

INDIVIDUAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN ROMANTIC POETRY:  
WORDSWORTH, BYRON AND KEATS

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the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English

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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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## Approval

The thesis titled “Individual Consciousness in Romantic Poetry: Wordsworth, Byron and Keats” submitted by Shreya Sangbriti (22303037) of Spring, 2026 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts on 04-06-26.

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## **Abstract**

Emotion, imagination and individual expression are common terms used for the poetry of the Romantic period, but the portrayal of emotion and the construction of selfhood is a complex field of study. The present thesis investigates the way in which William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, and John Keats create different models of the self by exploring the role of consciousness, memory, conflict and imagination in the process of forming individual consciousness in Romantic poetry. The study goes through observations via a comparative reading of selected poems by Wordsworth, Byron and Keats. Memory and reflection combine in Wordsworth's poetry to enable the slow emergence of consciousness, and to make the self a process of growth and self-discovery. In contrast to his narrative work, Byron's poetry presents a more alternative subjectivity that is formed in the context of conflict, alienation, and emotional division. On the other hand, Keats creates an imaginative and creative self that takes pleasure in uncertainty, magnificence, and emotional complexity. The study also focuses on Romantic selfhood and its non-static nature illustrated by Romantic criticism, emotion studies, and theories of consciousness. This study, which combines the distinct voices of the poets, adds to current debates over Romantic subjectivity and emphasizes the pivotal role of emotional expressions in constructing selfhood.

**Keywords:** Romanticism, selfhood, emotion, consciousness, identity formation, Wordsworth, Byron, Keats.

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, British poetry went through a significant transition. Poets started to delve into something more personal, the inner world of emotion, memory and individual experience, instead of classical forms and logical principles. This introspective change, which became crucial to English Romanticism, inspired authors to view their own emotions and consciousness as important lyrical subjects. The Romantic era's concern with inner being did not appear out of nowhere. Rather, it developed in reaction to intellectual and social shifts, such as the rapid growth of industry, the emergence of new identity-related philosophical theories and early advances in knowledge of how people think. Taken as a whole, these circumstances produce a setting in which emotion could develop from the basis of poetic decoration to a profound mode of thought.

### **1.1 Theoretical Framework**

In order to examine the formation of poetic subjectivity through emotional experience, this study uses a theoretical framework that brings together Romantic literary criticism, affect theory and recent ideas about embodied emotion. The framework's central claim is that emotional expression in poetry is more than just a personal experience or a decorative element. Instead, it serves as an organising principle that shapes perception, memory, imagination, and identity. From this perspective, Romantic poetry might be interpreted as an ongoing effort to comprehend how people learn about themselves through their emotions.

Romantic critical theory, particularly M. H. Abrams's crucial claim that Romantic poetry signifies a shift from art as imitation to art as expression, is the foundation of the

framework. In *The Mirror and the Lamp*, Abrams states that “poetry is defined in terms of the imaginative process which modifies and synthesizes the images, thoughts, and feelings of the poet” (22), implying that Romantic poetry gives a central place to the poet's inner life, in order for emotion and creativity to become vital sources of poetry. This concept is helpful for the current study since it clarifies the Romantic poets' intense interest in personal consciousness. In Romantic poetry, the ego does not seem to be finished. It seems to develop as a result of internal experience, emotional strain, and creative expression.

Harold Bloom develops a similar understanding when he describes the major Romantic poets as highly self-conscious writers who are aware of their own creative and emotional struggle, basically “taken possession of by some internal and personal force” (4). Romantic poetry is therefore about more than just nature, love, beauty, or defiance. Additionally, it concerns the poet's attempt to comprehend the self-experiencing of these emotions. For this reason, while comparing Wordsworth, Byron, and Keats, the topic of emotion becomes crucial. The three poets wish to feel, but in different ways. Wordsworth uses feeling to create a self that reflects and grows, with Byron's being a divided and rebellious self and Keats's being an imaginative, sensuous and uncertain one.

However, the program is not a typical or unrealistic Romantic inwardness. Jerome McGann's attempt to go against Romantic ideology is significant here, because he warns against the Romantic expression being an unadulterated authenticity. McGann defines Romantic poetry as a poetry of subjectivity that is historic, social and ideological in form (1-5). For the present study, this is relevant since emotion can be studied not only as a personal but also as a cultural, language and history-co-constructed phenomenon. In particular, Byron's poetry requires this sort of reading, as his voices seem to defy society, but are nonetheless saturated with social world they reject.

Such is the approach adopted by Karl Kroeber's research on Romantic narrative.

According to Kroeber, introspection, recollection and emotional development are frequently the structuring devices in Romantic writing (14-18). This helps to explain the movement of Romantic poems. They start with an outer image, a memory, a thing, a landscape, a voice, but quickly focus on the inner reality of the speaker's mind. The outside world is meaningful because it elevates feeling. This emotional awakening is then followed with a reflection on life for the speaker. Wordsworth's natural world, Byron's wandering landscape and Keats' sensuous object are all seen as beginning points for self formation.

The framework is also based on notions of memory and reflective consciousness, especially concerning Wordsworth. In *The Prelude*, the amplification of remembering the past does not count as a passive activity. This is an emotional journey where the poet gradually realises how he has developed. One perspective on emotion is that it does not leave when an experience has ended. It is still recalled and reflection reinforces the memory.

The study provides another prospect to understand this process, namely affect theory. According to Silvan Tomkins, affects are fundamental forces which influence perception and thought, which she projects from Freud's theory (Tomkins 6-10). Although Romantic poetry is not explicitly discussed in Tomkins' theory, it can be explained through this theory that before complete understanding is attained, the observation of poetry is frequently what comes first. The speaker experiences strong emotions first, and only then does he or she attempt to explain them. This is visible in Wordsworth's memory of fear in *The Prelude*, Byron's restless self-consciousness in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and Keats's painful pleasure in "Ode to a Nightingale". Therefore, thought is more important than emotion. It's one of the ways that thinking starts.

The study also gains insights from modern theories of embodied emotion. Paula Niedenthal argues that emotions are grounded in bodily and sensory experience rather than existing only as abstract mental states, stating that "there is a reciprocal relationship

between the bodily expression of emotion and the way in which emotional information is attended to and interpreted” (1002). This idea is useful because Romantic poetry is strongly connected with the body. Wordsworth remembers sensations 'felt in the blood' and 'along the heart' in “Tintern Abbey”, Byron's speakers feel emotion as exhaustion, guilt and restlessness and Keats fills his poetry with taste, touch, sound, smell and visual richness. These poets show that emotion is not only an idea inside the mind. It is also something felt through the body and through the physical world.

Lisa Feldman Barrett's theory of constructed emotion further helps this analysis by challenging the belief that emotions are fixed and universal. Barrett argues that emotions are made through the relation between bodily feeling, stating “an emotion is your brain's creation of what your bodily sensations mean, in relation to what is going on around you in the world” (30). This point is helpful in reading Romantic poetry because the poems do not simply report ready-made emotions. They form the feelings by means of poetry. Sadness is not the only function of melancholy in Keats, it becomes a state linked to beauty, pleasure and imaginative sensitivity. Likewise, the rebellion in Byron is not only a feeling of pride, but of pain, isolation and desire. The poem itself produces the feeling state that it is looking at.

There is another dimension of social and relational, through the mention of “Byronic Self”. The Byronic speaker is cut off, yet his cutting-off is done in regard to something he rejects, he is cut off from the world he rejects. His emotions are not just private, they are influenced by social judgement, political disillusionment and cultural perceptions. This is also the way in which Romantic emotion is seen as a means of reaching out to the world, although sometimes the speaker may feel disconnected from the world.

A historical link between Romanticism and the early theories of the mind also buttresses this structure. In questions of sensation, consciousness and mental process, Alan

Richardson observes that literary Romanticism is seen as intermingling with psychological and physiological thinking of the time (1-6). Thus it is possible to view Romantic poetry in the context of a broader consideration of the nature of the mind. But the poets are not psychologists of the modern day, and their poem continually asks psychological questions: What is memory and how does it relate to the self, how does guilt become punishment, how does imagination transform pain, and how does sensory experience help with emotional knowledge.

In this conceptual context, the three poets discussed in this thesis are considered to be three types of emotional subjectivity. Wordsworth can be seen as the self with reflection. The emotion that is remembered, meditated upon and embedded in the larger growth of consciousness becomes meaningful, as he shows in his poetry. Divided and rebellious are the two sides of Byron. His poetry reveals that the emotional experience can be intense and self-defining as well as unstable, destructive, or even unresolved. The creative self is symbolised by Keats. His poetry indicates that emotion can be a way of imagining, where the unknown, the beautiful, the sensation of the body, reveal new ways of perceiving.

These theories together offer a flexible and lucid framework for the analysis. The purpose is not to read the Romantic poems through a modern lens, but to listen to the poems and see what they have to say. Romantic poetry repeatedly shows that emotion changes how the conscious mind sees, remembers, desires and imagines. For that reason, this thesis places emotion at the center of Romantic selfhood and reads Wordsworth, Byron and Keats as three different but connected examples of how the Romantic self comes into being through feeling.

## **1.2 Methodology**

The main approach used in this study is the qualitative textual analysis of selected poems of William Wordsworth, Lord Byron and John Keats to show the connection between emotion and the process of the formation of individual consciousness in Romantic poetry. As the study is based on literary research, close reading is the primary method of analysis, which enables the examination of language, imagery, symbolism, tone and poetic structure of the selected texts. This research is interpretative and aims at providing insights from Romantic literary criticism, affect theory and psychological theories on emotion and theories of subjectivity.

M. H. Abrams's observation on Romantic expressivism, Charles Taylor's notion of modern self, Silvan Tomkin's as well as Lisa Feldman's theory on affect and Paula Niedenthal's notion on embodying emotion offers an essential frame incorporation with analytical discourse. These views are pertinent to the discussion of the role of emotional experience in the development of consciousness in Romantic poetry. The use of psychological processes, memory and mental development are also covered, with reference to Alan Richardson.

The main texts contain selected poems by William Wordsworth, Lord Byron and John Keats, organizing the chapters in a comparative manner. This comparative approach is used to explore each poet's unique model of consciousness through analysis. Wordsworth builds consciousness out of memory, reflection and nature, whereas Byron depicts consciousness as divided and conflicted by passion and rebellion and Keats looks at consciousness through imagination, beauty and sensory experience. The conclusion then ties up the three chapters and reveals these poets as providing three different emotional models of Romantic identity. The study aims to show that by employing close reading and theories of emotion and subjectivity, Romantic poetry can be used to explain the process of the development and formation of human consciousness.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The research questions consist of:

1. How does Wordsworth create an internal, developing sense of consciousness through reflective memory?
2. How does Byron use passion and rebellion to convey a split, emotionally confused identity?
3. How can Keats create a creative self by transforming emotion through substantial experience and imagination?

### **1.4 Thesis Statement**

Wordsworth, Byron and Keats use emotion not only as a poetic subject but also as a formative force that enables unique models of individual consciousness in Romantic Poetry.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

Over the past few decades, emotion and selfhood have been the primary focus of Romantic studies. Although romantic poetry is often characterized by personal feeling, imagination and individual expression, a growing body of scholars has been able to show that romantic emotion is far from being the straightforward expression of feelings. The feeling explored by poets in Romantic tradition is not spontaneous but a mode of exploration of consciousness, memory and hardly ever spontaneous. Thus, any analysis of Romanticism has been regarded not only as a consideration of sentiments but also of how poets create and manage various kinds of subject-positions. This volume of scrutiny is the initial point to consider the shaping of models of the self through emotion in the works of William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, and John Keats.

Scholar M.H. Abrams's book *The Mirror and the Lamp* is considered as one of the most impactful studies of Romantic subjectivity. According to Abrams, Romanticism represented a major change in literary thinking, from a classical focus on imitation to a focus on expression. Romantic poets, Abrams says, made poetry a medium through which the poet's inner life could be explored and articulated. Poetry did not reflect the outside world like a mirror, but it lit up the thinking process of the mind. The illustration of expressive art has been at the heart of Romantic research because it highlights the concerns of consciousness and self-expression as central ones of the period.

Harold Bloom elaborates on this in *The Visionary Company* which defines Romantic poets as writers who are highly self-aware and who constantly explore themselves. Romantic poetry often presents individual imagination in relation to the forces of nature, history, and creativity, Bloom suggests. His work emphasizes the significance of inwardness and visionary

experience, indicating that Romantic poetry often becomes larger than life experience.

Effectively, Abrams and Bloom create a critical tradition that prioritizes Romanticism as a genre that is all about the growth of the individual self.

These critics have focused on the inwardness of the conscious mind, but other scholars have added to this view by studying the historical, philosophical and psychological aspects of the individual self. Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* traces the development of the modern self, and suggests that the self emerges from processes of reflection, moral appraisal and self-understanding stating, "if our access in nature is through an inner voice or impulse, then we can only fully know this nature through articulating what we find within us" (374). Personal identity is explored in the context of wider intellectual currents, and inner experience is significant in the Romantic context, making Taylor's work particularly relevant to Romantic studies. Similarly, *Romantic Narrative Art* by Karl Kroeber presents the application of memory, imagination, and introspection as a way to create meaning and identity in Romantic writing. For Kroeber, the self is not something which can be defined as an essence but is a process that is always developing and is influenced by reflection on experience.

In recent years the interdisciplinary study of literature in relation to theories of emotion and neuroscience and psychology has also contributed to the study of the Romantic movement. Alan Richardson's *British Romanticism and the Science of Mind* is a profound contribution, which shows how Romantic literature was related to contemporary theories of consciousness. Richardson suggests that Romantic writers could indulge in scientific discussions about sensation, perception, memory and mental processes, stating, "literary Romanticism intersects numerous and significant ways with the physiological psychology of the time" (1). His essays contradict the notion that Romantic inwardness was solely philosophical and aesthetic in nature, revealing instead that Romantic poets were involved with larger intellectual discussions about the nature of the mind.

Emotion studies have also emerged to offer helpful conceptual tools for the analysis of Romantic poetry. According to Silvan Tomkins's theory of affect, the intensities of emotional experiences and states play a crucial role in human experience and consciousness. Whereas emotions, as secondary reactions to events, were seen by some as an incidental phenomenon, Tomkins considers affect as an integral part of human's meaning-making. His writing accounts for the emphasis on the experience of emotion in Romantic poetry, as well as on questions of identity. Feelings are not merely the subject in Romantic poetry, they are basically the power that influences perception and memory. This discussion is further enhanced by theories of embodied emotion. Paula Niedenthal believes that emotions are tightly linked to body experience, sensation and reaction. This view is useful for the interpretation of Romantic poetry, where sentiments are frequently conveyed using images of the senses and feelings of the body. In the same way, the theory of constructed emotion by Lisa Feldman Barrett does not accept the notion of universal and fixed emotions. Her work provides an efficient pattern of writing about how emotion is viewed by the Romantic poets as a meaning-making and identity-forming process.

The assessment on Wordsworth has been often preoccupied with memory, consciousness, and the development of the mind. There is an accepted critique that Wordsworth's poetry has long been seen as reflecting the experience and thereby creating identity. The studies of Wordsworth's selected poems illustrate the significance of memory in the formation of self-awareness and self-development. It can be observed that Wordsworth's poetry turns commonplace moments into imaginative and spiritual events by means of recollection. This criticism implies that Wordsworth's personality is not fixed but evolves over time through a constant process of remembrance, feeling and pondering. His poetry thus offers one of the most powerful Romantic paradigms of notions of consciousness and identity formation.

The theme of rebellion, alienation and divided consciousness has been a recurring theme in Byron's works. The Byronic hero is an emotionally intense, socially isolated, and psychologically conflicted figure of heated debate in critical discussions. The texts of Byron's selected poems have been studied as probes into the concept of fractured subjectivity and consciousness of resistance. Jerome McGann's *The Romantic Ideology* is of special importance because it breaks down idealized views of Romantic inwardness and stresses the historical and social aspects of Romantic poetry. In accordance to him, romantic writing is not solely a creation of the personal feeling, but of political, cultural, and historical facts. This is particularly true of Byron, who often wrote about historical, social, and political themes in his poems, while also expressing his own personal feelings. Keats's analysis has tended to be skewed towards imagination, aesthetic experience and negative capability. His use of the negative capability, that is in the state of being "able in the negative to find the positive" has been the focus of literary criticism and interpretation of his poetry. Selected poems of Keats portray an image of a self that is not defined by certainty or resolution but by an openness to beauty, to suffering, to imaginative transformation

The inquisition available on Romantic selfhood is vast, but at the same time there is a large gap. Wordsworth's memory, Byron's divided hero, and Keats's imagination have been the focus of many studies to date and have been treated as discrete critical issues. Less work has examined these poets' creation of alternative models of selfhood through emotion and consciousness in the context of a shared Romantic context. Much of the current scholarship is author-centred, poetry centred or theoretical. Thus, comparative studies are needed that explore the uses of emotion in the construction of identity and the self in the works of the various Romantic poets.

The aim of this thesis is to fill this void by exploring how Wordsworth, Byron and Keats create three different modes of Romantic selfhood. The study shows how emotion is

not just a poetic topic, but a basic mechanism by which identity is constructed, in the reflective consciousness of Wordsworth, the divided and conflicted self of Byron, and the imaginative openness of Keats. The research combines Romantic criticism, emotion studies, and theories of consciousness to add to the current debates on emotion, imagination, and selfhood in Romantic poetry.

## **2.1 Research Gap**

Current research often focuses on each poet separately, without comparing how their emotional approaches differ or what these differences suggest about Romantic ideas of identity.

## Chapter 3

### Wordsworth: Reflective Memory and Growth of Consciousness

William Wordsworth plays a pivotal role in English Romanticism due to his enduring interest in the context of how experience, memory and mind development relate with each other. Instead of introducing identity as a pre-destined or definite nature, his poetry portrays the self as a process that evolves over time by taking the experience of life into consideration, becoming meaningful as they are remembered and re-lived, and interpreted throughout a time span. Memory is a very important tool in this process where it plays a crucial role in translating the external experience into internal awareness. Recollection brings back memories that one has with the nature, consisting of happy times, grief, and even terrifying occasions.

First of all, “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey” is one of the most articulate poems of Wordsworth in which he explores reflective memory and consciousness building. The poem is composed when the poet returns to the shores of the River Wye after his five-year absence, and its structure is based on the comparison of the past and present state of mind. The landscape is not important only in terms of its physical beauty, but also in terms of its power to show how the consciousness of the speaker has been transformed with time. From the first lines, “Five years have past; five summers, with the length / Of five long winters!” (Wordsworth, line 1-2), the importance of time is set here. The repetition of “five” highlights the time interval between the speaker's earlier visit and his current one. The speaker is vividly aware of the years that have passed between him and his former self. This sense of time-shift is essential since it consists one of the most vital points in the poem, the connection of memory and consciousness.

The important thing about the poem is Wordsworth's concept of memory, presenting as the active force instead of mere list of things that once happened. The recalled landscape has

remained to have an effect on him even when he was physically away out of it, for a number of years. The remembered images of nature followed him even when he was taken away from nature, which is visible in the lines, “in lonely rooms, and ‘mid the din / Of towns and cities, I have owed to them, / In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,” (line 26-28). These lines indicate that nature still carry weight after the first encounter. Emotional memory holds onto the feeling and helps it work through time. The memory of landscape is therapeutic in the stances of loneliness and exhaustion, and shows that consciousness is constructed by both the past and present’s experiences.

Emotional experience is also suggested to be strongly linked to bodily sensation, leading to its strong integration in consciousness. The embodied nature of such experience is highlighted by Wordsworth when he talks of the impressions of nature being “felt in the blood, and felt along the heart” (29). The repetition of the word “felt” is especially important since it emphasizes the feeling over the abstract thinking. It brings back the sensations and emotions that are stored in the body. The speaker’s memory of nature is introspective which also involves somatic response, reflecting the source of consciousness, the mind’s and body’s interaction. In this way, Wordsworth makes identity a lived and experienced thing, instead of a conceptualized one.

When Wordsworth compares childhood and adulthood, the significance of memory in the poem becomes even more apparent. He acknowledges that in the previous space, his relationship with nature was direct and natural. When he was young, he was highly excited about natural scenes and was physically stimulated by them through the lines like, “The sounding cataract / Haunted me like a passion” (78-79). Nature is compared to “passion” to show the emotional power of youthful experience. At this age, the speaker comes into contact with Nature in the first place with sensation and impulsiveness. However, the adult speaker no longer experiences the natural world in the same manner. He heartily admits that this is indeed

a change, with "That time is past" (90). Wordsworth does not simply see this loss as bad, but as a sign of his improved soul. As the youthful intensity has faded, so has the reflective awareness. Maturity allows one to think back to past experiences, to give them meaning, to see the connection between past and present. Reflection, then, enriches and deepens consciousness.

A similar concept is found in the poem "My Heart Leaps Up". The speaker's reaction to the rainbow demonstrates continuity of consciousness through the various phases of life as depicted in "So was it when my life began; / so is it now I am a man" (Wordsworth, line 3-4). Overall, it feels like the poem is about how childhood memories are still present in the mind of an adult, and how they shape the adult's perspective even after the childhood years have ended. The enduring influence of early emotional experiences is underlined by the famous saying that "The Child is father of the Man" (7). The chronicles of life cycle is majorly portrayed in this sentence, showcasing how the children are consistent in experiencing the world like the first time, becoming the ultimate guide. Wordsworth does not see childhood and adulthood as two distinct periods, but as stages of a single journey of growth. So, through memory, the past and the present consciousness connect.

The tie between emotion and reflective thought is also present in "Lines Written in Early Spring". The poem starts off simply as a description of nature: "I heard a thousand blended notes"(Wordsworth, line 1), but as the poem progresses, it turns into a reflection regarding human relationship to nature. The speaker's emotional reaction to the world around inspires him to become more acknowledged about universal considerations on the subject of human life and moral obligations. This can be stated through the lines, "much it grieved my heart to think / What man has made of man." (7-8). Nature is not just observed, it is thought and felt: "a thrill of pleasure" (16). The poem illustrates Wordsworth's conviction that consciousness grows out of the interplay of experience and reflection.

In "Expostulation and Reply" this focus on lived experience is further reinforced. This poem questions the notion that one can learn only through formal learning or work of the mind. Rather, Wordsworth proposes that the genuine understanding emerges from careful noticing of the world. The poem invites a response to sensory and emotional involvement,

"The eye--- it cannot choose but see;

"We cannot bid the ear be still;

Our bodies feel, where'er they be,

"Against, or with our will." (line 17-20)

It allows consciousness to develop in a participatory manner instead of a passive receptive one. Learning is here an active process of feeling, perceiving and reflecting.

On the other hand, *The Prelude* provides the most comprehensive discussion of the development of consciousness by Wordsworth, in remembrance of emotionally significant events and their interpretation. The bond between childhood experience and adult consciousness is one of the main themes in this autobiographical poem. Wordsworth repeatedly returns to scenes from his youth in order to understand how they contributed to the development of his mind. Childhood is not considered as a distinct phase of life but as the building blocks of future consciousness. The poet believes that early experiences of nature have an enduring effect on perception and imagination. When described in the basis of childhood experience, these seem like very simple things, but they become much more important when looked back on as adults. Hence, memory is no longer simply a matter of recollection, but a way to make sense of past experiences. The grown-up version of the poet understand himself better by reflecting on the emotional and psychological moments that molded him.

A very important instance of such process can be seen in the famous boat-stealing scene. The speaker, as a young boy, sneakily steals a boat and rows across a lake, at first feeling excited, free, and confident. This scene starts as a journey in which nature seems open and receptive to the wishes of the speaker. But this effect becomes invalid when a mountain suddenly appears. The speaker refers to it as “a huge peak, black and huge,” (l.377) and the repetition of the term “huge” underlines the emotional impact of the experience. The mountain almost become lively as it chases the speaker and interferes with his feeling of power. This particular moment becomes important because of the amount of emotional reaction it brings. The speaker feels awe, fear and uncertainty in front of something that is beyond his comprehension. Nature is not just a source of pleasure anymore but it reminds of the forces that are greater than humans. The emotional effect of the experience is too intense to the extent that it cannot be completely understood at the time when it takes place. Rather, its meaning comes out over time with subsequent reflections. This indicates that consciousness is not built by an immediate sense but by the efforts of the mind.

Wordsworth also stresses the enduring nature of the event, as he talks about its psychological consequences. After the encounter, the speaker remembers that “there hung a darkness” (l.395) over his thoughts. His imagination keeps being filled with images of the mountain even after he gets home. This continuance proves that experience that is emotionally charged does not fade away after it is over. Instead, they are alive in consciousness and they influence the perception of the mind. The recollection of the mountain is a shaping factor in the growth of the speaker, as it shows how emotional strength can further shape identity through time. Also, the fact that the child that goes through the experience and the adult that tells the story are different in nature is what makes this episode so significant. The child is scared and he is not able to comprehend its meaning completely. The narrator, who is an adult, however,

rewinding back to the experience, understands that it influenced his intellectual and emotional development. This time gap enables the event to attain a new sense.

The theme of self-understanding is also emphasized by the autobiographical quality of the poem. Wordsworth's reconstruction of the experiences which he has had in his mind makes personal history an exploration of consciousness. The process of writing becomes the path of self discovery. The poet tries to find out how he has become the present person by examining the memories that continue to influence him. This is an example of how identity is not just given or known. Instead, it is a process that is slowly developed by experience, memory and reflection.

Furthermore, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" explores the other key element of consciousness, the consciousness of loss. The poem is preoccupied with the realization of speaker that the world is no longer as wondrous and intense as it was when the speaker was a child. Instead of just mourning this transformation, though, Wordsworth applies memory to investigate the process of consciousness building up as one contemplates what has been lost. The poem implies that the realization of self is not in spite of loss but rather due to it. The speaker makes the loss of childhood vision into a more profound identity and human experience through the act of recollection. It begins with an acute feeling of loss as the speaker notes that:

"There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,

The earth, and every common sight,

To me did seem

Apparelled in celestial light" (Wordsworth, line 1–4).

The description of the visual world establishes childhood as a state of acuity. Mundane things seem extraordinary as the consciousness of the child perceives the world in its wonder and immediacy. Nature is not merely seen but experienced as something that is sacred and

significant. But at once, the speaker recognizes that this vision has become blurred. The adult consciousness is capable to recall the experience but is no longer able to retrieve it in its entirety. This understanding brings in the main conflict of the poem, the clash of childhood perception with adult-awareness.

The spiritual sensitivity of childhood is one of the most important concepts in the poem since Wordsworth considers childhood as having a special spiritual awareness. He famously writes, "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting" (58), bringing rings in the philosophical speculation that children are much closer to a transcendent reality. This notion, whether taken literally or metaphorically, enables Wordsworth to describe the incredible sharpness of childhood vision. This image is an expression of the Romantic view that children are capable of seeing truths that are subsequently lost in the mists of habit and reason.

Subsequently, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" first seems to be a mere celebration of an ordinary experience with nature. But in the deeper meaning, it is actually the remembrance of that lived episode. Wordsworth implies that experiences have the greatest value when they are recalled and re-visited, not at the point of their occurrence. Isolation is visible in the first line of the poem: "I wandered lonely as a cloud / That floats on high o'er vales and hills" (Wordsworth, line 1-2). The first thing that comes to mind when seeing the cloud is emotional distance. The speaker seems to be out of the world and out of touch with people. While Byron's isolation aligns with alienation and conflict, Wordsworth's solitude is conducive to reflection and to a relationship with nature. The speaker's mind is open and receptive, as they are able to respond to the landscape around them.

This happening takes place when the speaker is suddenly introduced to the daffodils field: "A host, of golden daffodils" (4). The term "host" indicates that the individual or object is plentiful and thriving. The flowers are not just simply there but a living presence that grabs

the speaker's attention. They are depicted in a dynamic way, with some appearing to be dancing or fluttering, evoking a sense of play and activity. Nature is presented as alive, in harmony and the speaker is emotionally present in the scene. The speaker's emotional reaction is alluded to in the famous line of the poem, "A poet could not but be gay, / In such a jocund company" (15-16). When one's heart encounters nature, one's joy is boundless. The poem does not end with the act of observation, like many poetic descriptions of nature. Instead, Wordsworth turns to memory, thereby showing us the lasting significance of the event is, in fact, its ongoing impact on consciousness. The most significant moment of the goes as Wordsworth writes:

For oft, when on my couch I lie

In vacant or in pensive mood,

They flash upon that inward eye

Which is the bliss of solitude; (19-22)

There is a re-experience of the emotional response even though the time gap between the memory and the original experience is huge. This poem is an indication that identity is formed as a result of the accrual and re-interpretation of these remembered experiences. The moments add to the self and keep re-entering consciousness and shaping the emotional world. Consequently, in "The Tables Turned", the value of nature and the necessity of staying close to it is reflected upon vividly. Wordsworth portrays that blending with nature has a remedial effect which is important for one's well-being, showcasing through the lines, " How sweet his music! on my life, / There's more of wisdom in it" (line 11-12).

Wordsworth's interest in the lasting power of emotional experience is also evident in "The Solitary Reaper". The poem describes the speaker's encounter with a Highland girl singing alone while working in a field. Although the speaker cannot fully understand the song's

meaning, he is deeply moved by its emotional effect. The poem is opened with focus on the lone figure: "Behold her, single in the field, / Yon solitary Highland Lass!" (Wordsworth, line 1-2). The emphasis on solitude immediately establishes the uniqueness of the scene. The reaper is physically alone but the song is a part of the landscape. This juxtaposition of loneliness and emotional engagement is significant, as it is part of Wordsworth's wider interest in the experience of the individual. The woman is not depicted as a hero or a well-known figure. Rather, her song becomes extraordinary because of the emotion of the speaker. Wordsworth thus shows how intense such feelings can be that comes from a commonplace experience.

Wordsworth uses comparisons to highlight the speciality of the song. He says that there never was a nightingale that sang a song: "More welcome notes to weary bands / Of travellers in some shady haunt" (10-11). Likewise, he likens the voice of the reaper to that of the cuckoo: "Breaking the silence of the seas / Among the farthest Hebrides" (15-16). These likenesses add to the reaper's song. Nature can not seem to hold a candle to its emotional power. But Wordsworth's intent goes beyond just extolling the beauty of the voice. He wants to demonstrate the significance of emotional experiences as they are mediated through imagination. The speaker turns the song into a universal one, implying that consciousness plays an active role in shaping the perception.

The significance of the experience lies not in the content of the song itself but in the way it remains within the speaker's consciousness after the moment has passed. As he leaves, he states: "The music in my heart I bore, / Long after it was heard no more" (31-32). The song enters the speaker's mind and lives on after it has been played, supporting Wordsworth's idea that the self is formed by the mind's capacity to look after and reanalyze emotionally charged experiences.

Therefore, Wordsworth presents consciousness as something that arises from the interplay between memory and experience in each of these poems. It can be contemplated from the stated discussion that rather than seeing oneself as a definite or whole, identity is generated by how people remember, recollect, and reinterpret their past occurrences, providing the vivid understanding of consciousness.

## Chapter 4

### Byron: Emotional Conflict and the Fragmentation

In contrast to Wordsworth's poetry, which suggests that memory and reflection are forces that slowly develop a unified self, Byron has a more nuanced image of human consciousness. His poetry are full of characters that lack self-balance and are acutely aware of their emotions. The conflict or entrapment between freedom and loneliness, pride and vulnerability, desire and disappointment seem to be the pathway of harmony, reconciliation, or self-awareness, in the speeches of Byron. In his works, the self is not whole, but fragmented, even antagonistic. His characters are self-conscious and acutely aware of their environment, but they seldom find serenity as their outcome. Consequently, identity seems to be manipulative and constantly shifting.

Among his most powerful representations of the split Romantic ego, *Childe Harold Pilgrimage* can be considered as one of his most influential works. Though the poem is a record of Harold traveling all over Europe, it is not just a story of physical mobility. Rather, it is an investigation of emotional or psychological displacement. At the very start of the poem, it is evident that Harold is not a part of society and that he is disillusioned with the values that encompass him. His choice of leaving home is not as driven by curiosity but by emotional tiredness. The voyage is thus a spiritual state of being. His dissatisfaction does not change even though he goes to new locations, civilisations and historical destinations. They further make him realize the distance and loneliness. The greater the extent to which he travels, the more aware he becomes of his failure to create any meaningful relationship with the surrounding world. Wherever he is, he is filled with discontent and restlessness. Here, travelling is seen as an image of impossibility to achieve inner or outer peace instead of liberty.

One of the poem's most often cited lines best captures this feeling of alienation, "I have not loved the world, nor the world me" (Byron, line 3.113). The speaker's and society's mutual estrangement are encapsulated in the sentence. Significantly, Harold acknowledges his own rejection of the world in addition to asserting that he has also been rejected by it, displaying the reciprocity in the relationship. Harold's understanding of himself is partly shaped by the things he rejects and the social environment he feels cut off from. One of Byron's most significant discoveries is illustrated through the notion that the self frequently defines itself via conflict rather than harmony.

The importance of this alienation is that it forms the consciousness. Harold is deeply self-conscious, thinking about his thoughts and feelings, and his place in the world. But this self-awareness is not of stability or self-knowledge. Rather, it tends to exacerbate his feelings of alienation. This is the recurrent theme of Byron's depiction of consciousness as a source of conflict, not reconciliation. As Harold thinks of himself more and more, he realizes he is more moved from others. In "When we Two Parted", the same pattern is evident, emotional splitting that occurs through the process of memory. A speaker's memory of a lost loved one illustrates how experiences from the past lay in consciousness for a long while after, "Long, long i shall rue thee, Too deeply to tell" (line 23-24). By contrast, while Wordsworth's memories do much to comfort and enlighten the reader, Byron's memories often evoke sadness and separation.

Nature plays a key role in this emotional landscape and Byron's treatment of it is very different from Wordsworth's. Nature often gives moral lessons and a sense of renewal in Wordsworth's poetry. In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, however, landscapes are more likely to mirror than to cure the speaker's emotional state. Mountains, oceans, battlefields and ruins acquire personal and historical significance. This correspondence between emotional and physical landscapes comes from the fact that the external world reflects the internal world.

Often, ruins are used as a symbol for this awareness in Byron. While Wordsworth is able to see continuity and renewal in nature, Byron sees reminders of impermanence and failure. Historical places serve as proof of man's failure to maintain his ideals. These reflections have a very strong emotional impact. There's more to Harold's sadness than just his own personal grievance; it is tied to the history. He has an awareness that humans and civilizations can fall into disrepair. This instability is one of the factors that lead to the dualistic mentality of the Byronic hero. Harold is proud, hurt, independent, isolated, rebellious, and unhappy. These paradoxes are not faults in Byron's characterization, but an integral part of his psychological insights. The unity of consciousness is juxtaposed with its fragmentation.

*Manfred* exhibits an even more severe type of internal strife. The protagonist of the play is cut off from both society and himself. Manfred's fight is mostly internal, in contrast to Harold, whose discontent is frequently focused on the outside world. He is afflicted with self-consciousness, recollection, and remorse, which progressively turn his mind into a place of agony. He seems cut off from everyday human interactions right from the start of the play. He withdraws into solitude and looks for supernatural abilities to get away from the weight of memories rather than to acquire knowledge or power. However, the extent of his psychological suffering is made clear by the fact that he resorts to spirits.

This psychological struggle is seen in one of the most crucial lines in the drama: "The mind which is immortal makes itself / Requit for its good or evil thoughts" (Byron, III.iv). It can be considered as Byron's insight into consciousness. No society, religion, or supernatural power is responsible for Manfred's punishment. Rather, the mind is its own antagonist. Consciousness has a capacity to create suffering without support. The instrument of punishment is Manfred's mind, so he can not escape.

This concept is part of Byron's overall theme of self-consciousness. Manfred is very aware of himself, but it is an awareness that leads to no stability or self-knowledge. Rather, it establishes a fusion of reflection and anguish. The protagonist constantly replays his past traumas but never comes to a resolution. The consciousness gets stuck in its own processes and is not able to transcend. In this regard, Byron radiates self-awareness as a positive and negative force. It gives Manfred a freedom from outside control, but at the same time it isolates him emotionally.

Much of Manfred's mental torment is due to the enigmatic nature of Astarte. Her role in the drama is so overwhelming that Byron does not fully explain his relationship with her. She is not so very much a living character, rather, a haunting memory that colours Manfred's mind. Her indeterminacy enhances his guilt. In the story, the past can not to be changed and the dead cannot be brought back to life, and Manfred is stuck in a cycle of remembrance and regret. Furthermore, the fact that Manfred does not go down the path of traditional healing is highlighted throughout the play. This resistance is an important aspect of the Byronic hero.

Memory is the tool used in *The Prelude* and "Tintern Abbey" to gain self understanding and to be renewed. Recollection is a way for the speaker to experience and become aware. But in Manfred it is the opposite. The comment that "My spirit walk'd not with the souls of men" (1.2) is one of the most revealing prospects in the work, noting a sense of alienation in the statement. At first, Manfred seems heroic because he is intelligent and does not give up easily, refusing to back down. He feels different from others and this sense of difference perpetuates his sense of isolation.

The drama always raises concerns about the viability of such harsh self-reliance. However, his death does not solve the emotional conflicts, neither it has any apparent closure or reconciliation or atonement. Instead, Byron makes the reader think of a consciousness that

has its own paradoxes; is proud, but wounded, strong, but weak, bold, but severely broken. Byron thus reveals the dark side of individualism that is in direct contrast to the Romantic glorification of it.

Following that, *Don Juan* is among the other form of divided identities. The poem is humorous, changes point of view, and is often ironic, leaving one to ponder if there can ever be a completely authentic and steady depiction of emotions. Juan is not characterised by a single defining trait, in contrast to many conventional heroes. Instead of acting, he is often acted upon as he encounters a series of relationships, social encounters and adventures that inevitably shape his experience. This instability is important as it obstructs the formation of a stable identity.

One of the most striking features of the poem is the regular intrusion of the narrator's voice, providing commentary on personalities, society, politics and even the process of telling the story itself. A sense of separation between emotion and its expression is produced by these disruptions. Often the moments that can be quite romantic or tragic are punctuated with ironic commentary or amusing insights. This is reflected in one of the most famous sayings of the poem, "Words are things" (III.88). Although short, this statement is one of Byron's primary concerns.

Language is not merely a description of reality, but it is the primary shape of it. The words that are used to convey emotions have an impact on them. Love, sadness, desire and heroism are portrayed as filtered, not pure emotions. Another aspect of the poem that is quite important is its change of tone. Byron can be funny, sad, critical, reflective, serious or satirical in any given canto. The abrupt changes reflect the fragility of consciousness. Humans are not likely to have pure or regular emotions and the feelings often overlap. In the narration of Byron, this complexity is conveyed by his refusal to impose any single emotional attitude on the events.

As opposed to Manfred, who is driven to the margins of society, Juan's experience is one of perpetual crossing of social boundaries. He meets aristocrats, soldiers, lovers, rulers and ordinary people. The settings show different facets of human behavior and emotional expression. It seems as though consciousness is malleable, not static. With each situation the self is different, reflecting Byron's distrust of fixed notions of self. This fluidity sets Don Juan apart from the more conventional Romantic explorations of subjectivity.

The poem reiterates repeatedly that feelings do not reside in an unchanging state within the person, but can be dependent on conditions and interpretation. This concept can be related to theories of emotion in the present, such as Lisa Feldman Barrett's work that emotions are built from experience, language, and culture. Feelings are seldom pure, or isolated in Don Juan. Rather, they are shaped by the perspective of the story, social interactions, and expectations. How experiences are described affects their understanding. Language is thus an active factor in the building of consciousness. The self is constructed, not just by feeling, but also by self narratives and other people's narratives.

The voice of narration alternates between personal reflection, social criticism, philosophical observation and comic digression. The poem's changes fail to create a unified standpoint. Rather, consciousness seems to be disorganized and polycentric. Multiple positions exist side by side without being completely merged or negotiated. This is the narrative form that corresponds to Byron's perception of identity: multifaceted, paradoxical, and fluid.

Playfulness is an important element in this process. The irony in Byron's writing does not represent an absence of feeling, but rather it is a way of exploring emotional nuance. At times the poem is serious, and at other times it is funny, and the reader must note more than one point of view at a time. Love can be true and silly. Heroism can be commendable but

foolish. Suffering can be authentic and exaggerated or acted out. By using these opposites, Byron shows the fluidity of emotional experience.

The poem "Fare Thee Well" is somewhat similarly emotionally ambiguous, as the speaker grapples with the simultaneity of love, loss and separation. The poem depicts some of the conflicting emotions that can exist in one mind which makes for instability and inner division. There are both love and hate, attachment and detachment, so the emotional reaction is complex. Likewise, in "Epistle to Augusta", Byron is concerned with the various aspects of identity in a personal relationship. The poem displays a more introspective and personal level of awareness and that emotional relationships can be as powerful as solitude and conflict.

In Byron's "Darkness", the picture of human consciousness is even more disturbing. The poem, which was written in 1816 during the so-called "Year Without a Summer," depicts a planet where all life is progressively going to extinction and the sun has vanished. But Darkness is not just a poem about a 'nature' disaster. It is also a story of the breakdown of mind and soul. The poem opens with a startling declaration, Darkness is one of Byron's shortest poems, and one of his most unsettling explorations of human consciousness. The poem is an attempt to deconstruct the various aspects that provide meaning to human life: society, nature, morality, and hope. In its apocalyptic image, Byron expresses a state of mind that is faced with fear, alienation, and the boundaries of human capabilities.

One of the most famous lines in Romantic poetry is at the opening of this poem: "I had a dream, which was not all a dream" (Byron, line 1). The statement immediately instills confusion. The speaker is positioned somewhere in between reality and imagination, implying that the events that are described are fictional, but also psychologically significant. Both the dream structure and the exploration of its extremes enable Byron to comment on human

consciousness as well. What ensued was not just a report on physical devastation, but on the human reaction to absolute uncertainty.

When darkness engulfs, social bonds start to break. Human beings first gather together to survive, burning forest, homes and monuments to obtain temporary light. Through this line, “The bright sun was extinguish'd” (2), the imagery gets significance both literally and symbolically. Sun is traditionally the symbol of life, order, knowledge and stability. Its demise, therefore, marks the collapse of the system that supports human civilization. It is no longer the comforting and inspiring nature. Byron's nature, in contrast to Wordsworth's, is hostile and indifferent, and can facilitate dispassion and even thoughtlessness. Wherever light goes out, fear takes its place of knowledge and survival takes the place of life.

One of the most striking moments in the poem is when Byron says: “Morn came and went--and came, and brought no day” (6). The emphasis of the line is on the loss of normal temporal experience. Byron depicts a vision of utter desolation near the poem's conclusion, “Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless” (71). A strong sensation of emptiness and absence is produced by the suffix “-less” being repeated. Everything that makes life meaningful has disappeared. Silence and darkness are all that remain after the disappearance of humans, nature, and civilisations. The poem's larger claim that identity cannot exist apart from the environment that supports it, is reflected in the accumulation of negativity. The poem tells us that identity is not just one of hope and aspiration but it is also of vulnerability and uncertainty.

Byron's lyric poem “Prometheus” is a condensed, yet powerful statement of Byron's insight into emotional resistance and individual consciousness. Based on the classical myth of Prometheus, the Titan is punished by Zeus for stealing fire from the gods and handing it to humanity. The poem starts with a focus on the agony and punishment of Prometheus. He is bound and condemned by a higher power, and suffers greatly, but does not lose his dignity.

Byron calls him: “Titan! to whose immortal eyes / The sufferings of mortality” (Byron, lines 1–2). From the start, the address moves Prometheus from the ranks of the ordinary. He turns into a symbol of human endurance against overwhelming oppression. He is not only suffering personally, but also symbolically. Byron paints him as somebody who knows suffering but will not accept anyone who causes suffering.

Silent endurance is a theme that is repeated throughout the poem. Prometheus does not complain, making pain a source for his moral superiority. The line “A mighty lesson we inherit” (43), can be considered as the theme of the poem. Prometheus is a key figure because he does not avoid suffering, but meets it face to face. This is his learning curve, and he knows that human dignity can outlast defeat. The consciousness is stronger when it resists the relinquishment of its independence. Focusing on moral resistance is a symptom of what many Byron critics have called a central characteristic of Byron's Romantic subjectivity. The self is not constructed in a way of accepting social norms; it is constructed in confronting them. Prometheus is an extreme form of Byron's divided consciousness: powerful in his refusal to submit, isolated, suffering, and rebellious.

This theme is a close parallel to the Byronic hero as Byron conceived it, and has been compared to Prometheus. Prometheus is different from the normal community, as is Harold and Manfred. He defies authority and will not compromise his convictions. But unlike Manfred, whose revolt can lead to self-destructiveness, Prometheus' opposition is outward. It is significant, however, from an ethical point of view, as it is associated with his suffering and knowledge and his freedom for humanity. The poem, then, is not only a protest poem, it is a moral protest poem against tyranny.

The mythological context also enables Byron to link the individual mind to the issues of power and authority. Zeus is the symbol of oppressive control and Prometheus is the symbol

of human desire for freedom. The battle of the two figures is a portrayal of Byron's wider political and philosophical thinking. His sympathy with those who rebel against existing systems is recurring in his poetry. Prometheus is the perfect symbol for resisting domination when it seems like it doesn't matter. He is aware of his self even when he is being punished by others.

Across these works, emotion functions not as a unifying force, but as one that reveals the contradictions within the self. Whether through the estrangement of Harold, the psychological torment of anguish which Manfred undergoes, the despair of "Darkness" or "Prometheus" or the ironic self-consciousness of Don Juan and others, Byron shows that identity is in no way settled or utopian. Depending on his poetry, the self is always involved in the trade of competing desires, emotion, and viewpoints. Finally, Byron presents a sophisticated view of Romantic subjectivity where consciousness is characterized not by cohesion, but by fragmentation, disintegration, conflict.

## Chapter 5

### Keats: Imagination, Beauty and Creativity

A third model in Romantic selfhood is formulated by Poet John Keats. Wordsworth renders emotion as obsolete, Byron renders emotion as an arena of conflict and division and Keats renders emotion as the source of imagination. His poetry is more of affirmation than it is of description. He talks of “Negative Capability” in his famous letter, describing it as the ability to "be in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason"(Selected Letters by Keats). This concept can act as the core glimpse into his poetic vision. Keats is not looking for answers, but for experiences that can not be explained. Beauty, love, mortality, desire, and loss are not issues that need to be resolved, they are simply things to be experienced and thought about.

One of Keats' most clear analyses of the relationship between imagination and consciousness can be found in the poem “Ode to a Nightingale”. The poem begins with a powerful emotion and physical reaction, with the speaker telling the reader that his “heart aches, a drowsy numbness pain / My sense” (Keats, line 1-2). The opening line instantly puts the feeling into the body. This is not a philosophical or abstract experience, but one that is very sensory. The speaker's suffering is particularly apparent because it is accompanied by joy and admiration. It is not sharp, but it sets the tone for the poem's imaginative movement, which is inspired by a feeling of longing and discontent. The nightingale's singing is not the cause of his pain. He says that his emotions are based on joy, stating “Too happy in thine happiness” (6). Here comes interesting paradox, and one of the central themes of the poem: the co-existence of pleasure and pain.

The speaker is in awe of the nightingale's song, a type of freedom and happiness he wishes to experience, but he is also reminded of human constraints by the song's beauty. The

emotional ambiguity is indicative of Keats's conviction that the human experience cannot be confined to simple categories. The nightingale is a symbol of imaginative possibility. Its song seems untouched, effortless and timeless and seems not the song of human life. The speaker is still conscious of death, sickness, and tragedy, however. He wants to escape the human world, which he calls the place of "Where but to think is to be full of sorrow" (27). The line points to the weight of being conscious of oneself.

A human being is able to contemplate his life, but this consciousness sometimes causes him pain, not happiness. While Wordsworth often equates reflection with development and learning, Keats admits that consciousness can sharpen the mind's perception of pain. Hence, the need to flee becomes a reaction to the restrictions of human life. The speaker starts to think of using wine to escape. He then quickly rules this out, however, and focuses his energies on imagination:

"Away! away! for I will fly to thee Not  
charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
But on the viewless wings of Poesy" (31-33).

These are significant lines within the poem. Consciousness tries to penetrate the normal reality through imagination. But imagination is not presented as a straightforward way of getting away from the world by Keats. Instead, it is used as a creative tool to see things differently. Poems are not just about evasions, they are about changes.

As the poem continues, the speaker becomes more imaginative and starts to blur the lines between life and death. The difference in death between the speaker and the nightingale becomes more significant. The bird appears to have no age on it: "Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!" (61). But it is not in the literal sense that Keats means that the bird is immortal.

Instead, the nightingale represents the power of art, imagination and song. One by one the birds die, and the song goes on from generation to generation. The speaker is aware that people are only human beings but art and imaginative play have a continuity that goes beyond life. Thus, consciousness faces both death and eternity at once.

A poetry is a way to transcend through the mundane and into the new horizons. Speaker can imagine and transcend that material world to create an alternative experience. Keats, however, ensures that this creative journey is neither definitive nor permanent. The poem ends with one of the most popular phrases of Romantic poetry, "Was it a vision, or a waking dream? / Fled is that music: --Do I wake or sleep?" (79-80). The poem leaves the question unanswered rather than providing a definitive response. The speaker is unsure of his personal experience. Uncertainty is not seen as a sign of failure, though. Instead, it is a confirmation of Keats's belief that creative experiences are not only meaningful when they cannot be fully described, but also serve as explanations in and of themselves.

Consequently, a development of awareness is found in "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer". The poem tells of the joy of entering into a new literary realm, likening it to discovery and exploration. The speaker's consciousness is extended by imagination, a capacity to change perception and show new possibilities, basically the result of the artistic experience. Moreover, imaginative development is an integral part of personal growth, as is seen in "Sleep and Poetry", where Keats speaks of it. Poetry is no longer the art form, but the way to the understanding. The imagination allows people to transcend their everyday experience and experience other levels of emotional and intellectual consciousness.

On the other hand, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" looks to the visual arts to consider beauty, time and human experience. The concept of this poem is about an ancient urn that depicts scenes related to love, music, celebration and sacrifice. The urn transcends from being merely an object

to a poetic form as the speaker considers these images vividly. The speaker addresses the urn itself at the beginning of the poem, "Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness" (Keats, line 1). It appears to be unaffected by time and to have captured moments that the ages have not altered. This permanence is appealing to the speaker because it seems to give a sense of freedom from change and death, something that human life cannot guarantee.

The speaker's imagination starts to bring the images of the urn to life. The work is silent, but consciousness provides its movement, emotion and story. This process is an example of how imagination is involved in perception. The urn does not just convey meaning, it allows the speaker to make meaning. Consciousness is therefore not a passive but a creative function, Keats implies. Art is of value because it encourages imaginative involvement instead of providing simple solutions.

One of the most popular concepts in the poem is found in the opposing music of the heard and the unheard: "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter" (11-12). These lines show the fascination of Keats with the power of imagination. The music on the urn is not audible but is more beautiful because of the imagination. The missing piece fills the void with consciousness with the power of the absence being felt. This concept is in line with Keats's general view on creativity. The form of human experience is not merely defined by the actual, but also by the imagined, the desired and the anticipated.

The theme of desire is heightened as the poem progresses. The figures on the urn are forever yearning. The young lover is always chasing after his beloved but eventually misses her: "Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss" (17). This looks like a tragedy at first glance, but Keats immediately complicates this interpretation: "Yet, do not grieve; she cannot fade" (19). The desire of the lover is never satiated, otherwise it is not love. The affectionate is always young, beauty never fails, passion never abates. The figures are kept safe from being lost, but

are also refused in fulfillment. Keats makes permanence both desirable and stifling, and invites readers to ponder the interplay between desire and change.

This last stanza of the poem has been a subject of centuries of debate: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty” (49). This line do not give a philosophical answer to the situation, further, they extend the poem's exploration of uncertainty. There are no resolutions of the tension Keats has worked out throughout the poem. The urn is a source of information but it does not give complete certainty. Thus, the poem preserves Keats' conviction that certain experiences are worth experiencing, even if they cannot be explained at the end.

In "Bright Star", a likeness of such permanency is present. The speaker wishes for continuity and stability in a changing world. The poem is personal, dealing with feelings instead of art, but concerning the same duality of permanence and transience found in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. The desire to maintain meaningful experience is a part of Keats's conception of consciousness. This is also a concern in "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles", where production of art leads to consideration of the limitations of humanity and mortality. Being confronted with enduring works of art raises awareness of transience, and of the power of creative expression.

Subsequently, “Ode on Melancholy” is an exploration of human emotion itself. The theme of Keats' poem is in direct contrast to the common notion of happiness and sadness being polar opposites. Moreover, he suggests that beauty, pleasure, and happiness go hand-in-hand with loss and sadness. The poem begins with some warnings and the speaker does not recommend the reader to try to avoid suffering by forgetting, dying, or ignoring it: “No, no, go not to Lethe” (Keats, line 1). Lethe, the river of forgetfulness in Greek mythology, symbolizes the desire to escape emotional pain. The speaker rejects this possibility immediately. Unlike many traditions that encourage individuals to suppress or overcome sorrow, Keats insists that

melancholy should not be avoided. The opening lines establish the poem's central argument: suffering is not an obstacle to meaningful experience but a necessary component of it.

This rejection of emotional escape distinguishes Keats from other Romantic approaches to feeling. In "Ode to a Nightingale", the speaker briefly imagines leaving behind the world of suffering through imagination. In "Ode on Melancholy", however, Keats insists that sadness must be experienced rather than transcended. Consciousness develops through engagement with emotion, not through withdrawal from it.

One of the poem's most significant insights appears in the famous declaration: "Ay, in the very temple of Delight / Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine" (25-26). These lines form the philosophical center of the poem. Keats argues that melancholy exists within delight itself. Happiness and sadness are not separate emotional states but interconnected experiences. The greater the beauty of a moment, the greater the awareness that it cannot last forever. Joy therefore contains the possibility of loss from the beginning. This understanding reflects Keats's rejection of simplistic emotional categories. Human consciousness experiences emotions not as isolated states but as complex and overlapping conditions.

Among Keats's major poems, "To Autumn" is one of his most harmonious and well-balanced depictions of human consciousness. The poetry is not transcendental or definite. Instead, it celebrates the beauty of normalcy and the natural cycle of development, maturation, and deterioration. The poem begins with one of the most famous line about nature in English, "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" (Keats, line 1). The poetry engages the variant senses from this opening sentence. Warmth, ripeness, and fullness are implied by the terms mists and mellow fruitfulness. Instead of being dramatic, as is frequently the case with Romantic poetry, this attitude is serene. Keats focuses on the physicality, colours, and noises of the natural world around him. The self emerges through attentive observation rather than emotional disclosure.

The first verse conveys a sense of fullness and completion. The sun, having considered as friend, is described to play games with the season, "to load and bless / With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run" (3-4). Growth, fertility, and abundance are highlighted through images. Nature is full of life, friendly, and fertile. However, there is a sense of expectation that this is both the winter season and the season of plenty. As they approach the end of their cycle, fruits are considered ripe. Keats thus depicts beauty as a result of time rather than something that exists outside of it.

In the second stanza Keats makes Autumn a living, breathing thing. The season appears, The person is sitting "careless on a granary floor" (14). This visualization shows a restful image as opposed to an active one. Fall is not toward something but dwelling in the now. The personification turns a season into a symbol of a patient acceptance. The final line conveys an unspoken sense of failure and death. The speaker queries, "Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?" (23), implying a contrast between the freshness of Spring and Fall, which is nostalgic. However, Keats immediately rejects the temptation to dwell on the past, "Think not of them, Thou hast thy music too" (24), creating a significant response to the poem's meaning.

The poem celebrates ripeness, maturity, and seasonal change, showcasing that creativity does not stem from denial of reality, but from its embrace. By doing so, this piece of work becomes one of the ripest statements of Romantic consciousness, and it is a statement that brings into full fruition Keats's conception of a creative self, one that is defined by sensation, imagination and openness to experience.

The poem "La Belle Dame sans Merci" is basically a darker version of the analysis of imagination and experience of feeling. This poem starts with an image of isolation: "O, what can ail thee, knight-at-arms, / Alone and palely loitering?" (Keats, line 1-2). The knight is introduced as a being who is out of his way from the common world. The environment

surrounding him seems barren and desolate, mirroring his inner state. Here, rather than abundance, as in "To Autumn", a setting of decline and emptiness is suggested. The knight's physical appearance indicates that he has undergone a transformative experience, and that he does not fully comprehend it. Consciousness is demonstrated to be sensitive to emotional experiences that can have a long-term impact once they have passed.

The lady unfolds herself with immense beauty as the knight tells his tale: "Full beautiful---a faery's child" (14). The description puts her in-between reality and fantasy. She looks human but not, familiar but unknown. The ambiguity is important because it is characteristic of the overall uncertainty of the poem. The lady becomes the object of desire, but still she is not totally understood. This is an emotional, imaginative, and symbolic attraction that the knight feels for her.

When the knight goes into the lady's mysterious realm and falls asleep and describes his dreams as "La Belle Dame sans Merci / Hath thee in thrall!", it adds to the uncertainty. One does not know if it is reality or imagination. The knight is given knowledge not from personal experience but through a vision. This is a double meaning that reveals how Keats was interested in the states of consciousness between waking and dreaming, certainty and mystery. The poem does not give a clear explanation of the encounter, so several interpretations are possible.

What the dream also shows is the repercussions of too much desire. The knight encounters figures that have suffered the same fate, and it seems that love can be a form of bondage. At first imagination enriches experience, but in the end it causes emotional suffering. But Keats does not show this result as an easy moral teaching. This complexity mirrors quite closely that of Keats's "negative capability". The poem does not explain the reality of the lady, whether she is a supernatural, symbolic or psychological one? It does not say whether it is a deceived or transformed knight. These questions are left unanswered by Keats. Consciousness

is thus displayed as not the product of certainty and control, but of engagement with experiences beyond interpretation.

Keats' poems vary in terms of sensation, imagination, and emotional spontaneity. They embrace doubt as a necessary component of awareness rather than being tormented by it. There are no conclusive answers to the concerns of truth, beauty, mortality, or desire in his poetry. Imagination makes a person more aware of the beauty of the world and of its impermanence. Keats demonstrates how to be creative by being receptive to change, emotion, and ambiguity. His poetry expresses a feeling of incompleteness and uncertainty as well as the capacity to dream, feel, envision, and reimagine the world. By doing this, Keats offers a unique Romantic understanding of selfhood that is sensual, creative, and ever changing

## **Conclusion**

When considered as whole, these poets show the complexity and variety of Romantic self understandings. They have different approaches, but they agree that identity is not set, or predetermined. Emotions, imaginations, memories and reflections have a constant influence on the self. Wordsworth stresses development, Byron stresses split, and Keats stresses creative openness. These distinctions show that there is no singular way of thinking about emotion or about consciousness in Romanticism. Rather, it presents a variety of perspectives on consciousness. The results of this study, accordingly, suggest that selfhood in Romantic Poetry is dynamic and not static. Emotion is not just expressed, but it is also a part of the building of consciousness. Memory transforms experience into the state of understanding, Conflict discloses the complexity of identity, Imagination expands the scopes of perception. These various methods all help to broaden Wordsworth, Byron, and Keats' exploration of what it is to feel, think, and being self-aware. To conclude, this thesis demonstrates that the consciousness is fluid, frequently changing and evolving. Thus, Wordsworth, Byron and Keats' poetry continue to live on with the chronicles of time, conveying the complexity of human experience.

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