THE ROLE OF GEOMETRY IN WORDSWORTH'S "SCIENCE OF FEELINGS"

Raimonda Modiano
Charles LaPorte

Counter to previous studies of William Wordsworth that have viewed him as dismissive of mathematics, logic, and the fundamental principles of moral feelings, or ignored the connections between these domains, this dissertation presents Wordsworth as imaginatively reprocessing the discipline of geometry through poetry, or what he refers to as a “science of feelings.” Despite the many developments occurring in the realm of mathematics in the eighteenth century, Euclid's Elements remained the primary source for math and logic in secondary schools and universities. As a teaching tool, Wordsworth regarded Euclid as limiting the power of imagination, ultimately reducing the pupil's ability to sympathize with others. Rather than abandon the place of mathematics in education, the dissertation examines how Wordsworth saw Euclid as fulfilling only a part of a more dynamic and speculative philosophical upbringing. Thus the project reevaluates familiar works in light of a mathematical and historical context, recasting Wordsworth as deeply invested in the ways that poetry could adapt the principles of Euclidean geometry to account for change in human thoughts and feelings. Includes bibliographical references (pages 172-184).

View PDF (1.37 MB)

People Involved: Aaron Ottinger
Status of Research or Work: Completed/published
Research Type: Graduate Dissertations
Related Fields: 18th Century Aesthetics Affect British Media Studies Philosophy Poetry and Poetics Romanticism Science and Technology

Department of English · University of Washington · A101 Padelford Hall, Box 354330 · Seattle, WA 98195-4330
Main Office: (206) 543-2690 · Advising: (206) 543-2634

Copyright © 2016-2019 University of Washington · Privacy · Terms · Site Map · Contact Us

Source URL: https://english.washington.edu/research/graduate/role-geometry-wordsworths-science-feelings