

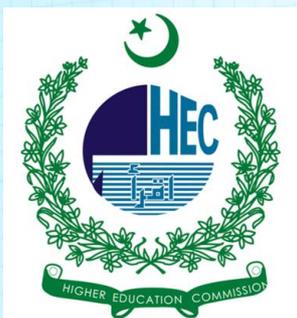
Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

<https://llrjournal.com/index.php/11>

Romantic Aestheticism and Sensory Experience in William Wordsworth's The Old Cumberland Beggar: A Kantian Analysis



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Abstract

William Wordsworth is widely regarded as one of the most influential poets of the Romantic age, celebrated for his distinctive power of narration and profound ability to capture human emotions and experiences through poetic expression. His poetry reflects a deep engagement with nature, imagination, and the sensory dimensions of human perception. This study explores the representation of Romantic aesthetics in Wordsworth's poem *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, focusing particularly on the role of sensory imagery in shaping aesthetic experience. The research employs the aesthetic theory of Immanuel Kant, as articulated in *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), to examine how aesthetic perception operates within the poetic structure of the text. Using a qualitative research methodology, the study adopts textual analysis to investigate how Wordsworth utilizes sensory elements such as sight, sound, touch, and emotional perception to construct a vivid poetic environment. Through this analysis, the research demonstrates that Wordsworth skillfully integrates Romantic aesthetic principles to engage the reader's senses and imagination. The poem illustrates how aesthetic expression can evoke empathy and deepen the reader's connection with the characters and their surroundings. The findings suggest that Wordsworth's use of sensory imagery functions as a powerful literary device that bridges the gap between poetic narrative and readerly experience, thereby reinforcing the enduring significance of Romantic aesthetics in literary studies.

Keywords: William Wordsworth, Romantic Aesthetics, Kantian Aesthetic Theory, Sensory Imagery, Romanticism, The Old Cumberland Beggar

Introduction

Wordsworth had a gift of making the trivial, special and that gift was proof of his genius as a writer. The romantics looked at several things in a special way such as, subject, character and morality. Wordsworth called it "a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions", this made his poetry special, he made use of all the aspects of human capacity, his poetry is not only read and contemplated but also heard. Smelled, seen and felt. While the pre-romantics thought, wordsworth felt and inhaled they experience and then tried to create the same effect for his readers, through the use of

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Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

amazing imagery he connected the reader to his own experience, as William Hazlitt puts it that Wordsworth looks at the world in a different way, for him human hopes are lofty and the human heart deep. This is his main concern and this is what he probes into and the tools he uses are thoughts and feelings and in the process fulfills his own desires of staying with and being a part of his only love which is nature. So we see that like all other romantic poets Wordsworth too had a special sense of the human capacity, pain, desire and also his failings in several regards. Like other romantics and maybe a little more than the rest, Wordsworth has a sense of aesthetics which is almost profound. J.A. Cudden defines aesthetics as something which is connected to the beauty we see all around and how we view it in terms of criticism or we can call it "taste". Aesthetics being a part of philosophy explores the nature of beauty and tries to identify the principles and laws of beauty in contrast with utility and morality. The Oxford dictionary defines aesthetics as a collection of principles dealing with the appreciation of beauty, and what it actually is and what are the artistic representations of it.

Wordsworth's poetry is full of romantic aestheticism and he has a unique way of making the mundane beautiful, he uses many new ways of expressing beauty in an extremely artistic way, sometimes by connecting it to nature and imagery and sometimes through narrating a story which shows beauty in a novel way. In the poem *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, Wordsworth shows his excellent skill at expressing romantic aestheticism by showing the beggar as an object of nature, and an object of nature can only be enjoyed by either seeing or hearing it by tasting or touching it. Human beings have been given these senses to be able to enjoy the human experience. The five senses we have been given are prerequisites for enjoying beauty. Imagery being a forte of Wordsworth's poetry is full of the use of these senses, maybe even more than other romantic writers.

Background of the Poem

This is a poem written by William Wordsworth in 1797, when he was 23 years of age. The time at which Wordsworth wrote this poem was a time when there was a movement to take the beggars of the streets. This movement is what Wordsworth retaliates against and shows us through his poetry that even the individuals we think of as useless and dispensable are in fact a part of our collective human experience and

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Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

even they, give our society an excuse to be kind and charitable and instill “hope” in us. Wordsworth through the story of this beggar who is a “solitary man”, and who travels all around has a role that he plays, which cannot be over written or discarded because it is an offence to God. No one life can be given more importance than another, a poor man’s life is as important as a rich man’s as they both play their respective characters as ordained by God. The old man is not just a useless, inconvenience but carries with him a memorabilia, namely that of kindnesses and philanthropy.

This poem raises several questions about how we as a society deal with poverty on a more individual level, some of us are kind to them and treat them with affection and charity whilst we choose to treat the symptoms of poverty making ourselves oblivious to actually curing the disease. Another very interesting aspect of the poem is it makes us look at the role of beggars in our society. The way that Wordsworth highlights the benign and harmless being of the beggar as almost a part of the scenery of the village, beautifying it and without whom a part of this whole setting will be lost forever. As stated by Sandy.M “Recent studies of Wordsworth have all reaffirmed the centrality of matters of grief, suffering, and loss to the workings of memory and consolation in the poetry”. (Sandy, 2012). Another important element is highlighted by Bruhn who says that “Creative expression should often take on the form of emotion [or] have the dynamic and thematic properties of an emotion”; and (4) “readers or spectators of art should readily perceive the emotion communicated”.(Bruhn, 2017). This is a contribution that was made by the romantics in the words of Salon “Each century, each people having possessed its own expression of beauty and morality – if we mean by Romanticism the most recent and modern expression of beauty – the great artist would therefore be –for the reasonable and passionate critic – the one that unites to the aforementioned condition, naïveté –the most Romanticism possible.” (*Salon de 1846, Oeuvres Complètes*, 642).

Statement of the Problem

William Wordsworth is widely acknowledged as one of the central figures of the Romantic movement, known for his emphasis on nature, emotion, imagination, and the aesthetic experience of the human mind. His poetry reflects a profound philosophical engagement with the natural world and human perception, often portraying how individuals interact with their surroundings through sensory and

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Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

emotional responses. Romantic poetry, particularly in Wordsworth's work, attempts to evoke a deep connection between the reader and the poetic world through vivid imagery and sensory experience. However, despite extensive scholarly attention to Wordsworth's treatment of nature, morality, and imagination, the specific role of Romantic aestheticism and sensory perception in shaping the reader's experience of his poetry has not always been sufficiently explored.

One of the key philosophical foundations of Romantic aesthetics lies in the ideas of Immanuel Kant, whose aesthetic theory emphasizes the relationship between sensory perception, imagination, and aesthetic judgment (Kant, 1790/2007). Kant argues that aesthetic experience emerges through the interaction between the human mind and sensory stimuli, enabling individuals to perceive beauty and meaning in objects and artistic expressions. These ideas strongly influenced Romantic writers, including Wordsworth, who frequently relied on sensory imagery and emotional engagement to convey deeper philosophical insights about human existence and the natural world (Abrams, 2010).

Wordsworth's poem *The Old Cumberland Beggar* provides an important example of how Romantic aesthetics operate within poetic narrative. The poem presents the life of an elderly beggar who moves through rural communities and survives through the kindness of others. While the poem is often interpreted as a social commentary on poverty and compassion, it also reflects a deeper aesthetic structure in which sensory descriptions and emotional responses create a powerful connection between the reader and the character. Wordsworth employs detailed imagery related to sight, sound, and environment in order to construct a vivid and immersive poetic landscape.

Despite the significance of these aesthetic elements, many critical discussions of *The Old Cumberland Beggar* have focused primarily on its ethical and social implications rather than its aesthetic construction. Consequently, there remains a gap in scholarship regarding how sensory imagery and Romantic aesthetic principles function within the poem to shape the reader's perception and emotional engagement. Understanding this aspect of Wordsworth's poetry is important because it reveals how aesthetic techniques contribute to the broader themes and philosophical depth of the poem.

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Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is the limited scholarly focus on the role of Romantic aestheticism and sensory perception in *The Old Cumberland Beggar*. This research seeks to examine how Wordsworth employs sensory imagery and aesthetic elements to create an immersive poetic experience that connects the reader with the characters and themes of the poem. By applying Kantian aesthetic theory, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how Romantic poetry utilizes sensory perception to construct meaning and emotional resonance.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value for literary scholarship, particularly within the fields of Romantic literature, aesthetic theory, and poetic analysis. By examining the aesthetic dimensions of Wordsworth's *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how Romantic poetry engages readers through sensory imagery and emotional experience.

First, the study contributes to Romantic literary studies by providing a focused analysis of Wordsworth's use of Romantic aesthetics. Wordsworth is often studied for his themes of nature, morality, and human emotion; however, examining the aesthetic mechanisms that shape these themes allows for a more comprehensive understanding of his poetic technique. By exploring how sensory imagery functions within the poem, the research highlights the artistic strategies Wordsworth uses to evoke empathy and emotional engagement among readers.

Second, the study is significant because it integrates philosophical aesthetic theory with literary analysis. By applying the aesthetic ideas of Immanuel Kant, the research bridges the gap between philosophy and literature, demonstrating how theoretical concepts of aesthetic perception can illuminate the structure and meaning of poetic texts. This interdisciplinary approach enriches the interpretation of Wordsworth's poetry and highlights the broader intellectual context of the Romantic movement.

Third, the research contributes to the critical understanding of sensory imagery in poetry. Romantic poets frequently used imagery related to sight, sound, touch, and emotional perception to create vivid poetic landscapes. Analyzing these sensory elements allows scholars to understand how literary texts stimulate the reader's imagination and create immersive aesthetic experiences. This perspective emphasizes

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

the importance of sensory engagement as a key component of Romantic poetic expression.

Furthermore, the study highlights the ethical and social implications of aesthetic experience in Wordsworth's poetry. Through the depiction of the beggar's life and the community's response to him, the poem encourages readers to reflect on compassion, social responsibility, and the moral dimensions of human relationships. The aesthetic techniques used by Wordsworth not only enhance the beauty of the poem but also deepen the reader's awareness of social and ethical issues.

Finally, the research provides valuable insights for students, educators, and scholars of English literature. By offering a detailed analysis of *The Old Cumberland Beggar* through the lens of Romantic aesthetics and Kantian theory, the study enriches academic discussions on Romantic poetry and demonstrates how literary texts can be interpreted through philosophical frameworks. Such analysis can also support teaching and research in courses related to Romantic literature, literary theory, and aesthetic philosophy.

In conclusion, this study is significant because it expands the understanding of Wordsworth's poetic artistry by examining the role of sensory perception and Romantic aestheticism in *The Old Cumberland Beggar*. Through its integration of literary and philosophical perspectives, the research contributes to broader discussions on the relationship between aesthetic experience, imagination, and human empathy in Romantic literature.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are

- To identify the use of romantic aestheticism in the old Cumberland beggar by Willaim Wordsworth.
- To explore the use of the human senses in the old Cumberland beggar by Willaim Wordsworth.

Research Questions:

The question for this research are:

1. To what extent does Wordsworth present Romantic Aestheticism in his poetry?
2. How does Wordsworth use the human senses to present Romantic Aestheticism in his poetry?

Literature Review

The poetry of William Wordsworth has long been the subject of extensive scholarly attention due to its profound engagement with nature, human emotion, imagination, and aesthetic perception. As one of the central figures of the Romantic movement, Wordsworth introduced a new poetic philosophy that emphasized the importance of personal experience and sensory engagement with the natural world. Scholars have explored various dimensions of his work, including Romantic aesthetics, philosophical influences, and the ethical concerns reflected in his poetry. This section reviews existing scholarship related to Romantic aesthetics, Kantian aesthetic theory, and critical interpretations of Wordsworth's poem *The Old Cumberland Beggar*.

Romanticism and Aesthetic Experience

Romanticism emerged in the late eighteenth century as a reaction against the rationalism and formalism of the Enlightenment and neoclassical literary traditions. Romantic writers emphasized imagination, emotion, and subjective experience as essential components of artistic expression. According to M. H. Abrams, Romantic poetry reflects a shift in literary theory in which the creative imagination of the poet becomes the central source of artistic meaning (Abrams, 2010). Abrams argues that Romantic poets viewed poetry as an expression of inner emotional and imaginative experiences rather than a mere imitation of external reality.

Similarly, Jerome McGann notes that Romantic poetry often attempts to bridge the gap between the subjective world of the poet and the external natural environment. Through the use of imagery, symbolism, and emotional language, Romantic poets sought to evoke a sense of unity between human consciousness and the natural world (McGann, 1983). This connection between human perception and nature is particularly evident in Wordsworth's poetry, where landscapes and natural imagery play a crucial role in shaping aesthetic experience.

Scholars have also highlighted the importance of sensory perception in Romantic literature. Jonathan Bate emphasizes that Romantic poets believed the senses to be a primary means through which individuals engage with nature and derive aesthetic pleasure (Bate, 2001). According to Bate, Wordsworth's poetry frequently portrays moments in which sensory perception leads to deeper emotional or philosophical insights. Through detailed descriptions of sights, sounds, and natural

environments, Wordsworth invites readers to experience the poetic landscape in a vivid and immersive manner.

Kantian Aesthetic Theory

The philosophical foundations of Romantic aesthetics are closely connected to the ideas of Immanuel Kant, whose writings on aesthetic judgment significantly influenced nineteenth-century artistic thought. In *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Kant proposes that aesthetic experience arises from the interaction between sensory perception and the cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding (Kant, 2007). According to Kant, aesthetic judgment is characterized by a sense of disinterested pleasure that arises when individuals perceive beauty without being influenced by practical or utilitarian concerns.

Kant's theory emphasizes the role of the human mind in shaping aesthetic experience. As Paul Guyer explains, Kant views aesthetic appreciation as a harmonious interaction between sensory perception and intellectual reflection (Guyer, 2006). This framework suggests that works of art evoke aesthetic pleasure by stimulating both the senses and the imagination. Such ideas resonated strongly with Romantic poets, who believed that poetry should awaken the imaginative and emotional faculties of the reader.

Another important aspect of Kant's aesthetic theory is the concept of universality in aesthetic judgment. Although aesthetic responses are subjective, Kant argues that they carry a sense of universality because they arise from shared cognitive faculties among human beings (Kant, 2007). This idea supports the Romantic belief that poetry can create a common emotional experience among readers by appealing to shared human sensibilities. Wordsworth's poetry often demonstrates this principle by depicting ordinary human experiences that evoke empathy and reflection among readers.

Wordsworth's Poetic Philosophy

The poetic philosophy of Wordsworth is most clearly articulated in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), where he argues that poetry should be written in the language of ordinary people and should represent the emotional experiences of everyday life. According to Wordsworth, poetry originates from "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" recollected in moments of tranquility (Wordsworth, 1802/2008).

This definition highlights the importance of emotional and sensory experience in the creation of poetry.

Scholars such as Stephen Gill emphasize that Wordsworth's poetry reflects a deep concern with the relationship between human consciousness and the natural environment (Gill, 2003). Gill argues that Wordsworth's descriptions of nature are not merely decorative but serve as a medium through which deeper philosophical reflections are expressed. Through sensory imagery and vivid descriptions of landscapes, Wordsworth encourages readers to engage with the natural world in a reflective and emotionally meaningful way.

Similarly, Geoffrey Hartman suggests that Wordsworth's poetry often explores the transformative power of imagination. Hartman argues that the poet uses sensory perception as a starting point for imaginative reflection, allowing readers to move from immediate sensory experiences to broader philosophical insights (Hartman, 2007). This process reflects the Romantic belief that aesthetic experience can lead to intellectual and emotional enlightenment.

Critical Studies on The Old Cumberland Beggar

The poem *The Old Cumberland Beggar* has attracted scholarly interest for its exploration of social, moral, and aesthetic themes. Critics often interpret the poem as a commentary on poverty, charity, and social responsibility in rural society. According to Nicholas Roe, the poem portrays the beggar as a figure who plays an important role in maintaining social compassion and moral awareness within the community (Roe, 2002). By depicting the interactions between the beggar and the villagers, Wordsworth highlights the ethical importance of empathy and generosity.

Other scholars have emphasized the aesthetic and narrative structure of the poem. For instance, Anne Mellor argues that Wordsworth's portrayal of marginalized individuals reflects a Romantic interest in ordinary human lives and experiences (Mellor, 1993). Through careful narrative description and sensory imagery, the poem transforms an ordinary figure into a symbol of moral reflection and human dignity.

Despite these insights, relatively few studies have examined the poem through the lens of Kantian aesthetics and sensory perception. While critics acknowledge Wordsworth's use of imagery and emotional language, the connection between these elements and philosophical aesthetic theory remains underexplored. This gap suggests

the need for further research that examines how sensory imagery and aesthetic principles contribute to the overall structure and meaning of the poem.

Research Gap

Although previous scholarship has provided valuable insights into Romantic aesthetics and Wordsworth's poetic philosophy, there remains limited analysis that directly applies Kantian aesthetic theory to *The Old Cumberland Beggar*. Most studies focus on the poem's moral or social themes rather than its aesthetic mechanisms. Consequently, the role of sensory imagery in creating aesthetic engagement between the reader and the poetic narrative has not been sufficiently investigated.

The present study addresses this gap by examining how Wordsworth employs sensory imagery and Romantic aesthetic principles to create a powerful poetic experience in *The Old Cumberland Beggar*. By applying Kantian aesthetic theory, the research aims to explore how sensory perception, imagination, and emotional engagement interact within the poem to produce a meaningful aesthetic experience for readers.

Research Methodology

The methodology used to conduct this research is qualitative mode of inquiry. The method of textual analysis has been used to achieve the research objectives. Wordsworth's use of the human senses has been analyzed to highlight the presence of Aesthetics in his creation of imagery.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in the research is Aesthetics given by one of the most eminent and respected critic of the 18th century, Immanuel Kant. He was a German philosopher who wrote several books on the nature of Aesthetics and how they play a role in the lives of humans. He in his books argues that aesthetics are subjective yet they are purely sensory. The major aspects of the theory are:

1. Whatever a person experiences as a neutral and unbiased or in words indifferent manner is aesthetic.
2. He says that anything that appeals to the senses like a meadow green in color is a source which gives us a pleasant feeling, and there for appeals to aesthetics.
3. Senses are all that is needed to find beauty.
4. Only after satisfaction of Aesthetics can we differentiate between a person with

taste from one who lacks in it.

Data Analysis

Sight (visual)

“I saw an aged Beggar..... of rude masonry”. Line 1-3

Here we see how Wordsworth uses the sense of sight in order to create a heartwarming and painful imagery of an old man, one who is not just old but also seems to be homeless, the effect that Wordsworth aims to create by the use of this image is basically to relate this image to the memories of his reader, we have all seen and felt for these kind of people who seem to leave an effect on the conscience of everyone who sees them. The use of sense of sight by Wordsworth has been used as a tool to create an empathetic and sympathetic mindset for the beggar.

**“He drew his scraps and fragments,
..... In the sun”.**

In these lines again we see the use of the word scanned and computation, as an extremely vivid and clear imagery. Wordsworth through the use of the sense of sight creates an image where the reader can actually see a man of extremely limited means, trying to gauge whether his generosity to the birds will cost him a meal, and whether he will be able to get by without these crumbs. His concern with making sure that none of these is wasted is both endearing and heartwarming simultaneously. Wordsworth’s mastery at engaging his reader in simple and common human concerns, is what connects the reader personally to his characters.

**“Instead of common and habitual sight
Is all his prospect”. Line 48-51**

The above given mentioned lines are yet another example of Wordsworth’s eloquent use of romantic aestheticism, here we see that he so beautifully through, getting the attention of the reader towards the beggar makes a case for him which no human being will be able to ignore, he says that this beggar is not a sore to the eyes when seen in this beautiful and natural scene, neither is his presence an hindrance to the natural way of life. He is a part of the scenery just like fields or the hill or the sky, he is one with them. Furthermore Wordsworth creates an element of pity for the beggar by saying that he is not a person with aspirations of wealth and power, he is just a man whose whole universe is just this landscape and this is all he wants just to be here and

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

to be left alone.

“Few are his pleasures:

entrance to their languid orbs.” Line 187-192

In these lines Wordsworth connects with his reader as himself by highlighting the idea that this man is poor in every regard, financially, physically and most importantly due to his age he even has trouble enjoying this calm and beautiful scenery all around him. Wordsworth says that this man has been looking down for so long that even looking up long enough to take a glance at the sunset is an effort. He points out that the beggars sole treasure in the world is his ability to absorb this landscape, that is what he feeds on and thrives on. Wordsworth here makes a plea for the beggar by saying that this man has had a life full of deprivation and scarcity, he has lived just because of the attachment to the this land and nature, now that the beggars were threatened by the powerful, they were trying to take away the only pleasure that this man had. And Wordsworth in an extremely articulate way says that at least he should be allowed to have that one pleasure that keeps him alive.

Hearing

“The post-boy, when his rattling wheels o'ertake

Upon his lips, or anger at his heart”. lines 37-43

In these lines we see that Wordsworth display his genius, by using another extremely important sense, that of hearing. Wordsworth has created such a human image in these lines that one has to admire the beautiful and caring atmosphere that Wordsworth has portrayed. He says that the post boy in his daily routine passes through the town and his “rattling” wheels can be heard by most people and make way for him but when the beggar due to old age doesn't hear him the boy also understands his frail and feeble condition, and so “shouts” from behind him and tries to warn him of his coming but even then he doesn't hear him and instead of getting angry or cursing the old man he changes his path, just to facilitate the old beggar. Wordsworth in these lines uses this amazing vocabulary to create such wonderful images in the mind of the reader, as if they are standing and witnessing this entire interaction between the beggar and the post boy, and feel the humanity and love and tolerance that they have for each other.

“Those life-consuming sounds that clog the air,

The pleasant melody of woodland birds”. Lines 182-186

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Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

Again here in these lines we see Wordsworth use the sense of hearing as an amazing tool to connect the reader to the imagery. Here he makes use of the two binary oppositions, “sound” and “silence”, he uses them both to create a contrast between so many things symbolically, he refers to village life and city life, calling one extremely noisy by say “life-consuming”, while he calls the silence of the village the natural way of life, he also uses this as an analogy for a calm and quiet peaceful mind whilst the materialistic and greedy mind is corrupted by this noise but the peaceful mind enjoys what he calls the “the pleasant melody” of beautiful birds. So we see how he uses these sounds to connect them to such deep and profound ideas.

Taste

**“Surrounded by those wild, unpeopled hills,
He sat, and ate his food in solitude:” line 14-15**

In these lines Wordsworth uses yet another human faculty, which is Taste. In these lines an image of the beggar has been created in which he seems to be so at ease as if he is a part of painting where he is surrounded by inanimate things and because of their company has somehow learned the art of being surviving without being noisy and fussy. Wordsworth in his beautiful style uses the word “ate” in such a manner that it seems as though we as readers can “taste” the food he is eating and also the can feel the flavor of his solitude on our tongues. Hence we can see how gifted Wordsworth was in the use of language to create a sense of aesthetics.

**“Of highway side, and with the little birds
Share his chance-gathered meal; and, finally”
lines 195-196**

Here in these lines again we see how Wordsworth in his brilliance creates an image of a meal which as he calls it “chance gathered” as it isn’t every day that he gets food and even if does he doesn’t usually have enough to share with the birds. Here Wordsworth uses aesthetic romanticism to the maximum as he shows eating and sharing as a natural way of life. He says that this natural world and all its elements are the beggars family and sharing a meal with them is as natural as wanting food and creates a wonderful bond between the ones who share a meal together.

Touch

“And ever, scattered from his palsied hand,

He travels on, a solitary Man” lines 16-20

In these lines we can see that Wordsworth uses a disability and a visual image to represent the human incapacity of the beggar but at the same time, this image of a “palsied” hand is nothing short of brilliant as it connects the reader right with the beggar as a frail old man who is the target of the changing times and hence a wonderful case is made for the helplessness of the beggar by Wordsworth. Another element present in these lines is that wordsworth’s environmental concerns are also highlighted in a very heartwarming way, the beggars careful attitude to avoid the wastage of food is a message by the writer and an ironic strike at the waste industrial culture and here again the effort of wordsworth with the reader, achieves its goal.

**“That first mild touch of sympathy and thought,
Where want and sorrow were.” Lines 115-117**

These lines are a perfect example of Wordsworth’s use of aestheticism, here we see that the beggar is seen as being affected by the “touch” of sympathy. Here wordsworth says that the most important thing in the world is to look at the world with compassion and kind heartedness and that is what keeps the natural way of life alive. He says that undoubtedly there is sorrow and pain in the world and people who have scarcity in their lives are somehow dependent on this natural world are the ones who deserve to be looked as a means to do good rather than as a burden which needs to be thrown off the shoulders of humanity.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine how Romantic aesthetics and sensory imagery operate in the poem The Old Cumberland Beggar by William Wordsworth, using the aesthetic framework of Immanuel Kant. The analysis reveals that Wordsworth’s poetic technique relies heavily on sensory perception, emotional engagement, and imaginative reflection to construct a meaningful aesthetic experience for the reader. Through the integration of Romantic aesthetic principles, Wordsworth not only narrates the life of an elderly beggar but also invites readers to reflect on broader philosophical and ethical dimensions of human existence.

One of the central findings of this study is that Wordsworth employs vivid sensory imagery to create a deep connection between the reader and the poetic environment. Romantic poets believed that sensory perception plays a crucial role in

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

shaping human understanding of nature and society. In *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, the poet uses descriptions of rural landscapes, physical movement, and interactions with villagers to evoke a vivid picture of the beggar's daily life. These sensory elements—particularly those related to sight and sound—allow readers to visualize the environment and emotionally engage with the narrative. Such techniques align with the Romantic belief that poetry should stimulate the imagination and evoke emotional responses through the careful use of imagery and descriptive language (Abrams, 2010).

The poem also demonstrates how aesthetic experience can lead to moral reflection. Wordsworth does not merely portray the beggar as a passive recipient of charity; instead, he presents the figure as a meaningful presence within the rural community. Through his existence, the beggar encourages acts of kindness and compassion among villagers. This perspective challenges the utilitarian logic of social systems that often view individuals solely in terms of productivity or economic value. Wordsworth's portrayal suggests that even those who appear socially marginalized contribute to the moral fabric of society. In this sense, the poem reflects the Romantic emphasis on empathy and human connection.

The use of sensory imagery further supports the Kantian concept of aesthetic experience as a process that engages both perception and imagination. According to Kant's aesthetic theory, aesthetic judgment emerges when sensory perception interacts harmoniously with the faculties of imagination and understanding (Kant, 2007). Wordsworth's descriptive language stimulates the reader's senses while simultaneously encouraging reflective thought about social relationships and moral values. This interaction between perception and reflection demonstrates how poetry can produce a form of aesthetic pleasure that extends beyond mere sensory enjoyment to include intellectual engagement.

Another important aspect of the poem is its focus on ordinary life and humble characters. Wordsworth deliberately centers his narrative on an elderly beggar rather than on heroic or aristocratic figures traditionally associated with classical poetry. By doing so, the poet aligns with the Romantic movement's broader effort to democratize literature and emphasize the significance of everyday experiences. The beggar's presence within the community symbolizes continuity, tradition, and human

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Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

interdependence. Wordsworth's aesthetic approach transforms what might appear to be a simple rural scene into a profound meditation on social ethics and human compassion.

Furthermore, the poem illustrates how aesthetic perception can reshape readers' attitudes toward marginalized individuals. By presenting the beggar through sensory-rich descriptions and reflective commentary, Wordsworth encourages readers to perceive him not merely as an object of pity but as a meaningful participant in the social environment. This shift in perspective reflects the Romantic belief that poetry has the power to cultivate empathy and moral awareness among readers. Through aesthetic engagement, readers are encouraged to reconsider societal assumptions about poverty, charity, and human dignity.

The analysis also highlights the narrative power of Wordsworth's poetic expression. His ability to combine sensory imagery with philosophical reflection demonstrates a sophisticated use of Romantic aesthetic principles. As scholars such as Abrams (2010) and Bate (2001) have observed, Wordsworth's poetry often transforms simple observations of nature and everyday life into deeper explorations of human consciousness. In *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, this transformation occurs through the interplay between sensory detail and reflective commentary, which allows the poem to function simultaneously as a narrative, an ethical reflection, and an aesthetic experience.

Conclusion

The research finds that Wordsworth like all other romantic poets has the mastery of using romantic aestheticism through the human senses in a way where they are connected to the human experience in general. This use of the senses is used by Wordsworth to create imagery which is a part of human consciousness, regardless of who one is with regard to social class, religion, and race, everyone can relate to these images and the emotions that they communicate. As Cunder, (2014), elaborates that Wordsworth joins these successors of literary influence to evoke the historical and be steered by it, cautioning them at the same time of individuals who might mislead them away from that legacy and into a infested realm where success and nature are choked by the fumes of over industrialism and the dissatisfaction of shattered covenants. Wordsworth not only uses it to communicate but also warns us of the consequences of

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

losing this element of humanity, making his poetry not just a thing to be cherished by the higher human faculties such as intellect but also something to be enjoyed at the very basic level of human beings' shared experiences. Like that of tastes we enjoy or don't, or sights that seem appealing to all human beings regardless of who they are or where they are from. This human element in Wordsworth's poetry has made him a poet whose works are loved even after hundreds of years.

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Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

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