

Wordsworth's Views of Poetry and the Poet



From William
Wordsworth,
*Preface to Lyrical
Ballads*, enlarged
edition, 1802

Lyrical Ballads

It is a collection of poems published jointly and anonymously by Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1798.

Preface

Wordsworth explained his intentions and aims.

Wordsworth's ideas about poetry:

- Subject matter of poetry
- The language of poetry
- The poet's identity
- The creative act of the poet

Subject matter of poetry

Poetry should deal with incidents and situations from “common life” and transfigure them through “a certain colouring of imagination”.

The language of poetry

Poetry should use familiar language. It should use "language really used by man" who belong to "low (=Humble) and rustic life" because their feelings "are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature".

The poet's identity

The poet is a man speaking to other man who has a number of traits which set him apart from ordinary people, like “a more lively sensibility”, “a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels”.

The creative act of the poet

The creative process starts from an emotion which is "recollected in tranquillity" which the poet is able to recreate in his mind feeling a "state of enjoyment"