being variegated with multi-dimensional interpretations. Behler (1968) proceeds to define 'Romanticism' with two approaches, that is; (i) Approach to Romanticism based on the meaning of that very word and (ii) Approach to Romanticism based on the matter. And the second

approach includes the literature, the poetry, and the programmatic writing as a movement of Romanticism (p. 110). Behler (1968) referred in his paper that Friedrich Schlegel as marked 'Romantic presents a sentimental content in a fantastic form' (p. 112) which broadens romantic across the Shakespearean as well as after-medieval literature. But, the uniformity of the content and concept of the romantics that differentiated them was 'romantic imagination' which gets its definition through the pens of the romantics as Wordsworth marked it something above,

something beyond as if they thought something true, then opened their eyes and saw it true and beautiful. The author also retorted that all the romantics except Lord Byron tried something serious and deep but the medium of their expressions and the artistic decoration of the content distanced them from each other as Coleridge afforded to narrate the underlying distinction between Wordsworth and the poet himself marking that Wordsworth had indulged in intervening charms in everyday phenomena while Coleridge was experimenting on imposing distantness in the near incidences (Behler, 1968, p. 112). Wordsworth invoked elementary feelings of the human heart and this invocation necessitated emphatic and plain languages because these sorts of choosing disavow the aristocratic restraint in expressions (E. L., 2019).

The poet strived to present human nature that paved the way to choose rustic indigenes and the expressions of naturalistic feelings got its foundation on the languages uncommon for the existing taste (Wordsworth, 1800, para. 5). The deliberate intervention of real-world languages unified the poet, Wordsworth, and this unification or unified way of linguistic or artistic presentation from the part of the poet is the projecting issue that this paper tends to highlight. The down-to-earth incidences and persons localize languages and this concept is tended to investigate on the matter of stylistic freedom in comparison to the poets of neo-classics and culminate to the establishment of the idea that such freedom along with deliberate choice also creates

Wordsworth distinctively within the time frame of romanticism in English literary arena.

The investigation focuses solely on the real language of men which is more than linguistic discovery; rather it tries to uncover the social aspects of language (Romaine, 1994) that the poet labours to establish through exercising stylistic freedom by breaking the restrains of aristocratic societal patterning of poetic expressions. This paper investigates the extent of stylistic liberation which aims to result in exposing Wordsworth a distinctive poet among his contemporaries. Thus, the paper procreates the problems as (i) whether Wordsworth exercises distinctive patterning of poetic expressions, (ii) whether his linguistic novelty has societal aspects and, (iii) whether he surpasses his contemporaries with societal commitment.

### **Literature Review**

The projection of intellectual efficacy and rational dictates is an exercised practice that tends to establish a norm and a diction through the forms of literature (Robinson, 1976, p.3). This type of artefacts generates a distinct space for these forms which then turns to be tried and targeted for the distinctive view of the society. Henceforth, the neo-classic poets strived to characterize poetry as dignified with forms and functions, it divided classes in the society as it deliberately mutes a class of people who remain untouched in the contents and they keep these literary pieces untried due to intellectual abundances, non-societal

dictions and laborious experiments on rhetoric and prosody. This thoughtful distinction of language for the poetry and for the society has nothing to impact on linguistic constructs. Rather it is fundamentally socio-political (Romaine, 1994, p.1).

The silence and muteness in creative writings have their purposes. It is a decisive tool from the part of the writers to hide other's identities in order to serve the greater purpose from the point of view of that other who tends to remain silent (Teleky, 2001). Contrary to this, the absence is not synonymous with silence. Absence is a socio-political construct that aims at abnegating the existence of the others on purpose (Guignery, 2009). It is called a purposeful choice of abnegation because poetry reflects individual ideas as the replication of social experiences (Riley, 2009, p. 349) and when a selective portion of masses is unheard, it does indicate the culpable silencing ordained to them. William Wordsworth, on the other hand, took a strong stance against these illusions of neo-classicists who faltered to reveal things as they were (Pope, 2005). This stance against them moved Wordsworth to collect materials from the everyday trifling incidents that afforded the poet knit the body of the poetry with freedom from metrical assonances, stylistic sophistication, and dignified dictions.

Gelpi (1992) reviewed the work of Walter Kalaidjian titled *Languages of Liberation: The Social Text in Contemporary American Poetry* where the reviewer posited the idea

that the recent move of the poets towards social inclusion changed the narratives of the poetry. The languages turned to explore and discover the social identity, values, psychology, and morality. These are the purposes of the poetry which is gaining its momentum through liberation from restricted versification and phraseology (p. 631).

Fruoco (2017) remarked in his medieval polyphony that Chaucer was a man who spoke the languages of the royal class of the society, but his poetic urge which reclined more from the point of view of a sociolinguist made him aware of the varieties of English (Northern, East Midland, West Midland, Southern, and Kentish) and enabled him how to produce these varieties in order to make justice to all without paying any bias to any variety as being spoken by the poet himself (p.9-10). The author evaluated his defense for the sociolinguistic aspect of Chaucer quoting from *The Summoner's Tale* where he projected that the friar uses Latin, French as well as provincial Middle English when situation claims that he needs to uphold his dignity as a cleric, to maintain his social ranks and to involve in gossiping:

In *The Summoner's Tale*, the friar often uses Latin, which seems normal for a cleric, but also tends to punctuate his speech with French phrases, especially when he is addressing Thomas, "O Thomas, je vous dy, Thomas, Thomas!" ("O Thomas! Thomas! Thomas! Je vous dis!" III.1832), and his wife, "'Now dame,' quod he, 'now je vous dy sanz doute'" ("Madame, je vous dis sanz doute"

III.1838). Here, the Friar obviously uses fragments of French in order to make apparent his social rank and to impress Thomas's wife. But when the friar asks Thomas about the whereabouts of his spouse, he then shows little desire to react to this linguistic competition and answers in provincial Middle English, "Yond in the yerd I trowe that she be, [...] and she wol come anon" ("Out in the garden, I expect," said he [ . . . ] 'she's bound to come in soon'" III.1798-99). (p.11).

This is remarked as a social urge which enables the poet to draw the pictures as they are through the presentation of the languages spoken by the society people though it is polyphonic vernacular. Even the Pardoner boldly speaks: "in Latyn I speke a wordes few,/To saffron with my predicacioun,/And for to stire hem to devocioun" (VI.344-46) (and say a few words in Latin/That's to give spice and colour to my sermon/It also helps to stir them to devotion) (Fruoco, 2017, p.11).

Again, linguistic constructs, in the view of the sociolinguists, is a social phenomenon (Romaine, 1994). The poets reveal these societal aspects of language by picking up the words from everyday phenomena of life and living amidst the cosmos. These common instances are attired with semiotic implications in order to provide them with poetic implication (Miles, 1965). Thus, the change from 'nature and power to light, sun and night; from fate, virtue, scene to dream, mother, flower, sea, sky' revealed through the poetry of William Wordsworth (p. 355). Because Wordsworth had to experiment on

direct images apart from the distant and gothic implications of images which were tried by Coleridge borrowed from Germanic. And the poet advanced to endow literal associations of those direct images (p.356).

Versification and metrical composition are bidding principles for poetry, which can be considered a type of restrictions on the free flow of thoughts, emotions and feelings. The rise of the novels gets its momentum to liberate the human flow of passion from structural restrictions. In the case of poetry, the blank verse was a sort of trial, though before the victory of novels, of these restrictions which culminated to free verses. William Shakespeare and Milton developed blank verses in their compositions and almost all the writers of the romantic period followed this trend of Miltonic intervention of blank verses (Shaw, 2007, p.1). It liberated the poets from the restricted principles of metrical sequencing. All the romantic poets utilized the Miltonic freedom through blank verse, though Coleridge tried little of this form. Wordsworth used this form but he diverted in most of the cases and could not maintain regularity as: "Five years have past; five summers, with the length/of five long winters! And again I hear/These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs/With a soft inland murmur. – Once again/Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs." (Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey, lines 1–5) (Parini, 2005, p. 655). But the free verse is a more inspiring effort in the case of liberating the poets from the pool of sacrificial metrical pyres. If this form had been tried with much

exuberance before Walt Whitman (Kirby-Smith, 1998), it could have been William Wordsworth who proclaimed the freedom of aristocracy from the poetry.

### **Methodology**

The credibility, validity, and authenticity of existing knowledge and the identified and generated knowledge can be ensured only when that knowledge is retrieved or accessed through following a rigorous methodological way so that the persons who tend to re-prove that idea to gain the identical knowledge can easily get to that pinnacle of knowledge. That is why; research claims a systematic way of investigation (Redmen & Mory, 2009). Identification of the problem, what may be a probable solution to that problem, what are the theoretical framework to investigate that problem, what are the sources of data, how the research data is collected, how the data is measured and interpreted- all are included in that systematic way of investigation which is called research design (S. Rajasekar et al., 2013, p.5). So, it is imperative to have a clear research design to begin an investigation.

### **Identification of Research Problem**

The first and prime necessity for a research initiative is to identify the research problem. A problem or a central problem among a bunch of related problems can be identified through the reviews of pieces of literature (S. Rajasekar et al., 2013, p.2). The pieces of literature reviewed above indicate that the evaluation and silencing of a language spoken by a specific society do not depend

on its linguistic constructs; rather it is a political decision that determines the prominence and negligence of a language. This indication raises a problem of whether the literary pieces that indulge in aristocratic overplay of languages downplaying the language of very common people deliberately mutes the speeches of the common mass. William Wordsworth, perhaps, is the first poet who had some brooding over this problem and he declared against this hypocritical practice of the poet of the neo-classical period. Thus, the paper initiates to identify whether the poets can make a mass absent from the appearance in the literature with the references from the poets of the romantic period and whether the poet, William Wordsworth, can be justified on the fact of his effort to create a space for the men in society in his poetry.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Romaine (1994) posits that language has a social perspective; it includes transmutability, Communicability, understandability, and if the poetry needs to be inclusive in respective of social class, it must ensure these criteria. Thus, the Wordsworthian effort of all-inclusiveness in his poetry is attempted to justify from the point of socio-linguistic theory.

### **Choosing of Research Method**

The research problem and theoretical framework of that problem indicate that empirical data analysis suits for this purpose which aims to collect and analyze non – numerical data to search for a theme and

holistic features and it does by following the specified way that is; content / conceptual analysis (Shaghi, 2016, p.7). This paper aims at interpreting and critically analyzing the content of the poetry of the romantic poets to prove the hypothesis or disprove the null hypothesis. Consequently, the qualitative research method serves the purpose of the research as per the nature of the research.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

This research involves theoretical analysis and explanatory interpretation which claims the development of the facts through 'researching archives of public libraries, courtrooms and published academic journals'. This is none the less an empirical research that claims the collection of data from secondary sources except interviews, survey, focus group discussion (Shaghi, 2016, p.7-8). Sources such as books, journals, blog posts, and previous research studies are used for the critical justification of the research problem.

### **Data Analysis Method**

Rajasekar et al. (2013) claim that there are two indispensable rules of modern research, such as; (i) The freedom of creative imagination necessarily subjected to rigorous experimentation and (ii) The interpretation of the facts that were collected (p.32). It is a qualitative research where secondary data from secondary sources are being used. As per the condition and nature of the research, desk-based content analysis claims acceptability.

### **Conversational Aspect of Wordsworth**

Kurland (2002) has a distilled remark on the language that it has a conversational aspect. This social aspect of language includes both the speakers and listeners having proper knowledge of each other, identical interests, and biases (para.5) to make conversation successful because these tools increase comprehensibility of the language, and eventually, communication is established between the parties. Wordsworth, in most of the cases, posits the ideas, thoughts and expresses feelings in such a manner that these are though emerging out of 'I' absorbing in 'We. Thus, the feelings and emotions are turning to the proprietorship of them who are present there. In the poem, A Farewell, the poet, and the sister feel alike and have identical passion for the cottage, as the poem states "We leave you here in solitude to dwell/ With these our latest gifts of tender thought;/ Thou, like the morning, in thy saffron coat, /Bright gowan, and marsh-marigold, farewell!" (L.19-22). It is the tender thought for the cottage that is bestowed by both of them and the other entity, except the poet (the sister of the poet), has consent with the thought and expressions of the poet. Again, the cottage also participates with the poet and his sister in the process of merry-making, joyousness, and tranquil life. The cottage has turned to be an animate entity that can listen to the appeal of the poet and that has the power to gift. Thus, the poet lets the cottage remind of its gift to ordain to the to be wed lady who is likely to enter here: "With joyousness, and with a thoughtful cheer, /Will come to you;

to you, herself will wed; /And love the blessed life that we lead here” (L. 30-32). Thus, the poet, his sister, and the cottage are equally participating in the discussion and as if they were planning how the future would be knitted here with the presence of the fourth person. This conversational tone is a central characteristic of Wordsworth’s poetry which agrees on the linguistic property of communicability.

### **Provision of Space for Meaning-making**

The ultimate goal of a language is to transfer the message to others and only transferring serves the purpose of language little. The targeted entity must understand the meaning, they must have comprehensibility of the message. Gesture, posture, and pause between the lines serve the purpose of meaning-making as it provides space and scope for the listeners or readers to comprehend the meaning of the message (Kurland, 2002). When the poet determines he needs to transfer his meaning to more than one, he creates spaces in the body of the poems. The feelings and deep emotions of the poet become social property. The poet takes the assistance of several tools and techniques to create this space in-text of the poem. These are (i) continuation of a sentence to several lines of a poem, (ii) creating pauses in a line by the use of periodic marks, (iii) inserting elaborative phrases and sentences into the sentence (Thompson, 2019). These techniques have two purposes as (a) it tends to clarify the statement what the poet says and (b) it tends to make the readers believe what the poet wants to mean. In the very first stanza

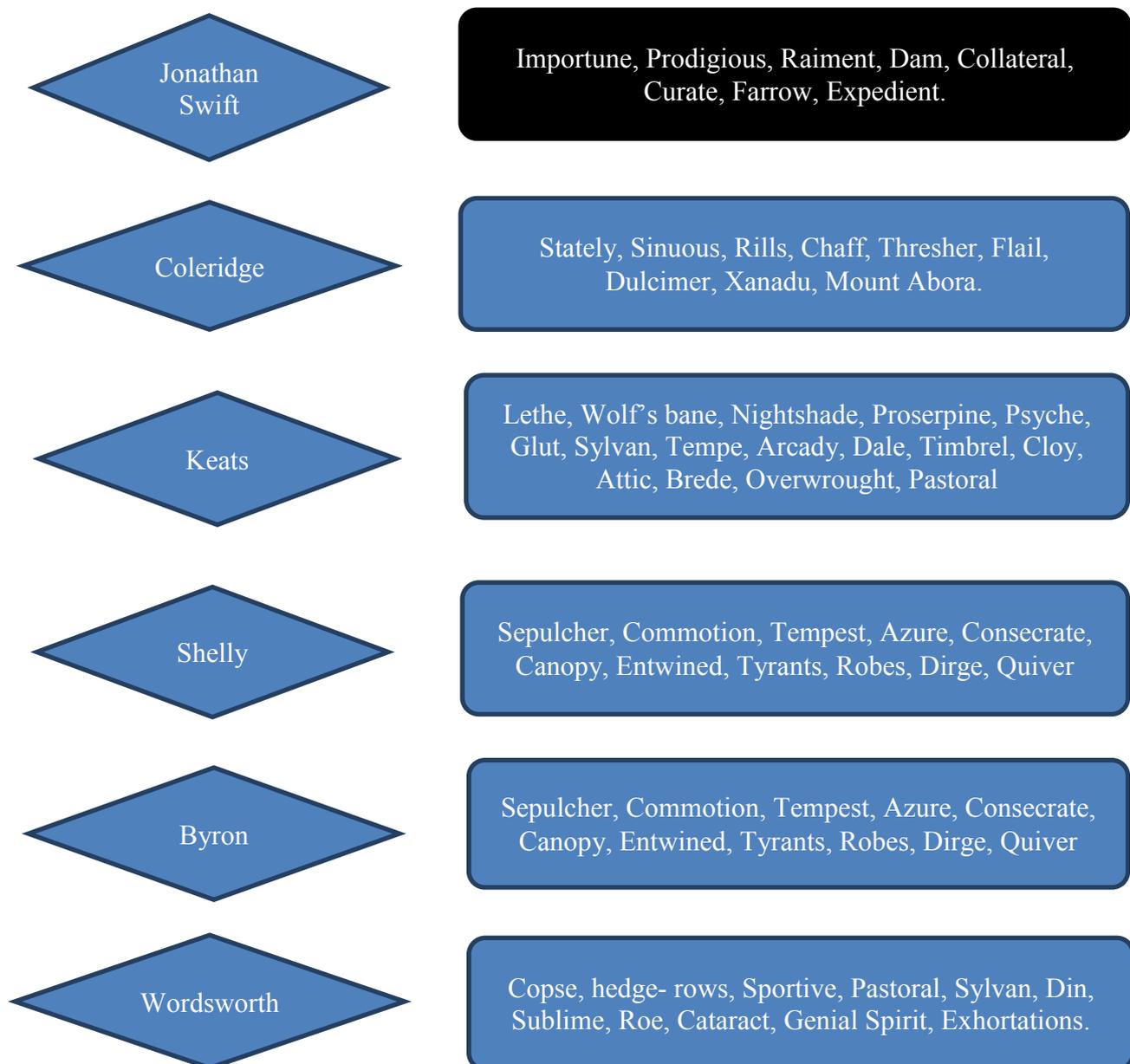
of the poem, A Complaint can be taken as the touchstone of the evidence of the above-stated concepts. The opening line “There is a change” proceeds with two dashes (--/ a space) and then it states “and I am poor”. This “dash” or space has a linguistic implication. This dash tries to bridge two distinct senses which could have been filled with any gloomy expressions of faces to project despair if these had been verbal expressions. Here, the ‘dash’ implies ‘filler’ that fills the gap of gesture in non-verbal communication. This line tends to be a photographic negative of non-verbal communication. Again, the second and third lines of the poem, A Complaint, exemplifies the second step complexity of verbal communication. “Your love hath been, nor long ago, / A fountain at my fond heart’s door.” It would have been an honest, unfeigned confession like ‘Your love hath been a fountain at my fond heart’s door’. But the deliberate insertion of “nor long ago” has barred to the free and smooth flow of the confession though it provided the readers with a temporal context of “how long ago love had been a fountain”. Thus, the poet attempts to fill the gaps which a piece of poetry creates through the semiotic representation of images and that of the urge of the metrical quest for the prosodic principle that enlivens a poem and makes it distinctive from other forms of writing.

### **The Diction of Romantic Poetry**

Poetry is made distinctive through the exercise of poetic diction, which refers to a distinctive kind of style, words exercised only by the poets though the romantic poets

(Especially, Wordsworth) revolted against this theory of distinctiveness and Wordsworth proclaimed using vocabularies in poetry which are near to men living in society. They used folk tales as their materials for writing and the practice of delineating materials from folk tales, rustic lives, created a sublime atmosphere around their poetry as these stories were the stories of village illiterate people (Deniz, 2009).

Thus, a transition from the dictions used in the enlightenment period was visible in the dictions of the romantic period (Enlightenment and Romanticism Vocabulary List, 2020). An interpolation of the frequencies of vocabularies used by the authors of these very two adjacent periods suffices to have a glimpse of the distinctiveness of the dictions.



The dictions marked and remarked are indicative in the case of characterizing all the poets existing in the romantic period and even one of the representative writers of the enlightenment period distinctively. Swift is reclining to the Latino-French somberness through his diction, Coleridge shows fondness to create a distant world of 'Xanado' where no human from everyday life can reach, and Keats has drawn a sylvan history at the bank of Arcady where the gods and deities of the Mount Olympus reside, and then the distant or faery world created by Coleridge and Keats turns tumultuous due to the tempest which overshadows both orient and oxidant posited through the furious voice of Shelly. He laboured to amalgam the history, culture, and tradition of orients and the oxidants in his poetry and revealed his urge to shake the world as a whole through the commotion. He mixes up the world myths in the *Alastor or the Spirit of Solitude*: "Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste/Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers/Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,/Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange/Sculptured on the alabaster obelisk,/Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphynx,/Dark Æthiopia in her desert hills/..... Among the ruined temples there,/Stupendous columns, and wild images/Of more than man, where marble daemons watch/The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men /Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around," (Abrams, 1993, p. 653, L. 109-20). The Byronic world is gloomy with city light and hypocrisy prevailed in that life. His streams do not flow, it remains stagnant. The poem,

Darkness reveals some sort of agonizing revelation of the deceptive society where Byron is living: "The crowd was famish'd by degrees; but two/ Of an enormous city did survive,/ And they were enemies: they met beside/ The dying embers of an altar-place/ Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things/ For an unholy usage; they rak'd up,/ And shivering scrap'd with their cold skeleton hands (Abrams, 1993, p. 488, L. 55-61).

The diction imposed by the poet, Wordsworth, creates a soothing atmosphere and the readers may find themselves in tranquility surrounding sylvan pastoral environments free from hustle and bustle which is more likely to rusticity than urbanity.

### The Metrical Discordances

The most followed meter for the romantic poets is pentameter in the form of blank verses which was mostly adopted from Milton. But Wordsworth is irregular in the interpolation of these metrical patterns. The poetry of Wordsworth, whether it is serious or sublime in treatment, superimposes caesura in most of the cases at the inception of the stanzas which provokes a sense of call, address to the audience for deep attention to what the poet needs to say. The poem, *Nutting*, begins with "\_\_\_\_\_ It seems a day", and then the poem retains pentameter all through its body as the second line may be taken for granted to evaluate the metrical ornamentation of the poet- " /I – Speak/ of – one/ from – ma/ ny- sin/ gled- out/". Thus, the *Ruined Cottage: Second Part* and the

*Prelude: Second Part* amass with such type of one-line addition which does not help to complete the stanzas but emphasizes on the way of thought provocation in the audience who are provided with extra relief of cadence all through the stanzas of the poems. But one thing is notable here; the aforementioned sections of the poems do not begin with such typical arrangements at the very beginning stanzas and this arrangement cannot be found at the beginning of the poems. It, perhaps, guides the readers to the belief that a powerful feeling is overpowering the poet to create and the poet cannot but be gay abundant leaving behind all shackles of metrical restrictions. Likewise, *Intimation of Immortality* and *My heart leaps up* break the assonances of the same meter all through the poem which is tried in the *Prelude* and *Michael*. Even, the poet experimented with diametric and trimetric forms of poems that are interjected in the poem *Written in March*.

Thus, the poet tries to keep close to his poetic theory of 'powerful feelings' and tends to disavow the rigidity of aristocratic interplay of poems that was mostly tried by the neo-classical poets. This, freedom has also alienated the poet from his contemporaries as almost all the romantic poets tried to keep a regularity in the metrical functioning of the poems and if the discordance is violated by other poets, Shelly, for example, the phraseology and thoughts become so deep and higher it loses the perception of the Wordsworth as the language of men.

### **Limitation and Delimitation of the Study**

The stylistic features, though the features delineated here are deliberate choosing, of Wordsworth have been contextualized with the thought in mind that literary piece evolves through language in written forms and it highlights social inclusions of vernaculars or deliberate silencing of throats. Wordsworth has been justified with the thought of his effort of inclusion of speech of the men in society. Thus, the social perspective of language or sociolinguistics helps to construct the ideas and justify the poet. The concept of sociolinguistics is a twentieth-century phenomenon and Thomas Callan Hodson coined this phrase in 1939 to designate the social characteristics of language (Joseph, 2004). Thus, the interjection of linguistic theory in literary criticism claims novelty, thus retaining frailties. Little has been investigated in this blending. Again, all the literary pieces of Wordsworth are not covered here and there prevail scopes to defy the indicated concepts that this paper tries to prove. It is evident that the concept, sociolinguistics, was unknown to the poets in the romantic period. But, the proposition made by Wordsworth in the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* touches upon the idea of social liability of the literary pieces which this paper tends to grant as the guiding principle and this paved the way for sociolinguistics interpretation of Wordsworth.

### **Implication of the Study**

Language is a social factor and this concept is aiding the literary world with greater

effect. Thus, poetry construction has been trying to bridge gaps between classical distances and social inclusivity with new trends of breaking the poetic norms. Free verse is one of the efforts to expatiate the concept of structural freedom. This study inclines to justify that Wordsworth thought of this liberation prior to the inception of this revolution and thus made the poet distinct among all other romantics. Thus, the sociolinguistic perspective is a revelation to analyze poetry in order to prove the inclination of the poets to the society people irrespective of regions and classes.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

William Wordsworth exercised digressional metrical forms, stanza construction, conversational tone, little epigrammatic phrases, and bombastic diction in his poetry. His poetry is embedded only on the smooth

terrain of waters which can address more readership among very common people of rural settings. This made the poet distinct and here lies the successful effort of social inclusivity of the rural taste in the poetry. It is claimed as an effort; not claimed as the culmination of creating classless society through the body of the poetry. Here, Wordsworth walked alone in the romantic period and this way is being followed by the poets who think poetry has a social liability and it cannot divide people and make a community people unheard. Wordsworth dreamed of unilateral society and he tried it through the knitting of poetry that offered him structural liberation from the barrenness of poetic forms and functions prior to his age. Thus, sociolinguistic theory can be utilized not only in the linguistic fields but also for the analysis of a literary text if the social context needs to be justified on the basis of its linguistic presentation.

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