Cognition and imagination in the poetry of William Wordsworth


Work on cognitive literary studies has been one of the approaches revealing new aspects of literary phenomena for some time. The article attempts to use a cognitive terminological framework to discuss the concept of imagination, which is perhaps the phenomenon most frequently associated with the nature of literature. It sets out some basic features of the imagination developed throughout history, ending in Romanticism, i.e. in the period during which imagination saw its greatest flourishing, first in the theoretical work of T. S. Coleridge, and then in the poetry of William Wordsworth and the other Romantic poets. Wordsworth’s imagination is characterized as greatly determined by the temporality of his poetic seeing of the world, and is illuminated through the concept of the episodic memory and its role in the construction of the present and the future. It is claimed that the poet selectively re-imagined elements of the past to build an ethically and spiritually charged present and future resulting in the creation of the wholeness of his life. Cognitive analysis of Wordsworth’s poems can thus show the author in a more realistic light, free of the transcendental aura that has often been attributed to him.

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