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Theme: Comparative Analysis of P.B. Shelley's and John Keats's Literary Creative Activity

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the basic Romantic trends and writers dominating in British literature during the second half of XVIII and the beginning of XIX centuries, as well as examines their impact on the creativity of two great Romantic poets, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats. The plot analysis of Shelley's and Keats's poems generally concentrates on revelation of social and moral problems, and emphasizes the importance of beauty and art.

Romanticism grown in the climax of the French Revolution and in-country unrest was the period of individualism, fascination with nature and natural world, interest in the supernatural and mythic. The Romantic heroes, created in this turmoil, unlike traditional literary heroes were outcasts who rejected established social and moral values of their time. The writings of Percy Shelley and John Keats manifest these characteristics of Romantic age and poetry.

The purpose of the present thesis is to survey Romantic literature inter alia with the development of various Romantic schools, to explore the literary activity of Percy Shelley and John Keats, and to demonstrate the growth of the notion "romanticism" from the Medieval Age till modern times.

The hypothesis of the thesis is that Romanticism has shaped the modern literature and still continues to affect it. In some ways, we are living in the age of Neoromanticism.

The aim of the given thesis has defined the following tasks:

- to define the similarities and differences between Neoclassicism and Romantic age;
- to determine the new artistic forms developed throughout Romanticism;
- to examine the effects of Romantic tendencies on compositions of Romantic poets, in particular on Shelley's and Keats's.
- to explore the image of Romantic hero in poems of Percy Shelley and John Keats;
- to define the elements of Romanticism in contemporary literature.

The object of the present research work is revolutionary poems, lyrics and sonnets of Shelley as "Revolt of Islam", "Prometheus Unbound", "Masque of Anarchy", "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty", "Odes to the West Wind", "Ozymandias" as well as odes, mythological and nature poems of Keats as "Endymion", "The Eve of Saint Agnes" and "Ode to a Nightingale".

The subject of the given work is the alienated life of Romantic hero and his extreme commitment to nature.

The practical value of the present paper is that it can be used as prerequisite to develop knowledge in life and literary activity of Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats, as well as

applied in the courses of English literature and art.

While developing the present research we made reference to materials of such authors as Liliana Sikorskaya, McDougal Littell, William J. Long, and Albert.C. Baugh, Andrew Maunder and many others.

We also used lectures and research articles by Charles Ngiewih Teke on the topic "Towards a Poetics of Becoming: Samuel Taylor Coleridge's and John Keats's Aesthetics between Idealism and Deconstruction" and by Muhammad F. Rasheed on the topic "Mortality, Death and Decay in Shelley's Ode to the West Wind and Keats' To Autumn".

We translated critical interpretations and studies on History of English Literature by A.A. Anikst and N.P.Mikhalskaya.

The methods used in the investigation are descriptive and comparative, applied in synthesis to accomplish the aim and the task of the given research work in the most appropriate way.

The work consists of **introduction, two main chapters, conclusion and reference literature.**

In the **Introductory part** a brief description of the term "romanticism", its history, main characteristics, literary forms and schools are presented.

The term "romantic" was first used in English literature in XVII century writings and represented "imaginary". However, the origin of the word goes back to the remote past, to the medieval use of the terms "romance" and "roman", quest narratives in which chivalrous knights fought and rescued ladies from monsters and giants. Gradually, in literary criticism "romanticism" began to denote a particular form and style of creativity that was characterized by an intense emotionality, by an interest in exotic and extraordinary and by the use of artistic means transmitting the versatility of reality, riches and contradiction of human emotions, thrills and passions.

Romanticism went down in history as the "Age of Revolutions". It was highly affected by the American War of Independence, by 1789's revolution in France, and by transition from a feudal system to bourgeois.

As a literary movement Romanticism sprang as a response to the dissatisfaction with the Enlightenment values of reason and order. In Germany it originated by the "Sturm and Drang" movement and by the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, while in Britain it evolved by writings of William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

The transitional and preparatory stage in the formation of Romantic literature was Pre-romanticism which was represented in England by such writers as, Chatterton, Radcliff,

Walpole and Blake. Pre-romantic repudiation of neoclassicism found its extensive manifestation in Romantic literature. Romantics returned to nature and to plain humanity as a material for their writings. Opposing the neoclassical ideals, they glorified the old sagas and medieval romances and prized imagination as the supreme faculty of the mind.

The changes in the content of Romantic writings also led to the classification of Romantics into two generations. The first generation Romantics were the first to realize the redemptive powers of natural world, and were truly the pioneers in what has become the “back to nature” movement. Distinct from them, the second generation was more concentrated on the relationship between life and art, or an original moral thinking built on beauty and truth.

Chapter I. Analysis of Romantic literary atmosphere influencing the literary creativity of the writers and poets at the end of the XVIII and the beginning of the XIX centuries

The first chapter gives a detailed description of historical and social events contributing to the formation of Romanticism and investigates the development of the new and the evolution of the existing genres in the creativity of Romantic writers.

From the second half of the XVIII century England became the centre of Industrialization. The Industrial Revolution which lasted over 60 years, changed both the economy and the natural scenery of the country. Increased mechanisation of the industrial factories decreased the need for human labour and created high levels of unemployment. Accordingly, within a short period of time acute poverty spread all over the England.

The Industrial Revolution corresponded revolts in the political order. Being disappointed with the economic inequality in country, French population started uprising for the natural rights of man and the elimination of class distinctions.

Existing political and social volatilities influenced not only the way people lived, but the way they felt and thought as well. It provoked a feeling of constant changeability of the life surrounding people and promoted the revelation of new characteristics in individual such as, power of imagination, love of freedom, independence of reasoning and desire to implement his own ideal model of world. All these changes contributed to the rise and formation of the new age called Romanticism.

Romanticism brought a new vision to literature by encouraging the development of complex and fast-moving plots and creating mixed genres, such as elegiac sonnets, the poetic autobiography, lyrical ballads, lyric drama and lyric-epic poem. Nevertheless, along with these newly established genres existing ones flourished as well. Among them the preference

was given to poetry which was appreciated for its ability to express profound emotions and contradictions of human soul.

Although the Romantic period centred primarily on poetry, many writers still favoured prose for their writings. They valued prose as the vehicle of social interaction that could encompass various standpoints and fuse the social space identified as the “republic of letters”.

Progress of the prose forms did not pass the novel by. Despite initial criticism, from the end of 1790s, the novel saw the rise of the new themes and approaches, and consequently, evolved from the inferior level of critical esteem to the most significant genre of literary expression. The novel moved into more fashionable circles with the works of William Godwin, Thomas Peacock and Walter Scott and with those of women novelists as Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and Jane Austen.

Romantic writers experienced the influence of the great French writer, Jean Jacques Rousseau who emphasized the importance of nature and natural state. Romantics imbued nature with human life, fervour and expressiveness and passionately wrote not only about the beauty and serenity of nature but also about its savagery and wildness. They combined the elements of nature with the spontaneous expression of human emotions and extended the concept of natural beauty consequently contributing to the spiritual life of mankind.

Denial of the present encouraged the Romantic poets appeal to the past. One group of Romanticists turned their attention to the cult of the Middle Ages which arose in the second half of XVIII century and offered a spiritual home, vague and mysterious, whereas, others found their ideals in classical antiquity where they were especially attracted by the republican regime of Ancient Greek and Rome.

Romanticism did not only vary in different countries, but even within the same country Romantic poets were not in the same way or to the same degree romantic. Therefore, they were specified into numerous schools depending on their political position and aesthetic views. While politically Romantic poets were identified as passive and active or revolutionary romanticist, for their aesthetic views they were categorized into the “Lake school”, the “Satanic school” and the “Cockney school” of Romanticism.

Chapter II. Keats versus Shelley: commonalities and distinguished features of their literary and creative activities

The second chapter includes a brief account of second generation Romantic writers and reflects comparative analysis of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s and John Keats’s literary activity by investigating Romantic elements influencing their creativity.

Romantic writers are not only classified for their political and aesthetic views. They are

distinguished for their actual age difference that was visibly felt in the subject matter of their works as well. For this characteristic Romantics are categorized into so-called first and second generation of writers.

The second generation of Romantics, who achieved maturity after the breakdown of the French Revolution, may be differentiated from their forerunners by their support of a more extreme intellectual revolt, which arose from the sharing of ideas, mostly in the poetry and prose of representatives of their generation.

This mutiny is particularly conveyed in the poetry of two great poets, Shelley and Keats, whose opposition is not limited to the subject matter of their writings, but shows itself in experimentation with old forms and creation of new ones either.

Shelley is as an architect of poetry. His views and mores formed the basis of his poetry and inspired him to write in numerous styles, beginning from revolutionary satire, philosophical visions to urbane verse letters. To him poetry was a means for making eternal all that is good and beautiful in the world.

Shelley's intellectual and creative power was basically lyrical, and his dispositions, impressions, ideas and sentiments represented themselves naturally in verse. Written in controlled sparse language and fairly personal tone, his lyrics are the rapturous aspirations for Beauty and the glorious embodiment of it.

Shelley's subsequent prose writings epitomize a magnificent and myriad-minded donation to Romantic idea and culture, and make strongly essential involvements in different still interconnected areas of thought, which comprise poetry and poetics, literary criticism, aesthetics, cultural theory, religious debate, politics, metaphysics and moral thought. Serving as an eloquent affirmation of the supreme social and moral value of the poet, "A Defence of Poetry" is the most important of Shelley's prose works.

Keats was the artist, with that love of the beautiful and that instinct for its reproduction which are the artist's divine gifts. His only aim was to venerate beauty wherever he noticed it, and to compose an original work of beauty which should exist everlastingly.

Keats' philosophy on art and beauty is best interpreted through his odes, which were recorded in a rush between April and September 1819, at a time when Keats was fighting down family disease.

Keats is also a great master of sonnet. Most of his sonnets reproduce his almost depressed attitude on life and his desire for a heritage to be left behind after his demise.

Virtually the most exceptional place in Keats's heritage belongs to his letters published between the years 1848 and 1878. His letters provide a clearer insight into poet's mind, his

artistic evolution, his developing ideas of poetry and his own objectives as a poet. Written with an unprompted freshness and an easy intimacy, they disclose his profound vision of his own spiritual growth, and illustrate his ardent affection for poetry. Keats's letters are essential documents and present many informative revelations about the nature of poetry and many critical principles which are cited as a basis for the assessment of poetry.

Both Shelley and Keats were great artists of an elevated and ardent simpleness. Their writings are loaded with resolute characters or even monumental portraits, affecting happenings and disastrous state of affairs, compelling conflicting feelings and mysterious images.

One of the distinctive features of Keats's and Shelley's compositions was the Romantic dejection generated principally by the devastating outcomes of the French Revolution and collapse of their attempt to the Ideal world. It is probably because of their melancholic temperament that they endeavoured to flee into the realms of imagination.

Conclusion: It is clearly seen that though Romanticism came to an end at the beginning of the XIX century, its impact is still sensed in modern art and literature

Many notions developed in Romantic epoch, like creative imagination, nature, myth and symbolism, emotions and intuition, autonomy from regulations, spontaneity, plain language, individual experiences, democracy and freedom, as well as an attraction with the past, counting ancient myths and the mysticism of the Medieval age still continues to be the gist of literary writings.

However, the most precious donation of Romanticism is the growth of the genius of two young poets, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats, whose experiments with poetry and poetic diction conduced to the formation of the present day literature.

Both Keats and Shelley were true Romantics with their ardent admiration for the natural world, idealism, emotional and physical passion, and fascination with mystical and supernatural. Their poetry is soaked with intense philosophy on life, nature and human identity which were the topmost concerns of the Romantic age.

Shelley and Keats established Romantic verse as the principal poetic institution of the age. They breathed a second life to the classical poetic forms and adapted them to illustrate the fundamental problems of their time. Being the last masters of the sonnet, they both made it a dazzling medium of personal expressions.

Having much similar in imagination, thoughts, productions and fate, Shelley and Keats laid the foundations for the contemporary literature, both verse and prose. Though, they were the most contentious literary figures of the early nineteenth century, Shelley's and Keats's

importance to English literature is broadly recognized in our days.

INTRODUCTION

Romanticism is an esthetic, philosophical and literary movement that arose in the European and American cultures in the timeline of XVIII and XIX centuries. The movement obtained its name from the word “romantic” which first came into view in the mid-seventeenth century writings and stood for “imaginary. However, the origin of the word goes back to the remote past, to the medieval use of the terms “romance” and “roman” (an epic poem of chivalry). From the XVII century the word “romantic” was used to describe the mysterious, the extravagant, the unusual and the fictitious. Gradually, in literary criticism “romanticism” began to denote a particular form and style of creativity that was characterized by an intense emotionality, by an interest in exotic and extraordinary and by the use of artistic means transmitting the versatility of reality, riches and contradiction of human emotions, thrills and passions. It came to be seen as an artistic assertion of the extremes in the human psyche, the areas of experience beyond logic and reason which could be expressed in a genuine and direct way. These new concerns became a proper reaction to the extremes of alternation and uncertainty which the age itself proclaimed. However, it was only after XIX century that “romanticism” started to be applied to “movement” or “school”, representatives of which, as Wordsworth conveyed in his verse,¹ “wandered lonely as a cloud” in pursuit of truth and beauty, and prized spontaneity and artists’ individual reaction to the happenings of life.

Romanticism went down in history as the “Age of Revolutions”. It emerged in the turmoil of political and social events prevailing over the continental Europe at the last decades of the XVIII century. Romantic movement was highly affected by the American War of Independence, by 1789’s revolution in France and by transition from a feudal system to bourgeois. It throve mainly as a protest against the political inconstancy and brutality springing from Western world in consequence of Industrial Revolution and as a strenuous opposition to the bourgeois system crushing human individuality to unimportance. Most importantly, it was an endeavour to do away with the inequity that came into being within the capitalist formation of society, namely, the exploitation of man by man and a strong manifestation of a need for independence and fundamental reform.

Romanticism was a virtually all-embracing movement which did not eliminate the rationalist ideas preceding it. It was esteemed as “a philosophy that affirmed the authenticity of personal experience” as a means of perceiving “truth”. Romantic aesthetics was connected

¹ www.poetryfoundation.org. William Wordsworth. I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

with the idealistic ideas of I. Kant and F. Schelling. Their idealism in which man became the subjective centre of knowledge had a crucial impact on the transition from the classical to the Romantic world-view.

As a literary movement Romanticism sprang as a response to the dissatisfaction with the Enlightenment values of reason and order which tended to shackle the free human spirit. In Germany it originated from the "Sturm and Drang" movement and from the works by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, while in Britain it evolved from writings by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The spiritual founder of the movement is the French Enlightenment philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau who by ascribing the root of evil to society and assigning the goodness and bliss to man's natural state, introduced the notion of a "noble savage". His idealization of human beings and nature became principal beliefs of Romantic philosophy.

The progress of Literary Romanticism is characterized by the shift in sensibility. However, this change was not immediate. The transitional and preparatory stage in the formation of Romantic literature was Pre-romanticism which was represented in England by such writers as, Chatterton, Radcliff, Walpole and Blake.

Pre-romantic literature sowed the first seeds of elements shaping the aesthetic views and principles of Romantics. It replaced the seventeenth and early eighteenth century aesthetic concepts of "refinement", "good taste" and "decorum" with the celebration of "originality", "nature" and "genius". Pre-romantics preserved the emotive rhetoric of XVIII century works intensifying Diderot and Richardson's idealization of heightened "sensibility" into a new self-conscious ideology of subjective and artistic authenticity. They rejected the strict rules and restrictions established in literature by neoclassicism and provided the creation of new genres which were later adopted and improved by Romantic writers.

Pre-romantic repudiation of neoclassicism found its extensive manifestation in Romantic literature. Romantics returned to nature and to plain humanity as a material for their writings and were in notable contrast to neo-classicists, who had confined themselves to the sketches of social and political life. Opposing the neoclassical ideals they glorified the old sagas and medieval romances and prized not the logic, but imagination as the supreme faculty of the mind. They based their theories on the intuition and the wisdom of the heart, and valued them over reason. Romantics detected beauty and truth in ordinary things and discarded the formal diction of the eighteenth century in favour of everyday language.

Romantic writers superseded the critical spirit of the Age of Rationalism with an imaginative one. Romantic imagination was considered to be the faculty that assisted man to constitute reality and create from nothingness. It was lauded as the ultimate combining power

which enabled human beings to bring together differences or opposites in the world of appearance. This reconciliation of opposites was the fundamental ideal for the Romantics.

Romantics' preoccupation with subjective experience and with celebration of the individual was extremely distinct from earlier poet's fascination with the greater world of human behaviour. Unlike their XVIII century precursors, Romantic writers construed things through their own emotions and wrote about the intricacy of their own thoughts. They repudiated the authoritarian subjects of the preceding age and supported human liberty in their compositions.

Romantic writers were critical of the factitiousness they examined in the literature of the previous ages, and so, they put a high esteem on the inner world of individual, in revelation of his feelings, thoughts and solitudes. Rejecting the unfavourable social milieu, they retired into the subjective world of personal concerns and exposed the moral merits of human soul.

Romantics looked for incentive in nature, praising either its specificity or the spiritual and moral bond between humanity and the natural world. For them, Nature turned from the classical image of order to the mirror in which they saw the eternal powers creating man and the physical universe. It became an organically unified whole, a living entity which partook in the feelings of an observer, rather than as a system of mechanical laws.

The artistic faculty of Romantic writers were extremely influenced by symbolic description of life and by dramatic disclosure of lyrical themes. Romantic writers were fascinated by exotic, setting them against the everyday subject. They found inspiration in various forms of oral traditions like myths, legends, fairy tales and ballads. This incitement was evidently contemplated in Walter Scott with his compiled pieces of folk literature embodying the peculiarities of Scottish history and the life modes of Scots, in Henry Longfellow with his renowned poem of "Song of Hiawatha" based on the North American Indian tales and songs, and in Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm with their compilation of the Old German folk tales.

Romantics' interest in the essence of the legendary past also conduced to the idolization of great writers such as Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton. In addressing these past figures, the Romantic writers cultivated a liberal awareness of many varied forms which great art could take, and had taken, throughout the ages. Such historical understanding of the multiplicity of artistic forms is an enduring consequence of Romantic aesthetics.

The new content of literature resulted in the approval of new artistic forms as well. While XVIII century rationalism and realism led to the prevalence of prose, the romantic vision contributed to the revival of poetry as a primary literary genre. Romantic poetry was

regarded as a reproduction of human life, “an ardent reflection of a nature”. It was meditative and contemplative, and used natural sceneries and childhood memories as a means of chasing hidden meanings in the internal states its authors sought to explore. Romantic poetry was a synthesis of older poetic forms as lyric poem, elegy, ode and sonnet, as well as the remarkable variety of hybrid forms like “elegiac sonnets”, “lyrical ballads”, “lyric drama” and the “historical novels” based on fresh criterions of arrangement and style. It was exalted in England by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Southey, in United States by Henry Wadsworth, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Edgar Allen Poe, in Germany by Henrich Heine, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, in Russia by Aleksandr Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov and others.

Though renowned for poetry, Romantic period was also an age when numerous remarkable prose works were composed. One of the imperative prose forms was the novel which became widely accepted, stimulating a dramatic growth of fiction writing in the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding that authors used a large variety of styles, counting historical, gothic, romantic and social, the essence of the novel was reality. It was marked by a keen interest in the interpenetration among literary genres, political and social structures, individual feelings and opinions. The Romantic age novel was promoted in England by Walter Scott, Maria Edgeworth, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen, in France by Alexandre Dumas and Victor Hugo, in America by Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper and Nathaniel Hawthorne, in Russia by Nikolai Gogol, Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

Along with the novel, Romantic literature saw the evolution of non-fictional prose forms, mainly of personal essays and autobiographies. The great essayists like William Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt and Charles Lamb wrote a large number of letters and essays on a wide range of topics and in the process verified the importance of the literary form of critical essay which came to particular prominence in Coleridge’s “*Biographia Literaria*”.

The changes in the content of Romantic writings also led to the classification of Romantics into two generations. The first generation of Romantics was characterized by emphasis on the self and its interrelation with nature. They were the first to realize the redemptive powers of natural world, and were truly the pioneers in what has become the “back to nature” movement. The poets of this group included Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey. They were also named by critics the “Lakists” or “Lake Poets” for their link with the Lake District.

Distinct from them, the second generation was more concentrated on the relationship between life and art. Their poetry was aimed at the assertion of intense individualism or the

triumph of the aspiration to liberty and equity, or the enunciation of an original moral thinking built on beauty and truth. The chief poets of the second generation were Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats. Except for Keats whose name was associated with “Cockney School”, these poets were considered by critics to be the members of “Satanic School”.

By the middle of the XIX century Literary Romanticism began to decline. In some countries it culminated in about 1850, or earlier, while in America it remained progressive until the end of the XIX century. However, as a literary sensibility Romanticism never entirely ceased. Romantic conventions were seen in the literature of the next decade when romanticism interacted with realism and naturalism in prose and with symbolism in poetry. Romantics’ interest in the riches of inner and outer experiences, their use of retrospective forms and inventive transformation of genres moved on the poetry of the succeeding age. A number of prose forms, particularly gothic novel, which initiated during Romantic period exerted a considerable influence on the writings of XIX century. Novels by Dickens, the Brontës and Wilkie Collins, the romances of R.L. Stevenson, Bram Stoker’s “Dracula”, the fantastic science fiction of H.G. Wells, the melodramas of Victorian fiction and drama were all the part of a continuing exploration of increasingly mainstream Gothic themes and preoccupations. Traditions of the Romantic age novel survived and refined contemporary literature in the writings of Ruth Rendell and Angela Carter.

CHAPTER I. Analysis of Romantic literary atmosphere influencing the literary creativity of the writers and poets at the end of the XVIII and the beginning of the XIX centuries

1.1 A concise history of Romanticism. Social and economic background

From the second half of the XVIII century England became the centre of Industrialization. The Industrial Revolution which lasted over 60 years changed both the economy and the natural scenery of the country. Pastures and open fields were enclosed and turned into manufacture factories. Farmers left without land moved into big cities in search of new working places and income. However, increased mechanisation of the industrial factories decreased the need for human labour and created high levels of unemployment. Accordingly, within a short period of time acute poverty spread all over the England.

The Industrial Revolution corresponded revolts in the political order. Being disappointed with the economic inequality in country, French population started uprising for man's civil rights and the elimination of class discrimination. In England this event was witnessed with some dismay. The wealthy governing classes grew frightened by the excessiveness of the rebellion in France and by the increasing feeling of dissatisfaction in their own country. They were ever inclined to see insurgence in any afford of the workers to improve their living and believed that the prime function of authorities was protection of order and the repression of rebellion. In order to weaken the spirit of resistance growing among population authorities established the strict police supervision and control over the press which was paralleled with the corresponding brainwashing of public opinion. This restraining policy of government grew harsher in the "Peterloo Massacre" of 1819, in which government troops charged a large group of workers who were meeting in Manchester to claim social and political reformation.

The situation did not improve between the years 1820 and 1832. In spite of regulating the shift from old economic world to the new, the government set the philosophy of laissez-faire meaning that authorities did not intervene in economic affairs. The consequences were that labouring class started to riot against the prevailing economic philosophy which urged them to work for inadequate wages and in sordid conditions. This ongoing unrest was settled in 1832 when English Parliament ratified the first Reform Act and granted all layers of society the right to vote. The bill did not eliminate public disorders entirely, yet, it was the first step to the long-awaited stability and greater democracy in the country.

Existing political and social volatilities influenced not only the way people lived, but the way they felt and thought as well. When the idea to create the ordered model of world where everything could be foreseen and set by the accepted rules was not achieved, it provoked a feeling of constant changeability of the life surrounding people and promoted the revelation of new characteristics in individual such as, power of imagination, love of freedom, independence of reasoning and desire to implement his own ideal model of world. All these changes contributed to the rise and formation of the new age called Romanticism.

Romanticism emerged from the aspiration to achieve equality and individual rights. It was directed against the French Revolution, as well as, against the bourgeois norms and capitalist civilization which strangled the personal freedom of population and had driven them to poverty.

Literary Romanticism appeared as a reaction against the Enlightenment period and the cold rationality connected with it. It was a movement indicated by the shift of sensibility and support for the independence of man and nature. Romanticism was an epoch of individualism in which philosophers and poets alike put an extraordinarily high estimate on human potentialities and powers, and stressed the significance of subjective experience, which alone could achieve a sense of the eternal and the preternatural.

In English literature Romanticism commenced with the appearance of “Lyrical Ballads” in 1798 and went on till the death of Sir Walter Scott in 1832. The Romantic literature emphasized the abiding ideals of youth and called to the feelings as the archetypal grace of Pope could never do. It was marked by human sensitivity and by a corresponding perception of the human soul.

However, Romantic literature was not a sudden and thoroughgoing evolution. It grew as an outcome of neoclassicism as well as the contrast to it. Echoing the revolutionary atmosphere of the age, the Romantics defied neoclassical traditions and evinced a new sensitiveness and self-expression. They developed original ways of writing which captured the flow of individual experience in forms and language closer to everyday speech and more accessible to the general reader. Romantics gave a different look to the way neoclassical writers treated the human soul and emotions. While the representatives of the neoclassical age stressed the importance of reason and order, the Romantic writers put feelings and intuition over them. They believed that neoclassicism underestimated the complexity of spiritual life which was free from the simple material factors and hence, considered it to be undeveloped. Moreover, they rejected the neoclassical way of representing a child as a savage who needed to be civilized and sophisticated. For Romantics child was holy and innocent and his/her

closeness to God could only be spoiled by civilization.

Romantic writers were deeply concerned with the cruel social wrongs bringing suffering to people. They longed to achieve a way of rectifying people's distress and saw its solution in literature. They all believed in literature to be some kind of assignment that could aid to the salvation of mankind.

Distinct from their German and French confreres, English writers did not consider themselves to be Romanticists and some even tried to refute common belief naming them so. Nonetheless, they all formulated a part of movement responding to the mood of the epoch, with its deep-rooted sense of ceaseless historical change and of the universe as governed by incomprehensible forces exceeding individual will.

1.2. The leading literary genres of Romantic age

Romanticism brought a new vision to literature by encouraging the development of complex and fast-moving plots and creating mixed genres, such as elegiac sonnets, the poetic autobiography, lyrical ballads, lyric drama and lyric-epic poem. Nevertheless, along with these newly established genres existing ones flourished as well. Among them the preference was given to poetry which was appreciated for its ability to express profound emotions and contradictions of human soul.

The Romantic poetry is a passionate protest against the rules, conventions and limitations imposed by the previous age. It varies from the strictly upheld formal style of neoclassical writings in its subjectivity, spontaneity and freedom of expressions.

The Romantic poems were constitutionally modified to cover the problems of the age. They evolved from the doctrines of liberty and individual conviction, and for this, they were mostly focused on personal experience rather than public and moral concerns.

The Romantic poems also present vivid portrayals of people's spiritual life during the age of transition and glorify strong individuals who challenge the social and moral values of their time, and struggle against the cruelty and ugliness penetrating into society. They show the complexity and discrepancy of human feelings generated not only by unfavourable environmental conditions, but also by the struggle of passions in his own soul.

Of all the types of poetry, the Romantics generally admired the lyric poem written in the first person. Being the chief faculty of conveying personal feelings so important for Romantic literature, the lyric poem was regarded as the most essentially poetic of all genres.

Distinct from the conventional love poems of previous ages, the Romantic lyrics are

mainly centred on the characters who share recognizable traits with the poet. They often closely accord the experiences and states of mind expressed by the lyric speaker with the facts of the lyricist's living and the personal confessions in his letters and journals.

The most favoured of the lyric poems was the ode of irregular form which allowed the Romantic poets to convey their strongest sentiments. The Romantic odes begin in an intensely personal impulse and move toward reflective or philosophical resolutions. They developed from the classical poem of emotional nature to the performative genre where the language indicated public and communal concerns. The eminent samples of Romantic odes are Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality", Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind", Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" and others.

Together with the lyric poems, some of the Romantic poets turned their attention to the pastoral poetry which praised the plainness and domesticity of country life. The pastoral poetry of Romantic age found its manifestation in Wordsworth with his vivid sketches of humble country folk, in John Clare with his certainties of rustic life and in Southey with his lived expression of rural workers and documentary details of their life.

The Romantic poetry ideated the poet as an extremely individual creator. Unlike their more socially integrated neoclassical confreres, the Romantic poets were usually repudiated and misunderstood by society and so, deemed to be solitary figures. They each had a strong individual vision that induced them to establish their writings on the base of their own self and on their personal reaction to life. The Romantic poets represented a modern hermit or exile, who usually granted a special moral value to similar outcast figures in their own writings. Their solitary journey coincided with the being of the heroic individuals like Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner", Clare's "I", Shelley's "Alastor", Keats' "Endymion" or Byron's "Manfred", who reached beyond the conventional social rules and normal human restraints.

The Romantic poetry was limited to a few poets, still, those few altered the aspect of literature forevermore. In a group of such prominent poets were George Crabbe and Thomas Moore who gave vivacious renderings of natural scenes with Romantic emotionality.

George Crabbe was one of the first poets whose works provided the link between Pre-Romanticism and Romanticism. He was a great bard of nature who portrayed it as strange being and arresting as no other Romantic poet did and therefore, was named by Byron as "Nature's sternest painter". Throughout the age, Crabbe persisted in his precise, realistic portraits of rural life and landscape, writing mainly in the heroic couplets of the neoclassical age. His poems describe village manners without a pastoral simplicity or rustic savagery and

present a vibrant “register” of various human types and incidents. His narrative poems, “the annals of the poor” as he rightfully named them in “The Parish Register”, provide an outstanding representation of the debasement of country people constrained by the pressure of war and tedious hard labour, and give a vivid examination of the moral failures, the weaknesses and perversities of characters with the sensibility of the moral psychologist.

The other admired figure of the time, Thomas Moore, was a proficient writer of patriotic and often nostalgic poems. Moore’s essential endowment to Romantic literature is his “Irish Melodies” set to tunes of the XVIII century Irish songs. They chant the past grandeur of poet’s native Ireland and call his contemporaries to fight for its independence and prosperity. In their evocation of romantic emotions and their call for freedom and support of nationalism, “Irish Melodies” are clearly in harmony with the author’s time and establish Moore as the national lyricist of Ireland.

Although the Romantic period centred primarily on poetry, many writers still favoured prose for their writings. They valued prose as the vehicle of social interaction that could encompass various standpoints and fuse the social space identified as the “republic of letters”.

The prose form of English Romantic literature flourished with the writings of the Thomas De Quincey, a writer of encyclopaedic intellectual interests and great versatility. Together with Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, Quincey played a great role in the dawn and development of lyrical Romantic essay, the main function of which was either an idiosyncratic disclosure of author’s mental conditions or emotional and ingenious rendition of facts. The essays of Quincey, as well as, of the Cockneys represent the evolution of what the critics called the “prose form of Romantic literature”.

Quincey’s other contributions to Romantic literature are numerous commentaries on politics and theology, commendable pieces of literary criticism, and vivid biographical sketches of the many writers he knew personally, most notably Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and Lamb. His most distinctive achievements, however, are the writings which start with fact and move into macabre fantasy and especially those which begin as quiet autobiography and develop into an elaborate construction made up from the materials of his reveries and dreams. In such writings Quincey widely wrote on the nature of dreams and anticipated modern psychological studies in relation to childhood experience and imaginative creation. Of these compositions the most celebrated and notable is “The Confessions of an English Opium Eater”.

This study of addiction and hallucination, of the induction of dreams as much as of the impossibility of forgetting a personal past, moves far beyond a merely Gothic fascination with

the dark and contorted architecture of the soul. It is a work of considerable psychological daring, prefiguring Freudian theories and preoccupations, as much as an intricate personal apologia which interweaves recollections of human kindness, nightmarish recalls of childhood trauma, and an equivocating justification of drug-taking. In this achievement De Quincey penetrated the depths of the subliminal world, describing the simultaneously macabre and ecstatic experience with great preciseness, imaginative acuity and lyrical intensity. He opened up to English literature the dark side of human consciousness, with its grotesque strangeness, and its pervasive sense of guilt and alienation.

Progress of the prose forms did not pass the novel by. Despite initial criticism, from the end of 1790s, the novel saw the rise of the new themes and approaches, and consequently, evolved from the inferior level of critical esteem to the most significant genre of literary expression. Unlike the XVIII century novel of Fielding which was focused on moral, the XIX century novel began to register the emotional growth of characters or of a leading character with whom the readers were expected to identify, and started to encompass the wide range of issues as high-class society contrasts with the primitive, national concerns with regional and male points of view with female. The novel moved into more fashionable circles with the works of William Godwin, Thomas Peacock and Walter Scott and with those of women novelists as Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and Jane Austen.

One of the first novelists who conveyed his social consciousness in novels with necessitarian” plots, is William Godwin. His “Caleb Williams” also subtitled “Things as They Are” intend to expose the frauds of XVIII century fictions and to question the moral consequences of unmasking them for the sake of “abstract truth”. The novel encloses the problems of class perception and the nature of oppression, and indicates Godwin’s revolutionary hatred of all forms of injustice, as well as, political and religious despotism. It is a novel of propaganda and contains the elements of crime, detection, pursuit and punishment which are highly innovative. Furthermore, it is one of the first novels to give a psychological portrait of character simultaneously as illustrating conflicts of political ideals and beliefs, and thus is considered to be the precursor of mystery novel.

Another influential novelist of the age was Thomas Love Peacock. Writing in the nature of French comic romance, Peacock famed himself as the principal prose satirist. His conversation poems and satirical novels are the combination of the prose and verse, stretch of imagination and shrewd portraits of reality. They are exceptional in making the mixture of genres, from sub-Gothic to semi-pastoral, with the essential element of conversation, which at times develop into an early kind of stream of consciousness. Essentially, Peacock’s novels

have an urbanity of ideas and stylish alternation of debate which remains almost unique in the English novel.

Romantic interest in the novel of manners is illustrated in the works of Fanny Burney. Burney brought into English literature the feminine novel of manners which depict the present-day life-styles of well-off people from the woman's viewpoint, with exquisite humour, and with the aspiration for attaining some improvement, or leastways of demonstrating the beauty of moral excellence and ethics. She is also acclaimed for her diaries and letters which revitalize English society of the late 1700s and early 1800s. Her diaries with their vibrant chronicles of her time and vivid portrayals of such eminent characters as Samuel Johnson and the mad King George III represent the lucid revelations of women's influence in social history and their role in the growth of autobiographical writing.

The prominent Anglo-Irish author Maria Edgeworth or "the great Maria", as she came to be called, is an innovator of the regional novel and an early writer of instructional tales for children. Edgeworth's ability to penetrate the pretentiousness of traditional historians and to create a "behind the scenes" image of people in a condition of instability, brought her world fame and the acclaim of such writers as Sir Walter Scott, Jane Austen and Byron. Her Irish novels form intangible, humorous discussions of the present state of society and establish their arguments through the exchange of voices, each supporting or subverting a social or cultural viewpoint. Although Edgeworth's novels as "Castle Rackrent", "The Absentee" and "Ormond" contain a slight advocacy of independence or Catholic nationalism, they all suggest the changing nature of Ireland in the years immediately preceding and succeeding the Act of Unions of 1801 and all explore the historic rifts of Irish society.

The most imaginative representative of the Romantic novel is the daughter of the great writer and philosopher William Godwin, and the feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley. Her essential gift to romantic literature is the creation of "The Modern Prometheus" or "Frankenstein" which brought a new breathe and resurgence to the Gothic novel after its publication. This engrossing story of man-made monster is first literary work to examine the human impact of scientific research and the first rightful example of the genre known as science fiction. "Frankenstein" is a novel that thrust the Gothic traditions to their limits, in the process creating a challenging sense of the individual in conflict with society. It is a musing on human knowledge and progression, and an appalling reflection on the inconsequentiality of Enlightenment idealism. It is also an imaginative representation of the principles of liberty and human rights, and a powerful revelation of the root of evil and the probable aftermaths of mechanization in the new industrialized epoch.

In *Frankenstein* Shelley explores the deepest recesses of human psychology, stressing the macabre, the unusual and the fantastic and preferring the realities of the subjective imagination. Mocking the Romantic imaginative ego, she addresses the hazards of Faustian creative power whose investigations recognize no restraints, except those of its own inexplicit ethical world. Shelley reveals the perilously egotistical state of the Romantic thinker preoccupied with his own consciousness and exposes a shift of sensibility, a movement towards the uncanny, the rationally uncontrollable and the psychologically disjunctive. Such a shift also has political repercussions, for the world Shelley depicted indisputably represents a clear challenge to the existing order and rational modes of thought and of social organization.

The notable contrast to the novels of the age are Jane Austen's writings with their charming descriptions of everyday life. Austen's originality, her creation of ordinary and unforgettable characters, her accounts of how they change challenge her contemporaries' expectations about novels' plots, setting and characterization.

While other writers used the novel to give moral examples, to describe real or imagined worlds and ways of life, Austen's achievement is to create a realm of characters whose emotions are recognizable, exploits are familiar and faults are human. Going against the trends of her time, she examined the human character and motivation with a gentle irony and perceptiveness which makes her novels unique, as representation of universal patterns of behaviour and as documentation of aspects of provincial society of her time.

Austen showed the pressure of the age on a society which was undergoing many radical changes, ridiculed the usurped supremacy of the ruling classes and portrayed an older order of values that was changing at a time when the gap between the gentry and poor was widening. With a humorous revelation of affection and with a firm confirmation of the merits of self-control, Austen countered the late XVIII century promotion of sensitivity and sentiment, and highlighted the ongoing search for order in a world overwhelmed by chaos and threatened from all directions, not only by war, or class division, but by such human fears as loneliness, uncertainty and failure as well.

Austen wrote in the mood of Wollstonecraft's "Vindication of the Rights of Women" drawing attention to the economic problems women had and asserting that women shared the same moral nature as man and had the same kind of individual rights and obligations. Most of her characters, especially those like Anne Elliott or Emma Woodhouse passed through a hard moral experience before they realized that one thing that truly mattered in life was the actual value of man and women, his/her devotion for impartial devotion, fidelity and kindness.

With all these novelty she brought to English literature, Austen famed herself as the foremost novelist of the age. Although she stood distant from the Romantic tendencies of her own age and mocked some of their more apparent and important qualities, though she was a supporter of XVIII century realistic conventions, still her creative aloofness and objective examination of her confreres could only have been aroused from the similar critical and humanistic atmosphere that contributed to the Romantic movement.

Where Jane Austen intentionally limited her area of concern, Walter Scott opened up the novel to the full panorama of revolt, dissent and social change. Having been an author of stylized reproductions of old Scottish and English ballads and unique epic poems narrating the feudal times of his native Scotland, Scott subsequently turned his attention to novel and won a remarkable place among his contemporaries.

With intense comprehension of reasons and powers affecting the deeds of communities and individuals, Scott made the old times realistic. He rewrote history, recreating for the nineteenth century the real historical figures of Scotch, English and French history and bringing them to life in turmoil of their times, presenting the whole of their heroism, their superb faith and enthusiasm, giving a fictional aspect to history and making fiction historical up to the time they became nearly inseparably connected in the minds of his readership. He moved from the Middle age culture of knightliness into an adaptation with the historically ascertained materialistic culture of present age. His address to past took in many periods, from the Jacobite rising of 1745 in "Waverley" to the Crusades in "The Talisman", from the conflict between Saxon and Norman in "Ivanhoe" to the age of Mary Stuart in "The Abbott", and on to the Porteous riots of Edinburgh in 1736 in "The Heart of Midlothian".

Scott's novels with their realistic historical settings give the XIX century world, and especially XIX century Britain, its sense of historical identity. They touch the audience with their epic descriptions and with their analysis of "the powers that go to make state of affairs and cause human beings to behave as they do". His novels are imbued in oral tradition, in the vigorous realism of Smollett and Fielding, and in the splendour of Shakespeare's historical chronicles. His characterization, often likened to Shakespeare's, is benign, acute and witty, mainly because of XVIII century dramatic conventions of external representation, however, highly extensive in its social scope, with pungent low-life characters. In introducing the transforming power of history and its effects on every character's life, Scott transformed the very nature, the scope and the future of the novel and cleared the way for formation of XIX century realistic novel.

Another genre which underwent certain adaptations during Romantic revival is drama.

Unlike the writings of previous ages, Romantic drama is more literary than theatrical. It was intended to be read privately at home rather than performed on the stage.

Romantic drama is characterized by a fragmentary non-conventional composition and usually lacks a traditional development of the action and a cohesive plot. It acquires its subjects from the French Revolution and from its after effects.

Romantic drama reached its perfection with the plays of such poets as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Byron who drew upon and developed certain aspects of contemporary drama and theatre and with the writings of women dramatists, like Frances Burney, Hannah More and Elizabeth Inchbald who continued the models of the Augustan drama, writing the so-called “well-made” plays.

Gothic drama, similarly to the Gothic novels, shows a taste for the macabre and the supernatural. It is chiefly influenced by Charles Maturin’s writings which provide the Gothic drama with a Shakespearian overtone and by James Robinson’s plays that link the earlier Romantic Gothic with the later Victorian interest in vampires.

The Romantic Literature is also distinguished by the interest in nonfictional prose which strengthened with the development of political and periodical writings. These writings generally attend to the themes of democracy and human rights and limn the existing social happenings as a form of apocalyptic change. One of such writings is Godwin’s “Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness” in which he provides a devastating analysis of unjust government institutions and expresses his belief in liberal society. Conversely, the anti-revolutionary views are expressed by Edmund Burke in his “Reflections on the Revolution in France”. The work became a major target for criticism for many Romantic writers as well as for Thomas Paine, who in his “Rights of Man” justified the French Revolution against Burke’s attacks and condemned his account of the Revolution as overemotional and inaccurate.

In the field of philosophical writings Romantic literature experienced the impact of the great woman philosopher, Mary Wollstonecraft. Her “Vindication of the Rights of Woman” is the foundational text of liberal feminism which proclaims that women should not be brought up to be weak and useless objects, but should rather be raised as sensible beings capable of conducing to the development of human virtue.

The work is also distinct for its ability to combine political and social analysis with a revolutionary ideology of individual rights. It indicates the author’s attitude to the destructive forces which arise from the unnatural division established in society, distinctions which divide nations into classes and ranks and which serve to forbid both dignity and liberty to the

suffering majority. It is one of Wollstonecraft's works written in immediate response to the French Revolution, and displaying her basic argument where she claims that the negligence and trivialization of women will undermine the Revolution.

1.3. Common characteristics of Romantic age writings

The Anti-bourgeois and anti-revolutionary principles of all romantics predetermined variety of common features peculiar to Romantic literature. Some of these features represent the progress of those elements which already prevailed in sentimental and pre-romantic literature, whereas others embody elements specific for romantic literature as a whole. Among these distinctive characteristics the most noticeable and the most interesting are the following: Idealization of nature and natural beauty: Refutation of bourgeois civilization and the turbulence connected with it encouraged Romantics to rediscover the beauty and value of nature. Romantic writers experienced the influence of the great French writer, Jean Jacques Rousseau who emphasized the importance of nature and natural state. They began to give greater attention to describing natural phenomena and capturing every "sensuous nuance" of it.

Romantics imbued nature with human life, fervour and expressiveness and passionately wrote not only about the beauty and serenity of nature but also about its savagery and wildness. They brought to literature the concept of sublimity of nature, its boundless opportunities and limitless force connected with free and strong human spirit.

Romantics appraised nature as a symbolic system, a physical revelation parallel to the Revelation in Scriptures and celebrated it as the only source of wisdom and solution to the ugliness brought by machines. However, in addition to its visual beauty and spiritual comfort, Romantic writers also appreciated nature for its ability to aid the urban men to understand their true identity and return to their roots. Therefore, they began to write lyrical poems calling people from the artificiality and complexity of the cities to the natural world.

Interest in medieval period: Denial of the present encouraged the Romantic poets appeal to the past. One group of Romanticists turned their attention to the cult of the Medieval Age which arose in the second half of XVIII century and offered a spiritual home, vague and mysterious, whereas, others found their ideals in classical antiquity where they were especially attracted by the republican regime of Ancient Greek and Rome. Those who praised the Middle Ages looked to Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton as a basis of creativity. They took a variety of conventional lyric forms, as well as Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnets

and adjusted them to conform to the meditative quality of their writings. Romantics rediscovered the old literature forms such as folktales, legends and ballads, and promoted the growth of historicism, the father of which was Walter Scott.

Praise of emotions: Rejecting the XVIII century methods of describing reality, Romantic writers created their own ways of its manifestation. It firstly appeared in the depiction of man's emotional world. The Romantic poets began to manifest the individual observations, considering that feeling was more significant than reason as a medium of understanding life. They combined the elements of nature with the spontaneous expression of human emotions and extended the concept of natural beauty consequently contributing to the spiritual life of mankind.

Importance of imagination: Romantics fervently supported the idea of artistic self-expression, releasing their imaginations from restraints in an attempt to articulate their individual views of love and life. They estimated imagination as a dynamic, active power, the approximate equivalent of the creative powers of nature or even God. Romantics deemed imagination to be a desire or motive that drove the human mind to reveal things which could not be understood through logical thinking and stated that the creations of the imagination were ²“forms more real than living man”. They believed that imagination was the fundamental power of a poet that enabled him to alter all images, to give oneness to diversities and perceive all events in the new light.

Nevertheless, poetic imagination was not comprehended by all Romantics in a similar way. While “the Lake Poets” saw imagination as a divine revelation, “the Cockneys” considered it to disclose the beauty of the real world. Where Byron perceived the flight of imagination and poetic fantasy so characteristic for Romantic writers, Shelley declared that imagination could expose the intellectual beauty which vigorously influenced the sense of people and called them to struggle. What Romantics had in common was that they all appraised the imagination as the highest form of learning and put it over reason.

Belief in the bizarre and supernatural: Portrayals of life in the works of Romantics did not only rise over the petty daily occurrences, but also surpassed the reality. The Romantic poets sought to flee from the limitations of “that shadow-show” called reality and reach from the trivial literary fantasy to the exalted mysticism. They described the life by means of symbols through which they tried to capture a variety of realities and regularities defining its progress. The indefinite grounds of public events acquired for them mystical character. For some Romantics this mysticism obtained religious colouring and they saw the reason of all events

² www.bartleby.com. A Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts. Percy Bysshe Shelley

in the influence of divine power, while, others rejected the idea of God and looked for explanation in natural forces.

Although engrossment with the mystical and bizarre already existed in the XVIII century Gothic novels, the Romantics imparted a sense of magnificence and enticing exquisiteness to the intimidations of the unidentified.

1.4. Schools and movements of English Romanticism

Romanticism was a complex movement that tried to find a new reply to the issues of revolt and opposition of the bygone days and contemporary politics, of the materialistic thinking prevailing in the Enlightenment age and idealistic tendencies of the early XIX century European philosophy. It did not only vary in different countries, but even within the same country Romantic poets were not in the same way or to the same degree romantic. Therefore, they are specified into numerous schools depending on their political position and aesthetic views. While politically Romantic poets are identified as passive and active or revolutionary romanticist, for their aesthetic views they are categorized into the “Lake school”, the “Satanic school” and the “Cockney school” of Romanticism.

A group of poets who brought a new contemplation and emotionalism to Romantic literature are the Passive Romanticists. Varying from one another in mind and art, the Passive Romanticists were considerably connected by social ties, and by religious and political sympathies. They were first inspired by the rebellious spirit caused by the bourgeois revolution in France, but later protested it seeing its tragic consequences on common people. Passive Romanticists are also named “the Lakists” or “the Lake Poets” after the Lake District in the north-west of England they lived. They idealized the harmonious and peaceful days of the Middle Ages and called people back to the patriarchal mode of life. They daily witnessed the misery brought to people by industrialization and tried to find a way of changing the social condition through their writings. The Lakists were first in England who openly criticized the aesthetic principles of neoclassicism and opposed them with their own romantic aspirations. They stood up for the expansion of description areas and sought to revive the national traditions in literature. Their poetry manifests a deep concern and love for the ordinary man, sense of nature and meditative dreaminess. The poets of this group are William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey.

As most of Romantic poets, in initial years of his creative activity Wordsworth

supported the revolution in France and stated that ³“Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive”. However, when the members of revolution started to fight aggressively among themselves and with their neighbour countries Wordsworth changed his attitude towards it. He confessed that awaiting any benefit to come of political makeover, putting too much faith in the ability of reason to form a self-sustaining and adapted world of equals was exceedingly unwise. Wordsworth expressed his new position with the lines:

Become Oppressors in their turn.
Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence.
For one of Conquest, losing sight of all
Which they had struggled for.

Being disappointed with results of French Revolution, Wordsworth resolved to devote himself to looking for truth and exquisiteness in the majesty and innocence of nature. He aspired for producing art that would be loyal to the finest qualities that dwells within man and tried to reveal it by absolute power of poetry. The freshness and emotional power of expressions, the strong psychological depth of his characterization and importance of his social interpretation made Wordsworth’s poetry notably distinctive from the more formally crafted works of his time.

Being a nature poet Wordsworth suggested that poetry was a result of ⁴“spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” and hence, it should be simple and natural. He presented into literature a state of innocence spawned by the primary bonds with nature and claimed that only in such condition intrinsic ardours of the heart get a better soil to achieve their perfection.

Wordsworth even believed that the metrical part of poetry, its rhythm and language too should be closer to the intonation of everyday speech to the greatest extent. Therefore, he broke the artificial diction of the previous century creating more open and democratic world of poetry. The language of his poetry gives a detailed description of everyday speech and the lives of ordinary people. It celebrates the spirit of man living in harmony with the natural environment and away from the corrupt city.

However, Wordsworth’s nature theory does not culminate with the depiction of man dwelling in the endless splendour of nature. It surpasses the common corporeal and emotional gratification and finds its reflection in the manifestation of nature as a divine power.

³ www.poetryfoundation.org. William Wordsworth. The French Revolution as It Appeared to Enthusiasts at Its Commencement

⁴ www.bartleby.com. Famous Prefaces. The Harvard Classics.1909–14. Preface to Lyrical Ballads. William Wordsworth (1800)

Wordsworth regarded nature as a provenience of spiritual comfort to human beings and believed that the man closer to nature was either closer to God. He also declared that from examination of nature man may learn more of moral credibility than from all the texts and sagas. Wordsworth considered nature as the only great and competent tutor of man and for this, he often viewed it on a broad scale, giving us detailed description of sceneries and majestic characteristics. This mystical semi-pantheistic nature-religion theory is plainly disclosed in the following lines of “Tintern Abbey”.

⁵A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,

Wordsworth placed the core of a poem not in outer nature, but in the mental states of the particular poet, and indicated that the elemental materials of a poem were not the external people and events it represented, but the internal feelings of the writer, or exterior objects which have been converted by the author's feelings. Wordsworth stated that comparing with other people, poet is more endowed with sensitive soul and ability to possess the extensive knowledge of man's personality and hence, he is intermediary between human being and external world. Guided by this point of view, Wordsworth defined poetry as ⁶“the real language of men” and the poet as ⁷“a man speaking to men”.

Unlike Wordsworth who contemplated mainly on the lives of common men, Coleridge presented mystery and the supernatural into the Romantic poetry of England. Inspired by stories of bewitching, haunting and possession shaped by antiquated treatises on demonology, folklore and Gothic novels, he created a sense of occult powers and unknown modes of being. With wonderfully strange journey in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and the pleasure-dome of “Kubla Khan” and “Christabel” Coleridge opened a realm of the supernatural and the exotic world to the readers.

⁵ www.poetryfoundation.org. William Wordsworth. Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798

⁶ www.bartleby.com. Famous Prefaces. The Harvard Classics.1909–14. William Wordsworth. Preface to Lyrical Ballads

⁷ www.bartleby.com. Famous Prefaces. The Harvard Classics.1909–14. William Wordsworth. Preface to Lyrical Ballads

Coleridge's fascination with mysterious was particularly seen in "The Rime of Ancient Mariner". This precious contribution to "Lyrical Ballads" combines the impact of the ballad revival with Coleridge's characteristic ambiance of nightmarish remorse and penitence, and represents a sense of the intricacy of man's life, its heart-rending conflicts, its gloomy and philosophical facets. It discloses Coleridge's humanistic idea of overcoming loneliness and building human relations based on love, and addresses the common Christian belief stating the importance of repentance and forgiveness of sins.

⁸He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast,
He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God, who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

While the poem amplifies Coleridge's feelings of a world no longer redeemable by Christian faith, its power also indicates the way in which poetry itself comes to take on a new role in Romanticism, the way in which it can facilitate the readers to look differently at the life and its meaning.

Although best known for his poetry, Coleridge was also a prominent philosopher, journalist, lecturer and literary critic of the 1790s and the beginning of the XIX century. He was interested in the processes and implications of critical theory, an intellectual exercise which ranged over literature and the workings of the mind to religion and the development of society.

Despite the decline of his Pantisocratic mission and his early revolutionary hopes, Coleridge continued to speculate around the central principle of his philosophy, the vital unity and indivisibility in Creation. The main ideas of this philosophy lie in the role and description of imagination. These ideas find their reflection in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" where he embodies the essence of the poetic imagination, the foremost of the human senses which is alone capable of perceiving the underlying harmony of all things and of underlying truth about the world. For its philosophical value "Kubla Khan" became one the most influential works of criticism and made Coleridge known as the father of modern English criticism.

The theory founded in "Kubla Khan" is expanded in "Biographia Literaria" which contains important discussions of the working of the poetic imagination and reveals the extent of Coleridge's thinking about the nature of literature. In "Biographia Literaria" Coleridge

⁸ www.poetryfoundation.org. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Part VII

familiarizes English criticism with an account of the organic form of literary works according to which, the work is conceptualized as a natural and self-generating process, parallel to the growth of a plant, that begins with a seed-like idea in the poet's imagination, grows by assimilating both the poet's feelings and materials of sensory experience, and evolves into an organic whole in which the parts are integrally related to each other and to the whole. By instituting this explanation of literary work, Coleridge tried to clarify that the form and the meaning of the poem are intimately tied to each other and, hence, they develop simultaneously.

"Biographia Literaria" is Coleridge's attempt to give his 'literary life and opinions' on poetry more systematically. It is a profoundly shaped, digressive series of deliberations on poetry, poets and, most importantly, the quality of the poetic imagination. Here Coleridge distinguishes oppositions and compatible states of existence and attempts to argue for independence, for wholeness and for "continuity in self-consciousness" as the dynamic of human creativity. He presents his vision of creative imagination which he classifies into primary and secondary.

What Coleridge saw as the "primary Imagination" was the reflection of the operating mind of the God himself. As it automatically balances and combines the innate abilities of the mind with the external presence of the objective reality which the mind receives through its sensory faculty, Coleridge regarded it as the "necessary imagination". It characterizes man's ability to learn from nature.

Secondary imagination, contrarily, represents a superior faculty which can be related to creative power. It is this aspect of imagination which can break down what is perceived in order to recreate by an autonomous wilful act of the mind that has no analogue in the natural world, which Coleridge correlates with art and poetry.

In "Biographia Literaria" Coleridge also makes an apparent distinction between the Fancy, which is merely a mode of Memory liberated from "the order of time and space" and receives its material from the laws of association, and Imagination, which transcends sensational material and brings the thoughts into direct connection with ultimate and supersensual reality. This variation is the essence of Coleridge's critical thinking, in which literature is less a work of art than a natural product of the imagination.

Coleridge's other illustrious critical triumph is his lecture on Shakespeare. Although it is recorded as an apostil and transliterated accounts from lectures, rather than formal essays, Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism is in a group of the most important compositions in the

⁹ www.genius.com. Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Biographia Literaria. Chapter XIII

English literature. Imbued with his veneration for and knowledge of Shakespeare, his captious philosophy sweeps away the arbitrary rules which for two centuries have stood in the way of literary criticism of Shakespeare and enables more profound investigation of the plays than do the creations of his eighteenth-century forerunners. His accent on “individual psychology” and description indicates the beginning of an original critical approach to Shakespeare, which has an intense impact on subsequent studies.

Both Wordsworth and Coleridge created a lasting influence on English poetry. They played a great role in the formation of new poetry by innovating in form, language and subject matter. Although their particular styles and methods were generally in contrast, they shared the same goal of making poetry closer the rhythm and diction of everyday language.

The last representative of the “Lake school” is Robert Southey. Although some critics related Southey’s fame to his lifelong intimacy with Wordsworth and Coleridge, he left a significant mark in the history of English Romanticism. His great contribution to literature is folktales and legends written on the base of Medieval ballad form. Southey’s ballads combine the traditions of folk art with those of the Gothic novel, a genre of “mystery and horror” so popular in English literature during the end of XVIII century. By urging a return from modern competition to cooperative feudalism and by stressing the helpful independence of medieval society his ballads show his distrust in democracy and lasting desire for social betterment. They describe extraordinary, exceptional happenings which are explained and assessed from the moral point of view and include supernatural elements so typical of Romantic age.

The second group of Romantic poets are Progressive or Revolutionary Romanticists. They characterized themselves as the successors of XVIII century Enlightenment ideals and longed for the continuation of revolutionary process beginning of which they saw in the French Revolution. Revolutionary Romanticists reflected the desires of progressive layers of bourgeois democracy and in their best works expressed people’s dream of social justice. The great representatives of Progressive Romanticists include George Gordon Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley. For “Satanic spirit of pride and audacious impiety” of their writings both poets were christened by Robert Southey as the poets of the “Satanic school”.

Unlike most of the writings of his age, Byron’s poetry is not chiefly informed by nature and by the consideration of natural world, but by social life and by contemporary events, by political state of England and by the feverish European nationalism provoked by the revolution in France. Supporting the ideals of XVIII century enlighteners and French revolutionaries, Byron wrote about the irrationality of contemporary reality, the ethical and political importance of revolution and its function in the future of humanity. He raised his

voice in defence of oppressed population and encouraged them to the struggle for liberty and equality.

¹⁰“Yet, Freedom! yet thy banner, torn, but flying,
Streams like the thunder-storm against the wind;”

Byron’s creativity represents a distinct sense of continuous progress and great powers influencing human living. His poetry is closely connected with the progressive liberation movements of the age; the riot of working class Luddites in England, the struggle of Ireland against English colonial control and the national liberation movements in Spain, Greece and Italy. It is affected by sorrow at the view of the degrading and corrupting force of conservatism and by expectations for future renovation, and was intensified by his deliberations about the fates of people, his philosophical views and bold political statements. Byron’s critical visions of political and social iniquity violating people’s rights are clearly exposed in his “Ode on the Farmers of the Frame-Bill”.

So if we can hang them for breaking a bobbin,
‘Twill save all the Government’s money and meat:
Men are more easily made than machinery---
Stockings fetch better prices than lives---

The essential place in Byron’s poetical heritage belongs to his poems. Byron’s poems arise not from a meticulously devised theory of literature, a determining philosophy, or a desire to increase and accomplish public taste, but from a vigorous restiveness moderated by an amused indifference. Being of great poetic value, his poems are appealing as expressing his extreme individuality and his protest against society. They reflect the strain between the potentialities of the human being and the restraints of the society in which the individual lived. The poems revive a desire to strike out a new path, exceeding conventional behaviour and conventional morality, still concurrently they betray a sense of guilt, as well as longing for the old order. They move easily between different ways of feeling and narrating, from the self-explorative to the argumentative, from the gloomy to the humorous, from the mock-heroic to the fervently romantic.

The central character of Byron’s poem is a melancholic and solitary figure who in his actions often defies social conventions. He is a restless wanderer, illustrated by Byron himself as featuring ¹¹“one virtue, and a thousand crimes”, alternating between despair and commitment to new, usually forbidden experiences, cold-hearted and malicious to his opponents, trepidly obeyed by his followers, and most importantly, impenetrably covered by

¹⁰ www.gutenberg.org. Child Harold’s Pilgrimage by Lord Byron. Canto the Fourth

¹¹ www.gutenberg.org. The Works of Lord Byron. The Corsair

an obscurity of ostentatious romantic mystery and depression. He exerts insouciance to ordinary human concerns and values and conceals the tormenting memory of a nameless guilt that drives him toward an inevitable doom.

This eccentric figure which is recognized as the “Byronic hero” was initially presented in the opening canto of *Child Harold*, and then in more developed form in “*Manfred*”. He was continually imitated in such characters as Heathcliff in “*Wuthering Heights*”, Mr. Rochester in “*Jane Eyre*”, James Steerforth in “*David Copperfield*”, Captain Ahab in “*Moby Dick*” and the hero of Pushkin’s great poem “*Eugene Onegin*”, and helped to shape the intellectual and the cultural history of the later nineteenth century.

Though Byron denied, and actually mocked, the tentative poetry of his contemporaries, he is definitely romantic in his emphasis on freedom and the individual and in his manifestation of powerful feelings. His poetry embodies the most vibrant artistic expression of Romantic age, as intense revelation of people’s emotional world, their strong passions and desires, and love of nature, the beauty and greatness of which he glorifies in his poems. Byron’s aversion of social inequality and oppression, his resentment at the misery brought by man upon man, his satirical flair together with a fervent belief in heroism and self-sacrifice makes him the most powerful representation of that atmosphere of criticism, doubt and rebellion characteristic to the Romantic age of literature.

The last group of Romantic poets include Leigh Hunt, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb and John Keats, who are combined by the name of “the Cockney school” criticism of and poetry. The name was first used in *Blackwood's Magazine*, in which Tory reviewers mocked the poets for their “plebeian” origins, their literary radicalism disdaining the strict rules of classicalism and for the glum themes of their writings on London life.

The most renowned representative of the school is Leigh Hunt who distinguished himself as an idiosyncratic and universal poet, a skilful critic and a mastermind of Romantic journalism. His importance as a man of letters lies in his development of the short, light essay, in his recognition of the genius of Keats and Shelley and his wide range of critical works. His value as a poet is, however, historical. With his affection for a worthy story free from moral instruction, and with his natural celebration of beauty and the riches of the creative power, Hunt represents a significant contributory force in the progress from the eighteenth century formal traditions to the Romantic age.

William Hazlitt is the principal literary critic of the age. He was a great lecturer on Elizabethan drama and English poetry from Chaucer to his own day, a superb expert of the theatre and of painting and a master of the familiar essay. Unlike his contemporaries,

Coleridge, Lamb and De Quincey, whose writings looked back to the elaborate prose stylists of the earlier seventeenth century, Hazlitt developed a fast-moving, hard-hitting prose in a style that he called “plain, point-blank speaking”. He revived the art of the prose, and brought a new psychological and political insight into literary criticism. His prose style is variable, moving from argumentative to enticing, from allusive delicacy to democratic plainness, yet always stamped with personality and fervour. It appeals to Romantic period ideas of the genius, sublime, and imagination as combination of opposing features and to Hazlitt’s ideals of liberty, individuality, and regeneration. Hazlitt’s style improves the essayist’s habit of interjecting the prose with lavish quotations in verse, making the essay a kind of personal anthology or a medium for showing off the author’s learning.

Another remarkable figure of Romantic age is an essayist, critic and poet, Charles Lamb. For his essay collection entitled as “Essays of Elia”, and for his collaborative writing with his sister, Mary, on a series of children's books, including the “Tales from Shakespeare”, Lamb won approval and support of many of his contemporaries like Coleridge, Hazlitt, Hunt and Wordsworth.

He wrote in a variety of literary forms, from sonnet and blank verse to a sentimental novel, a tragedy and a farce and in his writings he indicated a sense of the ideal into the representation of the actual and everyday things. His writings reflect the quiet pleasures of London life and comprise incomparable meditations, reveries and fantasies on the accidents and essentials of being and demise.

Lamb accommodated the intimacies of the familiar essay, a genre reflecting personal observations and considerations, to a modern world of magazine writing. Written in purely personal mood or experience Lamb’s essays cultivate a form and a style that he venerated in his seventeenth and eighteenth century mentors, Bacon, Browne, Walton, Fuller, Addison and Steele. His essays are effective appreciations of the life and literature of his age, and are excellent portraits of humanity represented by his own visions. His treatment of ordinary subjects in a nostalgic and fanciful way, his highly wrought style and his blending of humour and grief makes Lamb’s essays a distinct revelation of the author’s personality. A sense of the paradoxes of his essays, a sense that the illusions of personality in the personal essay may be easily exposed is never far away in his writings, lending fascinating edge to their charm and complicating the autobiographical impulse that seems to link to the works of his contemporaries.

The Cockney school poets denoted a major Romantic shift in British letters and had enduringly changed the course of modern literature. Except for Keats, all three representatives

of the school established the revolution of essay form and gave it a new literary force. They went up against XVIII century literary conventions and put their own responses to experience at the very centre of their work. As in their poetry, they built up new styles in essay and wrote on a wider range of topics, including the lives of common people as clerks, chimney-sweeps and prize-fighters. Instead of an elaborate formal style, they all developed looser, more subjective and impressionistic uses of language, giving each essay their own personal mark.

CHAPTER II. Keats versus Shelley: commonalities and distinguished features of their literary and creative activities

2.1. English Romantic poets. A brief characterization of generations

As mentioned earlier, Romantic movement and its elements were expressed in the poetry of various writers differently and thereby, promoted to the formation of distinct trends and schools. However, Romantic writers are not only classified for their political and aesthetic views. They are distinguished for their actual age difference that is visibly felt in the subject matter of their works as well. For this characteristics, Romantics are categorized into so-called first and second generation of writers.

The first generation of Romantic writers were mainly concerned with nature and the life of simple rustic man. Their writings were filled with the terrors of the French Revolution and the unrest caused by it. Being represented by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, Romantics of the first generation created a new kind of poetry which in simplicity of its form and language was closer to common man, and reflected his worries.

The second generation of Romantics, which included Byron, Keats and Shelley, on the other hand, were largely attracted by beauty and art, and portrayed in their writings thrilling scenes of classical world. They varied from their conservative confreres chiefly for eccentric lifestyles and disrespectful beliefs. While all Romantic writers were frustrated by the inequality of power and its representation in the world, and while all supported different means for eliminating obstacles to universal liberty, the second generation of Romantics, who achieved maturity after the breakdown of the French Revolution, may be differentiated from their forerunners by their support of a more extreme intellectual revolt, which arose from the sharing of ideas, mostly in the prose and poetry of representatives of their generation. They lived through the disenchantment of the post-revolutionary time, in savage brutality of the terror and the intimidating growth of rebellion and intensely restrictive. The revolt which had deeply distressed the elder poets, had for the younger, already become history; the beliefs and ambitions which Wordsworth and Coleridge first welcomed and then did struggle with, and which Scott continually detested, had entered the blood of Shelley and Byron, and stimulated humanitarian fervour even in Keats. Thus, the poetry of second generation writers came to be a rebel, a challenge against the governing laws and values of their time. This mutiny is particularly conveyed in the poetry of two great poets, Shelley and Keats, whose opposition is not limited to the subject matter of their writings, but shows itself in experimentation with old

forms and creation of new ones either.

2.2 Percy Bysshe Shelley's and John Keats's literary activity

Born during the flourishing of Romantic literature, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) is one of the greatly regarded poets of XIX century English Romanticism. He is a remarkable representative of his generation with a generous love for his fellow-men and an insistent willingness for deace in their behalf; his personality was uncommonly, even peculiarly, good and delicate; and his poetry was a meditative and exquisite lyricism unmatched in the world literature.

Of all second generation Romantic poets, Shelley was the most engaged in the political issues. He was stimulated by the views of Neo-Platonists, the French theorists of the previous age, the English political radicals, and contemporary writers on natural science. Unlike his contemporaries, he was a true revolutionary in insurgence against the economic, political and religious organizations of his nation, affected in his youth, as Wordsworth had been inspired in his, by the rationalist utopianism of Godwin's "Political Justice". Godwin's Necessitarianism, a view that a good sense will reverse the despotism of class and the rich, simultaneously beginning an age of excellence, shaped his thinking and penetrated into the heart of his works. His writings continued and revived the fundamental tendencies of earlier Romantic texts, increasing its criticism of social injustice into an attack on particular institutions of repression.

Shelley believed in the ability of imagination to guide man toward the principles of love and compassion and in the force of love to create a moral excellence. The quality which mainly differentiated him from his conferers was his ability to take flights of imagination by which he built a world of reverie to flee from the realities of world.

Shelley is as an architect of poetry. His views and mores formed the basis of his poetry and inspired him to write in numerous styles, beginning from revolutionary satire, philosophical visions to urbane verse letters. To him poetry was a means for making eternal all that is good and beautiful in the world. The essential element in his poetry is his love of beauty, not the ordinary beauty of nature or humankind which Wordsworth praised, but an eccentric "ethereal" beauty with no worldly quality or reality. Like Byron he wrote mostly of his own emotions, his fury or hopelessness, his grief or solitude.

Shelley's poetry is full with atmospheric effects, of the trickery which light plays with the fluid elements of water and air; of rain, stars, clouds, frost, dew, haze, wind, the foam of

seas, the phases of the moon, the green shadows of waves, the shapes of flames, the “golden lightning of the setting sun”. While poets like Burns and Wordsworth let in an idyllic light upon the rough meadows of earth, Shelley fled to “moonlight-coloured” world of shades and reverie, among whose dreaminess the heart went cold.

As a poet, Shelley made his first appearance with the publication of a volume of political rimes, entitled “Margaret Nicholson’s Remains. Nevertheless, first literary attention he won with his seditious pamphlet, “Necessity of Atheism” for which he was compelled from the university. In fact, the heading of the treatise is more provocative than its subject matter, which focuses on ¹²“the nature of Belief,” a point Shelley obtained from the sceptical beliefs of David Hume and John Locke. Still, what he truly condemned was the distorted caricature of religion chiefly suggested by the religious doctrines of his age. This dislike expressed first in *Necessity of Atheism* later came to the primary subject of his writings and famed him as a revolutionary poet.

Much of Shelley’s early philosophy, both in poetry and politics, is intensely conveyed in his other revolutionary poem, “Queen Mab”. This engaging poem is one of the earliest creations of Shelley’s growing poetic genius, a dream-vision allegory, which he composed under the impact of William Godwin’s philosophical ideas. The poem reminds with its form a fairy tale that illustrates the anguishes of the bygone days and the present, and contrasts them with the glorious renovation of the forthcoming world. It is established in a fantastic frame of a journey of incorporeal spirit through space to the castle of Queen Mab, who unveils the specific features of the present autocracy which threatens the fairy vision of a future humanity.

“Queen Mab” denies the existence of original sin and states the possibility of human perfection on earth. It enumerates the evils of institutional religion and ideates it as the weapon used by the tyrants to cloak and excuse their crimes. It also demonstrates Shelley’s critical views towards the organized morality, and renders a utopian vision of man’s need for simple virtue and forthright happiness. For these tenets the poem was rejected and deemed by conservative society as anarchic and dangerous.

The poem proves itself as “an overwrought didactic, political manifesto” which recaps Enlightenment thinking and other source texts. Shelley’s footnotes to the poem, being an alluring enunciation and inspection of his ideological engagements, serves as poet’s first major assault on social order and indicates religion, marriage, and diet as three experiences that strengthens the social classes and divisions.

¹² www.terpconnect.umd.edu. H.Buxton Forman. *The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley in Verse and Prose*. 1880. Percy Bysshe Shelley. *The Necessity of Atheism*.

Along with its alluring Notes, “Queen Mab” shows Shelley as the direct descendant of the French and British revolutionary intellectuals of the 1790s. It became an enchiridion to the 19th century Chartist movement and a vast encouragement for British Marxists, particularly George Bernard Shaw.

Shelley’s disgust at tyranny and anguishes of common man is enunciated in his “Song to the Men of England”. The poem is dedicated to Peterloo Massacre and is generally regarded as being one of poet’s most explicitly political writings. It was assessed by reviewer, Paul Foot as one of Shelley’s few poems that called English people to rise up and defeat their persecutors. Indeed, “Song to the Men of England” is directed to the poverty-stricken lower-class who, persistently oppressed and mistreated by the ruling class, have been suppressed into apathy. Nevertheless, the poem is not only a war cry appealing to all working people to revolt against their political tormentors, but an address calling them to put an end to the unbearable injustice of economic exploitation as well. For these traits the poem is deemed to be a rallying song of the British Communist Party.

Shelley’s address to social and political issues is also mirrored in his other major poems, mainly in “The Masque of Anarchy”. The poem is written as a dream experienced by the poet and performs a direct response to the brutal Peterloo Massacre of 1819. Referring to this historical tragedy, the poem imagines a mystic contest between Liberty, who sedately tolerates the oppression forced upon her, and Anarchy, Shelley’s symbol for a government that literally dispatches any who questions its ways. Culmination of the poem with Liberty’s victory verifies Shelley’s conviction on historical evolution and human perfectibility.

“The Masque of Anarchy” also exemplifies Shelley’s protest against contemporary British repression and exposes his harsh criticism of lawyers and bishops who have forgotten their true selves and their roles in administering justice, and have become murderers, thieves, and fraudsters instead. It denounces tyranny in all places and at all times, and asserts the need to reform social injustice through nonviolent resistance. Moreover, the poem celebrates freedom and the possibilities indwelling in the men and women of England and passionately calls them to overthrow their oppressors:

¹³“Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number-
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you-
Ye are many – they are few. ”

¹³ www.bartleby.com The Cry for Justice: An Anthology of the Literature of Social Protest. 1915. The Mask of Anarchy by Shelley Bysshe Shelley

The attitude of the poem corresponds to author's prose essay "The Philosophical View of Reform," insisting on hope and a spirit of reconciliation. It proves Shelley's belief in historical progression and human perfectibility, and becomes an exhortation, aspiring to encourage England to the level of the democratic liberation movements arising in many areas of Europe at that time.

The same idea of "bloodless revolution is adeptly expressed in" *The Revolt of Islam*". Written in the peak of poet's career, this revolutionary poem indicates Shelley's interest in Orientalism. "The Revolt of Islam" is an improvement of an earlier poem "Laon and Cythna" which the poet has been composed in 1817, in friendly contest with Keats.

The original text of the poem illustrates the condemned, yet brave struggle for deliverance of a brother and sister against the numerous repressions of the Ottoman Empire. It considers the encouraging force of love, the intricacies of evil and good, and eventually, spiritual triumph through decease.

The poem most plainly demonstrates Shelley's political, social and sexual idealism, and attests his conviction that radical activities will bring sexual equality, thus liberating human race from the bonds of sexual hypocrisy. Its story mirrors the expectations and disappointments of the French revolution, still it is intended to display Shelley's optimism in its imposing contrast to Wordsworth's revulsion from early assurance that, the revolution has been unsuccessful not in consequence of the ideas whence it began, but as a result of aggression and retribution with which it was prosecuted. Nevertheless, "Laon and Cythna" was instantly prohibited by the printer due to its contentious subject matter, and Shelley consequently altered the poem as "The Revolt of Islam", reducing its characteristics of political revolt and incest.

"The Revolt of Islam" is not just a denunciation of remote oriental autocracy, for it reveals both the temporary breakdown of the liberating tendency of the French Revolution and the modern state of Britain. It was created, as Shelley stated,¹⁴ "in the view of kindling within the bosoms of the readers a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence nor misrepresentation nor prejudice can ever totally extinguish among mankind". It expresses Shelley's complaint against the despotism of religion and of the government, gives images of the revolutionary movement for liberty and prophesizes an idyllic future for the whole of humanity.

Shelley's occupation with archetypes and with a syncretic mythological system by

¹⁴ www.knarf.english.upenn.edu. Percy Bysshe Shelley. *The Revolt of Islam*. Author's Preface

means of which he dramatized a revolutionary process, equally institutes the structures of his two “lyrical dramas”, “Prometheus Unbound” and “Hellas”. Both of these dramas demonstrate a decline of theatrical action in favour of a dramatic interpretation of imaginative motivation, and form profound and significant verse discourses on the nature of freedom.

“Hellas” impelled by the Greek revolt against the Ottoman rulers predicts the victory of the Greek movement as a part of the liberation movement of civilization and social development. However, it anticipates the possibility of a return of “hate and death” and of a cyclical series of bloody revolution upon bloody revolution. The work also unifies mythical drama with political allegory revealing at the same time Shelley’s preoccupations as a poet, political radical and a thinker.

Similar to “Hellas”, “Prometheus Unbound” combines the idea of revolution with the radical reordering of human vision and the processes of realizing, imagining, and expressing thought as speech. It predicts the regeneration of humanity and nature in the new Promethean age of perfection and verifies Shelley’s faith that free-thinking and reformist beliefs will edify mankind and release it from moral and intellectual captivity.

However, unlike the traditional Greek myth of Prometheus, Shelley’s poem is a revelation of an original hero that is redeemed by the power of love and epitomizes a symbol of human fulfilment. This character is a true manifestation of “Shelleyan hero”, a fighter against despotism and a governor in the struggle which is to induce the long-awaited contentment of humanity and like the “Byronic hero” he is, to a considerable degree, representation of the character of his creator.

Shelley’s Prometheus embodies a model of moral perfection, ideal of freedom and justice, signifying the liberation of both body and spirit and reinforcing the state of consciousness that implies a wider liberation from enemies which are both internal and external. He evolves from the figure of Milton’s Satan, whom Shelley, like Blake saw as “a moral being”, but his is basically a heroic fight concerned with more than self-vindication. Prometheus symbolizes archetypal humankind and, as in “The Ancient Mariner”, a revelatory change in his life exposes unlimited opportunities; most of all, a new way of perceiving the world.

Shelley’s “Prometheus Unbound” is a rhapsody dignified by Shelley’s love of beauty and by his insatiable faith in the glorious day of justice that would fall upon the world. Its significance lies not only in the lyric grace of the abundant choruses, but in the complete representation of Shelley’s fervent dislike of oppression as well.

The poem denotes an elevated message, as good overcomes evil in the long run because

of the radiant attractiveness of good and the self-destructiveness of evil. The ideas behind the poem are basically Platonic, and clearly articulate Shelley's mature Platonism, along with his aim at a synthesis of his youthful radicalism, Christian ethics and contemporary science. It blurs the boundary between sacred writing and literature, and thus, expresses Shelley's conviction in "A Defence of Poetry" that ¹⁵"poetry is indeed something divine". For its enormous scope and spiritual impetus "Prometheus Unbound" was considered by William Butler Yeats to be ¹⁶"among the sacred books of the world."

Shelley's mutinous attitude also establishes the essence of his illustrious drama, "The Cenci". Inspired by Guido Reni's arresting portrait of a young woman named Beatrice and by Medieval Italian story, Shelley composed five act play in which he dramatized the hardship of the members of a real-life sixteenth-century Cenci family, whose well-to-do and vicious patriarch used his influence and power to gain forgiveness for his sins. Through this heart tearing tragedy of Beatrice Cenci, Shelley efficiently explored the human heart and exposed oppression that can equally be found in the private life of the family and pervade all of society.

The poem involves a harmony and a definiteness of form uncommon with Shelley, and represents profundity of his poetic imagination. Though criticized and prohibited for themes of incest and parricide in its day, "The Cenci" later won recognition and proved itself to be in a group of most "Shakespearean" writings of English Romanticism and became, excepting some of Robert Browning's, the best tragedy since "Othello".

Shelley was in close relationship with many of Romantic writers, including Byron, Keats and Wordsworth. This affinity had an extreme influence on his principles and became inspiration for many of his writings.

Shelley's association with Byron is commemorated in his conversational poem, "Julian and Maddalo, which investigates the noticeably diverse outlooks of its title characters, the sensitive Julian (Shelley) and the cynical Maddalo (Byron). Much of the story is a fiction, though built on true discussions and debates between Shelley and Byron in the summer of 1819.

The poem provides an engrossing description, undoubtedly true in matter, of their friendly conversation; and the recollections of real debate. Their conversation comprises free will, religion, evolution, frustration, love: like the sonnet "Ozymandias", it is an evocation of a wasteland, both literally and figuratively. Akin to so many works of Romantic literature, including Shelley's own "The Triumph of Anarchy", this opposition of the real with the ideal,

¹⁵ www.poetryfoundation.org. Percy Bysshe Shelley. Essay on Poetic Theory. Defence of Poetry.19821

¹⁶ www.poemhunter.com. Biography of William Butler Yeats

of the general with the particular and of the past, present and future mirrors the chief concerns of the time. For this the poem is prized as an essential text of English Romanticism.

Shelley's relationship with his Romantic contemporaries is similarly noticed in his sonnet "To Wordsworth" that investigates the bases upon which the younger poet denied his senior. Mourning the once-idealistic Wordsworth's decline into conservatism and the withdrawal of his youthful principles, Shelley at the same time contrasts Wordsworth's creative breakdown with his own poetical growth. Such change in Shelley's earlier visions also symbolizes the departure of Romantic literature from its originators like Wordsworth and Coleridge to the younger radicals as Shelley, who felt to be deluded by the elder poets.

The same impression of disenchantment is persisted in "Peter Bell the Third", where Shelley expands his disapprove of the elder poet's violation of youthful promise and accuses Wordsworth's associate, Coleridge, for similar ideological collapse.

As most of Romantic writers, Shelley was an exile, wandering outcast rejected by respectable English society. He lived largest part of his life away from his native England and was extremely distressed by feeling of isolation. This dejection and sense of separation found its highest expression in Shelley's "Alastor" or "The Spirit of Solitude", which reveals the versatile quality of his poetic vision.

In this unworldly, nearly autobiographic composition, Shelley depicts the observations of the Poet who, repudiating human sympathy and family life, was chased by tormenting loneliness. He portrays the poet attracted by egotistical isolation, by a female soul very similar to Shelley's own. Shelley also articulates his protest against narcissism, moralizing and emotional self-indulgence.

"Alastor" is a long poem written in blank verse, as Shelley himself declared, about ¹⁷"a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that was excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe". It operates as an intermediary between the natural and supernatural realms by being both spirit and a constituent of human love. It also serves as a vague allegory of a Shelley's search for the beauty through an appealing and incoherent change of romantic wildernesses.

The poem is entirely written in Shelleyan theme, in its combination of abstraction and fervour, of mythopoeia and Wordsworthian egotism which Shelley so mistrusted in "Excursion". It is long, quite incomprehensible and unformed, and is memorized mostly for

¹⁷ www.genius.com. Percy Bysshe Shelley. Preface to Alastor

its lyric parts and arresting imagery typical of Shelley. Nevertheless, it is regarded as Shelley's first non-political writing which brought Shelley general notice and appraisal.

Shelley's final, incomplete poem, "The Triumph of Life" advocates an unconventional, yet chimerical view of life. The poem is deeply affected by the medieval Italian poet Dante's "Divine Comedy", whose thematic and metric form Shelley follows and modifies with very great force.

The Triumph illustrates the depressing manifestation of Life defeating nearly all illustrious individuals and artists. It is a gloomy and elevated poem, for all its fragmentary quality and consequent abstruseness, and the image, of all those who have been ruined by the worldliness. It is considered by the majority as Shelley's the most magnificent poem, bringing into use his unique imagery and strength in unimaginable ways.

Shelley's intellectual and creative power was basically lyrical, and his dispositions, impressions, ideas and sentiments represented themselves naturally in verse. He wrote many intense, short lyric poems that have proved themselves as his most admired compositions. Written in controlled sparse language and fairly personal tone, his lyrics are the rapturous pursuit of Beauty and the glorious embodiment of it. They were touched by mere sensibility and real spiritual quality, and recurrently included poet's insights of nature. However, Shelley's lyric poems are considerably distinct from the nature poetry of his contemporaries. His contemplation of nature is delineated by a celestial world of elegant and rapidly changing sounds and images, and emotions that marks a significant contrast to Wordsworth's philosophic Christian-mysticism or Byron's analysis of a spirit of pride. The quality of Shelley's pictures of nature comes purely from his idealistic outlooks, built on the awareness of the history of philosophy and ancient times, from really encyclopedic learning.

The most influential of Shelley's lyric poems is "Ode to the West Wind" which explores the connection of the forces of nature with the poetic mind. Shelley created the poem in the wood near Florence, Italy.

In this rhapsodic poem Shelley challenges the removed, aloof character of the invisible Power behind Nature and endeavours to create a personal relationship with it. He evinces his wish to be free like the wind and to disperse his words among mankind. Moreover, he expresses a passionate desire to lose himself in Nature, to become one with the spirit of love and beauty in the universe, which was to him in place of God.

¹⁸Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:

What if my leaves are falling like its own!

¹⁸ www.bartleby.com. Arthur Quiller-Couch. The Oxford Book of English Verse: 1250–1900. 1919. Percy Bysshe Shelley. Ode to the West Wind

The tumult of thy mighty harmonies,
Will take from both a deep autumnal tone.
Sweet, though in sadness, be thou, spirit fierce,
My spirit! be thou me, impetuous one!

The Ode commences directly in that passionate insight which is the primary prerequisite of poetry; the untamed autumn wind ranging through the woods occupies his thoughts and comes to be a living representation of the divine powers that regenerate the fading or effete existence of nations, bring consolation and “alliance” to desolate valiant souls, and strew their crucial words, like ashes ¹⁹“from an unextinguished hearth,” among humankind.

Shelley makes the savageness of the wind a restrained indication of his inmost personal desires for human independence and in a festive appeal of the atmosphere of transformation in nature, he appeals to the ambience of change in society. Nowhere does Shelley’s voice achieve a more affectingly personal note or more ideal naturalness.

The poem introduces worldly images of spirituality, power and liberty to illustrate myth and nature in unison. Despite Shelley’s initial rejection to accept the God, the poem is believed to be reverence to pantheism, the detection of a divine presence in nature.

The “Ode to the West Wind” is one of Shelley’s few lyric poems in which he enunciates his revolutionary hope to unleash human vitality and energy through poetry and assesses the role and ability of the poet or philosopher to spread new ideas and affect change. It indicates an ardent aspiration to transform the world, to bring inspiration and knowledge to an uncertain world. It allegorizes the function of the poet as the voice of change and revolution, and like in the final line of the poem, ²⁰“If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?” illustrates Shelley’s optimistic belief in the future of mankind. Nevertheless, the ode is no less his work of art in deliberate balance of composition, corresponding here the creativity of Keats’s “Autumn” and “Grecian Urn”.

Romantic convictions and values of Shelley’s contemporaries that repetitively affected his political poems have similarly impinged upon his lyrics. Inspired by Wordsworth’s nature poetry Shelley created two philosophic odes, “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty” and “Mont Blanc” in which he searched for the ideal Spirit of Beauty and the hidden Power of Nature.

Shelley’s “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty” was produced under the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's novel of sensibility, “Julie or the New Heloise” and William

¹⁹ www.bartleby.com. Arthur Quiller-Couch. The Oxford Book of English Verse: 1250–1900. 1919. Percy Bysshe Shelley. Ode to the West Wind

²⁰ www.bartleby.com. Arthur Quiller-Couch. The Oxford Book of English Verse: 1250–1900. 1919. Percy Bysshe Shelley. Ode to the West Wind

Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality". Regarded as poet's nature poem, the ode asserts the existence of spiritual power standing apart from the material world and the heart of man, and reveals Shelley's quest for it.

²¹The awful shadow of some unseen Power

Floats though unseen among us...

This quest for hidden Power which sanctifies all man's beliefs signifies a further phase in Shelley's evolution from Godwinian Necessitarianism towards Platonic idealism. For such descriptions of the source of Shelley's lyrical career, and of its connection with his political radicalism, the ode is considered to be autobiographical.

Similar to "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty", "Mont Blanc" is one of Shelley's finest nature poems that represents the Romantic principles.

The ode was compiled by Shelley as response to Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and as a mutinous reaction against the "spiritual certainties" of Coleridge's "Hymn before Sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouni", that "praised God for the sublime marvels of the scenery".

"Monc Blanc promotes to Romanticism both in its commemoration of the attractiveness of the physical scenery and through its inspection of the self, chiefly as depicted by the human mind. Its fundamental trait is its statement of the Romantic idea of a pantheistic nature, or a nature filled with celestial characteristics.

The ode epitomizes an opposition between the eternity of nature and humanity's transience, and emphasizes the poet's own ambivalence of belief. It builds a relationship between the human mind and nature as characterized by the external world and merges the mysterious landscape of the mountain with the mind's ability to allegorize nature. The poem, established Shelley's concept of poetry, which he subsequently extended in his essay of "Defence of Poetry".

The transient Spirit of Beauty and the unseen Power of Nature seen in earlier poems again induces in "To a Skylark," and "The Cloud, two stirring lyrics from the same period, in which the most alluring and inimitable outbursts of Shelley's poetic genius find their contemplation.

In "To a Skylark", enchanted by bird's celestial song as Keats in his "Ode to a Nightingale", Shelley expresses his relentless hope to live under the power of experience and joy. Recognizing the dissimilarity between himself and the idyllic song of the skylark, Shelley declares his passionate desire for his words to be heard.

²²Teach me half the gladness

²¹ www.bartleby.com. Nicholson & Lee. The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse. 1917. Percy Bysshe Shelley. Hymn to Intellectual Beauty

That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow

The world should listen then, as I am listening now

In “The Cloud”, however, Shelley returns to the idea of transformation- birth, death and rebirth earlier manifested in his “To Autumn” and describes the cloud as the driving force moving the one from apathy to spiritual vigour. Being the messenger of revolution, the poem investigates the essence of life and imperative philosophical issues such as the relativity of time and eternity.

Both “To a Skylark” and “The Cloud” celebrate the shifting aspects of nature comparing their order of existence to man's limited life on the earth. For such intense poetic force and freshness with which Shelley imbued his poems, these lyrics are deemed to be the "most typically Shelleyan of all the poems".

Despite Shelley’s affirmative vision of history and future his personal lyrical poetry is gloomy and is extremely characterized by self-indulgent and over-sentimental spirit. His poems are directly affected by poet’s own feelings, particularly by his self-pitying sense and so they have often been criticized by his contemporaries. His melancholic stance is plainly disclosed in the majority of his verses, as well as in the following lines of “Stanzas Written in Dejection, near Naples”.

²³I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne and yet must bear

Along with odes and lyric verses, Shelley composed numerous sonnets, the most notable of which is “Ozymandias” compiled under enticement of the statue of Egyptian pharaoh. The poem resulted from a writing competition with his friend and fellow poet, Horace Smith, who also produced a sonnet under the same title of “Ozymandias”. Both poems explore the ravages of time that predetermines the empires and their legacy to decay and fall into oblivion, and contrast this fate to the lasting power of art. However, while Smith’s sonnet relates the inevitable transience of Ozymandias’s empire to England’s future decline, Shelley demonstrates his sanguine views for its future regeneration.

The poem exemplifies a tale told in the spirit of Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind,” which ushers in winter but also quietly prophesies the coming spring renewal. It encloses many of the same issues presented by Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn” and similarly

²² www.poetryfoundation.org. To a Skylark by Percy Bysshe Shelley

²³ www.poetryfoundation.org. Stanzas Written in Dejection, near Naples by Percy Bysshe Shelley

contemplates on the correlation between poetry and the other arts, and eventually asserts the capability of poetry to rise above the unnaturalness of cold images and sculpturesque inaction. Like Keats's lyrical response in "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles", Shelley's sonnet, either in its structure or subject acknowledges that present stands on the collapsed shoulders of bygone giants.

Being associated with the major political preoccupations and concerns of the late 18th century, Shelley's sonnet offers a stern contrast to egotistical strivings and political oppressions. It confirms the power of poetic narrative over the limited and limiting use of words on the pedestal and proves itself as the finest sample of Romantic writings through its preoccupations with tyranny, with the relationship between art and empire, and with the nature and function of art and the artist.

In a group of Shelley's idyllic poems is his pastoral elegy, "Adonais" written in memory of the past poet, John Keats. The poem is headed by a preface that describes the motive of its creation, the location of burial of the young poet in Rome and the criticism of Keats's "Endymion" in the unidentified review, blames the reviewers for triggering the young man's death, and expresses respect to artist, Joseph Severn for giving care to Keats till his last breath.

Making use of the formal style of elegiac verse, Shelley grieves Keats's premature death and, whilst refuting the religious belief in resurrection, he depicts poet's return to the endless beauty of the world. He uses this conventional pastoral as an instrument by which he glorifies the historical John Keats, raising him out of the changeable world of human experience, to become an everlasting symbol of poetic power. Shelley presents a mature mysticism, a placid philosophy of life which rejects death and asserts the eternity of the human spirit.

24"“Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!”

In the following lines of the poem, Shelley utters a deep sorrow for the loss of a brilliant poet, which detracted from the world its most cherished asset, genius. He depicts Keats's death as a tragedy for poetry and for everything in nature and civilization to which poetry bestows long-lasting expression. He indicts hostile reviewers for the poet's death and intensifies the mortifying effects of the common man's disdain for genius, on civilization. Performing his plaintive tribute, Shelley either continues the idea of the poet as hero, here

²⁴ www.bartleby.com. The Harvard Classics. 1909–14. English Poetry II: From Collins to Fitzgerald. Percy Bysshe Shelley. Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats

undefeated even in the face of death and ²⁵“awakened from the dream of life”.

The poem imitates the ancient fertility rites by affirming and presenting the rebirth of the dead poet and revivifying the memory of John Keats, allowing his verse to last eternally through the homage done by a fellow writer. ²⁶It also represents the clearest example of Shelley’s choice of the afterlife over life and becomes the triumph of his idealism, as well as his mastery of the genre of the pastoral elegy, already illustrated by the ancient Greek poet Moschus’s “Elegy for Bion” and the Elizabethan Edmund Spenser’s “Astrophel” on Sir Philip Sidney’s death.

Shelley’s subsequent prose writings epitomize a magnificent and myriad-minded donation to Romantic idea and culture, and make strongly essential involvements in different still interconnected areas of thought, which comprise poetry and poetics, literary criticism, aesthetics, cultural theory, religious debate, politics, metaphysics and moral thought. The most understandable prose accounts of Shelley’s faith in the potential of man’s perfectibility, which he believed would come from the gradual transformation caused by reform, may be noticed in his striking pamphlets and essays, mainly in “A Philosophical View of Reform”, “A Refutation of Deism”, “An Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte”, “A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote”, and “A Defence of Poetry”.

Serving as an eloquent affirmation of the supreme social and moral value of the poet, “A Defence of Poetry” is the most significant of Shelley’s prose works. Though it was written in 1821, “The Defence” was never issued in poet’s lifetime; only first appeared in the collection of Shelley’s prose works edited by Mary Shelley in 1840. It represents the last of the great defences of poetry produced in the spirit of the Renaissance, with the supplementary ebullience provided by Romantic neo-Platonism.

Shelley’s Defence is a sequential and categorical reply to an ironic essay, “The Four Ages of Poetry”, in which his friend Thomas Love Peacock disputes over the Romantic writers’ statements for poetry.

In his writing, Thomas Love Peacock criticizes contemporary records on poetry, considering them brazenly embellished and the modern poetry as being deteriorated from the XVIII century Silver Age poetry to the form feebler than the poetry of primitive Golden Ages.

Rejecting Peacock’s claims, Shelley wrote a poetic manifesto, defining poetry as a lucid expression of imagination, a man’s artistic ability and a principal force of social freedom, and

²⁵ www.bartleby.com. The Harvard Classics. 1909–14. English Poetry II: From Collins to Fitzgerald. Percy Bysshe Shelley. Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats

²⁶Andrew Maunder. Encyclopedia of Literary Romanticism. Facts on File, Inc. New York. 2010

making the poet a missionary, a prophet and a potential leader for a new society. He elaborates his faith in the moral significance of poetic work, making the poets connecter between individual experience and social consciousness and calling them” ²⁷the unacknowledged legislators of the world” who anticipate and interpret the ideas of their age. Shelley’s estimation of the poet as hero, as the guide and voice of society is more than hidden self augmentation; it is a rational declaration of the irrational force of creativeness against an entirely utilitarian vision of art. In a line of the most notable characteristics of Shelley’s disagreement is his intense expression of the importance of the self and subjectivity, which positions him in unusual ways between ancient times and contemporaneity.

The essay gives a resounding reprise to Shelley’s more radical principles that supports the exquisiteness of “equality, diversity, unity, contrast and mutual dependence”. It also transpires as a large theoretical assertion of the nature and value of poetry, modelled in general style on Sidney’s “Defence of Poesie”. Shelley’s statements, similar to Sidney’s before him are significant, however his inspection of the concept of political progression as a benchmark of literary value and his vision of poetry as a rescuer of the man’s morality, contain sizeable intellectual strength.

Summarizing all written above, we can state that Percy Shelley’s life and compositions represent Romanticism in both its limits of blissful elation and depressing hopelessness. The main subjects in his writings, mysterious, inspirational, and timeless, are the uneasiness and meditateness, the revolt against ruling classes, the interaction with nature, the faculty of the idealistic imagination and of poetry, the quest for ideal love, and the uncontrollable spirit always in pursuit of liberty. All these characteristics Shelley demonstrated in the way he lived his life and in the considerable amount of compositions that he bequeathed the world after his legendary death by drowning at age twenty-nine.

John Keats (1795-1821) is the greatest representative of second generation Romantic poets whose figure as a poet has been etched in English literature through his writing on beauty and art. The most arresting thing in Keats was the autonomy through which he elaborated his own poetic future, the intense dedication with which he took up his own creative improvement.

Keats looked to some of his contemporaries as a dealer in self-pitying and improper sentimentalities, member of “the Cockney School” of poetry and a supporter of Leigh Hunt, a poet who was accountable for the frivolous sprightliness and shapelessness of Keats’s earlier writings and the implacable antagonism of the literary reviewers. However, in his later

²⁷ www.poetryfoundation.org. Percy Bysshe Shelley. Essay on Poetic Theory. Defence of Poetry.19821

writings he proved himself as a mighty poet creating his own, very idiosyncratic style based on sensuous imagery and explicit descriptive detail.

Distinct from other Romantics of his time, Keats appears to have breathed for poetry only and to have cherished it for its own sake. In his "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket" Keats wrote:

²⁸The poetry of earth is ceasing never...
The poetry of earth is never dead...

Although Keats lived a very short life he left extremely rich and sizeable literary legacy. Dreading he has only a few years left in his life, he worked feverishly, matured with unusual swiftness and created a number of the finest compositions in the English literature. Keats drew his immediate experience into his verse, finding symbols in nature, in his reactions to architecture, works of art or in his eclectic reading.

Keats's creativeness was detached and explicit, progressing not so easily in the domain of logical thinking as in the world of imaginative realization. His objective to take a worthy place in the literary canon of English literature, impelled him as much into a sequence of creative experiments with form and metre as into the elaborate essays in sub-Shakespearean historic drama so preferred by his contemporaries. His highest poetic ideal was that of imaginative insight and deferred judgment, "a selfless sympathy" not only with other human beings but with all life.

Keats's poetic views were highly influenced by the creativity of older Romantic poets, mainly by that of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Though Keats's poetry differed from theirs in many aspects, Wordsworth and Coleridge continued to have an essential stimulus on his writings and his hypothesis of poetry. Their impact is intensely sensed in his discernment of dejection in delight, pleasure in pain, and excitement in both emotional sensations and intellectual thoughts. He underwent love and death with equal strength, realizing that they were intimately connected. Similar to Wordsworth and Coleridge, he believed in the necessity of suffering in understanding of the world and claimed that great poetry grew from deep afflictions and adversities. Supporting this idea, Keats wrote in his letter: ²⁹"Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a Soul?"

Keats was the artist, with that love of the beautiful and that instinct for its reproduction which are the artist's divine gifts. His only aim was to venerate beauty wherever he noticed it,

²⁸ www.poetryfoundation.org. John Keats. On the Grasshopper and Cricket

²⁹ www.mrbauld.com. Keats on "The Vale of Soul-Making". To George and Georgiana Keats

and to compose an original work of beauty which should exist everlastingly. His sense of beauty is both natural and artistic.

Keats never searched beauty for beauty's sake. Known as a downright artist, he saw the appreciation of beauty as an end in itself and made the pursuit of beauty the main objective of his poetry. Keats aspired to set up a moral and esthetical ideal refuting the false values of his time. His exceptional sensibility allowed him to notice beauty in the most ordinary state of affairs, while his mastery of verse enabled him to disclose that beauty to the world.

³⁰A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:

Its loveliness increases; it will never

Pass into nothingness...

Keats was, likewise, a poet who contemplated the essence of poetry. He devoted very much of his time to thinking about poetry itself, its structure and effects, showing a great concern atypical amongst his society who were to a greater extent diverted by metaphysics or politics, fashions or science.

To Keats, the essential attribute of poetry is a representation of things in the way they are, with no attempt to rationalize them into something else. In his letter to John Taylor, Keats states: "If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all". This again proves that Keats considered the great poetry and truly skilled poets to be borne by individuals who featured the skill to entirely understand and react to life. Therefore, he produced poetry built on his real-life experiences, and characterized by spontaneousness and lyrical power.

Unlike poets and philosophers of the classical, eighteenth-century period, who perceived the Medieval era as one of nescience and superstition, Keats, along with other Romantic poets, was fascinated by it. He produced poetry that revised, revitalized and eventually went beyond the classical myths. Keats proved himself an expert of that Romantic style which institute a medieval setting for happenings that transgress man's sense of realism and the natural order. His devotion to the Middle Ages allowed him to make particular use of various forms of traditional literature to examine the aspects of the irrational, insensible and supernatural world. Keats quested for incentive in the Middle Ages, sometimes as seen through Spenser's idealizing eyes and sometimes more directly in writings of Dryden and Boccaccio. His poetic imagination was formed by his investigation of Dante, Chaucer, and above all, of Shakespeare and by the exploration of English seventeenth-century drama of Milton.

³⁰ www.bartleby.com. Bliss Carman. The World's Best Poetry. Vol.VI.Fancy.1904. John Keats. Endymion. Book I

Notable in Keats's creativity is the nonexistence of any moral objective and of any concern for contemporary life, predominantly the deficiency of the democratic feeling that had appeared so widely in the writings of his Romantic precursors. He did not greatly care about the politics and philosophy of his time or make his poetry the medium of these ideas. His objective was to affect men only by the force of beauty, not by an immediate appeal to their views.

Keats's earliest step to the literary recognition was made with his first collection of poetry issued in 1817, when the poet was twenty-one, and included some enchanting writings, his initial try at poetry, "Imitations of Spenser", as well as his sonnets "I stood tip-toe upon a little hill" and "Sleep and Poetry", that demonstrates Spenser's and more closely Leigh Hunt's the impact to whom the collection was devoted and plainly shows the greater part of his principal tendencies.

A large number of his early compositions investigate the tenuous connection between imagination and the poet that eventually supervene upon all other themes in Keats poetry.

Keats second great composition is "Endymion" dedicated to the young poet, Chatterton, the Romantic emblem of "misunderstood genius". Written between April and October, 1818, the poem marks a transitional stage in Keats's artistic development. It is a full-length poem, in which Keats recreates the classical love story between the shepherd Endymion and the immortal goddess of the moon, Cynthia.

Keats adopted this vaguely beautiful tale of love from Fletcher's "The Faithful Shepherdess", Drayton's "The Man in the Moon" and perhaps from the same poet's "Endymion and Phoebe". However, Keats's writing is somewhat a pastoral poem, as proved by the shepherd-hero, rural surroundings, and the concentration on natural beauty.

Keats renovates this ordinary myth into an elaborate and highly embellished and fairly complex allegory of over four thousand lines. He alters the Renaissance theory of fraternity as the man's devotion for man, under the impact of Wordsworth, into generosity or universal humanitarianism. Distinct from the Platonists of the Renaissance, he positions love over friendship; however, he mixes up physical and spiritual love.

"Endymion" commences with the famous line ³¹"A thing of beauty is a joy forever" and explores this throughout the poem as it pertains to the beauty of love. The poem exemplifies poet's first sustained attempt to study the connection between the real world of human experience and the ethereal world of an idealized existence. Its theme institutes the rapprochement of beauty and reality, actual life with a dream, and exaltation with harmony.

³¹ www.bartleby.com. Bliss Carman. The World's Best Poetry. Vol.VI.Fancy.1904. John Keats. Endymion. Book I

“Endymion” represents the quest for an ideal love and happiness beyond earthly possibility and contrasts the values of mortal and immortal life. At the same time, the poem serves Keats to express his own admiration for the majesty of the life and of youthful feelings, and sustains the search for poet’s own poetic identity set out in the volume of shorter poems.

The poem demonstrates the delicate reproduction of the Keatsian style. Here Keats’s persistent desire to go beyond the lyrical to the narrative and the epic finds its first momentous reflection. Keats selection of Endymion and his interplay with gods and goddesses epitomizes the revitalized Romantic fascination with classical mores and its mythology.

While Keats early writings centre principally on the natural and pastoral world, Keats’s middle and later poetry examines the interrelation between the poet and art, the ideal and the real, myth and humanity.

Keats’s involvement with traditional literature and Greek culture is also exquisitely manifested in his fragmentary “Hyperion”. “Hyperion” displays the impact of Milton in its relatively powerful and sonorous blank verse, and is modelled in style and structure on his “Paradise Lost”.

The poem exemplifies the conflict between “consecutive reasoning” and feelings, between Keats’s intellectual ideals and his inmost emotions. It discloses Keats’s belief in improvement and progress, as well as mirrors the increase of Keats’s own sentiment.

The poem is conceptualized by literary critics equally as biographical, for Keats was attending his brother Tom who died of tuberculosis while he was composing the poem, and political, as the poem is believed to be Keats’s statement on his own restless days and on commencement of Romanticism. Most reviewers, though, concur in perceiving the poem as Keats’s means of putting into poetry his long-lasting inquiring about the meaning of beauty when faced with bereavement and death.

Keats brought back the subject of fallen titans in “The Fall of Hyperion” which he compiled by revising, expanding and personally reciting lines from his earlier fragmented poem “Hyperion”. Like “Hyperion” it was left incomplete, mainly because of Keats’s desire to establish his own style and individuality as an artist, and it was not issued until 1857, almost four decades after Keats’s death.

Rejecting the poetic style of Milton observed in earlier edition, here again Keats produces his own, adaptable, vigorous and rich blank verse that perfectly concords with a natural and more meditative tone that is to be met in his other poems. In “The Fall of Hyperion” Keats investigates the idea of the impact of anguish on the imagination of a

contemporary poet, compelling the thinker to go through pain and suffering to achieve an absolute understanding of the strength and the restraints of art.

The poem commences with the plain differentiation between dreaming “fanatics”, the representatives of and apologists for Christianity which Keats had repudiated, and the character of the poet-prophet questing for a new universe. It goes through the questions of transiency, modification, overthrow and continuing revolutionary change in an effort to restate the tale of the downfall of the Titans by the new order of gods.

“The Fall of Hyperion” takes a far more personal tone than its previous version with a first-person narrator who shares his sentiments and his interaction with the reader. It examines evolution of Keats’s own poetic career and his rededication to the persistent art of poetry.

The poem recalls Keats’s earlier afflicted statements about the status of the poet, whose genius Keats compared to that of philosopher, and serves as mature interpretation of his conviction in the liberating force of beauty, which he sensed to be achievable only by men who had undergone pain. It contemplates the poet’s obligation to humanity and exposes his deeper insight into human tribulations. It manifests Keats’s last attempt to incorporate his faculties and desires, and to convey his understanding of the poet’s image and his function in the world. For this, “The Fall of Hyperion” has turned into Keats’s most triumphant assertion of his self-sufficient individuality as a poet.

Nearly all of Keats’s poetic works of later period explore traditional Romantic themes like the connection between reality and emotion, the temporariness of human love and the quest for an elusive beauty. These three substantial ideas are evidently brought together in Keats’s supernatural poems, namely in “Isabella”, “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” and “The Eve of Saint Agnes”.

The earliest of Keats’s narrative poems is “Isabella: or, The Pot of Basil”, which originally is intended to form a contribution to a collection of verse-tales based on stories by Boccaccio. In Keats’s interpretation of Boccaccio’s simple narrative, he produces a complex and appealing poem about human suffering, devotion and love. However, his account of the story of two tragic lovers expatiates upon the original by presenting a complex system of natural imagery, an interpolated social and moral observations, and elements of the Gothic.

The poem serves as a piece of craftsmanship that displays Keats giving unbiased poetic form to this medieval Italian tale. It possesses an imperative place in the history of Keats’s writing and in his development as an important Romantic poet. It presents many medieval characteristics, such as strength of love continuing to exist in face of suffering, decline and material terrors of all sorts, the vehement attachment of spirit to body that aided to the

formation of the neo-classical school. These ideas are reiterated by many poets and writers of the late XIX century (Swinburne, Rossetti, O'Shaughnessy, Morris, and Marzials) and depicted in magnificent paintings of Pre-Raphaelite artists as William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais.

Along with Keats's odes and a small amount of sonnets, "The Eve of Saint Agnes" epitomizes the most illustrious and mature of Keats's works. The poem is produced under the influence of "Lectures on the English Poets" by William Hazlitt and is in several ways a presentiment of the great odes, specifically "Ode to Psyche". Its story is based on the conflict between love and family hatred; between sensual warmth and the cold of austere or callous morality similarly expressed in Scott's "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" and Coleridge's "Christabel". Though being composed in Spenserian stanzas and manifesting chiefly Keats's earlier captivation with Spenser, the poem is exclusively Keats's own, as it retains the prolific imagery and expressive beauty which continues to be his legacy.

In this fascinating love poem, Keats revives almost the most enduring of all the symbolic legends contrived by the Romantic poets. He addresses history as a means of indicating an evolution from spirituality as governed by Christian principles of complete veneration to God and physical pureness, to spirituality as delineated through beauty and art. Hence, "The Eve of Saint Agnes" provides a poetic re-estimation of religious piety.

The poem highlights a sequence of sensational impressions and mystical ambience of a Gothic romance strengthened by a dramatic, fast-moving imaginary. It serves as a commentary on the imagination process and on the conflict of reality against desire. It represents an ultimate example of the medieval heroic concept of passion successfully confronting chill menace.

The treatment of images of sensation is subdued to the narrative with extraordinary effect, exposing the discrepancy between the warm beauties of sensation and the cold cruelties which imperill them. The atmosphere in the poem is of the Medieval Age, however, a symbolic Medieval Age where art, ritual belief, boisterous festivity and lavishness create a setting against which anonymous evil jeopardizes ideal love.

"The Eve of St. Agnes" is not only a sample of the abundance of Keatsian imagery, but it presents the first of Keats's various inner questionings on the values of reaching the ideal as well. The poem brilliantly exemplifies Keats's vision in vividly sensuous still reasonable details, concentrated on psychological moments, but also elaborates to examine mood. It has not only become Keats's greatest narrative poem, but also the poem in which those aspects of his art which are traditionally named "romantic" are most perfectly demonstrated.

“La Belle Dame Sans Merci” is a poem that gives evidence of poet’s long-held attraction for love, death and art. In this powerful short lyric Keats once again elaborates a genre of lyrical ballad pioneered by his confreres. He compiles the poem containing the qualities of both forms and much reproduced by poets down to W. B. Yeats.

In his pseudomedieval "ballad", "La Belle Dame sans Merci" Keats enrolls bizarre combinations of delight and suffering with exceptional sensitivity, thinking over the ruinous features of sexuality and the sensual traits of the yearning for death. He refines the folk theme of the beautiful, but evil lady (the femme fatale) into an uncannily powerful manifestation of a sense of loss, mystery and dread. Distinct from his traditional poems where Keats exemplifies beauty as salvation and eternal truth, in this lyric poem he considers beauty to be detrimental force and source of grief.

The poem is one of Keats’s most inexplicable compositions, in part his response to Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” whose mysteries it imitates. It is one of the riveting readings that has contributed to the popular image of Keats and the Romantic poet commonly as a dreamer, someone for whom love meant everything and who would suffer for love.

The name of the poem originates from a poem by the medieval writer Alain Chartier and is translated as the “beautiful lady without pity”. It sustains several of the stylistic qualities of the ballad, particularly the simplicity of language and deficiency of details which are the combination of the realistic and the supernatural, and which assist to produce a feeling of mystery.

The poem was highly esteemed by succeeding generation and accordingly became well-liked subject for Pre-Raphaelite painters such as Frank Cadogan Cowper, Sir Frank Dicksee, Walter Crane, John William Waterhouse, Arthur Hughes and Henry Maynard Rheam, as well as for several contemporary authors as James Tiptree Jr., Rachel Carson's who used lines of Keats’s poems as title and stimulation for the writings.

Keats’ philosophy on art and beauty is best interpreted through his odes, which were recorded in a rush between April and September 1819, at a time when Keats was fighting down family disease. The growing understanding that he himself had been infected with tuberculosis, supplied Keats’s soul with some of the sensational poems ever composed in any language.

In his Odes Keats borrowed the grandeur and the glory of the classical Greek verse and turned it into new English ode. In them Keats produced his own version of poetry as he perceived was inquired by his time, a poetry of the imagination’s and mind’s internal disputes, detached from “the common adoration” of his age.

Keats endowed this demanding form with his sensual appreciation and with a new poetic and intellectual richness. His odes dramatize the struggle of yearning and thinking and investigate the fundamental conflicts and oppositions. Their theme, nevertheless, remains the poet's imperishable obsession with the imagination as it achieves alliance with the beautiful.

Keats's odes set the sensuous and abundant variety of human experience against the ephemerality of human life. They examine the correlation between pleasure and pain, happiness and melancholy, imagination and reality, art and life with masterly poetic force. They also convey the possibilities and the limitations of the imagination's self-transcendence within a world that appeared to be fragile and temporary, and recite the longing for beauty while experiencing uncertainty of what constitutes beauty itself, thus indicating beauty's intrinsic transience.

Keats's odes reveal his remarkable development as a poet and his ability to lose his own self in pondering the exterior world (an ability he called Negative Capability). His Odes to the Nightingale, the Grecian Urn and Autumn, embrace much of the majesty of Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode", the evocativeness of Coleridge's "Dejection Ode" and the vigour of Shelley's apostrophe to the West Wind.

The first of Keats's odes is "Ode to Psyche" in which the elusiveness of beauty and of love it symbolizes is most resolved into an icon of happiness and peace.

The ode was stimulated by the story of Psyche and Cupid from Apuleius's "Metamorphoses", or "The Golden Ass". As stated by Andrew Sanders,³² it is a representation of a ceremonial dedication to the Soul - "as distinguished from an Intelligence"- and as an alternative to the idea of the world as "the vale of Soul-making".

"Ode to Psyche" presents a significant divergence from Keats's early poems, which habitually portray an escape into the pleasing world of man's imagination. It is more in the tradition of the pseudo-Pindaric than are his other odes.

The poem proffers some of the common themes and moods existing in his following odes, including Keats's reverence of the imagination, his praise of love as an ageless human emotion, and its melancholic disposition, yet it also contains several parts that obstinately decline to conform to his later odes. The most striking of them is the Wordsworthian theme which ideating the poet as the myth-maker offers a link, absent in the odes between the Psyche and Keats' former thought.

Of all Keats's odes the most acclaimed is "Ode to a Nightingale", in which the happy world of natural delight is opposed with the human world of pain.

³²Andrew Sanders. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Clarendon Press. Oxford.1996

The ode is directed to an archetypal bird whose wordless music provokes intense emotions beyond the access of language. However, the bird here symbolizes Keats, the poet, proficient to compose a delightful “song” that will exist when he deceases. The subject of deathlessness and the endurance of bird’s song is thus the same as the subject of poetry, for though the poet himself may be consigned to oblivion his poetry similar to song, persists.

³³Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!

No hungry generations tread the down;

The voice I hear this passing night was heard

In ancient days by emperor and clown:

The ode evolves through a sequence of precisely delicate elicitation of contrasting moods and ways of seeing, some exultant, some morose, yet each aiding to bring the narrator back to his “sole self”. It manifests the potential of the poetic imagination to evoke, like the bird’s song, an idyllic world, still at the same time, it gives emphasis to the ontological unsteadiness of such creations and their uncertain relation to the physical world. It also verifies Keats’s continuing struggle to resign himself to his own transience and to ponder the temporary nature of human existence and to quest for some form of immortality in nature or in art.

The ode denies the optimistic quest for delight perceived in Keats's earlier poems and represents a plain reaction to the death of poet’s brother, and his own debility, as well as poet’s immitigable grief for living in a world where ³⁴“youth grows pale and spectre-thin and dies”.

“Ode to a Nightingale” is inimitable in its rich and restful verse, and in its handling of the bird’s song as a symbol of the ageless, of the escape from the realm of transition and decay. For many this ode has become an embodiment of Romanticism because it unifies so many of its distinctive themes, formal intimations and philosophical concerns. The ode culminates with an inquiry-³⁵“Do I wake or sleep?” that exemplifies the Romantic desire to examine types of experience that alter or overstep the limitations dictated by logic, which the Enlightenment had revered as the governor of truth.

The same contest between the beauty and art and the pain of life is powerfully conveyed in “Ode on a Grecian Urn”.

The ode is impelled by Keats’s abiding interest in the eternal truths of poetic art and the imagination, and reveals a contrast between the timelessness of art and the ephemerality of

³³ www.poetryfoundation.org. Ode to a Nightingale by John Keats

³⁴ www.poetryfoundation.org. Ode to a Nightingale by John Keats

³⁵ www.poetryfoundation.org. Ode to a Nightingale by John Keats

human passion. It deliberates the capturing of life by art as both benefit and loss-it signifies flee from changes and decline into immortality, yet at the price of unending unhappiness.

The poem is Keats's endeavour to breathe life through poetic means into the world of an antiquity as depicted on an ancient Attic vase. The urn and the artistic images on it are the product of Keats's long contemplation on visual art-not on particular works only, but on the philosophy of ancient paganism as provoked by such diverse sources as Claude's paintings and the Elgin marbles. They symbolize the immortality of art and praise the ability of the artist to eternalize human activity, to render it perpetual, protecting it against transience and the passing of time.

In "Ode on a Grecian Urn", Keats delineates the world of the vase as the one where man's debilities as illness, age and demise are transcended, man's fervour never weakens and creativeness remains endlessly, unendangered by time. He develops an abundance of elements and elegance in every line, producing poetry which is profusely provided with poetic devices. He brings out the perpetuity of poetry, which correspondingly reveals his ceaseless belief in poet's immortality through his words.

In this expression of the world perpetually arrested by the carvings on the urn, Keats demonstrates the typical Romantic attraction with the ancient Greek world, while at the same time inviting the reader to meditate on contemporary views related to permanence, the objective and aesthetics of art. For these characteristics, the poem proves as one of the finest examples of the ode created throughout the Romantic age.

Keats's more concise "Ode on Melancholy" which commences with a denial of conventional and glum, assists to expression and investigation of the interrelation between the feelings of pleasure and grief.

The story of the ode shows the poet's interpretation of melancholy via a lyric conversation between the reader and the poet, together with the preface to Antique Greek characters and values. It reveals the poet's own thoughts and response to the feeling of melancholy, and strengthens his belief that those who have not experienced sorrow cannot appreciate joy.

"Ode to Autumn" is the climax and finale of Keats's five "great odes". The ode offers a good example of imagination's interplay with nature. It brings out the theme of autumn's riches by containing a plenitude of rich imagery and diction.

"Ode to Autumn" illustrates the strains, contradictions and conflicting emotions diminished amid a series of intense impressions of a season whose abundance comprises both fulfilment and incipient decline, both a strengthening of life and an inevitable, but natural

process of ageing and dying. It presents a brilliant depiction of a scene and a mood, the ultimate perfection of English landscape poetry and thus remains as a tribute to both the bounty of nature and the art of Keats's poetry.

Though the poem resembles Keats's other odes in manifesting on man's transience and passing of time, "To Autumn" is usually esteemed as having attained a solution and ending more reconciled to the nature of the world and life. The poem is construed not only as an emblem of artistic production, but as a contemplation on death, as Keats's reaction to the Peterloo Massacre, which occurred during the same year; and as a manifestation of nationalist attitude as well.

Bloom acclaimed "To Autumn" as being "the subtlest and most beautiful of all Keats's odes, and as close to perfection as any shorter poem in the English literature", whereas Robert Gittings remarked it as the most tranquil poem. Bewell voiced the ode to be Keats's creation of "myth of a national environment". This idea has been supported by Geoffrey Hartman, who explicated a conviction of "To Autumn" as "an ideological poem whose form expresses a national idea".

Keats is also a great master of sonnet. Most of his sonnets reproduce his almost depressed attitude on life and his desire for a heritage to be left behind after his demise.

In his sonnet "When I have fears that I may cease to be" Keats interrogates his ability to produce poetry lasting even when the mortal man is gone.

³⁶When I behold, upon the night's starred face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows with the magic hand of chance;

The poem resembles Shakespeare's sonnet, in which time subtracts all, including the narrator's love, however Keats's sonnet is much more subtle and most likely, even optimistic. It comprises "uncertainties, mysteries, doubts" enabling the poet to ponder inconclusively on what was beyond "fact or reason". Its progress from concept of mortal to immortal time demonstrates the poet's perpetual longing for eternity even as he is stating the possibility of ceasing to exist.

Keats's last sonnet and last verse is "Bright star" in which a manifestation of poet's blazing yearning for an achievement of life, his desire for experience, reaches its highest expression. In this visionary sonnet, after a long intermission, Keats returns to his powerful meditations on love, death, time, and nature or as Severn delineated "became like his former

³⁶ www.poetryfoundation.org. When I have Fears That I May Cease to Be by John Keats

self". As in so many poems, here again Keats is struggling with the paradox of the aspiration for immortality and a world of agelessness and perpetuity while existing in a world of time and change. He endeavours, as in the great odes, towards something abiding and permanent.

Virtually the most exceptional place in Keats's heritage belongs to his letters published between the years 1848 and 1878. Presenting one of the most inclusive descriptions of any English poet, these letters mirror the intellect, imagination and inquisitiveness of Keats's poetic faculty. In these letters he asserted his devotion to poetry and determined to contradict the distractions of love.

Keats wrote fully and sufficiently, combining the everyday events of his own life with a vigorous and delicate interest in that of his pen friends, and showing wit and high spirits, as well as his deepest reflections on love, poetry and the nature of man. His letters provide a clearer insight into poet's mind, his artistic evolution, his developing ideas of poetry and his own objectives as a poet. Written with an unprompted originality and an gentle intimacy, they disclose his profound vision of Keats's own spiritual development, and illustrate his ardent affection for poetry.

Keats's letters are essential documents and present many informative revelations about the nature of poetry and many critical principles which are cited as a basis for the assessment of poetry. Their essence forms the real diary" and self-disclosure of Keats's life, as well as comprises an explanation of his thinking and the first copies of poems including some of poet's finest writing and thought. These letters are the passionate indication of Keats's deliberations of poetry itself, its building and influences, demonstration of an intense attention uncommon amongst his society, who were more readily attracted by politics, science, metaphysics or fashion. Generated from an "unself-conscious stream of consciousness", they are emotional, filled with understanding of his own personality and his frail points.

These letters are not only precious indications to the understanding of the working of Keats's genius, but are also important documents in the history of criticism and in particular of that branch of criticism which deals with the relation of art to sensation, thought and moral concerns. They are highly esteemed within the norm of English literary correspondence and have become roughly as favoured and studied as his poetry, to which many of them serve as a valuable commentary.

It was in this letters where Keats donated to literature his three poetic notions of imagination and poetic creation: negative capability, "mansion of many apartments" and chameleon poet, the ideas that came to acquire common prevalence and arrest the public imagination, despite only appearing as expressions in his letters.

Negative capability is Keats's most distinctive contribution to aesthetic discourse that ever appeared in his letters and poetic works. Keats explained it as man's capability of being ³⁷"in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason". Keats claimed the poet being receptive rather than seeking for reality or cause, and not questing for utter awareness of every secrecy or uncertainty. Keats's idea of negative capability that incisively denied established philosophies and presumed systems of nature is best conveyed in poet's Ode on a Grecian Urn and Ode to a Nightingale.

In his letter to J.H.Reynolds of 3 May 1818, Keats also described a new vision of development that is centered on a sequence of progressive phases which he termed "Mansion of Many Apartments". He indicated main facets, ³⁸"Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression" that appears to be present at all periods of human maturity and that became the core of his memorable "Fall of Hyperion".

³⁹*"I compare human life to a large Mansion of Many Apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me - The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think - We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by awakening of the thinking principle - within us - we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight: However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the nature and heart of Man - of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of misery and heartbreak, pain, sickness and oppression - whereby this Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darkened and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open - but all dark - all leading to dark passages - we see not the balance of good and evil. We are in a mist - we are now in that state - we feel the burden of the Mystery."*

However, the most appealing of Keats's poetic theories is the idea of the poet and his imagination to be by its character chameleon- like and modifier to adjust itself to the variety of poetic themes.

37 www.poetryfoundation.org. Selections from Keats's Letters. On Negative Capability: Letter to George and Tom Keats

38 www.englishhistory.net. John Keats: Letters: To J H Reynolds, 3 May 1818

39 www.englishhistory.net. John Keats: Letters: To J H Reynolds, 3 May 1818

Keats is a Romantic poet par excellence. His “Romanticism” is best sensed in his zest for sensation, his affinity with the Middle Ages, his Hellenism, his perception of the mission of the poet, however, the fusion he formulated of these aspects is completely his own. The most arresting characteristic of his writings is the swiftness with which Keats evolved from the follower of Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton or Leigh Hunt to the poet with his own style. The felicity of his phrasing, the sensuousness of his diction and the abundance of his imagery, synthesized with his deep knowledge of the close association between life and art, make Keats an exemplary to those who considers poetry for an esthetic conception of human existence.

Keats had not only produced more exquisite poetry than was even attained by any other poet of so young age, nevertheless, perhaps no other impact was to verify so strong as Keats’s on the writers of the succeeding generation. His technique and illustrative traits fascinated powerfully virtually all the Victorians and Pre-Raphaelites. Tennyson considered Keats the greatest XIX century poet, M. Arnold praised his “intellectual and spiritual ardour” for exquisiteness and T.S. Eliot estimated Keats’s letters “certainly the most notable and most important ever written by any English poet.” The Pre-Raphaelites, including Millais and Rossetti, were affected by Keats and captured scenes from his writings counting "The Eve of St. Agnes", "Isabella" and "La Belle Dame sans Merci", rich, striking and well-liked images which continue to be strongly associated with Keats's writings. Keats’s earthly humanism represents one of his distinct heritages to later writers, a heritage realized most efficiently in the poem of Wallace Stevens in writings such as “Sunday Morning” which spells out the standpoint inherent in Keats’s “To Autumn”. In the twentieth century Keats continued to be an inspiration for such poets as Wilfred Owen, who celebrated his death as a day of mourning.

2.3. Similar and distinctive aspects of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s and John Keats’s poetry.

Both Shelley and Keats were great artists of an elevated and ardent simpleness. Their writings are loaded with resolute characters or even monumental portraits, affecting happenings and disastrous state of affairs, compelling conflicting feelings and mysterious images. Shelley’s songs and Keats’s odes reach the acme of lyric attainment in English literature.

The poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley is similar to Keats’s in many aspects, however, they have possessed a number of diversified traits in style and theme that differentiate them clearly. While Shelley's poetry is assimilated with a powerfully prophetic mood and continued all through his being in world of future, Keats appears to flee to past and occupies himself

mostly with the themes of myth and legend. Where Shelley's writings are brightened by Plato and shaped by Godwin, Keats's poems are imbued with the lush humanity of Spenser, Shakespeare, Browne and Wordsworth.

Shelley's and Keats's verse in a more specific meaning was romantic, characterized by the concern in worship of the supernatural, the enthralling and the outlandish mythological realm. Similar to most of their Romantic contemporaries, Keats and Shelley were enamored of ancient Greek literature, myths and art. This Romantic interest in Hellenism found its expression in subject matter and various forms of their creativity, commencing from translations (Keats's translation of Virgil's "Aeneid" and Shelley's translation of Plato's "Symposium") to odes and lyric verses. In Keats's case, Greek mythology was also intimately connected with his personal emotions for natural beauty (as in "I stood tip-toe") and with his delight in the union of mythical story with natural context. Shelley was sensitive to these incentives, as well and his poems of later period is usually centered on a rustic world which owes much to his continual recurrence to Greek literature "as the only effective cure" for ailments of mind. If Keats's use of Greek mythology was focused on the questions of poetry and on the severe yet essential processes of progression, Shelley's characteristic concentration is generally associated with his political considerations and with his bottomless and rather questioned loyalty to Hope. He was attracted by older times mostly for its relation to the future.

One of the distinctive features of Keats's and Shelley's compositions was the Romantic dejection generated principally by the devastating outcomes of the French Revolution and collapse of their attempt to the Ideal world. It is probably because of their melancholic temperament that they endeavoured to flee into the realms of imagination.

At the core of Shelley's dejection was a displeased want, virtually burning longing for continual dissatisfaction and disenchantment that evolved from the iniquity of the existing social, economic and political situation.

⁴⁰Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!

I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed

However, in Keats this Romantic melancholy took more personal tone and was mainly produced by the loss of his beloved brother and his own ailment. It was evoked by the thought that all human gratifications are sensitive to suffering, and do unavoidably result in anguish.

⁴¹She dwells with Beauty—, Beauty that must die;

And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips

⁴⁰ www.poetryfoundation.org. Ode to the West Wind by Percy Bysshe Shelley

⁴¹ www.poetryfoundation.org. Ode on Melancholy by John Keats

These poets were true revolutionaries of their generation. In the writings of both, though in Shelley's alone was directly and clearly proclaimed a revolutionary spirit of liberty loving youth who fought, not only with the conservative traditions of the upper classes within their own countries, but also with the entire system of brutal treatment, police oppression, ethical pretence and political machinations which the English were illustrated at that time. Nonetheless, Shelley was a liberal fighter, who constantly condemned well being of the ruling classes, whilst Keats was more high-minded and authentic craftsman who regarded his poetical calling as a personal responsibility towards people. In his writings more than in his confreres Keats' rebellious and unorthodox feature, as well as continuously critical approach toward established authority found its manifestation.

Indeed, Shelley was truly romantic in his firm violation of literary conventions, in creating new imagery and rhythms, in illustrating the internal world of man as part of the infinity of the Universe. His poetic technique was highly metaphorical, often filled with daring visions, of great catastrophes and great victories and of a glorious future for mankind. The complexity and novelty of his descriptions were so much ahead of his time that he was recognized only by few readers. In this trait, Shelley was akin to his younger contemporary John Keats, whose poetry was a compelling embodiment of the romantic idea of freedom, love and beauty as opposed to the vulgarity and prosaicness of bourgeois civilization.

Like Shelley, Keats lived in a poetic world of his own imagination; however, though he detested any kind of despotism and subjugation, he rarely let politics to influence his poetry, nor did he regard poetry as the proper vehicle for political statements. Keats's poetry was not affected by the revolutionary ideals of his time and did not share his contemporaries, particularly Shelley's rebellious spirit and his search for resolutions to society's wrongs. Conversely, it was more concerned with the merits of beauty and with private emotions of individual, including the joys or pains of love and the anxieties stirred by an indefinite future.

Keats and Shelley were for their contemporaries architects of beauty, as Wordsworth and Coleridge had been prophesiers of savage nature. Their idea of beauty is reflected in their poetic means of expression itself, in their words and poems. Shelley's interest in Beauty, as we can observe, was to some extent akin to that of Keats. However, to Shelley, in different manner, exterior Beauty was merely the external cover of the Platonic ethereal Beauty,

⁴²Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form,- where art thou gone?

⁴² www.poetryfoundation.org. Hymn to Intellectual Beauty by Percy Bysshe Shelley

whereas for Keats in his verse it was, in effect at least, nearly everything.

⁴³“Beauty is truth, truth beauty”-that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know

Unlike older Romantics, who contemplated nature as a system of information with simple entity and with a reality foregoing man’s understanding, Shelley and Keats considered nature mainly to be a world of irresistible beauty and artistic pleasure. While their predecessors usually composed about nature in itself, Shelley and Keats was disposed to make nature as a kind of the greatest metaphor for creativeness, expression and beauty.

Nevertheless, though both Keats and Shelley were real admirers of nature, and richness of their verse was loaded with nature and the inexplicable grandeur it possessed, their feelings for the Nature were rather distinct. When Shelley used the natural things as the cardinal factors of stimulating him and desired some of its forces to endow his poetic strength to spread his words to the public in this former world, Keats dealt with nature as an viewer and prized its outer beauty and attraction. Whilst Shelley noticed in nature a profound message-moral, ethical or etherial, Keats's affection for natural world was completely sensual and he cherished the charming views and landscapes of nature for their own value.

Keats’s consideration of nature may also be differentiated from Shelley’s in his interest in the atmospheric qualities of Nature such as moonlight, trees, flowers and hills. Shelley was rather concerned with the active facets of natural world as the cloud and the west wind, and the changing physical processes of Nature as the sundown and the ocean.

What is more gentle than a wind in summer?
What is more soothing than the pretty hummer
That stays one moment in an open flower,
And buzzes cheerily from bower to bower?

Both Shelley’s and Keats’s literary activity was highly influenced by Italian poetry. Shelley, particularly, infused himself with the Italian verse, and must have encouraged Keats to a devotion of it, as Keats followed, in many of his most appealing sonnets, the Italian form. It was away from this ambience of intensive learning of the classics, passionate conversation with their co-workers on creative method, and a passionate republican aspiration to transmit to Humanity an understanding of their own artistic force, and accordingly empower them to be really liberal, that Keats and Shelley created their most influential poems.

Keats and Shelley were not accepted in their own age. They were deemed inferior to many of their contemporaries, including Byron and Scott. It was only around a hundred years

⁴³ www.bartleby.com. Arthur Quiller-Couch. The Oxford Book of English Verse: 1250–1900. 1919. John Keats. Ode on a Grecian Urn

after his decease that his writings began to be recognized as elements of humanitarian romantic opposition against the contemptibility of existing society, against the superficiality and insignificance of traditional art.

CONCLUSION

As a result of this study we have come into the following conclusion:

Prevailing over English literature for mainly 34 years (1798-1832), Romanticism proved itself as one of the most ingenious, extreme and instable of all ages, a time characterized by insurrection, conservatism and reformation in politics, and by the creation of imaginative literature in its characteristically contemporary structure. It came to be a period when principles and ideals were in union, when radicalism and conventions, the old and the new were as essential as the more customarily literary ideas of human and nature, innocence and experience, youth and age.

This supreme trend in English literature was Renaissance, which changed not only English, but the European life as well; by extremely impelling force on Life and Art.

Encompassing the mysterious and fearless of the oppositions of human life, Romanticism destructed the artistic, philosophical, even geographical boundaries of the preceding ages. It altered the way people perceived the world, stressing the virtue of the individual and rejecting to defer to traditions. Romantic compositions echoed the preferences and mores of the period and considered more than ever the personal human experience, as well as personal cogitations.

Romanticism influenced not only the humanities and arts, but the society as a whole, permanently shifting the manner in which human sentiments, relations, and institutions were contemplated, understood, and artistically or otherwise reproduced. However, Romanticism was not a unified movement with a distinctly established outline, and its importance differed widely depending on time, place and individual author.

Inspired by Rousseau's idealism, Romanticism put an emphasis on the significance of the individual, resisted the rationalism and it opposed the addiction of literature to traditional ancient standards and supported a return to nature.

The classical writers were investigated in a new and different way, and were developed by the genius of Shelley and Keats; the Middle Ages incited the historical novels of Scott and the works of Coleridge, Southey, and many others; modern life were studied and criticized in the compositions of the fiction writers and the satirical writings of Byron.

Through distinguishing traits of their writings, the Romantic writers transformed the whole spirit of poetry in early nineteenth century. They established in literature an icon of wandering exiles among which were pedlars and vagrants of Wordsworth's poems, Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner", Mary Shelley's man-made monster, and the numerous tortured

outcasts in the writings of P. B. Shelley and Byron.

Romanticism brought to literature the idea of the poetry being essentially “imitation” of human nature and its primary function remaining the manifestation of the poet’s emotion. Romantic poetry was, however, a kind of verse distinct from anything before it both in form and subject matter. Its language was influenced by new thoughts of democratisation and simplicity in which artificial poetic diction was substituted by a form of language really spoken by common people.

The prose of the Romantic period also renounced their precursors by concentrating on the critical study of literature, its practice and theory as we find in Wordsworth’s Preface to “Lyrical Ballads”, Coleridge’s “Biographia Literaria” and Shelley’s “Defence of Poetry”.

Romantic literature generated a different “creative spirit” that displays itself in the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Byron and in the prose of De Quincey, Lamb, Scott, and Jane Austen - a brilliant generation of writers, whose nationalistic enthusiasm advocates the Elizabethan days, and whose intellectual and artistic power contributed to the recognition of Romanticism as the “second creative age” of English literature.

As a whole, Romanticism epitomizes a second revival of literature in England, particularly in lyric and narrative poetry which supersedes the Augustan improvement of didactic and satiric forms. This indeed was the epoch that saw the advent of those concepts of literature and of literary history, on which contemporary English scholarship has been established.

It is clearly seen that though Romanticism came to an end at the beginning of the XIX century, its impact is still sensed in modern art and literature. Many notions developed in Romantic epoch, like creative imagination, nature, myth and symbolism, emotions and intuition, autonomy from regulations, spontaneity, plain language, individual experiences, democracy and freedom, as well as an attraction with the past, counting ancient myths and the mysticism of the Medieval age still continues to be the gist of literary writings.

Key character types such as the Byronic hero and the disastrous woman (the *femme fatale*), futuristic and bizarre settings of science fiction (Mary Shelley’s “Frankenstein”), the millennial poems of political revolution and disenchantment, and the first strong literary involvements with the women’s rights (Mary Wollstonecraft’s “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman”) widely met in today’s literature, all are the creations of Romantic age.

Furthermore, Romanticism represented many of disagreements and ideological disputes that are at the core of the contemporary world; political liberty and oppression, individual and

collective duties or liabilities, masculine and feminine roles (until lately the established standard of Romanticism was almost entirely male), past, present, and future. It has proven the foundation of the contemporary western worldview, which saw people as free individuals endeavouring fulfillment through democratic actions, rather than as restrained members of a conventional, authoritarian society.

However, the most precious donation of Romanticism is the growth of the genius of two young poets, John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley, whose experiments with poetry and poetic diction conducted to the formation of modern-day literature.

Shelley is a supreme and creative lyrical writer in the English literature whose lyrical force is now asserted to be one of the major contributions to literature as have been the dramatic flair of Shakespeare.

In some respects, Shelley is the quintessential Romantic poet, his eccentric and brief life with its outlandish unearthliness, his moods of delight and dreaminess, his elevated mythopoetic imagination, his ecstatic idealism, merging to form a widespread image of Romanticism.

Shelley was also a deep philosopher whose writings ask and reply many elemental inquiries in life. He was the first writer in English literature to portray the ordinary people as the only force capable of shifting the existing order of life.

Shelley led the melody of verse to a degree of perfection unknown in English poetry before him. His rich imagination, his power of rhythmical expression, his harmonious lyricism and his passion for liberty made his poetry unequalled and brought him in a line with most momentous writers of the early nineteenth century.

The complexity of his philosophical idealism, the spiritual and aesthetic quality of his poetry established Shelley as “the master-singer of modern race and age”, whereas his principles of gender equality and free love had attracted commentary on the poet as a first advocate of feminism.

Shelley had fervour for improving the world and this enthusiasm shines again and again in his writings, in glows that are now intensely comprehensible and exceptionally pure. His conviction in change, the equality of the genders, the strength of imagination and love are repeatedly communicated in his poems, and they provoked much disputes among his conformist confreres.

From the artistic point of view, the most visible characteristic of his verse is the rapturous yearning for Beauty and its glorious manifestation. No poetry is filled in the same manner as Shelley’s with images magnificent and elegant in form.

More than any other Romantic poet, Shelley brought a stirred moral sanguinity to his compositions which he expected would influence his readers sensuously, morally and spiritually. Shelley's principal poems, including "The Revolt of Islam", "Prometheus Unbound", "Adonais", and "The Triumph of Life" are the greatest representation of radical idea produced in the Romantic period, whereas his shorter lyrics and odes are among the finest in the English literature.

Similar to Shelley, Keats was for the late nineteenth century the "poet's poet" overpowering the grapes of language with his aesthetic taste and indulging in a mysterious world of dream, grief and sensation. His poetry is crowded with love, beauty, imagination and sinuosity that are the heart of romanticism.

Keats was a zealous philosopher, as disclosed by his letters; in these he meditated on the essence of poetry and the poet and fought with the problems of anguish and demise. Keats's letters demonstrated the commencement of a mature and penetrating mind that might, given time, have modified his lavish Romanticism to something like a Shakespearian trait, while his poems were representations of the completely sensuous facet of the Romantic movement.

Keats had an astounding talent of perceiving the true spirit of the classics-an ability alien to numerous great intellectuals, and to the majority of the "classic" poets of the preceding age, - and enabled him to reflect in contemporary English literature the mood of the ancient Greeks. He was the last eminent English writer to whom Greek mythology was an abiding and living source not only of delight, but of elevated understanding of the natural world as well.

Whilst Shelley was supporting unachievable reforms, and Byron enunciating his own egotism and the political dissatisfaction of his age, Keats dwelled apart from human race and from all political values, venerating beauty like a zealot, completely content to compose the things that were in his own heart, or to mirror the grandeur of the natural world as he noticed or desired it to be.

Like other great poets of his generation, Keats made the investigation of poetic imagination and creativity the prime pursuit of his verse. Through the imaginary characters of goddesses Psyche and Melancholy, the natural symbol of the nightingale, and the man-made urn, Keats contemplated and verified his queries concerning the conditions that enables creativeness, the various forms the creativeness can take, the connection between nature and art, and the link between eternal art and its mortal creator.

Keats was the great expert of the Romantic ode. The luxuriant sensorial language of his odes, their idealistic interest in truth and beauty, and their strong suffering when faced with

death are Romantic concerns-though along with that, they are all exclusively Keats's.

Keats's literary activity lasted nearly four years and comprises merely fifty-four poems. However, all through his career Keats displayed notable intellectual and artistic development. From the observation of his compositions, it is clearly seen that if he had lived, and if with broader understanding of men and more profound experiences of life he had reached to Wordsworth's spiritual insight and Byron's power of fervour and knowledge, he would have grown into a greater poet than either. He would have produced more and superior narrative poetry, wherein human personages depicted with psychological discernment would have moved before a background of romantic beauty. For Keats had a style- a "natural magic"- that makes his compositions higher than anything in contemporary English poetry and drive us back to Milton or Shakespeare for a comparison.

Taking into consideration all the above mentioned, we can assert that both Keats and Shelley were true Romantics with their ardent admiration for the natural world, idealism, emotional and physical passion, and fascination with mystical and supernatural. Their poetry is soaked with intense philosophy on life, nature and human identity which were the topmost concerns of the Romantic age.

Shelley and Keats established Romantic verse as the principal poetic institution of the age. They breathed a second life to the classical poetic forms and adapted them to illustrate the fundamental problems of their time. Being the last masters of the sonnet, they both made it a dazzling medium of personal expressions. Percy Shelley's "Ozymandias" and John Keats's "When I have fears that I may cease to be" proves to be the elevated samples of the Romantic sonnet.

Shelley's and Keats's poetry divulged the seasonal process in nature by creating the ambiance of aging and transience. John Keats's "To Autumn" and Percy Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" both express a deep philosophical message regarding either the wastefulness of man's life or the fertility of nature, whereas poets' "Ode to a Nightingale" and "To a Skylark" contrasts that spirit of transience with the timelessness of art.

Though, Shelley and Keats were the most contentious literary men of the first decades of nineteenth century, their importance to English language and literature is broadly recognized in our days. Having much similar in imagination, thoughts, productions and fate, they laid the foundations for the contemporary literature, both verse and prose.

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