1. What according to William Wordsworth, poetry should be like?

*Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems* is a collection of poems by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, first published in 1789 and generally considered to have marked the beginning of the English Romantic movement in literature. A third edition of the publication of the Lyrical Ballads added a ‘Preface’ to it, where Wordsworth has explained why he wrote his experimental ballads. Unlike his contemporaries, the late Neo-classical writers, Wordsworth’s poems are rustic in tone, engages the lives of the peasantry and are written in the common language.

William Wordsworth believes that, the language of poetry should be real language of men. It is important to know that, by *language*, he probably means vocabulary, and not syntax or grammar. He says, the language of poetry must address the rustic and humble people. Wordsworth also mentions that, the language of poetry should be free from artificiality; it must be purified of coarseness or oddities. According Wordsworth, ‘all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion. Directing our attention to the importance of emotion as it is a very serious and profound subject. Emotion and can not be separated from thoughts because, these two are inextricably tied together. Thus, readers can infer that good poetry should seriously deal with both emotion and thoughts. This sort of poetry will help people become better people. “to illustrate the manner in which our feelings and ideas are associated under a state o excitement” is another statement by Wordsworth which supports connection between emotion and thoughts. Again, William Wordsworth more specifically declares poetry is an act, “to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affection of our nature.”

While commenting on the language of poetry, Wordsworth took care of some important aspects which can hamper the connection between the subject of poetry and the readers. They are avoidance of- i. personification and abstract ideas, ii. Poetic diction, iii. Overuse of vulgar phases, but use of simple or common language. He realizes that some people may think rhyme and meter distinguish poetry from prose, but he thinks that this sort of “regular and uniform” distinction is different from that between common language and poetic diction. To him, metrical language is more charming. He replies to many critics who disapproves poetic phrases that readers have read with pleasure poems with simpler language than the language in his ballads.

As readers we can identify from the Preface that, Wordsworth’s poetry depicts the thoughts and feelings present during certain emotional experiences. He admits that “the feeling (developed in his poems) gives importance to the actions and situation, and not the action and situation to the feelings.” Wordsworth claims that, his reader will understand this statement better if they are introduced with two of his ballads ‘Poor Susan’ and ‘Childless Father.’ Therefore, we can say that, Wordsworth’s purpose is to establish a connection between thoughts and feelings. Here, it is not un-observed that he still gives more importance to feelings, and thus, he sometimes sounds obscure. In many of his interpretations, feelings are given way more importance than any other aspect or experiences. Because, the nature of poetry must always satisfy the readers; and by readers he most probably indicated the rustic folks, common people and not the corrupted one’s.

Thus, it can be said that, in the Preface, William Wordsworth not only discussed his purpose of writing ballads, but also commented on the appropriateness of poetic language and its honest and simple nature.

1. Why William Wordsworth believes that the ‘Preface to the Lyrical Ballads’ is not a sort of systematic defense for his poetic theory?

The Romantic writer William Wordsworth, in his ‘Preface to the Lyrical Ballads’, explained his beliefs associated with the nature and style of poetry, its language and the role of a poet as well. He made any significant statements which very well supports his ideas and approvals. Unlike, the highbrow poetry of his contemporaries, Wordsworth’s poetry can revive the mind-dulling aspects of modernity.

Wordsworth remarks that the “Preface to the Lyrical Ballads” is not a sort of systemic defense for his poetic theory. Wordsworth remarks that if the “Preface to the Lyrical Ballads” were a sort of systemic defense for his poetic theory, then he would need to go through all the ways that metrical language can lead to pleasure. As the preface is not intended to be such a thorough defense, he will simply say that one of the chief pleasures of metrical language is “the pleasure which the mind derives from the perception of similitude in dissimilitude.” Wordsworth briefly elaborates, saying that “this principle is the great spring of the activity of our minds and their chief feeder,” before claiming that the limits of the preface prohibit him from speaking more on the subject, and “[he] must content [himself] with a general summary.”

From the above, we can clearly identify Wordsworth’s obscurity or occasional nonsensicality. It can be identified as a vague statement (“…the perception of similitude in dissimilitude.”). And, therefore, ‘Preface to the Lyrical Ballads’ cannot escape from the critic’s criticisms. Many ctraditional critics believed that, Wordsworth’s critical writings are relatable only when it is supported by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Sometimes, Wordsworth avoids to explain his declaration by claiming them to b too long to explain and proceeds to explain the process of poetic creation. The poet must first recall their emotions in “tranquility” and contemplate those emotions in peace until they dissolve away and a new, kindred emotion comes into place. Then the poet can begin the composition process, and the poet will feel pleasure. The poet must always be careful that readers of their poem will feel more pleasure than the deeper passions that the poem addresses. People tend to read poetry, and not prose, over and over again because of this pleasure. According to Wordsworth, poetry written in the heat of a moment may be too overwhelming and this is not what poetry is supposed to be. Wordsworth then addresses some potential errors which the readers may find in his ballads: he may have written on an unworthy subject, and he may have made arbitrary connections between things that no one would understand except himself. He is not sure yet which of his expressions are faulty; thus, he refrains from correcting anything. Wordsworth believes that a poet who corrects his own work too often could easily lose his or her confidence. Furthermore, the imperfect reader may also perceive certain poems as faulty when they are actually fine.

Overall, Wordsworth’s intention to is to not denounce other forms of poetry; rather, Wordsworth wishes to promote a new genre of poetry that he feels will help keep humans human. He awaits to hear from readers whether they think he has achieved his purpose, and whether that purpose was worth achieving.