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**W. WORDSWORTH, G. G. BYRON, J. KEATS**

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**LANDSCAPE AND NATURE IN THE POETRY OF  
ENGLISH ROMANTICS**

**W. WORDSWORTH, G. G. BYRON, J. KEATS**

**UNDERGRADUATE THESIS**

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Supervisor: Doc. Justin Quinn, Ph.D.

**Plzeň 2018**

Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

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## ABSTRACT

Vaňourková, Markéta. University of West Bohemia. May, 2018. Landscape and nature in the poetry of English romantics: W. Wordsworth, G. G. Byron, J. Keats.  
Supervisor: Doc. Justin John Quinn, Ph.D.

The purpose of this undergraduate thesis is to reveal the principles of romantic poetry concerned with landscape and nature in the poetry of the chosen authors. It is focused on poetry comparison of 3 English Romantic poets: W. Wordsworth, G. G. Byron and J. Keats. The thesis analyses the authors' poetry with regard to landscape and nature in order to find differences and similarities in their metaphors and ideas.

The thesis introduces the three chosen authors, their poetry, and the differences between their works with examples of their life experiences and their reasons for using nature in their poetry. The thesis concludes with knowledge and findings in the last section. The analysis is supported by the opinions of several literary critics and a bibliography.

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# Glossary

**CHP:** Childe Harold's Pilgrimage

**The Prelude:** The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind

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

**I stood Tip-Toe:** I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill

# Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the attitudes of Romantic poets towards nature. This exploration will focus on three chosen poets – William Wordsworth, George Gordon Byron and John Keats. The thesis hopes to show the main differences between their works and their perceptions of nature. Although English Romanticism ended in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the topic of nature is still current. Nowadays, humankind has to think even more about ecology and the way people affect the landscapes around them. The Romantic poets were the heroes of their time and most of them believed that they had the power to make changes with their poetry. The thesis will attempt to offer useful quotations from primary and secondary literature in order to help the reader understand the poets' attitudes towards Nature.

The idea of Romanticism in Britain was born in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was a time when the whole of Europe was living through the beginning of urbanization and industrialization. Many authors agree that the period of Romanticism began in 1798 with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and that it came to an end with the death of Sir Walter Scott in 1832. Romantic poetry is mostly known for what is usually called “a return to nature”. Authors of the Romantic movement believed that the Industrial Revolution was a threat, and they were afraid that society did not stress individuality in people enough. Romanticism followed the ideas of the philosopher J. J. Rousseau, who believed that humanity is born free and that the world and society is a bad influence on us and that it chains us. Thanks to this, people found it more appealing to return to nature and enjoy the landscape and the countryside. Natural topics were common in literature, and these topics increased tourism in Europe. Walking tours were very popular at the time and almost every Romantic poet had to experience at least one. Nature was a source of relaxation and imagination, an escape from city life, and, as will be shown in further chapters, even more.

The first chapter will describe the work of the first well known poet, William Wordsworth. He was the oldest of the three authors and had a major impact on the Romantic movement. We will show how the Lake District, where Wordsworth grew up, shaped his personality, and how important Nature is for our development. The chapter focuses on two of his most famous - *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey: On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798*, and selected parts of *The Prelude*.

The second chapter introduces the work of Lord Byron. Byron, in comparison to Wordsworth or Keats, was a rebellious personality and he is known as one of the first celebrities in the world of poetry. The thesis will explain his attitude towards nature in two of his poems –*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and his dramatic poem *Manfred*. Both of these poems are great examples of Byron's passionate writing and his view on the sublime landscape.

The third chapter will focus on the work of John Keats, the youngest of the three authors. The fact that he was surrounded by the deaths of his family members and his own illness influenced his poetic work. The chapter will try to introduce his idea of nature as an escape from the challenges of life and as a source of inspiration. These ideas will be shown in 3 of his poems - *I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill*, *Ode to a Nightingale*, and *To Autumn*.



# William Wordsworth

The first author the thesis will discuss is William Wordsworth. Wordsworth's poems will function as a starting point for our further discussions of Byron and Keats. Those two poets were familiar with Wordsworth's poems, and although Byron was ironic and sarcastic about Wordsworth's work, in some passages of Byron's poems it is possible to feel the inspiration of the older writer. The previous chapter mentioned that Romanticism is believed to have started with the first publishing of *Lyrical Ballads*. William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were friends who shared the same or very similar beliefs, not only about Nature, but also about poetry and the language it should be written in. This collection of poems, published in 1798, is now considered a great work by two inspiring authors. Yet, in the eighteenth century critics were very sceptical and did not appreciate the poems. That was why Wordsworth decided to write the *Preface* for the second edition in 1800. Coleridge and Wordsworth felt that the *Preface* was necessary, since it explained the main ideas and explained why the poems were written in certain language and why their poetry focused on daily and simple life events. Critics and readers were used to reading poetry written in high, classy and "posh" language (for example, Milton's *Paradise Lost*). When *Lyrical Ballads* was published, the public felt it was not sophisticated enough. In the *Preface* Wordsworth explained that:

"It was published, as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain, how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart. (...) Low and rustic life was generally chosen because in that situation the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language. (Wordsworth et al., 2005, p. 233 - 236)

Coleridge and Wordsworth believed that Nature was worth writing about, especially with the loud Industrial Revolution in the cities. Wordsworth wanted to show Nature as

beautiful, but also as powerful and emotionally important for shaping our personalities. He believed that the world is united by a great natural force or God. Jonathan Roberts (2015) explained that “Wordsworth’s religion – the felt continuity between personal identity, the natural world, and fellow human beings – is not a cultural relic. It is a valuable vantage point on a modern world picture of overpopulation and environmental apocalypse in which human and “natural” sympathies are pushed apart, and reason appears as the sole beacon of hope....” He also reminds us of the title of *Book VIII* in *The Prelude: Retrospect – Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind*. (Roberts, 2015, p. 265-266) As we can see, Nature and the love of Nature is beneficial not only for us as individuals but also for humankind.

William Wordsworth lost both of his parents when he was a young boy, growing up in the Lake District in England. He had a great relationship with his sister, who left the Lake District, and when she returned she and William were side by side until his death. His childhood in the Lake District and future walking tours around England, Wales, and the Alps developed a great feeling towards Nature, which he expressed in many of his poems and letters.

## **The Guide, the Guardian of My Heart, and Soul**

The analysis of Wordsworth’s feelings towards nature begins with his autobiographical poem *The Prelude*. The poem functioned as an introduction of the author to his readers, who were about to find out how important Nature was to him and Coleridge. As well as what made him understand Nature. He appreciated Nature and the countryside while living in a city because he was able to understand how Nature enriched him. In the city he felt that something was missing in his life. His memories of nature always helped him enjoy his life more even when he was faced with some challenges and difficulties.

*The Prelude: or, Growth of a Poet’s Mind* consists of 13 books which follow Wordsworth’s life and describe some of the most important events in his understanding

of Nature. The first two books focus on his childhood and his life in the Lake District. Then the author remembers his school years and university, but also the French Revolution, walking tours to the Alps, and his daughter in France. As M. H. Abrams pointed out, the *Prelude* is not only a story about Wordsworth's life:

“...throughout *The Prelude* there is a double story being told – a story of Wordsworth's life in the world and a correlative story of his life in nature. And on this second narrative level Wordsworth incorporates the problem of suffering within his overarching myth of the interaction between mind and nature, in which fostering nature conducts the mind through successive stages of growth, while speaking nature defines and communicated to the mind that degree of self-knowledge which its stage of cumulative experience has prepared it to receive.” (Abrams, 1973, p. 96)

Wordsworth saw Nature not only as landscape, mountains, and his childhood memories. The opening lines of *The Prelude* show us Wordsworth's childhood memories, which were important for his later life.

*Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze  
That blows from the green fields and from the clouds  
And from the sky; it beats against my cheek,  
And seems half conscious of the joy it gives.  
O welcome messenger! O welcome friend!*  
(*The Prelude, Book I, lines 1 – 6*)

He compares his life in nature in the District with living in the city. The city is like a prison for him. The cold dark walls of the city imprisoned him and forbade his freedom. Luckily, he then finds his freedom in nature. Because he leaves the city, he can now live where he wants, he is free to walk around and enjoy the Nature. He can choose whether he wants to walk on a “pathway, or through open field” (line 28).

Nature will not let him get lost, it will always guide him and show him the way. Although he usually describes the city as a prison, we can point out his poem *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802*. As John Mullan shows us, Wordsworth was able to describe the beauty of London too. He was able to describe the city as beautifully as he was Nature, because it was a moment when he was travelling to see his daughter in France for the first time. This might show us how sensitive he was and how his feelings influenced his point of view. We can see a similar effect in his poem *Tintern Abbey*. He describes the majestic, beautiful scenery of London. He shows London as quiet and peaceful, although in reality “the streets would usually be full not just of people, but also of horses and wagons, and would echo with the cries of every kind of vendor.” London here seems almost to be sleeping, because he experienced it during the early morning. (The British Library, 2018)

As a child, Wordsworth played in the countryside and although he was often alone, he felt that his presence was “a trouble to the peace” (line 316) and that it disturbed the peaceful atmosphere of the Lake District. Yet, Nature was not only joyful. Wordsworth claims that Nature educated and raised him. Nature lead him to steal an old shepherd’s boat with the intention of educating Wordsworth. He then thought about what he saw on the lake on which he was floating in the stolen boat: for instance “the huge Cliff/Rose up between me and the stars...” (lines 409 – 410). Although he realized that Nature made him steal the boat, he did not regret anything. He believed that it challenged his personality so that he could become the person he was. As a young boy he felt many emotions towards Nature, yet he did not see any deeper meaning. Only after experiencing Nature further, after coming back from the city to live in nature again, and only after letting Nature show how much it could help him in his life, only then was he able to understand that there was something more. He calls Nature “Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!” (line 428):

*Thou soul that art the Eternity of Thought!  
That giv'st to forms and images a breath  
And everlasting motion! not in vain,  
By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn  
Of Childhood didst Thou intertwine for me  
The passions that build up our human Soul  
(The Prelude, Book I, lines 429 – 434)*

Nature, or the power he felt from it, builds up our souls. Wordsworth remembers all the seasons when he experienced Nature and how he felt during those seasons. It seems that he was outside all the time. He did not spend much time inside. At some points he was afraid of the landscape because it looked like it was moving or trying to hurt him. M. H. Abrams in his book *English Romantic Poets: Modern essays in criticism* claims that in the first two books of *The Prelude* the poet introduces

...the education – mainly by natural influences – of a young boy...consciousness of self is still merged with nature-consciousness, though there are intimations of real separateness, of genuine selfhood. (Abrams, 1975, p. 126)

In Book II we can see Wordsworth living his life, having fun with friends, and still enjoying nature every minute he could. He listened to the beautiful songs the birds were singing and wanted to stay in nature just so he could listen to it over and over. He describes the beautiful scenery of the landscape at sunset, and also when the moon appeared. Wordsworth personalised the moon as a female: “standing to look upon her while she hung” (line 198). On the other hand, line 185 describes the Sun as a male: “To love the sun, a Boy I loved the sun/Not as I since have loved him, as a pledge/And surety of our earthly life” (line 185) In the following lines, Wordsworth shows us how much he enjoyed growing up in the Lake District:

*Standing to look upon her while she hung  
Midway between the hills, as if she knew  
No other region but belonged to thee,  
Yea, appertained by a peculiar right  
To thee and thy grey huts, my darling Vale!*  
*(The Prelude, Book II, lines 198 - 202)*

Book VI describes his walking tour of the Alps with his friend. He shows us how majestic nature is and describes how the landscape changes throughout the tour. He also expresses how they felt when they first saw Mont Blanc:

*..The day we first  
Beheld the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved  
To have a soulless image on the eye  
Which had usurped upon a living thought  
That never more could be: the wondrous Vale  
Of Chamouny did, on the following dawn,  
With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice,  
A motionless array of mighty waves  
(The Prelude, Book VI, lines 452 – 459)*

He knew that Nature was showing him its magnificence so that he could understand the world.

## Tintern Abbey

As mentioned above, William Wordsworth was a man who celebrated Nature. Although he loved nature, and he enjoyed walking tours and listening to the sounds of the countryside, he saw something deeper in nature. It was not just the landscape which was pleasant to watch, it was not just the birds signing their songs. Nature for Wordsworth had a deeper meaning. This chapter will now focus on the poem *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey: On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798*. Not only does the poem show Wordsworth's feelings towards nature, memories, childhood, and how much he appreciated his relationship with Dorothy, it also helps us understand why the poet felt that we need Nature in our lives and why he believed that it shapes our mentalities and personalities.

The poem starts with Wordsworth returning to Tintern Abbey, which used to be a Cistercian abbey but was in ruins. He had been there 5 years previously and returned with his sister Dorothy to enjoy the view once more. The first line shows that it was a long time for Wordsworth to not visit this beautiful scenery.

*Five years have passed; five summers, with the length*

*Of five long winter! And again I hear*

*These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs*

*With a soft inland murmur. Once again*

*Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs*

*(Tintern Abbey, lines 1-4)*

The poem sets the scene for us. We can easily picture the landscape around Tintern Abbey. Throughout the poem the speaker is excited and thrilled that he can once again enjoy the loveliness of the place. There are houses and buildings made by villagers, although he does not show any people walking or children running. It is a calming scene with him and his sister. He also thinks about the woods around the Abbey where people might be; dwellers or hermits who might live in caves in the forest. But he cannot see

anyone. The poem then turns from landscape description to the speaker's memories. Since being in this place 5 years before, he had carried the scenery in his memory. These pictures he saved for himself in his mind were very important; every time he felt unhappy in the city he remembered those beautiful trees, the sky and the woods.

*But oft, in lonely rooms, and mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart  
(Tintern Abbey, lines 26-29)*

Thanks to these memories, he was able to be happy in the city. Memories of nature helped him to see “into the life of things” (line 48) and he felt joy. He is talking to the river Wye, which surrounds the Abbey, and is so close to it that we can see its reflection. Whenever the poet felt down and unhappy from the dark, noisy cities over those 5 years, he remembered the river. Thanks to this, he was able to transport himself back into the scenery again.

*How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,  
O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer through the woods,  
How often has my spirit turned to thee!  
(Tintern Abbey, lines 56-58)*

Now his memories from 5 years ago are coming back to him. He remembers how he felt when he first saw the Abbey and its surroundings. Although he enjoys the feelings of memories and he is glad to remember the beauty of nature, he realizes that being in this place is like painting a memory picture and saving it in his mind. He went to see the Abbey so that he could create other memories for the future. Now, when he felt down again or suffered in life and was not able to come back to the Abbey, he would be able to see the



scenery in his memories again, just as he had been during the previous 5 years. Those memories will again, as they did before, put him in a good mood.

*That in this moment there is life and food  
For future years. And so I dare to hope,  
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first  
I came among these hills; when like a roe  
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams  
(Tintern Abbey, lines 65 - 70)*

As can be seen above, Wordsworth realizes that he is not the same man he used to be, and that he will also change when he goes further in his life. When he first visited the Tintern Abbey, he was like a child, jumping over the land and enjoying the beauties of nature. However, he did not understand the deeper meaning behind it. He was using nature as an escape from the city, but did not realize how important nature is or how what beautiful and important memories he would have.

*... I cannot paint  
What then I was. The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm  
(Tintern Abbey, lines 77 - 83)*

He was a different person at that time. The landscape only evoked simple passions in him. "That time is past" (line 83) and he has transformed into a different personality. He understands Nature, he knows what to look for in nature and how to observe nature. It was a long journey, but he understands it thanks to the contrast between the city and the countryside. Civilization and Nature are different and he often listened to "the still, sad music of humanity," which cannot free his emotions, only Nature can. Wordsworth saw the city as an obnoxious place of bad behaviour. In his poem *Michael* the old shepherd is forced to let his son go to live in the city, however he does not want him to become a bad man in the city. The shepherd, who grew up in the countryside, knows that the city is not pure and has many challenges for a young man. Unfortunately, as the poem continues, the son is affected by the city:

*He in the dissolute city gave himself  
To evil courses: ignominy and shame  
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last  
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.  
(Michael, lines 447 - 449)*

Nature is the guide for life; the one element in life to follow; it shapes us and helps us become the person we should be. Those powers of nature are also described in the poem *Michael* when the shepherd's personality and knowledge is shaped by the hills, the landscape and the forests around him. Nature is something more and it is beyond our understanding. It is something which unites people and nature. Something we as humans can never build or create. We have to appreciate it and understand its power. The force in nature which unites us might be God, or a power above all of us.

*...Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold*

*From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye and ear, both what they half-create,  
And perceive; well pleased to recognize  
In nature and the language of the sense,  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.*

*(Tintern Abbey, lines 103 - 112)*

Nature here is seen as someone who Wordsworth needed to follow, it was his guardian and nurse. It helped him understand the world, it shaped him. It was like a teacher who leads its children to gain knowledge about nature and to become spiritually developed. It anchors Wordsworth's mind, his heart, and his life. It is a teacher who never betrays him but, at the same time, it challenges him throughout his life, by which he learns – as was described in the Stolen Boat episode. Nature heals our souls from the bad influences of the city. We can always trust it and rely on it. It makes us better people and Wordsworth loved it for that.

Nature is always here to support us no matter what. After five years, the landscape is the same, it welcomes Wordsworth and his sister, who was definitely emotional support for him, and it shows its qualities and beauty. The speaker proclaims:

*...and this prayer I make,  
Knowing that Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
From joy to joy: for she can so inform  
The mind that is with us, so impress*

*With quietness and beauty,...*

*(Tintern Abbey, lines 121 - 128)*

Wordsworth believed that the memories he was developing and creating while standing there in the beautiful scenery of Tintern Abbey would help him overcome the terrors of life. With his memories of nature nothing would let him down, not even “evil tongues” (line 182) or “rash judgments” (line 183). No matter how much people tried to destroy him, he would always have those moments in his mind to help him in those situations. Although he does not know where he will be in the future, he will always have those picturesque moments in his heart. Thanks to that he understands and wants all of us to enjoy and understand these feelings too; that nature is a gift to be appreciated. When we, or his sister, accept the images of the landscape, we will have them in our memories forever.

*When these wild ecstasies shall be matured*

*Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind*

*Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,*

*Thy memory be as a dwelling place*

*For all sweet sounds and harmonies...*

*(Tintern Abbey, lines 139 - 143)*

Wordsworth explains how important those feelings and images are, as they can help us in difficult times. When we only have to remember those images of the scenery:

*If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief*

*Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts*

*Of tender joy portion, with what healing thoughts*

*Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,*

*And these my exhortations!...*

*(Tintern Abbey, lines 143 - 147)*

Wordsworth loved Nature and called himself “a worshiper of Nature” (line 152) who would carry those memories. And he talks to his sister, who helps him appreciate the moments and helps the experience to feel deeper. As the authors of *Romantismus a romantismy* Hrbata and Procházka claim, Wordsworth believed that there was a higher power above the world. It is a “cosmic energy and spiritual principle which shapes the personality of humans but, at the same time, is shaped by human experience, primarily by sensual perception.” Something we can experience and feel with our senses, and at the same time, it is a feeling of emotions.<sup>1</sup> (Hrbata and Procházka, 2005, p.39)

*A motion and a spirit, that impels*

*All thinking things, all objects of all thought,*

*And rolls through all things...*

*(Tintern Abbey, lines 101 – 103)*

No wonder this poem is one of Wordsworth’s strongest. He describes the whole scenery amazingly, which makes us feel like we are standing there with him enjoying the view. He also wrote the poem in the language of rural men, which means that it is very easy to read and to follow and we can enjoy the poem even more.

To sum up, we can confidently say that Wordsworth loved nature not only as a child but also as an adult. Nature inspired him, “nursed” him and, at the same time, it educated him. He felt safe in nature and understood that it challenged him throughout his life to develop his heart and mind. He also realized that loving nature helped him love humankind. He felt something more above the humankind, he believed that Nature was

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<sup>1</sup> Translation mine, original Czech text: “...pro Wordsworthe a Coleridge zůstává příroda ještě kosmickou energií i duchovním principem, který vytváří lidskou bytost, ale současně je utvářena lidskou zkušeností, zejména smyslovým vnímáním. “

a force which is in everything and unites us with Nature. Wordsworth's nature does not only shape our mindset and educate us, it is also shaped by us and our perceptions.

# George Gordon Byron

Our main focus is now going to be on one of the most interesting, extravagant, controversial and loud figures of the British Romantic Movement. Byron did not seem to fit the description of a romantic poet. He was sceptical, critical, and a different individual from the other romantic poets. Nick Groom, in his essay *Romantic poetry and antiquity*, describes Byron as a man of action, the one who did not understand how people could enjoy looking at monuments and paintings in museums when they could travel around to world to see the same places with their own eyes, not through a painting (Groom, 2012, p. 49). He wanted to experience nature personally, he wanted to live his life fully. First-handed experiences were important for Byron and were the main source of inspiration for his poems and for his life. He believed that poetry was like “lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents and earthquake,” (Graham, 2004, p. 27). He followed this idea, sharing and expressing it throughout his life; not only in his poems but also in real life. Some critics, for example the authors of *Byron, Poetics and History*, believe that Byron needed the attention he was receiving; he loved to write poetry, but, at the same time, poetry with no readers did not really make sense to him. When there was no one to read his verses the passion would wane (Stabler, 2002). That is to say, that Byron and the aforementioned Wordsworth were not that different in their writings. In some of Byron’s passages we can feel the inspiration of the older poet. Byron’s writings were passionate, and he was not afraid to be vulgar and critical of other contemporary poets of his time. He once said that Ketas was a “shabby Cockney brat.” (Abrams and Greenblatt, 2006, p. 607)

Romanticism will forever be connected with the term “Byronic hero”. Byron puts himself at the centre of his poems, albeit in the bodies of his heroes. These are strong personalities, unwilling to succumb to anyone, and the ones who appreciate Nature. They find forgetfulness and the sublime in Nature. Most of his heroes are quite similar to him and, according to Jerome McGann in his essay *Byron’s lyric poetry*, this is typical of Brechtian theatre, and he shows that his poems are more like self-criticism. Byron’s poems and works are critical, self-expressive, and sincere (McGann, 2004). Wordsworth or Keats

did not usually write about true events and when they did Byron felt that they embellished them (McGann, 2004). Byron trusted in what he saw in front of him, he trusted his vision and his imaginative hold on experience. He wanted to be sincere in his poetry. Byron mainly found his inspiration for natural topics during his walking tours. He was a traveller just like Wordsworth. He was known as a risk-taker, which is not surprising considering the fact that he fought for Greek freedom and died because of it.

## Nature and the Sublime

### Childe Harold's Pilgrimage

As was previously mentioned, Byron wrote about his experiences. He wrote the first two cantos of his most successful poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* while travelling with his friend to Spain, Malta, Albania, Greece, and Asia Minor. Byron wrote about what he saw and expressed his feelings of what he experienced.

The poem consists of four cantos in which Byron describes the sublime landscape around the hero Harold, but also talks about the histories of European states. The first Canto sees Harold leaving England because he has nothing that makes him happy. He goes on a journey, a pilgrimage to many European countries. He is not upset about leaving England. He enjoys his stay on a boat and sings a song. First, he travels to Portugal and Spain. Here, and in other Cantos too, Harold describes countries which are oppressed by other countries.

Canto II shows us Harold's journey to Greece where Byron, towards the end of his life, fought for Greek freedom. Harold laments on Greece, which was tyrannized by the "Turkish hand" (*CHP, Canto II, stanza 74*). Byron then talks about the boat and its crew. Then he shows the reader that everything is ephemeral and that nothing lasts forever.

*What valley echoed the response of Jove?*

*What trace remaineth of the Thunderer's shrine?*

*All, all forgotten-and shall man repine*



*That his frail bonds to fleeting life are broke?  
Cease, fool! The fate of gods may well be thine:  
Wouldst thou survive the marble or the oak,  
When nations, tongues, and worlds must sink beneath the stroke?*  
(CHP, Canto II, stanza 53)

In another of Byron's poems, *Manfred*, we can see a similar idea. People cannot think about living forever. Life progresses towards death and we have to realize that, otherwise we are just "fool(s)" (line 57).

The third Canto is the richest for the topic of Nature. Harold goes to see the Waterloo battlefield and is disappointed with humankind. He is angry that the landscape and the nation have been affected by war and despotism. Then he celebrates the beauty of Nature. We might assume that Byron tried to impute Wordsworthian ideas in this Canto, as we can see in the 72<sup>nd</sup> stanza where Byron writes:

*I live not in myself, but I become  
Portion of that around me; and to me,  
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum  
Of human cities torture: I can see  
Nothing to Loathe in Nature, save to be  
A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,  
Classed among creatures, when the soul can flee,  
And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain  
Of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain.*  
(CHP, Canto III, stanza 72)

Wordsworth did not like Byron's writing. Caroline Franklin points out that Wordsworth also accused Byron of plagiarism. Undeniably, Byron read Wordsworth's poetry and was influenced by it. We can feel the inspiration in some passages of Byron's poetry, mostly in those parts when nature is beautiful and calm. Wordsworth shared his suspicion with Thomas Moore; he felt that some passages of Byron's passages might be too similar to Wordsworth and that Byron was probably not inspired by Nature herself, but by Wordsworth. The accused author himself claimed that some parts of *Lyrical Ballads* were so beautifully expressed that they were "worth imitating." (Franklin, 2207, p. 86) Wordsworth's poetry contained the idea of becoming one with Nature and being lost in her in a good way. Byron, in the above quotation, presents a similar idea in his poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

On the other hand, Byron was not afraid of making fun of both Lake poets in his poem *Don Juan*.

*Young Juan wandered by the glassy brooks,  
Thinking unutterable things, he threw  
Himself at length within the leafy nooks  
Where the wild branch of the cork forest grew;  
There poets find materials for their books,  
And every now and then we read them through  
So that their plan and prosody are eligible,  
Unless, like Wordsworth, they prove unintelligible.*

*(Don Juan, stanza 90)*

*He, Juan, (and not Wordsworth) so pursued  
His self-communion with his own high soul  
Until his mighty heart, in its great mood,*

*Had mitigated part, though not the whole  
Of its disease; he did the best he could  
With things not very subject to control,  
And turned, without perceiving his condition,  
Like Coleridge, into a metaphysician.*

*(Don Juan, stanza 91)*

Byron shows us a humorous point of view of the sublime. Don Juan also “thought about himself, and the whole earth/Of man the wonderful, and of the stars,/And how to deuce the ever could have birth;...” (stanza 91) but then Juan comes back to his woman’s eyes: “And then he thought of Donna Julia’s eyes.”(stanza 91) These stanzas show us how radical and rebellious Byron was. He was not afraid of expressing his opinions of other poets, and was able to write satirical and humorous lines. We cannot be sure whether Byron wanted to follow Wordsworth’s ideas about Nature, nor that stanza 72 had nothing to do with it. Peter Cochran, author of the book “*Romanticism*” – *and Byron*, said that Nature in Byron’s third Canto of the *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* is “a thing, not a wisdom or respectable authority, but of haphazard direction, and perhaps hostile intent.” (Cochran, 2009, p. 243) Cochran shows us that Wordsworth’s and Byron’s attitudes towards Nature were completely different.

In the rest of the Canto III of the *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* he writes about the Alps. From the previous Cantos we might feel that Byron was a pessimistic poet. However, from his description of the Alps one feels the great passion he had towards Nature and her elements.

*...Above me are the Alps,  
The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls  
Have pinnacle in clouds their snowy scalps,  
And throned Eternity in icy halls*

*Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls  
The avalanche-the thunderbolt of snow!  
All that expands the spirit, yet appals,  
Gathers around theses summits, as to show  
How Earth may pierce to Heaven, yet leave vain man below.*

*(CHP, Canto III, stanza 63)*

Byron was amazed by the Alps. They are significant on the earth and he compares the sublimity and majesty of the mountains with the smallness of men. He also follows his description of Nature in the last Canto IV. This Canto also describes Nature in a great way. Byron's picture of the Ocean is one of the most famous. He saw the Ocean as "the image of Eternity-the throne/Of the Invisible" (CHP, stanza 184). It will now be shown that Nature can destroy man-made objects, or everything people do in an effort to conquer Nature.

*Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean-roll!  
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;  
Man marks the earth with ruin-his control  
Stops with the shore; - upon the watery plain  
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain  
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,*

*(CHP, Canto IV, stanza 179)*

Byron's description of the ocean is based on his use of the senses. He shows the reader what he (or his hero) hears in the waves, sees and smells in the Ocean and, in the end, he even touches the Ocean. Byron believed that Nature is powerful and more majestic than humankind and he showed how sublime Nature can be. Edmund Burke (1766) claims that sources of the sublime do not only have to be events and objects which give us the

feelings of pleasure; for him “the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure.” (Burke, 1766) That is to say that Burke saw the Sublime as a feeling of terror when we are afraid of what is happening in front of us. We are terrified of something we cannot control and of something which is unreachable. Those moments of awe, fear and pain give us the feeling of the sublime. Not only are we afraid and fascinated by the possible pain, which Nature or the objects of the sublime in general can bring us, but we can also experience the idea of death. This idea might be even more terrifying and the sublime is becoming stronger at these moments. Byron expresses the same ideas in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*:

*There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,  
There is a rapture on the Lonely shore,  
There is society where none introduces,  
But the deep Sea, and music in its roar:  
I love not Man the less, but Nature more,  
From these our interviews, in which I steal  
From all I may be, or have been before,  
To mingle with the Universe, and feel  
What I can ne’er express, yet cannot all conceal.*

*(CHP, stanza 178)*

Byron showed the Ocean as an eternal element of Nature. He expressed how powerful, terrifying and dangerous the Ocean can be.

Bostetter claimed that although Byron loved nature, he believed that the poet also needed people in his life. His lonely heroes might have just been an escape for Byron, but that does not necessarily mean that he was not happy around people. Byron without

an audience might have written different poems, or might not have written at all (Bostetter, 1975).

The poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* shows us how much Byron loved Nature. He believed, that Nature is stronger and greater than anything else, and that she will always be there: "States fall, arts fade – but Nature doth not die..." (CHP, Canto IV, stanza 3). No matter what happens to humanity, nature is the one permanent and real thing beyond civilization.

## **Manfred**

Now we will focus on another poem by Lord Byron which also shows many natural ideas and symbolism. Byron's dramatic poem *Manfred* introduces a Byronic. At the beginning, Manfred screams to the "spirits of the unbounded Universe" (Manfred, Act 1). Now the reader finds out why Manfred goes to Nature to search for the spirits. He is looking for forgetfulness. Through the poem we find out that Manfred hurt somebody. He fell in love with a girl, Astarte, and broke her heart. She grieved for the love and died. Manfred desperately tries to forget and asks for oblivion. He sees seven spirits: the spirits of Air, Mountain, Ocean, Earth, Wind, Night and Star. However, they cannot offer him forgetfulness or oblivion:

### *Spirit*

*We are immortal, and do not forget;*

*We are eternal; and to us the past*

*Is, as the future, present...*

*(Manfred, Act I,)*

He wants to escape from the memory of destroying Astarte, whom he loved. Nevertheless, according to Alan Rawes, he is not looking for revitalisation (Rawes, 2004). Byron introduces Nature here as spirits who are not only good. Edward E. Bostetter states that Byron refused to hide the bad and gross elements of nature. He was willing to share

the bad sides of nature and life. He wanted to show the realness of our lives and of the landscape. Even the uncivilized, ugly and bad things in life are real and we cannot ignore them. We should share and show these elements in order to overcome them. When we only share and describe great, peaceful and amazing things, humankind will be disappointed in its life. When poetry shows the ugly things in life it can give us some kind of therapy, which can prepare us for life. We will realize what is in the world, how the nature works and how strong it is (Bostetter, 1975). In other words, the unpleasant should be shared and described. Poetry should show people that things not only begin, but that they also end. There are permanent changes in Nature. Although Nature is and always will be there, the landscape is constantly changing. For Byron, nothing in life was forever. Moreover, Nature is beautiful, which does not mean that we should not be afraid of her. People cannot rely on the harmless image of Nature. The landscape is constantly changing and the poet shows us how much Nature can surprise us. Those terrifying events are what make Nature magnificent. The sublime feeling would come much more easily from those natural events and experiences which make us question the power of Nature's elements.

Further in the poem *Manfred* we find out about the Three Destinies. Byron used the Destinies to emphasize this idea. These spirits are those responsible for many horrible things in life and nature – plague and storms.

*First Destiny*

*The blest are the dead,*

*Who see not the sight*

*Of their own desolation.*

*This work of a night-*

*This wreck of a realm – this deed of my doing-*

*For ages I've done, and shall still be renewing!*

*(Manfred, Scene 3)*

Byron shows us the horrible creatures in nature responsible for our bad luck, diseases or political problems. This fact assures us of how different his Nature is from Wordsworth's. The older poet saw it as a challenging force which was an educator; however, he did not see it as a source of disease and horror. In the third scene the First Destiny talks about her creations. These are truly the horrible acts of Nature. The first Destiny is proud of her work. So, not only can Nature be cruel to us, she also wants to be cruel and it satisfies her. Then, Nemesis enters, and she is responsible for tyrannies, the loss of freedom in society.

All the spirits offer Manfred help under the condition that Manfred worships them. Manfred, being a strong personality, refuses. He does not want to worship these creatures, he will not succumb to anyone or anything. When Manfred finally sees his girl as a ghost or a spirit she does not want to talk to him. She is in heaven or purgatory. Manfred hopes that he is the one suffering, not her, and that she is happy where she is. Unfortunately, when she speaks to him she only tells him:

*Manfred! To-morrow ends thine earthly ills.*

*(Manfred, Scene 4)*

Byron's hero is not afraid of death. Although an abbot tries to pursue him to save his soul, Manfred is ready to die, he does not want to live. He has been ready to die since the beginning of the poem (Scene 2) when he was standing on a cliff wanting to jump. He was saved by a chamois hunter. At the end of the poem the abbot tries to save Manfred, but he refuses. A Daemon gives him one last chance to obey, but Manfred wants to die and he also refuses the daemon too.

*Manfred*

*'Tis over—my dull eyes can fix thee not;*

*But all things swim around me, and the earth*

*Heaves as it were beneath me. Fare thee well—*



*Give me thy hand. (Manfred expires.)*

*(Manfred, Scene IV)*

In the poem *Manfred*, Byron shows his great poetical abilities. His description of the Sun and the Moon are beautiful. Manfred tells the Sun that it was chosen by God to be the minister of all the stars. The Moon, as it is shown below, is an element of nature that makes everything better. When the Moon shines through the building of the Colosseum, which is a ruin, it makes it beautiful.

*And thou didst shine, thou rolling moon, upon*

*All this, and cast a wide and tender light,*

*Which soften'd down the hoar austerity*

*Of rugged desolation, and fill'd up,*

*As 'twere, anew, the gaps of centuries;*

*Leaving that beautiful which still was so,*

*And making that which was not, ...*

*(Manfred, Scene 4)*

As we can see, in this poem Byron worked a lot with personification. For instance, when Manfred first saw the Alps (the Witch of the Alps) he was in awe. She was personified by a beautiful young woman.

Simon Bainbridge suggests that Manfred cannot achieve the union that Wordsworth's poems offer. Manfred does achieve "union with nature", he does not want to (Bainbridge, 2011, p. 206). Death here, but also in other Byron's other poems, is ordinary. Becoming older is a part of nature and we have to accept it, as Manfred did. At the same time, Manfred wanted forgetfulness or oblivion. According to Alan Rawes, Byron shows us that we cannot find oblivion in nature. We can try, but we still have painful memories of

war or personal trauma. But, at the same time, Nature cannot forget the horrible things humans have done to her (Rawes, 2004).

With Byron's usage of personification (mainly in Manfred) and apostrophe, it is easy to picture the sublime feeling Byron and his heroes had. Nowadays, we undoubtedly classify Lord Byron as a romantic poet. However, M. H. Abrams did not define Byron as Romantic and omitted his work and description in his study *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic literature*. He omitted Byron's work in his study on purpose. He believed that Byron was a great poet who had a great impact; however, he was ironic in his poems and used satirical language. That was not common for Romantic poets. He was known for mocking Romantics, who were, as he claimed, too serious (Abrams, 1973). This was mainly because the critics used Coleridge's and Wordsworth's works as a classification for Romantic poetry, and Byron simply did not fit this description. He was too satirical, critical, ironic, sceptical, and pessimistic. He might be seen as too dark for Romanticism. Now we see Lord Byron as one of the greatest poets of European Romanticism. Caroline Franklin states that some people might see Byron as a gothic author because he turns to melancholy, passion, and his poetry is rather dark. Although his poetry was significantly darker than Wordsworth's, we can still classify Byron as a Romantic poet (Franklin, 2007).

John Keats once claimed that his and Byron's poetry was not majorly different. The former poet felt that writing poetry based on imagination was a harder task to do and deserved more acknowledgment. Byron, as Keats saw it, showed his readers what he saw or experienced. He did not use his imagination as Keats did, which made him a more realistic poet (Tuite, 2015).

In comparison with Wordsworth and Keats, Byron worked mainly with terrifying and powerful objects in nature. He often compared the smallness of humankind to Nature's powerful and amazing elements. He showed that, although we know how to build ships

and other great devices and gadgets, we can never command and overcome Nature; she is too powerful for us, which is very true even today.

*Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee  
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?  
Thy waters washed them power while they were free,  
And many a tyrant since; their shores obey  
The stranger, slave, or savage; their decay  
Has dried up realms to deserts: -- not so thou...*

*(CHP, Canto IV, stanza 183)*

We can try to prevent natural catastrophes; however, Nature is, and always will be more powerful than us.

In conclusion, Byron appreciated and respected Nature. He did not blindly worship her, he admired her forces and powers. Byron criticised tyrants for wars and for destroying of nature. When we compare Byron to Wordsworth, we find that his idea of Nature was not moral or pantheistic. He thought about Nature as the physical landscape. In his poems he often compared the greatness of Nature with the smallness of men. Since Nature is seen as the greatest and most majestic thing, humankind will never be able to conquer her. Many of Byron's heroes were looking for forgetfulness or oblivion in Nature. But Nature was not only good, and Byron was not afraid to show her powers.

## John Keats

The last poet we will focus on is John Keats. Although all the poets we have discussed had a tragic life, Keats probably suffered the most. When analysing his poetry we cannot omit a few important facts from his life which played a very important role in his work. He was born into poverty and from his childhood his life was full of tragedy. Keats' father passed away when he was five years old, and his mother suffered from tuberculosis and died when he was 14. Later in his life he watched his brother die, and the poet himself died at the age of 25. He studied to become a doctor and healer; however, as a passionate reader and admirer of poetry, he decided to give up on this profession. Because of his tragic and very early death he produced only a limited amount of poetry but, nevertheless, his poems do not lack passion or a love of Nature. The death that surrounded him and his family from his early childhood, the books that he read, the nature that surrounded him, and his previous medical studies all influenced his poems. He was also fascinated and influenced by Greek tradition and art. He fell in love with Italy and moved there when he knew that his time on the Earth was coming to an end. Maybe he also hoped that the climate will help to cure his illness. Unfortunately, it did not, and John Keats passed away on 23<sup>rd</sup> of February, 1821 in Rome.

Much of the inspiration for his work also came from his walking tours. Since tourism had become very popular during his lifetime, he and his friend Charles Brown went on a short tour in 1818. They travelled through Northern England, Scotland and Ireland. Although he dreamed of visiting the Alps as Wordsworth did, they did not managed to fulfil that dream because, as was mentioned previously, Keats was not that financially stable. Both friends visited many astonishing places, and when they visited the island of Ailsa Crag Keats wrote a poem about it called *To Ailsa Rock*. He used personification to describe the beautiful natural object. In the poem, Keats is fascinated by the island but, at the same time, we can feel from the lines that he is afraid of it (Mizukoshi, 2001).

*Hearken, thou craggy ocean pyramid!*  
*Give answer from thy voice – the sea-fowl's screams!*  
*When were thy shoulders mantled in huge stream?*  
*When from the sun was thy broad forehead hid?*  
  
*(To Alisa Rock, lines 1 – 4)*

The island has specific features and Keats' poem definitely shows a creative way of describing it.

Although his poetry was not very successful at the beginning, he did not give up just because of some harsh reviews. At first, he was not seen as a good and inspiring poet. Critics did not value his descriptions of Nature. John Gibson Lockhart, in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (August 1818), reacted to Keats' poem *Endymion* with the words, "It is a better and a wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop Mr John, back to "plasters, pills, and ointment boxes," (English History, 2018). Keats lived most of his life in the suburbs of London and was known for describing the nature he knew and met every day. For critics of the time his poetry celebrated "flowers seen in window-pots," (English History, 2018). Byron himself, in his letters to John Murray in 1820, called Keats' work "mental masturbation" and an "Onanism of poetry" (Strachan, 2003, p. 39). Surely, when we try to compare Byron's poems - which were full of powerful elements, sublime, and a fear of Nature - with Keats' poems, we cannot help but see a big difference between the two (Abrams and Greenblatt, 2006).

What is typical for Keats' poetry is the use of the senses, and precise vivid natural descriptions. However, Nature is not only an aesthetic landscape for him, she is also a source of inspiration and a place where he can relax and escape from the reality. Keats loved books, he loved reading, and he loved poetry. For him a poet was a healer, the one who helped people to see the beauty of the world, to help them overcome their problems:

*Sure a poet is a sage*

*A humanist, physician to all men.*

*(The Fall of Hyperion – A Dream, Canto I, lines 179 - 180)*

In other words, poetry and Nature had healing powers, they were not instruments of reform, as in Wordsworth's writings. These ideas of Keats were fully exposed in the poem *To Autumn*, where he describes poetry as a doctor who comforts the world. And the world needs this doctor. Thanks to his experiences with death, Keats realised that death is all around us and we cannot escape it.

A very important aspect of Keats' poetry is the fact that he only used nature and physical objects as an inspiration and starting point for his poems. John Keats was influenced by literature and took advantage of his great imagination. In other words, when Keats wrote about natural objects he only used real objects as an inspiration, but fully used his imagination to come up with great poetry. Examples can be seen in the poems *Ode to the Nightingale* and *To Autumn*. Both of those poems show us how much Keats could do with language and the reader's imagination. Where others saw a nightingale singing, Keats saw immortal art. Since imagination played a great role in his work, we cannot help but feel that the reader has some kind of free picture here. Keats describes the scene for us but, as in most of his poems, we do not know what he is referring to or what other poets, writers or objects have inspired him, one can only use one's own imagination to fully imagine the scene being described. Sheats claims that in the poem *To Autumn* the writer does not specify whether the personified autumn is male or female. As a reader, a person can use their imagination and personify the poem for themselves. Although autumn is described as having long hair, we cannot claim that it is a woman, since traditionally this season is personified as male (Sheats, 2001). His poetry is full of imagination and he skilfully combined everyday situations with objects from his imagination. According to Jerome J. McGann the themes of Keats' poems were almost from another world, from a world of imagination, because they were a source of escape from life. His descriptions in poetry were "driven by desire and structured as an order of pure language," (McGann,

1999, p. 276). John Keats, for instance, showed the power of his imagination in his poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. Keats based the whole poem on a made-up urn which did not exist. Thanks to his imagination, he was able to describe every single detail of the urn without having the actual object in front of him. The poem describes the probable events happening on the vase. Another example of Keats' great imagination might be his poem *The Eve of St. Agnes*. This is a story from the Middle Ages. When Keats wrote poetry, he wanted to write naturally and spontaneously, a similar idea to Wordsworth.

*„If Poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all. “*

*(Wolfson, 2001, p. XLI)*

In the above quotation, it is evident that Keats felt that Nature was his inspiration, not only for suggestions in his poetry, but also because of the fact that he used natural metaphors such as “tree” and “leaves” to describe poetry.

## **Keats's Nature and Beauty**

The rest of the chapter is focused on Keats' poetry of nature. As it was previously mentioned, Keats was supposed to have become a doctor. However, his love of poetry was stronger. Thanks to his experiences at school, where he obtained knowledge of anatomy, physics, and physiology, his poems often offer truthful descriptions of people and nature. For instance, many of his poems contain different kinds of flowers. Abrams claimed that this influenced many writers who followed Keats' descriptions of animals, insects, and flowers. It was a compromise between traditional poetry and science. Although his poetry uses the imagination (both the poet's and the reader's), it also describes objects with real proportions and anatomy (Abrams, 1971).

Romantic poetry was mainly focused on nature in general – the ocean, the sky, the stars, and the Alps. Since Keats spend most of his life in the suburbs of London, his experience of nature was usually in parks and meadows where people went to relax from London's hectic life. That is why Keats showed people in nature, because human life was a part of nature. He also claimed that he needed people in his life:

*But what, without the social thought of thee,*

*Would be the wonders of the sky and sea?*

*(To My Brother George, lines 13 – 14)*

According to Turley, Keats did not want to become a lonely wanderer around the world. He wanted to see people in the countryside. It could be said that, although Keats loved humanity and wanted it to actively enjoy nature and the landscape, there was something he was missing from people. Humanity did not give him the relief and joy he found in nature. That was why, though a lover of people, he often escaped to Nature (Turley, 2004). For Keats, as Jeffrey Baker states, Nature is also inseparable from beauty. The beauty of nature is simple, rich in inspiration, and is a source of joy (Baker, 2007).

*Away! Away! For I will fly to thee,*

*Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,*

*But on the viewless wing of Poesy,*

*Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:*

*Already with thee! Tender is the night...*

*(Ode to a Nightingale, lines 30-34)*

*“Beauty is truth, truth beauty,” – that is all*

*Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.*

*(Ode on a Grecian Urn, lines 49 – 50)*

The next part of the thesis is focused on the analysis of three of Keats’ poems, which will help to demonstrate Keats’ idea of Nature. “He found melancholy in delight and pleasure in pain, he feels the highest intensity of love as an approximation to death...” (Abrams and Greenblatt, 2006, p. 879). The poems will show that Keats loved Nature as an aesthetic scenery. Yet, he felt that he could escape from his daily troubles through nature



and poetry. Keats often used synesthetic elements in his poetry when, for instance, he was able to describe sound with taste. These poetic elements are found often in Keats' poetry.

## **I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill**

One of the first poems by Keats was *I stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill*. The poem is a great combination of strong poetic language and a description of calming nature.

*I stood tip-toe upon a little hill,  
The air was cooling, and so very still,  
That the sweet buds which with a modest pride  
Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside,  
Their scanty leaved, and finely tapering stems,  
Had not yet lost those starry diadems  
Caught from the early sobbing of the morn.*

*(I Stood Tip-Toe, lines 1 – 7)*

Keats used the senses to draw the reader into the scene. The landscape is calming, quiet, and relaxing: “*A little noiseless noise among the leaves/Born of the very sight that silence heaves/For not the faintest motion could be seen*” (lines 11 – 13). Since the scene in front of the narrator is so beautiful and astonishing, he feels free and it gives him pleasure.

*I gazed awhile, and felt as light, and free  
As though the fanning wings of Mercury  
Had played upon my heels: I was light-hearted  
And many pleasures to my vision started  
So I straightway began to pluck a posey*

*Of luxuries bright, milky, soft and rosy.*

*(I Stood Tip-Toe, lines 23 – 26)*

These natural images inspired him to write the poem. The inspiration of Nature is very common in Keats' poems, which will be shown in the analysis of his other poems. The poem shows us beautiful scenes of nature, flowers, wind, and water. We recognise that the speaker is calmed and relaxed by the view in front of him. The use of similes is very frequent here; for instance, when Keats describes the clouds as sheep.

## **Ode to a Nightingale**

*Ode to a Nightingale* (1819) is one of the Keats' best known poems, mostly because of the language and symbolism Keats used. The poem describes a scene where the speaker (Keats) is sitting outside and listening to the song of a nightingale. It is well known that Keats wrote this poem shortly after his brother's death, which probably influenced his thoughts and work. The poem demonstrates how well John Keats mastered the use of sensual perception.

The first stanza of the poem shows that the speaker is affected by a song. The song is being sung by a nightingale in a tree, although he cannot see it. The speaker feels as if he is being drugged with opium, or poisoned. In this part, Keats used symbolism from Greek mythology – "hemlock" (line 2) was the poison which killed Socrates, and "Lethe" (line 4) is known as a river in the underworld. Its function is to erase memories of the dead. Finally, the "Dryads of the trees" are mythological Greek tree nymphs. The nightingale singing causes a headache to the speaker.

In the second stanza, the narrator wishes to become the nightingale and disappear into the woods. He wishes to have some wine from France to make him forget about death and life and just become the nightingale.

*Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget*

*What thou among the leaves hast never known,*

*The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;  
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,  
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies  
(Ode to a Nightingale, lines 21 – 26)*

The speaker complains to the nightingale that the world is not a happy place. The human world hurts us and makes us suffer. In line 26 we can see that people in the world die young, just like Keats' brother did, and since he suffered from tuberculosis we can assume that his brother looked pale and grey when he was dying. The nightingale does not understand the suffering people go through, it only sings its song and is happy because it is not encumbered by a fear of death.

“What gives this stanza its particularly tragic tone is not the physical dying, but the spiritual deadness it renders, the lack of transitivity in what is merely happening.”  
(Baker, 2007, p. 44)

Poetry is the narrator's chance to forget his painful memories, his life, and the suffering he experiences. He wants to escape from the mortal world on “the viewless wings of Poesy” (line 33). Poetry might be an escape for us from the world, since it is closely connected to the imagination. His imagination will help him to enjoy life and forget his bad memories. It is known that Keats was suffering from unrequited love, illness, and the death of his brother. These memories and challenges in life must have influenced his work, and might be why he wanted to erase those memories and fly away like a nightingale. Jeffrey Baker suggests that the poem shows “the marvellous happiness of the bird, its freedom from all knowledge of suffering, its unwearied song of summer, the ecstasy of its overflowing soul, all indicate that it represents some supremely good abstraction or principle, possibly, indeed a spiritual being, but certainly something timeless.” According to Baker, the nightingale symbolises “the immortality of art” (Baker, 2007, p. 50-51). The bird, or the song that it is singing, is timeless and it was and will forever be heard.

Here, we can feel the difference between our lives, which are limited in the amount of time we spend in the world, and art, which will always be there.

*Was it a vision or a walking dream?*

*Fled is that music: - Do I wake or sleep?*

*(Ode to a Nightingale, line 79 – 80)*

At the end of the poem, the narrator realises that imagination only gives him a short escape from life. When the nightingale flies away, the speaker wakes up from his delusions and is desperate again.

The poem introduces Nature (the nightingale) as that which does not know suffering. He compares humankind with all its challenges and suffering with joyful Nature. The narrator of the poem enjoys the song of the nightingale, and he realises that death might be an escape from his suffering. The poem was written at a time when Keats knew, as a doctor, that he did not have much chance of surviving his illness. In *Ode to a Nightingale* he is not afraid of death and “have been half in love with easeful Death,/Call’d him soft names in many a mused rhyme / To take into the air my quiet breath;/No more than ever seems it rich to die...” (lines 51 – 554). It seems that the natural surroundings and the song of the nightingale assure Keats that death is not something to be concerned about. However, in the end we see that he returns to reality. The song is gone, the bird has flown away, and Keats is back in his suffering. In other words, Nature helped the narrator to accept death and forget about his life difficulties; however, this state does not last forever.

## **To Autumn**

The next famous poem we will focus on is *To Autumn*. This poem is known for its personification of the season autumn. As Vincent Newey claims, the poem “affirms the abundance and unfailing beauty of nature, where transience and death join a perpetual cycle; it is a redemptive ‘fiction,’ a myth of naturalness that has become a cultural icon,” (Newey, 2001, p. 83). That is to say, the poem is not only about the beautiful season, but

also about the death of the season, about its decay. The speaker assures the season that the process of decay is only a part of life. That it is normal to leave so that another season might come.

In the first stanza we can see how generous the season is, how much Nature gives us. Nature here seems very rich and demanding, everything is in bloom and the bees are so busy that they almost forget that the winter might come. Again, as in the previous poem, Keats uses the senses to describe the scene: “sweet kernel” (line 9), “twined flower” (line 18), and “the songs of Spring” (line 23).

*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;  
The bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core...  
(To Autumn, line 1 - 6)*

Even the products of humankind are at one with nature, and we as humans benefit from Nature. Thanks to her we do not suffer from hunger, we are able to use natural products to feed ourselves and use fruit to drink.

The second stanza shows what labours Autumn goes through and how it needs time for them. Keats seem to calm the season and assure it that there is no rush; the season might take its time with its creations. An article by Daljit Nagra shows that the narrator contrasts the work of autumn with the Industrial Revolution. Industrialisation was very fast, but Autumn should not rush (The British Library, 2018).

The final stanza shows the importance of the death of Autumn. The season should not be sad to die because it lived a great life full of well done work, and now it is time for

another season to come to done its job. In the first two stanzas we imagine the landscape quiet, with only the autumn wind. However, at the end the landscape is loud with the sheep's "loud bleat from hilly bourn" (line 30) and the singing "crickets" (line 31). As we can see, Keats enjoyed nature when it was both quiet and loud. He loved nature; this is obvious from his poems.

The poem celebrates Autumn and remembers how much Nature gives us. We need all the seasons, we need the change in Nature so that the flowers and trees can bloom and humans can eat the produce of Nature. We need it, and we benefit from it. Nature gives us so much, and she should be celebrated. Keats saw Nature as a cycle where Autumn returns every year, which differs from humankind. People die and do not return.

In conclusion, John Keats wanted to share his love of Nature with other people. He would not enjoy a scene if he could not share it with others. He saw Nature as a source of joy, of inspiration, as an escape from reality and its suffering. Keats also believed that Nature and beauty are inseparable. Nature freed him and calmed him. At the same time, he was aware of the differences between Nature and humankind. Nature lives her cyclic life, while humans suffer and die young. Yet, Keats was inspired by nature and loved its beautiful views. It helped him to escape from his daily sufferings. In comparison with Wordsworth, who saw Nature as a teacher of morals and a guide for humankind, Keats' Nature does not have the same feeling. Keats' Nature is a way of escaping from life's difficulties (Matthews, 1971). However, as we are introduced to in *Ode to a Nightingale*, the escape is only temporary. We cannot fully forget about our lives and the challenges we go through, but Nature helps us to escape for a while. We need Nature not only as an escape and a form of relaxation, we also need her to survive. Nature gives us food and drink. We would be lost without her. Keats was also able to describe the landscape not only with the senses, but also with the use of synaesthesia. He was aware of the fact that everything has its beginning and its end. Poetry can help us accept and overcome a fear of death (Kandl, 2001).

## Conclusion

The first author to be analysed was William Wordsworth. Wordsworth believed that Nature was a force that is above all of us. His idea of pantheism is mainly described in the poem *Tintern Abbey*, where he felt a great force which unites humankind and nature. At the same time, Nature was a guide for Wordsworth. She was his teacher and a nurse who led him through his life, shaped his personality, and educated him. Although Nature presented him with challenges throughout his life, he was always grateful for them and never regretted anything. It was a safe place for him and made him the man he was. He also showed us that a love of Nature leads to a love of humankind. We cannot forget that Wordsworth believed that Nature shapes our personalities and educates us. However, we as preservers shape Nature. The chapter gave the example of the poem *Composed upon Westminster Bridge*, where the view in front of him was shaped by his mood and by what he was feeling. And this applies not only to that description of London in the morning, but mainly to Nature.

Lord Byron, on the other hand, did not see Nature as a teacher. He believed that Nature was important in his life, she was respectful and he admired her powers. Byron was disappointed with humankind and the tyrants who destroyed nature with war. He often compared the natural world and humanity. He saw the great power of Nature in comparison to the helpless and small humankind. Lord Byron showed the terrible things Nature can do and how we cannot conquer her, even with the most powerful man-made tools. Nature was also a form of escape from people. Byron was a different poet regarding pessimism. He was not afraid to show the challenges we face thanks to Nature and how dangerous she might be. Byron's heroes were often in search of oblivion or forgetfulness in nature. However, our horrible memories and experiences from life cannot be forgotten.

The youngest poet, John Keats, saw Nature as the main source of inspiration for his poetry, and he believed that he could heal the world with his poetry. Nature for Keats was a source of joy and relaxation. He enjoyed beautiful landscapes and was calmed by them. Those scenes not only inspired him, but made him forget about his own suffering. He was

able to escape from reality thanks to Nature. She made him free and happy. Keats compared the immortality of Nature with the suffering of humankind. Nature helped him realise that everything in life is temporary, and, thanks to Nature and poetry, he was able to escape from reality into the world of the imagination. However, these escapes were only temporary and Keats often faced the terrifying reality of slowly approaching death. At the same time, Keats realised how much people need Nature as a means of survival. In other words, Nature for Keats was not only an escape from reality, the journey into an imaginary world, it also was a source of sustenance and life.



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## Summary in Czech

Předmětem bakalářské práce je odhalit a následně porovnat přírodní principy v poezii britských romantiků – Williama Wordswortha, Lorda Byrona a Johna Keatse. Obdiv a hluboký cit k přírodě byl pro romantismus charakteristický a tato práce se pokouší popsat hlavní rozdíly ve vnímání přírody u tří uvedených básníků.

Práce je rozdělena do tří hlavních částí, které reprezentují jednotliví autoři. V každé kapitole je obsaženo několik nejznámějších básní od jednotlivých autorů, v nichž se pokouší objevit a vyzdvihnout symboliku přírody. Jednotlivá tvrzení jsou podložena studiem primární a sekundární literatury. V závěru práce autorka shrnuje zjištěné poznatky a porovnává odlišnosti ve vnímání přírody podle toho, jak jej vnímali uvedení autoři.