The Romantic Movement in England

At the end of the 18th century a new literature arose in England. It was called Romanticism, and it opposed most of the ideas held earlier in the century. Romanticism had its roots in a changed attitude toward humankind. The forerunners of the Romanticists argued that humans are naturally good; society makes them bad. If the social world could be changed, all men might be happier. Many reforms were suggested: better treatment of people in prisons and almshouses (old homes), fewer death penalties for minor crimes, and an increase in charitable institutions.

The Romanticists believed that all people are kin and deserve the treatment to which human beings are by nature entitled. Every person has a right to life, liberty, and equal opportunity. These ideas had been well stated in the American Declaration of Independence. In France a revolution of the common people began in 1789. Many Englishmen hoped that the new democracies—France and the United States—would show the way for the rest of the world to follow. Along with democracy and individualism came other ideas. One of these ideas was that the simple, humble life is best. Another was that people should live close to nature. Thus the Romantic Movement was inherently anti-progress, if progress meant industrialization.

Because of this concern for nature and simple folk, authors began to take an interest in old legends, folk ballads, antiquities, ruins, "noble savages," and rustic characters. Many writers started to give more play to their senses and to their imaginations. Their pictures of nature became livelier and more realistic. They loved to describe rural scenes, graveyards, majestic mountains, and roaring waterfalls. They also liked to write poems and stories of such eerie or supernatural things as ghosts, haunted castles, fairies, and mad folk.

Thus Romanticism grew. The movement cannot be precisely defined. It was a group of ideas, a web of beliefs. No one Romantic writer expressed all these ideas, but each believed enough of them to set him apart from earlier writers. The Romanticists were emotional and imaginative. They acted through inspiration and intuition. They believed in democracy, humanity, and the possibility of achieving a better world.

The First Great Romanticists

William Blake was both poet and artist (see Blake, William). He not only wrote books, but he also illustrated and printed them. Many of his conservative contemporaries thought him insane because his ideas were so unusual. Chief among these “insane” ideas was his devotion to freedom and universal love. He was interested in children and animals—the most innocent of God’s creatures. As he wrote in Songs of Innocence (1789):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{When the voices of children are heard on the green,} \\
\text{And laughing is heard on the hill,} \\
\text{My heart is at rest within my breast,} \\
\text{And everything else is still.}
\end{align*}
\]

Certainly no one has put more wonder and mystery into beautiful melodic verse than did Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The strange, haunting supernaturalism of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (1798) and Christabel (1816) have universal and irresistible appeal.
A close friend of Coleridge's for many years was William Wordsworth. Together they brought out a volume of verse, Lyrical Ballads (1798), which sounded the new note in poetry. This book really signalled the beginning of English Romanticism. Coleridge found beauty in the unreal, Wordsworth found it in the realities of nature.

From nature Wordsworth learned that life may be a continuous development toward goodness. He believed that if people heed the lessons of nature they will grow in character and moral worth. (See also Wordsworth, William.)

Charles Lamb, a schoolmate of Coleridge's, for the most part had little of the serious quality that one sees in the authors of Lyrical Ballads; nor was he an ardent lover of nature. A city man, he showed how a person could live happily among his books by his own fireside. His best-known essay is the playful Dissertation on Roast Pig (1822). In Tales from Shakespeare (1807), he and his sister Mary rewrote many of Shakespeare's plays into stories for children. (See also Lamb, Charles.)

Interest in the past and in people and a love of rugged scenery are found in the works of Sir Walter Scott. The Lay of the Last Minstrel (1805) and The Lady of the Lake (1810) are representative of Scott's poems. Between 1814 and 1832 Scott wrote 32 novels. They include Guy Mannering (1815) and Ivanhoe (1819). (See also Scott, Walter.)

Jane Austen, a gifted writer of realistic novels, had difficulty finding a publisher for her skillfully drawn portraits of English middle-class people. Pride and Prejudice (1813) is her best-known work. (See also Austen, Jane.)

Among the lesser Romantic figures was Robert Southey, who was poet laureate of England and author of The Story of the Three Bears and The Battle of Blenheim. An industrious writer, he earned his living solely by his pen. William Hazlitt, on the other hand, earned his way by lecturing and by writing for critical magazines, such as The Edinburgh Review. (See also Hazlitt, William; Southey, Robert.)

The Younger Romanticists

By 1812 the older generation of Romanticists had grown conservative. They no longer supported radical causes or championed the oppressed. The younger Romantic writers, however, quickly and noisily took up the cry for liberty and justice.

George Gordon Byron was an outspoken critic of the evils of his time. He hoped for human perfection, but his recognition of man's faults led him frequently to despair and disillusionment (Manfred, 1817; Cain, 1821). Much of his work is satire, bitterly contemptuous of human foibles (Don Juan, 1819–24). His narrative poems (The Corsair, 1814; Mazeppa, 1819), about wild and impetuous persons, brought him success. He was a skilled versifier with a remarkable ear for rhythms. Byron influenced the youth of his day more than any other Romanticist. “Byronism” was a mood adopted by thousands of young men.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was the black sheep of a well-to-do, conservative family. Sonnets, songs, and poetic dramas flowed from his pen in the last four years of his life. Many of these works are profound and meditative (Prometheus Unbound, 1820). Others are exquisitely lyrical and beautiful (The Cloud, To a Skylark, Ode to the West Wind). Adonais (1821), his tribute to Keats, ranks among the greatest elegies.

John Keats was a greater poet than either Byron or Shelley (see Keats, John). He believed that true happiness was to be found in art and natural beauty (Ode on a Grecian Urn, 1819; Ode to a Nightingale, 1819). His verses are lively testimony to the truth of his words in Endymion (1818):
A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness;

Other Romanticists who deserve mention are Leigh Hunt, whose Abou Ben Adhem continues to be a favorite; Thomas Moore, whose Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms is still a favorite of vocal groups; and Thomas De Quincey, known best for his Confessions of an English Opium Eater (1822). De Quincey, however, ought to be better known for his useful distinction between the “literature of knowledge” and the “literature of power.”

The English Romantic Movement as return to Nature

Nature stands as a source of inspiration for the poets but poets have taken it differently when they have written poetry in different Eras of history. For romantics, nature constituted in poetry differently but for 18th century poets, nature’s role was different. Romanticism was a reaction against 18th century poets’ outlook. Nature was admired by Romantics as it existed even wild and they considered Nature as their teacher, their guide, their source of inspiration and their mother while Nature for 18th century poets stood for normal reality of universal law. Dr. Johnson said, “Nothing can please many, and please long but just representations of general nature”.

The Romantic age of English literature began as a deliberate movement in 1798 with the publication of Lyrical Ballads. It ended in 1832 with the death of Sir Walter Scott. It was not a sudden outburst but the result of long and gradual growth and development. The poets of the Romantic School—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats etc.—were not even the first romantics of England, for the Elizabethan literature is essentially romantic in spirit. The pre-Romantics of the late 18th century William Cowper, Thomas Gray, Oliver Goldsmith, William Blake and Robert Burns helped pave the way for this movement by turning their interest away from the classicism of the Age of Pope and towards nature, country people, and simplicity of expression.

In 1798, William Wordsworth and S. T. Coleridge published a collection of poems entitled as Lyrical Ballads and with it began the new age known as the Romantic Age. This new poetry, Known as romantic poetry, has revolutionary notes in comparison with the social and satirical poetry of the school of Alexander Pope. It is rather an inevitable reaction of the artificial and critical poetry of the eighteenth century. Romantic poets and novelists turned to the common people and simple things of field and home and daily life that common people could understand. High imagination, subjectivity, liberalism, love of
nature, Hellenism, and the use of supernatural powers characterized the literature of this period.

The basic aims of Romanticism were various: a return to nature and to belief in the goodness of humanity; the rediscovery of the artist as a supremely individual creator; the development of nationalistic pride; and the exaltation of the senses and emotions over reason and intellect. In addition, Romanticism was a philosophical revolt against rationalism. The characteristic features of English Romantic poetry are:

(1) Love and worship of Nature and dislike for the urban life.
(2) Love for the Medieval Age.
(3) Love for the supernatural and the mystical.
(4) Poetry came to be regarded as the spontaneous expression of the poet’s own subjective feelings and did not conform to the poetic conventions of classical doctrines.
(5) Completely abandoned the ‘Heroic Couplet’ and substituted it with simpler verse forms like the ballads which belonged to the English rural Folk.
(6) The ‘poetic diction’ of the Neo-Classical Age was completely overthrown and the language of the ordinary people became the language of Romantic poetry.
(7) The subjects of Romantic poetry were often ordinary people: “The Idiot Boy”.

The Romantic period of English literature was mainly a period of poetry. This poetry was largely produced by the five great names which dominated the age: William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, George Gordon Lord Byron, P. B. Shelley and John Keats. William Wordsworth began this new tradition in poetry with this simple, heart-felt poems of humble and rustic life. He chose common people for his poetry.

Love for nature is one of Wordsworth’s predominant themes. Nature took a different role in each of the Romantic poets and even the Pre-Romantics and Victorians writings, but each of these writers has that one major thing in common. They all write extensively on the role of nature in the lives of people. Like Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelly, John Keats is definitely under the impression of nature being a great force: almost divine.

The English Romantic Writers expressed a particular view of nature, man and the supernatural. They had a strong sense of the beauty in the world around them and took great pleasure in nature. Some, like Shelley and Keats, actually worshiped nature instead of god. Romantic poets are found essentially imaginative and their imaginative vigour expresses itself not merely in a colorful vision of the external world but also in a mystic communion. Mysticism is an inseparable part of romantic imagination and this is the essence of Wordsworth’s pantheism, Coleridge’s metaphysical speculation and Shelly’s myth-making power.

Zest for the beauties of exterior world characterizes all romantic poetry. Romantic poetry carries us away from the suffocating atmosphere of critics into the fresh and invigorating company of the out-of-door world. It not only sings of the sensuous beauty of nature, but also sees into the ‘heart of things’ and reveals the soul that lies behind. Their hearts overflow with sympathy for the poor and the down trodden. They glorify the innocence and simplicity of the common man. They try to see the heart of man and understand human nature. They find the divine in Man.

In end, English Romanticism is thus both a revolt and a revival; it is a revolt against 18th century traditions and conventions; it is a revival of old English meters and old English masters of poetry.
Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born on October 21st, 1772, in Devonshire, England. His father, John Coleridge, was a vicar of a parish and master of a grammar school. After his father died in 1781, Coleridge attended Christ's Hospital School in London, where he met lifelong friend Charles Lamb.

Coleridge's father had always wanted his son to be a clergyman, so when Coleridge entered Jesus College, at the University of Cambridge in 1791. Coleridge's Christian views as he became a supporter of William Frend, a Fellow (an elite academic) at the college whose Unitarian (naming God as one person, not ‘persons’) beliefs made him a controversial figure.

En route to Wales in June 1794, Coleridge met a student named Robert Southey. Influenced by Plato's Republic, they constructed a vision of pantisocracy (equal government by all), which involved immigrating to the New World (America) with ten other families to set up a commune. Coleridge and Southey envisioned the men sharing the workload, a great library, philosophical discussions, and freedom of religious and political beliefs.

After finally visiting Wales, Coleridge returned to England to find that Southey had become engaged to a woman named Edith Fricker. As marriage was an integral part of the plan for communal living in the New World, Coleridge decided to marry another Fricker daughter, Sarah. Coleridge's marriage was unhappy and he spent much of it apart from his wife.

While the pantisocracy was still in the planning stages, Southey abandoned the project to pursue his legacy in law. Left without an alternative plan, Coleridge spent the next few years beginning his career as a writer. He never returned to Cambridge to finish his degree.

Due to increasing nervousness and stress, Coleridge turned to opium, in search for a drug that could relax his nerves and reverse his depression. Laudanum, a mixture of opium and alcohol, soon became Coleridge's source of literary genius, as he experienced opium dreams of complete imagination. This addiction would lead to his financial and physical downfall.

In 1795 Coleridge befriended William Wordsworth, who greatly influenced Coleridge's verse. Coleridge, whose early work was celebratory and conventional, began writing in a more natural style. In his "conversation poems," such as Frost at Midnight and This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison, Coleridge used his intimate friends, such as Charles Lamb, and their experiences as subjects. From 1797 to 1798 he lived near Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, in Somersetshire. In 1798 the two men collaborated on a joint volume of poetry entitled Lyrical Ballads. The collection is considered the first great work of the Romantic school of poetry and contains Coleridge's famous poem, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

In 1798 the two poets travelled to the Continent together. Coleridge spent most of the trip in Germany, studying the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, Jakob Boehme, and G.E. Lessing. While there he mastered the German language and began translating. When he returned to England in 1800, he settled with family and friends at Keswick. Over the next two decades Coleridge lectured on literature and philosophy, wrote about religious and political theory, spent two years on the island of Malta in an effort to overcome his poor health and his opium addiction, and lived off of financial donations and grants.
Still addicted to opium, he moved in with the physician James Gillman in 1816. In 1817, he published Biographia Literaria, which contained his finest literary criticism. He continued to publish poetry and prose, notably Sibylline Leaves (1817), Aids to Reflection (1825), and Church and State (1830). He died in London on July 25th, 1834 aged 61.

Though he's really only known today for his poetry, Coleridge's contributions to the field of criticism and our language were many. For instance, he not only coined the word 'selfless,' he introduced the word 'aesthetic' to the English language. Coleridge summed himself up this way, in the epitaph he wrote for himself:

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Beneath this sod
A Poet lies; or that which once was he.
O lift one thought in prayer for S.T.C.
That he, who many a year with toil of breath,
Found Death in Life, may here find Life in Death.
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2. They left port, and the ship sailed down near Antarctica to get away from a bad storm, but then they got caught in a dangerous foggy ice field. An albatross shows up to meet them through the fog and promises good winds, but then the Mariner decides to shoot it.

1. Three guys are on the way to a wedding celebration. When an old sailor (the Mariner) stops one of them at the door, they call him the Wedding Guest. Using his hypnotic eyes to hold the attention of the Wedding Guest, he starts telling a story about a disastrous journey he took.

3. Shortly, the sailors lose their wind, and it gets really hot. They run out of water, and everyone blames the Mariner. The ship seems to be haunted by a bad spirit, and weird stuff starts appearing, like slimy creatures that walk on the ocean. The Mariner's crewmates decide to hang the dead albatross around his neck to remind him of his error.

4. Everyone is literally dying of thirst. The Mariner sees another ship sail at a distance. He wants to yell out, but his mouth is too dry, so he sucks some of his own blood to moisten his lips. He's like, "A ship! We're saved." Sadly, the ship is a ghost ship piloted by two spirits, Death and Life in Death, who have to be the last people you'd want to meet on a journey. Everyone on the Mariner's ship dies.

5. He continues his story: he's on a boat with a lot of dead bodies, surrounded by an ocean full of slimy things. Worse, these slimy things are nasty water snakes. But the Mariner escapes his curse by unconsciously blessing the hideous snakes, and the albatross drops off his neck into the ocean.

6. The Mariner falls into a sweet sleep, and it finally rains when he wakes up. A storm strikes up in the distance, and all the dead sailors rise like zombies to pilot the ship. The sailors don't actually come back to life. Instead, the Mariner's ship sinks. The Mariner's boat picks up the Mariner. When they get on shore, the Mariner is desperate to tell his story to the hermit. He feels a terrible pain until the story has been told.

7. After a speedy journey, the ship ends up back in port again. The Mariner sees a hermit standing next to the bodies of all his crewmates. Then a rescue boat shows up to take him back to shore. The Mariner is happy that a guy called "the hermit" is on the rescue boat. The hermit is in a good mood. All of a sudden there's a loud noise, and the Mariner's ship sinks. The hermit's boat picks up the Mariner. When they get on shore, the Mariner is desperate to tell his story to the hermit. He feels a terrible pain until the story has been told.

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" - Colridge
"The Rime of Ancient Mariner” : Characters List

Ancient Mariner: The poem's protagonist. He is unnaturally old, with skinny, deeply-tanned limbs and a "glittering eye." He sets sail from his native country with two hundred other men who are all saved from a strange, icy patch of ocean when they are kind to an Albatross that lives there. Impulsively and inexplicably, he shoots the Albatross with his crossbow and is punished for his crime by a spirit who loved the Albatross. He is cursed to be haunted indefinitely by his dead shipmates, and to be compelled to tell the tale of his downfall at random times. Each time he is compelled to share his story with someone, he feels a physical agony that is abated only temporarily once he finishes telling the tale.

Wedding Guest: One of three people on their way to a wedding reception; he is next of kin to the bridegroom. The Ancient Mariner stops him, and despite his protests compels him to sit and listen to the entirety of his story. He is afraid of the Ancient Mariner and yearns to join the merriment of the wedding celebration, but after he hears the Ancient Mariner's story, he becomes both "sadder and...wiser."

The Sailors: Two hundred seamen who set sail with the Ancient Mariner one clear, sunny day and find themselves in the icy world of the "rime" after a storm, from which the Albatross frees them. They feed and play with the Albatross until the Ancient Mariner inexplicably kills it. They begin to suffer from debilitating heat and thirst. They hang the Albatross's corpse around the Ancient Mariner's neck to punish him. When Life-in-Death wins the Ancient Mariner's soul, the sailors' souls are left to Death and they curse the Ancient Mariner with their eyes before dying suddenly. Even though their souls fly out, their bodies refuse to rot and lie open-eyed on the deck, continuously cursing the Ancient Mariner. After the rain returns, the sailors come alive and silently man the ship, singing beautiful melodies. When the ship reaches the harbor, they once again curse the Ancient Mariner with their eyes and then disappear, leaving only their corpses behind. The Ancient Mariner is destined to suffer the curse of a living death and continually be haunted by their cursing eyes.

Albatross: A great, White Sea bird that presumably saves the sailors from the icy world of the "rime" by allowing them to steer through the ice and sending them a good, strong wind. The Albatross, however, also makes a strange mist follow the ship. It flies alongside the ship, plays with the sailors, and eats their food, until the Ancient Mariner shoots it with his crossbow. Its corpse is hung around the Ancient Mariner's neck as a reminder of his crime and falls off only when he is able to appreciate the beauty of nature and pray once more. The Albatross is loved by a powerful spirit who wreaks havoc on and kills the sailors while leaving the Ancient Mariner to the special agony of Life-in-Death.

Death: Embodied in a hulking form on the ghost ship. He loses at dice to Life-in-Death, who gets to claim the Ancient Mariner's soul; instead, Death wins the two hundred sailors.

The Night-mare Life-in-Death: Embodied in a beautiful, naked, ghostly woman with golden hair and red lips. She wins at dice over Death and gets to claim the Ancient Mariner's soul, condemning him to a limbo-like living death.

Pilot: The captain of the small boat that rows out to the Ancient Mariner's ship. He loses his mind when the Ancient Mariner abruptly comes to life and begins to row his boat.
**Pilot's Boy:** The assistant to the Pilot; he rows the small boat. He loses his mind when the Ancient Mariner, whom he thinks is dead, abruptly comes to life and takes the oars from him.

**Hermit:** A recluse (solitary) who prays three times a day and lives in communion with nature in the woods. He accompanies the Pilot and the Pilot's boy on the small boat because "he loves to talk with mariners / from a far countree." The Ancient Mariner reveres the Hermit as a righteous and holy man, and asks him to absolve him of his sin. The Hermit is the first person to whom the Ancient Mariner is compelled to tell his tale.

**First Voice:** One of two voices presumably belonging to a spirit. The Ancient Mariner hears the First Voice after he is knocked unconscious when the ship jolts forward. He explains that the Ancient Mariner offended a spirit by killing the Albatross, because the spirit loved the bird. Other than this moment, the First Voice relies on the Second Voice to explain the Ancient Mariner's situation to him.

**Second Voice:** The second of two voices presumably belonging to a spirit. The Second Voice is softer than the First Voice—"as soft as honey-dew"—and more knowledgeable. He explains to the First Voice that the Ancient Mariner will pay for his crime much more dearly than he already has. Even though the First Voice tells the Second Voice that the Ancient Mariner angered a spirit who loved the Albatross, the latter explains that the Moon and air move the ship in lieu of wind, and not the spirit who loved the Albatross. Then he urges the First Voice onward, as they are hurrying somewhere.

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**“The Rime of Ancient Mariner”**

**Summary**

Three young men are walking together to a wedding, when one of them is detained by a grizzled old sailor. The young Wedding-Guest angrily demands that the Mariner let go of him, and the Mariner obeys. But the young man is transfixed by the ancient Mariner's "glittering eye" and can do nothing but sit on a stone and listen to his strange tale. The Mariner says that he sailed on a ship out of his native harbor—"below the kirk, below the hill, / Below the lighthouse top"—and into a sunny and cheerful sea. Hearing bassoon music drifting from the direction of the wedding, the Wedding-Guest imagines that the bride has entered the hall, but he is still helpless to tear himself from the Mariner's story. The Mariner recalls that the voyage quickly darkened, as a giant storm rose up in the sea and chased the ship southward. Quickly, the ship came to a frigid land "of mist and snow," where "ice, mast-high, came floating by"; the ship was hemmed inside this maze of ice. But then the sailors encountered an Albatross, a great sea bird. As it flew around the ship, the ice cracked and split, and a wind from the south propelled the ship out of the frigid regions, into a foggy stretch of water. The Albatross followed behind it, a symbol of good luck to the sailors. A pained look crosses the Mariner's face, and the Wedding-Guest asks him, "Why look'st thou so?" The Mariner confesses that he shot and killed the Albatross with his crossbow.

At first, the other sailors were furious with the Mariner for having killed the bird that made the breezes blow. But when the fog lifted soon afterward, the sailors decided that the bird had actually brought not the breezes but the fog; they now congratulated the Mariner on his deed. The wind pushed the ship into a silent sea where the sailors were quickly stranded; the winds died down, and the ship was

“As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.”
The ocean thickened, and the men had no water to drink; as if the sea were rotting, slimy creatures crawled out of it and walked across the surface. At night, the water burned green, blue, and white with death fire. Some of the sailors dreamed that a spirit, nine fathoms deep, followed them beneath the ship from the land of mist and snow. The sailors blamed the Mariner for their plight and hung the corpse of the Albatross around his neck like a cross.

A weary time passed; the sailors became so parched, their mouths so dry, that they were unable to speak. But one day, gazing westward, the Mariner saw a tiny speck on the horizon. It resolved into a ship, moving toward them. Too dry-mouthed to speak out and inform the other sailors, the Mariner bit down on his arm; sucking the blood, he was able to moisten his tongue enough to cry out, "A sail! a sail!" The sailors smiled, believing they were saved. But as the ship neared, they saw that it was a ghostly, skeletal hull of a ship and that its crew included two figures: Death and the Night-mare Life-in-Death, who takes the form of a pale woman with golden locks and red lips, and "thicks man's blood with cold." Death and Life-in-Death began to throw dice, and the woman won, whereupon she whistled three times, causing the sun to sink to the horizon, the stars to instantly emerge. As the moon rose, chased by a single star, the sailors dropped dead one by one—all except the Mariner, whom each sailor cursed "with his eye" before dying. The souls of the dead men leapt from their bodies and rushed by the Mariner.

The Wedding-Guest declares that he fears the Mariner, with his glittering eye and his skinny hand. The Mariner reassures the Wedding-Guest that there is no need for dread; he was not among the men who died, and he is a living man, not a ghost. Alone on the ship, surrounded by two hundred corpses, the Mariner was surrounded by the slimy sea and the slimy creatures that crawled across its surface. He tried to pray but was deterred by a "wicked whisper" that made his heart "as dry as dust." He closed his eyes, unable to bear the sight of the dead men, each of who glared at him with the malice of their final curse. For seven days and seven nights the Mariner endured the sight, and yet he was unable to die. At last the moon rose, casting the great shadow of the ship across the waters; where the ship's shadow touched the waters, they burned red. The great water snakes moved through the silvery moonlight, glittering; blue, green, and black, the snakes coiled and swam and became beautiful in the Mariner's eyes. He blessed the beautiful creatures in his heart; at that moment, he found himself able to pray, and the corpse of the Albatross fell from his neck, sinking "like lead into the sea."

**Summary** : **Parts V-VII**

The Mariner continues telling his story to the Wedding-Guest. Free of the curse of the Albatross, the Mariner was able to sleep, and as he did so, the rains came, drenching him. The moon broke through the clouds, and a host of spirits entered the dead men's bodies, which began to move about and perform their old sailors' tasks. The ship was propelled forward as the Mariner joined in the work. The Wedding-Guest declares again that he is afraid of the Mariner, but the Mariner tells him that the men's bodies were inhabited by blessed spirits, not cursed souls. At dawn, the bodies clustered around the mast, and sweet sounds rose up from their mouths—the sounds of the spirits leaving their bodies. The spirits flew around the ship, singing. The ship continued to surge forward until noon, driven by the spirit from the land of mist and snow, nine fathoms deep in the sea. At noon, however, the ship stopped, then began to move backward and forward as if it were trapped in a tug of war. Finally, it broke free, and the Mariner fell to the deck with the jolt of sudden acceleration. He heard two disembodied voices in the air; one asked if he was the man who had killed the Albatross, and the other declared...
softly that he had done penance for his crime and would do more penance before all was rectified.

In dialogue, the two voices discussed the situation. The moon overpowered the sea, they said, and enabled the ship to move; an angelic power moved the ship northward at an astonishingly rapid pace. When the Mariner awoke from his trance, he saw the dead men standing together, looking at him. But a breeze rose up and propelled the ship back to its native country, back to the Mariner’s home; he recognized the kirk, the hill, and the lighthouse. As they neared the bay, seraphs—figures made of pure light—stepped out of the corpses of the sailors, which fell to the deck. Each seraph waved at the Mariner, who was powerfully moved. Soon, he heard the sound of oars; the Pilot, the Pilot’s son, and the holy Hermit were rowing out toward him. The Mariner hoped that the Hermit could shrive (absolve) him of his sin, washing the blood of the Albatross off his soul.

The Hermit, a holy man who lived in the woods and loved to talk to mariners from strange lands, had encouraged the Pilot and his son not to be afraid and to row out to the ship. But as they reached the Mariner’s ship, it sank in a sudden whirlpool, leaving the Mariner afloat and the Pilot’s rowboat spinning in the wake. The Mariner was loaded aboard the Pilot’s ship, and the Pilot’s boy, mad with terror, laughed hysterically and declared that the devil knows how to row. On land, the Mariner begged the Hermit to shrive him, and the Hermit bade the Mariner tell his tale. Once it was told, the Mariner was free from the agony of his guilt. However, the guilt returned over time and persisted until the Mariner traveled to a new place and told his tale again. The moment he comes upon the man to whom he is destined to tell his tale, he knows it, and he has no choice but to relate the story then and there to his appointed audience; the Wedding-Guest is one such person.

The church doors burst open, and the wedding party streams outside. The Mariner declares to the Wedding-Guest that he who loves all God’s creatures leads a happier, better life; he then takes his leave. The Wedding-Guest walks away from the party, stunned, and awakes the next morning “a sadder and a wiser man.”

**“The Rime of Ancient Mariner” : Critical Analysis**

The Ancient Mariner illustrates the working of the inexorable law of one life. Any infringement of the law inevitably invites punishment. The Mariner shoots the innocent and friendly albatross, thus suffering misery in the form of loneliness and spiritual anguish. He becomes aware of the enormity of his sin and undergoes severe penance. This extreme penance burns out his ego, the sense of separateness, and finally he realizes oneness of all life. He discovers the joy of human companion in God and declares the moral, “He prayeth best, who loveth best.”

The journey of The Ancient Mariner is symbolic. He undergoes an experience which belongs to a world beyond the phenomenal world. In this supernatural world, the ordinary law of cause and effect does not operate. In The Ancient Mariner, Coleridge constructs a series of cause-effect situations which on the face of it, are logical and irrational. The introduction of the storm blast, the polar spirit, Nightmare, Life-in-Death and the troop of spirits is not subject to the law of cause and effect.

Through the ministry of awe, the Mariner is led to realise the existence of a spiritual order of universal love, the sacramental vision, the vision of oneness of life. We are not separate and independent entities. We are part of one web of Life. When this truth dawns upon him, his whole gestalt undergoes a radical change. He views his thoughts and acts as a spectator, a bystander watching at the roadside. His ego was annihilated...
and was reborn into self which pervades the whole universe. Evil and good deeds have both disappeared as if he had performed them in a dream.

The Ancient Mariner is a harmonious whole. The natural, the supernatural and the human are artistically fused. The poem emerges as a finished work of art. We are led to see into the mystery of life that is made up of both the natural and the supernatural. Finally we come to believe with the poet the sovereign law of life and have enshrined in the lines:

*He prayeth best, who loveth best,*
*All things both great and small;*
*For the dear God who loveth us,*
*He made and loveth all.*

In Part I of the poem, the Mariner intrudes with the festivities of a wedding going on the background, and detains one of the three wedding guests to listen to his tale. The sudden appearance of the Mariner with his 'long grey beard', 'glittering eye' and 'skinny hand' strikes a sombre and discordant note to the gay atmosphere of the wedding. The wedding guest is impatient to get away, but the Mariner hypnotizes him with his appearances and speech in such a way that he is rooted to the ground and is forced to hear out the Mariner like a three-year-old child. The gay atmosphere of the wedding is portrayed by the use of expressions like 'merry din', 'loud bosom', 'bride pacing the hall red as a rose', 'the merry minstrelsy'. The Mariner begins to narrate his journey which also commences on a happy note: 'the ship was cheered', 'merrily did we drop.'

The wedding guest is the symbol of social life as yet uninitiated to the spiritual life, whereas the Mariner stands for spiritual life having realized the aloneness of his self. The narration of his sombre story by the Mariner is interspersed with the description of rejoicing going on in the wedding house. The sombre and the cheerful are woven fine so as to present the whole picture of life.

After line 40 of the narration, the atmosphere suddenly becomes sombre with the advent of the storm blast. The ship has entered the world of Nature beyond the control of man. The ship is now at the mercy of the elements of Nature. The bright cheerful atmosphere becomes dismal, horrible and dangerous. There is ice all around which is here the symbol of death. The unfavourable wind is blowing and driving the ship to the polar region. The mariners are in a hopeless and helpless situation. They see no succour to their misery.

The sudden appearance of an albatross on the ship brought relief to their frayed nerves. The bird provided the much-needed company to relieve them of the tedium of loneliness, and to give them solace. The appearance of the bird augurs well for the Mariners as the ice splits and a favourable South wind starts blowing. The storm has blown over and the ship once again sails smoothly. At this point it is revealed in dramatic manner that the Mariner, driven by some unconscious impulse, has killed the innocent, auspicious and friendly bird.

The Part II of the poem begins with the change of wind. The ship sailing northwards comes out of Antarctic and enters the Pacific Ocean and is heading towards the Equator. The sin of killing the friendly bird haunts the Mariner and his companions. They blame the Mariner for this gruesome murder of the good bird that had caused the unfavourable wind to blow. After sometime, when the sun shines brightly and clears off the fog and mist, they change their opinion and justify the killing of the albatross. In this way they make themselves accomplices in the crime. But their euphoria is short-lived. The ship soon enters the silent and still sea. It becomes close and the ship stands still. Dark
sadness supervenes. The sun looks like the moon turning the day into virtual night. There is no sign of life anywhere. Death stalks the whole atmosphere. The ship and the ocean appear as ‘painted’, bereft of all life. There is extreme heat. The irony of their situation is that there is water all around but they cannot take even a drop to quench their thirst. They are stupefied by acute thirst and paralyzed by terror. Their tongues are ‘withered’ at the roots and their throats ‘choked’. The words ‘withered’ and ‘choked’ show the intensity of their thirst.

Corruption is rampant everywhere. Things are rotting in the stagnant sea. Abominable slimy creatures are crawling upon the sea presenting a horrible sight. The Albatross at this stage begins to be avenged. A tormenting spirit dogs them to avenge the killing of the bird. The shipmates cast an accusing look at him and hold him responsible for their miserable condition. They hang the dead albatross around his neck in place of the cross thus making him a damned sinner.

The nominal groups, animate and inanimate, abound in this part of the poem. The animate nominal groups refer to the Mariner and his companions. The inanimate nominal groups like ‘sea’, ‘mist’, ‘wind’, ‘breeze’, ‘fog’, ‘copper sky’, ‘noon’, ‘moon’, ‘night’, relate to the objects of Nature. ‘Death fires’, ‘a witch’s oil’, ‘dream’, ‘the spirit’, ‘the nine fathom deep’ are objects showing the supernatural in a manner that everything is received with credibility. The expressions like ‘silent sea’, ‘copper sky’, ‘bloody sun’, ‘slimy things’, ‘slimy sea’, strike terror in the mind of the reader. The repetition of the nominal water shows the desperate situation of the mariners. The nominal ‘sun’ is repeated three times. Coleridge uses the rising and setting of the sun not only to indicate the time and the direction of the ship but to show the change of direction in the Mariner’s mind also.

In a dazed state afflicted with extreme thirst and heat, time hangs heavy on the shipmates. Suddenly the Mariner spies something moving towards them. A ship of a sort is approaching them. Thirst and heat has rendered them speechless. The Mariner bits his arm and sucks blood to quench his thirst and is thus able to speak. He regains his power of speech and informs his companion about the approaching ship. At first they are glad to see the ship coming, but soon they are disillusioned and consequently feel horrified on seeing the mysterious movements of the ship without wind or tide. The ribs of the ship appear as bars against the rays of the setting sun. The horrible inmates of the ship were Nightmare, Life-in-Death and Death. The Life-in-Death struck terror in their mind with her ‘red lips’, golden yellow looks and ‘white skin’. Life-in-Death and Death diced for the ship’s crew and the former wins the Mariner. In the meantime the sun sets and it becomes dark.

In Part III of the poem, the human nominal groups again provide cohesion as they relate to the Mariner and his companions, round whom the poem revolves. Though this part is full of supernatural beings and incidents, yet the setting remains natural. ‘A speck’, ‘a mist’, ‘a shape’, ‘Life-in-Death’, ‘a spectre bark’ are the objects showing the supernatural. The air of reality is imparted by the natural setting. The supernatural appears in human form with his strength and weakness. The expressions like ‘horned Moon’ and ‘the star dogged Moon’ deepen the supernatural atmosphere. Nature acts in such a way as to advance the action of the story. ‘The spectre bark’ appears on the scene to seal the fate of the mariners. The nominal ‘weary’ occurs five times and the impending collapse and death. The broad and burning face of the setting sun forebodes terrible happenings. The nominal ‘Moon’ is repeated twice. The appearance of the ‘Star-dogged Moon’ is the precursor of mass death of the mariners. The moon, as it were, exercises both good and evil effect. It is the star between its horns that represents the demonic vengeance upon the mariners. As the Life-in-Death begins her work, the two hundred ship-mates drop down dead one by one. Their souls pass by the Mariner making ‘whizz’ sound similar to
that made by his crossbow when he killed the Albatross. So the ‘whizz’ sound reminded him of his heinous crime.

The use of most of the verbs like ‘parched’, ‘glazed’, ‘unslaked’, ‘baked’ bring out the extreme thirst and the utter desolation under which the mariners are smarting. Extreme thirst and fright has benumbed them. The sight of the skeleton ship makes the heart of the Mariner ‘beat fast’ and ‘thicked’ his blood with fear. Pitch darkness increases their fear. Darkness seems to ‘sip’ the Mariner’s blood. The ship-mates are so overwhelmed with horror that they can neither ‘groan’ nor ‘sigh’ and in their utter despair abandoned themselves to their fate.

In Part IV of the poem, the Mariner goes through the anguish of remorse and repentance. His whole being is transformed. He, who had earlier expressed revulsion at the sight of the slimy water snakes, is now filled with love for them. His whole gestalt, the total perspective to life, has undergone a radical change. Earlier encased in his little ego, he viewed the snakes as something separate from himself. He even regretted that human beings were lying dead and rotting while the ugly snakes were alive. Now blessed by the divine grace he has come to realize that outward beauty is skin deep and underneath every form surges the same spirit in all creatures. There is nothing high or low, ugly and beautiful. All the contraries disappear at the spiritual attitude. On the realization of this truth, he is redeemed of his sin. The dead albatross fell off his neck and sank into the sea to symbolically mark his redemption.

At the stage of the narration of the story, the wedding guest is overwhelmed with fear when he hears that all the mariners had dropped down dead. The Mariner’s ‘skinny hand’ and ‘glittering eye’ fan his fears that the Mariner is none other than a ghost talking to him.

The nominal group ‘alone’ occurs four times in two lines. It expresses the Mariner’s utter loneliness and his frustrated craving for human companionship. The heinous crime of killing the albatross weighs heavily on his soul and torments him. The utter isolation is symbolized by the ribbed sea bed. The Mariner stands forlorn amidst the rotting corpses of his ship-mates on the deck surrounded by the rotting sea infested with abominable water snakes. The extreme physical and spiritual loneliness bring our genuine remorse and repentance in the Mariner. Being forsaken by man and God, and he finds himself in the boundary situation whereby he dies to his old egoistic self and is reborn.

The nominal ‘weary eye’ shows the Mariner in a desperate situation. The Mariner is utterly fed up with his hellish life and expresses his wish to die. The nominals ‘slimy thing’, ‘rotting sea’, ‘rotting deck’ relate to all pervading corruption and evil.

The ‘white’ moonlight is a contrast to the ominous red shadow of the ship. The yearning for a movement of the moon replaces the sense of revulsion for the rotting stagnation felt by the Mariner. The movement of the moon symbolizes life that can put an end to the rot which has set in the static universe. The work of retribution takes place under the light of the sun while redemption occurs under the light of the moon.

The ‘spring’ is an image of divine grace and benediction. It is noteworthy that the internal and the external images blend in the poem. The spring of love that gushed from the Mariner’s heart is followed by the longed for shower of rain.

The use of verbs like ‘lie’, ‘die’, and ‘closed’ creates a death-like atmosphere. The repetition of the word ‘fear’ engenders fear in the heart of the readers also.

The ‘albatross’ and ‘the water snakes’ stand for one life. The Mariner’s realization of the truth of one life ushers in his redemption.
In part V of the poem, with the redemption of his sin, the Mariner feels relieved and a great weight of guilt is off his mind. He feels light and falls into pleasant sleep. Earlier he could not sleep for seven nights because of the curse that afflicted him and the nagging conscience that tormented him day and night. When he awakes from his sweet sleep, he finds that it is raining. There is drought no more. Rain is the symbol of divine grace with which the Mariner is now blessed. Now he finds himself at one with all nature. The dead bodies are manned by the spirits and they rise up to do their assigned jobs on the ship. The ship moves on. The mariner’s nephew is at his work beside him, but there is no communication between them. Though physically quite near, they are far apart spiritually. It is intolerable and painful to the Mariner. At this stage of the narration of the story, the wedding guest interrupts the Mariner and gives vent to his fears. But the Mariner at once silences him and allays his fear saying the dead had not come to life. Only their bodies moved because they were possessed by the spirits.

The Mariner comes out of his shell of egoism and enjoys the company of birds and the heavenly bodies. The spirit from the South Pole carries the ship as far as the Equator. At this stage, the Polar Spirit leaves the ship. The ship moves on silently. The penance of the Mariner falls down on the deck and passes into a trance. When he comes out of the trance, he is a completely changed man.

On coming out of his trance, the Mariner hears the Polar Spirit’s fellow demons engaged in conversation. One demon tells the other that the Mariner is the very guilty person who has committed the heinous crime of killing the friendly and innocent guest bird. The other demon remarks that the man has already undergone penance enough and shall do more penance.

This part is changed with supernatural atmosphere. The ‘sleep’ which the Mariner has experienced, is in fact, the vision he has had of the ideal universe which is interrelated and interdependent.

The ‘dream’ state which is invoked here is, in fact, the visionary state into which the Mariner falls and experiences supernatural things. He has the vision in which he hears the two voices of the Polar Spirit’s fellow demons.

The nominal ‘rain’ stands for divine grace and heralds the removal of the curse and the drought with which the place is afflicted. It rescues the Mariner from the jaws of death. The vision of ‘a hundred fire flags’ awakens in him the awareness of the ideal universe. The Sun is shown as the source of both light and sound which are the manifestations of the single identity.

The dead bodies of the mariners working on the ship present a ghastly and horrible scene. It strikes terror in the heart of the wedding guest as well as readers.

The use of verbs like ‘shook’, ‘burst’, ‘hurried’, ‘danced’, ‘roared’ mark the advent of movement of life in a death-like situation. When the curse is removed, the Mariner’s loneliness is broken. The ship begins to move. Even the dead mariners seem to rise to life. The helmsman ‘steered’ as the mariners ‘worked at the ropes. They ‘raised’ their limbs. The Ancient Mariner himself pulled at a rope.

The rescue of the Mariner from damnation and death by the divine grace is celebrated by Nature and Super nature. The birds sing sweet songs to mark the occasion.

In part VI, the conversation between the two demon spirits continues. When questioned by the first spirit, the second replies that the course of the ship is being directed by the benign Moon. The ship is moving at a supernatural speed so as to reach its destination before the Mariner comes out of his trance because the physical frame of the Mariner will
not be able to stand the strain and stress of the fantastic speed of the ship. Coleridge makes use of the scientific principle of Venturi effect when he makes the Second Demon explain to the First Demon that the extraordinary speed is achieved by decreasing the air pressure in front of the ship and increasing it from behind. When the Mariner comes out of his trance at night, the ship resumes its normal speed. The atmosphere is calm and the mind of the Mariner is at ease.

The dead man still stands on the deck staring at him with cursing look. The Mariner dares not look back to the past unpleasant events. He looks to the hopeful future. The welcome gentle breeze blows over him and showers benediction on him. He is overwhelmed with joy when he spies the familiar landmarks like the lighthouse, the hill, the church appearing in reverse order. He recognizes that he is in his own native country. Purged of all dross of guilt, he can now pray.

As the angelic spirit leaves the dead bodies, the bodies drop down once again, lifeless and flat. Before leaving the deck, the spirits signal to the shore for rescue. The Mariner sees a boat carrying the Pilot, the Pilot’s boy and the Hermit, coming toward the ship. He is glad to think that the Hermit will redeem his soul of sin.

The nominals, ‘the ocean’, ‘the moon’, ‘wave’, ‘wind’, and ‘breeze’ describe Nature in its tranquil moments. Peace pervades the whole Nature, so does it in the mind of the Mariner. The pleasant and soothing whiteness of the Moon has replaced the burning red Sun. The benign Moon acts as the guiding and presiding power. The redemption of the Mariner starts under the silent, moving Moon. The Hermit acts as priest of both Nature and God and unites the Mariner with Man and God.

The phrase ‘tell me’ is repeated twice to show the impatience and curiosity on the part of the First Spirit to know what makes the ship move at that supernatural speed. Silence and calm has replaced the noise and agitation. The divine grace works through the seraph band that man the dead bodies to make them work on the deck and finally signal to shore to secure help for the Mariner. The verbs ‘shrieve’ and ‘wash away’ are used to stand for the removal of the stain of sin from the soul of the Mariner.

The part VII, the concluding part of the poem, finds the Mariner in his own native country. The boat, carrying the Pilot, the Pilot’s boy and the Hermit, approaches the ship. They are amazed to find the ship dilapidated, desolate and diabolical. The Pilot hesitates to take the boat further to the ship, but the Hermit urges him to ‘push on.’ The Mariner is so stupefied that he can neither speak nor stir. As soon as the boat comes close beneath the ship, the ship goes down ‘like lead’ and sinks. The sky and ocean resound with the loud and dreadful sound the ship makes while sinking. The Mariner is ‘stunned’ and ‘floated’ on the ocean like a drowned man. The crew of the boat takes him to be dead and retrieves his body. When the Mariner opens his mouth to speak, the Pilot is so terrified that he falls down senseless. The Hermit too is afraid and prays to ward off his fear. When the Mariner begins to row, the Pilot’s boy goes mad with fear.

When they land on the shore, the Mariner entreats the Hermit to redeem him of the sin, but the stain of sin cannot be washed away so easily. He finds himself condemned permanently, tied to the wheel of penance. From time to time, throughout his future life, he is doomed to travel from place to place and unburden the agony of his soul by narrating his ghastly tale to a suitable listener.

When the vesper bell rings he informs the wedding guest that he must go to Church to pray. He teaches the wedding guest that the best prayer is love and reverence for all creatures, as the same spirit pervades all phenomenal manifestations. The Mariner’s words have profound effect on the wedding guest and lead him to realize the truth of
oneness of life. The wedding guest is now a totally changed man. He renounces the pleasure of wedding rejoicings and turns to pray.

Most of the nominals like 'wood', 'sea', 'moss', 'old oak stump', 'leaves', 'brook', 'snow', 'hill' relate to Nature and objects of Nature. 'Church' stands for religious life while 'wedding' for worldly pleasures. The Mariner chooses religious life and spurns the worldly life of social relation. Social relations are a hindrance to spiritual growth and progress. So the wedding guest also turns away from the 'bridegroom's door' and is left 'sadder and wiser'. The word 'sadder' here means more steadfast, grave and serious rather than simply cheerless.

The poet emphasizes the point that human love is meaningful only when it is understood in the context of universal love.

Most of the verbal and nominal groups relate to the central action of the poem. They also form the subject matter of the poem. The spirit, with which the whole poem is charged with, is summed up in the following lines:

*He prayeth best, who loveth best*
*All things both great and small*

The telling words of the Mariner bring about unobtrusive change in the being of not only the wedding guest but of the reader too, who is led to realize intimate kinship of man with all things.

**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner : Major Themes**

**The Natural World: The Physical:** While it can be beautiful and frightening (often simultaneously), the natural world's power in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is unquestionable. In a move typical of Romantic poets both preceding and following Coleridge, and especially typical of his colleague, William Wordsworth, Coleridge emphasizes the way in which the natural world dwarfs and asserts its awesome power over man. Especially in the 1817 text, in which Coleridge includes marginal glosses, it is clear that the spiritual world controls and utilizes the natural world. At times the natural world seems to be a character itself, based on the way it interacts with the Ancient Mariner. From the moment the Ancient Mariner offends the spirit of the "rime," retribution comes in the form of natural phenomena. The wind dies, the sun intensifies, and it will not rain. The ocean becomes revolting, "rotting" and thrashing with "slimy" creatures and sizzling with strange fires. Only when the Ancient Mariner expresses love for the natural world-the water-snakes-does his punishment abate even slightly. It rains, but the storm is unusually awesome, with a thick stream of fire pouring from one huge cloud. A spirit, whether God or a pagan one, dominates the physical world in order to punish and inspire reverence in the Ancient Mariner. At the poem's end, the Ancient Mariner preaches respect for the natural world as a way to remain in good standing with the spiritual world, because in order to respect God, one must respect all of his creations. This is why he valorizes the Hermit, who sets the example of both prayer and living in harmony with nature. In his final advice to the Wedding Guest, the Ancient Mariner affirms that one can access the sublime, "the image of a greater and better world," only by seeing the value of the mundane, "the petty things of daily life."

**The Spiritual World: The Metaphysical:** "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" occurs in the natural, physical world-the land and ocean. However, the work has popularly been interpreted as an allegory of man's connection to the spiritual, metaphysical world. In the epigraph, Burnet speaks of man's urge to "classify" things since Adam named the animals. The Ancient Mariner shoots the Albatross as if to prove that it is not an airy spirit, but rather a mortal creature; in a
"classify" the Albatross. Like all natural things, the Albatross is intimately tied to the spiritual world, and thus begins the Ancient Mariner's punishment by the spiritual world by means of the natural world. Rather than address him directly; the supernatural communicates through the natural. The ocean, sun, and lack of wind and rain punish the Ancient Mariner and his shipmates. When the dead men come alive to curse the Ancient Mariner with their eyes, things that are natural-their corpses-are inhabited by a powerful spirit. Men (like Adam) feel the urge to define things, and the Ancient Mariner seems to feel this urge when he suddenly and inexplicably kills the Albatross, shooting it from the sky as though he needs to bring it into the physical, definable realm. It is mortal, but closely tied to the metaphysical, spiritual world-it even flies like a spirit because it is a bird.

The Ancient Mariner detects spirits in their pure form several times in the poem. Even then, they talk only about him, and not to him. When the ghost ship carrying Death and Life-in-Death sails by, the Ancient Mariner overhears them gambling. Then when he lies unconscious on the deck, he hears the First Voice and Second Voice discussing his fate. When angels appear over the sailors' corpses near the shore, they do not talk to the Ancient Mariner, but only guide his ship. In all these instances, it is unclear whether the spirits are real or figments of his imagination. The Ancient Mariner-and we the reader-being mortal beings, require physical affirmation of the spiritual. Coleridge's spiritual world in the poem balances between the religious and the purely fantastical. The Ancient Mariner's prayers do have an effect, as when he blesses the water-snakes and is relieved of his thirst. At the poem's end, he valorizes the holy Hermit and the act of praying with others. However, the spirit that follows the sailors from the "rime", Death, Life-in-Death, the voices, and the angels, are not necessarily Christian archetypes. In a move typical of both Romantic writers and painters, Coleridge locates the spiritual and/or holy in the natural world in order to emphasize man's connection to it. Society can distance man from the sublime by championing worldly pleasures and abandoning reverence for the otherworld. In this way, the wedding reception represents man's alienation from the holy - even in a religious tradition like marriage. However, society can also bring man closer to the sublime, such as when people gather together in prayer.

**Liminality:** "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" typifies the Romantic fascination with liminal spaces. A liminal space is defined as a place on the edge of a realm or between two realms, whether a forest and a field, or reason and imagination. A liminal space often signifies a liminal state of mind, such as the threshold of the imagination's wonders. Romantics such as Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Keats valorize the liminal space and state as places where one can experience the sublime. For this reason they are often - and especially in the case of Coleridge's poems - associated with drug-induced euphoria. Following from this, liminal spaces and states are those in which pain and pleasure are inextricable. Romantic poets frequently had their protagonists enter liminal spaces and become irreversibly changed. Starting in the epigraph to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", Coleridge expresses a fascination with the liminal state between the spiritual and natural, or the mundane and the divine. Recall that this is what Burnet calls the "certain [and] uncertain" and "day [and] night."

In the Ancient Mariner's story, liminal spaces are bewildering and cause pain. The first liminal space the sailors encounter is the equator, which is in a sense about as liminal a location as exists; after all, it is the threshold between the Earth's hemispheres. No sooner has the ship crossed the equator than a terrible storm ensues and drives it into the poem's ultimate symbolic liminal space, the icy world of the "rime." It is liminal by its very physical makeup; there, water exists not in one a single, definitive state, but in all three forms: liquid (water), solid (ice), and gas (mist). They are still most definitely in the ocean, but surrounding them are mountainous icebergs reminiscent of the land. The
"rime" fits the archetype of the Romantic liminal space in that it is simultaneously terrifying and beautiful, and in that the sailors do not navigate there purposely, but are rather transported there by some other force. Whereas the open ocean is a wild territory representing the mysteries of the mind and the sublime, the "rime" exists just on its edge. As a liminal space it holds great power, and indeed a powerful spirit inhabits the "rime."

As punishment for his crime of killing the Albatross, the Ancient Mariner is sentenced to Life-in-Death, condemned to be trapped in a limbo-like state where his "glittering eye" tells of both powerful genius and pain. He can compel others to listen to his story from beginning to end, but is forced to do so to relieve his pain. The Ancient Mariner is caught in a liminal state that, as in much of Romantic poetry, is comparable to addiction. He can relieve his suffering temporarily by sharing his story, but must do so continually. The Ancient Mariner suffers because of his experience in the "rime" and afterwards, but has also been extremely close to the divine and sublime because of it. Therefore his curse is somewhat of a blessing; great and unusual knowledge accompanies his pain. The Wedding Guest, the Hermit, and all others to whom he relates his tale enter into a momentary liminal state themselves where they have a distinct sensation of being stunned or mesmerized.

**Religion:** Although Christian and pagan themes are confounded at times in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", many readers and critics have insisted on a Christian interpretation. Coleridge claimed that he did not intend for the poem to have a moral, but it is difficult not to find one in Part 7. The Ancient Mariner essentially preaches closeness to God through prayer and the willingness to show respect to all of God's creatures. He also says that he finds no greater joy than in joining others in prayer:

"To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!"

He also champions the Hermit, who does nothing but pray, practice humility before God, and openly revere God's creatures. The Ancient Mariner's shooting of the Albatross can be compared to several Judeo-Christian stories of betrayal, including the original sin of Adam and Eve, and Cain's betrayal of Abel. Like Adam and Eve, the Ancient Mariner fails to respect God's rules and is tempted to try to understand things that should remain out of his reach. Like them, he is forbidden from being truly close to the sublime, existing in a limbo-like rather than an Eden-like state. However, as a son of Adam and Eve, the Ancient Mariner is already a sinner and cast out of the divine realm. Like Cain, the Ancient Mariner angers God by killing another creature. Most obviously, the Ancient Mariner can be seen as the archetypal Judas or the universal sinner who betrays Christ by sinning. Like Judas, he murders the "Christian soul" who could lead to his salvation and greater understanding of the divine. Many readers have interpreted the Albatross as Christ, since it is the "rime" spirit's favorite creature, and the Ancient Mariner pays dearly for killing it. The Albatross is even hung around the Ancient Mariner's neck to mark him for his sin. Though the rain baptizes him after he is finally able to pray, like a real baptism, it does not ensure his salvation. In the end, the Ancient Mariner is like a strange prophet, kept alive to pass word of God's greatness onto others.

**Imprisonment:** "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is in many ways a portrait of imprisonment and its inherent loneliness and torment. The first instance of imprisonment occurs when the sailors are swept by a storm into the "rime." The ice is "mast-high", and the captain cannot steer the ship through it. The sailors' confi...
"rime" foreshadows the Ancient Mariner's later imprisonment within a bewildered limbo-like existence. In the beginning of the poem, the ship is a vehicle of adventure, and the sailors set out in one another's happy company. However, once the Ancient Mariner shoots the Albatross, it quickly becomes a prison. Without wind to sail the ship, the sailors lose all control over their fate. They are cut off from civilization, even though they have each other's company. They are imprisoned further by thirst, which silences them and effectively puts them in isolation; they are denied the basic human ability to communicate. When the other sailors drop dead, the ship becomes a private prison for the Ancient Mariner.

Even more dramatically, the ghost ship seems to imprison the sun:

"And straight the sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face."

The ghost ship has such power that it can imprison even the epitome of the natural world's power, the sun. These lines symbolize the spiritual world's power over the natural and physical; spirits can control not only mortals, but the very planets themselves. After he is rescued from the prison that is the ship, the Ancient Mariner is subject to the indefinite imprisonment of his soul within his physical body. His "glittering" eye represents his frenzied soul, eager to escape from his ravaged body. He is imprisoned by the addiction to his own story, as though trapped in the "rime" forever. In a sense, the Ancient Mariner imprisons others by compelling them to listen to his story; they are physically compelled to join him in his torment until he releases them.

**Retribution:** "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is a tale of retribution, since the Ancient Mariner spends most of the poem paying for his one, impulsive error of killing the Albatross. The spiritual world avenges the Albatross's death by wreaking physical and psychological havoc on the Ancient Mariner and his shipmates. Even before the sailors die, their punishment is extensive; they become delirious from a debilitating state of thirst, their lips bake black in the sun, and they must endure the torment of seeing water all around them while being unable to drink it for its saltiness. Eventually the sailors all die, their souls flying either to heaven or hell. There are at least two ways to interpret the fact that the sailors suffer with the Ancient Mariner although they themselves have not erred. The first is that retribution is blind; inspired by anger and the desire to punish others, even a spirit may hurt the wrong people. The second is that the sailors are implicated in the Ancient Mariner's crime. If the Ancient Mariner represents the universal sinner, then each sailor, as a human, is guilty of having at some point disrespected one of God's creatures—or if not, he would have in the future. But the eternal punishment called Life-in-Death is reserved for the Ancient Mariner. Presumably the spirit, being immortal, must endure eternal grief over the murder of its beloved Albatross. In retribution, it forces the Ancient Mariner to endure eternal torment as well, in the form of his curse. Though he never dies - and may never, in a sense - the Ancient Mariner speaks from beyond the grave to warn others about the harsh, permanent consequences of momentary foolishness, selfishness, and disrespect of the natural world.

**The Act of Storytelling:** In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Coleridge draws our attention not only to the Ancient Mariner's story, but to the act of storytelling itself. The Ancient Mariner's tale comprises so much of the poem that moments that occur outside of it often seem like interruptions. We are not only Coleridge's audience, but the Ancient Mariner's. Therefore, the messages that the protagonist delivers to his audier...
us, as well. Storytelling is a preventative measure in the poem, used to dissuade those who favor the pleasures of society (like the Wedding Guest and, presumably, ourselves) from disregarding the natural and spiritual worlds. The poem can also be seen as an allegory for the writer's task. Coleridge uses the word "teach" to describe the Ancient Mariner's storytelling, and says that he has "strange power of speech." In this way, he compares the protagonist to himself: both are gifted storytellers who impart their wisdom unto others. By associating himself with the Ancient Mariner, Coleridge implies that he, and by extension all writers, are not only inspired but compelled to write. Their gift is equally a curse; the pleasure of writing is marred with torment. According to this interpretation, the writer writes not to please himself or others, but to sate a painful urge. Inherent in the writer's task is communication with others, whom he must warn lest they suffer a similar fate. Just as the Ancient Mariner is forced to balance in a painful limbo between life and death, the writer is compelled and even condemned to balance in the liminal space of the imagination "until [his] tale is told." Like a writer, he is equally enthralled and pained by his imagination. Both are addicts, and storytelling is their drug; it provides only momentary relief until the urge to tell returns. In modern psychological terms, the Ancient Mariner as well as the writer relies on "the talking cure" to relieve himself of his psychological burden. But for the Ancient Mariner, the cure - reliving the experience that started with the "rime" by repeating his "rhyme" - is part of the torture. Coleridge paints an equally powerful and pathetic image of the writer. The Ancient Mariner is able to inspire the Wedding Guest so that he awakes the next day a new man, yet he is also the constant victim of his own talent - a curse that torments, but never destroys.

"The Rime of Ancient Mariner": As a Christian Allegory

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of an Ancient Mariner" is a lyrical ballad that seems more like a miniature epic. However, not only it is a ballad talking about the adventure of an old mariner who is cursed for life because he kills an albatross; deeper than that, it is also a religious allegory conveying numerous themes pertaining to Christianity. On the one hand, if one reads "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" simply as a tale at sea, the poem stands remarkable because of its simple rhyme and easy flow. On the other hand, if one reads deeper into the intricate details, symbolism, themes, and literary aspects, Coleridge will therefore have produced a masterpiece.

Furthermore, many critics agree that there are several religious connotations in this ballad; however, very few agree upon it being a religious allegory carrying a main religious theme that reflects Christian beliefs. This paper will discuss all the possible religious notions conveyed in Coleridge's artwork.

Christianity preaches that life is a trial by which we either pass and go to heaven, or fail and go to purgatory. Also, the human body is a victim of the human thought and action, which is represented by the soul. Therefore, in relation to the ballad, we can refer to the ship as the human body and the Mariner who steers the ship and leads it to destruction as the human soul. This ship led by the Mariner goes through a trial of storm and winds, but fails because of the Mariner. In Christianity, when a person is over with the trial (dies), his body rots away, "...for dust you are and to dust you will return," (Genesis 3:16 – 19), and the soul remains alive, either tortured, or pleased. The ship sinks. However, the Mariner becomes a captive of Life-in-Death (purgatory) and remains perpetually cursed for the mistake he has done.

Another symbolism conveyed through Coleridge's ballad is the Albatross that symbolizes Jesus Christ. When things start to fall apart in the ship, and the storm destroys all, the Albatross appears as a good omen that saves the ship from the remnants of the storm.
Just as the time when Christ was born and things gradually started to improve, sick people were healed, the blind saw, the deaf heard, and the mute spoke.

"At length did cross an Albatross, Thorough the fog it came; As if it had been a Christian soul, We hailed it in God's name."

(Mariner, p. 424)

The Albatross leads the ship to its right track, just as Christ leads His followers to heaven. "Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). However, salvation is not a mate during the trip, for the bird is killed. Another reference of the Albatross to Christ is when the Mariner kills it by a cross-bow, as a symbol of the cross Christ died on. Also, after the murder, guilt strikes him for killing a good spirit: "Instead of the cross, the Albatross/About my neck was hung" (p. 426). Again, referring back to the Holy Bible we see that Judea kills himself because of the great guilt of turning in Christ to the cross and denying his name three times before dawn (just as he was told by the Lord.)

After killing the albatross, a second skeletal ship appears carrying Death and Life-in-Death. This ship represents man's life without Christ; Christianity states that life without religion and faith is void and empty. Hence, the skeletal ship carries death and its partner and reaches for the Mariner, since his life appears to be without Christ, for he kills His symbol.

The Mariner's story can also be related to Cain's, the son of Adam and Eve, who kills his brother. God curses him to forever wander, but marks him with a sign so that no one shall kill him (mark of Cain). The Mariner, here, becomes cursed forever and doesn't die, but lives Life-in-Death, which is much worse than dyeing. He is destined to wander around with a burden and narrate his story whenever necessary to make him feel better.

Moving away from symbolism, numerological Christian references are also significant in the ballad. Number three represents The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit (The Holy Trinity), as well as Christ's resurrection on the third day after He got crucified. In the ballad, in Part III, Death-in-Life wins the battle and whistles three times. Furthermore, the Hermit, his son, and the Mariner, together in one boat, are very relevant to the Trinity, where the Hermit and his son are the Father and Son, and the Mariner is the soul (as I had mentioned), the Holy Spirit. Number seven is significant in the Bible because it counts the number of days it took God to create the earth. In the ballad, the Mariner remains afloat for seven days until he gets rescued by the boat; and for seven days and seven nights he is haunted by the curse of the dead shipmates' open eyes. Nevertheless, the poem is made of seven parts; Part III includes the climax - the important part of the story - where the Mariner gets cursed, and Part VII is where the ballad ends with the moral.

Another important religious theme is the one that relates the Mariner's story to Adam and Eve's, conveying the notion of sin, punishment, and regret. The first people on earth were the first sinners, so does Genesis say. Adam and Eve were the cause of all humankind's suffering, just like the Mariner's sin which causes his shipmates pain and torture. In both stories, a sin is committed, a punishment and a curse are set, and regret is felt after living the curse, which leads to moments of epiphany. The snake in Adam and Eve's story is a major character that encouraged them to sin. In the Rime of the Ancient Mariner however, the religious irony stands in the snakes, for they are there for him to bless in order to be freed of the curse. Ironically, the Mariner needs to praise the
cause of his torture (for if it wasn't for Adam and Eve's snake we'd all be in paradise now), in order to feel better.

Finally, the theme of narration sums up the whole story; the Mariner narrates his story to the wedding guest, and will always have to narrate it wherever he goes. Relating this theme to religion, it can be the notion of preaching. On the surface, the Mariner narrates his story to feel better. On a deeper level, the Mariner preaches the moral of respect and reverence towards God's creatures. In the Bible, the theme of preaching is very significant, for this is one reason why Jesus was sent to us, and that was the job of the apostles after Him. Here, the Mariner could be a symbol of Christ himself who suffers in order to preach the message to others in order to save them from mankind sin.

Therefore, once this ballad is read and apprehended, one would realize how deep its Christian allegory is and how important it is to understand the symbols conveyed by the author to the reader. There is no doubt that Samuel Taylor Coleridge is one of the best poets of his time; for this ballad, with its intricate meanings and rimes, could've never been written as such by an ordinary poet. In fact, "The Rime of an Ancient Mariner" is one of the poems that carry various themes in which a person would enjoy studying and writing about in depth. The more we read it, the more we learn about it, and the more we admire it.

"The Rime of an Ancient Mariner" : Use of Literary Devices

To point out some of the several literacy devices used in a lyrical ballad, Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Samuel Taylor Coleridge has been chosen. The literary devices explained with examples from the ballad include alliteration, anaphora, assonance, consonance, elision, hyperbole, imagery, inversion, irony, metaphor, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, paradox, personification, rhyme scheme, simile and symbols.

Alliteration: Alliteration is a literary device where words are used in quick succession and begin with letters belonging to the same sound group. Whether it is the consonant sound or a specific vowel group, the alliteration involves creating a repetition of similar sounds in the sentence. Alliterations are also created when the words all begin with the same letter. Alliterations are used to add character to the writing. For example in part 2, line 102-103;

The breezes blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow follow'd free:

The bold word is an example of alliteration in the poem.

Anaphora: The term anaphora refers to a type of parallelism created when successive phrases or lines begin with the same words. The repetition can be as simple as a single word or as long as an entire phrase. For example in part 1, line 27-28:

Below the Kirk, below the Hill,
Below the Light-house top.

Here, ‘below’ is used as anaphora to create a litany and rhyme.

Assonance: It is the effect created when there is a repetition of a vowel sound in stressed syllables with different consonant sounds. Assonance can be understood to be a kind of alliteration. What sets it apart from alliterations is that it is the repetition of only vowel sounds. This effect is used widely throughout the ballad to establish its rhythm. For example in part 1, line 21-22:
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The Ship was cheer’d, the Harbour clear’d--
Merrily did we drop

Assonance appears in the long ‘e’ sound in cheer’d and clear’d.

Consonance: Consonance refers to repetition of sounds in quick succession produced by consonants within a sentence or phrase. The repetitive sound is often found at the end of a word. Consonance is the opposite of assonance. For example in part 1, line 27-28:

And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the Sea.

The words ‘bright’ and ‘right’ have the same last consonants, creating the effect of consonance.

Elision: Elision refers to the leaving out of an unstressed syllable or vowel, usually in order to keep a regular meter in a line of poetry. It is the deliberate omission of a sound between two words. In Rime of the Ancient Mariner, elision is used repeatedly:

It crack’d and growl’d, and roar’d and howl’d--
Like noises of a swound. (Line 61-62)
It ate the food it ne’er had eat,
And round and round it flew. (Line 67-68)
And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work ‘em woe: (Line 91-92)

The highlighted words are examples of elision.

Hyperbole: A hyperbole is a literary device wherein the author uses specific words and phrases that exaggerate and overemphasize the basic crux of the statement in order to produce a grander, more noticeable effect. The purpose of hyperbole is to create a larger-than-life effect and overly stress a specific point. Such sentences usually convey an action or sentiment that is generally not practically or realistically possible or plausible but helps emphasize an emotion. For example in lines

As idle as a painted Ship
Upon a painted Ocean. (Line 117-118)

This hyperbole is used because it stretches the truth so that we understand how still the boat is.

Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink. (Line 121-122)

The poet has used exaggeration to define the ancient mariner's thirst when he is stranded in the ocean and how he can't drink a drop of that huge mass of water.

Imagery: In poetry, one of the strongest devices is imagery when the poet uses words and phrases to create ‘mental images’ for the reader. Imagery helps the reader to visualize and hence more realistically experience the author’s writings. The usage of descriptive words and similes, amongst other literary forms, in order to awaken the readers’ sensory perceptions is referred to as imagery. Imagery is not limited to only visual sensations, but also refers to sensations of taste, smell, touch and hearing as well. For example

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:  
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,  
Like noises in a swound! (Line 59-62)

These lines appeal specifically to the sense of sight and hearing when the ice is described as cracking, growling, roaring and howling noises.

Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink. (Lines 121-122)

These lines portray the intense thirst the narrator felt which plays with the reader’s sense of taste.

Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slimy sea. (Lines 125-126)

These lines appeal to the sense of touch because we are repulsed by the reading the description of ‘slimy insects’ with their legs and the sea as ‘slimy’.

**Inversion:** The term ‘inversion’ refers to the practice of changing the conventional placement of words. It is a literary practice typical of the classical poetry. It is usually used for the purpose of laying emphasis. It helps to arrange the poem in a manner that catches the attention of the reader not only with its content but also with its physical appearance; a result of the peculiar structuring. For example Coleridge inverts the word order from time to time, as the following lines demonstrate:

Instead of the cross, the Albatross  
About my neck was hung. (Lines 141-142)

The normal word order of this line would be ‘was hung about my neck’.

The naked hulk alongside came (line 195)

Here the normal word order would be ‘came alongside’.

**Irony:** The use of irony refers to playing around with words such that the meaning implied by a sentence or word is actually different from the literal meaning derived. Often, irony is used to suggest the stark contrast of the literal meaning being put forth. The deeper, real layer of significance is revealed not by the words themselves but the situation and the context in which they are placed. For example:

Water, water, everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink. (Lines 119-122)

These lines signify that water is everywhere, but there is none to actually drink.

**Metaphor:** A metaphor refers to a meaning or identity ascribed to one subject by way of another. In a metaphor, one subject is implied to be another so as to draw a comparison between their similarities and shared traits. The first subject, which is the focus of the sentences, is usually compared to the second subject, which is used to convey a degree of meaning that is used to characterize the first. The purpose of using a metaphor is to take an identity or concept that we understand clearly (second subject) and use it to better understand the lesser-known element (the first subject). For example:
They coil'd and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire. (Lines 281-282)

In the above stated lines, the metaphor is the comparison of the wake of the waves left by the sea snakes with fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessèd them unaware; (Lines 282-285)

A ‘spring of love gushed from my heart’ is the metaphor used for love in this line by Coleridge. It shows how beautiful the bride and groom looked that the ancient mariner blessed them with a spring of love gushing from his heart.

**Onomatopoeia:** The term refers to words whose very sound is very close to the sound they are meant to depict. In other words, it refers to sound words whose pronunciation to the actual sound or noise they represent. For example

*It crack’d and growl’d, and roar’d and howl’d* (Line 61)

The words in bold are onomatopoeia i.e. when pronounced they portray the sounds of actions they represent.

**Oxymoron:** It allows the author to use contradictory, contrasting concepts placed together in a manner that actually ends up making sense in a strange, and slightly complex manner. An oxymoron is an interesting literary device because it helps to perceive a deeper level of truth and explore different layers of semantics while writing. For example:

*And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:* (Line 51-52)

The phrase wondrous cold is an oxymoron.

*And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:* (Line 55-56)

‘Dismal sheen’ is the oxymoron used in these lines.

**Paradox:** A paradox refers to the use of concepts or ideas that are contradictory to one another, yet, when placed together they hold significant value on several levels. The uniqueness of paradoxes lies in the fact that a deeper level of meaning and significance is not revealed at first glance, but when it does crystallize, it provides astonishing insight. For example:

*Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship’s huge shadow lay,
The charmèd water burnt alway
A still and awful red.* (Lines 267-271)

This warring imagery of the moon spreads frosty colors across the ship, but the water burns red in its shadow. While the moon might calm the curse momentarily, it still lies beneath.

**Personification:** Personification refers to the practice of attaching human traits and characteristics with inanimate objects, phenomena and animals.

*The Sun came up upon the left,*
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea. (Lines 25-28)

In these lines, the sun is personified as a human being.

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread; (Line 267-268)

The moon in these lines is personified as a mocking woman.

**Rhyme Scheme:** It is the practice of rhyming words placed at the end of the lines. Rhyme scheme refers to the order in which particular words rhyme. If the alternate words rhyme, it is an "a-b-a-b" rhyme scheme, which means "a" is the rhyme for the lines 1 and 3 and "b" is the rhyme affected in the lines 2 and 4. For example, most stanzas in 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' have four-lines, called a 'quatrains', but not all of the stanzas have exactly four lines. The second and fourth line of each four-line stanza rhyme, providing a song like rhythm; e.g. ‘hand’ and ‘sand’ in the first stanza. But some stanzas have five lines. In these stanzas the second line rhymes with the fifth, the third line rhymes with the fourth. Some stanzas contain six lines. In these stanzas the second, fourth and sixth lines rhyme.

**Simile:** It is the practice of drawing parallels or comparisons between two unrelated and dissimilar things, people, beings, places and concepts. By using similes a greater degree of meaning and understanding is attached to an otherwise simple sentence. The reader is able to better understand the sentiment the author wishes to convey. Similes are marked by the use of the words ‘as’ or ‘such as’ or ‘like’. For example

Every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my crossbow! (Lines 223-224)

In these lines, there is the comparison of the passing of a soul to the sound of a shot arrow.

The sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye (Lines 251-252)

Comparison of the sky and sea to a weight on the eye is the simile in these lines.

**Symbol:** A symbol is a literary device that contains several layers of meaning, often concealed at first sight, and is representative of several other aspects or concepts and traits than those that are visible in the literal translation alone. Symbol is using an object or action that means something more than its literal meaning. For example, in the Rime of the Ancient Mariner, the Mariner is an actual symbolic representation of Adam. The Ancient Mariner slaying of the Albatross is equal to Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. The moon and sun also play an important symbol in this story. The sun represents God’s influence of wrathful power but the moon has a more positive association than the sun. Generally troubling outcome happens to the Mariner during the day while more favorable result happens by moon light. For example, the mariner’s curse lifts and he returns home by moonlight.

“The Rime of Ancient Mariner” : As a Ballad

Ballad is a short narrative folk song that fixes on the most dramatic part of a story, moving to its conclusion by means of dialogue and a series of incidents. It is one of the earliest forms of literature. The Ancient Mariner by S.T. Coleridge is a literary ballad.
Following this age-old tradition, Coleridge created a marvelous ballad poem. Here goes a discussion on what have made The Ancient Mariner a perfect ballad.

**Use of Refrains:** The refrain of words, lines, and sometimes stanza is a special feature of folk ballads. Coleridge makes use of refrain in a subtle way. He makes use of refrain for emphasis or for reminding us of the essence of a thing. In the following lines, refrain is clearly meant for emphasis. In the following lines, repetition is clearly meant for emphasis:

\[\textit{Water, water everywhere} \newline \textit{Nor any drop to drink.} \]

**Musical arrangement of words:** Coleridge has shown great skill in arranging the words of his verses in a melodious manner. For the sake of musical arrangement of words, he has frequently employed alliteration, assonance, and various rhythms. In the following passage, he has employed the hissing sounds of “s” to convey the idea of movement in a musical manner.

\[\textit{Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,} \newline \textit{Yet she sailed softly too} \newline \textit{Sweetly sweetly blew the breeze} \newline \textit{On me alone it blew.}\]

**Supernatural Machinery and Mysticism:** Supernatural element is an essential element of ballads of all description. Coleridge in this poem has built in a large supernatural machinery to draw and effect an effective and purposeful contrast between things natural and things human. The supernatural world or life has logic of its own and comes into action to impose the due punishment. It even controls, influences, and takes advantages of natural elements like the wind, the stars, the rain, the fog and the mist. The Ancient Mariner is also packed with mystery of an awful nature. The Mariner’s ship is becalmed. The ocean begins to rot. Then the ship begins to sail without a tide. The Mariner tells nothing of who he is and little of what he does. In the poem, we find him as a helpless soul passing through strange experiences.

**Short ballad stanzas:** The poem is written in short ballad stanzas. Many of them are four-line stanzas. But some are also five-line, or six-line stanzas. The verses are iambic tetrameters followed by iambic trimeters. The rhythms are various. The stanza is the same that occurs in Thomas’s Percy’s ballads. But Coleridge’s stanza is more polished and finished than Percy’s.

**Modernity:** The Ancient Mariner has touches of modernity. The psychological effect in which the poem abounds is something modern and original. In old ballads, entire emphasis is laid upon external events. In Ancient Mariner, the poet describes not only the external events but also what happens in the mind of the ancient Mariner. Thus we are told that The Ancient Mariner felt extremely fear-stricken when the ghost-ship disappeared all of a sudden on the sea.

\[\textit{Fear at my heart at a cup} \newline \textit{My life blood seemed to sip.}\]

In the light of the above discussion, it may be concluded that “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is obviously a ballad in its form. The poem has everything—a vivid story, dramatic action, verbal music, a scenic setting, and mystery. It is a beautiful ballad possessing all the characteristics of a ballad in a more polished and finished form.
“The Rime of Ancient Mariner” : Use of Symbols

Symbolism can be defined as the practice, system and art of representing ideas by means of symbols. The term ‘symbol’ although is a word, a phrase, an object, or a clause even, yet it always represents an abstraction. So the thing represented is an idea, quality, condition, or any other abstract thing.

Kinds of symbols: Coleridge has employed symboli in “The Rime of The Ancient Mariner”. These symbols are summed up in two artistic symbolic Categories – symbols of distance and symbols of life in Middle Ages.

The symbols of the art of storytelling serve to heighten the illusion; credibly the marvels, provide an approach to them, a middle distance, which makes them appropriately more remote. There is also nearer distance. The Wedding Guest is a symbol of the middle distance. He stands between the Ancient Mariner and his voyage in a land of marvels. The marginal comment of the poet is a symbol of nearer distance. It stands between the reader and the marvel land of poetry.

Further, the Hermit, the pilot and the Pilot’s boy, the background of the sea-port hill, the church, and the lighthouse are symbols of the vanished life of the middle ages. Hence in the words of Stoll, “when the Mariner and his strip, equally bewitched arrive, the effect of the mere sight of them on normal every day Hermit, pilot and pilot boy is startling, shocking. The effect of that, in turn, upon the Wedding Guest and also the reader is convincing”.

The Mariner: A symbol of inquiring spirit: Adopting the spiritual point of view we can look upon the Ancient Mariner as a symbol of “an unusually inquiring spirit”, and his voyage as a ‘mental adventure’. The Mariner’s tale is a story of a voyage into the interior. Not only into the unfathomable depths of the sources of human action; the story also takes us beyond the human world altogether. Again, it is a voyage of extreme contrasts of suffering and of expiation, of the human and social and an altogether alien cosmos with its own terrible yet beautiful order.

Moon symbolism: In The Ancient Mariner, a weak or waning moon is pretty clearly a powerful symbol for loss of mother love. In Part-III the crescent moon rises after life in death has won the Mariner’s soul and Death has won his ship mates, lives. Here the moon rises in the east, while the moon always rises in the west.

Shooting of the Albatross: The Albatross, following the ship, stands for the power of Nature coming to the help of the Mariner and his crew. It saves them from snow and fog. The bird seems to suggest some redeeming force in creation that guides humanity:

"As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God’s name”.

The shooting of the Albatross comes quite suddenly and irrationally. It symbolizes the sin of ignorance the act is explicitly called ‘hellish’. As a result, the ship is becalmed in a tropic sea. Parching heat replaces icy cold. The Mariner gradually discovers from the result of his action that the killing of the Albatross is the violation of a great sanctity. The sympathy between Nature and voyage is broken and terrible, retribution follows. The knowledge of evil is symbolized by the ‘shiny things’ that crawl on the retiring ocean, and the ‘death-fires’ and ‘witch’s oil’ burning by night.

Conclusion: Coleridge defines a symbol as something which presents the eternal in the temporal, and the universal in the particular. It is through the use of symbols that a poet
conveys universal truth. The Ancient Mariner, being a tale of the supernatural, is also symbolic and allegorical.

Through a set of symbols the poem becomes a moral allegory which says,

“He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast”.

The whole poem illustrates the moral of an intimate kinship between all living things. God is on the side of pity and love, and the forces of the universe become hostile to those who show cruelty towards animals. According to Bowra, this poem is a “myth of guilt and redemption”.

**“The Rime of Ancient Mariner” : As an Allegory**

An allegory is described as a fictional literary narrative or artistic expression that conveys a symbolic meaning parallel to but distinct from, and more important than, the literal meaning. Allegory has also been defined as an extended metaphor. The symbolic meaning is usually expressed through personifications and other symbols.

“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is an allegory that symbolizes the inherent struggle of human beings facing the ideas of sin and redemption. In writing this poem, Coleridge spent four months of sustained writing upon his purpose of supposing that supernatural situations are real. This purpose is seen clearly in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, which demonstrates salvation, and the power of sympathetic imagination. The story of the ancient mariner takes place on a sea voyage around the horn of Africa and through the Pacific Ocean to England, which Coleridge uses to symbolize the passage into the spirit world of guilt, retribution, and rebirth.

In discussing the symbolism of guilt in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, it is important to understand that in the eyes of the Romantics God was one with Nature. Because of this belief a sin against Nature was seen as a sin against God. In line 82 of the poem, the Mariner simply says, “I shot the Albatross.” In saying this, the reader often questions why the bird was shot. There is no explanation. The Albatross was shot without reason or motive very much like the sin of humans. Here the poem begins to take on its allegorical purpose in which the Albatross symbolizes not only sin, but possibly Jesus as well. In Christianity, Jesus died upon the cross for the sins of humanity. He was punished in order for humankind to be forgiven. Like Jesus, the Albatross died not for its own sins, but rather for the sins of humans-the sin of the Mariner.

In order for the Mariner to be forgiven of this sin he must first admit his guilt. In lines 91 through 96 he does so by saying,

“And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work ‘em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!”

It is this admission of guilt that allows the process of forgiveness for the Mariner to begin. It also allows the Albatross to become a reminder of the Mariner’s sin, a representation of Christ’s suffering, and a symbol of the Christian cross. In lines 40 and 41 it says:

“Instead of the cross,
the Albatross About my neck was hung.”
The next symbolic theme in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is that of retribution. In lines 143-146 Coleridge illustrates a time of draught for the sailors on the voyage. Without any water to drink they are suffering. This symbolizes the spiritual draught that human beings face in Christianity. Without the love for Christ human beings are thirsting for spiritual enlightenment and forgiveness - without which they suffer.

Also as a symbol for retribution in the poem is the appearance of Life in Death. In Christianity, in order to experience everlasting life in heaven, humans must succumb to death first. Coleridge uses supernatural events to show real life situations in his poem. The real life situation of life in death in Christianity is symbolized as a supernatural being in in lines 188-193 of the poem. This symbolism of Life-in-Death is expressed through personification in saying,

“Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thickens man's blood with cold.”

The final symbolic theme in Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is that of rebirth. This rebirth is seen in the Mariner’s realization that all creatures are a part of God. In lines 272-281 the Mariner discusses the beauty of the water snakes that are around the boat. This realization leads to the Mariner’s rebirth when in lines 284-285 he says:

“A spring of love gushed from my heart
And I blessed them unaware.”

It is at this moment of recognition that the Albatross falls from the Mariner’s neck because he no longer needs it as a reminder of his sin. He has been forgiven in his heart as he sees the beauty that God is in Nature.

Another symbol of rebirth in the poem is seen in the rain. After a draught of endless time through which the Mariner did not realize his sin or the beauty of Nature in God, he finally feels rain that he can drink, and be quenched from his physical and spiritual draught. With his recognition the Mariner experiences rain as a symbol of baptism and rebirth in lines 299-300 when he says:

“I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.”

In Christianity, baptism symbolizes the rebirth of the human from his or her sin into a new enlightenment, as does the rain in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.”

In the conclusion to the poem, Coleridge provides closure to the spiritual journey of the Mariner by expressing his Anglican upbringing. In lines 574-577 the Mariner asks a holy Hermit for forgiveness and is given penance. To fulfill his spiritual rebirth the Mariner is told by the Hermit in lines 578-581 to tell the story of his journey of death in life and rebirth in love to others. This penance is what allows the Mariner to be reborn.

The last stanza of the poem tells the reader of the wedding guest who has been listening to the story all along. It expresses the moral of the story in saying,

“He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
Coleridge uses “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” to transport the reader into a spiritual journey of guilt, retribution, and rebirth as a symbol of the journey of Christianity. Expressing the inherent struggles of humanity for sin and redemption, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” allows the reader to suppose that supernatural situations are real. Coleridge uses supernatural events to bring to live the ideas he expresses in his work. “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” clearly demonstrates the ideals of Christianity as salvation and the power of sympathetic imagination.

“The Rime of Ancient Mariner” : Depiction of Spiritual Journey

S.T. Coleridge’s ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, being a multi-meaningful poem, has now become one of the most famous poems in English literature. In general, it is a story of a mariner’s interesting voyage or journey on the sea, but, at the same time, includes many super natural elements. Actually, there is a story of a spiritual journey under the inner fold of the poem showing three stages of human soul – innocence, experience, and super or greater innocence through self-realization. Again, it is also a poem of guilt and redemption, sin and suffering, crime and punishment. Now, we will evaluate both of the journeys and other ideas of the poem and the similar examples of journey in other great pieces of English literature.

Physically the ship of the ancient Mariner leaves the harbour for southward with a good wind and fair weather till it reaches the Equator. Then it is driven by a storm towards the South Pole where huge ice-burgs dangerously float in the sea and no living creature is visible. With the coming of an Albatross, a favourable south-wind begins to blow and the ship sails northwards. But by the killing of the Albatross, the Mariner experiences many extremely horrible and mysterious incidents. At last the ship sails swiftly over the sea and the Mariner sees his native harbour. So the Mariner’s physical journey may be marked in this way as shown in diagram:

Besides the physical journey of the Mariner, the main significance lies in the spiritual journey where there is a development of a soul from the stage of innocence to the stage of experience, and from stage of experience to the stage of super innocence where one can know one’s own self. In order to show this, the poet uses some symbols and some horrible and mysterious incidents that intensify the mode of the journey.

At the innocent stage of this journey, we observe that all are favourable for innocent joy, natural atmosphere. The Mariner says-

“The ship was cheered the harbour cleared
Merrily did we drop”
He starts his journey with the cheerful faces of all people at the harbour including the ship, with no mark of disorder. This reminds us of the merry-time of birth when we generally begin our journey in this world. Again, there appears an Albatross bearing good omen and happenings. Here the Albatross is not a simple bird but it represents innocence, nature and God Himself. The Mariner says:

"As if it had been a Christian soul
We hailed it in God's name."

In our world, similarly, Christ bearing good things for us came to save humanity. Moreover, the bird is an innocent creation of nature making a relation between God and our innocent world.

But the stage of innocence does not last long. It comes to an end with the killing of Albatross by the Mariner, as Christ was killed. Then the stage of experience begins. We should mention a stanza now-

God save thee, ancient Mariner
From the fiends that plague thee thus!-
Why look'st thou so?
With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross.

Here a question may generally be raised that why the Mariner suddenly kills the bird. The answer may- from the indication of ‘fiends’ in the stanza above – be that something ‘evil’ prompted the Mariner to shoot the ‘Albatross’

Indeed, this killing is not an ordinary one, rather it is symbolically the killing of God’s representative, breaking of the relation between man and nature as well as man and God. Thus in the spiritual world, he commits a great sin.

In addition, in every religion we see a system of punishment for one’s sin. So, here the Mariner must be punished -either physically or spiritually or both.

In the meantime, his physical punishment has already begun. The previous ‘glorious Sun’ has now become ‘bloody Sun’ just above them. They become as lifeless as painted picture and cannot do anything. The poet expresses it exactly in the stanza below-

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion,
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink
Even,
Water, water, every where
Nor any drop to drink.

Additionally their spiritual punishment also begins -

The very deep did rot: O Christ
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

The death fires danced at night
The water, like a witch’s oils.

Here extremely spiritual horror, from where the Mariner wants to be released by God, has been expressed. But as he feels hatred to the lower creation of nature created by God, his punishment is later increased with the Albatross which is hung about his neck, as the symbol of his sin.

In this way both of their mental and physical punishments gradually increase. Suddenly a skeleton-ship appears between them and the Sun, as if an executioner between the criminal and the justice. There are in the ship, Death and life-in-Death playing at dice and their stake being the Mariner. The result is as follows-

The game is done! I’ve won! I’ve won!
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The sun’s rim dips; the stars rush out:

That is the Mariner is won by Death in life, and with this, the court of the Sun is closed. Consequently all the sailors become dead, and only the Mariner remains ‘alive but in death’ to suffer lifelong agony. However the cause of the sailors’ punishment is that they shared some of the Mariner’s crime by supporting him to kill the bird. But Mariner will suffer a lot. So he becomes ‘alone on a wide wide sea’ and no saint takes pity on his ‘soul in agony’.

Moreover, he discriminates between the upper creation and lower creation. He thinks that there are so many beautiful men but in death, while –

'A thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on and so did I

Consequently, he cannot say any prayer, rather his heart becomes ‘as dry as dust’, and yet the stage of experience continues.

Next, there happens a self-realization in the Mariners spirit or mind; he loves and blesses the lower creatures and can pray; and becomes free from his sin, Albatross, and reaches the stage of greater innocence

O happy living things! No tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart.
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The self- same moment I could pray;
From my neck so free
The Albatross fell of, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

At the end of the part V, from the second one of the two voices, we know the condition of the Mariner in the stage of greater innocence-

'The man hath penance done
And penance more will do’

Then he sees his native harbour and is rescued by the Pilot of the boat carrying a Hermit, after his boat has been sunk into the sea; he feels relief from his agony only
when he has related the story of his journey to the Hermit. Since then, the Mariner occasionally experiences the same agony, and relates his journey to the men whom he chooses and thus gets relief. Actually, this indicates us the Christian term, ‘Confession of saints’.

Then, what is the result of this spiritual journey? – The Mariner prefers walking to the church to worldly merriment. Moreover, the wedding guest, having heard the whole story of the Mariner, does not go to the feast- as he has also become experienced like the Mariner through this journey and next becomes ‘A sadder and a wise man.’

To sum up the discussion, we can say that journey does not prevail only in the ‘Rime of the Ancient Mariner.’ Rather in every step of our life, we are always making journey – either physical or mental. However, the experienced stage of our soul is more important than the innocent. Because innocence is governed by God or natural intuition; but in the stage of experience there happens an experiment through which we may overcome the stage of experience and may reach the stage of greater innocence.

**"The Rime of Ancient Mariner” : Sin and Redemption**

The premise of sin and redemption is evident in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s famous ballad “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”. The poem focuses on the trials and tribulations of the main character, the mariner. The narrative starts as the mariner and his ship set off to sea.

The mariner’s sin is fundamentally unpremeditated and unfounded. According to the editors of Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, “Sin is a vitiated state of human nature in which the self is estranged from God”. Sin was precisely what happened to the mariner. In a display of utter disregard for one of god’s creatures, the mariner shot the albatross. The murder of the Albatross came abruptly and for no apparent reason. “…With my crossbow I shot the Albatross!” illustrates how motiveless the killing of the albatross really was.

The idea of a crime against God implements itself through a crime against nature. If the mariner murders a human, the crime is then against man, and thus eclipses the religious significance involved in the murder. The implication of a crime against God progresses when the crewmembers remove the cross from around the mariner’s neck; and replace it with the albatross:

> "Ah, well a day!  
> What evil looks had I from old and young!  
> Instead of the cross,  
> The Albatross about my neck was hung”

This action is an important element in the advancement of the poem. By replacing the mariner’s cross with the albatross, the crewmember’s action symbolically characterized the exodus of the Holy Spirit from the mariner. The death of the creature of God, like the death of Jesus, will work to aid in the redemption and salvation of the mariner.

The crewmembers played a vital role in the sin of the mariner. The crewmember’s first reaction to the murder of the albatross is to rebuke it as shown by this quote,

> “Ah Wretch! Said they, such birds to slay  
> That made the breeze to blow”.

By making a remark, the crewmembers formed the first foundation of their sin. By judging the mariner, the crewmembers submitted themselves to the judgment of
heaven. By doing so, they set themselves up for a punishment that could be deemed far worse that any that they might have deserved.

The second sin of the crewmembers comes when they overlook the murder of the albatross by saying:

"T'was right, said they, such birds to slay
That bring the fog and mist".

As the crewmembers notice that the murder of the albatross bears no immediate effect on the weather, they consequently approve of the murder. By doing so, the crewmembers made themselves collaborators in the crime. Subsequently, the breeze vanished and the sky became foggy again.

"Down dropped the breeze,
The sails dropped down,
T'was sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break the silence of the sea”.

The crewmembers again contradict themselves and condemn the mariner for what he had done:

"Ah, well a day!
What evil looks had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross,
The Albatross about my neck was hung”

After an encounter with life-in-death, the crewmembers all drop dead. The deaths of the crewmembers were justified in that the fellow mariners have, made the desire the measure of the act: they first condemn the act, when they think the bird had brought the fog; then in the dead calm, again condemn the act. By doing so, the crewmembers isolate themselves from nature and thereby, from god since nature is the work of god.

The sun and the moon play a symbolic role in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”. Robert Penn Warren states: “There is a constant contrast between moonlight and sunlight, and the main events of the poem can be sorted out according to the kinds of light in which they occur”. In the poem, the good events correlate with the moon, and the bad events take place while under the sun. Coleridge highlights the importance of the distinction between the two kinds of light.

In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", as the voyage begins, the sun is burning brightly overhead. The crew is in good spirits, but soon hereafter a storm strikes the ship sending it wildly off course. At night, when the moon comes out, the Albatross first shows up “in mist or cloud, on mast or shroud, it perched for vespers nine; whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white, glimmered the white moon-shine”.

The moon is not the only element of nature that is associated with the albatross, the wind relates with the bird as well. As shown when the albatross first showed up,

“And a good south wind sprung up behind;
the albatross did follow ...”.

Before long, the mariner shoots the albatross, and the rising of the sun soon follows. Immediately upon the rising of the sun, the mariners accept the murder of the albatross. The sun is symbolically the cause of their acceptance of the crime.
The crewmembers justify the crime because the bird had brought the fog and mist or, the moon. To say it another way, the crewmembers renounce the fog and mist, which are one and the same with the moon. At this point, the sun is first introduced. According to Warren the sun is, “the light which shows the familiar as familiar, it is the light of practical convenience, it is the light in which pride preens (cleans) itself, which had risen so promisingly and so gloriously”.

Part III is split into two scenes, one of the sun, one of the moon, in even balance. In part III, there is an elaborate description of the sun. As the sun goes down, the moon comes out, and a description is given of it as well. Warren states that in the moon there are three phases of the redeeming process, which are:

“First, the recognition of happiness and beauty; second, love; third; the blessing of the creatures; fourth, freedom from the spell”.

As the mariner and his ship make their way home, he spots his home port, which he sees in the moonlight.

While the theme of sin has been thoroughly covered, the premise of redemption is left open for explanation. Redemption is the act of being pardoned after one has requested forgiveness. This is mostly seen in the bible when Jesus encourages his followers to pray to god for forgiveness, and they would be saved. According to this definition, redemption is exactly what the mariner experienced. He saw the sea snakes, he recognized their beauty, and he blessed them by saying,

“Oh happy living things!  
No tongue their beauty might declare...  
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,  
and I blessed them unaware”

He quietly blessed them. The act of blessing the sea snakes was the first step towards the mariner’s redemption. According to Humphry House: “Just as the albatross was not a mere bird, so these are not mere water-snakes – they stand for all happy living things”.

The first step towards redemption for the mariner was the recovery of love and the recovery of the power of prayer. As the mariner blesses the sea snakes, the albatross, which has been hung around his neck, falls off and sinks into the sea. This symbolically is the return of Christ to the mariner. The second redemption of the mariner comes when the crewmembers reappear. The reappearance of the crewmembers comes to be the relief from the curse.

The Hermit and the Wedding Guest are the important figures in the redemption of the mariner. The Hermit is a priest of god and the Wedding Guest is the catalyst into which the mariner confides his story, as he is doomed to do for the remainder of his days. The Hermit is not only a priest of God, he is also a priest of society. It is the Hermit that accepts the mariner back into society. The Wedding Guest is a crucial figure in the plot as he is the way of confession for the mariner. While at first the Wedding Guest fears that the mariner is a ghost, the mariner assures the Wedding Guest that he is a true human,

“Be calm, thou wedding guest!  
’Twas not those souls that fled in pain”

As the mariner’s story continues, the Wedding Guest becomes sucked in and cannot make himself leave the mariner. This is because whenever the mariner comes into
contact with someone that he needs to tell his story to, he and his subject become powerless but to listen to each other. In this way the story of sin and redemption is narrated to educate the listeners and make them wiser and sadder.

"The Rime of Ancient Mariner": Gothicism

Gothicism is a style in fictional literature characterized by gloomy settings, violent or grotesque action, and a mood of decay, degeneration. The Gothic begins with later - eighteenth-century writers' turn to past; in the context of the Romantic Period the Gothic is a type of imitation medievalism. When it was launched in the later eighteenth century the Gothic features accounts of terrifying experiences in ancient castles -experiences connected with dungeons, secret passageways, flickering lamps, screams, moons, bloody hands, ghosts, graveyards and the rest. By extension, it came to designate the mysterious, fantastic, supernatural, and again the terrifying, especially the pleasurably terrifying, in literature more generally.

The Gothic is a prominent and distinctive element in the writings of the Romantic Age. The mode had originated in novels of the mid-eighteenth century that in radical opposition to the Enlightenment ideals of order, decorum, and rational control. It had opened to literary exploration the realm of nightmarish terror, violence.

The Gothic introduces a genre that both influenced Romantic poetry and in its day for outstripped it in popularity. This topic cluster explores signs of Gothic influence in some of the most frequently read works of Coleridge e.g., the account of the skeleton ship and crew's reaction in Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is full of strange, uncanny or "Gothic" elements. Gothic horror fiction was very popular at the time it was written. The Gothic elements in the poem:

- The strange weather
- The albatross as a bird of good men
- Death and life-in-death
- The spirit from the land of mist and snow, and the two spirits the mariner hears in his trance
- The angelic spirits which move the bodies of the dead men
- The madness of the pilot and his boy
- The mariner's strange power of speech

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner has been acclaimed to be one of the many original works of Gothic literature because of its supernatural, horrific and romantic elements that are brought together within its narrative and language. The most dominant Gothic elements are the supernatural quality which can be found in the mariner's voyage, and also The Mariner's killing of the albatross, the terrifying death of his shipmates and the grotesque descriptions of the supernatural spirits are chief Gothic elements in the Rime of the Ancient Mariner that develop the story.

"Kubla Khan"

Summary

The speaker describes the "stately pleasure-dome" built in Xanadu according to the decree of Kubla Khan, in the place where Alph, the sacred river, ran “throi
measureless to man / Down to a sunless sea.” Walls and towers were raised around “twice five miles of fertile ground,” filled with beautiful gardens and forests. A “deep romantic chasm” slanted down a green hill, occasionally spewing forth a violent and powerful burst of water, so great that it flung boulders up with it “like rebounding hail.” The river ran five miles through the woods, finally sinking “in tumult to a lifeless ocean.” Amid that tumult, in the place “as holy and enchanted / As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted / By woman wailing to her demon-lover,” Kubla heard “ancestral voices” bringing prophesies of war. The pleasure-dome’s shadow floated on the waves, where the mingled sounds of the fountain and the caves could be heard. “It was a miracle of rare device,” the speaker says, “A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!”

The speaker says that he once saw a “damsel with a dulcimer,” an Abyssinian maid who played her dulcimer and sang “of Mount Abora.” He says that if he could revive “her symphony and song” within him, he would rebuild the pleasure-dome out of music, and all who heard him would cry “Beware!” of “His flashing eyes, his floating hair!” The hearers would circle him thrice and close their eyes with “holy dread,” knowing that he had tasted honeydew, “and drunk the milk of Paradise.”

Commentary

Along with “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” “Kubla Khan” is one of Coleridge’s most famous and enduring poems. The story of its composition is also one of the most famous in the history of English poetry. As the poet explains in the short preface to this poem, he had fallen asleep after taking “an anodyne” prescribed “in consequence of a slight disposition” (this is a euphemism for opium, to which Coleridge was known to be addicted). Before falling asleep, he had been reading a story in which Kubla Khan commanded the building of a new palace; Coleridge claims that while he slept, he had a fantastic vision and composed simultaneously—while sleeping—some two or three hundred lines of poetry, “if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or conscious effort.”

Waking after about three hours, the poet seized a pen and began writing furiously; however, after copying down the first three stanzas of his dreamt poem—the first three stanzas of the current poem as we know it—he was interrupted by a “person on business from Porlock,” who detained him for an hour. After this interruption, he was unable to recall the rest of the vision or the poetry he had composed in his opium dream. It is thought that the final stanza of the poem, thematizing the idea of the lost vision through the figure of the “damsel with a dulcimer” and the milk of Paradise, was written post-interruption. The mysterious person from Porlock is one of the most notorious and enigmatic figures in Coleridge’s biography; no one knows who he was or why he disturbed the poet or what he wanted or, indeed, whether any of Coleridge’s story is actually true. But the person from Porlock has become a metaphor for the malicious interruptions the world throws in the way of inspiration and genius, and “Kubla Khan,” strange and ambiguous as it is, has become what is perhaps the definitive statement on the obstruction and thwarting of the visionary genius.

Regrettably, the story of the poem’s composition, while thematically rich in and of itself, often overshadows the poem proper, which is one of Coleridge’s most haunting and beautiful. The first three stanzas are products of pure imagination: The pleasure-dome of Kubla Khan is not a useful metaphor for anything in particular (though in the context of the poem’s history, it becomes a metaphor for the unbuilt monument of imagination); however, it is a fantastically prodigious descriptive act. The poem becomes especially evocative when, after the second stanza, the meter suddenly tightens; the resulting lines
are terse and solid, almost beating out the sound of the war drums ("The shadow of the
dome of pleasure / Floated midway on the waves...").

The fourth stanza states the theme of the poem as a whole (though “Kubla Khan” is
almost impossible to consider as a unified whole, as its parts are so sharply divided). The
speaker says that he once had a vision of the damsel singing of Mount Abora; this vision
becomes a metaphor for Coleridge’s vision of the 300-hundred-line masterpiece he never
completed. The speaker insists that if he could only “revive” within him “her symphony
and song,” he would recreate the pleasure-dome out of music and words, and take on
the persona of the magician or visionary. His hearers would recognize the dangerous
power of the vision, which would manifest itself in his “flashing eyes” and “floating hair.”
But, awestruck, they would nonetheless dutifully take part in the ritual, recognizing that
“he on honey-dew hath fed, / And drunk the milk of Paradise.”

**Analysis of Kubla Khan as a Dream Poem**

Coleridge’s dream faculty is his strong point as a poet and he is a dreamer of dreams
and his Kubla Khan (1798) is not the product of his observation but has come out from
mysterious dreams. Coleridge himself claimed that the poem “Kubla Khan” was the
product of a hallucinatory dream experienced after he had taken opium “in consequence
of a slight indisposition.” On awaking, he began to commit the experience to paper but
was interrupted by “a person on business from Porlock.” On returning to his desk, he
found that the intensity of his impressions had faded. The poem claims to be “scattered
lines and images” from a longer, forgotten work. Whether the story is true or not, the
poem takes the unrecapturable nature of such dreams as its theme. It opens with
sumptuous images of a mythic land, in which a powerful ruler orders the construction of
a fabulous palace. It is an edifice of dream, a fragment of pure romance and a product of
a dream rooted in imagination.

Apparently Kubla Khan lacks any logical coherence of ideas. It has the essence of poetry
and dream because its aim is to delight, not to present the truth. Farther, it has
procession of images which are Vague. All these romantic associations are concentrated
within a short space to arouse a sense of wonder, mystery and awe. Such romantic
images include ancient forests and hills, caverns which are measureless to man, spots of
greenery, music of dulcimer, a damsel with a dulcimer, milk of paradise, a waning moon,
and a woman waiting for her demon lover:

> "But oh! That deep romantic chasm which slanted  
> Down the green hill athwart a cedern cover.  
> A savage place! As holy and enchanted.  
> As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
> By woman wailing for her demon lover”.

So to say, the images are not also linked logically. They come one after the other
through association as happens in dreams. In first four lines Kubla Khan orders a palace
to be built. In the ensuring four lines, it is built,

> "In xanadu did Kubla Khan,  
> A stately pleasure dome decree”

> ------------------------------
> With walls and tower girdled round  
> And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills”

In the midst of highly romantic description of landscape, the poet introduces an entirely
different note:
“Ancestral voices prophesying war”

Farther when the dream is broken midway, the poet feels himself unable to give description of the pleasure dome. So the poet wishes romantically to revive within him the symphony and the song.

The poem has two parts. In the first part there is a record of the vision or dream. The second part is the poet's efforts to realize that dream and to build that dome in the air. In fact, Kubla Khan is the most perfect example of what might pleasure dome, its sacred river, its panting fountain, its caves of ice, its ecstatic figure with flashing eyes and floating hair, Kubla Khan is clearly a poem about poetic inspiration. Though symbolism and loose disconnections the poetic mood of ecstasy can not be missed in this poem. The organic links among the different parts of this poem is its symbolic unity which simultaneously defines a world of separation of head and heart, action and contemplation, the matter of fact world and the realm of imagination. The richness of this poem is its dream quality, multiple point of view and an apparent ambiguity.

There are temporary changes in the metre because the poem has dreamy origin. In this connection three points may be mentioned:

(i) There is irregularity of the rhymes.
(ii) There is unevenness of the lines
(iii) There are temporary changes.

As if the words images and visions are so loose and floating in the world of conscience which is best poetically revealed in the poem. For example:

“It was a miracle of rare device
A sunny pleasure dome with eaves of ice.
A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw”.

Again Coleridge conveys the idea of harmony and order by imitating the word order of the Latin language, using strong single-syllable rhymes, and providing a percussive beat heightened by alliteration. The poem offers sensual images of an oriental paradise: There are “gardens bright with sinuous rills” and “many an incense-bearing tree”. With a powerful sense of movement, the poem follows the progress of the river Alph in order to focus on a violent natural force beyond the palace walls: a “chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething.” Coleridge describes this place with a mass of contradictory adjectives: It is “holy,” “enchanted,” and “savage,” its massive force like that of a living being. If, as literary critics have suggested, this place is a metaphor for the imagination, its blasts might be compared to Wordsworth’s definition of the poetic process as “a spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling.”

**Possible Interpretations of Kubla Khan**

If a man could pass through' Paradise in a Dream, & have a flower presented to him as a pledge that his Soul had really been there, & found that flower in his hand when he awoke -- Aye! And what then? Kubla Khan is a fascinating and exasperating poem written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Almost everyone, who has read it, has been charmed by its magic. It must surely be true that no poem of comparable length in English or any other language has been the subject of so much critical commentary. Its fifty-four lines have spawned thousands of pages of discussion and analysis. Kubla Khan is the sole or a major subject in five book-length studies; close to 150 articles and book-
chapters have been devoted exclusively to it; and brief notes and incidental comments on it are without number.

Despite this deluge, however, there is no critical unanimity and very little agreement on a number of important issues connected with the poem: its date of composition, its meaning, its sources in Coleridge's reading and observation of nature, its structural integrity (i.e. fragment versus complete poem), and its relationship to the Preface by which Coleridge introduced it on its first publication in 1816. Coleridge’s philosophical explorations appear in his greatest poems. 'Kubla Khan', with its exotic imagery and symbols, rich vocabulary and rhythms, written, by Coleridge's account, under the influence of laudanum, was often considered a brilliant work, but without any defined theme. However, despite its complexity the poem can be read as a well-constructed exposition on human genius and art.

Throughout the nineteenth century and during the first quarter of the twentieth century Kubla Khan was considered, almost universally, to be a poem in which sound overwhelms sense. With a few exceptions (such as Lamb and Leigh Hunt), Romantic critics -- accustomed to poetry of statement and antipathetic to any notion of a great artist -- summarily dismissed Kubla Khan as a meaningless farrago of sonorous phrases beneath the notice of serious criticism. It only demonstrated, according to William Hazlitt, that Mr. Coleridge can write better nonsense verses than any man in England --and then he added, politically, it is not a poem, but a musical composition.

For Victorian and Early Modern readers, on the other hand, Kubla Khan was a poem not below but beyond the reach of criticism, and they adopted (without the irony) Hazlitt's perception that it must properly be appreciated as verbalised music. When it has been said, wrote Swinburne of Kubla Khan, that such melodies were never heard, such dreams never dreamed, such speech never spoken, the chief thing remains unsaid, and unspeakable. There is a charm upon this poem, which can only be felt in silent submission of wonder. Even John Livingston Lowes -- culpable, if ever anyone has been, of murdering to dissect - insisted on the elusive magic of Coleridge's dream vision: For Kubla Khan is as near enchantment, as we are like to come in this dull world. While one may track or attempt to track individual images to their sources, Kubla Khan as a whole remains utterly inexplicable - a dissolving phantasmagoria of highly charged images whose streaming pageant is, in the final analysis, as aimless as it is magnificent.

There are, in short, as many different interpretations of Kubla Khan as there are critics who have written about it. Kubla Khan, a poem about poetic process Generally speaking, the most popular view by far is that Kubla Khan is concerned with the poetic process itself. What is Kubla Khan about? This is, or ought to be, an established fact of criticism: Kubla Khan is a poem about poetry. On this reading, the Tartar prince Kubla Khan, who causes a pleasure-dome and elaborate gardens to be constructed in Xanadu, is a type of the artist, whose glorious creation, as the ancestral voices from the deep caverns warn, is a precariously balanced reconciliation of the natural and the artificial. The dream of Xanadu itself is an inspired vision which expresses dramatically the very nature of vision: the fountain that throws up its waters from an underground ocean and so gives birth to the sacred river that meanders five miles through Kubla's hortus conclusus before sinking again into the subterranean depths images the sudden eruption of the subconscious into the realm of the conscious mind and its eventual inevitable recession back into the deep well of the unconscious.

Kubla Khan records an early, perhaps largely unconscious, exploration of critical perceptions united only loosely in an inchoate theory of literature. Freudian Analysis a poem such as Kubla Khan - so provokingly enigmatic and so deliciously suggestive -also provides an irresistibly fertile ground for psychological speculation, especially
of Freudian critics. When Coleridge called the poem a psychological curiosity in his 1816 Preface and confessed that Kubla Khan was the record of an actual dream, he unwittingly opened wide the door to analysts anxious to expound the latent psychological implications of his symphony and song. One of the earliest of the Freudian readings was offered in 1924 by Robert Graves, who proposed that Kubla Khan expressed Coleridge's subconscious determination to shun the mazy complications of life by retreating to a bower of poetry, solitude and opium - a serene refuge beyond the bitter reproaches of Mrs. Coleridge (the woman who is wailing for her demon lover) and almost beyond the gloomy prophecies of addiction uttered by the ancestral voices of Lamb and Charles Lloyd. By comparison with recent Freudian interpretations, this is pretty tame stuff. Nevertheless, it was enough to alert I.A. Richards almost immediately to the chilling possibilities of such an approach: The reader acquainted with current methods of [psychological] analysis, he warned, can imagine the results of a thoroughgoing Freudian onslaught.

In general, the Freudians treat Kubla Khan as an unconscious revelation of personal fantasies and repressed, usually erotic, urges; but there is little agreement about the precise nature of these subliminal drives. Douglas Angus argues that the poem illustrates psychoneurotic pattern of narcissism that reflects Coleridge's abnormal need for love and sympathy; Eugene Sloane, however, is convinced that Kubla Khan is an elaborate development of a birth dream, expressing an unconscious desire to return to the warmth and security of the womb (the hair in line 50, for example, is floating in amniotic fluid); and Gerald Enscoe finds the core of the poem's meaning in the unresolved struggle between two conflicting attitudes toward the subject of erotic feeling, i.e. the attitude . . . that the sexual impulse is to be confined within a controlled system is opposed to the anarchistic belief that the erotic neither should nor can be subjected to such control.

Still other readers prefer to follow Robert Graves by concentrating on what the poem implies about Coleridge's experience with opium: James Bramwell reads Kubla Khan as a dream-fable representing Coleridge's conscience in the act of casting him out, spiritually and bodily, from the paradise of his opium paradise; and Eli Marcovitz, who sets out to treat the poem as we would a dream in our clinical practice, confidently concludes that Kubla Khan is almost a chart of the psychosexual history of a personality ineluctably embarked on the road to addiction: It depicts the life of the poet -- his infancy and early childhood, the pleasures and deprivations of the oral period, the stimulation and dread of his oedipal period, the reaction to the death of his father at nine, the fear of incest and genitality with the regression to passive-femininity and morality, and the attempt to cope with his life's problems by the appeal to the muse and to opium.

Who would have supposed, without guidance, that so much repressed meaning was compressed into fifty-four lines? Even this brief sampling illustrates clearly enough the limitations and liabilities of using Freudian keys to unlock the mysteries of Kubla Khan. In the first place, of course, there is no received consensus (as we have just seen) about precisely what the poem reveals about Coleridge's subconscious mind. Nor is there agreement about the symbolic significance of the major images: is the stately pleasure-dome to be identified as the female breast (maternal or otherwise), or does it represent, as some think, the mons veneris? Similarly, what are we to make of the violent eructation of the fountain forced with ceaseless turmoil from the deep romantic chasm -- the ejaculation of semen, or the throes of parturition? And then there is the hapless Abyssinian maid, who has been variously identified as Coleridge's muse, as his mother, as Mary Evans (an early flame), as Dorothy Wordsworth, and (since Abyssinian damsels are Negroid) as the symbol of Coleridge's repressed impulse toward miscegenation.
A second and more serious problem with many Freudian readings, as the foregoing examples make clear, is a tendency to ignore basic rules of evidence and to indulge, as a consequence, in strained and unwarranted speculation. In one account, for example, we are asked (without irony) to believe that the last two lines of Kubla Khan point by indirection to fellatio, cunnilingus and deep oral attachment to the mother. Another analyst, James F. Hoyle, interprets Coleridge’s enforced retirement to the farmhouse near Porlock as the neurotic person’s ‘vegetative retreat’ to parasymphathetic preponderance with over stimulation of gastrointestinal functions, resulting in diarrhoea - - and then, as if this were not enough, goes on to conclude that the costive opium taken to check the attack of dysentery probably helped in converting depression to hypomania and so was instrumental in transforming the diarrhoea of Coleridge’s failure in poetry and life to the logorrhoea of Kubla Khan.

Literary criticism has more and more become a science of solutions. When a lurking mystery is discovered, analytical floodlights are trained upon it to dispel the shadows and open its dark recesses. But Kubla Khan, as Charles Lamb acutely perceived, is an owl that won't bear daylight. We must learn to take the poem on its own terms and, instead of attempting to salvage it by reducing it to a coherent substratum of symbols, we must reconcile ourselves to the fact that no single interpretation will ever resolve the complexities of so protean a product of the human imagination. Mystery and ambiguity, verisimilitude and teasing suggestiveness, are essential ingredients in Kubla Khan -- a poem which reflects, though darkly, Coleridge's largely subconscious ruminations on poetry, paradise, and the heights and depths of his own unfathomable intellectual and spiritual being. Kubla Khan is one of those ethereal finger-pointing so prized by Keats; it is a poem that has no palpable design upon us, and it provides at least one instance of an occasion on which Coleridge did not let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetration of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge.

"Dejection: An Ode"

Summary

The speaker recalls a poem that tells the tale of Sir Patrick Spence: In this poem, the moon takes on a certain strange appearance that presages the coming of a storm. The speaker declares that if the author of the poem possessed a sound understanding of weather, then a storm will break on this night as well, for the moon looks now as it did in the poem. The speaker wishes ardently for a storm to erupt, for the violence of the squall might cure his numb feeling. He says that he feels only a ‘dull pain,” “a grief without a pang”—a constant deadening of all his feelings. Speaking to a woman whom he addresses as “O Lady,” he admits that he has been gazing at the western sky all evening, able to see its beauty but unable fully to feel it. He says that staring at the green sky will never raise his spirits, for no “outward forms” can generate feelings: Emotions can only emerge from within.

According to the speaker, "we receive but what we give": the soul itself must provide the light by which we may hope to see nature’s true beauty—a beauty not given to the common crowd of human beings (“the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd”). Calling the Lady “pure of heart,” the speaker says that she already knows about the light and music of the soul, which is Joy. Joy, he says, marries us to nature, thereby giving us “a new Earth and new Heaven, / Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud."

The speaker insists that there was a time when he was full of hope, when every tribulation was simply the material with which “fancy made me dreams of happiness.” But now his afflictions press him to the earth; he does not mind the decline of his health.
but he cannot bear the corresponding degeneration of his imagination, which is the source of his creativity and his understanding of the human condition, that which enables him to construct "from my own nature all the natural man." Hoping to escape the "viper thoughts" that coil around his mind, the speaker turns his attention to the howling wind that has begun to blow. He thinks of the world as an instrument played by a musician, who spins out of the wind a "worse than wintry song." This melody first calls to mind the rush of an army on the field; quieting, it then evokes a young girl, lost and alone.

It is midnight, but the speaker has "small thoughts" of sleep. However, he hopes that his friend the Lady will be visited by "gentle Sleep" and that she will wake with joyful thoughts and "light heart." Calling the Lady the "friend devoutest of my choice," the speaker wishes that she might "ever, evermore rejoice."

**Commentary**

In this poem, Coleridge continues his sophisticated philosophical exploration of the relationship between man and nature, positing as he did in "The Nightingale" that human feelings and the forms of nature are essentially separate. Just as the speaker insisted in the earlier poem that the nightingale’s song should not be called melancholy simply because it sounded so to a melancholy poet, he insists here that the beauty of the sky before the storm does not have the power to fill him with joy, for the source of human feeling is within. Only when the individual has access to that source, so that joy shines from him like a light, is he able to see the beauty of nature and to respond to it. (As in "Frost in Midnight," the city-raised Coleridge insists on a sharper demarcation between the mind and nature than the country-raised Wordsworth would ever have done.)

Coleridge blames his desolate numbness for sapping his creative powers and leaving him without his habitual method of understanding human nature. Despite his insistence on the separation between the mind and the world, Coleridge nevertheless continues to find metaphors for his own feelings in nature: His dejection is reflected in the gloom of the night as it awaits the storm.

“Dejection” was written in 1802 but was originally drafted in the form of a letter to Sara Hutchinson, the woman Coleridge loved. The much longer original version of the poem contained many of the same elements as “The Nightingale” and “Frost at Midnight,” including the same meditation on his children and their natural education. This version also referred explicitly to “Sara” (replaced in the later version by “Lady”) and “William” (a clear reference to Wordsworth). Coleridge’s strict revision process shortened and tightened the poem, depersonalizing it, but the earlier draft hints at just how important the poem’s themes were to Coleridge personally and indicates that the feelings expressed were the poet’s true beliefs about his own place in the world.

A side note: The story of Sir Patrick Spence, to which the poet alludes in the first stanza, is an ancient Scottish ballad about a sailor who drowns with a boatload of Scottish noblemen, sailing on orders from the king but against his own better judgment. It contains lines that refer to the moon as a predictor of storms, which Coleridge quotes as an epigraph for his ode:

"Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon  
With the old Moon in her arms;  
And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!  
We shall have a deadly storm."

**“Dejection an Ode” : Poetic Creative Process**
The diverse features of Coleridge’s verse discriminate him as the most inclusive representative of the English Romantic Movement of the early nineteenth century. His best poetry is very small in its bulk and is the product of a brief but amazing period of creative activity but it ranges among the rarest treasures of English Literature. We can segregate the major works of Coleridge into personal, political and romantic poems. “Dejection: An Ode” behaves as one of the personal poems. In this poem the poet expresses his sense of failure and sterility. “Dejection: An Ode”, the last great poem is written by Coleridge, bewails the loss of creative powers.

“Dejection: An Ode” is written in a meditative mood. In fact, in this ode, he deplors the metaphysical strain in his thinking as responsible for the death of the poet in him. He has taken recourse to abstract philosophy, he says, in order to escape his grief, but metaphysical musing gradually becomes a habit with him and it slowly contaminates his poetic faculties. The motto of this poem is taken from the Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence printed by Thomas Percy. Percy’s collection has already made a great impression on all the romantic poets.

In the first stanza, Coleridge through a clever use of images has suggested the chilling up of his poetic imagination. This has driven him to dejection and he feels a very dull pain in his heart. He longs for a violent storm that could invigorate his mind and at least, get him out of this pitiable condition. The poet would not like to indulge in self-pity in his poems. He would be happier if the lute were not to produce any sounds at all. The moon has a peculiar place in the poetic activity of Coleridge. According to Bowra, “Coleridge took the moon as ‘a symbol of the poets’ power to transform the material world into a world of imagination”

Here the moon overspread with a phantom light points to his dejection, a certain chilling of his springs of poetry. But we find there is a certain silver thread rimming and circling it. This should salvage the situation slightly. We might say that the creative powers instead of having been dried up permanently have been temporarily suspended. The poet wishes that the wind has already gained strength and changed into a fierce storm. The poet does not expect the storm to bring any relief from the pain. But at least it could give some sort of life to it, as it is the sluggish monotony of this pain, which is almost unbearable to the poet.

In the second stanza, the poet is not able to provide any natural outlet to his stifled, unimpassioned anguish. Throughout the peaceful evening, he has been gazing at the beautiful sights of nature but he thinks he has lost the capacity of feeling that beauty.

“A grief without a pang, void, dark and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief.”

In these two lines the poet describes the nature of his heartache. It is a suppressed, sleepy, unaroused, passive kind of grief. It does not cause any piercing sensation in his heart, which appears to be just blank. His soreness is related to the “dull pain “mentioned in the last line of the first stanza.

“Might startle this dull pain and make it move and live!”

The sparkle or the dimness of the stars obviously corresponds to the fluctuations in the poet’s soul. Even though bedimmed, the stars are “always seen”. This corroborates our earlier understanding of the poem that the poet has not fully lost his poetic creativity. In the original version after taking about the “lake of blue”, the poet speaks of “a boat becalmed”. The becalming of the boat has a symbolic reference to the creative activity in Coleridge. The “fixed moon” also suggests the same thing.
In the third stanza, the natural cheerfulness of the poet has forsaken him. The real sources of passion and life are within and when they have dried up, merely eternal forms of beauty cannot raise his spirits. The poet's failure to respond to the 'yellow green light of the evening' has particularly disturbed him. He is shocked to realise that the outward forms are no longer capable of evoking his zest for life. Instead of helping him to recover his vitality, the external Nature makes him aware of his loss of feeling. Coleridge also feels that thinking and feeling are closely bound with each other. Lack of sensation makes his thinking also unproductive. Feeling beauty is a creative process; its real fountains lie within. But once the inward sources are desiccated, a certain loss of sensibility with regard to the physical objects appears quite inevitable.

In the fourth stanza, the moods that we see in nature are actually our own moods. Nature does not have any life of its own. It appears to be joyous or mournful in accord to the mood and feelings of an onlooker. This denotes that the outward forms of Nature are created by man with the assistance of his own imagination. The outward forms present a gloomy spectacle if we are caught in a web of sorrows, then even a tranquil scene of colourful evening portends a mighty storm, as happens in the case of Coleridge. Seeing is thus coloured with feeling. What Coleridge is lamenting in this poem is the fact that his seeing is not charged with his feeling. He notices beauty but he does not feel it. It should be observed that in these lines, Coleridge is contending against the Wordsworthian doctrine of the influence of Nature. Earlier he has shared Wordsworth's belief in a beneficent power of Nature, healing and spiritualizing all those who care for her. However, with his own shaping spirit of imagination gone, he finds it impossible to derive strength from nature. We have already seen how the poet believes that the mystic colouring of one's inner life animates every object of nature. This type of intuition that can shape nature is denied to the "poor loveless ever anxious crowed". Though the crowed is devoid of love and joy yet nature gets its life from the beholder's own amorous feelings. The loveliness of Nature as well as the sweetness of its sounds is torn by a convulsion; it can create only an equally disastrous seizure in the external nature. This is the mood in which the poem begins.

In the fifth stanza, the source of light and glory that can invest the earth with loveliness and sweetness is joy. This delight can be experienced only by the pure in their purest hour. This joy enables one to see a new earth and new heaven which the proud and the sensual can never witness. In the previous stanza, the poet has talked of 'a fair, luminous cloud' and 'a sweet and potent voice' that must emanate from one's soul and envelop the whole earth if one is to see something "of higher worth" in Nature, that would otherwise remain an "inanimate cold world". Continuing the same theme, the poet says that this "fair, luminous mist" and this "strong music in soul" are not only beautiful themselves but they also have a beauty making power. They can make the external objects of Nature look beautiful. Then addressing Sara, he says that it is not necessary for her to enquire what exactly the source of this glory and this music is. Coleridge has not explained the nature of this joy but it is clear that it is a creative principle having moral implications. Nature is just cold and inanimate the beauty we see in it actually exists within our soul. The source of this beauty is joy. So joy is a kind of creative principle. Only the pure hearted and virtuous people like Sara can experience it. The artist cannot create anything in its absence.

In the sixth stanza, there was a time when the poet was capable of experiencing this joy; then he was full of hope. He could weave dreams of happiness even out of his misfortunes. But now his joy is gone and his shaping spirit of imagination has greatly declined. He takes to abstract philosophy and metaphysics as an escape from his grief but this has stifled the poet in him. The poet recalls the time when he can experience joy in spite of the fact that his life is full of sorrows and impediments. So indomitable is his
joy within that he cares little for his sufferings. Coleridge says that his only resource against his increasing melancholy is deliberately to divert his mind from his feelings to cultivate a quiet mode of life and to immerse himself in deep metaphysical studies, in the hope of changing his nature and conquering his excessive sensitiveness.

In the seventh stanza the poet dismisses his depressing thoughts and turns his attention to the various sounds being made by the wind. To begin with, the wind appears to be screaming with agony. Next, these sounds appear to be similar to the one produced by a retreating army. Finally, he feels that the wind is producing a moaning sound like the one made by a little girl who has lost her way. The wind appears to the poet as an actor adept in producing all kinds of tragic sounds. Humphrey House believes that Dejection: An Ode is not a whole poem. His argument is that 'the opening of stanza VII especially, and its placing and relevance are serious obstacles to accepting the poem as a whole.

Humphrey House thinks that this stanza opens with a sudden twist of thoughts, in a very awkward language. The poet addresses the wind as a reckless musician and says that in this mouth of showers, of dark brown gardens, of peeping flowers, of blossoms, buds and tremulous leaves, it is producing sounds worse than the ones heard during the bleak months of winter, as if it is celebrating a devil’s Christmas. The sounds produced by wind remind the poet of the devils howling and shrinking in malicious joy. As the poet thinks of this tale about a lost girl, we feel that there is a slight awakening of his genial spirits, which he says, has failed him:

"My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail,"

His imagination is activated and his feelings are awake. Now his imagination has created for him a complex unity of grief, fear and delight.

In the eighth stanza, the poet concludes with a prayer for Sara. May gentle sleep visit her! Then next morning, may she get up with a light and cheerful heart! May she experience joy! Addressing the ‘Lady’, the poet says that we recline from Nature only what we give it. The poem concludes with the prayer that joy may raise her spirits and sweeten her voice, that all things may be the manifestation of her life and may exist for her sake, and that she may be blessed with enduring happiness.

Coleridge’s attitude to Nature as depicted in the Ode to Dejection is radically different from the attitude he held earlier under the persuasive influence of Wordsworth. Wordsworth, with his affect and encouragement, stimulated Coleridge’s creative imagination. He feels his inner vitality being fructified and life assumes some meaning for him. This fills his heart with joy, which makes him perceive joy all around and in the company of Wordsworth. Nature ceases to be the physical manifestation of a divine spirit capable of exerting a moral and educative influence. It is reduced into just a lifeless mass.

**Themes of Coleridge’s Poetry**

**The Transformative Power of the Imagination:** Coleridge believed that a strong, active imagination could become a vehicle for transcending unpleasant circumstances. Many of his poems are powered exclusively by imaginative flights, wherein the speaker temporarily abandons his immediate surroundings, exchanging them for an entirely new and completely fabricated experience. Using the imagination in this way is both empowering and surprising because it encourages a total and complete disrespect for the confines of time and place. These mental and emotional jumps are often well rewarded. Perhaps Coleridge’s most famous use of imagination occurs in “This
Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” (1797), in which the speaker employs a keen poetic mind that allows him to take part in a journey that he cannot physically make. When he “returns” to the bower, after having imagined himself on a fantastic stroll through the countryside, the speaker discovers, as a reward, plenty of things to enjoy from inside the bower itself, including the leaves, the trees, and the shadows. The power of imagination transforms the prison into a perfectly pleasant spot.

**The Interplay of Philosophy, Piety, and Poetry:** Coleridge used his poetry to explore conflicting issues in philosophy and religious piety. Some critics argue that Coleridge’s interest in philosophy was simply his attempt to understand the imaginative and intellectual impulses that fueled his poetry. To support the claim that his imaginative and intellectual forces were, in fact, organic and derived from the natural world, Coleridge linked them to God, spirituality, and worship. In his work, however, poetry, philosophy, and piety clashed, creating friction and disorder for Coleridge, both on and off the page. In “The Eolian Harp” (1795), Coleridge struggles to reconcile the three forces. Here, the speaker’s philosophical tendencies, particularly the belief that an “intellectual breeze” (47) brushes by and inhabits all living things with consciousness, collide with those of his orthodox wife, who disapproves of his unconventional ideas and urges him to Christ. While his wife lies untroubled, the speaker agonizes over his spiritual conflict, caught between Christianity and a unique, individual spirituality that equates nature with God. The poem ends by discounting the pantheist spirit, and the speaker concludes by privileging God and Christ over nature and praising them for having healed him from the spiritual wounds inflicted by these unorthodox views.

**Nature and the Development of the Individual:** Coleridge, Wordsworth, and other romantic poets praised the unencumbered, imaginative soul of youth, finding images in nature with which to describe it. According to their formulation, experiencing nature was an integral part of the development of a complete soul and sense of personhood. The death of his father forced Coleridge to attend school in London, far away from the rural idylls of his youth, and he lamented the missed opportunities of his sheltered, city-bound adolescence in many poems, including “Frost at Midnight” (1798). Here, the speaker sits quietly by a fire, musing on his life, while his infant son sleeps nearby. He recalls his boarding school days, during which he would both daydream and lull himself to sleep by remembering his home far away from the city, and he tells his son that he shall never be removed from nature, the way the speaker once was. Unlike the speaker, the son shall experience the seasons and shall learn about God by discovering the beauty and bounty of the natural world. The son shall be given the opportunity to develop a relationship with God and with nature, an opportunity denied to both the speaker and Coleridge himself. For Coleridge, nature had the capacity to teach joy, love, freedom, and piety, crucial characteristics for a worthy, developed individual.

**Motifs of Coleridge’s Poems**

**Conversation Poems:** Coleridge wanted to mimic the patterns and cadences of everyday speech in his poetry. Many of his poems openly address a single figure—the speaker’s wife, son, friend, and so on—who listens silently to the simple, straightforward language of the speaker. Unlike the descriptive, long, digressive poems of Coleridge’s classicist predecessors, Coleridge’s so-called conversation poems are short, self-contained, and often without a discernable poetic form. Colloquial, spontaneous, and friendly, Coleridge’s conversation poetry is also highly personal, frequently incorporating events and details of his domestic life in an effort to widen the scope of possible poetic content. Although he sometimes wrote in blank verse, unrhymed iambic pentameter, he adapted this metrical form to suit a more colloquial rhythm. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge believed that everyday language and speech rhythms would help broaden
poetry’s audience to include the middle and lower classes, who might have felt excluded or put off by the form and content of neoclassicists, such as Alexander Pope, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and John Dryden.

**Delight in the Natural World:** Like the other romantics, Coleridge worshiped nature and recognized poetry’s capacity to describe the beauty of the natural world. Nearly all of Coleridge’s poems express a respect for and delight in natural beauty. Close observation, great attention to detail, and precise descriptions of color aptly demonstrate Coleridge’s respect and delight. Some poems, such as “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison,” “Youth and Age” (1834), and “Frost at Midnight,” mourn the speakers’ physical isolation from the outside world. Others, including “The Eolian Harp,” use images of nature to explore philosophical and analytical ideas. Still other poems, including “The Nightingale” (ca. 1798), simply praise nature’s beauty. Even poems that don’t directly deal with nature, including “Kubla Khan” and “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” derive some symbols and images from nature. Nevertheless, Coleridge guarded against the pathetic fallacy, or the attribution of human feeling to the natural world. To Coleridge, nature contained an innate, constant joyousness wholly separate from the ups and downs of human experience.

**Prayer:** Although Coleridge’s prose reveals more of his religious philosophizing than his poetry, God, Christianity, and the act of prayer appear in some form in nearly all of his poems. The son of an Anglican vicar, Coleridge vacillated from supporting to criticizing Christian tenets and the Church of England. Despite his criticisms, Coleridge remained defiantly supportive of prayer, praising it in his notebooks and repeatedly referencing it in his poems. He once told the novelist Thomas de Quincey that prayer demanded such close attention that it was the one of the hardest actions of which human hearts were capable. The conclusion to Part 1 of Christabel portrays Christabel in prayer, “a lovely sight to see” (279). In “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” the mariner is stripped of his ability to speak as part of his extreme punishment and, consequently, left incapable of praying. “The Pains of Sleep” (1803) contrasts the speaker at restful prayer, in which he prays silently, with the speaker at passionate prayer, in which he battles imaginary demons to pray aloud. In the sad poem, “Epitaph” (1833), Coleridge composes an epitaph for himself, which urges people to pray for him after he dies. Rather than recommend a manner or method of prayer, Coleridge’s poems reflect a wide variety, which emphasizes his belief in the importance of individuality.

**Symbols of Coleridge’s Poems**

**The Sun:** Coleridge believed that symbolic language was the only acceptable way of expressing deep religious truths and consistently employed the sun as a symbol of God. In “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” Coleridge compares the sun to “God’s own head” (97) and, later, attributes the first phase of the mariner’s punishment to the sun, as it dehydrates the crew. All told, this poem contains eleven references to the sun, many of which signify the Christian conception of a wrathful, vengeful God. Bad, troubling things happen to the crew during the day, while smooth sailing and calm weather occur at night, by the light of the moon. Frequently, the sun stands in for God’s influence and power, as well as a symbol of his authority. The setting sun spurs philosophical musings, as in “The Eolian Harp,” and the dancing rays of sunlight represent a pinnacle of nature’s beauty, as in “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison.”

**The Moon:** Like the sun, the moon often symbolizes God, but the moon has more positive connotations than the sun. In “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” the sun and the moon represent two sides of the Christian God: the sun represents the angry, wrathful God, whereas the moon represents the benevolent, repentant God. All told, the moon appears fourteen times in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” and generally...
things occur during night, in contrast to the horrors that occur during the day. For example, the mariner’s curse lifts and he returns home by moonlight. “Dejection: An Ode” (1802) begins with an epitaph about the new moon and goes on to describe the beauty of a moonlit night, contrasting its beauty with the speaker's sorrowful soul. Similarly, “Frost at Midnight” also praises the moon as it illuminates icicles on a winter evening and spurs the speaker to great thought.

**Dreams and Dreaming:** Coleridge explores dreams and dreaming in his poetry to communicate the power of the imagination, as well as the inaccessible clarity of vision. “Kubla Khan” is subtitled “A Vision in a Dream.” According to Coleridge, he fell asleep while reading and dreamed of a marvelous pleasure palace for the next few hours. Upon awakening, he began transcribing the dream-vision but was soon called away; when he returned, he wrote out the fragments that now comprise “Kubla Khan.” Some critics doubt Coleridge’s story, attributing it to an attempt at increasing the poem’s dramatic effect. Nevertheless, the poem speaks to the imaginative possibilities of the subconscious. Dreams usually have a pleasurable connotation, as in “Frost at Midnight.” There, the speaker, lonely and insomniac as a child at boarding school, comforts himself by imagining and then dreaming of his rural home. In his real life, however, Coleridge suffered from nightmares so terrible that sometimes his own screams would wake him, a phenomenon he details in “The Pains of Sleep.” Opium probably gave Coleridge a sense of well-being that allowed him to sleep without the threat of nightmares.

**Chief Characteristics of Coleridge as a Romantic Poet**

Romanticism, in art, is European and American movement extending from about 1800 to 1850. Romanticism cannot be identified with a single style, technique, or attitude, but romantic painting is generally characterized by a highly imaginative and subjective approach, emotional intensity, and a dreamlike or visionary quality.

S. T. Coleridge is one of the most prominent writers of Romantic Movement. The chief characteristics in his poetry are; supernaturalism, element of mystery, fertile imagination, dream quality, medievalism, love of Nature, meditative note, humanitarianism, music and narrative skill which distinguish Coleridge’s poetry as the most complete representative of the English Romantic poetry of the early nineteenth century. We can take these characteristics of his poetry one by one:

**Supernaturalism:** Supernaturalism is something that is above and beyond what is natural; events which cannot be directly explained by known laws and observations. Exploration of the occult (supposedly supernatural or magic) and of infinity, mysticism, and numerology (study of the supposed influence of number) are some other manifestation of the intense desire of man to know what exists or lies beyond the finite mind. Imaginative and inventive fiction and poetry have been created upon this appeal. This element of supernaturalism is found in the three major works of Coleridge, ‘The Ancient Mariner’, ‘Kubla Khan’ and ‘Christabel’. The outstanding quality of Coleridge’s supernaturalism, however, is that his writings do not excite one’s senses to a feverish pitch and do not remain remote from human reality. He is capable of creating the still, sad music of humanity. In his supernaturalism we do not find any kind of crudeness as is found in other poets Horace and Monk Lewis. He replaced the crudeness with suggestiveness. He did not portray horror, he suggested it. Both in the cases of the Night-mare Life-in-Death and the serpent woman Geraldine, he resists the temptation of depicting their hideous monstrosity. He conveys the gruesomeness (horrification) of Life-in-Death in a few suggestive lines.

> Her lips were red, her looks were free
> Her locks were yellow as gold
Her skin was white as leprosy
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she
Who thickens Man’s blood with cold.

Or through the Mariner’s response to her

Fear at my heart, as at a cup
My life-blood seemed to sip.

In the same manner the repulsiveness (unpleasantness) of Geraldine’s ugly bosom is conveyed through a clever suggestion,

A sight to dream of, not to tell!
O shield her! Shield sweet Christabel!

Coleridge has successfully kept the reality of supernatural phenomena by avoiding the descriptions of details. He deepens his effect by mystery surrounding it. Along with this Coleridge’s supernaturalism has essentially psychological truth in it. The supernatural touches in ‘Kubla Khan’ or ‘The Ancient Mariner’ are so managed that they are in perfect harmony with the mental and emotional moulds of the characters as well as the readers. The ancestral voices heard by Kubla Khan prophesy war. The poet in his poetic frenzy is capable of building supernatural awe in the minds of the readers when the people coming see his castle see his flashing eyes and waving hair and draw a circle around him thrice to keep them safe from this man who has been fed on honey and dew and drank the milk of paradise. The supernatural drama of the ‘The Ancient Mariner’ catches hold of the readers’ sub-conscious mind. This is, however, noteworthy that Coleridge like Homer and Shakespeare makes the element of supernaturalism the part of a wider scheme which is intimately related to living human experience. The central idea of the need of human love and compassion with man, bird and beast and the entire creation of God and the painful experience caused by their absence is so intensely human that even the supernatural character of the events cannot becloud its truthfulness.

Element of Mystery or Mysteriousness; Mysteriousness is that condition in which some character, event or situation remains hidden and is not revealed to the usual vision or common understanding. It is not completely known but makes its presence feel to the people. Coleridge possesses an unusual gift of evoking the mystery of things. The Ancient Mariner is made a mysterious character just by the mention of the glittering eyes long grey beard and skinny hands. Geraldine’s sudden appearance in an unexpected circumstance makes her mysterious. Her being beautiful exceedingly also makes her mysterious. But Coleridge uses this faculty most effectively by keeping alive the ordinary natural phenomena intact. The blowing of the winds and the twinkling of stars assume a mysterious character. Mast-high ice sending a dismal sheen and making cracking and growling sound is bound to appear mysterious. Similarly mysterious is found in the death fires dancing in red and rout and water burning green, blue and white like a witch’s oils. The romantic chasm in ‘Kubla Khan’ is given a touch of mystery by the mention of the ‘woman wailing for her demon love.’

Fertile and Rich imagination: Imagination is a mental faculty of framing images of external objects which are not present to the five senses. It is a process of using all the faculties so as to realize with intensity what is not perceived, and to do this in a way that integrates and orders everything present to the mind so that reality is enhanced thereby. Coleridge in his ‘Biographia Literaria’ writes of imagination thus; ‘The power reveals itself in the balance or reconcilement of opposite and discordant qualities of sameness, with the differences of the general; with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old familiar objects; a
more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order. We see that Coleridge’s imagination has all these qualities to a superb order.

Coleridge is gifted with the most fertile and vigorous imagination among all the Romantic Poets. It is by this rich and fertile imagination that he is able to create his perplexing mystery. In this respect he goes ahead of Wordsworth who was too conscientious to describe or present those things that were not seen personally by him. Coleridge, on the other hand, was able to describe and present those things which he came across during his vast study through his faculty of imagination. He had the faculty of presenting such unseen and inexperienced things so vividly as if those had been literally present before his eyes. He presents the place of Kubla Khan’s palace as he was practically present there, ‘here Kubla Khan commanded a palace to be built and a stately garden there unto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground was enclosed with a wall,’ set imagination on fire and we can have vivid picture of Kubla Khan’s stately pleasure dome. According to the great Greek critic Longinus, a great writer is that one who has the capability of transporting the reader to his own imaginative world. Coleridge, no doubt, was bestowed with this quality. Not only this, he had the rare skill to create an imaginary world, changed it into imaginative and then transformed it to a make-belief condition. The world created by Coleridge in his whole poem of ‘The Ancient Mariner’ is the best example of this faculty of Coleridge. J.L. Lowes’ book ‘The Road to Xanadu’ amply illustrates how Coleridge’s imagination could transform simple facts collected during his reading into something mysterious and wonderful.

Dream Quality: Dream quality is a quality of imagining while asleep. It is a process of or a sequence of images that appear involuntarily to the mind of a sleeping person, often a mixture of real and imaginary characters, places and events. The major poems of Coleridge have a strange dream like atmosphere about them. Dreams with him are no shadows. They are the very substance of his life. He fed on his dreams and vitalized him in his poems. ‘Kubla Khan’ is essentially a dream poem recounting in a poetic form what he saw in a vision. ‘The Ancient Mariner’ displays a dream-like movement. C.M Bowra in the ‘Romantic Imagination’ illustrates the affinity of ‘The ancient Mariner’ with a dream. ‘On the surface it shows many qualities of a dream,’ he says. ‘It moves in abrupt stages each of which has its own single dominating character. Its visual impressions are remarkably brilliant and absorbing. Its emotional impacts change rapidly but always come with unusual force as if the poet were hunted and obsessed by them. When it is all over, to cling to the memory with a peculiar tenacity (tending to stick firmly) just as on waking it is difficult at first to disentangle (get freed) ordinary experience from influences which still survive from sleep.’ The dramatic texture (structure) of Coleridge’s poems gives them a kind of twilight vagueness intensifying their mystery.

Medievalism: Medievalism means devotion to the Middle Ages, a devotion to the spirit of beliefs of the Middle Ages. Coleridge’s love for supernatural led him to the exploration of Middle Ages. He was fascinated by the romance and legends associated with them. ‘The Ancient Mariner’ ‘Christable’ and ‘Kubla Khan’ are all wrought with the glamsours of Middle Ages. But it should be kept in mind that Medievalism does not form the substance of his poems. It gives them the much needed sense of remoteness and offers a fit setting for the marvelous which is Coleridge’s purpose to hint at or openly display.

Love of Nature: Nature means a physical world including all natural phenomena and living things. It also means a force that is represented before man in the form of beautiful scenes. Wordsworth is stated to be communicating new order of experience for which Nature serves us a point of departure and there was not such an experience in English poetry before his time. Coleridge shows for Nature the same loving devotion as we find in Wordsworth. But Bowra rightly points out that his eye for Nature is for its
more charms and less obvious appeals and he takes richer and more luxurious pleasure in those aspects of Nature that can present a dramatic and mysterious look. Whether his descriptions are based on his personal experiences or on what he has read, he never fails to give them a semblance of truth. The bergs around the skiff or the single sudden stride of a tropical night are scenes that he could not have seen, but they look a lively and realistic as the fire wild torrents actually seen by him rushing down the sides of the hoary, majestic sky. He can evoke the richness of colour as well as the magical associations of sound much better than any other poet. And he is equally successful both in giving graphic descriptions and in achieving broad generalized effects. In his earlier attitude towards Nature, he had a pantheistic view and also accepts it as a moral teacher, but later he comes to believe that it is we who invest Nature with life and it simply reflects our own moods. This later stage of his attitude towards Nature is the stage when he says in ‘Dejection: An Ode.’

*O Lady! We receive but what we give,*  
*And in our life alone doth Nature live*  
*Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!*

**Meditative Note:** Meditative thinking is the result of reflective and speculative temper. It is a philosophic bent of mind. Coleridge was amply gifted with this quality. This tendency of mind was present even in his early age which made him to do serious reading. He was especially impressed by the German philosophers Kant and Schiller. ‘Dejection: An Ode’ is also written in a meditative mood in which he deplores the loss of imaginative power because of the metaphysical strain in his thinking. The verses in ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ (which also hint at the theme of the poem) clearly reflects his meditative mind when he says;

*He prayth well, who loveth well*  
*Both man and bird and beast.*

*He prayth best, who loveth best*  
*All things both great and small*  
*For the dear God who loveth us*  
*He made and loveth all.*

**Humanitarianism:** Humanitarianism means the love of humanity and a commitment to improving the lives of others. We find humanitarianism in Coleridge’s poetry. Both he and Wordsworth strongly supported the French Revolution in the hope that it would free the masses from the tyranny of the dictators. But they were miserably disappointed in their hope. When Coleridge discovered that the revolutionists were perverting or violating the very principles they had stood for, he did not hesitate to denounce them in his; French : An Ode’. His love of humanity is expressed in different poems and also in the moral of ‘The Ancient Mariner’ when he says

*He prayth well who loveth well*  
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**Music:** Music is the art of arranging sounds, the art of arranging or making sound, usually those of musical instruments or voices, in groups and patterns that create a pleasing or stimulating effect. It can be presented in the written form indicating pitch, duration, rhythm, and tone of notes to be played. ‘Coleridge is always a singer’, says H.D. Traill. Court Hope also agrees that there is a tendency to approximate the art of poetry to the art of music. Coleridge's musical genius can best be seen in such poems as ‘The Ancient Mariner’, ‘Christable’, ‘Kubla Khan’ and ‘Youth and Age’. ‘The Ancient
Mariner’ has woven cunning sound patterns with the help of internal rhyme or of clever use of alliteration

The ice was here, the ice was there
The ice was all around
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled
Like noises in the swound!

The internal rhyme and the alliterative effect in the following lines is noteworthy

'The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew
The furrow followed free
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.'

The musical quality in ‘Christable’ and ‘Kubla Khan’ puts the reader into a hypnotic spell.

**Narrative skill:** Narrative skill is the art of telling a story or giving an account of a sequence of events in the order in which they happened. Coleridge is superb in the art of storytelling. He knows how to create suspense or to evoke interest in the narrative. In ‘The Ancient Mariner’ he invests the Mariner with a hypnotic power in order to raise our curiosity in his story. And he introduces his events very dramatically. By bringing the specter – ship gradually closer to view, a hush of expectancy is created before death and Life-in-Death are dramatically brought on the scene to determine the fate of the Mariner. The dropping down of his two hundred sailor companions one by one after the killing of Albatross and their souls going out making a whiz sound of the cross bow produces a very dramatic effect. The wedding guest’s interruptions are used to highlight the climatic moments. All these devices give the poem an incomparable narrative beauty.

The above are the characteristics that distinguish Coleridge from other romantic poets and make him the most complete representative of the English Romantic poetry of the early nineteenth century.

**Medievalism in S.T Coleridge**

**Introduction:** Medievalism means devotion to the Middle Ages, a devotion to the spirit of beliefs of the Middle Ages. Coleridge’s love for supernatural led him to the exploration of Middle Ages. He was fascinated by the romance and legends associated with them. ‘The Ancient Mariner’ ‘Christabel’ and ‘Kubla Khan’ are all wrought with the glories of Middle Ages. But it should be kept in mind that Medievalism does not form the substance of his poems. It gives them the much needed sense of remoteness and offers a fit setting for the marvellous which is Coleridge’s purpose to hint at or openly display.

**Medievalism in Coleridge’s Poetry:** The scene set in distant times and remote places. The three important poems in which Coleridge has made use of the supernatural are ‘The Ancient Mariner, Christabel and Kubla Khan. It is significant that in all the three poems, Coleridge takes us to distant times and remote places. The remoteness of scene in all the three poems is quite deliberate. Medieval times are associated with magic and witchcraft. The appearance of an evil spirit in Sir Leoline’s castle does not strike us as improbable nor do we feel any inappropriateness in Kubla Khan’s hearing ancestral voices prophesying war amidst the tumultuous noises heard from the fountain as well as the cavers measureless to man. The moment the poet effects temporal and spatial remoteness, the rigorous logic governing the familiar world of reality is suspended and the poet feels free to create a new logic in a comparatively new world.
There is much of medievalism in the works of almost all the romantic poets, with the exception of Wordsworth. The romantics inclined towards the distant and the remote in preference to the homely and familiar. Coleridge who mainly dealt with supernatural subjects was all the more attracted by the legends and romances of the Medieval times. The people were superstitious and they had a real faith in the supernatural. The Middle Ages, thus, provided Coleridge not only with his themes but also offered appropriate setting and atmosphere for the enactment of those themes. All the important poems of his, ‘The Ancient Mariner’ ‘Christabel,’ ‘Kubla Khan’ and ‘Love’ are wrought with the glamour of the Middle Ages.

‘The Ancient Mariner’ does not employ the medieval atmosphere as completely as ‘Christabel,’ where we have moat-castles, (castles having ditches around it) feudal lords, serpent6 women, and bards and pages. Still whosoever will read ‘The ancient Mariner’ a little careful reader will not fail to notice the medieval touches generously given to it. The very opening line, ‘It is an Ancient Mariner’ strikes the key-note of the poem. The word ‘ancient’ not only refer to the old age of the Mariner but immediately distinguishes him as belonging to the olden times. The reader is thus warned at the outset to be ready to be wafted to distant times. The reader is thus warned at the outset to be ready to be wafted (floated gently) to distant times. The ceremonials and rituals hinted at in the beginning are connected with the medieval church. The ‘loud bassoon’, the ‘merry minstrelsy’ and ‘the blushing bride, suggest a medieval wedding, when measures were danced and wine flowed in rounds, and songs and ballads were sung with great enthusiasm and joy. Moreover, the ship, the masts, the oars, the sails, the Pilot and the Pilot’s boy, and the lighthouse – all point to the past. The sailors, like people in the Middle Ages, are a superstitious set. They believe in portent (omen) and omens. They take the Albatross to be a bird of good omen, and condemn the Mariner for having killed it. The moral theme of the poem consisting in the catholic idea of redemption through penance or expiation is also medieval in spirit. The cross-bow with which the Mariner shoots the Albatross was also used in the Middle Ages.

Coleridge Medievalism also includes the following elements which are closely connected to one another. Those are Supernaturalism, Dream-like Quality, Love of Nature, Fertile and rich Imagination the element of Mystery and Mysteriousness and a very effective and impressive Narrative Skill.

**Supernaturalism:** - Coleridge’s romanticism in the sense of his artistic rendering of the supernatural phenomena. Although it has not the same level of supernaturalism as is found in ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, or ‘Christabel; yet the supernatural in the poem stand out quite conspicuously, (easily available). The woman waiting for her demon lover and the ancestral voices prophesying war; are obviously supernatural occurrences. The poetic frenzy of an inspired poet borders on the supernatural. The tumultuous rise of the river Alph from a deep romantic chasm is also given an unmistakable supernatural touch. But what is remarkable about ‘Kubla Khan’ is the convincing presentation of the supernatural elements. The description of the landscape is so vivid and precise; the similes used for the mighty fountain so homely (plain) and familiar that it does not occur to the reader that anything incredible is being described. The psychological truth hidden behind Kubla Khan’s hearing ancestral voices prophesying war or the representation of the poet as a super human being make these facts acceptable.

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English poetry before his time. Coleridge shows for Nature the same loving devotion as we find in Wordsworth. But Bowra rightly points out that his eye for Nature is for its more charms and less obvious appeals and he takes richer and more luxurious pleasure in those aspects of Nature that can present a dramatic and mysterious look. Whether his descriptions are based on his personal experiences or on what he has read, he never fails to give them a semblance of truth. The bergs around the skiff or the single sudden stride of a tropical night are scenes that he could not have seen, but they look a lively and realistic as the fire wild torrents actually seen by him rushing down the sides of the hoary, majestic sky. He can evoke the richness of colour as well as the magical associations of sound much better than any other poet. And he is equally successful both in giving graphic descriptions and in achieving broad generalized effects.

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Mysteriousness is that condition in which some character, event or situation remains hidden and is not revealed to the usual vision or common understanding. It is not completely known but makes its presence feel to the people. Coleridge possesses an unusual gift of evoking the mystery of things. The Ancient Mariner is made a mysterious character just by the mention of the glittering eyes long grey beard and skinny hands. Geraldine’s sudden appearance in an unexpected circumstance makes her mysterious. Her being beautiful exceedingly also makes her mysterious. But Coleridge uses this faculty most effectively by keeping alive the ordinary natural phenomena intact. The blowing of the winds and the twinkling of stars assume a mysterious character. Mast-high ice sending a dismal sheen and making cracking and growling sound is bound to appear mysterious. Similarly mysterious is found in the death fires dancing in red and rout and water burning green, blue and white like a witch’s oils. The romantic chasm in ‘Kubla Khan’ is given a touch of mystery by the mention of the ‘woman wailing for her demon love.’

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Imagination is a mental faculty of framing images of external objects which are not present to the five senses. It is a process of using all the faculties so as to realize with intensity what is not perceived, and to do this in a way that integrates and orders everything present to the mind so that reality is enhanced thereby. Coleridge in his ‘Biographia Literaria’ writes of imagination thus; ‘The power reveals itself in the balance or reconcilement of opposite and discordant qualities of sameness, with the differences of the general; with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order. We see that Coleridge’s imagination has all these qualities to a superb order.
Coleridge is gifted with the most fertile and vigorous imagination among all the Romantic Poets. It is by this rich and fertile imagination that he is able to create his perplexing mystery. In this respect he goes ahead of Wordsworth who was too conscientious to describe or present those things that were not seen personally by him. Coleridge, on the other hand, was able to describe and present those things which he came across during his vast study through his faculty of imagination. He had the faculty of presenting such unseen and inexperienced things so vividly as if those had been literally present before his eyes. He presents the place of Kubla Khan’s palace as he was practically present there, ‘here Kubla Khan commanded a palace to be built and a stately garden there unto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground was enclosed with a wall,’ set imagination on fire and we can have vivid picture of Kubla Khan’s stately pleasure dome. According to the great Greek critic Longinus, a great writer is that one who has the capability of transporting the reader to his own imaginative world. Coleridge, no doubt, was bestowed with this quality. Not only this, he had the rare skill to create an imaginary world, changed it into imaginative and then transformed it to a make-belief condition. The world created by Coleridge in his whole poem of ‘The Ancient Mariner’ is the best example of this faculty of Coleridge. J.L. Lowes’ book ‘The Road to Xanadu’ amply illustrates how Coleridge’s imagination could transform simple facts collected during his reading into something mysterious and wonderful.

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Albatross and their souls going out making a whiz sound of the cross bow produces a very dramatic effect. The wedding guest's interruptions are used to high light the climatic moments. All these devices give the poem an incomparable narrative beauty.

We can say that Coleridge’s Medievalism does not take us only to remote and distant places and men but has within it the other qualities of the poet's art like supernatural, fertile imagination, dream-quality, an effective and impressive narrative skill and his love of Nature.

**Supernaturalism in S.T. Coleridge**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge is one of the fabulous poets of Romantic Movement in English literature. His thoughts are philosophical. But his style is simple and clear. Supernaturalism is his special field. He writes about supernatural elements and events and describes what is unseen and beyond nature. But he describes them in such a way that they appear nature and life like. He differs from his contemporaries, Lewis, Mrs. Radcliff and poet, who create horror by showing reshaped and horrible paces. He on the other hand, creates horror by creating horrible atmosphere. He is a great artist.

It is true that what is best in Coleridge’s poetry is very small in amount but that little is of great value. He seems to have more interest in describing supernatural element. But his greatness lies in the fact that he describes them in such a way that looks to be natural and life like.

What is the supernatural? Though the ages phenomena which could not be explained by the know laws of nature have been attributed to supernatural powers and influences. If these happenings led to the benevolent powers; if or the contrary they resulted in suffering and misery, they were ascribed to evil spirits literature has continuously been enriched by stories in which the supernatural plays an important part. The desire of hearing about the miraculous is as strong in the civilized man as it was in his primitive ancestors, as it is in the native child. The folklores of all ages and countries abound in tales of magic, fairies, spirits ghosts and demons however be explained by the laws of science and that seem to involve gods or music.

The interest in the supernatural was an important aspect of the romantic spirit that appeared in the eighteenth century. The fashionable cult of the strangeness turned inevitably to this alluring world of the unknown and exploited it with a reckless carelessness. To Coleridge the supernatural appealed with a special power.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poems “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, ‘Kubla Khan’ and “Christable” are the precious assets of the English literature for supernatural elements. These are the poems that made him immortal in the world of literature.

“The Rime of The Ancient Mariner” is a poem in the romantic tradition with high imagination and supernatural elements. But at the same time Coleridge has put a moral lesson for his readers in the poem. He shows that any crime, big or small cannot go unpunished. Again, with true love the suffering soul may be purified and regenerated.

As a poet of the romantic tradition, Coleridge has put the supernatural in his poem “The Rime of The Ancient Mariner”, He put it perhaps to satisfy the taste of ordinary people of his day, we find every details of a sea voyage, the condition, the climate of the sea and the mariners on board. But at the same time there are so much incidents and scenes in the poem that cannot be believed with reason. Coleridge has created a willing suspension of disbelief here.
The Ancient Mariner is a tale of a curse which the narrator, the Mariner himself, brings upon himself and his companions by killing an Albatross without reason. Coleridge’s power of handling the supernatural is like the pure music of his verse. The moral of the poem is one of all-embracing love. This poem is full of moral teachings for human beings. Humphry House expresses his agreement with three great critics, Dr. Tillyard, Dr. Bowra, and Robert Penn Warren, that the poem has a very serious moral and spiritual effect on human life. The moral of the ancient Mariner’s story is that one should love all God’s creatures.

Coleridge is regarded as the greatest poet of the supernatural in English literature and The Ancient Mariner is regarded as a masterpiece of supernatural poetry. His supernatural is controlled by thought and study. Cazamian says, “The very center of Coleridge art lies in his faculty of evoking the mystery of things, and making it actual, widespread, and obsessing. Even better than Wordsworth, he knows how to handle that species of the supernatural whose essence (spirit) is entirely psychological. The supernatural element in The Ancient Mariner is a hallucination, the outcome of remorse; by the most sober of method.” His skill in dealing with the supernatural in this poem is two-fold: first, he has fully achieved his aim of making the supernatural appear to be natural; and, second, he has employed suggestive, psychological, and refined (sophisticated) methods of producing the feelings of mystery and horror in the poem, not crude and sensational like that of the writers before him, i.e. Horace, Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe, and Monk Lewis. The greatness of The Ancient Mariner lies chiefly in the technique by which the supernatural has been made believable and convincing. There are, no doubt, a number of impossible, incredible, and fantastic situation in the poem, such as: the mesmeric (magnetic) power in the mariner’s gaze, the sudden appearance of the mysterious skeleton ship, the spectre woman and her mate, the coming back to life of the dead crew, the seraph-band making signals to the land, the sudden sinking of the ship, and the polar spirit commenting on or influencing the course of events. But these supernatural phenomena are so skillfully blended with the perfectly believable and natural phenomena that the whole looks real. The sun shining brightly at the outset, the mist and snow, the freezing cold of the polar regions, the floating ice bergs floating in the water, the torrid (very hot) fierceness of stagnant water, the slimy things crawling on the sea, the moon going up the sky, the roaring wind, the rainfall—all are the natural phenomena in the poem. The realistic effect is enhanced by a description of the state of mind of the ancient mariner; that is how he tried to pray but he could not, how lonely he felt on a wide, wide sea, how he wanted to die but in vain (useless), how he suffered mental and spiritual anguish (torture). This psychological study of the mariner adds to the realistic effect because we are made to feel that any man would suffer in the same way under similar circumstances. Again, the details of the ship’s voyage have such a diary-like air that we accept them as a faithful recording of facts. There is, too, the logic of cause and effect in the poem. The punishment and torture have a convincing cause behind them.

The realistic effect achieved by Coleridge in The Ancient Mariner is one of his great achievements which make the poem not only convincing and exciting but also in some sense a criticism of life. There are a large number of situations and episodes in The Ancient Mariner, which fill us either with a sense of mystery or a feeling of horror or with both. The first situation that strikes terror in the heart of the Mariner (and also the reader) is the appearance of the skeleton-ship. When this skeleton-ship is sighted in the distance, the sailors feel happy to think that they will now get water to quench their burning thirst. But in a few moment they discover the reality of this ship. The description of the ship with its “ribs” and its “gossamere-like sails” fill us with terror. It is a strange mystery that this ship should sail on the sea without wind and without a tide, while the Mariner’s ship stands still “like a painted shop upon a painted ocean”. Obvi-
supernatural force, which drives the ship, and the crew also consists of supernatural characters. The feeling of terror is heightened when a reference is made to the crew of this ship. The crew consists of Death and Life-in-Death. But Coleridge creates the sense of horror in this poem not by describing a direct and crude description but by employing suggestive and psychological methods. For instance, he does not describe the physical features of the spectre woman and her death mate or other external phenomena at length, but he simply portrays the effect of those external things on the mariner's mind. The appearance of Life-in-Death is described in the following three lines: Her lips were red, her looks were free, Her locks were yellow as gold: Her skin was as white as leprosy. (Lines 190-92) These three lines are followed by these two: The night-mare Life-in-Death was she, Who thickens man's blood with cold. (lines 193-94) Coleridge, after giving us only three lines of description, conveys the horror by saying that the sight of her would have the effect of freezing a man's blood. In other words, he leaves it to us to imagine for ourselves the horrible appearance of Life-in-Death that personifies the unspeakable torture of a man who cannot die.

Coleridge merely offers a few suggestions to be developed by the reader himself. The effect of the skeleton-ship with Death and Life-in-Death on board again conveyed to us by the following two lines:

"Fear at my heart, as at a cup,  
My life-blood seemed to sip!"

That is, instead of giving us a detailed description of the whole horrible sight, Coleridge refers to the effect of that horrible sight upon the mind of the Mariner and says that fear sipped his life-blood. Another situation that produces horror in the poem is the death of the two hundred sailors who dropped down one by one, and each of them looked at the ancient Mariner with a curse in his eyes:

"One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,  
Too quick for groan or sigh,  
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,  
And cursed me with his eye."

The ancient Mariner heard a whiz-like sound every time a soul left its body:

"The souls did from their bodies fly,—  
They fled to bliss or woe!  
And every soul, it passed me by,  
Like the whiz of my cross-bow!"

What a horrible experience it must have been for the ancient Mariner and how horrible for the reader too. The agony and spiritual torture of the lonely ancient Mariner on a wide wide sea when he could not pray or die are, perhaps, the most terrifying and horrifying elements in the poem. The following stanzas convey some of the horror of the Mariner's state:

"I looked upon the rotting sea,  
And drew my eyes away;  
I looked upon the rooting deck,  
And there the dead men lay.  
I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;  
But or ever a prayer had gusht,  
A wicked whisper came, and made  
My heart as dry as dust."
What makes the situation still more horrifying is that the curse in dead men’s eyes had never passed away: “The look with which they looked on me Had never passed away.” “Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse, And yet I could not die.” Here, again, no ugly details are provided. We are to imagine the horror of the situation ourselves. We shudder (tremble) with fear to think of the Mariner who is left alone after seeing “four times fifty living men” dropping down one by one, “with heavy thump, a lifeless lump.” It is at this stage that the Weeding-Guest begins to experience a sensation of fear because he thinks that the Marines himself must also have dropped down dead and that it is the Mariner’s ghost who is now speaking to him and so he says:

‘I fear thee, ancient Mariner!  
I fear thy skinny hand!  
I fear thee and thy glittering eye,  
And thy skinny hand, so brown.’

Next, the groaning, stirring, and coming back to life of the dead crew must have been a terrifying experience for the ancient mariner till he discovered that the bodies were inspired not by their original souls but by a troop of angelic spirit. We are certainly terrified when we read:

“The dead men gave groan,  
They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,  
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;”

“They raised their limbs like lifeless tools  
We were a ghastly crew.”

In real life, if a dead man happens to open his eyes (because he has not really died), all the mourners get terribly frightened and run away helter-skelter. In this case two hundred dead men got up on their feet and started working at the oars.

The horror of the situation can well be imagined. Again, towards the close of the poem, the poet wishes to tell us how horrifying the Mariner’s face appeared after he had undergone his strange adventures. The poet does not describe the features the face; he simply describes the effect of the face upon the Pilot’s mind:

“I moved my lips— the Pilot shrieked  
And fell down in a fit;”

In other words, the Mariner’s face was ghastly like the face of a dead man, and it struck so much terror in the Pilot’s heart that the Pilot fainted. The Pilot must have thought that the Mariner was not a human being but some horrible spectre. The effect on the Pilot’s boy was that he went crazy with fear:

“I took the oars: the Pilot’s boy,  
Who now doth crazy go,  
Laughed loud and long, and all the while  
His eyes went to and fro.”

As for the Hermit, he too was terrified but, being a holy man, he sought courage from God:

“The holy Hermit raised his eyes,  
And prayed where he did sit.”
The Hermit is, indeed, badly shaken and, on stepping forth from the boat, could scarcely stand because of fear:

"The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand."

In a nervous state of mind, the Hermit asks the Mariner to tell him immediately what manner of man he is. In short, the horror of the Mariner's face is conveyed to us through the reactions of the Pilot, the Pilot's boy, and the Hermit. Coleridge's treatment of the supernatural is quite different from that of such writers as Horace, Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe, and Monk Lewis. The difference between Coleridge and the others is the difference between the maker of horror and the maker of horrors. Coleridge creates the atmosphere of mystery and fear by indefiniteness and by subtle suggestion, while the others employ crude description and they pile horrors in order to send a cold shiver down the reader's spine and to curdle the reader's blood. The theme of this poem is crime, punishment and reconciliation. In this poem the Mariner did not act but was only acted upon and he was the recipient rather than the doer. He is the recipient of the odd and of the fate. There is a tragic flaw for the Mariner as the killing of the bird starts his suffering. The suffering endured by the Mariner is due to killing the bird that represents imagination, and by killing the bird the Mariner kills the imagination and the loss of the imagination is a kind of death. The Mariner suffers mentally and spiritually, and he is isolated. Then in his suffering, he sees water snakes and blesses them, which eventually releases his suffering.

The ancient mariner is the story of a real life sea voyage pervaded by a supernatural atmosphere. There is an strangeness in the hypnotic eyes of the mariner, the spectral ship with death and nightmare life in death as its crew dicing or the deck, the winds that sound but never come near, the polar spirits entering the corpses of the mariners and activating them, and the mariners ship sinking mysteriously with a thundering sound coming from under the water. Terror is produced by Coleridge's ability to provide visual descriptions of striking vividness. The story with its supernatural accounts is obviously incredible, but within this frame work there is the human reality.

"God save thee, ancient mariner
From the fiends, that plague you thus!"

Here Coleridge vividly presents the supernatural issues by dwelling upon the hideous relations on the face of the mariner. This is the indirect way of treatment of the supernatural, Coleridge was perhaps aware of the fact that such supernatural scenes would not be accepted or believed by his readers. Hence he has dealt with the reactions of the persons that we experience.

'And some is dreams assured were
Of the spirit that plagued us so
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.'

Then comes the appearance from nowhere of the skeleton ship with gossamer-like sails, carrying death and life in death engaged in a gambling contest. This ship sails on the sea without wind or tide and it disappears as suddenly as it had appeared. The stanza where this incident is described is horrifying in their effect upon us and sends a cold shiver down our spine. The manner of the death of all the sailors except the ancient mariner is supernatural. There is something supernatural about the way in which the dead body of the albatross automatically falls down from the ancient mariner's neck into the sea. The moving of the ship upon the sea without a wind is supernatural.
In these lines the ancient mariner describes the gradual approach of the skeleton ship. He and his companions had passed a long and weary time, in thirst and loneliness. One day, looking towards the western sky, where the sun was setting, the ancient mariner saw a strange sight. At first the thing appeared like a den in the moving piece of mist; it was still to indistinct to be clearly distinguished.

Then as it came still nearer, the mariner found it had a definite shape—it was a ship, it was moving so fast that it appeared to be escaping from the pursuit of a water spirit. Besides, its course was very unsteady. The strange behavior of the ship made the ancient mariner think that the ship was trying to escape from a water spirit that was pursuing it to take revenge.

The poet skillfully suggests the supernatural nature of the ship. The ship of the ancient mariner was becalmed for there was no wind and tide, but in the same sea there was another ship which was moving fast and very fast. How could the second ship move thus, without wind or tide, unless there was something supernatural about it.

“Kubla khan” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge is one of the most mysterious and ambiguous piece of literature ever written. Allegedly written after a laudanum induced dream, the author claims to have been planning a two hundred to three hundred line poem before he got interrupted by a man. This is partly true, as the language seems often in genial Christianity.

Coleridge’s philosophy in life was very romantic and so nearly all of his poems exemplify the romantic idea, especially “Kubla Khan”. This romantic poem uses brilliant imagery and metaphors to contrast the ideals of romantic paganism with often in genial Christianity. The vision of paganism is the first idea introduced in the poem. The supernatural reference to “Alph” or Alpheus as it is historically known.

“The sacred river ran
Though caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea”

The river Alph is directly related to the Greek god Alpheus, who the river god. According to Greek mythology, a pagan belief, the god Alpheus had fallen in love with Arethusa the daughter of Nereus and a Hesperides. This again adds to the supernatural quality of the poem.

Suggestiveness is the basic feature of Coleridge’s supernaturalism. It is true that a very vivid and graphic description of the surrounding of the pleasure-dome is given in the poem but the supernatural element is suggestive. Coleridge is a superb artist for intermingling the natural and supernatural so that the probable and the improbable interfuse. Here are lines which for sheer suggestiveness and mystery are perhaps unsurpassed.

“A savage place: as holy and enchanted
As e’er beneath a waiting moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover”

A complete story of love’s tragedy is hidden in these three lines. And then the following two lines:
"And mid this tumult Kubla heard from
Ancestral voices prophesying war!"

The poet in these lines, describes the visionary landscape of the palace of Kubla Khan. Kubla Khan, the mighty emperor ordered to build a pleasure dome. The poet says that the place is a wild one which may be awe-inspiring. Again this is holy and magic land. The influence of magic seems to be there. This place says Coleridge is visited repeatedly by a woman to find out her lover who is a demon. Under the fading light of the waning moon she looks for her lover and wails. These lines are full of dream elements that run through the whole poem. Coleridge's supernaturalism is at its height as he describes a mysterious and terrible landscape.

In lines, 37–46, Coleridge here presents a visionary scene where a maiden is playing her musical instrument and singing. The poet says in these lines, describes the visionary landscape of the palace of Kubla Khan. The poet says that once he saw in a vision or dream that an Abyssinian girl was playing on a musical instrument called dulcimer. The maid was also singing a wonderful song that charmed the poet. If he could remember that music he could build a pleasure-dome in the air, with his inspired poetry. The poem here gets a supernatural touch with the maid and her musical instrument. The maid is Abyssinian and her instrument is a dulcimer which is from faraway place and time.

'For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of paradise.'

The poem here gets a supernatural touch with honey dew and milk of paradise. These are the foods of magicians and by taking them he could get the supernatural quality himself.

However Coleridge never forgets that his real purpose was to make the supernatural natural and to bring about the “willing suspension of disbelief which constitutes poetics faith.” Whether Kubla Khan is seen as a poem about poetic creativity or about life, it is a convincing work.

Coleridge made the supernatural as the region and haunt of his genius and shows the way to its most artistic use. There are two ways of treating the supernatural, one external and decorative and the other suggestive and psychological. In the first the supernatural horrors may be multiplied through a number of direct and vivid descriptions, in the second they may be subtly suggested and intensified through the depiction of their effect on the human victim. Coleridge knew how to handle that type of the supernatural whose essence is entirely psychological. He creates an atmosphere of mystery and horror by using supernatural elements. The influence of the supernatural has been brought to bear not only on human nature but or phenomenal nature also. Coleridge makes the natural seem supernatural by attributing to nature something of the special power and proficiency of the supernatural. Coleridge is best known for his haunting ballad, Rime of the Ancient Mariner, the dream like Kubla Khan and the unfinished Christabel. He used supernatural elements vastly in his three best known poems and supernaturalism gives him a new identity.

**S.T Coleridge's Willing Suspension of Disbelief**

No phrase in the language has acquired such wide and universe popularity, and has had such a profound impact on subsequent literary theory as Coleridge's phrase, "Willing suspension of disbelief", which he used to indicate the nature of poetic dramatic illusion. All through the Neo-classics era the question of dramatic illusion and credibility had exercised the mind of critics, and the observance of the unities was considered essential
for, their violation puts too severe a strain on the credibility of the audience and thus
dramatic illusion is violated. The topic was hotly debated and both Dryden and Dr.
Johnson have expressed their views on it, views which are in advance of those of their
contemporaries. However, it was Coleridge who said the last word on the subject, and
finally put the controversy at rest.

Coleridge uses the phrase in connection with his account in Chapter XIV of the
Biographia Literaria of the origin and genesis of the Lyrical Ballads. He writes,

“In this idea originated the plan of the Lyrical ballads; in which it was agreed that my
endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural or at least
romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a
semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing
suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith”.

Thus he was to treat of characters supernatural, which are incredible and improbable and
which under normal circumstances we would not believe in but the treatment was to be
such that as long as we were reading his poems, there would be, “a willing suspension of
disbelief”, and we would believe for the moment in what is essentially incredible and
improbable. In other words, the treatment should be such as would send the judgment
of readers to sleep, so that they would pursue the poem with delight.

In Chapter XXIII of the Biographia Literaria he explains himself further and writes:

“The poet does not require us to be awake and believe; he solicits us only to yield
ourselves to a dream; and this, too, with our eyes open, and with our judgment pursue
behind the curtain, really to awaken us at the first motion of our will, and meantime,
only, not to disbelieve”.

The poet sends our judgment to sleep, for as long as we are reading his word or seeing
his play. He does not ask us to believe in what is presented to our mind; he only requires
that we should not disbelieve. Only a momentary suspension of disbelief is required for
an enjoyment of imaginative literature. We are not under any illusion that it is reality;
only, for the moment, there is a voluntary remission of judgment, we enjoy what we
dream of. Similarly, the poet, if he is sufficiently skilful, sends our judgments to sleep so
that we neither believe nor disbelieve, it to be reality, but merely enjoy what is
presented to the mind’s eye. Our reason, or rational judgment, our consciousness, is in
voluntarily suspension and this suspension of judgment enables us to enjoy what is in
our waking moments when the spell is broken, we would condemn as incredible.
Distancing in time and place, humanizing of the marvelous and the supernatural, etc.,
are some of the devices used to procure such, “willing suspension of disbelief”.

Further light on Coleridge’s views in this connection is thrown through a comparison with
the view of Dr. Johnson. Dr. Johnson was of the view that the reader or the spectator
deludes himself into believing a play to be a reality, as long as he is witnessing it. The
spectator knows, “from the first to the last that the stage is only a stage and that the
players are only players”. But knowingly he deludes himself and regards it as the reality.
Not unlike Johnson, Coleridge is of the view that it is not in this state that a tale or play
is enjoyed, or that the reader or the spectator allows himself to be deluded even
temporarily, to be able to enjoy it. On the contrary, he just takes leave of his judgment
for the time being. ‘The true stage-illusion consists not in the mind’s judging it to be a
forest, but in its remission of the judgment that it is not a forest’. While Dr. Johnson
believed that the spectator is in full exercise of his judgment and knows that what is
being presented to him is not reality, Coleridge believes that the spectator does not
voluntarily exercise his judgment for the time being. His critical faculty is asleep so to
say. Thus Coleridge’s position is a middle one: the spectator or the reader c
actively believe nor disbelieve. His judgment is in a state of suspension for the time being. Voluntarily he is persuaded not to exercise it as long as he is reading a poem or witnessing a play. Imaginative literature owes its appeal to such suspension of disbelief.

What is Apocalypse and how it is manipulated in the Rime of Ancient Mariner

Apocalypse is a situation in which a lot of people die or suffer and a lot of damage is done. Apocalyptic is warning people about terrible events that will happen in future. The Rime of Ancient Mariner contains apocalyptic and natural symbolism that dominates the core of the poem. The Biblical symbolism found in this poem mainly reflects the apocalypse as it deals with the Mariner’s revelation that good will triumph over evil, and his acceptance of all nature as God’s creation.
William Blake—Life and Works

The Family: William Blake, mystic, poet, and artist, was born in London on November 28, 1757. His father was a hosiery worker, living at 28, Broad Street, Golden Square. The family consisted of four sons and a daughter, William being the second son, and the only one to achieve distinction. The eldest, James, succeeded his father in the hosiery business. The third, John, died young after leading a dissolute life. The youngest, Robert, who showed considerable capabilities as an artist, was greatly loved by William, and was nursed by him through the illness of which he died at the age of 21. Another boy, Richard, died in infancy.

Early Training and Poetical Attempts: William showed his artistic tastes at an early age. At the age of ten he was sent to a drawing school in the Strand. At fifteen he was apprenticed to an engraver. He also made drawings of the monuments in Westminster Abbey. He was greatly influenced by the Gothic style. His creative faculty found an outlet in the early years in poetry, some of which has survived in the thin volume of Poetical Sketches, printed for him by his friends in 1783. These pieces were composed between his 12th and 20th years.

As a Professional Engraver: In 1779 Blake set out to earn his living as a professional engraver. He did a lot of work in this line for the booksellers and publishers. During the next twenty years or so he supported himself largely by this means.

Marriage: In 1781 Blake met Catherine Boucher, the illiterate daughter of a market-gardener, and married her in August, 1782. She made a perfect wife for him. She learned to draw and paint well enough to be able to help him in his work. She remained childless, and survived him by four years, dying in 1831.

A New Method of Printing: During the years 1783-87 Blake met a number of distinguished persons, but this society soon disgusted him, and he ridiculed it in a satire known as An Island in the Moon written in 1785. In 1788 he began to experiment with a new method of printing from etched copper-plates. It is related that the secret of this process was revealed to him in a vision by the spirit of his brother Robert. The first results of this process were the small dogmatic works: There is No Natural Religion and All Religions are One. It developed further with the production of Songs of Innocence, which consisted of simple lyrical poems etched on copper with decorations coloured by hand.

The volume was finished in 1789 and was sold for a few shillings. This was the prelude to the remarkable series of books in "illuminated printing" which occupied Blake in some degree for the rest of his life.

Mysticism and Philosophy: Blake was now living in Hercules Road, Lambeth. Here he completed the works entitled The Book of Thel (1789); The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1793); America (1793); Visions of the Daughters of Albion (1793); Songs of Experience (1794); Europe (1794); Urizen (1794); The Book of Los (1795); The Book of Ahania (1795); and The Song of Los (1795).

During this period Blake was deeply under the influence of his visionary powers, and mysticism and philosophy emerged as his dominant interests.
Blake's output as an artist was considerable. In 1795 he produced his stupendous series of large colour prints which can scarcely be matched in the whole history of art for imaginative content and magnificence of colouring. These include "Nebuchadnezzar", "The Elohim Creating Adam", and "Newton". By 1797 he had completed his series of 537 water-colour designs for Young's Night Thoughts.

The Problem of Earning a Livelihood: Blake's circle of friends had become a little wider now, and included Thomas Butts. It was chiefly Butts's patronage which enabled Blake to earn a livelihood while devoting much time and energy to his symbolical works which never produced any adequate return by their sales. He even laboured over a long poem, The Four Zoas. It is a poem of the greatest significance for the understanding of Blake.

Life and Work at Felpham: During the seven years from 1793 to 1800, Blake's creative output was enormous. In 1800, Blake moved with his wife and sister, from London to Felpham in Sussex in order to work at some engravings for William Hayley. But three years later he returned to London with a great sense of relief. At first he had been able to work happily enough at Felpham, but soon he became more and more irritated by Hayley's patronizing airs and lack of understanding. He also experienced much spiritual discomfort at Felpham because of the visions that he incessantly saw. He was forced to lead a double life, submitting on the surface to Hayley's vanities and developing in secret his own imaginative faculties. The Felpham period was, therefore; a strangely mixed output of second-rate engravings for Hayley, of fine paintings, and of mystical poetry of great power, which was mostly embodied in the poem Milton. In January,1804 Blake was tried on a false charge of having used treasonable words against the King, and was acquitted.

Association with Cromek: In 1805 Blake joined the engraver Cromek in a scheme for the production of a series of engravings for Robert Blair's The Grave. But here he was again deceived; Cromek paid him a small sum for the designs, and then employed another man to engrave them. Blake, already embittered by neglect, felt still more embittered and suffered from fits of depression.

The Failure of His Exhibition: In 1809 Blake held an exhibition of his works at the house of his brother James in Broad Street, Golden Square. Sixteen pictures were exhibited, including his large painting of Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims, and each visitor to the house received for his entrance to the house a copy of the now celebrated "Descriptive Catalogue". The exhibition attracted very little notice, the only criticism of it, which appeared in Leigh Hunt's The Examiner being malicious and unfair.

Years of Obscurity: During the years that followed, Blake fell into complete obscurity. It is not known for certain how he earned his living during 1810-17. It has even been suggested that for part of this period he was confined to a mental hospital. Some of his acquaintances, such as Robert Southey, who visited him in 1811, did regard him as insane. But his intimate friends were convinced that he was not at all mad. Throughout this period he was occasionally selling copies of his illuminated books. He also executed engravings for various employers. He was occupied, too, with the 100 etched plates of his greatest symbolical poem, Jerusalem.

"Illustrations of the Book of Job": In 1818, Blake entered upon the last phase of his life, and until his death in 1827 was probably happier with his friends and in his work than he had been at any other period. He was now able to obtain more work, and became the centre of a circle of young artists who regarded him with affection and reverence. In 1821, Blake moved from South Molton Street to 3, Fountain Court, Strand, and here he executed his most widely known work in creative art, the "Illustrations of the Book of Job". Though superficially illustrations of the Bible story, the engravings form
one of the most important of Blake's symbolical works. Their mystical content has not prevented the designs from being the most widely known and generally appreciated of his works.

**Illustrations of the "Divine Comedy", and Death:** Blake was to make one more great effort in his art. In October, 1825, he was asked to make illustrations of Dante's Divine Comedy and to engrave them. He completed a hundred water-colour designs, of which seven were engraved, and he was still at work upon these when he died on the 12th August, 1827. He was buried in an unmarked grave in Bunhill Fields Cemetery, the approximate place being now indicated by a tablet placed there.

**Blake's Character:** Blake suffered from the defects of his qualities. His mind was never systematically cultivated. His qualities isolated him from his contemporaries and drove his mind upon itself, so that the interpretation of his message to mankind cannot be made with accuracy. But through all his mental turmoil and difficulties in dealings with his fellow men he preserved his intellectual integrity, and he never prostituted his art. Throughout his life he tried to exalt the things of the mind, and for him the imagination was man's highest faculty. Ceaselessly he fought against materialism. He was deeply religious, though in no conventional sense. In his later years Christ became identified in his mind with Art, and this fact provides many clues for the understanding of his doctrines. But perhaps the most illuminating revelation of his mind for most readers are the aphorisms and didactic statements which he engraved about the year 1820 around a representation of the Laocoon group.

**Conclusion:** Blake was not much understood by his contemporaries. He influenced them as little as he was influenced by them, and for many years after his death his name was unknown. His first full biography, written by Alexander Gilchrist, was published in 1863, and was reprinted under the supervision of D.G. Kossetti in 1880. Since that time his power and originality have gained fuller recognition, and he now holds a position as one of the greatest figures in English poetry and art. A bronze bust of him was placed in the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey in November, 1957 to mark the bicentenary of his birth. Many of his pictures are to be seen in the Tate Gallery, London, and collections of his illuminated books in the British Museum.

**A Brief Survey of William Blake's Poetry**

**Saw Spiritual Presences:** William Blake, though a poet and a mystic of the most extraordinary genius, had little or no influence on his generation. The greater part of his message was so obscure, so wild, so incoherently delivered, that even now, after much study, his commentators have succeeded in making clear only a portion of what he wrote. He belonged to that type of mind which in superstitious ages is described as being "possessed". When a very young child he one day screamed with fear because, he said, he had seen God put His face to the window. In boyhood he saw several angels, very bright, standing in a tree by the roadside. In his manhood, the earth and the air were for him full of spiritual presences, all concerned with his fate or with that of his friends.

**His Visual Imagination:** With a metaphysical gift which made it natural for Blake to move in an ideal world, he combined a visual imagination of abnormal, almost miraculous power, which enabled him to give bodily form to abstractions, and to summon at any moment before him "armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk." Outwardly he led a regular, quiet, laborious life, all the while pouring out poems, drawings, and vast "prophetic books" full of shadowy mythologies and mystical thought-systems which show that his inward life was one of perhaps unparalleled excitement and adventure.
His Fame as a Poet: Aside from the prophetic works, such as The Book of Thel and The French Revolution, his fame as a poet rests chiefly on his Poetical Sketches (1783) and on his Songs of Innocence (1789) and Songs of Experience (1794). These little volumes contain some of the simplest and sweetest as well as some of the most powerful short poems in the language. At his best, Blake has a simplicity as great as Wordsworth's, and a magic which reminds us of Coleridge, combined with a depth and pregnancy of meaning peculiar to himself. In him the whole transcendental side of the Romantic Movement was expressed by hint and implication, if not by accomplishment.

Poetical Sketches: The most admirable of Blake's poems are to be found in his earlier volumes—Poetical Sketches (1783), Songs of Innocence (1789), and Songs of Experience (1794). These contain matchless lyrics, which show him as almost entirely apart from the 18th century influence and conventions. His models—as far as he has any—are the Elizabethans, though, in Poetical Sketches, there are some pieces of rhythmical, poetic prose, whose inspiration is Macpherson. In four lyrics on the seasons in this volume he describes Nature symbolically; others of the poems are ballads; others are dainty little poems which might almost have come from an Elizabethan; while others, again, with their talk of the "more than mortal fire (that) burns in (his) soul", sound the note of the visionary, a note to grow deeper and deeper later on.

"Songs of Innocence" and "Songs of Experience": Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience are companion collections of lyrics, in which there are many pairs of poems, each in a different mood. In Blake's words they were meant to show "the two contrary states of the human soul". The tone of the first series is admirably sounded by the introductory "Piping down the valleys wild". The volume contains such lovely lyrics as The Lamb, Infant Joy, Cradle Song, and Holy Thursday, recording the happy procession of charity children to St. Paul's Cathedral, and the picture of The Chimney Sweeper in which little "Tom was happy and warm". But, in the companion series, the happy-songs are changed. The symbol is no more the Lamb, "woolly bright", image of Christ, but the Tiger, "burning bright in the forests of the night"; and Blake asks: "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" Holy Thursday is now viewed in the light of experience, and the procession of the children no longer gives the poet joy; but he is miserable to see so many poor babes "fed with cold and usurous hand". The Chimneysweeper, too, is now seen "clothed in the clothes of death"; and Blake is bitter against those who go "up to the Church to pray" while the misery of the innocent is around them.

"Auguries of Innocence": The rest of Blake's poetic work does not have the same appeal. Auguries of Innocence, found in manuscript, is not great poetry, but it is the expression of his love of all creatures which makes him hate those who put "a robin redbreast in a cage" or hunt the hare, and of his intense mysticism in which he sees all the world as symbolical of spiritual verities:

To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a Heaven in a wild flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And Eternity in an hour.

"Thel": Thel, in unrhymed rhythmical lines, has much lyrical beauty. Thel, "youngest daughter of the Seraphim", laments until comforted by the Lily of the Valley, the Cloud, and the Worm.

Prophetic Books: The prophetic books were "dictated" to Blake by spirits. Some have seen a coherent symbolism in them, but to the ordinary reader they are a non-sensical chaos, broken by flashes of fine lyric or prose sentences enshrining in condensed expression deeply philosophical thoughts. There is the well-known lyric in Milton in which concludes thus:
Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire.
I will not cease from mental strife,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.
Marriage of Heaven and Hell

In the prose work called Marriage of Heaven and Hell we have among the Proverbs of Hell the following: "He whose face gives no light, shall never become a star." "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom". "Exuberance is beauty." Though his oracular sayings are generally hard to interpret, intense spiritual thinking lies behind them.

**Blake’s World-View**

**Platonism:** Blake was influenced in part by the views of Plato for whom the physical world is an imperfect reflection of a perfect spiritual world beyond this (what Plato calls the world of Ideal Forms or Essences). From this point of view, every physical object (e.g. a horse) is a reflection or imitation of a perfect or ideal form or essence ('horseness').

**Christianity:** Another important influence upon Blake is the Bible. He was very taken by the view of classic Christian thinkers like St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, among others, that this world is the handiwork of God. If we are to know God, we need to study his physical handiwork which allows us, albeit most often only fleetingly, to intuit the spiritual world beyond this and, by extension, the Creator himself. Blake was of the view that this world is less the imperfect physical reflection or mirror of a perfect spiritual world beyond this (Plato’s view) than the multifarious ‘expression’ or manifestation of God/Spirit. Like a lamp, everyone and everything physical manifests the presence / light of the divine. Tragically, however, mankind has forgotten this. (It should be noted that, although influenced by Christianity, Blake invents his own personal mythology designed to counter lapse and rescue mankind from this fall from grace.)

Blake sought to emphasise in this regard what some critics have taken to calling a ‘multi-fold vision.’ He drew a distinction between, on the one hand, seeing ‘with the eye’ (the realist / materialist reliance solely on the senses inspired by John Locke the Empiricist) which allows one to perceive only the material surface or appearance of things, utilising that part of the mind which deals only with sense impressions, and, on the other hand, seeing ‘through the eye’ (the use, inspired by Immanuel Kant, of one’s ‘imagination’ to see the wonder latent within the material world, to discern the spiritual in and through the physical). Later, Coleridge would distinguish similarly between the Understanding (which registers the impressions empirically gathered by the senses) and the Imagination (the capacity of Reason to grasp the true nature of reality, to read, as it were, God’s presence suffusing all things).

**Hegelianism:** Blake was also influenced, directly or indirectly, by the dialectical theory of history advanced by the German Idealist philosopher G. W. F. Hegel. According to Hegel, the history of human civilisation is synonymous with the growth towards perfection of Spirit (the German word Geist when translated means ‘Spirit’ which serves, roughly speaking, as Hegel’s synonym for God). History is, as such, viewable in terms of a progression culminating in the perfection of, in Hegel’s view, Enlightenment Germany. The history of humankind up to this time is divisible into three broad stages, each of which is dominated by a particular Zeitgeist (or ‘spirit of the age’). That is, each stage is the expression of one particular aspect of Spirit to the exclusion of other aspects...
progresses dialectically: each stage (thesis) gives way to its antithesis in which opposing qualities of Spirit are manifested. These are both subsumed, however, in a third stage (synthesis) in which the best qualities of both the preceding stages are assimilated before the dialectical process is repeated all over again. In Hegel’s scheme of things, the ancient Asian world (China, India, Persia) gave way to its antithesis, classical European civilisation (Greece and Rome) the best parts of which were synthesised by modern European civilisation (or, more exactly, Enlightenment Germany). European history itself advanced dialectically: the long, dark night of Feudalism during which the Catholic church held sway was succeeded by the Protestant Reformation. The best features of the two were combined to produce the Enlightenment which reached its zenith in the French Revolution (notwithstanding its bloody excesses) and the democratic legacy it bequeathed to Western Europe. It is in this way that humankind (and, by extension, Spirit) draws ever nearer to perfection. (For a fuller but clear explication of Hegel, see Peter Singer’s Hegel.)

Blake views the world as structured dialectically. At first glance, when one sees reality merely 'with the eye,' the world appears to consist solely of irreconcilable but fundamental binary opposites (good versus evil, black versus white, love versus hate, etc.). However, when rightly viewed, that is, when one sees through the eye, these seeming opposites are each revealed to play a part in the greater scheme of things. In Blake’s The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, he expressed the view that

Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate, are necessary to human existence. . . . From these contraries spring what the religious call good and evil. . . . Good is the passive that obey reason; Evil is the active springing from energy.

In other words, the world is a fusion of binary opposites caught up in a dialectical relationship with each other, each inexplicable without reference to and inseparable from the other. In the dialectical scheme of things which Hegel inherited from Plato, the opposites (thesis and antithesis) come together to form a synthesis which combines the best features of the opposites. Some of the opposites which are dealt with in Blake’s poetry include: innocence versus experience, ignorance versus knowledge, youth versus maturity; naiveté versus cynicism, good versus evil; etc. At first glance, Blake would seem to extoll the virtues of innocence, etc. but it quickly becomes apparent on closer inspection that there is an insufficiency that inheres in the heart of innocence (it lacks, for example, the knowledge that comes with experience); paradoxically, too, Blake links goodness with reason, passivity, self-control and discipline [the biblical 'Thou Shalt Not . . .'], that is, the repression of emotion, activity [what he calls 'energy'] and all that is vital and alive. The shortcomings of the opposing side ought to be more evident.

**Blake’s Radical Politics:** From Blake’s point of view, the world was mad with its anxiety, bloodshed, oppression, cruelty, selfishness, lovelessness, and repressive morality. Many of the ills afflicting society, he felt, were rooted in sacrifice which formed the basis of a repressive social organisation that turned children into chimney sweeps, for example. The major cause of our warped civilisation was a failure of imagination, the failure to conceive reality and our part in it other than as they appear to our senses. Precisely because he believed himself able to perceive the manifestation of the divine in and through the imperfect material world, Blake was an idealistic visionary. He viewed himself as something of a seer, a visionary, and considered the poet’s vocation to be one of social amelioration, hence, the necessity of communicating his visions to as wide a public as possible. His work, he wrote, was an "Endeavour to Restore what the Ancients call’d the Golden Age." However, he came increasingly to feel frustrated in his personal life because he felt that he was rarely or insufficiently heeded.
Blake was a political radical influenced by such contemporaries as William Godwin and Thomas Paine. He supported both the American rebels in their quest for freedom from British rule and the desire of the French middle class to liberate themselves from the oppressive yoke of the aristocracy which culminated in the French Revolution. He also supported the struggles against economic and social injustice in England in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. He lamented the widening gap between the rising class of Capitalists and the working classes who laboured for them. Hence, the frequent albeit subtle presence of socio-political concerns in so many of his poems, especially in Songs of Experience. He also critiqued imperialist expansion by the European powers, colonialism, slavery, and racism in poems like "Little Black Boy" and Visions of the Daughters of Albion.

Social /political context of Songs of Innocence and Experience

(a) The Spirit of Rebellion - Society

Rural poverty and change: - The second half of the eighteenth century was a time of great change. It was the first phase of the Industrial Revolution. Mills and foundries were beginning to be established, changing long-established patterns of work and residence. The seeds for the growth of the great industrial cities like Manchester were being sown. The beginnings of mechanization were beginning to hit the weaver working from home. In the countryside, landlords were changing the enclosure system, leaving many peasant farmers without land and work.

Anti-Catholic unrest – the Gordon Riots: - There were also other causes of unrest such as the Gordon Riots in June 1780 which Blake witnessed in London. Unrest was whipped-up by Lord George Gordon against Catholics and the supporters of the Catholic Relief Act. This Act made it possible for Catholics to join the army without compromising their religion.

The riots caused great havoc and raised fears for the safety of the State. Troops were brought in to quell the riots and 25 ringleaders were hanged for treason. Lord Gordon, however, remained unscathed.

Child-labour and prostitution: - One of the great causes of social reformers in this period was the plight of the child chimney sweeps. From the age of four, children who were orphans in the workhouse or from very poor families would be sold as apprentice sweeps. They had to crawl naked up chimneys, often spurred on by prods from their masters or by having a fire lit under them. They would work in the mornings and then be abandoned onto the streets, unfed, in rags or naked, left to fend for themselves. Physically, these children would be deformed and sick because of their work; they had no education.

Apprentices in other trades were equally poorly served. An apprentice was a source of cheap labour. Nobody had responsibility for their welfare, so many died while still very young as a result of cruelty or neglect.

Prostitution and venereal disease were rampant in late 18th century England. The 'double standard' of different moral codes for men and women applied. Many prostitutes ended up in prison. The plight of such women, as well as women prisoners in general, was a cause espoused by reformers such as the Quaker Elizabeth Fry.

(b) The Spirit of Rebellion - Politics

Blake's was a time of turmoil arising out of challenges to established ideas about monarchy, hierarchy, human nature and human rights.
Jean-Jacques Rousseau: - In 1762, Jean-Jacques Rousseau published his work *The Social Contract*, about human society and human rights. This championed republicanism and democracy. It was centred upon the idea of freedom as active participation in political life and legislation. Rousseau was the first philosopher of Romanticism, valuing feeling and innocence highly whilst downplaying the role of intellect. He said that 'Man was born free but everywhere is found in chains.' Rousseau also held that children were born good and had an in-built capacity to learn through experience. Formal education distorted the child's creativity, imagination and freedom to develop.

The American War of Independence and the French Revolution: - The spirit of rebellion took political form very clearly in America and France. In 1775, the American War of Independence began, ending in 1783. This was seen as a blow to monarchy and a victory for Republicanism. In 1789, the French Revolution began. This led to the execution of King Louis XVI of France in 1793 and the beginning of the Reign of Terror. Many French aristocrats took refuge in Britain. However, 1794 saw the execution of Danton, Robespierre and other leaders of the French Revolution. Many who had originally supported the Revolution were alienated by the cruelties it involved and by the way in which one tyranny was replaced by another. In 1795, Napoleon Bonaparte began his rise to power. This led to more war and to fear of a new tyrant emerging.

Tom Paine's The Rights of Man: - The French Revolution spurred the publication of Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man*, part 1 in 1791 and part 2 in 1792. In this work, Paine attacked hereditary government and the monarchy. He argued for the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. He advocated equal political rights and proposed that all men over twenty-one in Britain should have the vote. He believed this would create a House of Commons willing to pass laws favourable to working people.

The book was immediately banned. Paine was charged with seditious libel but he escaped to France before he could be arrested. Paine gave anyone the right to reprint his book. It was produced in cheap editions so that it could achieve a working class readership. In just over two years, more than 200,000 people in Britain managed to buy a copy. This led to the founding in 1792 of the London Corresponding Society by a shoemaker, Thomas Hardy (not to be confused with the 19th century novelist and poet). The society's aim was to win the vote for all adult males.

Paine also produced *The Age of Reason*, attacking the claims of Christianity. He criticised the Old Testament as being untrue and immoral and claimed that the Gospels were contradictory. This caused further outrage and lost him popularity with many of his earlier supporters, including Blake.

Religious and Political Dissent: - Paine's main themes in *The Rights of Man* chimed in with the beliefs of many of the Christian sects which abounded in England at the end of the 18th century. These sects were called Dissenters because they did not agree with the establishment of a state church with the monarch at its head. Most of them would have been seen as politically revolutionary, since they rejected monarchy, hierarchy in state and church and espoused equal rights for all people. They were the descendants of the sects which had flourished after the English Civil War in the previous century, such as the Levellers. The basic approach of the dissenters was summed up in a saying from a much earlier period:

'When Adam delved and Eve span
Who was then the gentleman?'
They believed that government by royalty and with a system of hereditary power was wrong. It divided people into classes, giving civil rights only to the few while keeping the majority unnaturally poor. This was seen as a perversion. God did not intend this enslavement when he created human beings. ‘It was not so in the beginning’ was the core belief.

**Blake’s Response to Politics:** - Blake moved among politically radical people but rarely entered wholeheartedly into any political movement, largely because most radicals were Deists or freethinkers. For example, he admired Thomas Paine for his support of equality and belief in the ideals of a non-hierarchical democracy. However, he disagreed strongly with Paine's Deist, anti-Christian beliefs.

Blake's initial support of the French Revolution was later tempered by his abhorrence (strong disapproval) of the violence it involved. He was also shocked to see that the revolutionaries quickly became tyrannical oppressors in their turn.

(c) **Blake’s Religious Outlook**

**Blake and formal religion:** - As a consequence of his philosophical views, Blake rejected formalised religion. He saw the Christianity of his day as being a distortion of true spiritual life. It changed spirituality into a system of moral laws which bound people in shame or in fear of punishment. This made them obedient to society's laws and rules. Organised religion was, therefore, an agent of social control, instead of a source of life and liberation. It bound its adherents (supporter) to the will of those in control. Blake felt that what should have been a message of love and brotherhood had become one of cruelty.

**Blake’s perspective on God:** - Blake had some interesting perspectives on God, which sometimes varied from biblical and church teaching about the Creator. Like other Dissenters, Blake rejected the concept of a transcendent God ‘out there’. Instead, he is focussed on the presence of Christ's Holy Spirit as a principle of each person's inner life, and the reality of divine inspiration / imagination.

He rejected the Old Testament stereotype of God as being vengeful and punitive. He felt people used this idea to justify their own revenge, bloodthirstiness and desire for land and power. Blake went further in rejecting completely the accepted view of God as a transcendent ruler, who takes offence and requires appeasement through sacrifice. Traditional Christianity taught that God's justice required the sinfulness of human behaviour to be 'paid for'. This was achieved when the sinless Son of God, Jesus was crucified on a cross as a sacrificial substitute for humanity.

This approach to the sacrifice of Christ was abhorrent to Blake. He believed it was a 'mind-forged fetter' made when people ‘fell' into their separate selfhood (see Blake's view of the 'Fall' of Adam and Eve) and began to interpret the world solely from the point of view of experience. That is, they developed a view of God that was actually an image of themselves – jealous, possessive and tyrannical.

In the last three lines, Blake is referring to how he saw the account of the Fall of humankind in Genesis (Genesis 2:4-18 Genesis 3:1-13, where God forbade the eating of fruit from the Tree of knowledge of good and evil in Eden. A serpent tempted Eve to eat it in defiance of God's ban). Blake rejected this view of a God whose will is law and who binds people with prohibitions.
Blake's view of the 'Fall' of Adam and Eve: - According to Blake, the Fall of Adam and Eve was not a fall into sin. It was a fall into a distorted way of seeing God, the world and the self. This distorted perspective resulted in the development of the image of a God in humankind’s image, who was thus perceived as being vengeful, punitive and bloodthirsty. It caused people to see themselves as being separate, isolated selves who needed to be protected, rather than as part of a unified creation. This self must also ‘fight its own corner’ and put itself first, rather than live in harmony with others.

Fallen sexuality: - Blake also believed that the ‘fall from grace’ brought about a separation between the sexes - interior division where there should be unity (as he stated in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1793)). The effects of this are to distort human sexuality, make it possessive, jealous and devouring. Sex, therefore, has to be surrounded by prohibitions and inhibitions. These deny the potential for true joy in sexual experience.

Blake held that fallen sexuality was ‘set right’ by Christ, who repudiated a religion based on obeying laws (this is Blake's interpretation, rather than being entirely consistent with the Gospel accounts). Blake believed that the repression of sexuality caused personal unhappiness and social ills, such as prostitution, which in turn led to poverty and venereal disease. Instead, he believed in ‘free love’, although there is no sign that he put his beliefs into practice in his life.

(d) Philosophical Influences on Blake

New philosophies: - In the later eighteenth century, Dissenters like Blake became very interested in the works of earlier Christians, who had moved away from orthodox, biblical Christianity and combined Christian ideas with beliefs drawn from magic, astrology and alchemy. Works by thinkers like Paracelsus and Jacob Boehme were readily available and highly popular among the Christians among whom Blake moved. As a result of this interest many became followers of the Swedish thinker Emanuel Swedenborg. A Swedenborgian chapel was established in London and Blake and his wife were members of this church for some time.

The influence of Swedenborg: - Like other Dissenters, Blake was initially an admirer of Swedenborg. Some of the beliefs taught by Swedenborg which can be found in Blake's work include the ideas that Heaven and hell are products of a person's state of mind, self-created by every individual during his or her life on earth. All angels were once human. Man was so created by God as to be able to speak with spirits and angels while living in the body. A human being is essentially a spirit clothed with a body. The spiritual person is the only true reality. What we call ‘nature’ and the ‘natural’ is actually a distortion of the truth - a lie. People need to be transformed from the ‘false’ natural state into their ‘true’ spiritual state. The Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a doctrine known as the Holy Trinity, is wrong. The Trinity exists in one person only, Jesus Christ, just as a trinity of soul, body and spirit exists in each person.

Many of these ideas would be considered as heresy by mainstream Christians. Blake himself rejected Swedenborgianism when the Swedenborgian chapel in London began to organise itself hierarchically and to teach along more traditional lines. Like other Dissenters, Blake rejected all monarchy and hierarchy within society and the Church.

Blake and Jacob Boehme: - Following his disaffection with Swedenborg, Blake became influenced by the writings of the German, Jacob Boehme. Some of Boehme's key themes, found in Blake's work, are everything exists, but can be understood only through its opposite, evil is a necessary element in goodness.
would become inert and progress would be impossible, evil is a result of the striving of single elements of Deity to become the whole, God himself contains conflicting elements and antithetical principles within his nature. As with the theories of Swedenborg, these ideas do not tally with the teaching of the Bible about such issues.

(e) Attitudes to man and God in the Age of Reason

A new perspective on 'truth': - Described as the ‘Age of Reason’ the eighteenth century saw a movement away from an understanding of truth as something which was revealed by God and, therefore, independent of human reason. Instead, truth could be found through observation of the world and by the use of human reason. Accordingly, laws were to be judged valid because they met human requirements of reasonableness, rather than because they were based on divine commands encountered in the Bible.

John Locke: - In his Essay Concerning Human Understanding, John Locke (1632 - 1704) argued that the human mind is a blank slate at birth. Therefore, there are no innate (inborn) ideas. Everything humans think or know comes to them through the experience of their senses, an experience upon which they reflect. This means that knowledge of the world issues from observation and analysis. Locke's thought was seen as laying foundations for the scientific thinking of such men as Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton.

Blake's opposition to Locke: - Blake reacted violently against the philosophy of John Locke, seeing him as an 'agent of the devil'. According to Blake, Locke's emphasis on rationality at the centre of human life was a distortion of humanity. Instead, Blake believed that the imagination was central, since it allows humans to perceive, relate to, and express, divine reality.

According to Blake, people cannot understand anything fundamental about the natural world by observing, measuring or analysing it. Understanding can only be achieved by employing the creative power of the imagination, since this enables people to see, as it were, through the eyes of the creative imagination responsible for the world (i.e. God).

For this reason, Blake also vehemently opposed the scientific method he saw as being embodied in Isaac Newton's work, which he believed, produced a model of the world as a mechanism to be analysed, measured and regulated. Blake's views put him in alignment with the European Romantics, as well as with the views of other Dissenters.

Changing attitudes to God: - Locke and Newton remained convinced theists and still upheld some kind of belief in revealed religion. Revealed religion refers to the idea that God makes himself known to human beings who could not know him in any other way. However, in the eighteenth century many Christian thinkers believed in natural religion. Natural religion is the belief that people can arrive at knowledge of God by using their reason and drawing inferences from their experience and observation of the world.

Deism: - Influenced by the dominance of reason and science, many key thinkers of the period started to regard God in a way described as Deism. Deists believed that reason required the existence of a creator but did not require his continued involvement with his creation. A popular Deist description of God was as a clockmaker. He was responsible for creating the complex mechanism, or clock, of the universe. Once in existence, however, it has no further need of its creator's involvement. A clock runs according to its mechanical nature and does not need interference from the clockmaker. So, too, the universe runs according to its own laws and has no further need of its creator. The outworking of this view is that God is purely a philosophical necessity, as
'first cause'. There is no need for a God who engages with human beings and intervenes in his creation.

**Blake's reaction to Deism:** Although thinkers such as Tom Paine espoused Deism, Blake was very antagonistic towards the mechanistic view of the world which it implied. He rejected the Deism represented by writers such as Voltaire. He rejected Christian writers such as William Paley, who attempted to establish the existence of God from rational arguments which considered the natural world as a complex mechanism. For Blake, the deist approach rendered the world dead, barren and devoid of the active presence of creative divine power (in which creative power human beings participated when they employed their own imagination).

Blake further rejected a mechanical vision of the world because it implied that laws or rules govern the world. People could therefore fulfil themselves by following laws. These laws, however, are man-made and imprison the human spirit. For Blake, true fulfilment comes from being transformed through the development of the imagination and thus participating in divine life.

**Literary context of Songs of Innocence and Experience**

(a) **Reactions to Rationality**

There was a reaction against the dominance of reason which was expressed through two literary genres.

**Sentimental and gothic literature:** ‘Sentimentalism' developed as a reaction to rationalism in philosophy and to Calvinism in religion. The Enlightenment encouraged distrust of feelings, whilst Calvinism taught that the human heart was intrinsically evil. ‘Sentimentalism' emphasised the central importance of feelings and the essential goodness of the human heart.

A sentimental approach can be found in novels like Sir Charles Grandison by Samuel Richardson. It is also highlighted in the debate between reason and sentiment in Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility.

The genre of the gothic-horror novel such as The Castle of Otranto by Horace Walpole is also related to this reaction against the emphasis on reason. The gothic novel represents a world that is not totally controlled by, and accessible to, human reason. It is aware of deeper psychological and sexual impulses beyond the realm of reason.

**European Romaticism:** Reaction to rationality was also expressed by the rise of European romanticism. This was associated with the work of people such as Goethe, Schiller and Klinger in Germany and Wordsworth and Coleridge in England.

Klinger's play Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress) gave its name to a movement in which the struggle for self-realization of the artistic 'genius' was central. The power of creative imagination was given priority over the power of reason. The poet was perceived as a seer or prophet. His/her genius (guiding spirit) enabled him/her to enter into the realities of existence. This higher 'truth' was closed to those who relied on reason and on surface observation.

For the Romantics, imagination was not an ability to conjure up a world which wasn't 'real' or didn't exist. Instead it referred to a capacity to penetrate reality, to have vision or insight into the inner reality of the world.

**Blake's Romanticism:** Other early European Romantics such as Novalis were Christians. They believed that dreaming and imagining were waves of participating
in the life of God. They understood that the 'real' world is not the world of surface material reality, but a world infused with the divine. This could be perceived by using imagination.

Blake is often seen as the first English Romantic poet because of his insistence on imagination as the means of apprehending the reality of the universe and his opposition to rationalism.

(b) The Age of Reason

The Elevation of Rationality: - The eighteenth century is frequently referred to as 'The Age of Reason'. It was marked by confidence in the powers of the human mind to discover the secrets of the universe. Human beings felt capable of discovering the workings of the world, from the human body to the solar system, by the application of science and rationality. The world was open to scientific enquiry. It could be measured, analysed and exploited.

Earlier ages had been marked by a belief that, since God was the creator of all things and could not be fully comprehensible to human minds, human understanding and reason could not reliably grasp the whole 'truth'. People would expect the world to involve an element of mystery. However, this perception shifted in the Age of Reason to a belief that human reason could be the ultimate judge of truth.

Confidence in Human Analysis: - The eighteenth century saw an increasing confidence that human beings could gather together all information about the world and put it into an organised form. This meant that this was the century when the first dictionaries and encyclopaedias were compiled. It was believed that dictionaries could tie down the origin and meaning of words, whilst language could be standardised by establishing the rules of grammar. Consequently, Samuel Johnson is perhaps better known for his dictionary than for his other literary works.

(c) Enlightenment Literature

Rational poetry: - Poetry generated in the Age of Reason characteristically appealed to the head and to appreciation of form, rather than to the 'heart' or imagination. Consequently, wit was highly valued. The standard form was the closed heroic couplet, such as this from Alexander Pope's An Essay on Criticism (1711):

In Wit, as Nature, what affects our hearts
Is not th' exactness of peculiar parts;
'Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call,
But the joint force and full result of all.

The above poem is constructed from a sequence of rhyming pairs of iambic pentameter lines with masculine rhymes. The heroic couplet tends to give the effect of neatness and finality, with an implication that life can be similarly neat and controllable. Used by less gifted poets, it could be a very mechanical form.

Songs of Innocence and Experience (SoIE) [1793]

The Meaning of the Collection: Although conceived and written independently, Songs of Innocence (SoI) (1789) should be read in conjunction with Songs of Experience (SoE) which he published in 1793 with a new edition of SoI. The two collections of lyrics represent, as Blake said in 1794, "the two contrary states of the human soul" and often...
develop opposing points of view on the same subject matter. Some critics argue that there is an unresolved tension between the two collections that are not reconciled until the much more comprehensive vision contained in his later, more prophetic poems. However, others contend that there is a dialectical relation between the two collections (evidently, Blake's dialectical world-view shaped his conceptualisation of the two volumes) as a result of which many of poems ought to be paired for dual consideration. When read dialectically (i.e. in conjunction with each other), the upshot is that 'innocence' (and its ideals) cannot be apprehended without an understanding of 'experience' (life in a fallen world) while, on the other hand, experience uninfomed by innocence degenerates into wickedness and exploitativeness. What is indispensable, Blake seems to aver, is a dialectical fusion or synthesis of the opposing qualities symbolised by innocence and experience, respectively, in order to adequately grasp the full complexity of human existence. (Note, to this end, the metamorphosis in SoE of specific motifs [e.g. the chimney sweeper] first found in SoI.)

**Blake’s Intention:** Harold Bloom avers in studies like The Anxiety of Influence that Blake is the first of the English Romantic poets to 'write back' to Milton whose legacy, he argues, casts an enormous shadow over all succeeding poets, each of whom respond to and attempt to rewrite their precursor in various ways. Milton regurgitates in Paradise Lost the Christian narrative that attempts to explain the human predicament by depicting mankind has having fallen from grace (man is literally kicked out of paradise) due to original sin. Milton contends that mankind may, however, redeem itself through the sacrifice of Christ. In SoIE, Blake seems to aver that the vicissitudes of the human condition are not explicable by reference to some primordial fall from grace. Rather, it is the nature of human existence to be in a world seemingly pulled simultaneously in two opposing directions. Humans are caught on the cusp between innocence and experience, good and evil, etc., torn in both directions. They key things is to 'see through' or beyond this apparent contradiction and to realise that to understand the human condition involves assimilating or synthesising these two contrasting poles of human experience. In short, Blake's theme is the possibility of salvation which he locates in the Imagination.

**Particular Themes:**

**SoI:** Innocence here implies several aspects—the new-born innocence of children and lambs; the exploited innocence of neglected and enslaved children; the mature vision of a world of love in which the divine is glimpsed in the merciful and peaceful actions of men and women. Although seemingly naive, innocence is in fact a powerful scalpel to dissect and denounce a stale and unjust human society.

The adult persona is led and 'dictated’ to by the child—what he hears is the wisdom of the child, a voice not corrupted by the complexities and pretensions of adult life. **The Lamb** is celebration of an earthly paradise in which animals and humans live in complete love and harmony under the protection of a benevolent God—a delight in the divine glories inherent in nature. **The Little Black Boy** is naive conception of a world without racial prejudice. **The Chimney Sweeper** is innocence exploited without being aware of the exploitation. **Holy Thursday** is the innocence of orphans left to the care of ‘beadles’ and charitable institutions and **The Divine Image** is celebration of the divine inherent in the human

**SoE:** ‘Experience’ is the opposite of everything for which ‘innocence’ stands. The adult’s view predominates over that of the child—the persona claims omniscience (in the guise of prophecy) for himself. **The Tyger** is an interrogation of the purpose of (an) evil (creature) in a world made by an allegedly good God. **London** is a terrifying, almost surrealistic vision of contemporary English society. **Holy Thursday (II)** is the children’s song becomes weeping. **The Human Abstract** is the virtues of Mercy, Pity, Peace and
Love are not seen as divine qualities so much as they are the consequences (rather than the redemption) of a fallen world.

Persona: the speaking voice in these poems varies. In SoI, Blake adopts the voice of the ‘piper of innocence’ whose muse is a child. The speakers in particular poems here are often children or child-like, and the songs express their emotions and their vision. To them, the cosmos is one of ‘Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love’ received by all creatures from the Creator who himself became a child and is often symbolised as a lamb. In SoE, Blake adopts the prophetic point of view of the Bard of Experience.

Tone: In SoI, the speaker’s tone is most often simplistic and even naive; In SoE, an almost omniscient, even cynical point of view is adopted.

Poet: neither the piper nor the Bard is meant to be completely identified with Blake. Each expresses a point of view that is, from its own standpoint, both accurate and limited. Innocence unfortified by experience deteriorates into naiveté, whereas experience by itself depicts the world to which we are confined when our knowledge is merely sensory, not imaginative.

Impact: this is didactic poetry with an important difference from that of Blake’s predecessors. Like Pope’s, SoI is designed to ameliorate humanity. However, unlike a poem like The Rape of the Lock, it is designed to appeal more to the emotions than the intellect or reason, that is, Blake’s goal is to make you feel the truth of what he is saying and thereby to enact changes in your life.

Aspects of Form / Poetic Technique: Although born in the middle of the eighteenth century, generally speaking, Blake writes in a radically new style very different from the Neo-classical dictates of eighteenth century poetry. His simple, down to earth style is opposed to the artificial, pretentious, grandiose and ornate style of writers synonymous with Neo-Classicism such as Alexander Pope.

Some of the characteristic features of his poetic style in SoI and SoE include:

Poetic Kind: the collection consists mostly of brief lyric poems expressed in the first person

Poetic Genre: there are no identifiable genres (e.g. sonnet) even though many, not all, of the poems are divided into stanzas many, not all, follow a particular rhyme scheme many, not all, have a definable metre.

Blake’s style is very idiosyncratic in these respects. Perhaps the best term to describe the genre of these poems is the one chosen by Blake himself: ‘song.’

Diction: Blake’s diction is most often down-to-earth and simple. Note his imagery in specific poems by discussing his choice of particular metaphors, etc. and say how these contribute to the meaning of the poem in question.

Rhetorical Devices: note particular examples of litotes, etc. and show how these contribute to the meaning of the poem in question. One device to note the use of is:

Irony: for example, although the speakers in SoI are innocent and even naive in their outlook, the poems themselves are often anything but. In the "the Chimney Sweeper," the child is optimistic and full of faith in outlook even though he does not realise that he has been wronged by his own father.
Naivété: by the opposite token, as Blake put it elsewhere, the "innocence of a child" can often reproach the "errors of acquired folly." One of these errors is to trust in the reality of the world presented to us by our senses and to ignore the world of imagination and vision.

Sound note particular examples of alliteration, etc. and show how these contribute to the meaning of the poem in question.

"The Songs of Innocence and Experience": Critical Analysis

The Songs of Innocence and Experience is probably Blake's most famous work. The Songs of Innocence were originally published in 1789, and the two sets of poems together appeared in 1794. But when we say “published” we have to be, as always with Blake, aware that they were not published in any conventional sense; rather Blake himself prepared a number of copies, each consisting of Plates on which words and visual images mingle and intertwine. No two copies are identical; furthermore, there are variations in the arrangement of the poems and even occasional differences as to which sequence a poem belongs to.

Songs of Innocence have often been described as exemplary poems of childhood, and this was very much how nineteenth-century anthologists saw them of poems like “A Cradle Song” and “The Lamb” this may well be true, in that they (and others) are written in a voice with the limpidity of childhood perception; here the “innocence” of the title is portrayed as an unequivocal and valued property of the child. With other poems, though, the situation is more complex. “The Chimney Sweeper” in Innocence, for example, seems to offer a perspective of innocence that nevertheless ends up by appearing to validate a proverb (“If all do their duty, they need not fear harm”) of which Blake could surely never have approved.

Innocence, then, is shown to us as a state to be valued, but also as one to be superseded in the gradual development of consciousness. The Songs of Experience represent a further stage of this evolution, and again the positions of the narrators are often more uncertain and equivocal than they may appear at first glance. “The Tyger”, for example, has often been seen as paired with “The Lamb”, although there is no specific evidence for this; certainly we may see the two poems as offering visions of two different sides of the divine (and human) creative process, but here the tiger stands for a force that can be seen - and should be seen by the artist - as positive, creative even, in the “awe” of its destructive potential.

On the other hand, if we look at the two “Nurse's Songs” from Innocence and Experience, what we see is a movement from innocence, from a nurse-figure who understands her charges' desires and is willing to indulge their freedom, to corruption, a nurse-figure whose only concern is for a kind of repression that arises from her own psychopathology and her memories of her own distorted childhood (“The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,/My face turns green and pale”). Similarly the second “Chimney Sweeper” poem mounts a direct challenge to the perspective of its “innocent” counterpart by attacking “God and his priest and king, /who make up a Heaven of our misery”.

Apart from “The Lamb” and “The Tyger”, perhaps the best known of all Blake's lyrics, “London”, appears in the Songs of Experience, and in its first stanza it summarises Blake's view of the pathos and tragedy of a city oppressed by laws and regulations that reduce its inhabitants to mere cogs in a machine:

I wander through each chartered street
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

The poem builds up to an astonishing crescendo of indictment, in which Blake hears the sound of the “mind-forged manacles” that bind us not only through direct repression but also through our own complicity in the ideologies of power:

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackening church appalls
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls;
But most through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

Here we have an example of the full density and complexity of Blake's language, with almost every word (“blackening”, “appalls”, “marriage hearse”, to take but three examples) loaded with multiple meanings: meanings that serve to underline the duplicities of power, while nevertheless acknowledging that the voice of experience maybe necessary if we are to work through to a fuller understanding of contemporary social conditions and their place in the wider scheme of things.

What in general, then, are the Songs of Innocence and of Experience about? The most obvious answer is that they are about what they say they are about, the two “contrary states” of “innocence” and “experience”, and that the individual poems in the two books are still essentially exemplars of these states. Innocence, then, would be the condition allied to childhood: a condition in which we can view the natural and human world without fear, and can feel confident that we have a home in that world. Behind this, of course, lies a whole realm of biblical myth, in particular that of the Garden of Eden, although there are significant differences between the biblical Garden and Blake innocence.

Perhaps the most obvious difference concerns sexuality. Adam and Eve, after all, were ejected from the Garden because of their accession to carnal knowledge, and throughout Christianity there is a connection between sex and the fall of man. To Blake things were quite otherwise: the world of innocence is one of natural, unforced pleasure in sexuality, as in all other matters of the body, and it is interesting that this significant alteration of emphasis constitutes one of Blake's many prefigurations of the much later discoveries of Freud, who first demonstrated the sexual interests of the infant systematically.

Innocence, however, cannot last forever unchallenged, although it is always possible to prolong or regain it temporarily through love, through poetry and through beauty. It is, however, inevitably under threat of being superseded as we move into adulthood and encounter cares, duties, responsibilities. But - and this is a very important point for Blake - although this “progression“ (which is also a fall from grace) is inevitable, it is also true that we make it much worse than it needs to be. We make it worse through all kinds of tyranny and harshness at the political level, through the rule of the moral law and an ethic of punishment rather than forgiveness at the religious level, and through selfishness, possessiveness and jealousy at the personal and psychological level.

In Blake, though - and this is what makes some of the Songs, as well as most of his other works, so complex - these levels cannot be separated out. We hear again in the famous phrase about “mind-forg'd manacles” in “London” a double meaning. On the one hand, we could say that the “minds” that forge these manacles are the mirror of society.
people; when we observe the inhumanity of urban life we are seeing the imposition of some people's will upon others, or, to put it another way, we are witnessing the suppression of healthy individual life by an ideology comprised of work, power and repression. It is at the same time true, however, that the mind that places these shackles upon us is, in an important sense, our own. Again, to use a more modern terminology, we could say that what Blake shows us is not only the forces of violence at war in society and the economy; he also shows us a process of internalisation by means of which we absorb these forces inside ourselves and accept them without question, an acceptance which kills off the all-important development of the imagination inside us.

In most of these respects the Songs encourage us to see Blake as a “romantic” poet. Most of the other major romantics - Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats – share Blake's mistrust of the forces abroad in contemporary society: they too detect an increasing mechanisation in the world around them, and they too recommend are consideration of a more “innocent” state as part of the solution to the problem. Yet in none of these other writers, with the possible exception of Wordsworth, do we find quite the level of detail in the description of everyday city life. This is, of course, partly because Blake knew everyday life and its pressure better than they; the “escape to the country” was not for him remotely financially viable. It could also be argued that the Songs show him to be the most politically radical of them, with the possible exception of Shelley.

It is also fair to say that the Songs are quite different poetically from anything the other romantics wrote. It is true that the form of the ballad was popular with all of them, trying as they were to find a kind of poetry which was freed from the formal constraints of classical eighteenth-century poetry; but nowhere in the balladic forms of the other romantics do we find quite the terseness of form, the extreme compression of the best of the Songs, and nowhere, not even in Wordsworth - who shared with Blake an intense respect for childhood and its perceptions - do we find the strange courage that enabled him to write and, in his own unique way, publish poems like the simpler of the Songs of Innocence.

Yet it seems clear that Blake is not “putting on voices” in these poems; rather, he was one of those rare artists who still had inside him the voice of childhood and was able, from time to time, to bring it forth in an unforced fashion, and this is again one of the elements that makes the Songs so powerful. For the questions we are induced to ask, about man's inhumanity to man, while reading the Songs of Experience are rendered vastly more poignant by the way that Blake has introduced us to the voices of the children who exist as the subjects of, and subject to, the world of suffering depicted as the - perhaps inevitable, but perhaps supremely avoidable - fate of experience.

A Poison Tree : Critical Analysis

Human beings, along with the ability to reason and question, possess the capacity to hate, and yet also to forgive. Unfortunately, forgiving someone is not always as easy as holding a grudge against them and this lack of control over one's actions is inherent to human nature. In “A poison tree”, William Blake critically discusses these two opposing forces, uncovering the inherent weakness in humans, and the effects of these innate flaws.

Through the use of extended metaphors and vivid imagery, Blake symbolically portrays this fundamental flaw through the poem. The central theme in the poem is hatred and anger, dominating much of the author’s thoughts. Blake expresses this through the introduction of a clever parallelism – the treatment of anger between a friend and a foe. Through this, Blake emphasizes the nature of anger – while expressing and letting go of wrath ends it, suppression nurtures it. Blake startlingly makes the real
poem, and with metaphors that can apply to many instances of life. A Poison Tree is an allegory. The tree here represents repressed wrath; the water represents fear; the apple is symbolic of the fruit of the deceit which results from repression. This deceit gives rise to the speaker’s action in laying a death-trap for his enemy. The deeper meaning of the poem is that aggressive feelings, if suppressed, almost certainly destroy personal relationships.

“And it grew both day and night
Till it bore an apple bright”

Blake further symbolizes this in the next two stanzas. He appears to metaphor the repression of anger and hatred to ‘a poison tree’, thus giving it an identity. The personification in “A Poison Tree” exists both as a means by which the poem’s metaphors are revealed, supported, and as a way for Blake to forecast the greater illustration of the wrath. The wrath the speaker feels is not directly personified as a tree, but as something that grows slowly and bears fruit. In the opening stanza the speaker states, “My wrath did grow.” The speaker later describes the living nature of the wrath as one which, “grew both day and night,” and, “bore an apple bright.” This comparison by personification of wrath to a tree illustrates the speaker’s idea that, like the slow and steady growth of a tree, anger and wrath gradually accumulate and form just as mighty and deadly as a poisoned tree.

“And I water’d it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles”

To understand the metaphorical sense of the poem, one must first examine the title, “A Poison Tree,” which alerts the reader that some type of metaphor will stand to dominate the poem. In the second stanza, Blake employs several metaphors that reflect the growing and nurturing of a tree which compare to the feeding of hate and vanity explored by the speaker. The verses, “And I watered it …with my tears” show how the tears life lead an object of destruction. The speaker goes further to say, “And I sunned it with smiles” describing not only false intentions, but the processing of “sunning”, giving nutrients to a plant so that it may not only grow and live, but flourish. In both of these metaphors, the basic elements for a tree to survive, water and sunlight are shown in human despair and sadness.

Blake called the original draft of “A Poison Tree” “Christian Forbearance,” suggesting that what is meant to appear as a gentle attitude is often a mask for disdain and anger. Furthermore, Blake believed that the attitudes of piety that adherents of conventional Christianity were taught to maintain actually led to hypocrisy, causing people to pretend to be friendly and accepting when they were not. The righteousness that the conventional religion prescribed, Blake believed, allowed people to hide evil intent and to perform evil deeds, such as stifling the healthy growth of children, under the cover of appearing virtuous.

“And into my garden stole
When the night had veiled the pole
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree”

The religious context of the poem is also evident in two metaphorical allusions made by the speaker towards the end of the poem. Blake, being a religious visionary, has also criticized the views and actions of Christianity. This is evident in the symbol of the ‘poison tree’, which can be seen to make direct biblical reference to 1
knowledge, representing the evil existing within man. Thus, as the garden is symbolic of
the Garden of Eden, the apple is symbolic of apple which brought Adam and eve to their
demise. It is the evil and poison that is bared from anger, the fruit of the poison tree. As
in the biblical story, the apple here is beautiful on the outside, while poisonous and
deadly underneath. By presenting the apple, Black is symbolic of the Serpent,
maliciously deceiving his foe and bringing his demise. The serpent in Black is his
weakness, and just like he, all humans have this inherent flaw inside of them. Black uses
this to criticize Christian forgiveness, expressing that while Christians believe in ‘turning
the other cheek’, by forgiving and repressing anger, they are ignoring the basic flaw
existing in our human nature. Symbolically, the speaker represents God, the foef and
garden represent Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the tree represents the Tree
of Knowledge of Good and Evil in Genesis. If this analogy is true, it shows God rejoicing
in killing his enemies, which most people think the God they know would never do.

Conclusively, “A Poison Tree” teaches a lesson and asserts a moral proposition rather
than offering a critique of a theological system, the lesson is less concerned with anger
than with demonstrating that suppressing the expression of feelings leads to a corruption
of those feelings, to a decay of innocence, and to the growth of cunning and guile.
Repeatedly in Songs of Experience, not just in “A Poison Tree,” Blake argues that the
religious doctrines intended to train people, especially children, in virtue are cruel and
cause harm. In addition, Blake depicts those who implement religious discipline as
sadistic. Blake’s poetry, while easy to understand and simplistic, usually implies a moral
motif on an almost basic level. The powerful figurative language in “A Poison Tree" is so
apparent that it brings forth an apparent message as well. The poem is not a celebration
of wrath; rather it is Blake’s cry against it. Through this, Blake warns the reader of the
dangers of repression and of rejoicing in the sorrow of our foes.

Tyger : Critical Analysis

“The Tyger” represents an intense, visionary style with which William Blake confronts a
timeless question through the creation of a still-life reverie. To examine “The Tyger’s”
world, a reader must inspect Blake’s word choice, images, allusions, rhyme scheme,
meter, and theme. “The Tyger” seems like a simple poem, yet this simple poem contains
all the complexities of the human mystery. The first impression that William Blake gives
is that he sees a terrible tiger in the night, and, as a result of his state
of panic, the poet
exaggerates the description of the animal when he writes:

‘Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright
In the forests of the night...’

The opening question enacts what will be the single dramatic gesture of the poem, and
each subsequent stanza elaborates on this conception. Blake is building on the
conventional idea that nature, like a work of art, must in some way contain a reflection
of its creator. The tiger is strikingly beautiful yet also horrific in its capacity for violence.
What kind of a God, then, could or would design such a terrifying beast as the tiger? In
more general terms, what does the undeniable existence of evil and violence in the world
tell us about the nature of God, and what does it mean to live in a world where a being
can at once contain both beauty and horror? Immediately after seeing the ‘Tyger’ in the
forests, the poet asks it what deity could have created it:

‘What immortal hand and eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?’

The word ‘immortal’ gives the reader a clue that the poet refers to God. Then, in the
second stanza, the author wonders in what far-away places the tiger was made, maybe,
referring that these places cannot be reached by any mortal.
poet asks again, once the tiger's heart began to beat, who could make such a frightening and evil animal. Next, in the forth stanza, William Blake asks questions about the tools used by God. And he names the hammer, the chain, the furnace, and anvil. All these elements are used by an ironsmith. The tiger initially appears as a strikingly sensuous image. However, as the poem progresses, it takes on a symbolic character, and comes to embody the spiritual and moral problem the poem explores: perfectly beautiful and yet perfectly destructive, Blake's tiger becomes the symbolic center for an investigation into the presence of evil in the world. Since the tiger's remarkable nature exists both in physical and moral terms, the speaker's questions about its origin must also encompass both physical and moral dimensions. The poem's series of questions repeatedly ask what sort of physical creative capacity the "fearful symmetry" of the tiger bespeaks; assuredly only a very strong and powerful being could be capable of such a creation.

"What the hammer? what the chain?  
In what furnace was thy brain?"

The smithy represents a traditional image of artistic creation; here Blake applies it to the divine creation of the natural world. The "forging" of the tiger suggests a very physical, laborious, and deliberate kind of making; it emphasizes the awesome physical presence of the tiger and precludes the idea that such a creation could have been in any way accidentally or haphazardly produced. It also continues from the first description of the tiger the imagery of fire with its simultaneous connotations of creation, purification, and destruction. The speaker stands in awe of the tiger as a sheer physical and aesthetic achievement, even as he recoils in horror from the moral implications of such a creation; for the poem addresses not only the question of who could make such a creature as the tiger, but who would perform this act. This is a question of creative responsibility and of will, and the poet carefully includes this moral question with the consideration of physical power. Note, in the third stanza, the parallelism of "shoulder" and "art," as well as the fact that it is not just the body but also the "heart" of the tiger that is being forged. The repeated use of word the "dare" to replace the "could" of the first stanza introduces a dimension of aspiration and willfulness into the sheer might of the creative act.

"Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?"

The reference to the lamb in the penultimate stanza reminds the reader that a tiger and a lamb have been created by the same God, and raises questions about the implications of this. It also invites a contrast between the perspectives of "experience" and "innocence" represented here and in the poem "The Lamb." "The Tyger" consists entirely of unanswered questions, and the poet leaves us to awe at the complexity of creation, the sheer magnitude of God's power, and the inscrutability of divine will. The perspective of experience in this poem involves a sophisticated acknowledgment of what is unexplainable in the universe, presenting evil as the prime example of something that cannot be denied, but will not withstand facile explanation, either. The open awe of "The Tyger" contrasts with the easy confidence, in "The Lamb," of a child's innocent faith in a benevolent universe. The meekness of Blake's lamb makes his "fearful" and "deadly" tiger appear all the more horrific, but to conclude that one is decidedly good and the other evil would be incorrect. The innocent portrayal of childhood in "The Lamb," though attractive, lacks imagination. The tiger, conversely, is repeatedly associated with fire or brightness, providing a sharp contrast against the dark forests from which it emerges — "Tyger! Tyger! burning bright / In the forests of the night." While such brightness might symbolize violence, it can also imply insight, energy, and vitality. The tiger's domain is one of unrestrained self-assertion. Far from evil, Blake's poem celebrates the tiger and the sublime excessiveness he represents. "Jesus was all virtue," wrote Blake "and acted from impulse, not from rules."
William Blake never answers his question about the unknown nature of god. He leaves it up to the reader to decide. By beginning and ending his poem with the same quatrain he asks the question about god creating evil as well as good, again. In conclusion, a reading of “The Tyger” offers different thematic possibilities. The poem seems to change as the reader changes, but the beauty of the words and meter make this poem an astonishing, enjoyable excursion into the humanity of theology. Moreover, the poem is quotable in various situations, and it leaves a permanent impression on the reader. Therefore, “The Tyger” by William Blake emerges from creation’s cold, clear stream as a perpetual inspiration – a classic. In my opinion, William Blake wrote the poem with a simple structure and a perfect rhyme to help the reader see the images he wanted to transmit. Above all, the description of the tiger is glaringly graphic due to essentially the contrast between fire and night.

**London : Critical Analysis**

The poem, ‘London’ is a devastating and concise political analysis, delivered with passionate anger, revealing the complex connections between patterns of ownership and the ruling ideology, the way all human relations are inescapably bound together within a single destructive society. The poem’s opening shows the narrator wandering the “charter’d” streets of London down to the “charter’d Thames”.

The loaded word “charter’d” – changed from the first draft’s politically empty “dirty” – is used in a critical sense, and Blake’s contemporary readers would no doubt have picked up on it. The use of this loaded word – repeated to sharpen the ironic point that the streets, the very river itself, are privately owned – suggests the oppressive nature of early capitalism, in which the Whig alliance of merchants, rising finance capitalists and some of the most powerful landed aristocrats who did not need to lean on the crown for power, were busy accumulating capital via taxation and the establishment of a national debt, thus transferring wealth from the majority to the minority. As the narrator wanders, he marks, notices, the suffering population:

“And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe”

The repetition of “marks” is emphatic; the Londoners are branded with visible signs of sickness and misery. The subtle shift from “mark” used as a verb in line 3 to a noun in line 4 binds the narrator to those he sees, showing he is not a disinterested observer but one of the sufferers himself. No-one is immune. This is a picture of a whole society in chains, and the tightness of the poem’s structure – especially in the formal second verse – emphasizes this feeling of entrapment. The move from visual to aural description makes turning away, escape, impossible – ears cannot be shut. In the second verse, this commonality of suffering is hammered home by the pounding rhythm, stressing the word “every”, five times:

“In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg’d manacles I hear”

The cumulative effect of this verse enacts the narrator’s helplessness. The “I” figure doesn’t appear till the very end of the verse, as if he has been overwhelmed by the sounds of human torment. The sense of imprisonment is made absolutely plain in the phrase “mind-forg’d manacles” – literally, metal restraining cuffs, devised by the mind of man to subjugate people by physical force, such as the prisoners languishing in Newgate; but also, metaphorically, mental chains imprisoning through ideological acceptance of the status quo. After the dirge of passivity in: “In every cry of every Man / In every Infant’s cry of fear”, we are jolted by the phrase into a sudden moment of analysis, of understanding. The tone of anger and condemnat
verse, the long list of accusatory examples has an unstoppable momentum. The verse begins, as if in mid-sentence:

"How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning Church appalls;
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls"

From now on in this cinematic poem, we lose sight of the narrator altogether as he becomes subsumed within his furious indictment, leaving the general misery on scene to zoom in on three specific social types – the chimney sweep, the soldier and the harlot – all emblematic figures, a point made clear by the use of capitals, used also for the representative institutions. The boy sweep blackens the church by literally making the churches sooty but also in the sense that the church's reputation is increasingly tarnished by its whitewashing of the brutal, smoke-belching commercial system which exploits child-labour. The word “appalls” here means ‘indicts’ rather than the modern usage of ‘disgusts’. The church is not appalled in a compassionate way, but is fearful of the menace the sweeps represent. The soldier whose sigh “Runs in blood down Palace walls” is a “hapless” victim, in spite of the fact that he is part of the armed state. The soldier, sighing in death or fear, metaphorically stains the palace walls with his blood just as the sweep’s cry blackens the churches. Perhaps the soldier’s discontented “sigh” takes the tangible form of red-painted protest slogans on palace walls. The final verse, which Blake only added in a later revision, reveals how the system, constructed on the savage institutions of power – the law, church, monarchy and army – poisons personal relationships at the deepest level. This is the culmination of the narrator’s apocalyptic description:

"But most thro’ midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born Infant's tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse."

It is no longer daytime, but midnight. The harlot is a young victim, like the boy sweep. She has been robbed of the chance to love her baby, because it is the result of commerce, not love, and because its existence only brings her increased poverty. She passes her own misery onto her child, and that child, like her, will pass its misery onto further generations. Her curse, like the sweep’s cry and the soldier’s sigh, has actual effects. Like “mind-forg’d manacles”, “Marriage hearse” is a fantastically potent phrase, reverberating with meanings: the two words are linked oxymoronically, with the notion of joyous, fruitful marriage undermined by its grim apotheosis, death by venereal disease. The phrase also fillets bourgeois marriage in all its hypocrisy, the husband routinely unfaithful to his wife, and suggests the sterile death-in-life of the wedded state. Marriage has become the funeral of love, the death of freedom. By striking at the family, the poem attacks the reproductive system of society itself. The harlot’s curse does more than make the baby cry; it destroys bourgeois complacency. It’s a fitting end; the poem’s final line has the incantatory power of a curse itself, with the rhyme shutting the lid on the poem once the build-up of hard alliterative sounds (black’ning, blood, Blasts, blights and plagues) has reached its crescendo.

London begins with the economic system, couched in that abstract, legalistic word “charter’d”, protected by its “bans” (laws), and moves to its consequences – the selling of bodies and souls within a sealed system of commercial exploitation. Yet, though the poem describes claustrophobic trappedness, paradoxically it does not feel defeatist. This is an anti-vision poem, but it implies that a vision is needed, and this lifts it out of despair. Its rising anger, reaching its height in the Shakespearean last line, is like a battle cry, or at least the precursor to one. It doesn’t just catalogue the woes, but by
ordering the encounters, reveals their cause and their inter-connection. It shows the power of articulation both in the victims’ utterances – the sweep, soldier and harlot marking the city, by black’ning, splashing their blood, infecting it – and in the poem’s own rhetorical eloquence.

Finally, we can conclude that London is a devastating portrait of a society in which all souls and bodies were trapped, exploited and infected.

**Holy Thursday (I) of SoI and Holy Thursday (II) of SoE : Comparison and Contrast**

The two poems: Holy Thursday I, II reflect Blake’s theory of contrariness. The title of the poems refers to the Thursday before Easter Sunday, observed by Christians in commemoration of Christ’s Last Supper in which the ceremony of the washing of the feet is performed: the celebrant washes the feet of 12 people to commemorate Christ’s washing of his disciples’ feet. In England a custom survives of giving alms to the poor. So the title has religious significance. Both poems deal with the same theme; but their approach to the theme is different; the first being light and ironic and the second being more savage and direct. I first analyse Holy Thursday (I) and then Holy Thursday (II) and finally, I will compare and contrast both the poems.

“Till into the high dome of Paul’s they like Thames’ waters flow.”

The poem’s (Holy Thursday I) dramatic setting refers to a traditional Charity School service at St. Paul’s Cathedral. The first stanza captures the movement of the children from the schools to the church, likening the lines of children to the Thames River, which flows through the heart of London: the children are carried along by the current of their innocent faith. In the second stanza, the metaphor for the children changes. First they become “flowers of London town.” This comparison emphasizes their beauty and fragility; it undercuts the assumption that these destitute children are the city’s refuse and burden, rendering them instead as London’s fairest and finest. Thus Blake emphasizes their innocence and beauty in Holy Thursday I. Next the children are described as resembling lambs in their innocence and meekness, as well as in the sound of their little voices. The image transforms the character of humming “multitudes,” into something heavenly and sublime. The lamb metaphor links the children to Christ and reminds the reader of Jesus’s special tenderness and care for children. As the children begin to sing in the third stanza, they are no longer just weak and mild; the strength of their combined voices raised toward God evokes something more powerful and puts them in direct contact with heaven. The simile for their song is first given as “a mighty wind” and then as “harmonious thunderings.” The beadles, under whose authority the children live, are eclipsed in their aged pallor by the internal radiance of the children. Thus the ‘guardians’ are beneath the children. The final line advises compassion for the poor. Blake’s basic aim in this poem is to emphasize the heavenliness and innocent of the children. The beginning of Holy Thursday (I) is transformed into Holy Thursday II as:

“Is that trembling cry a song? Can it be a song of joy?”

Holy Thursday II in contrast begins with a series of questions: how holy is the sight of children living in misery in a prosperous country? Might the children’s “cry,” as they sit assembled in St. Paul’s Cathedral on Holy Thursday, really be a song? “Can it be a song of joy?” In the first stanza, we learn that whatever care these children receive is minimal and grudgingly bestowed. The “cold and usurous hand” that feeds them is motivated
more by self-interest than by love and pity. Moreover, this “hand” metonymically represents not just the daily guardians of the orphans, but the city of London as a whole: the entire city has a civic responsibility to these most helpless members of their society, yet it delegates or denies this obligation. Here the children must participate in a public display of joy that poorly reflects their actual circumstances, but serves rather to reinforce the self-righteous complacency of those who are supposed to care for them. The song that had sounded so majestic in the Songs of Innocence shrivels, here, to a “trembling cry.” In the first poem, the parade of children found natural symbolization in London's mighty river. Here, however, the children and the natural world conceptually connect via a strikingly different set of images: the failing crops and sunless fields symbolize the wasting of a nation’s resources and the public’s neglect of the future. The thorns, which line their paths, link their suffering to that of Christ. They live in an ‘eternal winter’, where they experience neither physical comfort nor the warmth of love.

Holy Thursday I is meek and lenient in tone; but the poem calls upon the reader to be more critical than the speaker is: we are asked to contemplate the true meaning of Christian pity, and to contrast the institutionalized charity of the schools with the love of which God—and innocent children—are capable. Moreover, the visual picture given in the first two stanzas contains a number of unsettling aspects: the mention of the children's clean faces suggests that they have been tidied up for this public occasion; that their usual state is quite different. The public display of love and charity conceals the cruelty to which impoverished children were often subjected. Moreover, the orderliness of the children's march and the ominous “wands” (or rods) of the beadles suggest rigidity, regimentation, and violent authority rather than charity and love. Lastly, the tempestuousness of the children's song, as the poem transitions from visual to aural imagery, carries a suggestion of divine vengeance as in these lines:

“Then cherish pity, lest you drive
an angel from your door.”

In the Innocence version, Blake described the public appearance of charity school children in St. Paul's Cathedral In “experienced” version, however, he critiques rather than praises the charity of the institutions responsible for hapless children. The speaker entertains questions about the children as victims of cruelty and injustice, some of which the earlier poem implied. The rhetorical technique of the poem is to pose a number of suspicious questions that receive indirect, yet quite censoriously toned answers as in:

“Is this a holy thing to see
In a rich and fruitful land”

The question may be asked which of the two “Holy Thursday” poems states the right attitude. According to John Beer, a famous critic the innocent poem displays greater insight, in spite of the greater worldly wisdom, and in spite of the superior moral interest, shown in the experienced poem. The innocent speaker, says this critic, sees more of the scene than the experienced one. The speaker in the experienced poem is so anxious to assert his moral ideas that the scene in St. Paul's becomes an excuse for a moral sermon rather than a situation he can give attention to. And John Beer concludes: “The innocent song ends on a positive note without preaching a sermon, while the experienced speaker preaches a sermon that is negative in tone, being full of moral anxiety but destructive of moral obligation.” With his “Holy Thursday” of Experience”, Blake clarifies his view of the hypocrisy of formalized religion and its claimed acts of charity. He exposes the established church's self-congratulatory hymns as a sham that the sound of the children is only a trembling cry.

“From Milton: And Did Those Feet” : Critical Appraisal
Of all the poets of eighteenth century, Blake is the most original and the most spontaneous. He is the poet of inspiration. He follows no man's lead and obeys no voice except that which he hears in his own mystic soul, he is always looking behind the visible frame of things, for the glories and terrors of the world of spirit. Blake’s mysticism is based on the theology and philosophy of Swedenborg, Boehme, Kabbala and Christianity. Kathleen Raine regards him as; “perhaps the greatest Christian prophet of the modern world”.

Blake’s Song “And Did Those Feet” shows Blake’s eternal relation between the eternal soul and eternal God, along with this, Blake seems deeply drunk in the passion of patriotism. He expresses his intense desire to purge England from all the evils. According to him, once England was a holy place where angels tread upon, where Jesus traversed through. Once it was the chosen land. But at the time of Blake this land turned into an evil den.

The scenario of society has been completely changed. England lived with an outward appearance of prosperity. England was winning her wards, trade and winning respect in foreign capitals. A wave of self-satisfied nationalism was sweeping the country. In Blake’s time, religion itself was chipping in and the general tendencies of contemporary society had been formal, utilitarian and material. Blake drew his religious wisdom from the same sources as he drew his poetry and painting. This perennial source was human imagination, which he called, the Bosom of God, the Saviour, the Divine Humanity and Jesus.

England was, to Blake, a dreamland. He had a vision of the England that would have been the chestiest land. The poet is of the opinion that he has zeal and zest to change England.

“Bring me my bow of burning gold,  
Bring me my arrows of desires,  
Bring me my spear — O clouds, unfold!  
Bring me my chariot of fire!”

He has burning golden bow and sheaf full of arrows. He would throw the arrows and destroy the evil everywhere from the society. He wants to equip himself with spear to fight against the forces of evil. His chariot of fire has potential to carry away all dross that has infected the body politic of England. The poet is ready on intellectual level to root out evil from England means to give new orientation to English society.

Blake is a mystic and throughout his poetry he dwells upon the innocent passion of being noble, chaste and loving. He wants England a place where only benevolence, kindness and goodness can prevail. He feels great sorrow when he feels, that England miserably failed to play its role. This crest-fallen England with evils, injustices and miseries taxed upon Blake’s mind and forced by the circumstances, he decided to launch a ceaseless fight against the agents to evil. His fight is like gods of classical mythology. He desires from Almighty to assist him against evil.

His fight will be fought ceaselessly until Jerusalem is built upon the pastures of England.

“I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have built Jerusalem,  
In England’s green and pleasant land”

This is a small poem but each and every line has fathomless depth. The poem is divided into three stanzas. The first stanza has picturesque beauty
different situations and the ancient times England. The second is his desire to fight and in third stanza he wants to reconstruct England on solid foundations.

The lyrics of poem have splendour and beauty. Every lyric is a window of imaginative world; symbols are used for multiple meanings. Its vocabulary is simple and symbols are universal. We can’t find the most complete exposition of Blake’s philosophy in this poem.

**Auguries of Innocence : An Analysis**

William Blake’s “Auguries of Innocence” is a poem that was written with the mind-set of a Romantic. Before we delve into the poem, first a quick explanation of what romanticism is. Romanticism was a movement which was particularly popular from the late 1700s to about the mid-1800s. It was most commonly considered an intellectual movement of art, music, and literature; beyond that the idea of romanticism is a little unclear, as many people have different views on it. Suffice to say that expression was a prevalent theme in romanticism, and the intellectual aspect of it provided a lot of room for commenting on the perceived inadequacies of the time period.

Nowhere is the idea of complaining about the ills of society more observant than in “Auguries of Innocence.” The poem is mainly William Blake listing an abundance of reasons as to why he is unhappy with the world around him (the early 1800s). A series of paradoxes make up the meat of the poem. The very first stanza reads, “To see the world in a grain of sand, and heaven in a wild flower, hold infinity in the palm of your hand, and eternity in an hour.” Obviously no human being can literally see the kingdom of God in the petals of a rose, nor can they capture time in a bottle. But what exactly is William Blake’s purpose by including all these paradoxes? Let’s read on and find out.

The next major paradox of Blake’s poem starts at about line 50. He claims that “the prince’s robes and beggar’s rags are toadstools on the miser’s rags.” This is an obvious paradox, as a prince is a far cry from a beggar. But he then goes on to say “a truth that’s told with bad intent beats all the lies you can invent.” This statement implies that it is much better to lie to someone (as long as you are doing it for a good reason) than to be honest to someone with malicious intent. For example, when your significant other asks you if they look big in a new outfit, you damn well know the answer to give.

Blake describes a bunch more paradoxes, like “man was made for joy and woe” and “the poor man’s farthing is worth more, than all the gold on Affric’s shore.” I believe that Blake is using all of these paradoxical statements in order to make a statement about the intelligence of humanity. The statements that he made regarding holding infinity in your hand are clearly impossible, and we as humans cannot understand how this concept could make any sense. But then if it is impossible than how can we even create the thought of it in the first place? Surely our minds could not be able to create an impossible thought; if we can conceive of something, than surely in some way or another it must be possible. But we cannot understand how. Blake is saying that just because we think we know something that does not automatically make it true or false.

Blake exemplifies this thinking in another series of lines, wherein he states, “The questioner who sits so sly, shall never know how to reply”. He makes it clear here that just when you believe that you know everything, is the exact point at which you know nothing. However, in the very next line Blake claims that “he, who replies to words of doubt, doth put the light of knowledge out.” This line seems to be saying that once you begin to discuss doubt about preconceived notions, you are hurting the pursuit of knowledge. So just what the heck is Blake trying to really say? Perhaps these two lines themselves make up a great paradox. If we can conceive of these two statements, can they both be true? Or do they contradict one another?
Ultimately we feel that Blake is doing a great job at making people think when they read this poem. It completely exemplifies the Romantic Movement, in that it is an expression of many different statements, a lot of which are very contradictory. His paradoxes are not only made to make us think, but I feel that they can also represent human nature. Think about, how many possible thoughts we have going on in our head at one time or another. Look at the liar's paradox. If I were to say that I always lie, how would you know if I am lying or telling the truth? It is the nature of human beings to be paradoxical, because we are so complex a species that it is impossible to simplify us down into one category. We are at the same time good and evil, pretty and ugly, smart and dumb. We can fully support Blake’s goals in getting people to think, and believe that the paradoxes in the poem only help people to think for themselves even more.

**Songs of Innocence & Songs of Experience : Major Themes**

**The Destruction of Innocence:** Throughout both Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience, Blake repeatedly addresses the destruction of childlike innocence, and in many cases of children’s lives, by a society designed to use people for its own selfish ends. Blake romanticizes the children of his poems, only to place them in situations common to his day, in which they find their simple faith in parents or God challenged by harsh conditions. Songs of Experience is an attempt to denounce the cruel society that harms the human soul in such terrible ways, but it also calls the reader back to innocence, through Imagination, in an effort to redeem a fallen world.

**Redemption:** Throughout his works, Blake frequently refers to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. While he alludes to the atoning act of Christ Crucified, more often Blake focuses on the Incarnation, the taking on of human form by the divine Creator, as the source of redemption for both human beings and nature. He emphasizes that Christ "became a little child" just as men and women need to return to a state of childlike grace in order to restore the innocence lost to the social machinery of a cruel world.

**Religious Hypocrisy:** In such poems as "Holy Thursday" and "The Little Vagabond," Blake critiques the religious leaders of his day for their abuse of spiritual authority. The men who should be shepherds to their flocks are in fact reinforcing a political and economic system that turns children into short-lived chimney sweepers and that represses love and creative expression in adults. Blake has no patience with clergy who would assuage their own or their earthly patrons’ guilt by parading poor children through a church on Ascension Day, as in "Holy Thursday" from both sections, and he reserves most of his sharpest verse for these men.

**Imagination over Reason:** Blake is a strong proponent of the value of human creativity, or Imagination, over materialistic rationalism, or Reason. As a poet and artist, Blake sees the power of art in its various forms to raise the human spirit above its earth-bound mire. He also sees the soul-killing materialism of his day, which uses rational thought as an excuse to perpetuate crimes against the innocent via societal and religious norms. Songs of Experience in particular decries Reason’s hold over Imagination, and it uses several ironic poems to undermine the alleged superiority of rationalism.

Blake was not opposed to intelligent inquiry, however. In "A Little Boy Lost" from Songs of Experience, Blake admires the boy’s inquiries into the nature of God and his own thought, even as he sharply criticizes the religious leaders of his day for demanding mindless obedience to dogma.

**Nature as the Purest State of Man:** Like many of his contemporary Romantic poets, Blake sees in the natural world an idyllic universe that can influence human beings in a positive manner. Many of his poems, such as "Spring," celebrate the beauty and fecundity of nature, while others, such as "London," deride
urban society. Blake's characters are happiest when they are surrounded by natural beauty and following their natural instincts; they are most oppressed when they are trapped in social or religious institutions or are subject to the horrors of urban living.

The Flaws of Earthly Parents: One recurring motif in both Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience is the failure of human parents to properly nurture their children. The "Little Boy Lost" is abandoned by his earthly father, yet rescued by his Heavenly Father. The parents of "The Little Vagabond" weep in vain as their son is burned alive for heresy. Both mother and father seem frustrated by their child's temperament in "Infant Sorrow." This recurring motif allows Blake to emphasize the frailty of human communities, in which the roles of mother and father are defined by society rather than by natural instincts, and to emphasize the supremacy of Nature and of divine care in the form of God the Father.

Social Reform: While much of Blake's poetry focuses on leaving behind the material world in favour of a more perfect spiritual nature, his poetry nonetheless offers realistic and socially conscious critiques of existing situations. Both of his "Chimney Sweeper" poems highlight the abuse of children by parents and employers as they are forced into hazardous, and potentially fatal, situations for the sake of earning money. Both "Holy Thursday" poems decry the overt display of the poor as a spectacle of absolution for the wealthy and affluent. "The Human Abstract" points out that our virtues are predicated on the existence of human suffering. Although Blake is certainly more spiritually than practically minded, the seeds of social reform can be seen in the philosophy underlying his verses: innocence is a state of man that must be preserved, not destroyed, and the social systems that seek to destroy innocence must be changed or eliminated.

William Blake’s Theory of Contrariness

Songs of Innocence and of Experience is a collection of short lyric poems accompanied by Blake's original illustrations. The two sections juxtapose the state of innocence and that of experience. Many of the poems in Blake's words they were meant to show “the two contrary states of the human soul”; the illustration of innocence and experience. The tone of the first series is admirably sounded by the introductory "Piping down the valleys wild" and that of second the dark picture of poor babes “fed with cold and usurous hand”.

Blake is bitter against those who go "up to the Church to pray" while the misery of the innocent is around them. His theory of Contraries is summarized in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: “Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate, are necessary to human existence.” The essence of Blake’s theory is that, in some paradoxical way, it is possible for the contraries of innocence and experience to co-exist within a human being. The crime of “religion” was its attempt “to destroy existence” by ignoring or minimizing the essential oppositions in human nature. The word ‘contrary’ had a very specific and important meaning for Blake. Like almost all great poets, he was an enemy of dualism. Western thought has been intensely dualistic, seeing everything as composed of warring opposites, head and heart, body and spirit, male and female as though the split between the hemispheres of the human brain were projecting itself on everything perceived. A study of the poems in the two groups shows the emotional tensions between the two Contrary States.

“Piping down the valleys wild”

In the “Songs of Innocence”, Blake expresses the happiness of a child's first thoughts about life. To the child, the world is one of happiness, beauty, and love. At that stage of life, the sunshine of love is so radiant that human suffering appears only temporary and fleeting. In the Introduction to the first series, Blake represents a laughing
inspiration for his poems. And in the poems that follow in this series, Blake gives us his vision of the world as it appears to the child or as it affects the child. And this world is one of purity, joy, and security. The children are themselves pure, whether their skin is black or white. They are compared to lambs “whose innocent call” they hear. Both “child” and “lamb” serve as symbols for Christ. Joy is everywhere—in the “Joy but two days old”; in the leaping and shouting of the little ones; in the sun, in the bells, in the voices of the birds; in the Laughing Song all Nature rejoices. But, above all, there is security. There is hardly a poem in which a symbol of protection, a guardian figure of some kind, does not occur. In The Echoing Green, the old folk are close by, while the children play. Elsewhere there is the shepherd watching over his sheep; there are the mother, the nurse, the lion, the angels, and, most important of all, God Himself. There is spontaneous happiness and delight in these groups of poems as “The Infant Boy” illustrates, “I happy am/ Joy is my name’.

“These flowers of London town!
Seated in companies they sit
with radiance all their own”

In the first Holy Thursday, poor children sit “with radiance of their own”; while in the second Holy Thursday, the poet deores the fact that there should be so many poor and hungry children depending on charity in a country which is otherwise rich and fruitful. The second poem is very moving, as it was intended to be. We thus have pictures of contrary states. In the “Songs of Innocence”, the prevailing symbol is the Iamb, which also symbolizes the Christ. In the “Songs of Experience” the chief symbol is the tiger as expressed by the first stanza:

“Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night”

Where ‘forests of the night’ symbolize experience. The tiger burns metaphorically with rage and quickly becomes for some a symbol of anger and passion. The poet asks a crucial question here. Did God Who made the lamb also make the tiger? The lamb, innocent and pretty, seems the work of a kindly, comprehensible Creator. The splendid but terrifying tiger makes us realize that God’s purposes are not so easily understood. The tiger represents the created universe in its violent and terrifying aspects. It also symbolizes violent and terrifying forces within the individual man, and these terrifying forces have to be faced and fully recognized. The two poems called The Lamb and The Tiger do, indeed, represent two contrary states of the human soul. No contrast could have been more vivid and more striking. Blake sees exploitation in the songs of experience as exemplified by the following lines from, ‘London’.

“And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe”

The poems in the second group record the wounds and cruelties of the civilized world. Some of them are bitter comments on the restraints forged by custom and law. Here Blake deplores the dominance of reason, religion, law, and morality, and he deplores the suppression of natural impulses, and more especially the suppression of the sexual impulse. Instead of innocence, joy, and security, Blake finds guilt, misery, and tyranny in the world. The protective guardians have disappeared and in their place are the tyrants. The rigors of sexual morality are depicted in A Little Girl Lost, The Sick Rose, The Angel, and Ah, Sunflower. The Sick Rose shows the destructive effects of sexual repression. In The Angel, the maiden realizes too late what she has missed. Ah, Sunflower shows the youth “pining away with desire”, and the “pale virgin shrouded in snow”, because both of them were denied sexual fulfillment.
The contrasts Blake sets forth in the Songs are echoes of English society’s approach to the social and political issues of his era—a time characterized, on the one hand, by increasing desire for personal, political, and economic freedom, and on the other, by anxiety regarding the potential consequences of that freedom for social institutions. Several of the poems directly address contemporary social problems, for example, “The Chimney-Sweeper” deals with child labor and “Holy Thursday” describes the grim lives of charity children. The most fully-realized social protest poem in the Songs is “London,” a critique of urban poverty and misery. Thus contrariness are a must. The language and vision not just of Blake but of poetry itself insists that the contraries are equally important and inseparable. ‘Without contraries is no progression’, wrote Blake. He sought to transform the energies generated by conflict into creative energies, moving towards mutual acceptance and harmony. Thus, by describing innocence and experience as ‘contrary states of the human soul’, Blake is warning us that we are not being invited to choose between them, that no such choice is possible. He is not going to assert that innocent joy is preferable to the sorrows of experience.

William Blake’s Romanticism

William Blake is a romantic poet. The sparks of romanticism are vividly marked on his poetry. The question arises what is Romanticism? The answer is that it is a phenomenon characterized by reliance on the imagination and subjectivity of approach, freedom of thought and expression, and an idealization of nature.

It was Schelling who first defined romanticism as ‘liberalism in literature’. Though romanticism officially started by the Lyrical Ballads jointly penned by Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1830, poets like William Blake made cracks to classicism towards the end of the 18th century. In Romanticism, a piece of work could become, as Blake described, “an embodiment of the poet’s imagination and vision.” Many of the writers of the Romantic period were highly influenced by the war between England and France and the French Revolution. In the midst of all these changes, Blake too was inspired to write against these ancient ideas. ‘All Religions Are One’, and ‘There is No Natural Religion’ were composed in hopes of bringing change to the public’s spiritual life. Blake felt that, unlike most people, his spiritual life was varied, free and dramatic. Blake’s poetry features many characteristics of the romantic spirit. The romanticism of Blake consists in the importance he attached to imagination, in his mysticism and symbolism, in his love of liberty, in his humanitarian sympathies, in his idealization of childhood, in the pastoral setting of many of his poems, and in his lyricism.

“Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire”

The above lines from, ‘Jerusalem’ amply justifies the point. “Poetry fettered”, said Blake, “fetters the human race”. In theory as well as practice, the Romantic Movement began with the smashing of fetters. In his enthusiastic rage, Blake condemned the verse-forms which had become traditional. He poured scorn upon all that he associated with classicism in art and in criticism. “We do not want either Greek or Roman models if we are but just and true to our own imaginations”, he said. The whole critical vocabulary of neo-classical criticism had evidently disgusted him. He could not endure it. The visions that Blake started seeing in his childhood and which he kept seeing throughout his life were doubtless a product of his ardent imagination. His visions profoundly controlled both his poetry and his painting. Of many of his poems he said that they were dictated to him by spirits. In this most literal sense he held that, inspiration could come to the aid of a poet. In a state of inspiration, the poet made use of his imagination. “Human imagination is the Divine Vision and Fruition”, he said. Energy and delight accompany this expression of the Divine Vision. All these views on the subject of poetry spring from the intensely romantic nature of Blake. It is not merely the revolutionary
permeates his poetry. The subject of child is more crucial to his art. We see in Holy Thursday I:

“These flowers of London town!
Seated in companies they sit
with radiance all their own”

The child is here the symbol of the most delicate and courageous intuitions in the human mind. The elements of Romanticism are present in these poems, some of them in the highest degree, such as the sense of wonder, the contemplation of Nature through fresh eyes, an intimate sympathy with the varieties of existence. Other elements of Romanticism are found in a much less degree, such as the obsession with the past, or the absorbing sense of self. Everything that the eyes of the child see is bathed in a halo of mystery and beauty. The words in these poems are perfectly adapted to the thought because they are as simple as possible, and the thought itself is simple. Blake's first style is in a way a juvenile form of Romanticism. The "Songs of Innocence" most completely fulfil the definition of Romanticism as "the renascence of wonder". The world of Nature and man is the world of love and beauty and innocence enjoyed by a happy child, or rather by a poet who miraculously retains an unspoiled and inspired vision. Despite his strong emotions and his unfamiliar ideas, Blake keeps his form wonderfully limpid and melodious. Besides love for children, imagination plays a key role in his poetry as Tyger embodies:

“When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears;
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he Who made the Lamb make thee?”

Symbolically, this poem is an impassioned defense of energy and imagination which occupy a commanding position in Blake's thinking. The tiger is Blake's symbol for the "abundant life", and for regeneration. The poem effectively conveys to us the splendid though terrifying qualities of the tiger. The climax of the poem's lyricism is reached in the lines which, though somewhat cryptic, effectively produce and effect of wonder and amazement. Blake was a great champion of liberty and had strong humanitarian sympathies. This is another aspect of his Romanticism. Blake's humanitarian sympathies are seen in such poems of Experience as Holy Thursday, A Little Boy Lost, The Chimney Sweeper, and above all London as in the following lines:

“In every voice, in every ban.
The mind-forg’d manacles I hear”

In London, Blake attacks social injustice in its various forms, as it shows itself in the chimney sweeper's cry, the hapless soldier's sigh, and the youthful harlot's curse. He appears here as an enemy of what he calls "the-mind-forged manacles". Nor does, Blake show any mercy to the Church. The boy in Blake's poetry finds the church an inhospitable place, while the ale-house is warm and friendly because the church imposes religious discipline like fasting and prayer. Pastoralism, too is feature of poetry. The little pastoral poem 'The Shepherd' has a delicate simplicity. It celebrates the happiness of rural responsibility and trust. Noteworthy also is 'The Echoing Green' with its picturesqueness in a warmer hue, its delightful domesticity, and its expressive melody.

Finally, it is established that Blake is a romantic poet. Blake is one of the major Romantic poets, whose verse and artwork became part of the wider movement of Romanticism in late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth century European Culture. His writing combines a variety of styles: he is at once an artist, a lyric poet, a mystic and a visionary, and his work has fascinated, intrigued and sometimes bewildered re:
nineteenth century reader Blake’s work posed a single question: was he sane or mad? The poet Wordsworth, for example, commented that there “is no doubt that this poor man was mad, but there is something in his madness which interests me more than the sanity of Lord Byron and Walter Scott”. Blake’s use of images, symbols, metaphors and revolutionary spirit combined with simple diction and spontaneous expression of thoughts and emotions make him a typical romantic poet.

**William Blake’s Symbolism**

Blake is a highly symbolic poet and his poetry is rich in symbols and allusions. Almost each and every other word in his poems is symbolic. A symbol is an object which stands for something else as dove symbolizes peace. Similarly, Blake's tiger symbolizes creative energy; Shelley's wind symbolizes inspiration; Ted Hughes's Hawk symbolizes terrible destructiveness at the heart of nature. Blake's symbols usually have a wide range of meaning and more obvious. Few critics would now wish to call Blake a symbolist poet, since his handling of symbols is markedly different from that of the French symbolistes, but the world inhabited by his mythical figures is defined through quasi-allegorical images of complex significance, and such images are no less important in his lyrical poetry. The use of symbols is one of the most striking features of Blake’s poetry.

There is hardly any poem in the “Songs of Innocence and of Experience” which does not possess a symbolic or allegorical meaning, besides its apparent or surface meaning. If these poems are written in the simplest possible language, that fact does not deprive them of a depth of meaning. The language of these poems is like that of the Bible—at once simple and profound as the following lines read:

“O Rose, thou art sick!”

When Blake talks of the sick rose, he is really telling us how mysterious evil attacks the soul. Flower-symbolism is of particular importance in Songs of Innocence and Experience, being connected with the Fall by the motif of the garden; and its traditional links with sexuality inform the text of ‘The Blossom’ and the design for ‘Infant Joy’, which are taken up in Experience by the plate for ‘The Sick Rose’. ‘Ah! Sun-Flower’ is a more symbolic text, and has evoked a greater variety of responses. Declaring this to be one of ‘Blake’s supreme poems’, we can interpret the flower as a man who ‘is bound to the flesh’ but ‘yearns after the liberty of Eternity’. Harper claims that it describes the aspiration of all ‘natural things’ to ‘the sun’s eternality’. Identifying the speaker as ‘Blake himself. Blake travels from flower-symbolism to animal symbols as in the ‘Tyger’:

“Did he smile his work to see
Did he who made the Lamb make thee!”

If the lamb symbolizes innocence and gentleness, the tiger is to Blake a symbol of the violent and terrifying forces within the individual man. The lamb, innocent and pretty, seems the work of a kindly Creator. The splendid but terrifying tiger makes us realize that God’s purposes are not so easily understood, and that is why the question arises “Did he who made the Lamb make thee?” At the same time, the tiger is symbolic of the Creator’s masterly skill which enabled Him to frame the “fearful symmetry” of the tiger. But the lion described in the poem Night (in the “Songs of Innocence”) offers an interesting contrary to the tiger of the “Songs of Experience”. Both the beasts seem dreadful, but the lion, like the beast of the fairy tale, can be magically transformed into a good and gentle creature: the tiger cannot. In the world of Experience the violent and destructive elements in Creation must be faced and accepted, and even admired. The tiger is also symbolic of the Energy and the Imagination of man, as opposed to the Reason. Blake was a great believer in natural impulses and hated all restraints.
Consequently he condemns all those who exercise restraints upon others. He states in Holy Thursday II:

“And their ways are fill’d with thorns
It is eternal winter there”

The eternal winter are symbolic of total destruction of the country and the perpetual devastation and ‘Grey-headed beadle’ in ‘Holy Thursday I’ are symbolic of authority and it is they exploit children for their own material interests. In the poem London, oppression and tyranny are symbolised by the king (who is responsible for the soldier’s blood being shed), social institutions like (loveless) marriage, and “he mind-forged manacles”. Even further, personal and social relationships have been symbolised as:

“In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree”

A Poison Tree is another allegory. The tree here represents repressed wrath; the water represents fear; the apple is symbolic of the fruit of the deceit which results from repression. This deceit gives rise to the speaker’s action in laying a death-trap for his enemy. The deeper meaning of the poem is that aggressive feelings, if suppressed, almost certainly destroy personal relationships. On the surface, however, the poem is a simple, ordinary story. Thus symbolism is crucial to understanding Blake as poet of earlier romanticism. What can be more symbolic than the following lines from, ‘Auguries of Innocence’?

“To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour”

Thus, Blake’s poetry is charged with symbols. He has depicted nature and human nature; animals and plants as simple but profound symbols of powerful forces; “contrary states of the human soul” – for example, good and evil, or innocence and experience throughout his poetry. What is different in Blake is that he is not modeling after any symbols but his own. The symbols always have an inner relatedness that leads us from the outer world to the inner man. The symbols live in the ordered existence of his vision; the vision itself is entirely personal, in theme and in the logic that sustains it. Blake is difficult not because he invented symbols of his own; he created his symbols to show that the existence of any natural object and the value man’s mind places on it were one and the same. He was fighting the acceptance of reality in the light of science as much as he was fighting the suppression of human nature by ethical dogmas. He fought on two fronts, and shifted his arms from one to the other without letting us know—more exactly, he did not let himself know. He created for himself a personality, in life and in art, that was the image of the thing he sought.

In short, it is established that William Blake is a highly symbolic and even allegorical poet. His use of symbolism is unique and cinematic. It paints a lively and pulsating picture of dynamic life before us. Especially, the symbolic use of

‘Sun-flower’ gets so much stamped on the mind of the reader that it is difficult to forget it. He mentions a tiger it becomes a symbol of God’s power in creation, his lamb turns out to be a symbol of suffering innocence and Jesus Christ and his tree is symbolic of anger and desire to triumph over enemies; the dark side of human nature. Symbolism is the main trait of William Blake as a dramatist as a poet and this has been well-crystallized in his legendary work, ‘The Songs of Innocence and Experience’.
Blake’s Concept of God

William Blake formed most of his works in the fashion of Romanticism. Much like William Wordsworth, Blake wrote from the heart, letting natural expression take over. Many of the writers of the Romantic period felt they had entered an imaginative climate, which some of them called “the Spirit Age.” During this “Spirit Age,” many authors felt that freedom and spontaneity were the key elements in poetry. Before this creative revolution, a poem was considered a classical work of art, assimilated to please an audience. In Romanticism, the “rules” hanging over poetry were dropped and a piece of work could become, as Blake described, “an embodiment of the poet’s imagine vision. “Blake used these free-formed ideas and concepts in his later works.

Blake’s essays, All Religions Are One, There is No Natural Religion, and There is No Natural Religion, all show Blake’s views against Christian Orthodoxy, religion based on ancient scripture and against “Natural Religion,” the belief that God is as natural organism, much like man. Blake was opposed to the idea that God is only what the church believes him to be but he was also opposed to the notion that God was here before we were.

Blake believed that man’s “Poetic Genius,” or imagination helped create the God of today. Many of the writers of the Romantic period were highly influenced by the war between England and France and the French Revolution. During the war, Blake was faced with charges of “speaking against his King and country.” People of this era felt his works tested the boundaries of good art. Many of the other writers of this time also challenged previously accepted ideas. Mary Wollstonecroft wrote “A Vindication of the Rights of Women.” Her work stood up against the female stereotypes and preconceived notions about women.

In the midst of all these changes, Blake too was inspired to write against these ancient ideas. All Religions Are One, There is No Natural Religion, and There is No Natural Religion were composed in hopes of bringing change to the public’s spiritual life. Blake felt that, unlike most people, his spiritual life was varied, free and dramatic. Growing up he had no formal education. At the age of ten he joined a drawing school and later studied for a short time at a prestigious art school, the Royal Academy of the Arts. From this point in his life, art had the strongest influence. Later on, his work diminished and he went to a friend who was an artist, William Haley, for help. Haley attempted to change Blake’s free art into conventional and breadwinning art. Blake soon rebelled, calling Haley the enemy of his spiritual life. After all of this, he began to write poetry, hoping to revive his free expression and flow. He wrote three works around 1788, to illustrate his views on religion, All Religions Are One, There is No Natural Religion, and There is No Natural Religion. He wrote All Religions Are One directed against Deism or “Natural Religion” and against Christian Orthodoxy.

Blake felt that God is not a natural or organic being; he is a creation of man’s imagination or “Poetic Genius.” He states that “The Jewish and Christian Testaments are an original derivation from the Poetic Genius,” supporting his theory that man has imagined God. In There is No Natural Religion; he speaks against the argument that man naturally perceives God. He states that the desires and perceptions of man are not natural or organic, but are things taught to us.

Along with his prose work Blake’s poetry presented the same ideas. His Songs of Innocence and Experience expose the presence of God and Spirituality in Innocence but the questions like “Could frame thy fearfull symmetry?” and “Dare frame thy fearfull
symmetry?" make his belief more firm and unique. This is important because when the author initially poses the question, he wants to know who has the ability to make such a creature. After more interrogation, the question evolves to "who could create such a villain of its potential wrath, and why?" William Blake's implied answer is "God."

In the end, Blake reminds us that all things in this world were accepted as "natural," then "the philosophic and experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things, and stand still unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again. "We as humans are too dependent upon acceptance and not enough on independence. In There is No Natural Religion, Blake tries to persuade his audience that our knowledge is not limited to the physical sense, it is free and unbounded, much like Blake's ideal spiritual life.

**William Blake as a Lyric Poet**

Lyric is a short poem that conveys intense feeling or profound thought. In ancient Greece, lyrics were sung or recited to the accompaniment of the lyre. The lyric is the commonest kind of the poetry of self-expression. Man has always liked to pour out his intensely-felt feelings and emotion, and hence the lyric is among the earliest forms of poetry to be written in the literary history of any people. When moved by some intense emotion, love, hatred, joy, sorrow, wonder, admiration, etc., man has always expressed himself in a poetic language, and this accounts for the early appearance of the lyric among all peoples. The chief qualities of a good lyric may be summarized as follows:

1. It is a short poem, characterised by simplicity in language and treatment.

2. It deals with a single emotion which is generally stated in the first few lines. Then the poet gives us the thoughts suggested by that particular emotion. The last and concluding part is in the nature of a summary or it embodies the conclusion reached by the poet. Such is the development of a lyric in general, but often these three parts are not distinctly marked. In moments of intense emotional excitement the poet may be carried away by his emotions and the lyric may develop along entirely different lines. A lyric is more often than not, mood-dictated.

3. It is musical. Verbal-music is an important element in its appeal and charm. Various devices are used by poets to enhance the music of their lyrics.

4. A lyric is always an expression of the moods and emotions of a poet. The best lyrics are emotional in tone. However, a poet may not express merely his emotions, he may also analyse them intellectually. This gives to the lyric a hard intellectual tone. Such intellectual analysis of emotion is an important characteristic of the metaphysical lyrics of the early 17th century. Such lyrics are also more elaborate than the ordinary lyric.

5. It is characterised by intensity and poignancy (causing sadness or pity). The best lyrics are the expressions of intensely felt emotions. Like fire, the intensity of the poet’s emotion burns out the non-essentials, all attention is concentrated and the basic emotion, and the gain in poignancy is enormous. It comes directly out of the heart of the poet, and so goes directly to the heart of the readers. The lyric at its best is poignant, pathetic and intense.

6. Spontaneity is another important quality of a lyric. The lyric poet sings in strains of unpremeditated art. He sings effortlessly because he must, because of the inner urge for self-expression. Any conscious effort on his part, makes the lyric look unnatural and artificial.
William Blake is a lyric poet. He was born in the neo-classical age, but the things that distinguish him from other poets of his age are the lyrical qualities of his poetry. By the lyrical qualities we understand such poetic features as subjectivity, melodiousness, imagination, description and meditation. Moreover a lyric poem is usually short and may fall into such genres as elegy, ode, ballad, sonnet etc. A lyric poem expresses a poet’s private thoughts and emotions rather than telling a story. From all these perspectives the poems of Blake in Songs of Innocence and Experience are lyrics.

The first quality that makes his poems lyrics is **subjectivity**. The neo-classical approach to poetry was objective. Blake on the other hand took a subjective approach. Blake was a disturbing prophet who desired social change. He was personally against all kinds of repressions, materialism, institutional corruption, racism, worship of money and hypocrisy.

Blake **voiced against repression and constrains**. He did not follow the neo-classical restraints of writing poem. He also expressed his hatred towards institutional and personal repressions in such poems as- The Holy Thursday, The Nurse’s Songs (Experience),

In Blake’s time many children had to depend upon charity. In his poem ‘Holy Thursday’, Blake raises his voice against such repression.

And their sun does never shine,  
And their fields are bleak and bare,  
And their as are filled with thorns  
It is eternal winter there.

Blake means here that all children are angels, not scapegoats to be the butchered on the altar of the society. How can England call herself rich and fruitful land if she has hunger children waiting for food from the so-called benefactors of society? Blake believes that children should be free and their life should be colourful. But the guardians always try to restrict them. Blake opposes such kind of restriction. In Nurse’s Song, the nurse keeps a constant watch over the children and her instincts reflect her disposition. From her angle of view, life is aimless, a useless waste of time in childhood and in old age, a shame. It has no purpose as she says:

Our spring and our day are wasted in play,  
And your winter and night in disguise.

She sets all her views in a depressing background such as winter, night, and dew darkness and so on. She looks back with frustration on her childhood, and instead of feeling merry she grows pale. Her ‘spring’ and “day” seem to express the agony of growing up to a regretful maturity. She is hostile and insensitive to innocence. She takes the children back home, leaving them unable to protest, to play and enjoy.

William Blake **dislikes Industrial Revolution** and in his poems he focuses how the Industrial Revolution represents the devil and that it must be purged. Blake focused on child labour and prostitution—the two adverse effects of Industrialization Revolution in his poems The Chimney Sweeper and London.

Blake hated the **exploitation of children's labour because of Industrial Revolution**. Blake believed in the innocence of childhood pleasures. The Chimney Sweeper by William Blake expressed the difficult lives of working children. As the title reveals it, the children are cleaning chimneys all day long in unimaginable conditions. Blake gives his readers a clear understanding of the harsh conditions of these young chimney sweepers. He says:
“There’s little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head
That curl’d like a lamb’s back,”

Blake focuses how badly these children are left powerless and with no escape. On another instance, the poem relates the misery felt by these children when it says:

“A little black thing among the snow
Crying “‘weep, ‘weep,” in notes of woe!”

Blake is here pointing out that man is responsible for evils of society. The picture drawn by Blake is disturbing and heart-breaking at the same time.

In his poem "London," from his work Songs of Experience, Blake describes the woes of the Industrial Revolution. He describes the Thames River and the city streets as "chartered," or controlled by commercial interest. He refers to "mind-forged manacles"; he relates that every man's face contains "Marks of weakness, marks of woe"; and he discusses the "every cry of every Man" and "every Infant's cry of fear."

In “London” Blake describes a world during and after the industrial revolution in which there have been many ill-fated side effects as people move away from the traditional farming families and their beliefs.

Blake vividly portrays another worse effect of Industrial revolution, “prostitution”, in his poem “London”. A prostitute or an unwed mother is unable to rejoice in her child’s birth. It tells of a married couple looking down upon her for what she does in order to make a living. This is ironic because the business of prostitution is caused in part by the restrictions placed upon the married man. It is also ironic because the married man is what has created the need for, and use of prostitutes. The harlot curses the respectable and polite society because it is they who have created the demand for her, and then look down upon what she does. “Blights with plagues” implies that perhaps she also infects them with some sort of venereal disease. The final words of the poem, “Marriage hearse” compares marriage to death. The narrator sees marriage as another type of restriction placed upon man by society, marriage is a sort of death in man's ability to be free to do as he wishes.

Blake believed in equality for all men, and this is reflected in his poem. William Blake's The Little Black Boy revolves around the theme of slavery and the ideal slave's mentality. Blake wrote about a black African-American and his experience with slavery. Blake probably expressed his own feelings towards the whites' racism and suppression acts towards African-Americans through the black boy, which is the speaker of the poem.

The poem is about an African-American, who is the speaker of the poem, who remembers his childhood with his mother where she used to indoctrinate her child with the racist beliefs of slavers. The black boy has a dream, that all humans will be equal.

Blake stands against puritan hypocrisy. Two of his poems from Songs of Experience present his views on the matter: ‘The Chimney Sweeper’ and “The Garden of Love’. In ‘The Chimney Sweeper’, the child (Blake) is telling society that his pain is being caused by those in whom he put his trust— his parents. They abandon him and go ...to praise God & his Priest & King (Blake, 11). Perhaps they do this, because on the outside their child looks happy and they probably think that they are helping him more than anything:

‘ And because I am happy, & dance& sing
They think they have done me no injury,’
In the meantime, the church is also playing a part in his misery. How? Because it allows the parents to come inside its building to pray when they should be protecting their child from all harm:

'They are both gone up to the church to pray 
........................
a heaven of our misery '

All of Blake's poem are short, some very short indeed. All are written in apparently simple style, and the most usual verse form in the rhymed quatrain. (stanza of four lines). A lyric poem is usually melodious. In many of Blake's poem like “The Tyger” we find melodious tone.

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

For Blake "imagination" is that gift in man, which can hear the prompting's of God, or "spiritual sensation". 'Introduction' is a canonical poem of the romantic period. In it lies the key romantic element: imagination, emotion, idealism. In "Introduction" to Songs of Innocence Blake as a poet, playing his simple and innocent music attracts the attention of a muse or spirit that appears to him as a child on a cloud. The child encourages him to play a song about a "Lamb" and being impressed with the musician asks him to drop his pipe and write a book "that all may read". In this way the spirit is asking Blake to share his inspiration with a wider audience, an audience that would not depend on his presence to experience the happiness his imagination can bring.

Sometimes Blake asks question about creation: how can we understand a God who is capable of creating the innocence of the lamb and the fury of the tiger? The Tyger (Songs of Experience) is Blake’s famous meditative poem. The tiger is Blake’s symbol for the “abundant life”, and for regeneration. Centrally, it Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright

In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Nature was not the central focus of Blake’s poems, but it was a theme that did occur in many of his works, such as "Nurse’s Song" "The Lamb", "Earth’s Answer", "The Garden of Love", "To Spring" and "To the Evening Star".

Each of his poems is a vehicle of expressing his personal emotion. It seems his art had been too adventurous and unconventional for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and we may even say he was ahead of his time.

**William Blake’s views of life concerning innocence and experience**

William Blake, being a visionary and mystic poet, could see the contemporary real picture of the society and foresee the coming crisis and offered suggestions to relieve from it, and put them into his writings. His dealing matter is more spiritual than physical. In his “Songs of Innocence and of Experience”, he expresses two states of soul – innocence and experience and how the first one gradually turns to the second. (By a conscious going through these songs, we can realize Blake’s views of life, concerning innocence and experience.)
At first we can take a general idea of Blake’s views or philosophy. It “asserts the contrariety of systems with regard to soul and the other objects of creation.” And this contrary is between the stage of innocence and of experience. The stage of experience is energetic and unavoidable for human salvation. He says “without contrary is no progression.” For him ‘good’ is the passive that obeys reason whereas ‘evil’ is the active stemming out from energy.

At the stage of innocence, a soul remains very natural, joyful, universal and related to God Himself. But, after facing the hardness, cruelty and worldliness, and getting freedom of choice, it reaches the stage of experience. Almost in every case, it is encouraged or compelled to be converted into the stage of experience by the surroundings. Here one thing is mentionable that the latter stage is more important than the former because from the latter, there is a possibility of reaching the stage of higher or greater innocence, but the former is a heavenly thing.

Now we can look at the songs how the poet treats, with his excellent use of symbols, the stages and how the first turns to the second.

At the very introductory poem of the innocence, we are informed the nature of innocence. The setting of the poem is natural, pastoral and joyful, and it is about the children under the guidance of God, as ‘a child’ and ‘lamb’ represent Christ himself in the following lines-

“On a cloud I saw a child
And he laughing said to me
‘Pipe a song about a lamb!’ ”

And at last

“Every child may joy to hear”

That means the followers of innocence may enjoy to hear the songs. On the other hand, the ‘Introduction’ of the song of experience expresses the nature of experience. It begins with these lines-

Here the voice of the Bard!
Who Present, Past and Future sees;
Whose ears have heard
The Holy word,
That walked among the ancient trees,

That is, the speaker himself is experienced here and not bound to anyone. Moreover, in this poem there is ‘the lapsed soul’, representing the human being that was expelled from the Garden of Eden through bitter experience. However, at last of the poem, there is a hint of regeneration and salvation of this mankind.

According to Blake, through experience, the innocent ‘lamb’ becomes the dreadful ‘Tyger’. The symbolic poem ‘The Lamb’ represents the meek and mild part of human soul which is connected to the ‘child’ as well as ‘lamb’ or Christ, as we mentioned earlier. On the other hand, the poem, ‘the Tyger’, symbolizes the strong, reckless and harsher side of human soul. It is just opposite to the lamb. Even the poet himself is surprised at this creation-

“Did he who made the lamb make thee?”
There are two poems under same name, ‘The Chimney Sweeper’, in both sections of innocence and experience, but they are different in nature. This different sort of harsh profession of the child is resulted from the Industrial Revolution which moved the poet much. However, in the first poem, though he has to work hard, the child is satisfied with the thought of getting God as his father and of the fact that –

“if all do their duty they need not fear harm”

On the other hand, the child in the second poem of same name is just the prey to the contemporary church system that the parents of poor children go to church, leaving their children working for chimney sweeping. The chimney sweeper is now experienced not for his own wish but by the cruel society. So, he is sad not cheerful, though he ironically expresses it.

Again, there is another pair of poems named ‘Holy Thursday’; both show the children of the charity school serving for the church. However, the first one shows them as ‘flowers of London town!’ and ‘angles;’ and advises the authority to be tender to them; giving hints of coming misery. On the contrary, the second one questions, seeing their misery, about their serving for the church –

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty!

We see another pair of poems under same name, ‘The Nurse’s Song’ in the innocence shows the nurse as innocent caretaker granting the children’s claim to play more time. But the second one in the experience shows the contrary state. Here the nurse is experienced and grave, and she has no passion for joy, play and merriment. She can not bear with the children’s playing.

In this context, in Coleridge’s ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, we see that the innocent wedding guest, coming to the feast, did not attend there, after he had heard the story of the mariner’s journey; he became grave because he had been experienced through hearing the story. In the same way the experienced stage of life becomes grave which can not accept the natural joy and pleasure.

‘The Divine Image’ in innocence with the definite article ‘The’, means the real, one and only divine Image which includes Mercy, Pity, Peace and love –

“Where Mercy, love and Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too.”

On the contrary, ‘A Divine Image’ in the experience, with indefinite article ‘A’, points at a particular divine image which has a unique growth. It shows the basic social thing of the experienced and cruel world, ironically saying:

“Cruelty has a human heart
And Jealousy a human face
Terror the human form of divine
And Secrecy the human dress.”

C.M. Bowra, a critic, in his ‘Romantic Imagination’ comments on Blake’s view of innocence and experience: “The two sections of Blake’s book, the ‘Songs of Innocence’ and the ‘Songs of Experience’, are contrasted elements in a single design. The first part
sets out an imaginative vision of the state of innocence; the second part shows how life challenges and corrupts and destroys it.”

William Blake’s Criticism of Society in his Poems

William Blake, as a critic of his time, took an active role in exposing the corruption taking place in his society. He also describes the woes and injustices of civilized society. According to Blake, men are short sighted and blind and they are ignorant of the spiritual nature of life. In this role Blake appears as a critic of the age and of contemporary condition.

William Blake wrote about how the industrial revolution represents the devil and that it must be purged. Blake focused on child labour and prostitution—the two adverse effects of Industrialization Revolution.

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“London” describes a world during and after the industrial revolution in which there have been many ill-fated side effects as people move away from the traditional farming families and their beliefs.

Prostitution is one of the worse effects of Industrial revolution. A prostitute or an unwed mother is unable to rejoice in her child's birth. It tells of a married couple looking down upon her for what she does in order to make a living. This is ironic because the business of prostitution is caused in part by the restrictions placed upon the married man. It is also ironic because the married man is what has created the need for, and use of prostitutes. The harlot curses the respectable and polite society because it is they who have created the demand for her, and then look down upon what she does. “Blight with plagues” implies that perhaps she also infects them with some sort of venereal disease. The final words of the poem, “Marriage hearse” compares marriage to death. The narrator sees marriage as another type of restriction placed upon man by society, marriage is a sort of death in man’s ability to be free to do as he wishes.

He also criticizes the institutions that remained silent in the faces of injustice. ‘Holy Thursday’ is an indictment of a society which allows children to depend upon charity.

And their sun does never shine,  
And their fields are bleak and bare,  
And their as are filled with thorns  
It is eternal winter there.

Blake means here that all children are angles, not scapegoats to be the butchered on the altar of the society. How can England call herself rich and fruitful land if she has hunger children waiting for food from the so-called benefactors of society?

In the poem “A divine Image’ the poet says that cruelty, jealousy, terror and secrecy are human qualities. Cruelty may be seen in the heart of man, jealousy may be seen in the face of man. Terror is visible in the human shape which we call divine. Secrecy is the dress or the garment which human beings wear.
In conclusion, it can be easily seen how Blake stood against the suffering of human kind and used his poems to expose the corruption of the world that surrounded him. He clearly criticized the society and hoped that people would take action to change things for the better. The problems in Blake's society aren't very different than the ones in today's world. People should take a good look around them and take action to better their surroundings.
JOHN KEATS, 1795-1821

No less individual and unique than the poetry of Byron and Shelley is that of the third member of this group, John Keats, who is, in a wholesome way, the most conspicuous great representative in English poetry since Chaucer of the spirit of 'Art for Art's sake.' Keats was born in London in 1795, the first son of a livery-stable keeper. Romantic emotion and passionateness were among his chief traits from the start; but he was equally distinguished by a generous spirit, physical vigor (though he was very short in build), and courage. His younger brothers he loved intensely and fought fiercely. At boarding-school, however, he turned from headstrong play to enthusiastic reading of Spenser and other great English and Latin poets and of dictionaries of Greek and Roman mythology and life. An orphan at fourteen, the mismanagement of his guardians kept him always in financial difficulties, and he was taken from school and apprenticed to a suburban surgeon. After five years of study and hospital practice the call of poetry proved too strong, and he abandoned his profession to revel in Spenser, Shakespeare, and the Italian epic authors. He now became an enthusiastic disciple of the literary and political radical, Leigh Hunt, in whose home at Hampstead he spent much time. Hunt was a great poetic stimulus to Keats, but he is largely responsible for the flippant jauntiness and formlessness of Keats' earlier poetry, and the connection brought on Keats from the outset the relentless hostility of the literary critics, who had dubbed Hunt and his friends 'The Cockney [i.e., Vulgar] School of Poetry.'

Keats' first little volume of verse, published in 1817, when he was twenty-one, contained some delightful poems and clearly displayed most of his chief tendencies. It was followed the next year by his longest poem, 'Endymion,' where he uses, one of the vaguely beautiful Greek myths as the basis for the expression of his own delight in the glory of the world and of youthful sensations. As a narrative the poem is wandering, almost chaotic; that it is immature Keats himself frankly admitted in his preface; but in luxuriant loveliness of sensuous imagination it is unsurpassed. Its theme, and indeed the theme of all Keats' poetry, may be said to be found in its famous first line--'A thing of beauty is a joy forever.' The remaining three years of Keats' life were mostly tragic. 'Endymion' and its author were brutally attacked in 'The Quarterly Review' and 'Blackwood's Magazine.' The sickness and death, from consumption, of one of Keats' dearly-loved brothers was followed by his infatuation with a certain Fanny Brawne, a commonplace girl seven years younger than himself. This infatuation thenceforth divided his life with poetry and helped to create in him a restless impatience that led him, among other things, to an unhappy effort to force his genius, in the hope of gain, into the very unsuitable channel of play-writing. But restlessness did not weaken his genuine and maturing poetic power; his third and last volume, published in 1820, and including 'The Eve of St. Agnes,' 'Isabella,' 'Lamia,' the fragmentary 'Hyperion,' and his half dozen great odes, probably contains more poetry of the highest order than any other book of original verse, of so small a size, ever sent from the press. By this time, however, Keats himself was stricken with consumption, and in the effort to save his life a warmer climate was the last resource. Lack of sympathy with Shelley and his poetry led him to reject Shelley's generous offer of entertainment at Pisa, and he sailed with his devoted friend the painter Joseph Severn to southern Italy. A few months later, in 1821, he died at Rome, at the age of twenty-five. His tombstone, in a neglected corner of the Protestant cemetery just outside the city wall, bears among other words those which in bitterness of spirit he himself had dictated: 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water.' But, in fact, not only had he created more g
achieved by any other man at so early an age, but probably no other influence was to prove so great as his on the poets of the next generation.

The most important qualities of his poetry stand out clearly:

He is, as we have implied, the great apostle of full though not unhealthy enjoyment of external Beauty, the beauty of the senses. He once said: 'I feel sure I should write, from the mere yearning and tenderness I have for the beautiful, even if my night's labors should be burnt every morning and no eye ever rest upon them.' His use of beauty in his poetry is marked at first by passionate Romantic abandonment and always by lavish Romantic richness. This passion was partly stimulated in him by other poets, largely by the Italians, and especially by Spenser, from one of whose minor poems Keats chose the motto for his first volume: 'What more felicity can fall to creature than to enjoy delight with liberty?' Shelley's enthusiasm for Beauty, as we have seen, is somewhat similar to that of Keats. But for both Spenser and Shelley, in different fashions, external Beauty is only the outer garment of the Platonic spiritual Beauty, while to Keats in his poetry it is, in appearance at least, almost everything. He once exclaimed, even, 'Oh for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts!' Notable in his poetry is the absence of any moral purpose and of any interest in present-day life and character, particularly the absence of the democratic feeling which had figured so largely in most of his Romantic predecessors. These facts must not be over-emphasized, however. His famous final phrasing of the great poetic idea--'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'--itself shows consciousness of realities below the surface, and the inference which is sometimes hastily drawn that he was personally a fiberless dreamer is as far as possible from the truth. In fact he was always vigorous and normal, as well as sensitive; he was always devoted to outdoor life; and his very attractive letters, from which his nature can best be judged, are not only overflowing with unpretentious and cordial human feeling but testify that he was not really unaware of specific social and moral issues. Indeed, occasional passages in his poems indicate that he intended to deal with these issues in other poems when he should feel his powers adequately matured. Whether, had he lived, he would have proved capable of handling them significantly is one of the questions which must be left to conjecture, like the other question whether his power of style would have further developed. Almost all of Keats' poems are exquisite and luxuriant in their embodiment of sensuous beauty, but 'The Eve of St. Agnes,' in Spenser's richly lingering stanza, must be especially mentioned.

Keats is one of the supreme masters of poetic expression, expression the most beautiful, apt, vivid, condensed, and imaginatively suggestive. His poems are noble storehouses of such lines as these:

The music, yearning like a God in pain.
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odour with the violet.
Magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

It is primarily in this respect that he has been the teacher of later poets. Keats never attained dramatic or narrative power or skill in the presentation of individual character. In place of these elements he has the lyric gift of rendering moods. Aside from ecstatic delight, these are mostly moods of pensiveness, languor, or romantic sadness, like the one so magically suggested in the 'Ode to a Nightingale,' of Ruth standing lonely and 'in tears amid the alien corn.'
Conspicuous in Keats is his spiritual kinship with the ancient Greeks. He assimilated with eager delight all the riches of the Greek imagination, even though he never learned the language and was dependent on the dull mediums of dictionaries and translations. It is not only that his recognition of the permanently significant and beautiful embodiment of the central facts of life in the Greek stories led him to select some of them as the subjects for several of his most important poems; but his whole feeling, notably his feeling for Nature, seems almost precisely that of the Greeks, especially, perhaps, of the earlier generations among whom their mythology took shape. To him also Nature appears alive with divinities. Walking through the woods he almost expects to catch glimpses of hamadryads peering from their trees, nymphs rising from the fountains, and startled fauns with shaggy skins and cloven feet scurrying away among the bushes.

In his later poetry, also, the deeper force of the Greek spirit led him from his early Romantic formlessness to the achievement of the most exquisite classical perfection of form and finish. His Romantic glow and emotion never fade or cool, but such poems as the Odes to the Nightingale and to a Grecian Urn, and the fragment of 'Hyperion,' are absolutely flawless and satisfying in structure and expression.

**John Keats' Negative Capability**

The Romantic poet John Keats (1795-1821) coined the phrase 'Negative Capability' in a letter written to his brothers George and Thomas on the 21 December, 1817. In this letter he defined his new concept of writing: I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.

What Keats is advocating is a removal of the intellectual self while writing (or reading) poetry – after all:

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Beauty is truth, truth beauty – that is all
Ye know on earth and all ye need know
- Ode on a Grecian Urn, lines 49-50
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Throughout his poetry and letters Keats proposes the theory that beauty is valuable in itself and that it does not need to declare anything for us to know that it is important. That is, beauty does not have to refer to anything beyond itself: I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart’s affections and the truth of Imagination - What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth – whether it existed before or not – for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty. - Keats in letter to Benjamin Bailey (Saturday 22 November, 1817)

It is this ability to hold onto a beautiful truth despite the fact that it does not fit into an intellectual system that Keats praises in Shakespeare. He criticizes Coleridge for letting go ‘by a thin isolated verisimilitude... from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge' where he should realise that 'beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration' (Keats in a letter to his brothers [Sunday 21 December, 1817]).

Keats' poems are full of contradictions in meaning ('a drowsy numbness pains') and emotion ('both together, sane and mad') and he accepts a double nature as a creative insight. In Ode to a Nightingale it is the apparent (or real) contradictions that allow Keats to create the sensual and hedonistic feeling of numbness that allows the reader to experience the half-swooning emotion Keats is trying to capture. Keats would have us experience the emotion of the language and pass over the half-truths in silence, to live a
life 'of sensations rather than of Thoughts!' (letter to Benjamin Bailey [Saturday 22 November 1817]). Keats here can be seen to be extending Kant's principle that much thought is sublingual by making the meaning of words less important than their 'feel'. Since you can very often not find the exact word that you need (showing that much of your thinking occurs without language) Keats often deals in the sensations created by words rather than meaning. Even if the precise definition of words causes contradiction they can still be used together to create the right ambience. Negative Capability asks us to allow the atmosphere of Keats' poems to surround us without picking out individual meanings and inconsistencies.

Whatever the complicated relations between Truth and Beauty and their respective definitions, what matters to Keats are moments of intense feeling that combine 'thought' and 'emotion' in appreciating beauty. This explains why much of Keats' poetry is devoted to catching, and holding, moments of beauty. Keats addresses this desire directly in Ode on a Grecian Urn (lines 15 – 20) where he writes,

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Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal – yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, tho thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair.
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Throughout this poem, and many others, Keats captures moments, like that of the 'fair youth' stooping to kiss his lover, and holds them to prevent change and decay, revelling in that moment of perfection.

In many of Keats' poems this need to hold a perfect instant leads to an excited tone, an almost excessive use of superlatives and an atmosphere of crushing, voluptuous intensity as Keats demonstrates the depth of his appreciation for the beautiful and in the act of appreciation creates poems as exquisite as that which he is admiring. Keats' Negative Capability is the ability to bask in the beautiful without questioning either it or his methods of description. In other words to take beauty simply as it is.

**Keats' Odes: Pain and Beauty**

Each of the five poems by John Keats, “Bards of Passion and Mirth,” “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” “Ode to Melancholy,” “Ode to Autumn,” and “Ode to a Nightingale,” all come back to their common theme: the binary nature of the human soul. As a Romantic poet Keats' works seem to agree with the idea that the human experience is characterized by pain. Moreover, Keats links beauty and pain together, a concept that seems contradictory. He does this by his implications that there we can transport ourselves from pain and into beauty and even nature. This begs the question: Can we really leave pain through the imagination or through the appreciation of beauty? For example, if we long for something we will never obtain, can we escape that tragedy through the imagination? Is longing an inevitable condition of the human experience? The answers vary, especially in relation to time and what part of our lives we are in.

As seen in the works of Wordsworth and Blake in addition to Keats poems, we are led to believe that the human soul is double sided. There is pain and there is joy. There is passion and hatred and then there is apathy. There is good and evil, right and wrong. From “Bards of Passion and Mirth,” the concept that the soul itself is a contradiction is best shown in lines 31 through 34 when Keats mentions the contrasting experiences we mortals face on a daily basis:
Of their sorrows and delights;
Of their passions and their spites;
Of their glory and their shame;
What doth strengthen and what maim.

This emphasizes that sorrow, for example, draws upon delight to define the separation
between the two just as delight does sorrow. Keats upholds the belief that to understand
one, the presence of its opponent is required. In “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” the greatest
contrast drawn in relation to the human soul is Time. Life passes quickly with Time.
Keats says to the urn, “Thou shalt remain,” which means that the Grecian urn will stay
and pass through each generation. Also, the urn depicts moments in life that are frozen
in time. Although the human soul changes and transforms, that which is seen on the
Grecian urn never will. It is stuck. In “Ode to Melancholy,” Keats mentions the passing of
moods: “But when the melancholy fit shall fall.” This implies that sadness comes and
goes, prior to the “fit” the soul or being was in a state of something else. This idea is
upheld in “Ode to Autumn,” too. Keats speaks reverently of autumn but autumn, as
beautiful as it is has a sad side to it. Autumn is the slowing of the nights, the cooling of
the air, the aging of the year, and the withering of life because at the end of autumn is
winter, which, for many people is associated with death and the End. “Ode to a
Nightingale,” supports this theme, too. The idea gleaned from this particular ode is
ironic. In the Poem, the speaker is pained by his overwhelming joy at the nightingale’s
song. This is the essence of the human soul; it is a state of utter irony. This main idea
was a common focus for the Romantics. It also relates to the idea of thesis and
antithesis joining to become a synthesis, or in other words, the quintessence of
experiences and emotions.

Another trademark Romantic idea was that life is characterized by pain. I feel that his is,
in many cases, true. We can be defined by our pain and we can be defined by how we
handle it. All of life is a test. It is hard. It is a struggle and we are put on earth to see
how we fair- that is one way of looking at it. The other way is to see life as a state of
suffering before the final reward. Either way, life is about pain. Pain is natural. It is good
for us. It keeps us grounded.

In Keats’ works, I think that pain and beauty are so closely linked is because Keats
believed that we could escape pain if we could delve ourselves in to the appreciation of
beauty or nature. It is possible to “escape” pain through appreciation of beauty or
through the imagination. However, this is nothing more than the utilization of another
object to distract us from a harsh reality. Oftentimes, we are miserable, we are told to do
something rather than nothing. This keeps us from brooding. We can use our
imagination to get away from what is happening. This can seem silly, if not immature, to
pretend like something is not really happening, but sometimes it is necessary.

The initial link between beauty and pain is due to the fact that beauty can bring pain. A
lover pining after a ‘beauty” is in a kind of pain: heartsickness. We can be pained by
beauty. The knowing that beauty doesn’t last, that beauty dies, is a painful thought. In,
“Ode to a Grecian Urn,” the scene of the two lovers expresses the pain of passing beauty
and love in a round-a-bout way.

Bold Lover, never never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal-yet do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!
This is unlike in life where we can love and love will dissipate, and beauty can bloom and then will wither. Keats moves us out of the pain of knowing that there will never be change or growth and lightens the mood by pointing out that the beauty and happiness found in the urn is permanently preserved. Keats offers advice about how to take away the pain of a moment and transform it into another emotion in "Ode to Melancholy." "...glut thy sorrow on a morning rose/Or on the wealth of globed peonies..." Here, Keats suggests that we move the magnitude of our emotions from sadness to the appreciation of something beautiful. "Ode to Autumn" has a similar lesson. Autumn, as mentioned before, has a withering, "winnowing," dying beauty. After harvest, the "stubble plain" and trees are left bare, the cider press only oozes, the swallows are gathering to leave the skies silent." In this instance, beauty and pain are linked in that beauty can cause pain. Autumn is a very pretty season but it has a forlorn undertone. "Ode to a Nightingale" best represents the pain of beauty. Keats begins this idea by saying that in life, in reality, there are many troubles and woes and this nightingale’s song is a way of escape. If he could use alcohol to be with the nightingale, to be a part of that experience, which knows nothing of the human woes, he would find it much preferable to living in the human reality. He is so happy listening to the nightingale that he could die. Keats is then saddened by the knowledge that nightingale will continue to sing his beautiful song, “Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain,” even when he is dead and can no longer enjoy the song. For him, the beauty will not last. Then he says to us that in death, there is no more pain.

Now more than ever it seems rich to die, 
To cease upon the midnight with no pain, 
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad 
In such an ecstasy!

Pain and beauty can also be linked by how they both relate to longing for something that we cannot have. As in the case of the Grecian Urn, the two lovers can never have their joy but it is a comfort, in a way that they will always be beautiful and always in love. It is still a disappointment, though, to always have something out of reach. It is part of life though; it is inevitable. If we let longing be synonymous with pain, it is absolutely natural and an expected art of life. A common lesson that we see is that even if you have everything in the world, there will always be something lacking. You will always want something more. I do not think that the Romantics wanted us to circumvent the human state. And argument for that might be that they explained a lot of issues that people have and lessons that people sometimes learn the hard way but I think that the Romantics wanted us to go through the full range of emotions so that we were able to fully know what it means to feel, to live, to be.

Another thread that runs through all five of these poems is age (and the progression of life). From “Bards” we understand that wisdom is something that comes with age and when we die we are endowed with divine wisdom. From “Urn” we learn that age is ephemeral. The urn will teach the coming generations that will age and pass like the previous generations, and this follows the idea that with age comes wisdom and even sadness. In “Melancholy,” again, life is fleeting, death comes fast enough and we should not quicken its pace: “For shade to shade will come too drowsily/And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.” Here, Keats is telling us not to give in to a fit of melancholy and end it all but to refocus our energy into something better. From “Autumn,” we are told that in youth, or Spring, there is a beauty in it but old age, Autumn, has its own beauty, even though it is a fading and tragic beauty. Finally, in “Nightingale,” we see that although there is joy in being young and sadness in aging and dying, on “the other side” of dying is eternal joy.
Keats as a Writer of odes

(i) Introduction: - Originally ode was a Greek form of verse, but odes have been written in Latin Poetry also. It meant a poetic composition written to be sung to the music of lyre. So it is known as lyrical in character. But when ode form came into the hands of the English writers, the idea of Music was considered to be essential and it became a type of lyric poem only. Thus in the context of English poetry, ode can be defined as a lyrical poem which expresses exalted or enthusiastic emotion in respect of a theme which is dignified and it does so in a metrical form.

(ii) Characteristics of an Ode: - Following are the characteristics of an ode.

(a) It is an address to an abstract object which means that it is written to and not written about.
(b) Ode is a natural and spontaneous overflow of the feelings of its writer.
(c) The ode must be highly serious in character due to its dignified theme.
(d) Its language and style should also be dignified and elevated.
(e) The ode must exhibit a very clear, logic in the development of thought of its writer.
(f) The ode can adopt any of the metres regular or irregular.

(iii) Keats’ Odes

John- Keats dwelt on various forms of writing. But none of them has given him as great success as the ode form. Therefore Keats is always remembered as a writer of odes, Again, Keats holds a leading rank among the ode writers of English literature.

(iv) Unity of impression

The first and foremost quality of his odes is their unity of impression. The major odes of Keats — “Ode to a Nightingale”, “Ode on a Grecian Urn” and “Ode to Autumn” Malancholy” have a common subject and theme. In all these odes the development of mood is more or less similar and the mood develops in a shape of drama, i.e. first the mood takes birth, it develops, reaches climax and finally the anticlimax takes place.

(v) Ode to Nightingale

Now we study the dramatic development of Keats’s mood with reference to his odes. The very of opening stanza of “Ode to Nightingale” takes Keats in a mood of escape, He wants to escape from fever and fret of life. He longs for intoxicant, either a draught of vintage or “a beaker full of the warm sough to help him fade away into the form that is the nightingale’s abode. Foreign to the worries of life, he wants to share the joys of nightingale in his imagination. He wants to live in the world of “immortal bird” that was not born for death. He says; “thou was not born for death, oh Immortal bird.”

(vi) Ode on Grecian Urn

Similarly in “Ode on Grecian Urn”, Keats is fully aware that in real life, everything is short lived and fleeting. But the urn which is the great piece of art gives him a sense of immortality. The pictures curved upon it are immortal because they are fresh and vigorous from centuries. In both these poems the fascinating clement for Keats in the
world of imagination. As he says in “Ode on Grecian urn;” Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter;

The other binding element between nightingale and urn is their permanence. The song of nightingale is immortal; similarity the art that produced the urn is also immortal.

Escape into the world of imagination takes the two poems to a point of climax but in the right tradition of dramatic development, the anti-climax takes place and this anticlimax brings Keats back to the world of reality. In the “Ode to Nightingale”, the world “Forlorn” and in “Ode on a Grecian Urn”, the Urn’s death brings Keats back into the world of man.

(vii) Ode to Autumn and Ode on Melancholy

“Ode to Autumn” can be read in the same light It depicts the theme of ripeness, decay and death in describing the natural cycle of seasons; Autumn winter, spring, summer. In “Ode on Melancholy” the throne of poem is that joys. and beauty are a source of human misery because they are short living. Thus WC have seen that there is a unifying force behind the great Odes of Keats.

We find that Keats undergoes various stages of development which a Shakespearean hero experiences. In the beginning he is in the position of Hamlet. He does not wish where to be or where not to be. “to be or riot be, that’s question. ” He continues to hang between the world of reality and the world of imagination. But towards the end of his two odes, “Ode to a Nightingale and Ode on a Grecian Urn”, we find that Keats has developed himself up to Hamlet’s state of readiness as after his escape he is ready to accept the realities of life as they are. Keats did in odes o what Shakespeare had already done in dramas.

(viii) Keats’ Negative Capability

In short, when Ode form came to Keats it reached the height of perfection and subjectivity. It was primarily under the influence of Shakespeare’s negative capability that Keats came to adopt this form of verse. He wanted to attain that perfection in negative capability which Shakespeare had achieved in his dramas, but Keats found that instead of drama, Ode form of verse was best suited to his purpose.

Negative capability is a capacity to negate one’s individual self and to assume the very personality of the person whom the writer wants to portray. It is a capacity to be like water with no colour of its own, but capable of assuming any colour that is put into it. Keats has been able to acquire this negative capability in his Odes and this is his individual contribution to this form of verse.

(ix) His Style

The style of the odes is as unifying as their mood and theme. Every ode has the same perfection of language. He makes use of a beautiful vocabulary. Every word is as full of meaning as it is beautiful. The language is concise, exact and concentrated. The right word has been used at the right place. The technical excellence of odes is as great as their poetical. In his odes, – we has the best and finest of Keats which is also best and finest in his poetry. Keat’s odes, to sum up, are the best form of verse as far this genre is concerned. We may not find any other poet, a writer of odes, who can equal Keats in his cadence, rhythm and perfection as well as the sublimity of their themes.
Ode to a Nightingale: Summary and Critical Analysis

Summary

Keats is in a state of uncomfortable drowsiness. Envy of the imagined happiness of the nightingale is not responsible for his condition; rather, it is a reaction to the happiness he has experienced through sharing in the happiness of the nightingale. The bird's happiness is conveyed in its singing.

Keats longs for a draught of wine which would take him out of himself and allow him to join his existence with that of the bird. The wine would put him in a state in which he would no longer be himself, aware that life is full of pain that the young die, the old suffer, and that just to think about life brings sorrow and despair. But wine is not needed to enable him to escape. His imagination will serve just as well. As soon as he realizes this, he is, in spirit, lifted up above the trees and can see the moon and the stars even though where he is physically there is only a glimmering of light. He cannot see what flowers are growing around him, but from their odour and from his knowledge of what flowers should be in bloom at the time he can guess.

In the darkness he listens to the nightingale. Now, he feels, it would be a rich experience to die, "to cease upon the midnight with no pain" while the bird would continue to sing ecstatically. Many a time, he confesses, he has been "half in love with easeful Death." The nightingale is free from the human fate of having to die. The song of the nightingale that he is listening to was heard in ancient times by emperor and peasant. Perhaps even Ruth (whose story is told in the Old Testament) heard it.

"Forlorn," the last word of the preceding stanza, brings Keats in the concluding stanza back to consciousness of what he is and where he is. He cannot escape even with the help of the imagination. The singing of the bird grows fainter and dies away. The experience he has had seems so strange and confusing that he is not sure whether it was a vision or a daydream. He is even uncertain whether he is asleep or awake.

Critical Analysis

Keats's Ode to a Nightingale is considered one of the finest odes in English Literature. It reveals the highest imaginative powers of the poet. The poem was inspired by the song of a nightingale which the poet heard in the gardens of his friend Charles Brown.

The sweet music of the nightingale sent the poet in rapture and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast table, put it on the grass-plot under the plum tree and composed the poem. After he had finished the poem he came back with scraps of paper in his hand. Brown rescued the papers and found them to be the poem on the nightingale.

Thus the poem is an expression of Keats's feelings rising in his heart at the hearing of the melodious song of the bird. The song of the nightingale moves from the poet to the depth of his heart and creates in him a heartache and numbness as is created by the drinking of hemlock. He thinks that the bird lives in a place of beauty. When he hears the nightingale's song, he is entrenched by its sweetness and his joy becomes so excessive that it changes into a kind of pleasant pain. He is filled with a desire to escape from the world of cares to the world of beautiful place of the bird.
The poem presents the picture of the tragedy of human life. It brings out an expression of Keats's pessimism and dejection. He composed this poem at the time when his heart was full of sorrow. His youngest brother Tom had died, the second one had gone abroad and the poet himself was under the suspense and agony by the passionate love for Fanny Brawne. All these happenings had induced in the poet a mood of sorrow. He could not suppress it. Thus the poet enjoys the pleasure in sadness/pain and feasts upon the very sadness/pain into joy. This complex emotion gives the poem a unique charm.

In the beginning, Keats seems to be an immature youth with a melancholic heart urging to find a means of oblivion and escape. On catching the sight of a nightingale and hearing its music, which he assumes to be an immortal voice of happiness, Keats feels that his body is getting benumbed. But, he also feels an acute pain because he is conscious of his mortality and suffering. He fantasies of having drunk hemlock or 'some dull opiate': "My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains, / my sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk."

The initial situation of awareness and conflict is slowly to change and develop throughout the ode with a corresponding shift in tone. The tragic awareness of suffering inflicts on him a peculiar kind of ache because the opposing effect of dullness, which is the effect of desire, is increasing. The awareness is a burden that makes him 'sunk' gradually towards the world of oblivion.

After describing his plight, Keats acknowledges, rather than envy the bird's 'happy lot' and participates in its permanent happiness. He identifies the bird with dryad, the Greek Goddess of the tree. He contrasts the mortality and suffering of human being with the immortality and perfect happiness of the nightingale. Of course, Keats immortalizes the bird by thinking of the race of it as the symbol of universal and undying musical voice, which is the voice of nature, and also of ideal romantic poetry, of the world of art and spirit. This universal and eternal voice has comforted human beings embittered by life and tragedies by opening the casement of the remote, magical, spiritual, eternal, and the ideal. The poet is longing for the imaginative experience of an imaginatively perfect world. At this stage in the poem, the poet is trying to escape from the reality, and experience the ideal rather than complement one with the other. This dualism is to resolve later. Keats begins by urging for poison and wine, and then desires for poetic and imaginative experience.

But, as the poem develops, one feels that the numbness and intoxication the poet deliberately and imaginatively imposes upon his senses of pain are meant to awaken a higher sense of experience. The vintage, dance and song, the waters of poetic inspiration are the warmth of the south together make a compound and sensuous appeal.

Keats develops a dialectic by partaking both the states—the fretful here of man and the happy there of the Nightingale—and serves as the mediator between the two. After activating the world of insight and inner experience by obliterating that of the sense, Keats is revived into a special awareness of the conflict. With this awareness, he moves into a higher thematic ground moving from the ache of the beginning through yearning for permanence and eventually exploring the tension so as to balance the transient with the permanent.

In fact, no one can escape into the ideal world forever. Imaginative minds can have a momentary flight into the fanciful world. But, ultimately one has to return to the real world and must accept the reality. John Keats is no exception to this. He makes
imaginative flights into the ideal world but accepts the realities of life despite its 'fever, fret and fury'.

The process of experience he has undergone has undoubtedly left him with a heightened awareness of both the modes of experience. When the imaginative life wakes, the pressures of ordinary experience is benumbed: and when ordinary experience becomes acute, the intensity of imaginative reality is reduced. And this makes life and experience more complete.

To sum up, Keats soars high with his 'wings of poesy' into the world of ideas and perfect happiness. But the next moment, consciousness makes him land on the grounds of reality and he bids farewell to the ideal bird. At this moment, Keats must also have been conscious that the very bird, which he had idealized and immortalized, existed in the real world, mortal and vulnerable to change and suffering like himself.

**Ode on a Grecian Urn: Summary and Critical Analysis**

**Summary**

Keats' imagined urn is addressed as if he were contemplating a real urn. It has survived intact from antiquity. It is a "sylvan historian" telling us a story, which the poet suggests by a series of questions. Who are these gods or men carved or painted on the urn? Who are these reluctant maidens? What is this mad pursuit? Why the struggle to escape? What is the explanation for the presence of musical instruments? Why this mad ecstasy?

Imagined melodies are lovelier than those heard by human ears. Therefore the poet urges the musician pictured on the urn to play on. His song can never end nor did the trees ever shed their leaves. The lover on the urn can never win a kiss from his beloved, but his beloved can never lose her beauty. Happy are the trees on the urn, for they can never lose their leaves. Happy is the musician forever playing songs forever new. The lovers on the urn enjoy a love forever warm, forever panting, and forever young, far better than actual love, which eventually brings frustration and dissatisfaction.

Who are the people coming to perform a sacrifice? To what altar does the priest lead a garlanded heifer? What town do they come from? That town will forever remain silent and deserted.

Fair urn, Keats says, adorned with figures of men and maidens, trees and grass, you bring our speculations to a point at which thought leads nowhere, like meditation on eternity. After our generation is gone, you will still be here, a friend to man, telling him that beauty is truth and truth is beauty — that is all he knows on earth and all he needs to know.

**Critical Analysis**

Ode on a Grecian Urn is an ode in which the speaker addresses to an engraved urn and expresses his feelings and ideas about the experience of an imagined world of art, in contrast to the reality of life, change and suffering. As an ode, it also has the unique features that Keats himself established in his great odes.

The features of Keatsian Romanticism and Keats' philosophy of art, beauty and truth are also important in this poem. Though it is a romantic poem, we find the unusual classical
interests of Keats in the style and form of this poem. This is a romantic poem mainly because of its dominant imaginative quality.

Like Wordsworth’s nature, Keats’ imagination is a means to understand life, a means of the quest for truth and beauty, and the most reliable mode of experience and insight. The speaker in the poem begins with reality— an ancient marble urn with engravings around it. He addresses to the urn as a virgin bride of quietness. Time is slow for it. It is unchanging, perfect and silent. The carving around the urn is expressing the story of the pilgrims, lovers and other mysterious people recorded in times of gods and men on its outside. In the poet’s imagination, this world and people made immortal by art are real as well as beautiful.

The Ode on a Grecian Urn expresses Keats’s desire to belong to the realm of the eternal, the permanent, perfect and the pleasurable, by establishing the means to approach that world of his wish with the help of imagination. This ode is based on the tension between the ‘ideal’ and the ‘real’. Keats here idealizes a work of art as symbolizing the world of art which represents the ideal world of his wish at an even deeper level. Then he experiences that world thus created through imagination. In this poem, the two domains of the transient real and the permanent ideal are the two facets of a deeper reality, the reality of imaginative experience. The perfect, permanent and pleasurable world of the Urn, or that of the ideal, stands against the destructive corrupting and painful effects of time. Keats’ fascination with the immortality of art is duly counterbalanced with his awareness that it is lifeless. He neither supports gross realism against truly imaginative art, nor does he wander in imagination alone. Life compensates for the incompleteness of art and art compensates for the transience of life.

This ode which represents Keats mature vision consists of one of his central philosophical doctrines of art itself: “Truth is Beauty and beauty truth”. This famous maxim of Keats has an intellectual basis of truth and also an emotional basis in beauty. Art may appeal to the sensuousness or just the emotion of common people, but Keats’ response extends from the sensuous to the spiritual and from the passionate to the intellectual. Keats establishes a balance between the real and the ideal, and art and life, and he finds the deepest of reality in its balance. This ode gives a much importance to passion as to the idea of permanence. It is not a lyric of the escape of a dying young man, unwilling to face bitter life into the realm of everlasting happiness, but is a poem that embodies his mature understanding.

Keats indicates a contrast between the unchanging ‘Urn’ and temporal life in the very beginning of the poem, but shifting to the other side from where he seems to prefer warm life against the ‘Cold Pastoral’ where he finally resolves the duality in his doctrine of beauty and truth. The Ode begins with an apostrophe to the urn: “Thou still unravish’d bride of quietness, / Thou foster child of silence and slow time, / Sylvan historian”. Keats addresses the urn as a bride of quietness that is still unravished by time. That reminds us of life that is ever ravished by time. The urn narrates its history in a silent but musical form. The silent music which Keats, the addressee, feels he can hear is sweeter than the music of the human voice for it is permanent. Unlike the temporal presentation of poetry which is prone to narrate the histories of human being, the urn narrates a ‘leaf-fringed legend’ as if it were in space rather than in time. The narration of the urn is itself liberated from time.

The worlds of reality and of imagination (or the real and the ideal) are explicitly contrasted in this ode. But the permanence of art created out of imagination is a
complement to the temporary aspect of life. The creation of art and its realization in the contemplation of a higher reality is a complement to the tragic awareness of temporal and painful life. Even the realities are of two kinds: the reality of life or the objective reality and the reality of art or the world of imagination. On the one hand, the lover in the world of the urn can never kiss his beloved as one can in real life. But on the other hand, the lover on the urn has the privilege that the beauty of his beloved can never fade away – as it happens in real life. This is why the poet is seeking for the reality of life to be like that of the ideal art. The urn’s immunity to the time could not be an absolute ideal without the consummation of love. But the temporary satisfaction in life only intensifies the awareness of transience by consummation itself. The act of imaginative experience can bring together the unheard into a lasting melody. The poet who is emotionally involved with the picture of passion also has the unifying vision that reconciles the real with the ideal by idealizing the real.

In short, the permanently ideal world of the urn is presented in the urn that is lifeless thing when seen from the viewpoint of real life. But the idea that comes under the domain of imaginative reality is reconciled in the act of imaginative creation of the urn’s legend. Therefore, the real life is complemented and enriched by this ideal. Thus, the two domains of the real and the ideal coming into conflict as usual, ultimately reconcile to make a more permanent truth as asserted in the ‘truth and beauty’ maxim. To sum up, in this ode, Keats begins by idealizing, personifying, and immortalizing a real object. This ideal at first clashes with the real but is reconciled by imagination and insight at the end. The poem begins with an address to the Grecian urn and with almost envious amazement, but it ends with the realization that beauty or ideal is also a dimension of the truth of the real; the beauty of imaginative experience is a part of reality or truth and the knowledge of all truth is beautiful.

**Ode to Autumn : Summary and Critical Analysis**

**Summary**

Autumn joins with the maturing sun to load the vines with grapes, to ripen apples and other fruit, "swell the gourd," fill up the hazel shells, and set budding more and more flowers. Autumn may be seen sitting on a threshing floor, sound asleep in a grain field filled with poppies, carrying a load of grain across a brook, or watching the juice oozing from a cider press. The sounds of autumn are the wailing of gnats, the bleating of lambs, the singing of hedge crickets, the whistling of robins, and the twittering of swallows.

**Critical Analysis**

In this poem Keats describes the season of Autumn. The ode is an address to the season. It is the season of the mist and in this season fruits are ripened on the collaboration with the Sun. Autumn loads the vines with grapes. There are apple trees near the moss growth cottage. The season fills the apples with juice.

The hazel-shells also grow plumb. These are mellowed. The Sun and the autumn help the flowers of the summer to continue. The bees are humming on these flowers. They collect honey from them. The beehives are filled with honey. The clammy cells are overflowing with sweet honey. The bees think as if the summer would never end and warm days would continue for a long time. Autumn has been personified and compared to women farmer sitting carefree on the granary floor; there blows a gentle breeze and the hairs of the farmer are fluttering. Again Autumn is a reaper. It feels drowsy and
sleeps on the half reaped corn. The poppy flowers have made her drowsy. The Autumn holds a sickle in its hand. It has spared the margin of the stalks intertwined with flowers. Lastly, Autumn is seen as a worker carrying a burden of corn on its head.

The worker balances his body while crossing a stream with a bundle on his head. The Autumn is like an onlooker sitting the juicy oozing for hours. The songs and joys of spring are not found in Autumn seasons. But Keats says that Autumn has its own music and charm. In an autumn evening mournful songs of the gnats are heard in the willows by the river banks. Besides the bleat of the lambs returning from the grassy hills is heard. The whistle of the red breast is heard from the garden. The grasshoppers chirp and swallow twitters in the sky. This indicates that the winter is coming.

Every stanza has a sense of finality when it closes. In every stanza a quatrains is followed by a sestet. The first stanza indicates the rich powers of the season. In the second stanza there is a suggestion of the gradual passing away of time. This makes the ode dramatic. Different postures are shown with the help of personification. Here we find imaginative elements in a series of images. A sense of sadness comes in the soft dying day, willful choir of small gnats etc. 'Bloom' and 'Sunset' symbolized twilight and darkness.

Ode to Autumn is an unconventional appreciation of the autumn season. It surprises the reader with the unusual idea that autumn is a season to rejoice. We are familiar with Thomas Hardy's like treatment of autumn as a season of gloom, chill and loneliness and the tragic sense of old age and approaching death. Keats sees the other side of the coin. He describes autumn as: "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness! / Close bosom friend of the maturing sun". He understands maturity and ripeness as one with old age and decay. Obviously thin, old age is a complement to youth, as death is to life. Keats here appears as a melodist; he seems to have accepted the fundamental paradoxes of life as giving meaning to it. The very beginning of the poem is suggestive of acceptance and insight after a conflict.

The subject matter of this ode is reality itself at one level: Keats depicts the autumn season and claims that its unique music and its role of completing the round of seasons make it a part of the whole. Although autumn will be followed by the cold and barren winter, winter itself will in turn give way to fresh spring. Life must go on but it cannot continue in turn give way to fresh spring. Life must go on but it cannot continue without death that completes one individual life and begins another. This is indirectly conveyed with the concluding line of the ode: "And gathering swallows twitter in the skies". In one way, this gives a hint of the coming winter when shallows will fly to the warm south.

The theme of ripeness is complemented by the theme of death and that of death by rebirth. So, in the final stanza, the personified figure of autumn of the second stanza is replaced by concrete images of life. Autumn is a part of the year as old age is of life. Keats has accepted autumn, and connotatively, old age as natural parts and processes them.

**Comparison of Ode to a Nightingale and Ode on a Grecian Urn**

Both odes are masterpieces of poetry and are the fruit of mature art of the poet. Ode on Grecian Urn shows the poet's fascination which he saw in British Museum. Throughout this ode Keats has appreciated the permanence of art and compared it with transitory nature of life and worldly things. In this ode Keats has given what we now term as Keats
philosophy of life. Ode to a Nightingale is a tribute to nightingale bird. The poet expresses his fascination and appreciation for the happy condition of the bird and compares it with the miserable condition of human life on the earth. Keats wishes to escape into the nightingale’s world; however, he finally realizes that he cannot run from his present condition because day dreaming is not the solution of his problem: only solution is facing and living with those problems.

In both odes poet’s admiration is for the ideal worlds of art and nature. Things carved on the Grecian urn are permanent and free from decay whereas things of life are exposed to change and decay. The branches of the tree on the urn will always remain green; the lovers will enjoy their present state; the music will always remain enjoyable; the lover will always have his beloved before his eyes and the beloved will never grow old. On the other hand earthly things keep on changing. Earthly passions do not give satisfaction and comfort to human being rather they leave a heart high sorrowful and cloyed. Those who nourish these passions get nothing but a burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

If Ode on Grecian Urn shows Poet’s admiration and yearning for the world of art, Ode to a Nightingale shows the same for the world of nature. Here once more the poet wants to escape in the world of nightingale which does not know and pain and suffering. The world of nightingale is free of fever and fret of human world; in that world pain and groan are totally absent; things do not grow old there; there is nothing like disease there; thought which makes people sad and sorrowful is not present in there; frustration and disappointment are nowhere in the world of nature; and love does not change there.

In both odes imagination of the poet seems to touching climax. Both poems are excellent manifestation which Kats called negative capability. Negative capability means expressing personal feelings in a way that they lose all the subjectivity. In other word make individual feelings and things universal. Negative capability also means to say things which are not true but which can be shown true with little logic. For example Keats says that lover on the urn will always enjoy love and the nightingale bird is immortal. Now both these things are not actually true but logic can prove their truth.

Ode on Grecian Urn gives us a very important message and this message is Keats’ message which is recurrent motif running throughout Keats’ poetry. The message is that beauty is truth and truth is beauty. On the other hand, the message which we get after reading Ode to a Nightingale is that human being can run away from the problems of life and they have to live with the problems of life.

Though subjectivity is present in both poems, Odes to a Nightingale shows comparatively stronger feelings of subjectivity. Consider the death wish of the poet. We do not find this wish in Ode on a Grecian Urn. However, the poet finally restores balance and overall impression of the poem is totally objectivity.

Pain and suffering are permanent features of Keats’ poetry. Both odes dwell on pain and suffering. Greatness of Keats lies in fact that pain and suffering do not bring element of frustration and disappointment in Keats’ poetry. Both odes show that Keats takes pain and suffering integral part of hum life. He wants to escape with strong realization he cannot escape.

Both odes are highly sensuous in their appeal. Keats’ continuously arouses different senses of the readers: sometimes with unmatchable picture; sometimes with melodies voices; and sometimes with wonderful imagination.
Dramatic qualities are present in both odes. In Ode on Grecian Urn Keats seems to be talking to urn and in Ode to a Nightingale, he seems to talking to the nightingale. Both odes present the quick succession of picture and images and the reader feels to be watching a drama in theatre or a movie in cinema.

Both odes are full of lines which have become most quotable lines by any writer. Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter, beauty is truth is beauty, to cease upon midnight with no pain has become proverbial when we with how much frequency we find them quoted by people.

Keats love for compound words such as pouring forth, soul abroad, overwrought, evermore is very noticeable in both odes.

Music and melody which has become closely related with Keats’ poetry are present in both odes to the level of perfection in both odes. Consider the following lines:

**Ah! Happy, happy boughs!**

**Now a line from Ode to a Nightingale:**

**Away! Away! For I will fly to thee**

Both odes seem an earnest effort to create to ecstatic beauty. The poet does preach any philosophy or creed. If he wants it all it is the philosophy of life and existence.

Dissimilarity

The tone of “Ode to Nightingale” is pathetic and it is more subjective than “Ode on a Grecian Urn”. The tone is joyous and objective in “Ode on a Grecian Urn”. The overall tone of the poem is melancholic in “Ode to Nightingale”. The poem is also very subjective, because it draws reference from Keats’ own life. The expressions “fever and fret” the “spectre thin” etc clearly refer to the pathetic death of Keats’ brother. The poem is written immediately after the death of his brother. On the other hand Keats’ tone in “Ode to Grecian Urn” is very joyful. Here he celebrates the beauty of the Urn, the joyfulness of the lovers and the excitement of the religious sacrifice. He uses the word “happy” several times. More importantly unlike Nightingale it is not based on his personal loss. The poem was written after one of his visits to the British museum.

In these Odes the speaker wants to go beyond the better realties of the world by a kind of visionary imagination of the happy world. But when he comes to learn that the kind of imagination he is pursuing is a false temptation, he rejects the visionary imagination and comes back to harsh reality.

Conclusion

Keats is called least romantic of all the romantic poets. He uses all the elements of romantic poetry like imagination, escape, love of the past, enjoyment of beauty, love of picturesque, sensuality, spontaneous expression of feelings, experiment with form and theme, subjectivity, depiction of nature, love of exotic, death wish, simplicity of language and expression. Yet we find great care of a great classic poet in Keats’ poetry. His balance is outstanding. Both odes carry all the qualities of classic art as well as romantic art. It is this blend of romanticism and classicism which makes Keats's poetry of everlasting appeal. And this blend is nowhere so prominent in Keats’ poetry as we find
them in his great odes. This is the reason that critics say that Keats’ odes were enough for his greatness.

In Keats’s great odes beauty that is truth includes much of human sorrows. Discuss

Both beauty and sorrow exist side by side in great odes which Keats wrote and which are the climax of Keats’s achievement because in odes Keats’s art transcends all the limitation and rawness which provided critics opportunities to criticize Keats so harshly that Poesy became the second of his beloved Fanny Browne who never rewarded him for all his passion and love for the girl: Keats loved Poesy with as much intensity as much he had for Fanny Browne. Keats’s odes, the perfection of this art in English language, are full of beauty which was also truth for Keats. But, while studying these odes, the reader is seldom unaware of the sorrows which emerge from every line of these odes. We nowhere find such fine blend of subjectivity and objectivity in poetry as we find in Keats poetry and to a great extent all the beauty of Keats’s odes depend upon this blending of subjectivity and objectivity. It does not imply that Keats does not make use of other skills of art to create beauty in his verse. Rather Keats seems working like a classical poet more than a romantic poet when we come to think of different ingredients which Keats has used in order to make his lines the odes pregnant with beauty: rhyme, rhythm, restrain, imagination, proportion, sights, sounds, melody, and control everything is present in odes.

Let us look on some of his odes to prove what we have said just now.

Keats’s Ode to Grecian is one of the near to perfect creation of the poet. In this ode Keats’s has given his idea of permanence of art and temporariness of earthly life. The ode is also important because the ode contains the most quoted line by Keats. “Beauty is Truth and Truth is Beauty” sums up Keats philosophy of life. Keats has used all the devices to make this ode a beautiful piece of art. We find dramatic opening very enchanting and convincing. Then there is cinema like presentation of picture throughout the ode. The trees, the people of the village, the piper, the lover, the maiden, the priest, the animal of sacrifice all come alive and vivid before our eye and this succession and vividness of picture conveys the reader in a beautiful world of imagination which is infinite and permanent.

If we have a look at the vocabulary of the ode, the use rhetoric becomes at once clear to us. Keats seems to be using elevated and sonorous language very close the language used by Milton and other epic poets. Grecian urn has been addressed as Attic shaped and cold pastoral.

Beauty and Greek way of life are completely associated and Keats has evoked Greek elements a number of times in his odes and the title of Ode on Grecian Urn is not an exception. In this ode Keats talks about Greek art and Greek way of life.

Imagination makes the things more beautiful than they actually are and Keats’s imagination is so powerful that it forces the readers to imagine things in all their beauty. Keats believes that heard melodies are sweet but those unheard are sweeter which means that concrete things are beautiful but imagined or abstract things are more beautiful.
Music is an other source of beauty in Keats’s poetry and his Ode to Grecian Urn is full of music. Keats has employed different techniques to make his verses musical. Alliteration, assonance, consonance, variation in rhyme and rhythm all add music to his verses. Consider the following lines:

**Ah, happy, happy boughs! That cannot shed**  
**Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu,**

Yet in spite of all the beauty present in this ode, a strong undercurrent of sorrow is overwhelming in this ode. Form where does this sorrow come is not difficult to answer. This sorrow is the result of his personal experiences of life. However, Keats’s greatness lies in the fact that his personal experiences appear something universal as Keats has described them. The third stanza of Ode on a Grecian Urn is full of sorrowful undercurrents but it is Keats called negative capability of the poet that it appears something universal. Nevertheless intensity of the sad feelings of the poet is evident from every verse of this stanza. In this stanza Keats describe the difference between art and life. According the poet all breathing human passions give nothing but:

**That leaves a heart high sorrowful and cloy’d**  
**A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.**

Beauty and sorrow exists side by side in Keats’s Ode to a Nightingale as well. On the one hand we find beautiful painting of nature in this poem, but on the other hand picture of earth where everything is temporary and transitory haunts us and we feel like running from this world reality and where to think is full of but full of sorrow. Amid all the beauty and music of the nightingale, we find the desire of death in the poet.

**“That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,**  
**And with thee fade into the forest unseen.**

Whichever ode we take, we find the very same qualities of existence of beauty and sorrow side by side. His Ode to Autumn is perhaps most objective of all. Here we do not subjective elements as we find in all other odes. The whole ode is studded with beautiful pictures. Personification of autumn and description of nature scenes is unmatchable any where in poetry. Yet the undercurrent of sorrow is always very prominent. There is very melancholy that broods on the total effect of the poem.

We can conclude our argument with reiterating the fact that Keats’s odes are full of beauty which also truth for Keats but this beauty is not without all the pain which life has for us who life and experience things. It is this characteristic his that makes Keats least romantic of all romantics i.e. a fine blend of subjectivity and objectivity.

**Keats as an Escapist**

Escape means to run, to avoid and to flee. As a literary term escape means writing about things which are imaginary, having nothing do with the realities of life, which are pleasant, having very little of the bitterness of real life.

Escapism is a special characteristic of romantic poetry. Now term romantic is not easy to define, yet we can say that poetry which is the result of imagination is called romantic poetry. This kind of poetry generally does not deal what is happening with human beings
as they living their life on this earth surrounded by different problems. Rather it seeks to present human beings in a sort of make belief work—a world which do not exist.

As I said that escapism is a very dominant trait of romantic poetry, we have to see why it confined to the romantic poetry and why it does not appear in classical poetry. In order to understand this we will have to socioeconomic changes which were taking place in English society at the time when romantic poetry was being written.

Escapism, which we find in romantic poetry, and industrialization and urbanization have vital relation. Both industrialization and urbanization affected the sensibility of the poets because of their special demands and those who could not fulfill the demands of the time found it convenient to avoid those demands and live in a world without those demands. Of course this world was not present. They had no option but to dream of that world.

Keats was one of the romantics and he felt what all romantics felt. Yet Keats was different from other romantics because of his unique experiences of life.

His failure in love, his failure to write poetry good enough to satisfy the critics of his time, his experience of death of his brother and his fear of death lend some special escapist traits to his poetry. Nowhere in his poetry has he discussed the social, moral and political issues of his time. Again and again he seems to escape or attempting to escape in a world which is not the real day to day world of his time. Rather and ideal world he creates with his powerful imagination.

In spite of the fact that Keats died at very young age, yet he created the poetry of highest order. His famous odes and his epic Hyperion put him the top English poets. All these poems show Keats as an escapist. In these poems he has created imaginary worlds of beauty and perfect calm. In all his odes he is concerned with creation of beauty. Though he has succeeded marvelously in his attempt, the beauty we find in his poems is not the beauty of our world. Rather it is the beauty of the world which the poets creates through his imagination in order to seek refuge from the harsh realities of life.

His odes are good examples to show escapism in his poetry. In Ode on Grecian Urn he seeks refuge in the beautiful world of antiquity. It is a world where things are permanent and enjoyable forever. It is world where passion though always remains unfulfilled; it does not leave parching tongue and heart cloyed. Consider the following lines from this ode:

More happy love! More happy, more happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoyed
For ever panting, and for ever young.
All breathing human passions far above
That leaves heart high sorrowful and cloyed
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

His Ode to Nightingale is very remarkable in many ways. In this ode the poet wants to escape in the world of nightingale because the world where nightingale lives is very different from the world where the poet lives. The world of the nightingale is free of weariness, fever, fret, death, pain and old age. His imagination actually carries him to the world of nightingale and he forgets his own world completely. The whole poem is search of an ideal world free of all pains and problems of the earthly life. Though the
poem ends with realization that he cannot escape from his world yet nostalgia of the poet is never lost. Consider the last two lines of the poet:

   Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
   Fled is that music:-Do I wake or sleep?

Escapist elements are never absent from Keats’ poetry. When we say Keats is an escapist poet, we mean that he does not write about the day to day matters of life. Rather he creates imaginary worlds in his poetry and it seems that he wants to escape in that world. Many things were responsible for lending this characteristic to Keats’ poetry. Firstly, all the poets belonging to that period were escapist because of special circumstances of that period. Secondly, Keats never found anything in real world. His life was permanent disappointment. This led him live in the world of imagination. Thirdly, he believed that poetry should be a pure attempt to create beauty and for beauty, he turned to the world of imagination and in order to give true sparkle to his poetry, antiquity came as the best source.

Keats is different from other romantic poets in many ways. Though he creates imaginary world as much as other romantic poets do, we do not find the fever of other romantic poets in Keats. He is devoid f any idealism which is a dominant trait of other romantics. Actually other romantics exhibit two sort of escapism: escape in the past world and escape in the future world which they created with there idealism. But in Keats escapism is just creation of imaginary world and his imaginary world always belong to the past. It does not have any relation with future. The realization that the world is what it is gives objectivity to Keas poetry in spite of all the subjectivity which makes Keats’ poetry something special and something unique.

**Keats’ concept of beauty**

Keats was considerably influenced by Spenser and was, like Spenser, a passionate lover of beauty in all its forms and manifestations. The passion of beauty constitutes his aestheticism. Beauty was his pole star, beauty in nature, in woman and in art.

   “A thing of beauty is a joy forever.”

He writes and identifies beauty with truth. Of all the contemporary poets Keats is one of the most inevitably associated with the love of beauty. He was the most passionate lover of the world as the career of beautiful images and of many imaginative associations of an object or word with a heightened emotional appeal. Poetry, according to Keats, should be the incarnation of beauty, not a medium for the expression of religious or social philosophy. He hated didacticism in poetry. **“We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us.”**

He believed that poetry should be unobtrusive. The poet, according to him, is a creator and an artist, not a teacher or a prophet. In a letter to his brother he wrote: **“With a great poet, the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration.”**

He even disapproved Shelley for subordinating the true end of poetry to the object of social reform. He dedicated his brief life to the expression of beauty as he said: **“I have loved the principle of beauty in all things.”**
For Keats the world of beauty was an escape from the dreary and painful life or experience. He escaped from the political and social problems of the world into the realm of imagination. Unlike Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Shelley, he remained untouched by revolutionary theories for the regression of mankind. His later poems such as “Ode to a Nightingale” and “Hyperion” show an increasing interest in human problems and humanity and if he had lived he would have established a closer contact with reality. He may overall be termed as a poet of escape. With him poetry existed not as an instrument of social revolt nor of philosophical doctrine but for the expression of beauty. He aimed at expressing beauty for its own sake.

Keats did not like only those things that are beautiful according to the recognized standards. He had deep insight to see beauty even in those things that are not thought beautiful by ordinary people. He looked at autumn and says that even autumn has beauty and charm:

“Where are the song 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.”

In Keats, we have a remarkable contrast both with Byron on the one side and with Shelley on the other. Keats was neither rebel nor utopian dreamer. Endowed with a purely artistic nature, he took up in regard to all the movements and conflicts of his time, a position of almost complete detacher. He knew nothing of Byron’s stormy spirit of hostility of the existing order of things and he had no sympathy with Shelley’s humanitarian and passion for reforming the world. The famous opening line of “Endymion”, ‘A thing of beauty is a joy forever’ strikes the keynote of his work. As the modern world seemed to him to be hard, cold and prosaic, he habitually sought an imaginative escape from it. He loved nature just for its own sake and for the glory and loveliness which he found in it, and no modern poet has ever been nearer than he was to the simple “poetry for earth” but there was nothing mystical in love and nature was never fraught for him, as for Wordsworth and Shelley, with spiritual message and meanings.

Keats was not only the last but also the most perfect of the Romantics while Scott was merely telling stories, and Wordsworth reforming poetry or upholding the moral law, and Shelley advocating the impossible reforms and Byron voicing his own egoism and the political measure. Worshipping beauty like a devotee, perfectly content to write what was in his own heart or to reflect some splendour of the natural world as he saw or dreamed it to be, he had the noble idea that poetry exists for its own sake and suffers loss by being devoted to philosophy or politics.

Disinterested love of beauty is one of the qualities that made Keats great and that distinguished him from his great contemporaries. He grasped the essential oneness of beauty and truth. His creed did not mean beauty of form alone. His ideal was the Greek ideal of beauty inward and outward, the perfect soul of verse and the perfect form. Precisely because he held this ideal, he was free from the wish to preach.

Keats’ early sonnets are largely concerned with poets, pictures, sculptures or the rural solitude in which a poet might nurse his fancy. His great odes have for their subjects a storied Grecian Urn; a nightingale; the goddess Psyche, mistress of Cupid; the melancholy and indolence of a poet; and the season of autumn, to which he turns from
the songs of spring. What he asked of poesy, of wine, or of nightingale’s song was to help him:

“Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget,
What thou amongst the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever and the fret,
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan.”

"I Stood Tiptoe Upon a Little Hill" and "Sleep and Poetry" – the theme of both these poems is that lovely things in nature suggest lovely tales to the poet, and great aim of poet is to be a friend to soothe the cares, and lift the thoughts of man. Perhaps Keats would have said that he attempted his nobler life of poetry in poems like "Lamia" and "Hyperion" but it is very doubtful whether he believed that he had done justice to this elevated type of poetic creation.

Keats’ love of beauty is not ‘Platonic’ in nature. He loves physical objects and takes interest in human body. He does not become obscene but his love of beauty gives us very attractive and suggestive picture of women:

“Yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow’d upon my fair love’s ripening breast,
To feel forever its soft fall and swell,
Awake forever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender taken breath,
And so live ever.”

Religion for him took definite shape in the adoration of the beautiful, an adoration which he developed into a doctrine. Beauty is the supreme truth. It is imagination that discovers beauty. This idealism, assumes a note of mysticism. One can see a sustained allegory in “Endymion” and certain passages are most surely possessed of a symbolical value. Sidney Colvin says:

“It was not Keats aim merely to create a paradise of art and beauty discovered from the cares and interests of the world. He did aim at the creation and revelation of beauty, but of beauty whatever its element existed. His concept of poetry covered the whole range of life and imagination.”

As he did not live long enough, he was not able to fully illustrate the vast range of his conception of beauty. Fate did not give him time enough to fully unlock the ‘mysteries of the heart’ and to illuminate and put in proper perspective the great struggles and problems of human life.

**Keats’s Sensuousness**

The term ‘sensuous’ usually refers to the enjoyment and delights borrowed from the senses. Sensuousness is that quality which is derived from five senses- sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. It is a way of perception through five senses. A sensuous poet uses those word pictures that help the reader to understand the sights and sounds expressed or suggested in a poem. John Keats is best known for his use of such images that appeal to human senses. For this reason, he is often called a sensuous poet.
The **Ode on a Grecian Urn** contains a series of sensuous pictures—passionate men and gods chasing reluctant maidens, the flute-players playing their ecstatic music, the fair youth trying to kiss his beloved, the happy branches of the tree enjoying an everlasting spring, etc. The ecstasy of the passion of love and of youth is beautifully depicted in the following lines:

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More happy love! more happy happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young.
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The **Ode to a Nightingale** is one of the finest examples of Keats’s rich sensuousness. The lines in which the poet expresses of passionate desire for some Provencal wine or the red wine from the fountain of the Muses appeal to both our senses of smell and taste:

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O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene…….
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These lines bring before us a delightful picture of Provence with its fun and frolic, merry-making, drinking and dancing. Similarly the beaker full of the sparkling, blushful Hippocrene is highly pleasing. Then there is the magnificent picture of the moon shining in the sky and surrounded by stars. The rich feast of flowers described in the stanza that follows is one of the outstanding beauties of the poem. Flowers, soft incense, the fruit trees, the white hawthorn, the egglantine, the fast-fading violets, the coming musk-rose—all this is a delight for our senses.

In the **Ode to Autumn**, the bounty of the season has been described with all its sensuous appeal. The whole landscape is made to appear fresh and scented. There is great concentration in each line of the opening stanza. Each line is like the branch of a fruit tree laden with fruit to the breaking point. The vines suggesting grapes, the apples, the gourds, the hazels with their sweet kernel, the bees suggesting honey—all these appeal to our senses of taste and smell. The three stanzas of “To Autumn” Keats presents three different sets of images appealing to three different senses. “To Autumn”, thus, very strongly reflects Keats’ sensuousness.

The first stanza of “To Autumn” mainly appeals to the sense of taste. The poem opens with a rich picture of Autumn in the mind.

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“Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom friend of the maturing sun;”
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Here autumn is a season of “mellow fruitfulness”. The vines, laden with the clusters of the thatch roofed country houses. The juicy grapes appeals to the sense of taste of the readers. Similarly, the apples, the gourd, the hazelnuts and honey bring water to the mouths of the readers. Though these images at first appeal of the sense of sight, they ultimately appeal to the sense of taste.
The second stanza appeals to the sense of sight. Keats personifies ‘Autumn’ and presents it as a country woman to convey an idea about Autumn’s occupations. Autumn, in the shape of a woman, is seen on a granary floor, sitting carelessly while her disordered hair is soft lifted by the winnowing wind. Sometimes, she is found in deep sleep on a half reaped cropland. At some other time, she is found to wade across a hilly brook taking the load of a gleaner on her head. She is also found to work patiently with her cider-press to collect juice from the fruits. Thus, autumn has several occupations that can be seen with our eyes. In other words, Autumn is a woman appeals to our sense of sight very vividly.

The third stanza deals with the sense of hearing. The poet says-

"Where are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they? Think not for them, thou hast they music too,........"

In describing autumn, the poet alludes to the season of spring. Autumn does not have the song of spring. But she has her own music. There is the wailful choir of small gnats, which directly appeals to our sense of hearing. Then there are lambs ‘bleating, the songs of the hedge-crickets, the whistles of redbreast, the twittering of the swallows that appeal directly, to the sense of hearing.

Conclusion

Keats is a poet of sensations. His thought is enclosed in sensuousness. In the epithets he uses are rich in sensuous quality – delicious face, melodious plot, sunburnt mirth, embalmed darkness and anguish moist. Not only are the sense perceptions of Keats are quick and alert but he has the rare gift of communicating these perceptions by concrete and sound imagery.

As time passes Keats mind matured and he expresses an intellectual and spiritual passion. He begins to see not only their beauty but also in their truth which makes Keats the "inheritor of unfulfill’d renown”.

Keats is more poet of sensuousness than a poet of contemplation. Sometimes he passes from sensuousness to sentiments. In his mature works like Odes or the Hyperion, the poet mixes sensuousness with sentiments, voluptuousness with vitality, aestheticism with intellectualism. However the nucleus of Keats’ poetry is sensuousness. It is his senses which revealed him the beauty of things, the beauty of universe from the stars of the sky to the flowers of the wood.

Keats’ pictorial senses are not vague or suggestive but made definite with a wealth of artistic detail. Every stanza, every line is replete with sensuous beauty. No other poet except Shakespeare could show such a mastery of language and felicity of sensuousness.

**Keats’ Hellenism in his odes**

Keats, as is well known, was not a classical scholar, yet he has been famous for his Hellenism, a term which may be defined as a love of Greek art, literature, culture and way of life. Keats had an inborn love for the Greek spirit,-their Religion of Joy and their religion of Beauty. He once wrote to one of his friends that he never ceased to wonder at ‘all that incarnate delight’ of the Greek way of life. In fact, he was driven to the world of
Greek Beauty because he wanted to escape imaginatively from the harsh realities of his present. It should, however, be noted that ‘Keats was a Greek’ because he could enter lovingly and imaginatively into the world of the ancients, and not because his knowledge of it was accurate and scholarly. His presentation of Hallas is romantic and not realistic.

Keats’ mind was saturated with Greek literature and mythology. He habitually chooses Greek stories for his poetry. Endymion, Hyperion, Lamia, Grecian Urn, Psyche etc., all have the themes borrowed from the Greeks. The Grecian Urn is a monument of the poet's power of entering imaginatively into another world. We as readers feel that we have been transported entirely to the Hellenic world of beauty, love, festivity and ritual. It is permeated through and through with the Greek spirit. It may also be noted that the ‘Ode’ form, which he made particularly his own and in which he excels all other English poets, is typically a Greek verse form.

Moreover, there are countless allusions to Greek legends and stories in poems which are not directly based on Greek themes. He frequently refers at all places to Muses, Apollo, Pan, Narcissus, Endymion, Diana, and a number of other classical gods and goddesses. In Ode to Nightingale, we have references to Dryads (That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees), the goddess Flora (Tasting of Flora and the country green), and Bacchus and his pards (Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards). In Ode on Melancholy, references are made to the river Lethe, goddess Proserpine and Psyche. These allusions are not mere conventional personifications as with other poets; there is a tone of enjoyment in these allusions which shows that Greek mythology had really taken possession of his mind.

The Greek temper of Keats is also revealed particularly in his joy in the Beauty of nature and his zest for an out of door life lived in her midst. Like the Greeks, Keats also takes a sensuous, childlike pleasure in the forms, colours, scents and sounds of nature and sees a god or goddess behind every object and phenomenon of the external world. The following lines can be cited in this regard-

And haply the Queen – Moon is on her throne,  
Cluster’d around by all her starry Fays;

The Greeks had a zest for life in nature and loved the activities of such life; but they also loved the serenity and quiet of pastoral life. Both these aspects are combined vividly in the Ode on a Grecian Urn. For example, the scenario of the Bacchanalian procession consisting of the flute players, the youth singing under the tree, and the lover about to kiss represent the joy of youth and its energy. On the other hand, the picture of the lowing heifer being led to the sacrificial altar represents the charm of a serene and quiet life. In fact, in his worship of Beauty, Keats justifies the remark of Shelley that he was a Greek.

The Hellenic spirit was re-incarnated in Keats. Through his contact with Greek sculptures, he imbibed, as if by instinct, the classical discipline, simplicity and austerity. He was basically a romantic, and in the beginning his art is characterized by the romantic excess. But at times, he could achieve the clearness of outline, the directness and restraint and the austerity and finish of the classics. As Matthew Arnold points out, the last three lines of the Ode on a Grecian Urn, ‘is as Greek as anything from Homer or Theocritus’. Similarly the stanza of this Ode beginning, ‘Who are those coming to the sacrifice’ has been described as having ‘the clear radiance of Greek style’.
In his description, Keats often achieves not only clarity, directness and simplicity, but also the happy combination of movement with repose which characterizes Greek art. For example, in the Ode on Melancholy we get;

‘Beauty that must die
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips bidding adieu’

Keats also has the passion for perfection of the Greeks. He has the epigrammatic terseness and brevity of the Greeks. Phrases like ‘drowsy numbness’, ‘leaden-eyed despair’, ‘leaf-fringed legends’, ‘cold pastoral, ‘wakeful anguish of the soul’ etc bear enough testimony to this. The opening two lines of the Ode on a Grecian Urn have even been called by Rossetti as the ‘Pillars of Hercules of the human language’.

However, this Greek note in Keats’ poetry should not be exaggerated. He surely has the romantic melancholy, romantic exuberance and the love of colour and pageantry of the romantics. As a matter of fact, he got his knowledge of Greek mythology and literature through the study of the Elizabethans and in the process also imbibed their romanticism. In his poetry, we find a rare combination of classicism with romanticism. As Legous and Cazamian put it, ‘Keats affects the rare union of classical discipline, guided by the examples and precepts of the ancients, with the more intrinsically precious matter, which the artist finds in romanticism’. We may also add that he is not always content with the enjoyment merely of the beauty of form. He often tries to penetrate to the real significance and truth which may lie at the back of formal beauty.

Views on Transience, Permanence, Art, Life, and Beauty in Keats’ Odes

Keats is a poet of beauty. But he is not a poet of sensuous and ephemeral beauty. He is a poet of permanent and ever-lasting beauty. As a poet of beauty, Keats considers art as the embodiment of that everlasting beauty. So, to Keats art represents a permanent, everlasting beauty which contrasts the transient human life. Keats’ view on art is mainly expressed through the contrast between the human life and art that are represented in the form of urn, song, and autumn.

Keats’ most significant views on art are expressed in his “Ode to a Grecian Urn,” In this Ode he makes a contrast between human life and the life of the Urn. Keats finds the Urn much superior to human life. As a work of beauty the Urn represents a permanent life.

In “Ode to a Grecian Urn,” Keats emphasizes the fact love, beauty and youth are all immortalized in the work of art. The beloved in the Grecian Urn is immortal; she will not lose her beauty.

She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

The lady’s beauty and youth have been made permanent in the Urn which is a wrought piece of art. His final comment about the Grecian Urn is:-

When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say’st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"
The poet discovers beauty which is unfading and truth. This beauty is undying in excellent artistic creations. He gets the very taste of eternity in the excellent work of art.

Comparing the transience of life with the permanence of a work of art, 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' asserts the quality of both the real world and the world of art. In 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', Keats actually prefers the immortal nature of art over the mortal nature of human activities in the real world.

Although the urn exists in the real world which is subject to time and change, the life it presents and itself are static and unchanging; thus the bride is "unravished" and as a "foster" child, the urn goes through the "slow time" and not the time of the real world. The figures carved on the urn are not subject to time, though the urn may be changed or affected by slow time.

Keats views on art are also expressed in his "Ode to a Nightingale" as a work of beauty. Once again he makes a contrast between the world of the Nightingale which represents the world of art and the human world. In Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale," he contemplates the essence of the nightingale and contrasts it with his own worldly state and the nature of mortal life.

In Ode to Nightingale the poet spotlights the beauty and fascinating charm of the bird’s song. He simultaneously underscores the most fleeting nature of human life. Human youth and life itself are quite transient. Human beings grow up, flower up into blossoming youths and then fade and die. This is the nature of all human passions. Human beings do not have permanent beauty and permanent joy. Human life on this earth is ever a stratum of happiness and contentment. Human youth and human happiness soon disappear leaving behind an arena of desolation and dry dreariness. Keats refers to life in this world in the following lines of Ode to a Nightingale.

\begin{quote}
\textbf{The weariness, the fever, and the fret}  
\textit{Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;}  
\textit{Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,}  
\textit{Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;}
\end{quote}

Here the poet refers to the importance of youth. Man’s weariness, his fret, palsy, grey hair, pale youth have been referred I order to show that life is just like a passing show on the earth. Again he says

\begin{quote}
\textit{Where but to think is to be full of sorrow}  
\textit{And leaden-eyed despairs,}  
\textit{Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,}  
\textit{Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.}
\end{quote}

The poet has drawn the vivid picture of the mortal world. Here beauty fades, love pines, sorrow and despair seize men and to think is to be full of sorrow. Happiness in the earth is just a feeling thing. So, the idea of importance or transience is quite dominant in Keats’s poem.

But it is only the aspect of Keats’s poetry. He is occupied with the idea of impermanence, it is true. But that is not the only phase. We also represent the idea of permanence. He is searching of unfading beauty and permanence in the world of the Nightingale. Not with the help of intoxicating wine but with the fluttering wings of his imagination he will go to
the world of the Nightingale, i.e. the shelter of nature where he gets abode of permanence and then he will take refuge in the stratum of permanence. He says

_Away! away! for I will fly to thee,_  
_Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,_  
_But on the viewless wings of Poesy,_

Here we see that Keats passing from the world of transience to that of permanence. He discovers unerring permanence in the world of nature which does not change and betray.

According to Keats the Nightingale as a part and parcel of nature is immortal. A bird may die as individual but the species will continue from generation to generation. So, Keats adds:-

_Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!_  
_No hungry generations tread thee down;_  
_The voice I hear this passing night was heard_  
_In ancient days by emperor and clown:_

The song of the Nightingale has immortal delight because it is an integral part of nature and nature does not die. The song of the bird stirs the poet’s imagination and opens the “magic” casement of poetry. This is the theme of permanence as we find in Ode to Nightingale where the poet is transported to imaginative ecstasy.

As a romantic poet Keats imagines a pure and enduring life for all natural objects and natural creatures. In “Ode to autumn” Keats celebrates the season of autumn. Autumn is abstracted and given a universal form. The beauty and the activities of autumn are true for all ages.

The basic tension of the poem “Ode on a Grecian Urn” is between art and the human life. Art though unreal has permanence of beauty and the power to enrapture us through fanciful experiences which are richer than those of artificial life. He clearly portrays the shapes of the Urn which have an eternal life. In “Ode to Nightingale” the speaker wants to share his experience of intensifying to the song of a Nightingale and its effect on his mind. He states the unrestricted, spontaneous happiness of the bird. By simultaneously using figures as personifies of autumn, Keats raises them out of their transient human bodies and eternizes them.

**Ecstasy and Disillusionment in Keats’ Odes**

In his Odes, Keats makes a balance between the flux of human experience and the fixity of art. Keats’ poetic imagination changes easily from the living world to the world of dreams, from art to reality, and from a place of ecstasy to a place of disillusionment.

In the poem, "Ode to a Nightingale," written by John Keats, the speaker attempts to use a nightingale as a means of escaping the realities of human life. The speaker wants to share his experience of listening to the song of a Nightingale and its effect on his mind. The time is night, a moon lit night and place is a green woods. There is a path in the woods which ends somewhere in the woods. In this romantic place and time, a Nightingale is “pouring forth” its soul. The song of the Nightingale has a hypnotizing effect on his mind. It appears in the poem that Keats is tempted into the nightingale’s world of beauty and perfection. The speaker cherishes a longing to join the world of the
bird which he wants to do through at first, country celebrations and secondly through drinks. The speaker visualizes the happy, excited, and ecstatic frenzies which he wants to have in order to join the happy world of the Nightingale.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:

The speaker also gives the description of his actual journey into the dim-sum woods. But as soon as the speaker in the deep woods he can’t see anything in embalmed darkness. He can only guess. In this imaginative forest he finds all the sensual enjoyment of his life. In the darkness of the forest he is surrounded by all the pleasures that he would think to have in the ideal world. There are flowers and fragrance every where and the summer season of woodland takes him to the extremity of joy of living.

The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

At this point the speaker becomes so excited that he wants to die.

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!

But all this ecstasy is followed disillusionment and the speaker comes down to reality. The world of imagination can shelter us for a short time, but it can not give us the solution of the reality of life.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam’d to do, deceiving elf.

Keats begins his “ode on a Grecian Urn” simply describing the various figures that are curved on its surfaces.

The first scene depicts musicians and lovers in a setting of rustic beauty. The speaker attempts to identify with the characters because to him they represent the timeless perfection only art can capture.

THOU still unravish’d bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:

The lovers will always love, though they will never consummate their desire. The musicians will always play beneath trees that will never lose their leaves.

The speaker ends the poem with "heart high-sorrowful." This is because the urn, while beautiful and seemingly eternal, is not life. The lovers, while forever young and happy in
the chase, can never engage in the act of fertility that is the basis of life, and the tunes, while beautiful in the abstract, do not play to the "sensual ear" and are in fact "of no tone.

Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;  
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

In Ode to Autumn, the act of creation is pictured as a kind of self-harvesting Autumn is a season of ripe fruitfulness. It is the time of the ripening of grapes, apples, gourds, hazelnuts etc.

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-eaves run;

It is also the time when bees suck the sweetness from "later flowers" and "make honey." Thus the autumn is pictured as bringing all the fruits of earth to maturity in readiness for harvesting. Despite the coming chill of winter, the late warmth of autumn provides Keats with ample beauty to celebrate: the cottage and its surroundings in the first stanza, the agrarian haunts of the goddess in the second, and the locales of natural creatures in the third. Keats experiences these beauties in a sincere and meaningful way.

But the music of autumn is ‘wailful’ and “mournful”. Also we have in the last stanza the “soft-dying day” after the passing of “hours and hours’. Thus the poem’s latent theme of mortality is symbolically dramatized by the passing course of the day. “And gathering swallows twitter in the skies” and “Birds habitually gather in flocks toward nightfall” means that the day is coming to a close. Also, birds gather particularly when they are preparing to fly southwards at the approach of winter.

While barrèd 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;

The sense of coming loss confronts the sorrow underlying the season’s creativity. When Autumn’s harvest is over, the fields will be bare, the swaths with their “twined flowers” cut down, the cider-press dry, the skies empty. This means that the season too is drawing to a close. A feeling of disillusionment is inevitable because of these suggestions.

From the above discussion we can say that the strain and stress of practical life makes him fly to the world of imagination for the time being but he thinks of the short coming of the imagery world and finally accepts life as it is.
Greek Mythology

Greek myths and legends form the richest, most fertile collection of stories in Western culture, excluding the Bible. Yet despite their diversity they tend to share a common outlook on life. The Greeks cherished life and believed in living it to the fullest degree, since death was an inevitable fact. Only a small minority accepted the idea of resurrection after death; to the rest of the Greeks death was a dismal state, whereas life was dangerous, thrilling, and glorious. So the Greeks believed the only answer to death was to carve an imperishable legend for themselves. They pursued fame with astonishing energy in the five centuries from Homer to Alexander the Great. They were a tough, restless, ambitious, hard-living, imaginative race. But their lust for reputation made them touchy about their honor, and so they were also feisty and vengeful. Their myths and stories show all of these traits in abundance.

The Olympian Gods mirrored these Greek qualities, being quarrelsome, unforgiving deities who enjoyed warring, banqueting, and fornicating. They were always depicted in human form with beautiful, powerful bodies. The Greeks admired strength, beauty, and intelligence. And to them man was the measure of all things.

Because of the Greek urge for fame, their mythology produced a wealth of heroes, who tended to be adventurous fighters - bold, experienced, strong, and clever. However, they also had faults that sometimes ruined them: overweening pride, rashness, cruelty, all of which arose from the very source of their successes - ambition.

The legends of tragic dynasties show this same characteristic. Despite their worldly power, the royal families of Crete, Mycenae, Thebes, and Athens were afflicted with faults that rendered them vulnerable to disaster: pride, ruthlessness in getting revenge, stubbornness, and sexual conflict. No race has understood quite as clearly as the Greeks how character is destiny, or how our very achievements can stem from the same source as our shortcomings.

Hyperion was the Titan god of light, one of the sons of Ouranos (Heaven) and Gaia (Earth), and the father of the lights of heaven-Eos the Dawn, Helios the Sun, and Selene the Moon. His wife was Theia, lady of the aither-the shining blue of the sky. Hyperion's name means "watcher from above" or "he who goes above" from the Greek words hyper and iôn.

Hyperion was one of the four Titan brothers who conspired with Kronos in the castration of their father Ouranos. When Sky descended to lie with Earth, Hyperion, Krios, Koios and Iapetos-posted at the four corners of the world--seized hold of their father and held him fast while Kronos castrated him with a sickle. In this myth these four Titanes personify the great pillars which appear in Near-Eastern cosmogonies holding heaven and earth apart, or else the entire cosmos aloft. As the father of the sun and dawn, Hyperion was no doubt regarded as the Titan of the pillar of the east. His brothers Koios, Krios and Iapetos presided respectively over the north, south and west.
The Titanes were eventually deposed by Zeus and cast into the pit of Tartaros. Hesiod describes this as a void located beneath the foundations of all, where earth, sea and sky have their roots. Here the Titanes shift in cosmological terms from being holders of heaven to bearers of the entire cosmos. According to Pindar and Aeschylus (in his lost play Prometheus Unbound) the Titanes were eventually released from the pit through the clemency of Zeus.

**Introduction to Hyperion**

Hyperion deals with the overthrow of the primeval order of Gods by Jupiter, son of Saturn the old king. There are many versions of the fable in Greek mythology, and there are many sources from which it may have come to Keats. At school he is said to have known the classical dictionary by heart, but his inspiration is more likely to have been due to his later reading of the Elizabethan poets, and their translations of classic story. One thing is certain, that he did not confine himself to any one authority, nor did he consider it necessary to be circumscribed by authorities at all. He used, rather than followed, the Greek fable, dealing freely with it and giving it his own interpretation.

The situation when the poem opens is as Saturn, king of the gods, has been driven from Olympus down into a deep dell, by his son Jupiter, who has seized and used his father's weapon, the thunderbolt. A similar fate has overtaken nearly all his brethren, who are called by Keats Titans and Giants indiscriminately, though in Greek mythology the two races are quite distinct. These Titans are the children of Tellus and Coelus, the earth and sky, thus representing, as it were, the first birth of form and personality from formless nature. Before the separation of earth and sky, Chaos, a confusion of the elements of all things, had reigned supreme. One only of the Titans, Hyperion the sun-god, still keeps his kingdom, and he is about to be superseded by young Apollo, the god of light and song.

In the second book we hear Oceanus and Clymene his daughter tell how both were defeated not by battle or violence, but by the irresistible beauty of their dispossessors; and from this Oceanus deduces 'the eternal law, that first in beauty should be first in might'. He recalls the fact that Saturn himself was not the first ruler, but received his kingdom from his parents, the earth and sky, and he prophesies that progress will continue in the overthrow of Jove by a yet brighter and better order. Enceladus is, however, furious at what he considers a cowardly acceptance of their fate, and urges his brethren to resist.

In Book I we saw Hyperion, though still a god, distressed by portents, and now in Book III we see the rise to divinity of his successor, the young Apollo. The poem breaks off short at the moment of Apollo's metamorphosis, and how Keats intended to complete it we can never know.

It is certain that he originally meant to write an epic in ten books, and the publisher's remark[245:1] at the beginning of the 1820 volume would lead us to think that he was in the same mind when he wrote the poem. This statement, however, must be altogether discounted, as Keats, in his copy of the poems, crossed it right out and wrote above, 'I had no part in this; I was ill at the time.'
Moreover, the last sentence (from 'but' to 'proceeding') he bracketed, writing below, 'This is a lie.'

This, together with other evidence external and internal, has led Dr. de Sélincourt to the conclusion that Keats had modified his plan and, when he was writing the poem, intended to conclude it in four books. Of the probable contents of the one-and-half unwritten books Mr. de Sélincourt writes: 'I conceive that Apollo, now conscious of his divinity, would have gone to Olympus, heard from the lips of Jove of his newly-acquired supremacy, and been called upon by the rebel three to secure the kingdom that awaited him. He would have gone forth to meet Hyperion, who, struck by the power of supreme beauty, would have found resistance impossible. Critics have inclined to take for granted the supposition that an actual battle was contemplated by Keats, but I do not believe that such was, at least, his final intention. In the first place, he had the example of Milton, whom he was studying very closely, to warn him of its dangers; in the second, if Hyperion had been meant to fight he would hardly be represented as already, before the battle, shorn of much of his strength; thus making the victory of Apollo depend upon his enemy's unnatural weakness and not upon his own strength. One may add that a combat would have been completely alien to the whole idea of the poem as Keats conceived it, and as, in fact, it is universally interpreted from the speech of Oceanus in the second book. The resistance of Enceladus and the Giants, themselves rebels against an order already established, would have been dealt with summarily, and the poem would have closed with a description of the new age which had been inaugurated by the triumph of the Olympians, and, in particular, of Apollo the god of light and song.'

The central idea, then, of the poem is that the new age triumphs over the old by virtue of its acknowledged superiority--that intellectual supremacy makes physical force feel its power and yield. Dignity and moral conquest lies, for the conquered, in the capacity to recognize the truth and look upon the inevitable undismayed.

Keats broke the poem off because it was too 'Miltonic', and it is easy to see what he meant. Not only does the treatment of the subject recall that of Paradise Lost, the council of the fallen gods bearing special resemblance to that of the fallen angels in Book II of Milton's epic, but in its style and syntax the influence of Milton is everywhere apparent. It is to be seen in the restraint and concentration of the language, which is in marked contrast to the wordiness of Keats's early work, as well as in the constant use of classical constructions, [247:1] Miltonic inversions [247:2] and repetitions, [247:3] and in occasional reminiscences of actual lines and phrases in Paradise Lost. [247:4]

In Hyperion we see, too, the influence of the study of Greek sculpture upon Keats's mind and art. This study had taught him that the highest beauty is not incompatible with definiteness of form and clearness of detail. To his romantic appreciation of mystery was now added an equal sense of the importance of simplicity, form, and proportion, these being, from its nature, inevitable characteristics of the art of sculpture. So we see that again and again the figures described in Hyperion are like great statues--clear-cut, massive, and motionless. Such are the pictures of Saturn and Thea in Book I, and of each of the group of Titans at the opening of Book II.
Striking too is Keats's very Greek identification of the gods with the powers of Nature which they represent. It is this attitude of mind which has led some people—Shelley and Landor among them—to declare Keats, in spite of his ignorance of the language, the most truly Greek of all English poets. Very beautiful instances of this are the sunset and sunrise in Book I, when the departure of the sun-god and his return to earth are so described that the pictures we see are of an evening and morning sky, an angry sunset, and a grey and misty dawn.

But neither Miltonic nor Greek is Keats's marvellous treatment of nature as he feels, and makes us feel, the magic of its mystery in such a picture as that of the
tall oaks
Branch-charmèd by the earnest stars,
or of the
dismal cirque
    Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor,
    When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,
    In dull November, and their chancel vault,
    The heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.

This Keats, and Keats alone, could do; and his achievement is unique in throwing all the glamour of romance over a fragment 'sublime as Aeschylus'.

"Hyperion, A Fragment": An Introduction

Date of Composition: - Hyperion was begun by Keats beside his brother’s sickbed in September or October, 1818. It is to Hyperion that he refers when he speaks in those days of "plunging into abstract images", and finding a "feverous relief" in the "abstractions" of poetry. These phrases are applicable only to Hyperion. It was finished sometime in April, 1819.

Keats’s Original Plan about This Poem: - The subject of Hyperion had long been in Keats’s mind, and both in the text and the preface of Endymion he indicated his intention to attempt it. At first he thought of the poem to be written as a "romance", but his plan changed to that of a blank verse epic in ten or twelve books. His purpose was to describe the warfare of the earlier Titanic dynasty with the later Olympian dynasty of the Greek gods; and in particular one episode of that warfare, the dethronement of the sun-god Hyperion and the assumption of his kingdom by Apollo. Hyperion exists in two versions, both incomplete. The second version was a revision of the first, with the addition of a long induction in a new style which makes it into a different poem. The two versions of the poem extend over Keats’s greatest creative period. The first version was written mostly before the great Odes, the second mostly after them. As a matter of fact, the period covered by Hyperion is the period of Keats’s most intense experience, both of joy and sorrow, in actual life, and of his most rapid development.

The Dethronement of Hyperion, the Proposed Theme: - The theme of the war between the Titans or the earlier generation of gods, and the later Olympians who overthrew them often occurs in the literature which Keats was fond of reading. The specific theme, the dethronement of Hyperion, the old sun-god, by Apollo the new, is Keats’s own. Apollo is also the god of poetry, and as Endymion had symbolised...
of the lover of beauty in the world, so the story of Apollo and Hyperion was perhaps
going to symbolise the fate of the poet as creator. Since the poem is unfinished, we
cannot know.

**The Miltonic Influence:** - The design of Hyperion owes much to Milton. The poem
opens in the regular epic manner, in the middle of the story. The Titans, like Milton’s
fallen angels, are already outcasts and have lost their power. Hyperion alone is not yet
overthrown, and, like Milton’s Satan, he is the one hope of further existence. The
open-ing scene is followed by a council to discuss the regaining of the lost dominion, in
which Enceladus, like Moloch,[1] pronounces his sentence for open war, and Oceanus,
like Belial,[2] stands for more moderate measures. Externally, at least, this is modelled
on Paradise Lost, and marks a clear break with the loose and incoherent struc-ture of
Endymion.

**Keatsian Originality of Style:** - In spite of its fragmentary condition, Hyperion
remains Keats’s most imposing piece of work. According to the publishers, “the hostile
reception given to Endymion discouraged Keats from con-tinuing with the poem. Keats
himself said that he gave it up because of the excessive Miltonism of the style. “There
were too many Miltonic inversions in it”, he wrote to Reynolds. “Miltonic verse cannot be
written but in an artful or rather in an artist’s humour.” The Miltonic influence is certainly
obvious in the verse and diction of the first Hyperion as it is in the design. There is, for
instance, a constant use of inversions (“stride colossal”, “rest divine”) typical of Milton’s
Latinized style. Especially noticeable is the trick of sandwiching a noun between two
adjectives (“gold clouds metropolitan”). There are other frag-ments of classical sentence-
structure too:

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  save what solemn tubes,
Blown by the serious Zephyrs, gave of sweet
And wandering sounds, slow-breathed melodies.
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But the poem is hardly Miltonic in any stricter sense. In the matter of rhythm, Keats’s
blank verse has not the flight of Milton’s. “Its periods do not wheel through such stately
evolutions to so solemn and far-foreseen close; though it indeed lacks neither power nor
music.” It is still the verse of Keats, but immensely purged and strengthened by contact
with a severer master. Some of the most beautiful images in their delicacy and precision
are utterly unlike Milton’s generalised verbal grandeur, and indeed could be by nobody
but Keats:

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    . . . .No stir of air was there
Not so much life as on a summer’s day
Rob not one light seed from the feather’d grass,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.                   (1, 7-10)
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Books I and II. The Speeches of Oceanus and Clyniene

The first book of Hyperion gives us a picture of the fallen Titans, with Saturn as the
central figure, but Hyperion as the only one who remains even potentially active. The
second book shows them in council and the vital part of it is undoubtedly the speech of
Oceanus. The sum and substance of his speech is as follows:

```
My voice is not a bellows unto ire.
Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof
How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop:
And in this proof much comfort will I give,
If ye will take that comfort in its truth.
We fall by course of Nature’s law, not force
```

Prepared by Atta Ur Rahman Jadoon 03335499069
Of thunder, or of Jove. (11,176-82)
Saturn was not the first power in the universe, and should not expect to be the last. Chaos and darkness produced light; light brought heaven and earth and life itself into existence; and the Titans were the first-born of life. Just as heaven and earth are more beautiful than chaos and darkness,

So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
A power more strong in beauty, born of us
And fated to excel us. ... (11, 212-15)

The Titans should not grieve over the situation and should not envy their successors

. . . .for 'tis the eternal law,
That first in beauty shall be first in might. (11, 228-29)

The simple Clyniene follows and supports Oceanus by bearing testimony to the beauty of young Apollo’s music which she has heard. The lesson of all this is that Hyperion is to be a poem of evolution, of the super-session of lower forms by higher; and that the successors are to prevail because they are superior in beauty.

Apollo, the Subject of Book III: - In the fragment of the third book the interest shifts from the Titans to the young Apollo. Mnemosyne (Memory) alone among the Titans has formed relations with the younger gods. She has watched over the childhood of Apollo, and now she finds him wavering and uncertain of his course. In his talk with her he finds the consciousness of his destiny and assumes his new-found godhead. At this point the poem breaks off.

Reasons of incompleteness: - It seems that what began as an epic poem about a mythological conflict has become a symbolical poem of a different kind. But in the process new difficulties have arisen for the poet. The conventional epic conflict would have afforded a wealth of scenes and incidents. The new scheme, of an evolution in beauty, presents far greater problems. It could hardly be put forth in events and actions, and would not therefore afford material for the ten books originally proposed. Perhaps there were other difficulties as well. The poem remains unfinished because Keats did not know how it was to go on.

Treatment of Greek Things, But Not in a Greek Manner: - Although Keats has been called a Greek, he does not write of Greek things in a Greek manner. The very description of the palace of Hyperion, with its vague, far-dazzling pomps and phantom terrors of coming doom, shows that. Keats is here far in workmanship from the Greek purity and precision of outline, and from definition of individual images. Some of his pictures of Nature, too, show not the simplicity of the Greek, but the complexity of the modern, sentiment of Nature. But Keats shows a thorough grasp of the essential meaning of the war between Titans and Olympians. He illustrates with great beauty and force (in the speech of Oceanus in the second book) that essential meaning : the dethronement of an older and ruder worship by one more advanced and humane, in which ideas of ethics and of arts held a larger place beside ideas of Nature and her brute powers.

Keats’s Success in Animating the Colossal Gods: - Again, Keats attains great success in conceiving and animating the colossal shapes of the early gods. He shows a masterly instinct in the choice of comparisons, drawn from Nature by which he tries to make us realise the voices of those gods, with their personalities between the elemental and the human.
A Dramatic Representation of Human Emotions: - Indeed, Hyperion is Keats’s most serious and considerable attempt at the dramatic presentation of emotion, because the Titans are conceived in human terms, and their sorrows are human sorrows. There is far greater power, too, of discourse, of argument in verse, than ever before; there is no parallel in Keats’s earlier work to the speech of Oceanus.

Sublimity of Book I, and Intensity of Book III: - The second book of Hyperion, relating the council of the dethroned Titans, has neither the sublimity of the first, nor the intensity of the unfinished third. In the first book we have a solemn vision of the fallen Saturn, followed by a resplendent vision of Hyperion threatened in his empire. In the third book we see Apollo undergoing a convulsive change under the afflatus of Mnemosyne, and about to put on the full powers of his godhead. But the third book has a ripeness and controlled power of its own which places it quite on a level with the other two.

One of the Grandest English Poems: - “With a few slips and inequalities, and one or two instances of verbal incorrectness, Hyperion is indeed one of the grandest poems in the English language, and in its grandeur seems one of the easiest and most spontaneous. Keats, however, had never been able to apply himself to it continuously, but only by fits and starts. Partly this was due to the distractions of bereavement, of material anxiety, and of dawning passion amid which it was begun and continued: partly (if we may trust the statement of the publishers) to disappointment at the reception of Endymion; and partly, it is clear, to something not wholly congenial to his powers in the task itself.”

Summary of “Hyperion, A Fragment

BOOK ONE

Saturn’s Despondency after His Defeat: - The Titans were defeated by the Olympians in a war which had started when the Olympians rebelled against the authority of the Titans who had been ruling the universe ever since their conquest of Chaos and Darkness.

Saturn was the chief of the Titans, while Jove or Jupiter was the supreme leader of the Olympians. The grey-haired Saturn had, after his defeat, taken shelter in a remote and shady place in a valley, where he now sat, quiet as a stone. Perfect silence prevailed around him. He was feeling absolutely listless, and his right hand lay, nerveless, on the ground, looking like the hand of a dead body. There was no longer the divine rod of authority in his hand. He sat there in a state of deep despondency, with his eyes closed.

A Visit By Thea: - It seemed that no force would be able to wake up Saturn from his trance. But there did come somebody to wake him up. The visitor was goddess Thea, the wife of the sun-god, Hyperion. She too was a member of the defeated party, and she too was grief-stricken. She woke up Saturn from his listlessness and wanted to know how he was feeling. She told him that he had brought no comfort for him and that she was well aware that he had lost all his power and his authority. She told him that he could continue sleeping and that she would sit at his feet and weep.

Thea’s Suggestion, Accepted By Saturn: - Saturn opened his eyes and, looking around him, realized that he was now a deposed monarch who had lost all his kingdom. He told Thea that he had not only lost his empire but his identity and his real self also. He asked her if it would be possible for him to regain his empire. He said that, if it had been possible for him to find another chaos somewhere, he would have created another universe out of it, just as another power had originally cre
primeval Chaos. In reply, Thea suggested that he should visit his fellow-Titans who had taken refuge at a place to which she could escort him. She wanted that Saturn should rejoin his defeated fellow-Titans and comfort them. Saturn accepted her suggestion, and they both set out on their journey.

The Fears of the Undefeated Hyperion, and His Resolve: - Some of the defeated Titans had been captured by the victorious gods and been put into prisons. A few of the other Titans were wandering about in the world at large in a disconsolate condition. But the majority of them had taken shelter at the particular place where Thea was now taking Saturn. However, there was one Titan who had still not been defeated and who still held sway over his sphere. He was Hyperion, the god of the sun. But, although Hyperion, who lived in a splendid and radiant palace and who commanded the blazing planet of the sun, was still sovereign in his own kingdom, he had begun to feel mentally disturbed by certain ill-omens which seemed to indicate that even he could not feel secure and that his authority might also be threatened. The ill-omens almost unnerved Hyperion, but he was able to overcome his fear and, gathering all his strength and will-power, he declared that he would use his terrible right arm to infuse terror into the heart of Jove who had rebelled against the authority of Saturn and that he would even succeed in restoring Saturn's throne to Saturn.

Hyperion, Urged By Coelus to Go and Meet the Defeated Titans: - There were still a few hours before the sun was due to rise. Hyperion had already prepared himself to start the day's journey. And, though he was impatient to begin the day, he could not commence his task before the due hour. He therefore lay down to while away the few hours which still remained. Although he had formed a strong resolution to fight against Jove, yet his mind was not at ease. The fear of the danger which threatened his supremacy still weighed upon his mind. In this state of mind he heard a voice whispering into his ears. It was the voice of his aged father, Coelus (or Uranus) who now spoke to him from somewhere in heaven. This is what the aged god, Uranus, said to Hyperion:

"You are the brightest of my children. You were born under mysterious circumstances, and the mystery of your birth was not revealed even to me and to your mother. You as well as your brothers and sisters are all manifestations of that beauty which pervades the whole universe. It is very unfortunate that a civil war has taken place among the gods and goddesses, as a result of which my eldest son, Saturn, has been defeated and dethroned. I was in no position to give any help to him. You, my son, are still retaining your authority and governing your dominion. I want you to go down to the earth and meet Saturn and his fellow-gods to see what help you can give to them. It is a bad sign that, while you have all lived and governed your kingdoms with dignity, you are all now experiencing such emotions as fear, anger, and hope which are the feelings characteristic of mankind and not of gods."

At these words, Hyperion got up and, leaving the planet of the sun in the charge of his father who had spoken to him, plunged noiselessly into the deep night in order to go down to the earth and meet his fellow-Titans.

BOOK TWO

The Defeated Gods Feeling Miserable: - In the meantime, Saturn and Thea had arrived at the place where most of the defeated Titans had taken refuge in a cave among the rocks. As already pointed out, some of the gods and goddesses were in prison where they were being tortured. These included Coeus, Gyges, Briareus, Typhon, Dolor, and Porhyrion. Some others were wandering about aimlessly in the world. They included Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory; and Phoebus, a daughter of the moon-goddess. Those who had taken shelter in this cave among the rocks included Creus, Iapetus.
Cottus, Caf, Enceladus, Phorcs, Ocaanus, Tethys, Clymsne, Trutnis, Ops. These gods and goddesses included also Asia, the daughter of the mountain-god Caf by his union with Tellus. All the gods and goddesses assembled here were in a most wretched and miserable condition because of their removal from their respective high positions of authority in the universe.

**Saturn’s Address to His Fellow-Gods:** - On arriving at this place, Saturn felt even sadder than before. This god, who had once wielded supreme authority in the universe, was now experiencing such distressing emotions as rage, fear, anxiety, remorse, and revenge. And he experienced not only these emotions but also that of despair. It seemed that Fate had robbed him of his divine powers and infected him with the weaknesses and infirmities of human beings. Under the stress of these emotions, Saturn might have collapsed to the ground but, by chance, he met the eyes of Enceladus of whose exceptional strength and might he was fully aware. Seeing anger in Enceladus’s eyes, Saturn felt invigorated and strengthened. The presence of Enceladus acted as a great stimulus upon him, and so he shouted to the assembled Titans: “Titans, behold your supreme god”. At Saturn’s words some of the gods groaned, some got up on their feet, some shouted, some wept, some wailed; but all of them bowed to Saturn reverently. Saturn had now conquered his feelings of fear and despair, and he spoke in a self-confident manner. Addressing his fellow-gods, he said:

“
I do not understand why you should feel so dejected. Neither in my own heart nor in the book of wisdom which I have always kept close to myself, am I able to discover any reason why you should have given up all hope. There have been no portents to show that we are a doomed race. Seeing you in this mood of dejection, I do not know what message I should give to you. If I ask you to arise, you will groan because you are in no mood to fight; if I ask you to cringe to the conqueror (Jove) you will still groan because your self-respect will be hurt. What can I then do? Tell me, my brother-gods, how we can wreak vengeance upon the rebellious gods who have won a victory over us. You, Oceanus, are a deep thinker. What advice can you give me?”

**Oceanus’s Reply:** - Saturn here ended his speech. Oceanus now replied to Saturn’s question. This is what Oceanus said:

“What I have to say should be a source of comfort to you, provided you can find comfort in what is true. The truth is that we have been defeated not by the power of Jove but in accordance with Nature’s law. Great Saturn, you have studied this universe but, having been accustomed to wield unlimited power, you have missed certain small points which lower minds could easily understand. You should realize that, just as you were not the first power to rule the universe, so you are not the last. You are not the beginning, and you are not the end. We all acquired our positions and our authority after the original chaos and the primeval darkness had been conquered. And just as we are fairer than that chaos and that darkness, those who have now become the rulers of the universe are fairer than we are. On our heels a fresh perfection treads, a power more strong in beauty, a power born of us but destined to surpass us just as we surpass the original chaos and the primeval darkness. Besides, it is not a question of conquest; we have not been conquered by Jove and his comrades just as we did not in any sense conquer chaos and darkness; it is just a question of progress which proceeds inevitably according to the law of Nature. We should not resent having been superseded just as the dull soil does not resent the existence of the grand forests which it has itself nourished and fed, and just as a tree does not resent the dove which sits on its branches and sings. We have ourselves begotten those who have now taken our places as the rulers and, in course of time, they too would be ousted by another race because the law of Nature is that “first in beauty should be first in “might”. I have been succeeded on my throne by another god.
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(Neptune) but I am not resentful of him because he is far more impressive in his appearance and far more handsome than I am. I myself bade farewell to my empire in order to make way for him, even though I felt sad to relinquish my authority. Now what I want is that you should understand the principle which is behind our dethronement, and draw comfort from it."

Clymene’s Account of Her Strange Experience: - None of the gods said anything in response to Oceanus’s speech. The only one who now spoke was the goddess Clymene. She said that she wanted to tell the assembly of the gods an experience which she had gone through in the forest and which had convinced her that the gods who had now come into power after displacing the previous rulers of the universe were really superior to their predecessors. She said that, while singing and playing on a musical instrument on the sea-shore, she had suddenly become conscious of a magic influence which seemed to be coming from an island opposite. She had thereupon thrown away her musical instrument and started listening to the music which began to come from the same direction. The music which she heard consisted of a succession of melodious sounds which fell upon her ears one after the other like pearl beads dropping suddenly from their string. She had never heard such music before; and it now made her sick with simultaneous feelings of joy and grief. She was filled with joy because this music was rapturous, and she felt sad because this music was superior to any music which she herself could produce. The feeling of grief proved to be stronger than the feeling of joy and, stopping her ears with her hands, she fled from that place in order not to hear that music any longer. But a voice, sweeter than all music, followed her, crying: “Apallo! Young Apollo! The morning-bright Apollo!” What Clymene meant by describing this experience of hers was that the music of Apollo, who belonged to the new race of rulers, was far superior to the music which could be produced by the Titans.

Enceladus, Opposed to an Attitude of Passivity and Submission: - While both Oceanus and Clymene had wanted to convince the defeated gods that the best course for them would be to reconcile themselves to their present state, Enceladus the Giant felt deeply annoyed with what these two speakers had said. He regarded the dethronement of the Titans as an unbearable humiliation and he therefore suggested that the Titans should not give way to despair but should make a vigorous effort to regain their kingdoms. He said that he would tell the Titans how they could destroy the power of Jove and how they could once again become the proud rulers of their realms. He said that he could not forget the days of peace and tranquility which he had enjoyed during the period of the rule of the Titans, and that he would like those days to return. Enceladus went on to say that one of the Titans, namely Hyperion, had still not been displaced and that even the defeated Titans could therefore hope to regain their lost empires. After expressing these views, Enceladus said that he was happy to note that his words had produced the desired effect on his listeners.

Hyperion’s Arrival to Meet the Defeated Gods: - Just then Hyperion, who had been urged by Coelus (or Uranus) to go down to the earth in order to meet the defeated Titans, arrived at the scene. When Hyperion alighted on a rock near the cave, where the defeated gods were holding their conference, his radiance filled the atmosphere all around. Every gulf, every chasm, every height, and every depth looked bright with the radiance shed by Hyperion. Hyperion looked at the assembled Titans and noted the wretchedness of the dethroned gods who could now, in the light being shed all around by Hyperion, see how miserable they appeared by contrast with him. But Hyperion was in no joyous mood, because the sight of the defeated and miserable gods filled him also with depression. Four of the gods including the fierce Enceladus now got up and advanced to greet Hyperion. Going near him, these four gods shouted the name of Saturn and, in reply, Hyperion answered from the mountain-peak: “Saturn.”
himself at this time was sitting near the mother of all the gods whose face showed no joy on account of the sad fate which had overtaken her progeny.

BOOK THREE

Keats to Sing About Apollo: - At this point Keats deviates from the story of the Titans which he has been narrating and from the role of Hyperion which he has been describing. He thinks of the premature death of his brother Tom and says that he should turn rather to sing about his own sorrow than about the woes of the gods. But he does not then proceed to sing even about his own personal sorrow. He says that he would like to sing about Apollo, “the father of all verse.” The thought of Apollo fills him with a great enthusiasm and joy, and he calls upon all Nature to put on fresh glory in order to join him in celebrating the greatness of Apollo who was born on the island of Delos. He announces to all Nature that “Apollo is once more the golden theme” of his verse. Evidently, Keats's purpose now is to take up the theme of the dethronement of Hyperion by Apollo. But Apollo is not yet a god. Keats therefore first takes up the theme of how Apollo became a god.

Apollo’s Encounter with an Awful Goddess: - When Hyperion stood radiant in the midst of his grief-stricken fellow-Titans, Apollo left his mother and his twin-sister sleeping in their bower and wandered forth in the morning twilight. Walking through the lilies of the valley at that early hour, when the nightingale had just stopped singing and when there were only a few stars left in the sky, Apollo came to a stop on the banks of a stream and suddenly burst into tears. While he stood there weeping, with his golden bow in his hand, an awful goddess came and stood before him. Apollo was surprised to see this mysterious figure who seemed to have come from nowhere. He then realized that he had always been conscious of the presence of this goddess on this island and that he had often heard the sweep of her garments over the fallen leaves as she walked about in the valley and in the forest. He told the goddess that he had either actually seen her before on this island or had dreamed of her. The goddess replied that he had dreamed of her and that, on waking up from his dream, he had found a golden lyre which she had placed for him by his side. From the strings of that lyre he had produced sweet music which the whole universe had heard with both pain and pleasure, realizing that a new kind of music had come into existence.

The Goddess’s Deep Interest in Apollo: - The goddess now asked Apollo why he had been weeping and what it was that had been making him so sad. She told him that she had been keeping a watch upon him during his hours of sleep and during his hours of wakefulness ever since his childhood. She said that she had given up her allegiance to the old gods for his sake and for the sake of the new loveliness which he possessed and the new music which he had originated.

Apollo’s “Aching Ignorance”: - Thereupon Apollo suddenly realized who this goddess was. He said that her name had suddenly occurred to him and that she must be Mnemosyne. Then he said that his sorrow, which had made him shed tears, was not a mystery to her and that she knew everything about him. He went on to say that there were certain things which he did not understand. He wanted the goddess Mnemosyne to clear his doubts about certain matters. He wanted to know the nature of the stars, the identity of the power behind the forces of Nature, the divinity who ruled the universe, and the reason why he was often overtaken by a melancholy which was so deep as to have a numbing effect on his limbs. He asked her to tell him why he often listened to the sounds of the elements “in fearless yet in aching ignorance.”

The Deification of Apollo, Or Keats’s Emergence as a True Poet: - Mnemosyne remained silent. Apollo’s mind was now suddenly illuminated by a new
discovery. He said that he could read a wonderful lesson in the goddess’s silent face. "Knowledge enormous makes a god of me”, he said. Then he told her what he could read in her face. Her face had brought to him a sudden awareness of “names, deeds, old legends, dire events, rebellions, majesties, sovereign voices, agonies, creations and destroyings.” This new awareness, he said, was like a wine or an elixir which seemed to deify him and make him immortal. As he said these words, keeping his eyes steadfast on Mnemosyne, he experienced wild convulsions which shook his whole body. He underwent an agonizing experience. The agony which he felt was akin to the agony of death. While he was going through this painful ordeal, Mnemosyne kept her arms upraised like one who was making a prophecy. At last Apollo shrieked with joy and ecstasy, and from all his limbs came a glory which showed that he had become a god. Apollo had died into life. Apollo the mortal was dead bat Apollo the god was born. In other words, Apollo had risen to great heights of poetry and music by his contact with Mnemosyne who symbolized all human experience, all experience which mankind had had in the past and an awareness of which is a necessary part of the equipment of a poet. (Mnemosyne represents not only the past of mankind but also the present and even the future. The deification of Apollo means that Keats himself feels that he has become a true poet because of his realization that a keen and sensitive awareness of the reality of all human experience is essential if a poet wants to write true poetry).

**Critical Appreciation of “Hyperion”**

It is a commonplace of Keats criticism to present the poet as struggling against both a debilitating sense of his own immaturity and the wider public perception of him as 'immature'. Keats's doleful suspicion that he was merely a 'weaver-boy' in the eyes of reviewers and other 'literary fashionables' was confirmed by Byron's caustic reference this 'pass a bed' poetry, and by John Gibson Lockhart's conclusion that Keats was only 'a boy of pretty abilities'.

In 1820, the Guardian ironically praised his 'juvenile industry', while the London Magazine condemned his 'boyish petulance'. Throughout his poetic career, Keats contended with reviewers who configured him as 'effeminate' or 'callow', and who routinely exhorted him to 'grow up'. But while Keats's relationship with immaturity and 'juvenile industry' may have been fraught, it was by no means wholly disabling. Marjorie Levinson has shown with customary dexterity how Keats used his cultural marginality, stylistic vulgarity, and 'adolescent' sexuality to subvert authoritarian values extolled by' so distant guardians of public taste' like Lockhart and J. W. Croker. Indeed, Keats's work often teeters self-consciously on the edge of puerility, such 'teeterings' becoming the condition for contestations of various kinds.

In the prevailing callous critical atmosphere, Keats continued to prove himself the greatest of his contemporaries. Though he was never admitted in his lifetime, yet his approach towards fine or poor creations was par excellence. His assortment and denunciation of poetic process was from a full-grown mind. Famous fragmentary poem “Hyperion” seems to have afforded Keats less satisfaction than any other of his works. It was printed, as the "Advertisement" shows, at his Publishers’ desire, “and contrary to the wish of the author.” Still later, he “re-cast it into the shape of a Vision, which remains equally unfinished.”
“I have given up Hyperion,” Keats writes from Winchester, Sep. 22, 1819 “there were too many Miltonic inversions in it—Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful, or rather, artist’s humour. I wish to give myself up to other sensations. English ought to be kept up.”

This phrase apparently refers to the mood in which he had just written those noble lines to Autumn, which we put, with Lamia, and five or six more pieces, amongst his maturest work; the work wherein art touches its genuine triumph in concealing itself: the work which, in matter and manner alike, embodies his most essential, his most intimate, genius. And, in the remarks, which follow, the poet clearly shows a consciousness that in Hyperion the “artist’s humour “was too prevalent: “the false beauty, proceeding from art,” blended with “the true voice of feeling.” Keats, criticizing here for the last time his own work, touches on the note, which is most sensible in his poetry, as it is that which lay the deepest in his own nature. Almost more than passion for beauty, although, indeed it is, rather, itself the fine flower of beauty, tenderness, almost passing into tremulousness, seems his characteristic. Here and there, whilst he was little more than a boy, we hear this note in excess.

But Keats, in both the qualities just named, true child of Spenser, has also the manliness of nature, the sanity of sentiment, which underlie everywhere that river of gold, which ripples through the Faerie Queene. Beyond any of his great compeers during the last two centuries, (if we may here venture thus to sum up the imperfect criticisms on his genius which are offered in these notes), Keats had inherited, not only as Man but as Poet, or rather, as Poet because he was so as Man, the inspiration and the magnanimity of the great age of our Muses; —more than any, he is true English-Elizabethan: Had the years of Milton been destined for him, of him, more than of any other it might have been prophesied, fortunate.

Despite the marvellous grandeur of its execution, the judgment of Keats upon this work appears to be thoroughly well founded. After an introduction worthy to be compared with what the Propylaea of the Acropolis at Athens must have been, at once in severe majesty and in refinement of execution, the interest of the story rapidly and irremediably falls off. It is, truly, to take a phrase from the Preface to Endymion, “too late a day.” The attempt to revivify an ancient myth, —as distinguished from an ancient story of human life, —however alluring, however illustrated by poets of genius, seems essentially impossible.

It is for the details, not for the whole, that we read Hyperion, or Prometheus Unbound, or the German Iphigeneia. Like the great majority of post-classical verse in classical languages, those modern myths are but exercises, (and, as such, with their value to the writer), on a splendid scale.

The story of which “Hyperion” tells the beginning is, in fact, far too remote, too alien from the modern world: it has neither any definite symbolical meaning, nor any of that “soft humanity” which underlies the wild magic of his other works, and has rendered possible a picture, true not only to Corinth two thousand years ago, but to all-time. Yet, with such strange vital force has he penetrated into the Titan world, and all but given the
reality of life to the old shadows before him, that, had this miracle been possible, we may fairly say that Keats would have worked it.

The author was, hence, right in giving up “Hyperion”. Yet, by a singular irony of literary fate, “Hyperion” was the first of his poems, which seems to have reached fame beyond his own English circle of admirers. Byron, in a passage often quoted, placed its sublimity on a level with Aeschylus. But the criticisms, which it called forth from Shelley, are the most noteworthy. In Nov. 1820 we find him writing that he has received “a volume of poems by Keats; in other respects insignificant enough, but containing the fragment of a poem called “Hyperion”.... It is certainly an astonishing piece of writing. “Nor was this Shelley’s first impression only; for on 15 Feb. 1821 he returns to Keats: “His other poems are worth little; but, if the Hyperion be not grand poetry, none has been produced by our contemporaries.”

If we remember the masterpieces contained in the precious little book of 1820, it may be reasonably held that even the political antagonists of Keats and his friends could hardly have exceeded these criticisms in blind prosaic injustice. So may one great poet, and he, snow-pure from taint of envy or malice, misunderstand and misestimate another!

Hyperion”, An Epic of Beauty’s Triumph

First in Beauty Should Be First in Might: - The fragmentary epic, Hyperion, is concerned chiefly with beauty. A war in heaven was the basis for the narrative which Keats had planned to write. An older race of gods known as the Titans had been overthrown by the younger Olympians.

Hyperion, the sun-god, after whom the poem was named, had been visualized by Keats as the champion of the Titan cause because he was the only one of them yet undefeated when the poem begins. The main action of the poem would almost certainly have been the overthrow and supersession of Hyperion by the Olympian Apollo. The fundamental theme, then, is the war which had taken place between two classes of gods. From the outset we find ourselves in the company of the defeated Titans, experiencing their bitter sorrow and asking their questions; and the centrality of beauty is asserted precisely here, because the only theatrical answer to the question why the older gods have suffered at the hands of the younger gods is that beauty should triumph and that in the present case it has actually triumphed. The victorious Olympians are more beautiful than the Titans; there is no more to be said on this point because “it is the eternal law that first in beauty should be first in might.” This one statement made by Oceanus not only puts beauty at the centre of the poem but interweaves it with pain by denning a metaphysic of suffering out of beauty’s triumph. To the riddle of the defeat of the Titans, the solution is that the less beautiful must be superseded and pushed into the background. In this poem Keats simultaneously vindicates the beautiful and gives his explanation of the pain and suffering in this world. In his view the pain and suffering of the world are the price of beauty’s victory. The survival of the fittest is the tune to which creation dances; this constitutes the world’s outward drama and equally its inner sense. The greater or the fitter is one who is the more beautiful because Nature’s law is that first in beauty should be first in might.
The Problem of Suffering and Pain: -

The poem opens with a striking picture of Saturn sitting still and silent after his defeat. He is joined by the goddess Thea (who was the wife of Hyperion, the sun-god). She rouses Saturn from his stupor in order to stress his total discomfiture and to say that she has to offer no explanation of these recent events and that she has no comfort to offer either. "I have no comfort for thee, no, not one", she pointedly says. In reply, Saturn asks her if his feeble shape is really his and if his voice is really his. In other words, through Saturn’s questioning, Keats raises the problem of human suffering (even though the questioner is a god). Thea only understands that disaster has befallen the Titans. Saturn only understands the pain of defeat. Both of them want to understand more; and Keats now sends them together to that sad place where Cybele and the bruised Titans sat in mourning. Some of the defeated Titans are then named and described, where after Saturn proceeds to address them. His speech goes deeper still into the sheer puzzle of pain. He puts it thus:

Not in my own sad breast,
Which is its own great judge and searcher out,
Can I find reason why ye should be thus: (II, 129-31)

At the end of his speech he turns to Oceanus whose "severe content", which is the result of thought and musing, has surprised him and from whom he now seeks guidance.

Stoic Resignation to the Truth: -

It is Oceanus who, in his reply to Saturn’s question, urges his fellow-gods to see their Titanic woes as part of a process called beauty’s triumph. Whether the process justifies the pain involved is not easy to decide. Oceanus proclaims his message to be “the pain of truth”; but at the same time he asserts that those who take his message to be painful are foolish. The dominant note of the speech of Oceanus is Stoic resignation to the truth rather than welcome of it. He concludes with the following advice:

Receive this truth, and let it be your balm.

But there is no suggestion that pain can be transformed into something else. In other words, pain and suffering remain pain and suffering, and cannot undergo any mystic transformation. All that Oceanus can say is that the defeated gods have to suffer but that they are suffering in a good cause. So his mandate is that the sufferers must achieve calm and tranquility.

The Superior Beauty of the New Sea-God and of the New God of Music: -

Oceanus cites his own individual defeat as an illustration of the general principle which he has just laid down. He refers to the new Olympian god who has overthrown him. He speaks about the new god of the sea in ardent terms, praising the beauty and the glow of the new god. Oceanus was so impressed by the new god that he voluntarily relinquished his position as the sovereign of his empire and came away from his headquarters, so to speak. Following Oceanus, the goddess Clymene expresses her own sense of bewilderment but then goes on to speak of Apollo in the same eloquent and glowing terms in which Oceanus had spoken about his successor. Says she:
A voice came sweeter, sweeter than all tune,
And still it cried, "Apollo! Young Apollo!"
I fled, it follow'd me, and cried "Apollo"!

(II, 292-94)

Thus the reference to Apollo emphasizes a singing voice of the utmost beauty. And the beauty is, of course, the point, because the final triumph of beauty will be the triumph of Apollo; and in this way Oceanus’s assertion of the eternal law of Nature will be vindicated. No doubt, Enceladus, who speaks after Clymene, rejects both her opinion and the view of Oceanus. Enceladus describes Oceanus as “over-wise” and he describes Clymene as “over-foolish”. Enceladus speaks in a militant tone, and he relies on Hyperion to come to the rescue of the defeated Titans. But the event described in Book III, in which Apollo achieves his deification, clearly shows that Enceladus’s defiance and militancy would come to nothing, if the poem had been continued, it would have described the conflict between Hyperion and the new god Apollo, and it would have described the triumph of the latter who is more beautiful by virtue of his music and melody the like of which had never before been heard in the universe.

Major Themes in Hyperion

Human Sufferings in Hyperion/ “the agonies, the strife of human hearts” in Hyperion

Hyperion" is an uncompleted epic poem by John Keats. It is based on the Titans and Olympians, and tells of the despair of the former after their fall to the latter. Keats wrote the poem for about one year, when he gave it up as having "too many Miltonic inversions." He was also nursing his brother Tom, who died in January of 1819 of tuberculosis. Hyperion relates the fall of the Titans, elemental energies of the world, and their replacement by newer gods. The Olympian gods, having superior knowledge and an understanding of humanity’s suffering, are the natural successors to the Titans.

Keats's epic begins after the battle between the Titans and the Olympian gods, with the Titans already fallen. Hyperion, the sun god, is the Titans' only hope for further resistance. The epic's narrative, divided into three sections, concentrates on the dethronement of Hyperion and the ascension to power of Apollo, god of sun and poetry. Book I presents Saturn fallen and about to be replaced and Hyperion threatened within his empire. The succeeding events reveals the aftermath of the situation and the Titan’s acceptance of defeat after Oceanus’ speech. In Hyperion, the quality of Keats's blank verse reached new heights, particularly in the opening scene between Thea and the fallen Saturn:

"Deep in the shady sadness of a vale,
... Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone”

Many themes introduced in the Hyperion are identifiable as those associated with Romanticism. Hyperion, which marks the exchange of the old powers for the new, addresses ideas about poetry, beauty, knowledge, and experience. Hyperion's dominant themes address the nature of poetry and its relationship to humanity and the sublimity of human suffering the knowledge gained through it. The narrative suggests
consideration of progress, particularly toward enlightenment and depictions of beauty, even as it evokes classical ideals found in Greek mythology. Visual and verbal representations, in the use of language and of Greek sculptural forms, contribute to this exploration. Through his representation of gods, Keats's commentary on Romantic opposites includes the real and ideal, history versus myth, finite versus infinite. The theme of truth is also prevalent. The speech of Oceanus and the ascension of Apollo both point to Hyperion's concern with truth and its relationship with beauty, knowledge, and suffering. Truth is closely associated with knowledge and both are acquired through pain, which results from the understanding and acceptance of change and impermanence. However painful, truth is pure and beautiful, and what is beautiful is eternal. It is this honourable truth that the human spirit strives to attain. That is why Keats calls Hyperion:

“the agonies, the strife of human hearts”

The poem is tragic with most of the qualities of a tragedy. Oceanus is working as a chorus giving the poem’s moral and working as a mediator. Keats says: All I hope is that I may not lose interest in human affairs. In his later poetry, the realm of Flora and Old Pan are gone. His early poems were sensuous, but later he became aware of human sufferings. He thought that poetry of escape is not the real poetry. Real poetry deals with human beings. The function of poetry according to Keats is a friend to soothe the cares of man and lift up his thought. In the poems, gods have been given human qualities symbolizing sufferings of man. Gods are huge and Titanic, but have been given human characteristics effectively and realistically. Saturn's misery, Thea's stature all perfect human as exemplified in the line, 'I have no comfort for thee, no, not one'. Keats has humanized the gods to reveal human sufferings as further in Saturn’s speech:

“Who had power
To make me desolate? Whence came the strength?”

For Saturn, dethronement is a question of identity as Napoleon or any human being, may be Nawaz Sharif or Musharraf, and could have felt. Thea’s reassurance to Saturn is a typical human activity. The suffering of Titans is the collected suffering of humanity at large. Hyperion is a militant whose spirit is dampened by danger. So Keats, unlike other poems, has human concern in this poem. The Confidence with Saturn reminds us of Duke in “My Last Duchess” by Browning as “I gave commands and all smiles stopped”. Saturn is like Milton’s Satan who doesn’t want to establish his own kingdom for sovereignty as much as to take revenge on God. So the gods are all humanized. This is also visible in the Hyperion’s apprehensions about his dethronement and mock determinations.

“I will advance a terrible right arm
Shall scare that infant thunderer, rebel Jove”

He has seen certain omens which indicate that his downfall may be imminent. Human beings feel apprehensive when they hear a dog howling or an owl screeching; and this god is feeling apprehensive because the wings of eagles darkened his palace and because the neighing of steeds has been heard which had never been heard before “by
gods or wondering men”. The omens are different no doubt, but Hyperion’s reaction to the omens is the same as that of human beings is. And just as a human being might still resolve to fight against a coming danger, so Hyperion too says that he will use his terrible right arm. He feels most restless to think of the fate which might overtake him. But his restlessness is human restlessness under the pressure of a coming danger. Just as a wealthy man is afraid lest he should become bankrupt, so Hyperion is afraid lest he should lose his “lucent empire”. Just as a wealthy man is afraid lest he should be deprived of all his gains, so Hyperion is afraid lest he should lose “the blaze, the splendour, and the symmetry”. Hyperion is at this time like a fish out of water. He would like to begin the day sooner than usual, but the laws of Nature do not permit him to do that. He picks up courage only when his father whispers to him from somewhere in heaven and urges him to go and join his fellow-Titans on the earth; another human activity.

Keats suffered from the two experiences of entirely different nature: imagination and reality. It is evident, then, that Keats was grappling with the problem of human suffering and with a human dilemma. He even suggests the simple formula: What cannot be cured must be endured. Human beings should face the facts squarely and calmly, and such a calm acceptance of realities shows not a defeatist mentality but a manly or even a divine frame of mind. Having arrived at this stage in his thinking, Keats went on to write the great odes in which his human concerns find a full utterance. Keats has like Apollo, acquired the tragic vision and become a great poet. Had he lived longer, he would have written even greater poetry and it would have been a poetry marked by profound thought, intense emotion, and a portrayal of the stern realities of human life.

“Hyperion is a veritable gallery of studies in pain” and “what Keats achieves above all in Hyperion is the sublimation of suffering.” What is your opinion?

Keats is a poet of suffering and pain. Throughout his poetry feelings of suffering is the prominent feature. In spite this we cannot call Keats a poet of sadness. We find a strange tranquility and calm in Keats’ poetry even when he tells the story of loss, pain and suffering. Keats seems to accept as something integral and inevitable for human existence.

When we say that Hyperion is the veritable gallery of pain, we that we find only pain in the poem and nothing else. Actually Hyperion like all other masterpieces written by Keats gives the impression of a gallery with having different picture, the most important being those of Saturn, Thea, Hyperion and Nature. All these pictures are embodiment of pain, though in quite different ways.

When we say that achievement of Keats in Hyperion is the sublimation of suffering, we mean that suffering has been described with so much beauty that they appear to be sublime and inevitable to human existence, and, therefore, integral part of life.

The poem deals with the theme of change. It is the law of nature that new things replace the old things but this change is always painful. Keats has captured this pain with such blend of objectivity and subjectivity that he has succeeded in making suffering...
Keats is Hyperion is surely a tale of pain and suffering. This is tale of loss and of suffering which emanates from loss. Actually the poem deals with the fall of Titans at the hand of Olympians. From the very beginning the feelings of pain dominate and the sadness and anguish which Saturn feels after his defeat by Jove has been dramatized and portrayed with such poignancy and pathos that loss appears to be personal.

The poem opens when Saturn has already fallen and is deprived of all the powers he previously enjoyed. His condition and torture finds expression in very powerful and moving lines.

**Deep in the shady sadness of a vale**
*Far sunken from the healthy breath if morn,*
*Far from the fiery noon, and eve’s one star,*
*Sat grey-haired Saturn, quiet as stone,*

This sad story continues and each line tells something more about anguish and torture which mind and soul of Saturn was undergoing.

...............Upon the sodden ground
*His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,*
*Unsceptred; and his realmless were closed;*
*While his bowed head seemed listening to the Earth,*
*His ancient mother for some comfort yet.*

Saturn is not the only person the anguish and pain of his soul whose soul and mind is depicted in Book 1 of Hyperion. Thea and Hyperion also have their share of pain and suffering with Saturn. Consider the following lines which Keats has written for Thea when she comes meet defeated Saturn:

**But O! how unlike marble was that face,**
*How beautiful, if sorrow had not made*
*Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty’s self.*

All the conversation which takes place between Thea and Saturn is full of pain. Every word, every line and every thought seems to dwelling on pain and suffering of both the God and The Goddess.

**Saturn look up! –though wherefore, the poor old king?**
*I have no comfort for thee, no not one.*

Now let us try to look the pain and its intensity in some of the speeches of Saturn. He speaks the following words to Thea when listens to Thea’s speech.

**Thea, I feel thee ere I see thy face**
*Look up, and let me say our doom in it*
The whole speech of Saturn is soaked with the pain and torture which soul suffers. The following lines reveal the torture of his soul:

I have left

My strong identity, my real self,
Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit
Here on this spot of earth.

Thea! Thea! Thea! Where is Saturn?

We find the same pain and its permanent presence even Keats introduce Hyperion. Though Hyperion is still on his throne and consoles himself with the thought that he can restore Saturn to his Throne by defeating Jove, his anguish and pain is perceivable in every description Keats has used to reveal the mind and soul of the great God.

I cannot see-

but darkness, death and darkness.

Even here, into my centre of repose,
The shady vision comes to domineer,
Insult, and blind, stifle my pomp-

When we study further this poem, finally we come to believe that Hyperion is no one but the poet himself Hyperion’s story the story of the poet himself. And this subjective element in the poem which makes every verse of the poem drenched in sadness and pain.

What makes suffering sublime in Keats is not difficult to understand. Keats, as an artist knew what is common to him is common to all human being and expressing this poetry will lend sublimity to his thought and expression and this is what Keats so frequently did in his poetry and in which he always succeeded.

Death, loss, cravings for love, creation of beauty with realization that beauty does not remain forever though it is truth and love of life have stood first during the creative concerns of the poet. And very nature of these things brings pain in human life because they not forever and realization that they cannot remain forever bring sublimation in the suffering which human being under while they hanker after the above mentioned things. Keats’ Hyperion is the artist expression of what Keats considered true of human life. On the surface he seems to be telling the story of Gods and Goddess having no relation the lives of the mortals but actually he tells the story of human beings living on the earth.

The Greek Note in Keats’s Poetry

The Greek Spirit in Keats’s Poetry:
Shelley expressed the opinion that “Keats was a Greek”. Indeed, Keats was unmistakably a representative of Greek thought, in a sense in which Wordsworth and Coleridge and even Shelley were not. The Greek spirit came to Keats through literature, through sculpture, and through an innate tendency, and it is under Hellenic influence as a rule that he gives of his best.

Keats’s Inborn, Temperamental “Greekness”:
The inborn, temperamental “Greekness” of Keats’s mind is to be seen in his love of beauty. To him, as to the
Greeks, the expression of beauty is the ideal of all art. And for him, as for them, beauty is not exclusively material nor spiritual, nor intellectual, but is the fullest development of all that goes to make up human perfection.

**His Personification of the Forces of Nature:** Keats is a Greek, too, in his manner of personifying the forces of Nature. His Autumn is a divinity in human shape: she does all kinds of work, and directs every operation of harvest. This is a typical attitude of the Greek. The Pan of Greek myth was more than half human. Whoever wandered into the lonely places of the wood might expect to hear his pipe or even to catch a glimpse of his hairy hands and puck-nosed face; and the Pan of Keats’s ode is half-human, too, as he sits by the riverside or wanders in the evenings in the meadows. Keats has “contrived to talk about the gods much as they might have been supposed to speak”. The world of Greek paganism lives again in his verse, with all its frank sensuousness and joy of life, and with all its mysticism. Keats looks back and lives again in the time

When holy were the haunted forest boughs,  
Holy the air, the water, and the fire.  (Ode to Psyche)

**His Interest in Greek Mythology:** Towards the creations of Greek mythology Keats was attracted by an overmastering delight in their beauty, and a natural sympathy with the phase of imagination that created them. “He possessed the Greek instinct for personifying the powers of Nature in clearly defined imaginary shapes endowed with human beauty and half-human faculties. Especially he shows himself possessed and fancy-bound by the mythology, as well as by the physical enchantment, of the moon. Never was bard in youth so literally moon-struck. Not only had the charm of the myth of the love of the moon-goddess for Endymion interwoven itself in his being with his natural sensibility to the physical and spiritual spell of moonlight; hut deeper and more abstract meanings than its own had gathered about the story in his mind. The divine vision which haunts Endymion in dreams is for Keats symbolical of Beauty itself, and it is the passion of the human soul for beauty which he attempts, more or less consciously, to shadow forth in the quest of the shepherd-prince after his love.”

**His Main Themes Drawn from Greek Myths, Art, and Literature:** Greek myth, and to a smaller extent Greek art and literature, provide either his main themes or numerous allusions. Keats’s boyish enthusiasm had been nourished by his Elizabethan reading, by Leigh Hunt, by the Elgin Marbles, and by Wordsworth. One reason for Keats’s high regard for The Excursion would be the account in the fourth book of the Greek religion of Nature and its imaginative expression in myth. Classical myth had been a very rich element in Renaissance poetry from Spenser to Milton, but had been blighted by Augustan rationalism. It revived with the romantic religion of Nature and the imagination. Wordsworth’s sonnet “The World Is Too Much With Us” shows the attraction of classical myth for Wordsworth. Wordsworth here points out that the Greeks, who saw Proteus rising from the sea and heard old Triton blow his horn, were nearer religion than Christian Englishmen bent upon making money and with no eye or ear for Nature. Keats’s Sleep and Poetry contains echoes of Wordsworth’s sonnet.

**No First Hand Knowledge of Greek Literature:** Keats had no first-hand knowledge of Greek literature. He derived his knowledge of
translations and books of reference like Chapman’s translation of Homer, and Lempriere’s Classical Dictionary. His sonnet on Seeing the Elgin Marbles reveals the important influence exerted on him by Greek sculpture. According to a critic, Hyperion is in poetry what the Elgin Marbles are in sculpture. The calm grandeur of Greek art, its majesty and symmetry and simplicity, its economy of ornament and subordination of parts to the whole, came to Keats through his knowledge of these marbles. This influence is most obvious in the two odes, On Indolence and On a Grecian Urn.

**His Limitations as a “Greek” :** - But Keats has his limitations as a Greek. He does not write of Greek things in a Greek manner. Something indeed in Hyperion—at least in its first two books—he caught from Paradise Lost of the high restraint and calm which was common to the Greeks and Milton. But his palace of Hyperion, with its vague, far-dazzling pomps and phantom-terrors of coming doom, shows how far he is in workmanship from the Greek purity and precision of outline, and firm definition of individual images. Similarly one of the most characteristic images[1] of Nature from this poem shows not the simplicity of the Greek, but the complexity of the modern, sentiment of Nature, with its concourse of metaphors and epithets. Keats produces here every effect which a forest-scene by starlight can have upon the mind: the pre-eminence of the oaks among the other trees, their aspect of human venerableness, their verdure unseen in the darkness, the sense of their stillness and suspended life, etc.

**The Absence of Certain Greek Elements from His Poetry:** - The rooted artistic instincts of the Greeks were absent from Keats’s nature and temperament. He did not have the Greek instinct of selection and simplification, or of a rejection of all beauties except the vital and the essential. He did not have the capacity to deal with his material in such a way that the main masses might stand out unconfused, in just proportions and with outlines perfectly clear. And like his aims and his gifts, he was in his workmanship essentially romantic, Gothic, English. At the time when he wrote Endymion, he believed that poetry should surprise by a fine excess, and the manner in which Keats deals with the Greek story of Endymion, is as far from being a Greek or classical manner as possible.

**Sidney Colvin’s Analysis of Keats’s Hellenism:** - “But though Keats sees the Greek world from afar, he sees it truly. The Greek touch is not his, but in his own rich and decorated English way he writes with a sure insight into the vital meaning of Greek ideas. For the story of the war of Titans and Olympians he had nothing to guide him except the information that he got from classical dictionaries. But as to the essential meaning of that warfare and its result, it could not possibly be understood more truly, or illustrated with more beauty and force, than by Keats in the speech of Oceanus in the Second Book. In the dethronement of an older and ruder worship by one more advanced and humane, in which idea of ethics and of arts held a larger place beside ideas of Nature and her brute powers—this idea has fully been brought out. Again, in conceiving and animating the colossal shapes of early gods, Keats shows a masterly instinct. This is clear from his choice of comparisons, drawn from the vast inarticulate sounds of Nature, by widen he seeks to make us realise their voices.

**Hyperion as an Epic**
Characteristics of an Epic Poem: - An epic is a long narrative poem with a lofty theme treated in a lofty style. An epic generally deals with the mighty deeds of heroes, be they men or gods or both. An epic is always written in the same metre throughout. The subject of an epic poem may be some well-known legend or some momentous sequence of historical events. An epic poem portrays characters on a grand scale. An epic is written in a grand style. An epic has a grand underlying idea. Thus grandeur is the keynote of an epic poem. Some of the best-known epic poems in western literature are the Iliad and the Odyssey by Homer, and the Divine Comedy by Dante. (In Indian literature the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are outstanding examples of epic poetry recognized by the whole world).

The Subject of Keats’s Epic Poem “Hyperion”: - Keats intended his Hyperion to be an epic poem. It was originally meant to be an epic in ten or twelve books. Keats's purpose was to describe the warfare of the earlier Titanic dynasty with the later Olympian dynasty of Greek gods and, in particular, one episode of that warfare, namely the dethronement of the sun-god Hyperion by a younger god called Apollo. The theme of the war between the Titans and the Olympians who overthrew the former often occurs in the literature which Keats was fond of reading. The specific theme, namely the dethronement of Hyperion, the old sun-god, by Apollo, the new god, is Keats’s own. Apollo is also the god of poetry, and so the story of Apollo and Hyperion was perhaps going to symbolize the fate of the poet as a creator. Since the poem is unfinished, we cannot be sure. In any case, it is obvious that Keats’s poem has a lofty theme.

Very Little Action in This Epic Poem: - An epic poem abounds in heroic actions. However, there is a dearth of action in Hyperion. The reason for this dearth is that, when the poem begins, the Titans have already been defeated by the Olympians. In other words, the main action of the story has already taken place. Perhaps, if Keats had continued with the poem, he would have narrated some of the major episodes in the warfare retrospectively. But as the poem stands, there is some talk of heroic action, especially by Enceladus and Hyperion himself, but there is actually little of such action in the poem. (The material for the poem has been drawn from Greek mythology, a knowledge of which was derived by Keats from various sources.)

The Characters in The Poem: Saturn: - As already indicated, an epic poem has an exalted theme treated in an exalted style, but the portrayal of characters is perhaps even more important. The characters must be heroic beings. They may be men or gods, or both. Hyperion deals only with gods. There is, to be sure, one human being: namely Apollo, but he has a divine origin; and, what is more, he is deified in the poem, thus becoming a god (who will challenge the sovereignty of Hyperion). The leading characters in Keats’s poem are Saturn, Thea, Hyperion, Oceanus, Enceladus, Clymene, Mnemosyne, and Apollo. Keats’s portrayal of these characters is certainly very impressive, even though most of the gods including a few from this list are suffering from a deep depression of spirits on account of the defeat which they have suffered at the hands of the Olympians. We meet Saturn in the very opening lines where he is hardly depicted as a heroic figure. Saturn is described as sitting in a valley, silent and motionless, with “his old right hand” lying on the ground “nerveless, listless, dead, and unsceptred”. Subsequently also he produces as impression, more of weakness and helplessness than of heroism. In reply to Thea’s speech, for
defeat of the Titans in language which arouses our sympathy rather than admiration. Later still, we find him experiencing all those emotions which would become a human being more than an immortal god who had been the chief ruler of the universe. The ex-ruler of the universe is described as experiencing such emotions as grief, rage, fear, anxiety, but most of all despair. It seems that Fate has poured a mortal oil upon his head and deprived him of his god-like qualities and attributes. In spite of all this, the figure of Saturn does create an impression of hugeness and vastness. His very lament over the loss of his empire conveys to us some idea of his past glory.

**Character-Portrayal: Thea:** The portrayal of Thea produces a slightly more favourable impression. Her very size and stature give rise to a feeling of awe in our hearts. The tall Amazon, we are told, would have looked like a pigmy by the side of this goddess. Thea would have seized Achilles by the hair and twisted his neck. She could have, with one finger, brought to a stop the ever-revolving Ixion’s wheel. Her face was as large as that of Memphian Sphinx pedestalled in an Egyptian palace. Her face could be called beautiful if the expression of sorrow on it had not seemed to be even more beautiful than the face. She has one hand upon her heart as if she were feeling a cruel pain even though she is an immortal.

**Character-Portrayal: Oceanus:** Of Oceanus we are not given any physical description, but he emerges as one of the most impressive figures in the poem. He is a sage and a philosopher. The defeat of the Titans has not made him despondent. He has been able to reconcile himself to the defeat by his cogitation, contemplation, and musing, so that there is an expression of “severe content” on his face. He tries his utmost to provide comfort to the grief-stricken gods and goddesses by his philosophy. His discourse is one of the grandest passages in the whole poem. It is, indeed, a memorable exhortation, pregnant with wisdom. His heroism lies in this capacity to explain and justify the defeat which the Titans have suffered at the hands of the younger gods. It is his great intellect and his deep wisdom which make a hero of him in our eyes.

**Character-Portrayal: Enceladus:** Enceladus is another striking character in the poem. He was once tame and mild like an ox grazing calmly in a pasture. But at this time he is tiger-passioned, lion-thoughted, and wroth. In his imagination he is hurling mountains at his opponents in the second war which is yet to come. Oceanus’s exhortation produces no effect at all on this fearless giant. He dismisses the counsel offered by Oceanus as of no account at all. He addresses Oceanus as “thou, sham monarch of the waves”, and reminds him of the scalding which Oceanus had received during the war. Enceladus’s view is that the Titans must not lose heart because of their defeat but should get ready to fight again in order “to stifle that puny essence in its tent” (that is, to destroy the power of Jove who, in the eyes of Enceladus, is a puny or insignificant being as compared to the older gods). Enceladus’s defiance reminds us of Satan’s in Paradise Lost.

**Character-Portrayal: Clymene:** Another character who wins our sympathy and even our admiration is Clymene. She is a modest goddess who speaks somewhat shyly and timidly but who strikes us as an admirable being by virtue of her sensitive and artistic temperament. She is fond of singing and playing on musical instruments. When she suddenly hears a new kinds of music, which comes to her from an island in t
feels enchanted and bewitched. Although she tries to run away from that music, she is chased by a voice which keeps shouting the name of Apollo. Evidently, Clymene has felt completely overwhelmed by the sweetness of this new music the like of which had never been heard before.

**Character-Portrayal: Mnemosyne:** Mnemosyne is another unforgettable character. It is she who confers godhood on Apollo. She has appeared to him in a dream, and she had placed by his side a golden lyre from the strings of which he was able to produce unprecedented music. It is by looking at her face that Apollo undergoes a transformation and “dies into life.” In her face he reads a wondrous lesson; there he reads names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions, majesties, sovran voices, creations and destroyings, all at once. She personifies the past, the present, and even the future. She is undoubtedly a grand figure in the poem.

**Character-Portrayal: Hyperion:** However, it is the portrayal of Hyperion which stirs in us feelings of awe, terror, admiration, and sympathy. Keats devotes plenty of space to a portrayal of Hyperion. Hyperion still retains his sovereignty, his rule, and his majesty. Blazing Hyperion sits on his “orbed fire”, inhaling the incense sent up from man to the sun’s god. He paces from hill to hill with “stride colossal”. Entering his palace, he gives a roar which scares away the Hours. On the flares from vault to vault till he reaches the gate of the central dome where he stamps his foot fiercely. And yet, despite all this show of strength, the great sun-god is experiencing fear and apprehension lest he too should be dethroned. However, he takes heart when Father Uranus speaks to him in a whisper from heaven, urging him to rise above his fears and to go down to the earth in order to give whatever comfort and help he can to the defeated Titans. If Keats had continued the poem, he would have surely depicted Hyperion in action against Apollo, waging a mighty though losing battle against the younger god.

**A Grand Idea Behind the Poem: Evolutionary Progress:** There is thus no doubt at all that the characters in this poem have been drawn on a grand scale and are worthy of an epic. We then come to the idea behind the poem. As already pointed out, this idea too is grand. In fact, there are two grand ideas behind the poem. One is to be found in the speech of Oceanus who urges the defeated Titans to accept their defeat with a good grace. He explains to them that evolution is the law of nature, and that no one can govern the universe for all time. He says that just as chaos and darkness had given way to light and life, and just as Heaven and Earth had been conquered by Saturn and his fellow-Titans, so the Titans must now accept their dethronement by the Olympians as an essential and inevitable part of the scheme of things. Saturn was not the first and he cannot be the last of powers. “So on our heels a fresh perfection treads”, he says. Those who have conquered the Titans will themselves be conquered one day by some other gods. We may define the principle underlying the speech of Oceanus as evolutionary progress or as revolutionary development (coup d’état). We can also regard his speech as advocating the ideal of beauty. Perhaps the most important lines in this speech are:

> for ’tis the eternal law
> That first in beauty should be first in might.

From this point of view Hyperion may be regarded as an epic of
The Other Grand Idea: A Knowledge of the Past: - The other grand idea underlying this poem is that a poet can attain the height of his powers only if he comes into close contact with the stern and stark realities of human life. A poet must not live in an ivory tower. Apollo has been experiencing a vague sorrow. His sorrow has been a source of great perplexity to him because he cannot understand what is tormenting him. There are several questions which he puts to Mnemosyne, and he receives an answer simply by looking at her face more closely. From her face he derives enormous knowledge which makes a god of him. What is this knowledge which he obtains? This is knowledge of the entire history of mankind. Apollo’s attaining this knowledge means that he has become fully acquainted with the sorrows, sufferings, agonies, and the tumults of the life of mankind. It is his acquisition of this knowledge which transforms Apollo into a god. In symbolic terms, the transformation of Apollo into a god means that the poet Keats has attained ripeness and maturity. So far Keats had only been theoretically talking about the strife and the agonies of the human heart; but now he has come into a direct contact with those aspects of human life. Like Apollo, Keats now “dies into life”.

Certain Other Features of an Epic in “Hyperion”: - Then there are certain other features of this poem which give it the character of an epic. There is an invocation to the Muse at the beginning of Book III. Invocations are generally a part of the machinery of an epic poem. Then there is a long passage in which the various gods and goddesses are named and briefly described and individualized. This passage reminds us of the catalogue of warships in Homer’s Iliad. The description of the fallen Titans in this poem reminds us of the description of the fallen angels in Milton’s Paradise Lost. The conference of the Titans is akin to the conference of the angels in that poem. Enceladus, like Moloch in Paradise Lost, urges open war; while Oceanus, like Belial in Paradise Lost, stands for more moderate measures. And there are several other points of contact between this poem and Paradise Lost. Besides, Keats’s poem moves within all the three worlds. The fallen Titans are hiding in a cave, that is, in the under-world; Hyperion is described as still ruling his planet of the sun in the sky; while Apollo is described as dwelling on an island in this world.

Epic Similes: - Another important feature of Hyperion is the use of epic similes by Keats. A famous simile is the one found in the passage which describes the tall oak trees dreaming all night without a stir. Thea’s words to Saturn came and went like a gust of wind blowing suddenly through those oak trees which are regarded by the poet as “green-robed senators of mighty robes”. Another epic simile is found in the passage where the noise heard from the immortals when a god proceeds to make a speech is compared to “the roar of bleak-grown pines”.

In Praise of “Hyperion”: - Hyperion has received some glowing tributes from poets and critics. Byron said: “Hyperion seems actually inspired by the Titans and is as sublime as Aeschylus.” Shelley said: “If Hyperion be not grand poetry, none has been produced by our contemporaries.” Cazamian writes: “Hyperion is an epic poem in which Keats, competing with Milton on a footing of equality, set out to relate the celestial revolutions of pagan mythology, as did Milton the Christian cycle of a paradise lost and regained. Scarcely outlined as it is, already arresting by the vastness of conceptions which it promises by its visions of a gigantic and primitive world, this work stands out in wondrous majesty.” Another critic describes it as “one of the grandest po
language and in its grandeur one of the most spontaneous”. According to yet another critic “no English poem of any” length since Milton—complete or fragmentary—begins with a more majestic sureness of phrase than Hyperion.”

**A Fault of Structure:** - All this does not, however, mean that Hyperion is a perfect poem. It suffers from several imperfections and faults. In the first place, there is a fault in the structure. The first two books of the poem certainly form one compact unit. Here the poet sticks to the main line of the story. There is no digression, and no deviation from the chief concern of the poem. Every single line is relevant to the theme. But Book III marks a sudden and unexpected departure from the subject, thus giving a jolt to our minds. Book III has not been integrated with the first two books of the poem as it stands. Of course, if Keats have gone on with the poem and completed it, Book III would too have fallen into its proper place. In that case, Keats would have picked up the thread of the story where he left off at the end of Book II and, after describing some of the main episodes of the war between the Titans and the Olympians retrospectively, he would have depicted the conflict between Hyperion and the newly-deified Apollo, leading to Hyperion's defeat. But as it is, the reader cannot see any connection between the first two books and the third. There is thus a discontinuity.

**Too much of the Miltonic Influence, Another Fault:** - Another fault of the poem is an excess of the Miltonic influence. The Miltonic influence is certainly not altogether a fault because it is responsible for much of the majesty and grandeur of the poem; but too much of the Miltonic influence is certainly a flaw. Keats himself realized this and said that he had abandoned the poem because there were too many Miltonic inversions in it and because he could not write in Milton’s artful humour.

**Lack of Action:** - There is a lack of action in the poem. An epic deals with mighty deeds. But no mighty deeds are performed in Hyperion as the poem stands. The mighty deeds lie either in the past or in the future but none in the present poem. There are certainly some dramatic situations such as Clymene’s experience and Apollo’s deification, but no heroic actions. This too is a weakness in the poem. Besides, the epic strain of the first two books gives way to a lyrical note in the third. This too is a flaw.

**Other Faults, As Pointed Out by a Critic:** - At least one critic raises certain fundamental objections to the poem. According to him, the poem begins with a premature sense of an ending. The poem emerges into a scene of inaction, immobility, and silence. From the very beginning, then, Keats’s epic threatens to collapse under an impossible contradiction. How can a narrative move beyond its origin when that origin is itself both beginning and end. This critic also says that Keats portrays Saturn merely as a great fragment. “Farest on forest” hung above Saturn’s head; Saturn’s old right hand lay nerveless and listless; Saturn’s realmless eyes were closed; and Saturn’s head was bowed. Saturn is thus a thing of fragments: parts of him are magnified, but never, the whole. This critic further says that the state of speechlessness depicted at the beginning of the poem extends to the Titans themselves. The poem produces an impression not of an Aeschylean sublimity of style but the sublime immobility of death. However, it is not possible for us to agree with much of this criticism.

**The Theme of Hyperion**
The Subject of the Epic: the War between the Gods: - Although Hyperion is an incomplete poem and was therefore described as a fragment, yet the idea behind it emerges clearly as we go through it. The subject which Keats chose for his poem was the war between the Titans and the Olympians, and the victory of the latter over the former.

If the poem had been completed, Keats would almost certainly have described retrospectively some of the main episodes in the war which has ended when the poem begins. After describing the course of the war, he would have gone on to pick up the thread of the narrative from the point where Apollo is transformed into a god. Then would have come the crux of the whole saga, namely an encounter between Hyperion and Apollo, and the triumph of the latter. As it stands, the first two books of the epic describe the state of affairs after the war between the two classes of the gods has ended in the defeat of the Titans, with the exception of Hyperion who still retains his sovereignty over his realm of the sun. The Titans are feeling very despondent and are on the verge of total despair, with exception of Enclusus who is still in a defiant mood.

Oceanus, Asked For His Views: - The chief of the Titans, namely Saturn, is feeling even more grief-stricken than the others. Hyperion’s wife Thea comes to him and concurs with him so far as his bleak view of the situation is concerned. Satan laments the loss of the power and authority, which he says, he had always exercised in a benevolent manner so as to keep his subject happy. Thea takes him to the den where the other Titans sit or lie in a despondent state. There Saturn makes a speech to his fellow-gods, expressing his puzzlement over the defeat which they have suffered. At the end of his speech he turns to Oceanus, the “sophist and sage”, and asks him for help and guidance in the present situation. Saturn has perceived an expression of “severe content” on the face of Oceanus; and this makes him think that Oceanus may be able to throw some light on the problem which is baffling Saturn.

The Underlying Idea of the Poem, Stated by Oceanus: - It is the speech which Oceanus makes in reply to Saturn’s question that contains the underlying idea of the whole poem. This underlying idea is that things can never stand still in this universe and that change and development are the law of Nature. According to Oceanus, progressive change must always take place (whether by evolution or by revolution). That is why we may say that the concept of evolutionary progress is the theme of the poem or that Keats is here writing an epic of the revolutionary idea. Oceanus makes some very significant and memorable remarks, his object being not to incite the gods against the victorious ones but to make it possible for them to reconcile themselves to their defeat.

Saturn, Not the Beginning nor the End: - Oceanus tells the gods that the proper course for them to follow now is to be contented with their lot and to accept it even if means a loss of dignity. He says that he would be able to provide much comfort to them by his arguments provided they are willing to draw comfort from the facts as they are. He says that the Titans have fallen from their high positions as a result of the operation of the law of Nature and not because of the destructive thunderbolts of Jove. He tells Saturn in particular that, having been the supreme ruler of the universe and having held a position far above the others, he had missed the small point which minds of a lower order would fully perceive. According to Oceanus, Saturn has missed t
wisdom and truth. Oceanus says that Saturn should realize that just as he was not the first ruler of the universe so he cannot be the last ruler. Saturn could not have remained the ruler of the universe forever. “Thou art not the beginning nor the end,” Oceanus tells him. Originally chaos and darkness had prevailed in the universe. From the chaos and darkness had come light, and with light had come life. It was at this point that the first gods, Heaven and Earth, came into being. Then Saturn was born, the first issue of the union of Heaven and Earth. Then all the rest of the race of Titans and the race of Giants followed, so that they all found themselves to be the rulers of the various beautiful kingdoms. Oceanus points out to his fellow-gods that they should not be depressed by the loss of their kingdoms, because the real height of supremacy lies in the ability to look facts in the face in a spirit of complete calmless:

And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty.

First in Beauty Should Be First in Might: - Oceanus, countinuing his discourse, says that the Titans who were born of the union of Heaven and Earth had surpassed their parents in beauty, in compactness, in symmetry, in will-power, in the freedom of action, in the spirit of comradeship, and in a thousand other ways. And just as they had surpassed their parents, so the next generation of gods, led by Jove, had surpassed the Titans:

So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
A power more strong in beauty, born of us
And fated to excel us,.........

Oceanus says that the Titans had to be succeeded by a power more beautiful and more strong than the Titans, even though that power had been begotten by the Titans themselves. The law governing the universe according to Oceanus is that “first in beauty should be first in might.” According to this law, the Olympians (Jove and his comrades) would in course of time be dethroned by another race which would be more beautiful and therefore more strong. Oceanus then cites his own ease, saying that the new god of the sea possesses greater glory than Oceanus and has such a glow of beauty in his eyes that Oceanus had voluntarily surrendered his empire to him and departed thence to come to this den to meet his fellow-Titans. Oceanus ends his exhortation by saying to his fellow-Titans: “Receive the truth and let it be your balm.”

Keats’s Message in the Fragmentary Epic, Expressed Fully: - Now, this is the truth which Keats wants also us to recognize and accept. Change, flux, ferment, development, evolution, revolution—these are inevitable. Change may come steadily or change may come in the form of the French Revolution or the Russian Evolution; but change must come. Change may take place peacefully or change may come through conflict and war; but come it must. Mankind should remain prepared for change: slow and steady, or violent and swift. And change in this universe has always been progressive. Saturn claims that his rule was a benevolent one. Speaking to Thea, he deplores the fact that he would no longer be able to exercise his benign influence on the planets, on the winds and seas, and on the life of mankind. He deplores the fact that he would no longer able to perform those acts by means of which
used to give an outlet to his love for mankind as well as for the forces of Nature. He deplores the fact that he has lost his "strong identity" and his "real self". He says that he would try to re-establish himself as the chief ruler of the universe. But, in the light of Oceanus’s discourse which comes later in the poem, we feel sure that Saturn’s reasoning is fallacious. His rule must have been benign, as he says. But what makes him think that his successor would not prove even more benign or that his successor would not do greater good to the universe than Saturn himself done? The continuity of Saturn’s rule would have meant stagnation. There is no end to the good that can be done to mankind, and there is no end to the evolutionary process so far as the universe as a whole is concerned. This is the valuable lesson which we are expected to draw from Keats’s poem as it stands. The narrative about the war between the defeated gods and the victorious ones, and especially the encounter between Hyperion and Apollo, is certainly not complete; but Keats’s message is complete, though the poem is a fragment.

Oceanus’s View Reinforced by Clymene’s Experience: - The lesson urged by Oceanus is reinforced by Clymene’s account of her strange experience. She had suddenly heard a new kind of music which had enchanted her. The new “blissful golden melody” which she had suddenly heard had made her “sick with joy and grief at once”. She had felt joyous because of the repturous notes of music which she had heard, but she had felt sad at the thought that her own music had been superseded by this new music. She had fled from the spot but had been chased by a sweet voice which kept uttering the name of Apollo. Clymene’s experience implies that a new musician has appeared on the scene and will now dethrone the existing deity governing the realm of music. This again is a case of evolutionary or revolutionary change. Clymene herself is reconciled to this change, but gods like Enceladus are not.

Enceladus’s Militancy, Unjustified: - Enceladus refers to Oceanus as “over-wise” and to Clymene as “over-foolish”. Enceladus is still in a defiant mood, and in his imagination is hurling mountains upon his enemies. Enceladus speaks scornfully about Oceanus, calling him “thou sham monarch of the waves.” Enceladus is burning with the fire of revenge. He is not only sorry because the Titans have lost their realms but he is even more sorry at the loss of those days of peace and “slumberous calm” which the Titans used to enjoy during Saturn’s reign. Enceladus argues that Hyperion is still undefeated, and that there is still a hope for the Titans to win a victory over the Olympians-and to re-establish themselves as the rulers of the universe. The point here is that Enceladus’s whole approach is wrong because Enceladus has not been able to grasp the truth contained in the speech of Oceanus. Enceladus is an uncompromising militant. He would learn his lesson only when Hyperion too is overthrown.

An Epic of Beauty’s Triumph: The Meaning of Beauty: - One other point that deserves attention in connection with the theme of this poem is that beauty is Oceanus’s criterion of superiority. The eternal law, according to Oceanus, is that “first in beauty should be first in might.” now, we can understand the idea of evolutionary progress and we can understand also the revolutionary idea; but it is somewhat difficult to understand the concept of the progressive change brought about by superior beauty. Science teaches us the theory of evolution. This biological theory needs no explanation. We can also understand evolutionary development or revolutionary changes in the political, social, and cultural life of mankind. History provides countless exampl
changes. In fact, changes of this kind are taking place before our very eyes. But what does Oceanus or Keats mean by saying that first in beauty should be first in might? Well, this poem is not a scientific discourse. Keats wants us to look at the evolutionary development or progress with the eyes of a poet and not with the eyes of a scientist. For Keats, beauty was the supreme consideration. Beauty was the supreme power in his eyes. Beauty was a magnificent obsession with him. "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever", he had written. Later he was to write:

**Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty,—that is all**

**Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.**

Of course, beauty does not merely mean physical attractiveness. For the mature Keats, beauty came to be identified with truth. Beauty has thus intellectual and philosophical connotations in Keats’s eyes, Truth implies all the facts of life in the aggregate, all the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of all mankind. It is only a man with a vast vision who can accept the entire range of the life of the universe, including the life of mankind, and who can be said to have a capacity to appreciate beauty. Interpreted thus, Oceanus’s criterion of beauty does not conflict basically with the scientific view of evolution. Thus considered, Keats’s poem becomes an epic of beauty’s triumph. Keats’s approach to the whole issue is aesthetic, as is con-finned by the experience of Clymene who represents the artistic temperament.

**The Relevance of Apollo’s Deification in Book III:** - A discussion of the theme’ of the Hyperion cannot end here. There is something more to it. While the first two books form a compact unit, Book III marks an abrupt transition which mars the structure of the poem. Book III contains an account of the experience by which Apollo was transformed into a god. Now, if Keats had been able to complete the poem, this particular episode would have fallen into place. After describing the process of Apollo’s deification, Keats would have gone on to describe a second war between the Titans (with Hyperion and Enceladus at their head) and the Olympians (with Jove as their leader). The central episode in this second conflict would have been an encounter between Hyperion and Apollo in which Apollo would have won, not by the force of arms but by the sheer power of his enchanting music. Perhaps, Hyperion, overwhelmed by that music, would have surrendered as readily to his opponent as Oceanus had previously surrendered to Neptune. But the poem breaks off at the point where Apollo has been transfigured and deified.

**A Second Theme of the Poem: The Symbolism of Apollo’s Deification:** - The process by which Apollo becomes a god is itself significant because here we have, in additions to its obvious meaning, a symbolic description by Keats of Keats’s own emergence as a mature poet. In symbolic terms, Apollo is Keats himself. Apollo has been feeling afflicted by a vague grief and has often wept because of this grief. When he comes into contact with Mnemosyne, he experiences a strange exhilaration and asks her several questions regarding the nature of this universe and the divinity who controls the powers of Nature. He speaks to her of his “aching ignorance”. Mnemosyne makes no reply. Apollo thereupon suddenly discovers a wonderful meaning in the expression of her silent face. Her face proves to be a source of infinite knowledge to him and he says that this new knowledge which he has derived from her face mak
become a god. He reads in her face names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions, majesties, sovran voices, agonies, creations and destroyings. Thereupon he is shaken by convulsions and tortured by an indescribable agony. He experiences the agony of a dying man but in the very moment of his death he is reborn. He dies into life, and he is reborn as a celestial being. Apollo has become a god. In symbolic terms, Keats the poet has attained maturity and the ripeness of his poetic powers. Keats has acquired “the lore of good and ill” and, leaving the world of Flora and old Pan far behind, he has passed to the nobler world of human suffering and human strife. Now he will write truer and higher poetry than before (and the great odes were a specimen of that poetry). It is to be noted that Mnemosyne’s face contains all life, past, present, and even to come. She is the eternal existence of the universe, as it were. She belongs to the old order, and also to the new, for she is immanent and ever-lasting. She is a mirror of all the essential facts of life—“agonies, creations and destroyings.” And of her Keats had dreamed. She was “the vast idea” that had come to him that night as he slept on Leighs Hunt’s sofa. She had become the “might abstract idea of beauty in all things”; and Keats had struggled through “purgatory blind” for a vision of her, face to face. Now he had achieved what he sought, and “knowledge enormous mode a god of him” through the pain of a death and a second birth. Keats has become a true poet through a comprehension of history and change human suffering.

A Complete Poem in One Sense: - Thus Hyperion is a complete poem so far as its basic themes are concerned. What is not complete is the story of the conflict between Hyperion and Apollo.