4-6-2022

Fingerprints of Feeling: The Romantic Influence on Later Poetry

Brooke M. Neal
Georgia Southern University

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An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the Department of Literature.

By
Brooke Neal

Under the mentorship of Joe Pellegrino

ABSTRACT

Most readers and critics see the historical sequence of Western literature as a series of discrete literary periods and perceive these periods as reacting against one another like a pendulum swinging, each successive period countering its predecessor. This thesis interrogates that common understanding by demonstrating the persistence of Romantic themes in subsequent literary periods through the scope of British poetry. I trace three overarching tenets of the Romantic ideal through subsequent literary periods. literary periods: Romanticism, Victorianism, Modernism, and Postmodernism or the Contemporary era.

The Romantic ideal primarily emphasizes the importance of emotion over logic and reason. This ideal is articulated through thematic issues like a focus on the Common Man, a return to Nature, and a fascination with the Exotic. After situating each of these within the Romantic period, I then illustrate the pervasiveness of these themes in representative poetry of the Victorian, Modern, and Postmodern eras.

Thesis Mentor:_____
Dr. Joe Pellegrino

Honors Director:_____
Dr. Steven Engel

April 2022
Department of Literature
Honors College
Georgia Southern University

Acknowledgements

Because of his tremendous contribution to this project, I would like to especially thank my thesis mentor, Joe Pellegrino. Not only did he stick with me when I told him I wanted to write on Wordsworth, but he also dedicated his time to teaching me these poems one by one in painstaking detail. Without his scholarship and insight, this project would not have been feasible.

I would also like to thank my good friend and fellow Honors College scholar, Rachel Rubio, who convinced me to apply for the Honors Program in my junior year. Without her help and encouragement through the application process, I would have never had the amazing and rewarding opportunities afforded by the Honors College here at Georgia Southern. Thanks so much, Rachel.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their willingness to listen both to my rantings and the triumphs I have undergone during the writing process. Even though they really had no clue what I was talking about when trying to explain my project, they have never wavered in their love and support.

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The primary purpose of literature is to express the human experience. Whether, in the throes of passion, an author decides to express themselves through a gushing of poetic jargon or, in a tempered and measured process, an author plugs their ideas into a strict stanza structure, writers have, from the beginning of human existence, used literature as a means to make sense of their realities and convey that reality to their readers. As history moved forward, the style and attitudes of such communication changed in reaction to the attitudes and events within society, resulting in separate periods that were colored with their distinctive styles.

Every literary period has its defining characteristics, but to view those characteristics as purely intrinsic to their respective eras would be a faulty understanding of how each movement grew out of the previous. Each period emerged as a conversation with the one that came before, sometimes by pure contradiction, but more often as an extension of it. Far from literary periods rising in opposition to their predecessors, they often continued or expounded upon the characteristics of those in the past. One of the most distinct and, arguably, the most influential literary period, would be the Romantic era.

Although literary Romanticism is a rather nebulous concept, the movement distinguishes itself through the breaking from the sentiments of the previous Enlightenment, or Neoclassical, era. This period emerged after the Restoration, a time that both marked the reinstatement of the monarchy and a rise in the emphasis of science as the ultimate source of logic and reason. The return of the monarchy heralded a

reemergence of art and literature, as, during the English Civil War of 1642, theaters were closed and the rich atmosphere of court life tumbled along with the monarchy. The shift back into court life prompted the production of poems and plays that served as entertainment for the aristocracy. In order to please and impress this elitist minority, playwrights and authors wielded their best literary skills, creating clever quips hidden in complex and predetermined poetic structures and conveyed through flowery, esoteric language. Works of this time also reflected the reemergence of classical themes, centering on familiar biblical and mythological stories, such as Adam and Eve from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, or heroes accomplishing great feats of a high moral caliber, like Christian in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress.*

In addition to the rise in classical themes, the Enlightenment era brought about an increased emphasis on science and relied on logic and reason as means for humans to govern themselves. Many scientists, philosophers, and writers of this era strongly adhered to the idea that, since the universe displayed order, the best way to maintain society was for every person to live an orderly life, performing the functions that they were created for. Alexander Pope summarized the Enlightenment principle of rationally articulating one's place within the great cosmic machine, and acting so that the entire machine, the universe itself, might function smoothly: "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; / The proper study of Mankind is Man" (*Epistle II*, 1-2). Pope's insistence on knowledge, rather than revelation, as the foundation for all human endeavors is certainly reactive against the prevailing thought of the Renaissance. And yet his tacit awareness that the order of the universe was itself a creation of a Divine Bei ng complicates this stance

because rationality serves to reinforce an underlying structure that was created by and for something that rationality itself cannot approach or grasp.

It would be an understatement to posit that many of the Romantics hated Neoclassic sentiments and did nearly everything in their power to contradict them. This attitude resulted in an abrupt shift in the generalized intellectual climate. It moved from a focus on rational relationships and an ordered society to a focus on individual desires and their fulfillment, with little or no concern for society at large. In short, the Romantics saw the individual as far more important than the group. Society, if it operated at all, was not to function for the good of the majority but was to meet the needs of every individual within it. Sharply contrasting with previous literature that widely focuses on characters struggling to adhere to a prescribed moral code, Romantics mainly sought to express the inward, emotional states of human beings and their unique experience of the world. While Enlightenment writers and thinkers conveyed their individual struggles with adhering to a moral code that was externally imposed (and existed for the good of the man, not for the good of the one), Romantic artists attempted to portray their actions as manifestations of an inner drive, one aligned with Nature, or the Oversoul, or just their own desires. The locus of control for writers of the Enlightenment was external, and their charge was to impose their own sense of self-control. But for the Romantics, self-control was practically nonexistent. Thus, they were constantly in danger of allowing their excess to drag them into three emotional traps: melancholy, sentimentality, and nostalgia.

In contrast to the Enlightenment idea that man was seen as the ultimate source of Truth and Reason, the Romantics turned to nature as a means of finding and expressing wisdom or truth instead of merely relying on the opinions of privileged academics. The

Romantic literature concerning nature often suggests the idea of Divine Immanence, or the notion that God can literally be found within the real and tangible aspects of nature. This concept is implicit in later literature, as writers and speakers refer to nature as that has more wisdom than we, as mortals, can fathom. This sentiment led others to reconsider humanity's relationship to Nature, and to see it not as an entity to be overcome or resisted, but as something to be participated in. The processes of nature may be unforgiving, and we may look for ways to avoid them, but we will always be subjected to its prodigious strength.

Another common Romantic theme is the focus on the common man. While works of previous eras dealt primarily with royalty or larger-than-life archetypes from classical, biblical, or mythological sources, the subject matter of much Romantic literature is centered upon the experiences of everyday people, or "common folk." The literature conveys this focus not only through the illustration of the lives of such people, but also by discussing their inward, emotional states as they sought to divine the meaning of existence and their place in a universe. This emphasis directly opposes the dominant themes in the literature of preceding Neoclassical, or even that of the Renaissance, whose works centered on a character's battle to conquer their sinful natures in order to better conform to a prescribed moral code.

Fascination with the exotic was another very common trait of Romantic literature. In previous eras authors widely focused on the themes and ideas confined to Western society. The Romantics, however, eschewed this common theme, an attitude reflected in the subject matter of their literature. This sentiment sharply contrasted through its emphasis on anything that wasn't western. They believed that Western Europe was

infected with the “disease” of rationality, and therefore focused on subjects and themes far removed from the “everyday” world of British society. This shift to exoticism is seen both through the Romantics’ fascination with the Eastern culture and their increasing interest in the grotesque. The themes of much of Romantic literature are concerned with the Orient, or places that Great Britain colonized. Exoticism is also seen in Romantic literature containing darker themes. Because the society of this time was severely constrained by standards and rules that were considered socially acceptable, Romantic authors used their fascination with the peculiar to, in a sense, scratch their iconoclastic itches. They used the production and consumption of literature to explore the underbelly of the human psyche, and, by doing so, laid bare what so many respectable people wished to keep hidden.

However, Romantic literature is not defined solely by these three traits. In fact, the movement was not limited only to literary endeavors; it possessed a breadth that infused the attitude of society at large, transcending art and literature and affecting such disciplines as philosophy, where it acknowledged the existence of individual sense perceptions, and the structuring of governmental institutions, where there was a new focus on individual rights (and thus, democracy). Despite the vast disparities between these areas, The Romantic attitude of questioning established rules and conventions remained constant in nearly every area of the human experience.

First and foremost, Romanticism reacted against the imposition of rigid social classes promoted and enforced by the European monarchies, an attitude that precipitated the French Revolution. Romantic political thinkers emphasized the value and the rights of each individual. They viewed traditional social structures -- where the only people who

"counted" were the aristocracy and the bureaucracy they created to support this hegemonic way of living -- as something archaic to be dismantled, by violence if necessary. However, the study of this response to the prevailing conservative ideology would require us to delve into the historical contexts of the transmutation of the direct democracies of Greece to the European monarchical systems as well as the imposition then acceptance of the religious understanding of the Divine Right of Kings (which would also necessitate a study of the role of institutional churches in the formation and enforcement of this form of government), While interesting, this approach is tangential to the purpose of this thesis, for it ultimately leads away from the expression of the self through literature into the larger schema of both national and religious history.

Another common trait of the Romantics is their concern for what they would refer to as the "disease of rationality," something they believe infected European society at large. During the Neoclassical period, as well as the eras preceding it, people generally favored the representation of the real and the tangible, disregarding the subjectivity of imagination and fancy. We can trace this desire for mimesis all the way back to Aristotle, so it had millennia to burrow itself into western consciousness. In literature, such an emphasis was seen not only in the strict formality of Enlightenment poetry, but also, as mentioned above, in the thorny and sometimes convoluted images of the Metaphysical poets, the promotion of an esoteric chivalric code in Middle English romances, and the insistence on verisimilitude on the literature of the ancient world. The Romantic attitude swung in the opposite direction, favoring a free expression of human imagination brought about by an individual's perception of objects on which their fancy had fallen. We need only to look at Coleridge's attempts to distinguish between the operations of the primary

and secondary imaginations to see how Romantics struggled not with creating a true representation of the external world, but an expression of the inner workings of their own minds. Just as the Impressionists in the graphic arts did not attempt to recreate their sense experiences, but their reactions to those experiences (their impressions of the world, not the world in and of itself), so too the Romantics tried to understand how their minds apprehended the external world, then turned it into something new.

Funnily enough, by defending this argument the Romantics, in a sense, cancel out their own belief. They not only rejected the restraining rationality of Neoclassicist or Enlightenment thinkers but were set upon their own belief that there is no rationality. This "logic," that there is no such thing as rationality, is actually a rationale, and thus, by embracing it, the Romantics hoist themselves on their own petard. By relying on rationality to prove that there is no such thing, they unintentionally prove rationalists correct, and render their own argument null and void. Most of the Romantics seem to have been unaware of this glaring self-contradiction and continued to dance along the path of pathos, believing that their ideology of self-expression liberated them from the prison of rationality was humanity's key to freedom. Such a huge example of self-sabotage must have been obvious to the Romantics, but their extant works do not seem to address it. It took a later American Romantic, Walt Whitman, to speak for all those European Romantics who preceded him:

> Do I contradict myself?
>
> Very well then, I contradict myself,
>
> (I am large; I contain multitudes.)
>
> "Song of Myself" paragraph 51

Furthermore, including a philosophical component to this analysis would not be conducive to a deeper understanding of the influence of the Romantics. Although the expression of the human experience undeniably crosses into philosophical realms, the history of Western philosophy is a history of competing ideologies and stances competing with and overtaking one another in what might be considered a Hegelian progression but seems at times more like an Aristotelian infinite regression. Rousseau's "noble savage" may be a perfected understanding of human nature, and most certainly influenced the English Romantic writers (Grimsley 508-ff). Kant's transcendental schemata may be the most logical way of understanding how the self apprehends and understands the external world, and his conclusion that the external world is ultimately unknowable is certainly a fixture of Romantic writing (Walsh 22-25). But these theories are ultimately contingent on the thought processes of the theorists themselves and are modified by interpretation and negated by philosophers with different first principles. So their inheritors and expositors end up in a morass of countless contradictions and exceptions. Exploring these muddy intellectual currents would require a far more lengthy study, and the results it would yield would merely support what can already be arrived at via our more focused area of interest.

The emphasis on the Common Man, the turn to Nature, and fascination with the Exotic are, however, tenets of the Romantic movement that have the capacity to describe experiences common to all humanity. Arguably, the being, or existence, of an individual is comprised of three aspects: the individual itself, the individual's relationship with the external world, and the machinations of that individual's psyche. Since these three romantic tenets or themes address these three aspects of human existence, they can be

used to describe the overall experience of that individual without relying on an external locus of control to do so.

The received tradition in western literature is that each succeeding period renounces the tenets of the period preceding it. But post-Romantic writers did not completely abandon the themes and issues first embraced by the writers of this period. To both explain and prove that these themes, or tenets, weave throughout the subsequent literary periods, I will first present those themes in representative Romantic poems, then offer three poems from each literary period -- all considered to epitomize the generic, thematic, and structural conventions of their respective periods -- and illustrate within them the persistence of each of the three aforementioned Romantic tenets.

The following table presents the works, their periods, and their connections with Romantic concerns:

	Nature	The Common Man	The Exotic
Romanticism	"Tintern Abbey" *William Wordsworth*	"To Autumn" *John Keats*	"Kubla Khan" *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
Victorianism	"God's Grandeur" *Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ*	"Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" *Robert Browning*	"The Jabberwocky" *Lewis Carroll*
Modernism	"The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower" *Dylan Thomas*	"The Whitsun Weddings" *Philip Larkin*	"Sailing to Byzantium" *W. B. Yeats*
Postmodernism	"Blackberry Picking" *Seamus Heaney*	"On Raglan Road" *Patrick Kavanagh*	"The Sea is History" *Derek Walcott*

It would be easy to choose more obscure authors, whose works are considered to be either incongruent with the prevailing literary conventions of their day, or deliberately

imitative of the Romantic style. But each of the poems above contributed to the main current of thought within its literary period while echoing the sentiments of Romanticism as well. The premises which the Romantics espoused permeated the attitudes of each of the succeeding eras, proving that Romanticism is not dead, but continues to thrive even through the ideological shifts of the following periods.

The Romantic Period

Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight

Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest

Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue.—And I have felt
A 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,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; ‘tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress

With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

Out of all the authors of the Romantic era, William Wordsworth is perhaps the most famous. Belonging to the first generation of English Romantic writers, Wordsworth was one of the first to attempt to codify the practice of applying the Romantic ideology in literature, seen through his extensive Preface to his volume of poetry *Lyrical Ballads*, a manifesto attempting to explain his both his philosophy perpetuating the creation of *Lyrical Ballads* and the methodology by which he brought those works into being. One of

the reasons why Aidan Day calls Wordsworth's work a poetic revolution is that the poet sought to emphasize the eschewing of society and human wisdom in favor of a return to Nature (*Romanticism*, 10). A large portion of his work addresses this elevated perspective on Nature. Perhaps the most famous of these is "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798," which is usually referred to simply as "Tintern Abbey." This work reflects the speaker's perception of the enlightening and centering power of Nature, which countermands the deadening of spirit he experiences in any urban setting.

In "Tintern Abbey," the speaker finds himself enraptured in his renewed sense of Nature's restorative powers. After an absence of "five summers' ' being "'mid the din / Of towns and cities," the speaker again sinks into contemplation as he sits in his familiar "sylvan Wye" (26-27). In this space, the speaker is both able to rediscover the peace and wisdom with which he was once so familiar he once knew and essentially purifies himself from the sullying effects of human attempts to dominate nature.

"Tintern Abbey" also acknowledges Nature's power as a source of solace, but also as the magnet of man's moral compass. Aligning himself with the common Romantic tendency to question the authority of imposed laws that circumscribe human experience, the speaker recognizes the simplicity of morality within Nature. Nature's rendering of moral goodness does not hinge on rationality, or imagining oneself a universal legislator, or considering what will maximize the amount of happiness in the world. Rather, it is something as simple as " acts / Of kindness and of love" (35-36). The speaker validates the authority of this proposed morality by explaining that they came in "sensations sweet" that "pass[ed]" into his "purer mind / With tranquil restoration,"

presenting themselves to the recipient's affectivity (29-31). Because the Romantics had such high regard for the legitimacy of human emotion as the source of Truth, the speaker rightly posits that Nature's version is true, for it made its appeal not to his intellect, but to his emotions, something that, according to the Romantics, is a thing that is never truly misaligned or perverted. The contemporary philosopher Alan Rayner offers this succinct summation: "What causes us . . . to be selfishly deceitful, unreasonable and cruel is the product of a profound misconception of reality, which isolates or conflates human identity from or with the remainder of Nature" (Rayner). Ultimately, the speaker of Tintern Abbey posits that when the soul joins with Nature, one's moral compass will align to Nature's driving force.

Because Nature has elucidated exactly what this "best portion" of life yields, the speaker finds that his searching soul is finally able to reach a place of respite and peace (34). This sense of tranquility stems from having this truth set before his eyes and appealing to his very heart. This causes him to realize that his almost subconscious search for meaning, a search that creates unease and disquietude in his soul, is ultimately unnecessary, for Nature already holds within itself the answer to his search. This realization causes him to release himself from the current state of temporal human understanding to rest in unity with the all-encompassing knowledge that Nature provides.

The peace of resting in Nature's omniscience propels the speaker to share his experience with the others, namely his sister whom he addresses as "dear, dear Friend" (119). He feels the necessity to instruct her in the restorative practice, for he states that if he had not been so taught, his "genial spirits" would have fallen into "decay" (116). He informs his sister that if she succumbs to the "wild ecstasies" that resulting from

encountering Nature, she will be shaped into a seasoned and "matured" vessel capable of receiving and maintaining the imparted knowledge of Nature, a knowledge that will protect her from the "evil tongues" and "[r]ash judgements" of others (141, 131-32).

Furthermore, the speaker addresses Nature's protection from the suffering of this world, a protection that stems from the impenetrable serenity that emanates from a soul's union with Nature. According to the speaker, this serenity precipitates an tireless ardor for Nature's beauty, demonstrated when he describes himself as "[a] worshipper of Nature" who "came / Unwearied in that service. . .[and] far deeper zeal / [o]f holier love" (155-58). This softening effect of Nature's beauty has an almost transcendental power, for the speaker states that, in the event that his sister is suffering so much she is numbed to the power, she can still find solace in her brother's experience, evoking within her "healing thoughts / [o]f tender joy" (147-48). He is completely assured of Nature's restorative capability, for he believes that its effects upon him have the power to pull his sister from "dreary. . .daily life" even if sorrow renders her incapable of seeking that power for herself. This capability of vicarious restoration enthralls the speaker to Nature's power all the more, for he says that they are "[m]ore dear, both for themselves and thy sake."

To Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

The celebration of Nature's beauty weaves itself into John Keats' poem "To Autumn." Facilitating the Romantic idea that we derive benefit from unity with Nature, Keats makes it easier to connect with something as noncorporeal as a season of the year. He creates a personification of Autumn itself, and by doing so furthers Wordsworth's

idea that humans and Nature are inherently unified. Keats conveys this sentiment by enshrining the beauty and abundance of autumn into one being that takes the shape of a woman lazing about a granary, a reaper dozing in a field, a gleaner carrying her burden, and a cider maker watching her apples give up their juices. All of these manifestations or incarnations emphasize the provisions and abundance that flow from the season, working in concert with the labors of the common people.

Every description of this personified autumn pays particular attention to the unending abundance of the season, but that bounty cannot be enjoyed, or even recognized, without the tasks performed by the population she represents: those who live close to the earth and are more in touch with the natural cycles of the seasons. Keats presents Autumn as a thing of surpassing beauty, but she is not the only beautiful thing in the poem. Those who work with her, who perform work necessary for us to gain something from Autumn's beauty, are themselves beautiful. But this is not a reflected beauty; they are not moons to her sun. Rather, they stand independent, as she is compared to them, and not vice versa. They are the touchstone for the metaphors and similes that Keats uses to construct his personification of the season.

Keats then, presents himself, and indeed, the whole of the movement, as a type of cultural primitivist, who believed that "the life, activities, and products of 'primitive' people—who are considered to live in a way more accordant to 'nature' because they are isolated from civilization—are at least in some ways preferable to the life, activities, and products of people living in a highly developed society, especially in cities" (Abrams 244). This rendering of the season, appearing predominantly in the second stanza, begins with the speaker describing her as "sitting" upon "the granary floor" with "hair soft lifted

by the winnowing wind" (14-15). The line evokes the image of the back-breaking process of separating the wheat from the chaff during the winnowing process. This task, although relegated to those lowly field laborers, is essential for making the bread and other commodities that sustain society. Keats' focus on these workers not only brings them to the attention of his readers, but privileges them over their counterparts who worked in more industrialized urban settings. Because those who unthinkingly benefit from this process are unaware of the difficulty of the labor involved, the speaker also contemplates this personified vision at other places within this life-sustaining chain of activities. She reaps the fields, bringing forth the fruits of her hook, which "Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers" (20). And then she carries the results of her work to those who, unaware of the amount of work behind it, blithely accept it. Like a gleaner, she "keep[s] / Steady thy laden head across a brook" moving her wares to market. Just as a generous field owner would allow some of the wheat harvest to be left in the fields for the gleaners, this autumnal spirit also generously yields to others what she has wrought by offering humanity access to her bounty.

The poem's references to slowed time and unexpected beauty further describe Autumn's allure, implying the Romantic sentiment that beauty is unexpectedly found in the ordinary. He states that he has often found her "by a cyder-press with patient look" while she "watchest the last oozing hour by hours" (21-22). Just as the cider apples yield a sweet, amber liquid through slow pressing, Autumn's beauty develops from the same progressive maturation. This incremental growth makes the "mellow fruitfulness" of her "store" all the more precious, for just as apples grow sweeter as they ripen, Autumn's beauty blossoms under the slow influence of time (1, 12). The funereal images that

populate the final stanza of the poem also add to this *tempus fugit* / *carpe diem* theme. Autumn may slowly grow into her particular form of beauty and bounty -- which is totally unlike the beauty and bounty of spring -- but at her heels is winter, and the death of the year. She too will pass in her turn, yielding to the inevitable, inexorable, time.

The apples of the cider press also imply the Romantic emphasis on the Common Man by describing how beauty is unexpectedly found within the ordinary and sometimes unsavory. When apples are harvested, only the blemished and partially rotten specimens are selected for cider-making. Although not beautiful to the eye, these imperfect fruits yield the sweetest liquid gold that contrasts with the slight tanginess of the perfect apples. This cider imagery points directly to the Romantic's attitude toward everyday people by illustrating how the raw and rustic beauty of this population is widely overlooked by those who favor prestige, just as the rich sweetness of blemished apples are missed in favor of their flawless counterparts.

Nourished on Autumn's wines and ciders and love-drunk, the speaker affirms Autumn's value, just as the Romantic's sought to validate the intrinsic worth of even the most humble of individuals. He offers a rebuttal to the favoring of spring, reassuring Autumn that she has her "beauty too" through the "rosy hue" on the "stubble plains" and her "full-grown lambs bleat[ing]" on the "hilly bourne" (26, 30). These images remind us that her time, and ours, is waning, and we both will face a winter of old age and death. Her mature, reserved beauty contrasts with the newly-unfettered abundance of Spring. Yes, there is loveliness in the tender, fresh springtime, but there is a sweeter allure resting in the golden "bloom" of Autumn's "soft dying day" (25).

Kubla Khan

Or, a vision in a dream. A Fragment.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!
The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid
And on her dulcimer she played,

Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight ‘twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

As with Keats’ “To Autumn,” Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” draws from the Romantics’ tendency to focus on the outside imagery to describe an inward rumination. In this manifestation of the pathetic fallacy, Coleridge breaks away from the common subject matter of his contemporaries’ writings through a poem describing a Mongolian emperor of China, and grandson of Genghis Khan, who completed his grandfather’s conquest of China. Khan, orders built an exotic “pleasure dome” in “Xanadu,” an Orientalized kingdom where the historical Kubla Khan built his capital city (2, 1). Far from the recurrent Romantic paradigm of experiencing a moral revelation within a serene portrait of an English landscape, the fantastical narration of “Kubla Khan” offers a certain removal from familiar terrain. Contemporary readers were aware of the English landscapes where the Romantics had their revelatory experiences, even if they did not thoroughly understand those natural settings. But Coleridge’s -- and Khan’s -- construction offers strangeness of another magnitude. This impossible edifice, in its equally impossible landscape, leaves readers scrambling for solid ground beneath their feet, but they are ultimately unable to find any purchase, and so acquiesce to Coleridge’s exploration of the animalistic underside of human emotions and desires.

"Kubla Khan" piles the exotic upon the exotic. An exotic emperor in an exotic setting builds an exotic building. The majority of the poem focuses on descriptions of that setting and building, where even Coleridge's descriptors add other exotic elements. In some of the most famous lines he ever wrote, he describes Xanadu as "A savage place! as holy and enchanted / As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted / By woman wailing for her demon-lover!" (14-17).

The exoticism here begins with a recognition of the uncivilized nature of the place. Then Coleridge compounds that with an oxymoron that enjambs the spiritual and physical worlds. He concludes with an image of unchecked emotion, along with the implication of a triply-illicit sexual encounter. The woman wails in desire for her lover, not her husband. But despite the fact that her lover is not even human, he is nevertheless also an incarnation -- of something evil. And all of this is done purely in service of describing the exotic landscape.

Amid this landscape, sexualized by almost every description Coleridge uses for it, Kubla Khan experiences another form of the exotic, as he hears his ancestors telling him what his future will be. But after only two lines, Coleridge leaves the titular character again and returns to yet more exotic description, this time of the pleasure dome. Physically impossible in both placement and composition, and described through a series of paradoxes, Coleridge begins not with the object itself, but with the shadow it casts on this already-unreal world (lines 31-36).

The shadow floats in the middle of the waves of a "sunless sea" (5) or "lifeless ocean" (28). Compounding the impossibility of a shadow without sunlight are the sounds one might hear within the dome, sounds mixed from both the headwater and mouth of a

sacred river. The river begins as a fountain that throws up chunks of rock, travels over miles of land, then ends in that dark body of water after it falls through caves that are "measureless to man." The dome can only cast a shadow on the water if it is above the water, somewhere between the land of Xanadu itself and the bottom of bottomless caverns. Such a place cannot exist in reality, for it would have to be, like its shadow, floating, but in the air, hovering between the world as we might know it and the impossibility of a final destination of a never-ending descent. This is most certainly, then, a "miracle of rare device." And yet even this is not strange and alluring enough for Coleridge, as he concludes his description with the oxymoronic composition of the dome, compressing light with dark, air with water, and heat with cold, in this "sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice."

The speaker is clearly experiencing emotional duress, for he describes his "deep romantic chasm" as a "savage place" with a "mighty fountain" being "forced" the "earth in fast thick pants" (19, 18, 17). The poem also illustrates unhinged human emotion free from metaphorical concealment. As the speaker takes the reader "[t]hrough the wood and dale" of his "sacred river," he describes hearing gushes from the chasmic river as a "woman wailing for her demon lover"(26, 16). This unfettered affectivity builds to actual conflict as Kubla heard his "[a]ncestral voices prophesying war" (30). Far from the docile musings often seen in Romantic poetry, "Kubla Khan," through metaphorical and actual representation, describes very raw and almost brutish emotion, an illustration that, within the reserved society of seventeenth-century England, would be considered quite exotic.

"Kubla Khan" also exemplifies Romantic Exoticism through its display of the "imagination" or ideas of the human consciousness that are not constrained by scientific

actuality. Even if not technically considered “exotic,” many Romantic works describe some form of conjured reality, such as Wordsworth’s rapture in the wake of Nature’s alleged revelations and Keats’ rendering of Autumn. The terrain in”Kubla Khan” crosses into the exotic, for, unlike the previous works where abstraction only arises from images that actually exist, the terrain in “Kubla Khan” represents and describes abstract concepts. Although Xanadu contains such images of fountains, caves, and rivers that contemporary readers would be familiar with, the speaker matches those images to descriptions that do not reflect reality, such as the “sunny pleasure”domes with “caves of ice” and rivers with “dancing rocks” (36,23). These images are, as the speaker states, “measureless to man,” and simply do not make any sense at all. Despite its unreality, many Romantics favored this exploration of the human psyche and inspired subsequent writers, such as Lewis Carroll, to also dabble in imaginary abstraction.

The Victorian Era

God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Continuing the Romantic theme of the return to Nature in the Victorian era of rapid industrialization and shifted societal values, "God's Grandeur" by Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., encourages readers to look beyond the world of materiality in order to apprehend the wisdom and glory afforded by the world's natural landscape. Like Wordsworth in "Tintern Abbey," the speaker disparages mankind's inattentiveness to Nature and describes the abuse it has suffered at the hands of a society of rapid industrialization. The speaker, however, goes further than Wordsworth's assertions that connection with Nature elicits a sense of peace to say that unity with Nature is, in effect, a connection with God Himself.

This notion that "Capital-N" Nature is a manifestation of the Divine, or is itself some spirit or force worthy of worship is another aspect of the multi-faceted Romantic idea of Nature. While this concept is not overt in "Tintern Abbey," other Romantic writers often presented Nature as an all-encompassing spiritual entity that contains within

itself the power to create and destroy, the strength to overcome any slights humans might offer it, and the wisdom to always manifest the proper way of proceeding, both for itself and for humanity. In short, Nature, for them, possesses all the characteristics that a believer in an institutional religion would ascribe to a Divine Being.

Within this poem the speaker asserts that the beauty and majesty of Nature so permeates the natural world that it is nearly incapable of being contained. The words chosen by the speaker imply that Nature, with its "charged" grandeur, does not merely exist as something acted upon by increasingly industrialized humans. It transcends this state, and is, itself, alive, infused with splendor and even care and concern for the very humans that might turn against it. All of this "flame[s] out" like "shining from shook foil" (2). This image refers to the charged power of the earth itself, for it references the process of rolling tin into thin sheets, then shaking those sheets to produce flashes of reflected light from them. This description gives even this mundane metal a sort of celestial undercurrent, conveying the idea that even the most commonplace of Nature's objects are infused with the grandeur of the Divine Power. Hopkins ends this description with a final image that presents the overwhelming greatness of this Divine presence that infuses the natural world. It is "like the ooze of oil / [c]rushed," gathering into a pool that becomes larger and larger, and thus much harder to ignore.

Yet humans do ignore this obvious connection. The next quatrain details how the Victorians, preoccupied with "progress," have turned away from the natural world, and a natural way of life. Using expressions such as "bleared and smeared with toil" to evoke the factory smog of quickly developing cities, he implies that humans, through their pursuit of material gain, have, in a sense, removed themselves from exposure to the

ingrained glory of the natural world, rendering themselves incapable of drawing from its splendor. The "[g]enerations"that "have trod" along the earth are desensitized to this natural grandeur, as they are "smudge[d]" with "man's smell" and cannot "feel" the "soil" with their "shod" feet (8). The reference to the shod feet conveys the concept that humans have artificially placed barriers between themselves and a more "natural" state of existence. The increasing wealth and globalization of society in the Victorian era was a detriment to the human soul, as with this distraction, individuals were no longer able to avail themselves of a connection to the "dearest freshness deep down things" (10).

Although, like the Romantics, the speaker condemns humanity's disinterest in Nature, he does not believe that this behavior could besmirch its glory. He expresses the firm belief that despite humanity's numbed attitude towards this splendor, Nature's glory will continue and never be "spent" (9). The Divine presence within Nature will exist despite human inattention, because it is sustained not merely through human effort, but by a Divine Power that "broods" over the earth with its "warm breast" and "bright wings" (9, 14).

Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister

Gr-r-r--there go, my heart's abhorrence!
Water your damned flower-pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God's blood, would not mine kill you!
What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
Oh, that rose has prior claims--
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
Hell dry you up with its flames!

At the meal we sit together;
Salve tibi! I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
Sort of season, time of year:
Not a plenteous cork crop: scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt;
What's the Latin name for "parsley"?
What's the Greek name for "swine's snout"?

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps--
Marked with L. for our initial!
(He-he! There his lily snaps!)

Saint, forsooth! While Brown Dolores
Squats outside the Convent bank
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
--Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?
(That is, if he'd let it show!)

When he finishes refection,
Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
As do I, in Jesu's praise.
I the Trinity illustrate,
Drinking watered orange pulp--
In three sips the Arian frustrate;
While he drains his at one gulp!

Oh, those melons! if he's able
We're to have a feast; so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double?
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!--And I, too, at such trouble,
Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

There's a great text in Galatians,
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine district damnations,
One sure, if another fails;
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to hell, a Manichee?

Or, my scrofulous French novel
On grey paper with blunt type!
Simply glance at it, you grovel
Hand and foot in Belial's gripe;
If I double down its pages
At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

Or, there's Satan!--one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia
We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine...*
'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratia*
Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r--you swine!

Robert Browning's Victorian dramatic monologue, "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," also demonstrates the abiding influence of the Romantics. Although the poem contains significant religious themes, the poem decries any unthinking support for social institutions that were already crumbling at the time. Browning takes aim at socially imposed clericalism, or the idea that those in the religious state are somehow sanctified

by their choice of life and thus should be given an elevated status within society. Through the internal musings of a monk as he rails against “Brother Lawrence,” his sanctimonious fellow , this dramatic monologue both uncovers the often shrouded world of monastic life, and, unlike Enlightenment literature while illustrating the Romantic belief that all individuals are linked by the common struggles of humanity, even those assigned to allegedly higher stations.

The petty ruminations of this cloistered monk toward his companion highlight his hypocrisy, a flaw common to all of humankind including those belonging to the religious order who, in previous centuries, were considered as higher or elevated individuals. Instead of focusing on matters of a divine nature or taking issue with his brother for transgressing some aspect of life in the cloister, the speaker rails over the small annoyances of his unctuous companion, describing the way in he would primly “[w]ater” his “damned flower pots” and his “[w]ise talk of the kind of weather” and “season,” speaking as if he were an expert on the topic (2, 11). As the narration continues the speaker reveals an irritation with this brother whom he refers to as his “heart’s abhorrence, his commentary proves that his dislike for at his sanctimonious attitude transcends that of mere annoyance (1). He is mocking and scornful of his brother’s showy aversions to devilry, using the “great text in Galatians” to describe his companion’s phobia of the earthly pleasures, such as the speaker’s “scrofulous French novel” that he claims would “send” Brother Lawrence “grovel[ing]” / [h]and and foot in Belial’s gripe” (56, 58-59). The obvious non-sequitur in these lines makes the reader aware that the speaker is not quite as learned, or as pure, as he thinks himself. Despite being a part of the religious order and therefore, as the laymen of previous decades

believed, an exemplar of Christian values, the speaker is stricken with more faults than those he finds in his brother. His final exclamations reveal that there is not much to distinguish him from a typical sinner. In fact, he may be even more consumed with hatred than others who consider themselves Christians.

The final four stanzas offer a series of increasingly more evil plans for ways in which the speaker could thwart his brother. From the relatively tame idea of cutting the flowers off the vines in his brother's garden, to causing him to sin at his moment of death, to framing him by placing his own copy of a pornographic novel in his brother's possession, the series culminates in the ultimate evil, making a deal with the devil to have him capture his brother's soul. Far from exemplifying the higher ethical standards one would expect from a religious contemplative, this speaker unwittingly condemns himself while he thinks he is condemning his brother.

Browning's focus on these revelations bring a character we might consider somehow other, or elevated above us, down to our level. He illustrates a common humanity, and how we can all fall prey to our darker impulses. Continuing the Romantic tradition of privileging the primitives, Browning snidely offers a sense of connection that is one we might not care to admit, but one we share nevertheless. Just as the Romantics rebelled in their literary works against the social strictures imposed upon them, so too the Victorians fought against even more constrictive social mores in their texts. Both explored the unfamiliar and the exotic, reveling in the strangeness of their subjects and slyly writing against the prevailing institutional structures.

Jabberwocky

‘Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

“Beware the Jabberwock, my son
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!”

He took his vorpal sword in hand;
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

“And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!”
He chortled in his joy.

‘Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

Similar to Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan,” Lewis Carroll’s “The Jabberwocky” transports readers to an imaginary realm, one created through and colored by striking and unusual language and images. Carroll’s work is just as difficult to pin down as Coleridge’s; both present a fantastic narrative without offering any definitive locations or

descriptions, thus appealing directly to the imagination and not the reasoning of the reader.

Perhaps one of the most exotic aspects of “The Jabberwocky” is its complete absence of sensical language, compelling readers to construct the setting, the characters, and the incident of the poem with little guidance from the speaker. We can find firm footing for understanding the bare bones of the narrative: A father tells a son to take a weapon and kill a beast. The son goes forth, does so, and returns with the head of the beast. The father then congratulates him on his success. But beyond this, the entire work is filled with descriptors and images that are wide open to a number of interpretations.

The piece opens with the speaker describing the “slithy toves” that he labels as “brillig” as well as the “mimsy” “borogoves,” (1, 3, 5). The speaker does little to elucidate why this Jabberwocky should be avoided and only discloses that the creature has “jaws that bit” and “claws that catch” (6). The strange warning of the speaker also include the “[j]ubjub bird” and exhortations to “shun the frumious Bandersnatch” while again offering little reason why readers should do so (7-8). This lack of explanation, then, requires readers manufacture either images or situations independently of authorial explanation, requiring them to imagine for themselves the “uffish” way in which the Jabberwocky stands “with eyes of flame” (13, 14).

Just as “Kubla Khan” offers readers the opportunity to explore the more unsavory aspects of human and emotion in a setting far removed from day to day existence, the exotic and nonsensical language featured in the narrative may perhaps allow readers to ascribe personal experiences to work that, in the midst of its elusive narration, recounts the experience of a young, unnamed character who does succeed in slaying the

Jabberwocky. This “son,” approaches his adversary with no small amount of bravery, as the speaker recounts that he “sought” his “foe” for a [l]ong time,” finally running the Jabberwocky through with his “vorpal blade” (10, 18). This work never reveals exactly why this seemingly young person must pursue or slay the Jabberwocky. Since vague and almost rambling verse obscures the particular reason behind this narrative conflict, readers are free to perhaps match th explore their own personal struggles or adversaries within the context of the Jabberwocky while never explicitly delineating the exhaustive or perhaps unsavory aspects of those conflicts.

The Modern Era

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower

> The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
> Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
> Is my destroyer.
> And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose
> My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.
>
> The force that drives the water through the rocks
> Drives my red blood; that dries the mouthing streams
> Turns mine to wax.
> And I am dumb to mouth unto my veins
> How at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks.
>
> The hand that whirls the water in the pool
> Stirs the quicksand; that ropes the blowing wind
> Hauls my shroud sail.
> And I am dumb to tell the hanging man
> How of my clay is made the hangman's lime.
>
> The lips of time leech to the fountain head;
> Love drips and gathers, but the fallen blood
> Shall calm her sores.
> And I am dumb to tell a weather's wind
> How time has ticked a heaven round the stars.
>
> And I am dumb to tell the lover's tomb
> How at my sheet goes the same crooked worm.

In The *Cambridge Companion to Modern Poetry*, authors Davis and Jenkins maintain that literature of the Modern Era exemplifies a distinct shift from spiritual rumination of previous eras (62). Authors of this time were more concerned with finding "ways of avoiding the tendency to solipsism stimulated by these richly interiorized cadences and narcotic atmospheres," such as Wordsworth's and Hopkins's musings on the restorative and transcendent attributes of Nature (62). Although appearing removed from the emotional effusions displayed by these authors, Dylan Thomas' poem "The Force That Drove the Green Fuses Through the Flower" exemplifies the Romantic notion

that humanity is both a part of and subject to Nature. Like prior poetry that refers to Nature as having a transcendent power over humanity, this poem addresses Nature's ability to hold sway over the lives of individuals, rendering humanity subject to its power. In this particular case, images of the natural world reinforce the idea that we are all subject to the most natural of processes, the inevitable passage of time.

The concept of this dependability on the "force" of Nature's power appears in the very opening lines that describe the inextricable linkage between man and Nature. humanity is directed by the" force" of Nature itself, saying that the energy that drives"through the green fuse drives the flower," also "[d]rives" the "green age" or youth, ultimately controlling the life force that keeps man's physical beings alive (1). While the beginning of each stanza addresses this life-giving interconnectivity, they also address the "force" that both "drives the water through the rocks" of the tangible world and the "red blood" of man also giving Nature sway over the continuance or expiration of human life. The remainder of the poem addresses this duality in Nature's power, asserting that the same natural energy that "drives the water through the rocks" and "dries. . .streams" is the same energy that ultimately expires the lives of people or turning their blood to "wax" (7,8). Although taking a slightly different slant than the awestruck ruminations of Wordsworth or Hopkins, this work continues the romantic notion Man, however, is not only unified with the active forces of Nature but will also inevitably expire at its hand.

Echoing the Wordsworthian sensibility that Nature and humanity are linked, this poem also expresses that Nature is a transcendent force that holds sway over the lives of individuals. Additionally, this work advances the notion that Nature, although being an

intrinsic part of mankind, remains a powerful entity that will continue to control the lives and death of people as it exists as an entity completely separate from. While the first few lines of each stanza describes man's innate linkage to the cyclical to the "force" that "whirls the water" and " as well "-" of Nature's cyclical power, they end with a disparaging of humans not having the authority to either "tell the crooked rose" that they could be "bent by the same wintry fever" or "to tell a weather's wind" that a mere human could know "[h]ow time has ticked a heaven round the stars" (4, 19, 20). This refrain, appearing in each stanza, carries the Romantic sense of Nature's ineffable power that permeates and controls each aspect of human existence and holds within it the power to both propel the living and place individual within the "tomb," a force that acts upon its own volition regardless of man's inability to comprehend its machinations (21).

The Whitsun Weddings

That Whitsun, I was late getting away:
        Not till about
One-twenty on the sunlit Saturday
Did my three-quarters-empty train pull out,
All windows down, all cushions hot, all sense
Of being in a hurry gone. We ran
Behind the backs of houses, crossed a street
Of blinding windscreens, smelt the fish-dock; thence
The river's level drifting breadth began,
Where sky and Lincolnshire and water meet.

All afternoon, through the tall heat that slept
        For miles inland,
A slow and stopping curve southwards we kept.
Wide farms went by, short-shadowed cattle, and
Canals with floatings of industrial froth;
A hothouse flashed uniquely: hedges dipped
And rose: and now and then a smell of grass
Displaced the reek of buttoned carriage-cloth
Until the next town, new and nondescript,
Approached with acres of dismantled cars.

At first, I didn't notice what a noise
        The weddings made
Each station that we stopped at: sun destroys
The interest of what's happening in the shade,
And down the long cool platforms whoops and skirls
I took for porters larking with the mails,
And went on reading. Once we started, though,
We passed them, grinning and pomaded, girls
In parodies of fashion, heels and veils,
All posed irresolutely, watching us go,

As if out on the end of an event
        Waving goodbye
To something that survived it. Struck, I leant
More promptly out next time, more curiously,
And saw it all again in different terms:
The fathers with broad belts under their suits
And seamy foreheads; mothers loud and fat;
An uncle shouting smut; and then the perms,
The nylon gloves and jewellery-substitutes,
The lemons, mauves, and olive-ochres that

Marked off the girls unreally from the rest.
        Yes, from cafés
And banquet-halls up yards, and bunting-dressed
Coach-party annexes, the wedding-days
Were coming to an end. All down the line
Fresh couples climbed aboard: the rest stood round;
The last confetti and advice were thrown,
And, as we moved, each face seemed to define
Just what it saw departing: children frowned
At something dull; fathers had never known

Success so huge and wholly farcical;
        The women shared
The secret like a happy funeral;
While girls, gripping their handbags tighter, stared
At a religious wounding. Free at last,
And loaded with the sum of all they saw,
We hurried towards London, shuffling gouts of steam.
Now fields were building-plots, and poplars cast
Long shadows over major roads, and for
Some fifty minutes, that in time would seem

Just long enough to settle hats and say
        I nearly died,
A dozen marriages got under way.
They watched the landscape, sitting side by side
—An Odeon went past, a cooling tower,
And someone running up to bowl—and none
Thought of the others they would never meet
Or how their lives would all contain this hour.
I thought of London spread out in the sun,
Its postal districts packed like squares of wheat:

There we were aimed. And as we raced across
        Bright knots of rail
Past standing Pullmans, walls of blackened moss
Came close, and it was nearly done, this frail
Travelling coincidence; and what it held
Stood ready to be loosed with all the power
That being changed can give. We slowed again,
And as the tightened brakes took hold, there swelled
A sense of falling, like an arrow-shower
Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain.

Concerning the Romantic idea that all members of humanity possess an intrinsic value, “Whitsun Weddings” by Phillip Larkin, although written in the Modern era, offers a similar perspective on the Common Man. While on a train ride en route to London, the speaker, sitting in a “three-quarters empty train” with “all sense / [o]f being in a hurry gone,” offers a description of the natural English countryside and multiple wedding parties who are seeing their newlyweds off on their honeymoons. These platform parties draw him out of himself, and he starts to pay attention to them, and eventually eagerly anticipates seeing the next group at the next train stop. Despite the speaker’s implicit cynicism over the “wholly farcical” nature of the “happy funeral,” the poem implies a sort of cynicism to the proceedings from which he sees himself to be a separate party, the speaker perhaps finds himself longing for the happiness he observes in the newly married couples, making this piece an exemplification of the common man through its display of young and new love,a desire from which the vast majority of individuals never escape.

As the speaker observes the wedding parties “at each of the stations as he travels the “curves” going “southward from Lincolnshire,” he uses a focus on the natural world for the purpose of emphasizing the hopefulness he sees within these young couples (14,10). During the “sunlit Saturday” at “Whitsun,” he observes, with some amusement, the parties of these “happy funerals” where the uncles of the “pomaded, girls” talk “smut,” also observing the departure of these young couples to their honeymoons, having nothing else to wear to the services but their “broad belts” and “nylons.” This casual attire indicated that these are not higher people of gentry but middle class people living in widely agricultural county of Lincolnshire.

Despite communicating amusement at the “noise” witnessed at each train stop, the speaker admires the pure, raw happiness of the couples as he observes them from his seat in the train car (21). From this vantage point, he notes that and for “fifty minutes” did not hardly seem adequate time for the excited newlyweds to settle themselves, giving them just enough time to “settle their hats’’ and for the women to exclaim that they “nearly died” to their husbands as they recount their wedding mishaps (59, 62). The speaker finds a sort of solace in their nervous excitement and describes the couples in tandem with descriptions of the English countryside. Contrasting images of “long shadows’’ stretching from the “poplars” and “the walls of blackened moss” with an image of “London spread out in the sun” like “squares” of “wheat,” the speaker conveys the renewing power he see within the affection and excitement of such commonplace couples during this “traveling coincidence” (69,70, 76). These observations, having the “power” to feel “changed,” his experience of both the landscape and the couple’s youthful infatuation, he claims to feel (76,77). Although the speaker does perhaps recognize this feeling as common to all of humanity, he, like the perhaps realizing that part of him desires that same sort of companionship (76, 77).

Although this speaker is, like the rest of humanity, attracted by the couples’ unbridled joy, he remains aloof, observing the “event” “curiously from his vantage point with no movement to engage with them (34, 33). This attitude further testifies to the Romantic emphasis on the Common man in this later piece as it displays the same sort of sentiment of Romantic poets concerning their renderings of the common people. While glorifying the simplicity of agrarian existence, Romantic poets describe those seemingly simple objects with esoteric language that their subjects could not hope to understand.

Just as these poets exercised a certain removal from their subjects, the speaker of "Whitsun Weddings" also remains disengaged from the emotional contentment of the couples, perhaps thinking that romance, although nice for other people, does not apply to him and contents himself to simply live vicariously through their happiness of having a love he describes as "something like rain" (80).

Sailing to Byzantium

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees
—Those dying generations—at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

Continuing with this sense of unfulfilled desire, the poem "Sailing to Byzantium" by William Butler Yeats communicates a need to escape from the thralls of mortality. As the speaker disparages the shifting cultural values as the 'dying" younger generations "neglect / [m]monuments of unageing intellect," he yearns for a release from both his

decaying “old” body and a return to a time when humanity, nature, and God exist in complete unity of man, God, and Nature (3, 7-8). He does find this in his homeland, and decides to leave for the exotic Byzantium, a place that he believes is a time and place where man and deity are united in perfect harmony, allowing the soul and body to rise out of the deadened state brought about by such a society.

Like many Romantic authors, “Sailing to Byzantium” escapes this reality by leading readers into a completely different and unfamiliar land in which they can find a restoration for their souls that can’t be derived from a familiar setting. Concerning this country that the speaker describes as not as “not being for old men,” the speaker bemoans the soul deadening practices of his country who do not seek this a unity with the wisdom of the “sages” of “God’s holy fire,” but instead focus on the magnificent “[m]onuments” of the rapidly shifting 20th century culture. The speaker finds that these habits of the “young” cause people like he, the “aged men” of a “dying generations” to become “paltry,” or, in a sense, useless and dreams of an idealized place where he can release himself form such existence and into the “artifice of eternity”(9,3,24).

This oneness with the “natural” is something that, to the speaker, is something far removed or “across the sea” from his homeland, something he highlights by choosing the “gold mosaic” walls of Byzantium as his place of release for his soul that he claims is “fastened to the dying animal” of his body. In this “holy city,” he claims, “bodily forms” arise out of a natural and mortal state to turn the “tattered coats” of man’s mortal flesh into ‘[h]hammered gold with gold enamelling” made by the “Grecian goldsmiths” to please the “emperor” of this foreign land. Through the mention of this “golden boughs” and “lords and ladies” , the speaker, in a sense, elevates this commonplace longing for

youth and fear of death within the fanciful guise of this mysterious and somewhat amorphous rendering of the orient, allowing him and readers an escape from mundane reality.

By positioning himself in this Byzantium, so far removed from an existence with those who live within the “sensual music” of the younger generations, the speaker claims to have found a place where he can found a place of respite and release from the weakness of his mortal and aging flesh, claiming that he is now a part of the “holy fire” of this faraway city’s union of “what is past or passing or to come” (19, 32). This experience not only offers a release, but also elevates, something he communicates when the speaker references being “perne” in a “gyre,” or spiraling upward through the release offered to him only in this city of his imagining.

The Postmodern Era

Blackberry-Picking

for Philip Hobsbaum

Late August, given heavy rain and sun
For a full week, the blackberries would ripen.
At first, just one, a glossy purple clot
Among others, red, green, hard as a knot.
You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet
Like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it
Leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for
Picking. Then red ones inked up and that hunger
Sent us out with milk cans, pea tins, jam-pots
Where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots.
Round hayfields, cornfields and potato-drills
We trekked and picked until the cans were full,
Until the tinkling bottom had been covered
With green ones, and on top big dark blobs burned
Like a plate of eyes. Our hands were peppered
With thorn pricks, our palms sticky as Bluebeard's.

We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.
But when the bath was filled we found a fur,
A rat-grey fungus, glutting on our cache.
The juice was stinking too. Once off the bush
The fruit fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour.
I always felt like crying. It wasn't fair
That all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot.
Each year I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not.

In reply to the Modern Era, literature produced in the following postmodern world seems to reject an internal search for meaning. They instead focused on images of the exterior world to describe inward musings, a tendency emphasized by Seamus Heaney in his work "Blackberry Picking." Using the Romantics emphasis on the restorative effects of nature, the speaker of this work addresses a certain nostalgia for the innocence he had in his youth and revisits his childhood memories of blackberry picking to describe the decay of youthful naivete. Like the Romantics, Heaney's work depicts a unity between

humanity and its natural surroundings, paralleling the slow rot of the sweet berries with the fading, bygone state of youth.

Through his descriptions of the perfection and “sweetness” of the blackberries he remembered picking as a child, the speaker conveys the idea that, in a youthful mind, life holds within it perfection, kindness, and beauty. Remembering the times after the “heavy rain and sun” of “[l]ate August,” when the “blackberries would ripen” in “glossy purple clot[s],” the speaker describes the pleasure of such excursions for those “sweet berries” that dotted the counrtyside with their abundance. After this comparison between the purity of childish naivete to the pure pleasure derived from blackberry picking, the speaker goes on to address the “hunger,” indicating that the “lust of the little fruits were perhaps tainting the innocence of his pursuit. In his eagerness for the black “flesh” he recalls finding so enticing, the speaker “trekked” ventures further into the “briars’’ and the “wet grass, picking “until the cans were full” (5, 12). Through this explanation, the speaker perhaps indicates that his youthful enthusiasm for the blackberries was turning into lust, evoked by the “hands’’ that were “peppered” with “thorns’’ and “palms sticky as Bluebeard’s” (15, 16). The specific mention of Bluebeard perhaps indicates that the speaker’s pursuit, although at first innocent and enthusiastic, is becoming one of greed, using the description of his boyish enthusiasm for berries as a parallel to the tainting of youthful innocence in the face of life’s temptation.

Continuing his use of Nature imagery as representative of human corruptibility, Heaney recounts the fate of the “fresh berries” as a result of their “hoarding” (17). The sweet “cache” the little fruits, picked eagerly by the canful, fell prey to a “rat-gray fungus” that turned the fresh juice to a “stinking” mass as they lay within their buckets.

The speaker recalls feeling “like crying” when seeing this decay and hoping, each summer, that the following summer the berries would not succumb to “rot” (22). Through this description, the author conveys a certain inevitability of decay, and, thorough means of this memory of the masses of berries “fermented” each summer, is perhaps offering up the concept that youthful innocence will always, inevitable, fade away with the exposure to the cares of the world and the slow decay of time.

On Raglan Road

On Raglan Road on an autumn day I met her first and knew
That her dark hair would weave a snare that I might one day rue;
I saw the danger, yet I walked along the enchanted way,
And I said, let grief be a fallen leaf at the dawning of the day.

On Grafton Street in November we tripped lightly along the ledge
Of the deep ravine where can be seen the worth of passion's pledge,
The Queen of Hearts still making tarts and I not making hay -
O I loved too much and by such and such is happiness thrown away.

I gave her gifts of the mind I gave her the secret sign that's known
To the artists who have known the true gods of sound and stone
And word and tint. I did not stint for I gave her poems to say.
With her own name there and her own dark hair like clouds over fields of May

On a quiet street where old ghosts meet I see her walking now
Away from me so hurriedly my reason must allow
That I had wooed not as I should a creature made of clay -
When the angel woos the clay he'd lose his wings at the dawn of day.

Like the Romantics, Postmodern poets sought to link humanity through renderings of the common struggles experienced by everyday people, the main feature of Patrick Kavanaugh's "On Raglan Road." Relaying the tale of a young, talented writer pursuing a relationship with a woman that he admits he would regret, this work underscores the tendency to relay commonplace experiences in order to bely the finer nuances of love and the ramifications of broken connections.

During the onset of the first stanza, the speaker recounts his pursuit of a relationship with a woman that he subconsciously doubts will last, a common confession for many trapped in youthful infatuation. He admits to being fully aware "[t]hat her dark hair would leave a snare that I [the speaker] might one day rue" and that, despite the "danger" the relationship would cause to his heart, he "walked along the enchanted way" of his relationship regardless (4). He pursues this woman with ardency, admitting that, in

his youthful naivete, did not realize she would not commit to a relationship that would grow and on hindsight describes her as "[t]he Queen of Hearts still making tarts," simply playing the role of his loving paramour without committing to a progressive relationship (7).

The speaker does admit to pouring into this stagnating relationship and, on hindsight, finds himself quite embittered with the resulting heartbreak. Like so many star-crossed lovers going before him, the speaker admits to still pouring energy in his stagnating relationship, a common mistake he recounts with no small amount of cynicism. He recalls taking great pains trying to impress her, giving her "poems to say" and "gift[s] of the mind" and the "secret sign that's known" to "the artist" (9,10). Infatuated, he wants her to delight in the works of "artist" such as him who know the "true gods of sound and stone / [a]nd word and tint," and wants to share those experiences, placing "her own name there and her own dark hair" in his love compositions (9-10, 11). His efforts, however, did not bring about his desired intimacy, as he declares that she cast a shadow over his verse "like clouds over the fields of May" (12).

With a cynicism of a broken heart, the speaker illustrates through this common experience the attitude of many Romantics who view themselves as societal outsiders. He recounts meeting his love again presumably after the end of the relationship "[o]n a quiet street where old ghosts meet," and observes that she "[a[way from me [the speaker] so hurriedly" he knew she no longer wanted to engage with or speak to him (13,14). Angry at the rejection, he believes he had wasted his time and "had wooed not as [he] should a creature made of clay" essentially likening himself, as a writer of poetry, to angel who

unwisely fraternized with an earthly, lesser being that distracted him from his more important work (15). Like the many poets that have come before him, the speaker sees himself as elevated over humanity through because of his type of work, an attitude he proves when observing that "[w]hen the angel woos the clay," or the woman that he loved, "he'd lose his wings at the dawn of the day," communicating he believes he has wasted his energy and poetic ability by pursuing earthly pleasure in this relationship and not focusing on his poetry.

The Sea Is History

Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
in that gray vault. The sea. The sea
has locked them up. The sea is History.

First, there was the heaving oil,
heavy as chaos;
then, likea light at the end of a tunnel,

the lantern of a caravel,
and that was Genesis.
Then there were the packed cries,
the shit, the moaning:

Exodus.
Bone soldered by coral to bone,
mosaics
mantled by the benediction of the shark's shadow,

that was the Ark of the Covenant.
Then came from the plucked wires
of sunlight on the sea floor

the plangent harp of the Babylonian bondage,
as the white cowries clustered like manacles
on the drowned women,

and those were the ivory bracelets
of the Song of Solomon,
but the ocean kept turning blank pages

looking for History.
Then came the men with eyes heavy as anchors
who sank without tombs,

brigands who barbecued cattle,
leaving their charred ribs like palm leaves on the shore,
then the foaming, rabid maw

of the tidal wave swallowing Port Royal,
and that was Jonah,
but where is your Renaissance?

Sir, it is locked in them sea sands

out there past the reef's moiling shelf,
where the men-o'-war floated down;

strop on these goggles, I'll guide you there myself.
It's all subtle and submarine,
through colonnades of coral,

past the gothic windows of sea fans
to where the crusty grouper, onyx-eyed,
blinks, weighted by its jewels, like a bald queen;

and these groined caves with barnacles
pitted like stone
are our cathedrals,

and the furnace before the hurricanes:
Gomorrah. Bones ground by windmills
into marl and cornmeal,

and that was Lamentations -
that was just Lamentations,
it was not History;

then came, like scum on the river's drying lip,
the brown reeds of villages
mantling and congealing into towns,

and at evening, the midges' choirs,
and above them, the spires
lancing the side of God

as His son set, and that was the New Testament.

Then came the white sisters clapping
to the waves' progress,
and that was Emancipation -

jubilation, O jubilation -
vanishing swiftly
as the sea's lace dries in the sun,

but that was not History,
that was only faith,
and then each rock broke into its own nation;

then came the synod of flies,

then came the secretarial heron,
then came the bullfrog bellowing for a vote,

fireflies with bright ideas
and bats like jetting ambassadors
and the mantis, like khaki police,

and the furred caterpillars of judges
examining each case closely,
and then in the dark ears of ferns

and in the salt chuckle of rocks
with their sea pools, there was the sound
like a rumour without any echo

of History, really beginning.

A common feature of much Postmodern or contemporary work is an increased interest in postcolonialism, studying the cultural shifts. Despite this apparent difference in subject matter, these poems are not exempt from the Romantic influences, especially the emphasis on the exotic. Unlike many poets of the Romantic era, postcolonialist work with an accurate idea of what such exotic places actually are and do not have to shroud their messages in amorphous images of what they think such places could be. Instead, they can use their accurate ideas of such places to create work in an attempt to bind the experiences of humanity, something Derek Walcott's "The Sea is History" does in attempt to show others that these cultures, although not having a written language like their colonizers, do have a distinct history, one that he claims is contained in the sea itself.

In the opening lines, the speaker beings by stating a common question posed to those of colonized cultures and rebuts the insinuation of the inquiry (lines 1-4). By recounting this commonly asked question, the speaker highlights the assumption that colonized people did not have a culture because of their lack of proof, or the

“monuments” and “martyrs” like the European cultures. The speaker disagrees, stating that his cultural history lay at the bottom of the sea, in the following lines insinuating that the sea also contains the history of the subjugation of his culture (lines 5-12).

In reference to the ocean, the speaker reveals that the colonizers believe the “Genesis” or inception of his culture began only with their arrival, and observes the “Exodus” of his people being the slave trade, doing so with the image of the “caravel,” or slave ship that he claims the white men see as the inception of Caribbean history. The speaker further likens the experience of his people in the trade by referencing their “Exodus” to the island through the “packed cries” and “moaning” of his people in the slave trade.

Using these Biblical references, the speaker melds the familiarity of the Anglo-Christianity with the exotic Caribbean Ocean, also implying to his addressee the role that those of such religion has played in the subjugation of his race. In the following several stanzas, he references the many sunken slave ships whose memory the sea contains wiht the “[b]one soldered by coral to bone, and the “Ark of the Covenant” in the shark’s shadows” that show “form the plucked wires / [o]f sunlight on the sea floor” (13, 16-17). Although explaining the sort of history his people possess does not contain any sort of permeance, as the waves of the “ocean kept turning the blank pages” of “History” and washing it’s memory away (24, 25).

Continuing his description of the sea’s role in his culture, the speaker receives another commonly asked question from his addressee asking where the “Renaissance” of the speaker’s people could be found, probably in an attempt to undermine his heritage. In response, the speaker launches into another series of Biblical references in defense of his

culture against the alleged refinement of the English Renaissance, using both height and and native language to demonstrate them unlike his addressee, he is has mastered both the vernacular of both the native and colonized (lines 33-37).

Although the speaker explains his culture's history lies hidden in the changeable sea, the speaker proves that they, like the country under the "onyx-eyed" "grouper" (a masked jab at Queen Elizabeth 1), did indeed have a distinct and flourishing culture of their own, later comparing the "groined caves with barnacles" to the British aristocracy ,"weighted by its jewels" as their "cathedrals (41, 42, 45). The speaker opines that his people are possessed of just as much culture, demonstrated when he uses his colloquial speech by telling his addressee to "strop" on his goggles and describing the ocean's "moiling waves," demonstrating he, unlike the person he is addressing, has mastery over both languages.

Finally, the speaker's concluding point testifies to his people's respect for the land, describing its defilement upon the establishment of the colonies (lines 68-76). Unlike the British, the natives of the Caribbean revere both the land and the sea as the holder of their history, something the speaker explains through the "bullfrogs" vote in lieu of British law, an image informed by his mention of the "furry caterpillars" in reference to the law, evoking images of British police holding order in the Caribbean.

The speaker concludes by reinforcing his idea that the land itself is the holder of his cultures' history (lines 77-80). Unlike the common habit of Romantic poets to use Exotic settings as an outlet for their own fancy or imagination, Walcott uses settings of the "tidal wave" of "Port Royal" and the "colonnades of coral" to prove to his audience that both the people and places commonly considered "exotic," do, in fact, share a

commonality with the rest of humanity. They have their history within the blue waters and Crystal oceans that is independent of both those who have colonizers as well as the "statues" and "martyrs" of European history (31, 39). Melding the Postmodern focus on values not inundated with typical Western culture with the Romantic emphasis on the Exotic, Walcott proves that such places are more than merely objects of others' imaginings but places that actually do contain the sacred histories of separate, and he argues, sacred cultures.

In more recent literary eras, authors have scoffed at the Romantics, claiming that their diaphanous imagery, fondness for abstraction, and preoccupation with the interior experience is too constricted and irrelevant for later readers. This point, while made by many critics, is perhaps best summarized by Stan Smith, who makes the connection between the use of poetic devices and the illustration of thematic concerns. He observes that poets of recent eras have attempted to make their poetry more "concrete," in an attempt to avoid producing work that is "unfocused, emotionally scattered, and prone to large abstractions" (193). This concentration, he states, generally pulled poets away from focusing on affectivity (5).

This perception, however, fails to acknowledge the overwhelming influence of the tenets of Romanticism on writers in subsequent literary periods. In an attempt to fulfill their purpose of conveying the human experience, authors have, whether knowingly or not, had cause to address humanity's relationship with Nature, the existence, struggles, and triumphs of the Common Man, and the everlasting appeal of the Exotic. While these concerns usually took a shape that the conventions of the period dictated, they nevertheless all sprung from the same headwaters. Poets of any given era may always be preoccupied with distinguishing themselves from their predecessors, but some matters are of too great an import to be completely abandoned. The fundamental concerns and constructions of literary Romanticism have continued to thrive in the poetry of subsequent periods, and its influence will endure for many years to come.

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