CHAPTER 3

KEATS AND BAUDELAIRE:
Their Formative Influences
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John Keats as we know was born just a few years before the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* which officially marked the beginning of the Romantic age of the English literature. Keats’s name figures along with the later Romantics but it would not be wrong to say that his style very much matched the writers of the earlier ages especially with those of the Transition Age which had preceded the Romantic Age of the English Literature.

Before looking into the Transition and the Romantic age, let us briefly consider the literary trends of the 18th Century literature. The literary trends of the 18th century literature had already begun in the later half of 17th century, after the restoration of Charles II to the English throne, and dominated the first half of 18th Century. The age had its distinct literary features. Some of the important ones are as follows. The writers of the age religiously followed the rules and regulations laid down by the classical masters. These writers always associated themselves to the polite society of the time. They believed that it was this polite society that made man capable of civilized achievements and helped him in exploring realms of imagination and sensibility. The age saw the rise of satire and prose in literature. However by the middle and later half of the eighteenth century the critical and rational literature of John Dryden, Alexander Pope, and Ben Johnson was challenged by a new trend.

James Thomson’s *The Seasons* that came out in the later half of 1720s is supposed to be first work that protested the 18th Century literary trends and by 1740s almost all writers chose to write in this new tone. This new kind of literature was basically a simple expression of life seen through
imagination rather than ‘prosaic common sense’ that the earlier age strongly believed in. The literature of the period set a new tone by drawing away from the rules and regulations set forth by the Classical masters. The writers of the Romantic revival strongly revolted against the bondage of rules and regulations. They believed these rules merely fettered the free spirit of man.

It was in fact during the Transitional period the writers had started to alienate themselves from the polite society of the eighteenth century. They started singing about the rustics and about the people who belonged to the lower strata of the society along with their simplicity. During the age emotional sensitivity was encouraged through sympathetic responsiveness towards the poor, needy, humble, downtrodden and afflicted. Along with this the Gothic novels particularly Mysteries of Udolpho had played an important role in popularizing the feelings of awe and wonder. It had cultivated among the people the tastes for the mysterious and the uncanny. As pointed out earlier important work of the time, which the death knell of the 18th Century literature was Thomson’s Seasons which was notable for its celebrations of the powers and pleasures of rural nature. In his Preface to Winter Thomson had written –

I know of no subject more elevating, more musing, more ready to awake the poetical enthusiasm, the philosophical reflection, and the moral sentiment, than the works of Nature. Where can we meet with such variety, such beauty, such magnificence? All that enlarges and transports the soul? What more inspiring than calm, wide survey of them? In every dress nature is greatly charming- whether she puts on crimson robe of the morning, the strong effulgence of noon, the sober suit of the evening, or the deep sables of blackness and tempest! How gay
looks the spring! How glorious the summer! How pleasing the autumn! And how venerable the winter!- but there is no thinking of these things without breaking out into poetry; which is, by the bye, a plain and undeniable argument of their superior excellence. For this reason the best, both ancient and modern, poets have been passionately fond of retirement and solitude, the wild romantic country was their delight. And they seem never to have been more happy than when, lost in unfrequented fields, far from the little busy world, they were at leisure to meditate, and sing the works of nature\(^1\).

These words gained immense popularity especially that it was spoken during the time when Nature used to be just in the background, when predominant theme of literature always used to be men and the upper class society. Keats definitely was inspired by them when we consider his poems as replete with Nature as theme and descriptions of her beauty.

Thomson’s lines from *The Seasons*-

> The downy orchard, and the melting pulp,
> Of mellow fruit\(^2\) (*Seasons; L 300-301*)

Gives us images similar to what we later find in Keats’ *Ode to Autumn*.

> Season of mist and mellow fruitfulness\(^3\) (*Ode to Autumn; L 1*)
Similarly –

on the marble tomb
The well dissembled mourner stooping stands,
For ever silent, and forever sad. 4(The Seasons; L1220-1222)

Gives us the ideas which are found in Keats’ *Ode on a Grecian Urn* that were to follow later.

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
Forever piping songs forever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
Forever warm and still to be enjoyed,
Forever panting, and forever young; 5

(*Ode on a Grecian Urn;* L 21-27)

A deviation from this conventional style can be found in the works of other poets of the Transitional Age like William Cowper, Thomas Gray, Robert Burns, George Crabbe, Thomas Chatterton and William Collins. Thomas Gray in his ‘*The Bard*’ presented a figure of poet prophet, seer, sage and martyr. Like Thomson, Crabbe in his *The Village*, presented a scene of a rural life. Burns looked into the Scottish folklore as themes for his works.

The most important of Keats’ precursors belonging to the age was Thomas Chatterton who was born in 1752. He was a genius in his own right publishing his first volume of poetry at the age of twelve. He became fascinated with the Medieval Age and wrote a series of documents in
pseudo medieval diction and ascribed it to an imaginary person called Thomas Rowley. Burdened by his poverty Chatterton poisoned himself and died at a tender age of seventeen in 1770. His Rowley poems were published in 1777, 1778 and 1782. These publications brought him fame as an eccentric writer yet full of originality.

For Wordsworth he was-

Chatterton, the marvelous Boy,
The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;⁶

(Resolution and Independence ; VII, L 43-44)

And for Coleridge he was-

Brisstowa’s bard, the wonderous boy!
An amaranth, which earth scarce seem’d to own,
Blooming ‘mong poverty’s drear wintry waste,
Till disappointment came, and pelting wrong
Beat it to earth…⁷

(On Observing a Blossom on the First day of February; L 12-16)

And Keats following Coleridge in his sonnet Oh Chatterton said-

A half-blown flower, which could blast amate.
But this is past. Thou art among the stars
Of highest heaven; to the rolling spheres
Thou sweetly singest- nought thy hymning mars,
Above the ingrate world and human fears.⁸

(Oh Chatterton; L8-12)
Chatterton’s pseudo Medieval writings appealed the age and Keats was not left behind. He found it enticingly exciting, exotic and mysterious. We find him turning away from Milton and mentally associating himself with Chatterton. His association with Chatterton might have encouraged Keats to proclaim in his *Sleep and Beauty* that ‘Augustan poets rode rocking horses instead of Pegasus’. In a ‘Letter to the Dygne Master Canyge’ Rowley complains against the contemporary poets on similar lines:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{instedde of mountynge onn a winged horse} \\
\text{You onn a rouncy dryve yn dolefull course}^9. \\
\end{align*}
\]

(*Letter to the Dygne Master Canyge; ll 79-80*)

Another example where once again Keats owed to *The Rowley Poems* was in the third minstrel’s song in Ælla.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Whanne Autumpne Blake and sonne-brente doe appere} \\
\text{With hys goulde honde guyltenge the falleynge lefe,} \\
\text{Bryngeynge uponne Wynterr to folfylle the yere,} \\
\text{Beerynge uponne hys backe the ripèd shefe;} \\
\text{Whan al the hyls wythe woddie sede ys whyte;} \\
\text{Whanne levynne-fyres and lemes do mete from far the syghte;} \\
\text{Whann the fayre apple, rudde as evenskie,} \\
\text{Do bende the tree unto the fructylle grounde;} \\
\text{When joice peres and berries of black die,} \\
\text{Doe daunce yn ayre, and call the eyne around;} \\
\text{Than, bee the even foule, or even fayre,} \\
\text{Meethynckes mie hartys joie ys steyncèd with somme care.}^{10}
\end{align*}
\]
Keats must have remembered this song when he was writing his *Ode to Autumn*. His lines-

\[
\text{to bend with apples the moss’d cottage-trees,} \\
\text{And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;}^{11}
\]

*(Ode To Autumn; L5-6)*

Brings back to our minds Chatterton’s

\[
\text{the fayre apple, rudde as evenskie,} \\
\text{Do bende the tree unto the fructylle grounde}^{12}
\]

Not only that the whole idea of Keats’ personifying Autumn as harvester, gleaner and basket bearer in the second stanza of the poem might be an off shoot from Chatterton’s

\[
\text{Beerynge uponne hys backe the ripèd shefe;}^{13}
\]

Apart from these, the very fact that Keats had dedicated his *Endymion* to Chatterton speaks volumes of how much Keats admired him. At the same time it is quite surprising that Keats drew his inspiration from a poet who was frustrated and had ultimately committed suicide.

In the works of the Neo Classic writers Nature was always portrayed merely in the background. With the romantic revival Nature occupied an important place in literature, so much so, poets like William Wordsworth considered her to be his mother, teacher, and a guide. Nature was treated in a new way and it was given much importance in the works of these poets. A close bond was felt to be present in between man and Nature.
The works of the writers of the transitional period were intuitive rather than rationalistic. Here again they differ from the writers of the earlier period. Intuition and imagination was given more importance than intellect.

Another important feature of the age was the writers of the time dreamt of a golden age. They were not satisfied with their own age for something or the other. For some it was in the bygone medieval and classical eras, for some it was in the oriental world for others it was in the years to come. The writers of the time sought to retire to their ideal world in their writings.

Their works were spiced up with intense human sympathy. The sympathy was for the things commonly found in every day life. In his Task Cowper describes the simple homely scenes of woods and brooks. Burn’s To a Mouse, To a Mountain Daisy and other poems show us how the simple things that we encounter in our day-to-day life have unlimited poetic possibilities. Collins is best known for his work Ode to Evening in which he follows the rest and addresses nature in a very personal manner.

Rousseau considered conventions of civilizations brought about intolerable restrictions on one’s personality, which hindered decent living. He considered it to be the root of all evil.

William Blake anticipated the Romantics by revolting against the intellectual literature and the literary conventions of the 18th Century. The year 1789 not only saw French revolution but also William Blake bringing out his works The Songs of Innocence. Its sequence The Songs of Experience came out later in the year 1794. In these works Blake deliberately broke away from the literary and cultural pattern of his age. The theme of his Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience exactly corroborated to what Rousseau was preaching. In the title page Blake
describes his songs as ‘…showing the two contrary states of human soul.’ This very statement makes the readers appreciate Blake’s ability to transform complex states of mind into simple songs. His *Songs of Innocence* has its own freshness and purity. The poems of this group deal with childhood- a symbol of un tarnished innocence. The poetic imagination is filled with childlike directness and sense of joy in human and natural world. In *Songs of Innocence* all human desires are innocent and even discipline that we find in the poem *Holy Thursday* is a joyful one. On the other hand *Songs of Experience* represents corruption of innocence, immoral forces of the society, distortion, sadness and the road to which wisdom leads. According to the poet progression is always from innocence to experience however it is full of disillusionment. Blake believed in creative imagination. He always hated the empiricist philosophers who according to him through their theories destroyed the state of innocence. According to Blake, fruit of deceit springs from an analytic intellect. Misuse of intellect and distrust of imagination combine to corrupt and destroy.

In the last stanza of his poem *Human Abstract Analysis* he writes-

The Gods of the earth
Sought through nature to find this tree;
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in human brain\(^\text{14}\).

(*Human Abstract Analysis*:L 21-24)

Here Blake tells us that the Gods searched for the tree that bore the fruit of deceit. In spite of their search they could not find any because according to the poet the fruits of deceit are born in human mind. When he says so what
does he mean? He meant that rational within the mind is the root of deceit from where the evil and deceit originate.

From the beginning of his career Blake wrote in a simple language and shunned poetic diction. He used free verse and personal images to symbolize his vision of the universe. For his songs he uses plenty of private and conventional symbols. ‘Childhood’ itself is becomes a symbol of innocence for him. In the poems belonging to the innocence group most of the symbols he uses are taken from the Bible and they can be easily understood. However in the experience group most of the symbols are personal or private and cannot be understood easily. Understanding these private symbols becomes tough and since the symbols are not understood easily, one may not understand the poems properly. In spite of this the songs are very lyrical, limpid, and melodious. He is able to distill the complex imaginative ideas and speak about it in just a few words. For his songs Blake chooses his material judiciously, distills them in his thoughts and put them in such a manner that they made a direct and immediate appeal to the readers.

In Thomas Gray’s *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* a melancholic note prevails. This melancholic strain started by Gray and other poets of the time remained in English poetry for a long time and it was passed over to the Romantic poets who came after them. W. J. Long in his history of English literature says-

> .... and Gray’s elegy is to see the beginning and the perfection of that literature of melancholy which largely occupied English poets for more than a decade.¹⁵

*(English Literature its History and its Significance; William J. Long Chapter I)*
The stamp of melancholy that we so often find in the works of Thomas Gray (1716-1771) is recurrent in Keats’s poems which were to come much later. Gray was also much interested in the ancient sagas, life of common man and nature. These things can be found in plenty in the works of Keats. He delighted in nature and homely materials just as William Cowper and other great poets of the Transition Age.

Like Burns, John Keats also wrote straight from the heart about the various emotions. In 1818, when John Keats while on a walking tour in the North of Scotland, visited Robert Burns’ first home, he composed a sonnet. The mysticism of William Blake along with far-fetched ideas, the melancholy of Thomas Gray, rural scenes and nature of others are found in plenty in Keats’s writings. So we can see that the writers of the romantic revival or the Transition age did influence Keats in one-way or the other.

As I have pointed out that Keats’s name is associated with the later Romantics. The literary characteristics of the Romantic age to which he belonged, also had an immense influence on him. As we know that there are different prominent features found in the literary works of Romantic period. Some of these features were also found in the other literary ages yet what is important is that these features occur more frequently in the English literature produced between 1790s to 1830s, the heyday of Romantic movement. Some of these distinguishing features were-talented individuals occupied special place and they were often seen as rebels against conventions and traditions. By conventions and traditions we mean the literary conventions and literary traditions of the preceding 18th century Neo-Classical age. Orthodox traditional religion especially Christianity was discarded and its place is taken by some absolute and intense private experience. Each individual tried to look for different alternatives. Nature
became important and awe inspiring entity which often created space for intense experiences. We are well aware of the place nature occupied in the literature of the Noe-Classical age. It was always portrayed at the background with no independent entity of its own. Nature was treated as something to sympathize or compliment some feelings and general atmosphere of the work of art. It was never taken up as the subject for a work of art in itself. There was a peculiar want for a revolution against the traditions in a society and also a want for transformation in individuals. The age was inspired by Rousseau’s idea of freedom. French Revolution and the fall of Bastille became the epitome of free and independent state. This independent and free spirit was encouraged in all the spheres of life and also in literature. The writers of the time accordingly rebelled against and shunned the rules and regulations laid down by the Classical writers which was given undue importance by the writers of the 18th century. Shakespeare who broke all the traditional rules was considered a hero and lonely rebel like Milton was considered as an unappreciated martyr. The society was more instinctive and responsive to sensual hedonism. Emotion and imagination became the two most important aspects of Romantic literature. Accordingly sense impressionism became the immediate inspiration for the production of different forms of work of art. These often led to sensual hedonism. Rationality was shunned at in the name of unconscious wisdom, instinctive responsiveness, sensual hedonism and vigorously passionate conduct. It was an age of intuition, emotion and imagination rather than rationalism. The age produced literature of heart rather than literature of brain. Entranced usually of dream or drugged state and a child’s or a savage’s outlook occupied a special position in the Romantic literature. It was an age which legally allowed the use of ‘laudanum’, a mixture of poppy and alcohol as a pain-killer, soporific and tranquilizer. Many of the writers of the time started using drugs especially laudanum or opium as medicine but they got addicted to them. Artificial
inspiration through the use of drugs was a popular way during the time. A search for past and golden future was undertaken to establish ideal world along with the historical past to establish the rich cultural tradition. The proponents of literature and also many of the general populace were not happy with the turn of events after Napoleon took over after the French Revolution. English writers like William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge who whole heartedly supported revolution initially shied away and distanced themselves from the revolution. In the process of doing so they retreated to their ideal worlds of nature and the supernatural. Similarly other writers of the Romantic age also undertook this kind of voyages to their own Utopia(s), which were found in the Classical, Medieval, and the Oriental past or the golden future that was yet to be born. There were many who retreated to the historical past of England. Much importance was given to subjective visions in order to bring about social transformation. An artist was given his due importance and each individual’s voice became a prominent voice of the time, a voice that could change the world.

Much of the points mentioned above are found present in Keats’ Poetry. His rebellion is seen not only in his choice of John Milton, William Shakespeare, Lord G. Byron and Leigh Hunt as cultural heroes but his decision to quit medicine and take up poetry instead, also showed the rebel in him. His non acceptance of the conventional Christian faith is often hinted in his works. Return to nature the other important feature of the romantic literature is found in plenty in his works. Like the rest of the Romantics, Keats too wrote plenty about the nature around him. He celebrated the beauty of the Lake District, Fingal’s Cave in Scotland, the flora, and rich countryside with which he was familiar. He ardently took note of all the beautiful things of nature. Keats treats nature in a simple, direct and personal manner unlike Shelly and Wordsworth. In nature Shelly saw the symbols of the facts of human life. Shelly believes that
Nature exercises a healing influence on man’s personality. He finds solace and comfort in Nature and feels its soothing influence on his heart. Shelley, in his poetry and his approach to nature appears as a pantheist too. In fact, in his attitude towards Nature, William Wordsworth greatly influenced him. However, unlike Wordsworth, who linked the spirit in Nature with God, Shelley, on the other hand, linked it and identified it with love, for he was an atheist and a skeptic. An important work that reflects Shelly’s pantheism is *Adonais.* He feels that Nature’s spirit is eternal. He believes that there is some unknown and unseen intelligence controlling Nature. Thus he fuses the platonic philosophy of love with pantheism. To him Nature is alive, capable of feeling and thinking like a human organism. Wordsworth equates it with God, Shelley with love.

Shelley loved the indefinite and the changeful in Nature. He presented the changing and indefinite moods of Nature like the clouds, the wind, the lightening so on and so forth. Poems like ‘Ode to the West Wind’ reflects this characteristic trend of Nature wherein, Shelly shows West Wind driving the dead leaves, scattering the living seeds, awakening the Mediterranean and making the sea-plants feel its force. There is no pictorial definiteness in his poetry and for this reason his Nature description is clothed in mist. For Wordsworth nature meant much more than its mere physical existence. In his Tintern Abbey Wordsworth declares Nature to be ‘…the nurse, the guide and guardian of my heart and soul/ and all of my moral being’ (L-109-111). He strenuously operated his soul in order to understand nature. Contrary to these ideas Keats’ Nature is interesting just for her sensuous appeal. According to Compton Rickett-

…Keats is content to express her through senses. The colour, the scent, the touch, the pulsing music, these are the things that
stir him to the depths; there is not a mood of earth he does not love, not a season that will not cheer and inspire him.\textsuperscript{16}

His attitude towards nature at times was Hellenic. Keats’s nature is peopled with Gods and Goddesses of mythologies. There are Dryads, Fauns, Satyrs and Nymphs present in his woods and trees.

No doubt he remained aloof from politics and all political controversies of the time. Yet he always advocated the spirit of freedom, which was preached by the leaders and philosophers of his time. In this he had more of republican left wing outlook. He sympathized with radical figures like Henry ‘Orator’ Hunt, and Richard Carlyle who defied law at that time. He was also against monarchy and militarism. Like other Romantics of the time he also shunned rationalism for sensuous hedonism, and stressed on imagination as a source of greater wisdom. Speaking about imagination a strong similarity can be drawn between his statement and Blake’s. Blake had said –

\begin{quote}
What is now proved was once only imagined.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

\textit{(The Marriage of Heaven and Hell)}

Speaking on similar lines in a letter to Benjamin Bailey written on 22\textsuperscript{nd} November 1817 Keats writes–

\begin{quote}
What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth-whether it existed before or not.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

This is a complex idea however if we take into consideration the 34\textsuperscript{th}, 35\textsuperscript{th}, and 36\textsuperscript{th} stanzas of \textit{Eve of St Agnes} we see quite a similar thing happening. It gives a poetic realization to imagination which Keats also equates with
Adam’s dream. The imagination of Madeline here fuses with the reality of Porphyro. This fusion between the two also symbolizes the fusion between the spiritual and the physical. Similarly in Hyperion too, Keats through the character of Apollo speaks about how imagination can conceive about the birth of a poet. His odes like Ode on a Grecian Urn, and Ode to Nightingale seeks to explore the unstable relationship between imagination and reality. Going by these examples Keats conceived imagination as a creative power. Imagination has the power to invent pleasures and provide an escape from this world into a mental world of delight and pleasure which ultimately satiates. It can conceive a transcendent beauty, immortal and ideal. The wonderful feelings experienced can be recreated through words for the readers to enjoy. Lastly he also believed that it is through the exploration of contradictions and frustrations of such experiences imagination can create a vision which is a more complex beauty.

Then again in a letter to Bailey written on 13th March 1818 he discusses about his idea of imagination where he says that it is intimately associated with heart’s instinct. Here he brings about the famous comparison between imagination and Adam’s dream. According to him what imagination seizes to be beauty is truth or in other words, concepts of beauty and truth are instinctual. It cannot be found out through rationality. In his idea about life of sensations he points out the idea of evolution that we find in his Hyperion. The prototype present on earth should be felt, adored and admired as it is the source of exalted state of the realm of imagination.

In a letter addressed to John Hamilton Reynolds written on 13th July 1818 tells that he cannot write about scenery and visiting(s) because fancy is less than palpable reality. This again points out the importance he lends to imagination. He would rather write about imaginative things than palpable reality around him.
Dreams and drugged entranced states are frequently found in his works. His works like *Sleep and Poetry* and *Ode to Nightingale* are replete with them. When we speak about the drugged entranced state we actually refer to it in its literal sense. It was a popular habit during the Romantic period to take a solution named ‘laudanum’, a mixture of poppy and alcohol as a pain-killer, soporific and tranquilizer. People belonging to all classes, irrespective of sex and age used it as night cap. Most writers of the time like Charles Lamb, Thomas Moore, P.B. Shelly, Robert Southey, Walter Scott and George Gordon Byron are said to have taken it, and some like S.T. Coleridge, Thomas De Quincey and George Crabbe got addicted to it. Britian imported about ten thousand kilograms of opium during the time, and it was only in 1868 the parliament passed a resolution to control its availability. Laudanum played an important role to accelerate imaginative process through the sub-rational, dreams, reveries, and ecstatic states. It became the source of many strange and surrealistic visions. Coleridge in his essay *On Poesy or Art* found in his *Literary Remains* claims-

There is in genius itself an unconscious activity; nay, that is the genius in the man of genius\(^1\)

The tranced state is very much present in the lines-

A dusky light- a purple flash
Crystalline splendor- light blue-
Green lightening.-
In that eternal and & delirious misery-
Wrathfires-
Inward desolations-
An horror of great darkness
Great things that on the ocean
Counterfeit infinity-

These lines were dated to 1796 and they clearly anticipate the strange horrifying seascapes of Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Similarly his *Kubla Khan* according to the poet himself is an end product of administration of ‘an anodyne’ - ‘two grains of opium’.

Similarly many people claim that Keats might have started taking Laudanum from his student days and especially as he was a student of medicine he must have known about the drug. Given to this history he might have had started taking this drug as a pain-killer for the long sore throats that occurred during the early stages of tuberculosis. Charles Brown also records that in 1819-1820 Keats was secretly taking laudanum to keep up his spirits. Keats works both poems and letters are well sprinkled with the references to opium and poppy. In a letter to Fanny Brawne written on 3rd July 1819 he writes-

> Make it rich as a draught of poppies to intoxicate me.\(^{20}\)

In *Endymion* Book I, Endymion dreams of Cynthia when he falls asleep on the bank of ‘sacred ditamy, and poppies red’.

> Moreover, through the dancing poppies stole
A breeze, most softly lulling to my soul;
And shaping visions all about my sight
Of colours, wings, and burst of spangly light…\(^{21}\)

* (Endymion Book I, ll 555,566-569)
In ‘The Fall of Hyperion’ lines—

No Asian poppy, nor elixir fine…
and
Could so have rapt unwilling life away. \(^{22}\)

(The Fall of Hyperion Book I, l-47,51)

Once again tells us that the poet is overcome with domineering poppy.

In his poems like ‘To Sleep’ and ‘To Autumn’ we again have allusions to poppy made.

thys\(\) poppy throws,
Around my bed its lulling charities \(^ {23}\)

(To Sleep, L 7-8)

And

drows’d with the fume of poppies \(^ {24}\)

(To Autumn, L-17)

Haydon had in 1819 noted about the alternation between excitement and despondency in Keats’ character and Alethea Hayter in his *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* hints that this alternation in mood might have something to do with Keats’ taking of Laudanum. According to Alethea Hayter this addiction to opium might have given him dream visions which Keats talks about in 19\(^{th}\) March, and again later in 18\(^{th}\)/19\(^{th}\) April of 1819. The dream vision he talks about goes somewhat like this—
the dream was one of the most delightful enjoyments I ever had in my life- I floated about the whirling atmosphere…..with a beautiful figure to whose lips mine were joined a(s) it seem’d for an age- and in the midst of all this cold and darkness I was warm- even flowery tree tops sprung up and we rested on them sometimes with lightness of a cloud till the wind blew us away again…..o that I could dream it every night.25

Keats cherished the dream and yearned for it again. Alethea Hayter points out ‘feeling of blissful buoyancy’, ‘extension of time’, ‘contrasts of temperature’ and ‘bliss of an outcaste’ as the different constituents of the dream and according to him these are very much an opium vision. This opium-sleep-dream idea in one cluster dates back to the ancient times so much so Ovid in his Metamorphosis even links poppy with Morpheus, the God of dreams. Keats did not hesitate to pick up the strings. Just like for others poppy and opium becomes a significant if not important source of inspiration for him. It is not just the appeal these situations provoke but Keats also speaks about the resistance.

Similarly the outlook of a noble savage as in The Fall of Hyperion is sympathetically treated. The lines-

Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave
A paradise for a sect; the savage too
From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
Guesses at heaven…26 (Fall of Hyperion, L 1-4)

Are enough to prove the idea of tranced state.
Again following the Romantic tradition and enthusiasm Keats applauded, and sought inspiration from Geoffrey Chaucer, Edmund Spencer, William Shakespeare, John Milton, Leigh Hunt and Thomas Chatterton in his works.

The Romantic age was an age of poetry. The most important thing about Keats is his idea about poetry. He looked upon poetry from an aesthete’s point of view. For him poetry was meant to exist only for its own sake. He was faithful to his art and lived for it. Many a time in his poetry Keats transports himself to the far off classical, medieval and oriental ages and spaces. His odes *On a Grecian Urn, To Psyche, To Melancholy* and poems like *Hyperion, Eve of St Agnes, La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, unfolds the mysteries of the ancient worlds. These poems speak about the beauty of the Hellenic, Medieval and the Oriental world.

The people living around him also influenced Keats in his writings. He is a true romantic and like other romantics Keats also experimented with the different styles of various writers. In London he had a group of friends who were involved in literary activities. His view about literature that it was meant merely for pleasure was in fact to my understanding, an influence of Leigh Hunt and the Cockney School.

Hunt is often referred in several of Keats’s early poems as ‘Libertas’. Many times Keats walked all the way from Clerkenwell or Cheapside to the rural village of Hampstead and spent a night at Hunt’s place. Like Hunt, Keats also rebelled against the conventional style and chose the easy relaxed manner. But even before knowing and meeting Leigh Hunt personally, Keats was influenced by the liberalism which Hunt preached in his *Examiner*. In his *Examiner*, Hunt had sharply criticized Prince Regent and the Tory government. The meeting between Keats and Hunt took place only in October 1816, but before that they had been reading and enjoying each
other’s poetry. Their first meeting was later on documented by Hunt in following words-

I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the exuberant specimens of genuine though young poetry that were laid before me, and the promise of which was seconded by the fine fervid countenance of the writer. We became intimate on the spot, and I found the young poet’s heart as warm as his imagination. We read and walked together, and used to write verses of an evening upon a given subject. No imaginative pleasure was left unnoticed by us, or unenjoyed; from the recollection of the bards and patriots of the old, to the luxury of the summer rain at our window, or the clicking of the coal in winter time. Not long afterwards, having the pleasure of entertaining at dinner Mr. Godwin, Mr. Hazlitt, and Mr. Basil Montague, I showed them the verses of my young friend, and they were pronounced to be as extraordinary as I thought them.\(^27\)

*(Lord Byron and some of his contemporaries, Leigh Hunt, pp 247-8)*

The above lines clearly speaks about Leigh Hunt’s ready acceptance and his sympathy towards Keats and his works. The line – ‘…the luxury of the summer rain at our window, or the clicking of the coal in winter time.’ Also gives us the hint that Hunt was also given to sensuous beauty or experience. Apart from that we also from the line get to know about Hunt’s evocative precision both of which are qualities abundantly found in Keats’ works. We can also at the same time safely guess that through their acquaintance Keats learnt many valuable lessons from the elder poet.
Cerdic Watts in his A Preface to Keats writes—

‘Admirers of Keats’ major poetry, with its dialectical energy and its salting of skepticism, have sometimes regarded Hunt’s influence as a retrograde one which encouraged the escapist, whimsical and dilettantish tendencies; and indeed there were some such encouragement, for Hunt cultivated a pose of blithe hedonism. Nevertheless, for fluency of natural description invigorated by unexpectedly bold phrasing, Hunt’s work was a valuable model. That is indicated by the felicitous phrases like ‘suckle’s streaky light’ and ‘flings of sunshine’ as found in his *The Story of Rimini*—

Various the trees and passing foliage here,
Wild pear, and oak, and dusky juniper,
With briony between in trails of white,
And ivy, and the suckle’s streaky light,
And moss, warm gleaming with a sudden mark,
Like flings of sunshine left upon the bark,
And still the pine, long haired, and dark, and tall,
In lordly right, predominant o’er all.28

(Hunt: Poetical Works, Oxford University Press, 1923, p.12)

In Keats’ *Calidor* the diction, loose heroic couplet and sentimental eroticism makes it apparent that the work is inspired by Hunt’s *The Story of Rimini*. In the work he borrows Hunt’s narrative energy along with Hunt’s trademark diction. To name few they are adjectives ending with ‘y’ formed from nouns and verbs like ‘shadowy’, ‘bowery’, ‘silvery’; then you have adverbs formed from present participles like ‘lingeringly’, ‘refreshingly’,


‘tremblingly’; and abstract nouns ending in ‘ness’ like ‘clearness’, ‘calmness’, ‘dimness’. Again following Hunt’s footsteps Keats at times used verbs as nouns as in ‘easy float’, ‘hasty trip’, and ‘airy feel’ to name few. Bate pointed out that Hunt sometimes tried to express sentiment in a certain sprightliness, which often made them colloquial and at times vulgar. This can be seen in again his *The Story of Rimini*.

…prepared
To do her duty, where appeal was barred,
She had stout notions on the marrying score.³⁹

(*The Story of Rimini*. Canto II lines 26-28)

A similar kind of thing can be found in Keats too as in-

God! She is like a milk-white lamb that bleats…³⁰

(‘Woman! When I behold thee, flippant, vain’, L-31)

Keats also borrowed Hunt’s couplet which was different from the regular one, which lacked the Augustan poise and emphasis. It was much looser and followed a more casual movement.

When it comes to style Hunt was not the only one to influence Keats. In the initial stages we see John Milton playing an important role in shaping many of his works. William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, Petrarch, Thomas Moore, Blake, John Dryden and Gray all have influenced Keats’s style of writing at various stages and in various ways. Wordsworthian concern for humanity is often found in Keats’s writings. Keats himself had in one of his letters placed Wordsworth above Milton for his anxiety towards mankind. According to him Wordsworth had ‘…convinced his
nerves that the world is full of misery and heartbreak, pain, sickness, and oppression\textsuperscript{31}(Letter to J.H. Reynolds, 3\textsuperscript{rd} May 1818).

In one of the visits to Hunt’s place Keats’s met Benjamine Robert Haydon who was a painter. Contrary to Hunt, Haydon was serious, devout and passionate about painting. He believed that as a painter he was entrusted by God a mission to take English painting to ‘Michelangelesque power’ and ‘Raphaelite grandeur’. He took up the larger religious and historical subjects instead of just being satisfied with well rewarding portrait paintings. Haydon got much of critical praise and little of financial support and ultimately unable to cope with his poverty committed suicide. Haydon might have had faced a sad ending but it was him who introduced Keats to the Greek plastic art which later had a profound impact in his works. Apart from this Haydon also amplified in Keats the importance of lofty subject and its grand treatment. Haydon wrote-

\begin{quote}
Keats was the only man I ever met with who seemed and looked conscious of high calling, except Wordsworth\textsuperscript{32}.
\end{quote}

On November 19\textsuperscript{th}, 1816 the poet had dined with the painter and then after that he wrote the following letter to him on 20\textsuperscript{th} November 1816-

\begin{quote}
My dear Sir,
Last evening wrought me up, and I cannot forbear sending you the following-Your’s unfeignedly, John Keats

Great Spirits now on Earth are sojournning
He of the cloud, the Cataract the Lake
Who on Helvellyn’s summit wide awake
Catches his freshness from Archangel’s wing
\end{quote}
He is the Rose, the Violet, the Spring
The Social Smile, the Chain for freedom’s sake:
And lo!- whose steadfastness would never take
A meaner sound than Raphael’s Wishpering.
And other Spirits are there standing apart
Upon the Forehead of the Age to come;
These, These will give the World another heart
And other pulses – hear ye not the hum
Of mighty Workings in a distant Mart?
Listen awhile ye Nations, and be dumb! 33

This sonnet not exactly the best of Keats tries to pay an enthusiastic tribute to those who inspired him, and Haydon surely was among them. Keats who was always afraid after harsh criticisms he met for his initial works surely was inspired by the Haydon and his grand canvas, lofty themes, and endless confidence.

Charles Cowden Clarke who was the son of Keats’s Principal at Enfield school told him many things about various forms of art. They used to share literature among themselves and they use to be together spending time reading to each other from different literary works. They held discussions on various issues on themes and style of different literature they read. He played an important role in motivating and molding Keats for the later literary life.

Edmund Spenser also considerably influenced Keats. Like Spenser, Keats too was a lover beauty in all its forms and manifestations. As in Endymion he says:
A thing of beauty is joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, health, and quiet breathing.  

(*Endymion*, L1-5)

It was Spenser’s *Fairey Queene* that first awakened his genius. Love of sensuous beauty, frank response to the charms of nature and romance, luxuriant imagination, and felicity of expression that is found in both the poets tell us about an essential kinship shared by them. Spenser's fairyland enchanted him and he was introduced to a new world. His fascination about Spencer can be seen in his letter to John Hamilton Reynolds written on 17th and the 18th of April 1817 where he says.

Just now I opened Spencer, and the first Lines I saw were these.—
‘The noble Heart that harbors virtuous thought,
And is with Child of glorious great intent,
Can never rest, until it forth have brought
Th’ eternal Brood of Glory excellent—’

He was so enamoured that he attempted to imitate it and to some extent succeeded in doing so. We come to know from his brothers and later from Keats himself about this account of a sudden development of his poetic powers. His earliest attempt, the *Imitation of Spenser*, is in his first volume titled *Poems*. Then on from this moment he began to deeply and fervently read and ponder over other poets and important among them were Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, Fletcher, William Browne and John Milton. They became for him his household Gods. When his soul arose into poetry,
it was imbued with our earliest authors. In the year 1815 Keats came under the influence of Chapman’s translation of Homer. William Shakespeare developed his intellect and style in different ways. In spite of the fact that many of Keats’s sonnets are found in Italian form some of the better ones follow Shakespearean model. Many of his words, allusions and reminiscences are again drawn from the plays of Shakespeare. His admiration for Shakespeare can be seen in the letter to John Hamilton Reynolds written on 17th and the 18th of April 1817. He writes-

I’ll tell you what—On the 23rd was Shakespeare born—now If I should receive a Letter from you and another from my Brothers on that day ’twould be a parlous good thing—Whenever you write say a Word or two on some Passage in Shakespeare that may have come rather new to you; which must be continually happening, not withstand that we read the same Play forty times—for instance, the following, from the Tempest, never struck me so forcibly as at present

The letters written to Haydon on 10th and 11th May 1817 and to J.H. Hamilton on 22nd November 1817 again speaks about his view about the greatness of Shakespeare and his sonnets.

Another important personality to have immense influence on John Keats is Dante. Keats’ copy of Dante’s Inferno is full of markings and underlining which points out the fact of Dante’s influence. The markings in Inferno however are unique in comparison to Keats’ markings in other texts like Milton’s Paradise Lost; Burton’s The Anatomy of Melancholy, Spencer’s The Faerie Queen and the plays of Shakespeare. His markings in Dante’s Inferno not only give us an idea that Keats was influenced by the work but it also exactly relates itself to the different phases of Keats’ work. Robert
Gittings in his *The Mask of Keats* - *A Study of Problems* points out that Keats’ markings fall into three distinct or defined groups. The first group is the extensive marking in Canto I; then the markings in Cantos IX to XV form the second group; and finally markings in Cantos XXII to XXVII form the third group.

The first two pages of first canto are marked more heavily than anywhere else. This enthusiastic reading of Dante might be explained by what Keats had written in the margin of his copy of *Paradise Lost* sometime in August 1819.-

> There is always a great charm in the opening of great poems Where the action begins-that of Dante’s Hell.\(^{37}\)

Again in another place he writes-

> the brief pathos of Dante\(^{38}\)

He must have written these notes at the margins as we know that *Inferno* is full of brief and lovely passages expressing the various emotions.

Keats had with special emphasis marked the images in Canto XIV-

> Dilated flakes of fire, as flakes of snow,
> On Alpine summit, when the wind is hush’d.\(^{39}\)

* (The Divine Comedy –*Hell, Canto XIV, L-26-27)*

This image is important as it actually with much success lessens the torment of the sinners in the burning sand with the help of its loveliness. A similar image is reflected by Keats in his own *Hyperion*. 
Similarly in Keats’ *Ode to Autumn* the lines in the last stanza are just reflections of *Inferno’s* Canto XXVI which again he has heavily marked.

As in that season, when the sun leaste veils
His face that lightens all, what time the fly
Gives way to the shrill gnat, the peasant then
Upon the cliff reclin’d, beneath him sees
Fier-flie innumerous spangling o,ver the vale,
Vineyard or tilth, where his day-labour lies

*(The Divine Comedy, canto XXVI, L27-32)*

As pointed out in the previous chapter doctrinal Christianity was disregarded by Keats. So he needed a substitute and for that he looked towards Classical mythology whose richness and beauty stirred his youthful imagination. His approach to classical Mythology develops from a joyous wonderment to agonized recognition of its inadequacy. He was so much influenced by the Classical Mythology, that his contemporaries described Keats in different ways.

Leigh Hunt says-

He never saw an oak tree without seeing the Dyrad

*(Imagination and Fancy, p283)*

Shelly called him ‘a Greek’ and Byron’s attitude towards Keats was that of both sneering and appreciation and in Don Juan he describes John Keats as-
Without Greek
Contrived to talk about the God’s of late,
Much as they might have been supposed to speak.\textsuperscript{42}

\textit{(Don Juan, XI. 160)}

In a letter to Fanny written on September 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1817 also points out to the fact that Keats had sent Fanny a copy of Miss Taylor’s essays in Rhyme.
In the same letter he writes about what he is writing about. It certainly was \textit{Venus and Adonis}. He goes on to describe the source of his theme, at the same time drawing conclusion that –‘but I dare say (you) have read this and all the other beautiful tales which have come down from the ancient times of that beautiful Greece’\textsuperscript{43}. This line from the letter also points out the fact that he was well versed in Classical writings and at the same time thought that others too, in this case his sister, was also similarly well acquainted with them. On similar lines in his letter written to Jane Reynolds on 14\textsuperscript{th} September 1817, he advices her to learn Hebrew and then translate Hebrew works into native language. In a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds of 27\textsuperscript{th} April 1818 he speaks about learning Greek and Italian and then thereafter looking for a befitting genre. A little later in the same letter he hints about his love for the Classics.

In his work \textit{Life, Letters, and Literary Remains, of John Keats} Richard Monckton Milnes speak about Keats’ natural sympathy for the spirit of old mythology. He has this view about Keats because simply few books like Tooke’s \textit{Pantheon}, Spence’s \textit{Polymetis}, and Lepmpriere’s \textit{Dictionary} was enough to introduce Keats’ mind to the old Greek mythology. So it is some kind of natural or inborn quality in Keats that led to this ‘recreation and reconstruction of Grecian feeling and fancy’\textsuperscript{44}. John Keats’ myth making power has been investigated and discussed time and again. Margaret Sherwood’s essay \textit{Keats’ imaginative approach to myth} in \textit{Undercurrents}
of Influence in English Romantic Poetry; Douglas Bush’s essay on Keats in his work *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry*; and Walter Evert’s *Aesthetic and the Myth in the Poetry of Keats*; takes up the issue in different ways. In Margaret Sherwood’s essay *Keats’ imaginative approach to myth* in *Undercurrents of Influence in English Romantic Poetry* she emphasizes the in the Nineteenth Century myth as a poetic vehicle was relevant and as a result Keats too arrived at coherent interpretation of life and nature and the unity between the diversities of the natural laws. Bush in his essay emphasizes on Keats’ natural Myth making power and his ability to unite myth, nature and literature as in *Ode to Autumn* and *Ode to Psyche*. He also points out to the fact that Keats, at times altered mythology freely and at times incorporated post-classical accretions that old stories gathered while passing through many lands. Lastly, in the work Bush also points out that Keats’ work exhibited ‘a progressive adaptation of myth to humanitarian symbolism’. We are well aware of the testimony of Charles Cowden Clarke that Keats knew the hand book of Classical mythology by heart while he was in school. On this issue Walter Evert points out that interfusion of classical myth in his poetry is evident as in *Ode to Apollo* written in February 1815. These Myths were not merely lovely tales or embodied essences of all the grand and lovely qualities of nature for Keats but he shared some kind of special bond and faith with these deities, gods, goddesses, and nymphs. He believed that one could through imagination transcend mortal plane and live with the Gods. This faith inspires him to bring into union the heaven and earth. This belief sustains his idea of universal harmony where myth, nature, poetry, and human actions unite.

However at the same time though Greek mythology inspired Keats his attitude towards it changed with time. He had come to understand the inadequacy of the Classical mythology. He understood that aesthetic and
spiritual values symbolized in classical mythology fit for particular context was no longer valid for his age. With time Keats’ poetry increasingly sought to portray inner life and this led to make Greek deities of the external world less effective. His portrayal of inner life also many times concerned itself with human sufferings and here no equivalent could be found in the old myths. He tried to give personal meanings for the old classical myths and in a way this created a gap between symbols and the ideas symbolized.

C. D. Thrope in his Keats’ Interests in Politics and World Affairs, (1931’), and H.G.Wright’s Keats and Politics, ‘Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association’, XVIII (1932) points out that Keats’ liberalism has it’s roots in his innate humanitarianism. This was furthered by his association with Charles Cowden Clarke, Leigh Hunt, and William Hazlitt. Readings of anti-Tory and anti-authoritarian literatures also made him radical and they can be seen in many of the earlier writings like Isabella. Through these he tried to expose the economic exploitation of the privileged classes. This might not be present in his later poetry yet his liberal views are very much present in his later letters.

In a letter to Benjamin Haydon written on 11th May 1817 he writes-

I feel confident I should have been a rebel Angel had the opportunity be mine.46

In another letter to J. H. Reynolds written on 9th April 1818 he writes-

I would jump down Aetna for any great public good.47
And finally in a letter to George Keats written on 18th September 1819 he writes-

    This is no contest between the Whig and Tory- but between the right and wrong. 48

Then again in another letter addressed to Dilke on 22nd September 1819 he writes-

    I hope sincerely I shall be able to put a mite of help to the liberal side of the question before I die.49

Keats did not believe in any kind of political creed. Yet it would not be wrong to say that he was to some extent influenced by the ideas of the time and believed in the concept of the possibility of progress in the socio political order at least in the realm of thoughts. He believed in the idea of right and wrong and he chose to do and stand for what was right. He believed in the idea of public good and was ready to do anything, even jump down from Aetna for the benefit of the people.

Thus in a letter to Reynolds written on 3rd of May 1818 he writes-

    …the general and gregarious advance of intellect.50

This idea of gregarious advancement is also used in political field as can be seen in his letter to George written on 18th September 1819 where he says-

    All civilized countries become gradually more enlightened and there should be a continual change for the better.51
He not just noted the gradual changes and events like annihilation of the tyranny of the nobles as kings conciliated the common people, French revolution, Manchester massacre and various turns in political events that were taking place in the society, but through these, he came to believe that progress can be achieved through constant struggle and this belief is evident in his later works. His belief and faith in progression through constant struggle led him to admire men of selfless action. He thought that history itself is made up by heroes who are again made up of noble, earnest, selfless men of action.

Keats was often mesmerized by the outward beauty of nature and Charles Amitage Brown gives an account about their walking visits to the English Lakes and highlands of Scotland in the year 1818. Brown speaks about how Keats was elated at the sight of beautiful nature around him and also recounts the different works Keats wrote lost in it. He writes-

In the summer of 1818 Keats offered to be my companion in a walking visit to the English lakes and the highlands of Scotland. We first went by coach to Liverpool, as his brother George was about to embark from that port for America, and thence to Lancaster, from which town we commenced our walk, each with a knapsack on his back. I cannot forget the joy, the rapture of my friend when he suddenly, and for the first time, became sensible to the full effect of mountain scenery. It was just before our descent to the village of Bowness, at a turn of the road, when the lake of Windermere at once came into view. In the evening he repeated to me his beautiful and pathetic poem of 'Isabella', which he had just written, before he left Teignmouth.52
Another incident Brown recounts about the journey where the beauty of nature inspired Keats to imagine is given below.

After having made something like the usual to [ur] through Westmoreland and Cumberland, we journeyed by coach from Carlisle to Dumfries, where we stood before the grave of Burns. Then, as we walked, by Solway Firth, through that delightful part of Kirkudbrightshire, the scene of 'Guy Mannering', I talked of Meg Merrilies, while Keats, who had not yet read that novel, was much interested in the character. There was [a] little spot, close to our path-way,--'There', he said, in an instant positively realizing a creation of the novelist, 'in that very spot, without a shadow of 'doubt, has old Meg Merrilies often boiled her 'kettle!' It was among pieces of rock, and brambles, and broom, ornamented with a profusion of honeysuckle, wild roses, and foxglove, all in the very blush and fullness of blossom. While we sat at breakfast, he was occupied in writing to his young sister, and, for her amusement, he composed a ballad on old Meg. I took a copy of it at the time.53

The ballad to old Meg was meant for the amusement of Fanny Keats who was then a school-girl; yet it is replete with Keats’ imagination. Even the rocks around him inspired Keats and it can be seen in the following lines, recounted from Brown’s account.

Walking onward, we saw, as it were, the shoulders of this rock; then, as we still walked on, we saw more and more, with the mountains of Arran behind, the whole extent of Cantire, and even Ireland like a little dusky cloud in the horizon. At [ou]r
inn in Girvan he wrote this Sonnet on Ailsa rock. ‘Hearken, thou craggy ocean-pyramid &c’.\textsuperscript{54}

*Ode to Nightingale* is another such example which reaffirms nature’s inspiration to Keats’ poetic output. Brown recounts the occasion or rather an incident that inspired Keats to write the ode.

In the spring of 1819 a nightingale had built her nest near my house. Keats felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song; and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast-table to the grass-plot under a plum-tree, where he sat for two or three hours.\textsuperscript{55}

His love for inspiring scenery of English countryside is often found in his letters. The letter written to John Hamilton Reynolds on 17\textsuperscript{th} and the 18\textsuperscript{th} of April 1817 tells us about the journey Keats made to Shanklin. There he writes about the beauty of the place-

Shanklin is a most beautiful place-sloping wood and meadow ground reaches round the Chine, which is the cleft between the cliffs of the depth of nearly 300 feet at least. This cleft is filled with tree and bushes in the narrow parts and as it widens it becomes bare, if it were not for primroses on one side, which spread to the vary verge of the sea, ans some fishermen’s huts on the other, perched midway in the balustrades of beautiful green Hedges along their steps down to the sands. – but the sea, Jack the sea- the little waterfall- than the white cliff- then St Catherine’s Hill.\textsuperscript{56}
Then he goes on to speak about Carisbrooke in the same paragraph as it was there he ultimately decided to stay. His decision to stay at Carisbrooke is not just decided in terms of in convenience and expences but the place too has a quaint beauty of its own.

I see Carisbrooke Castle from my window, and have found several delightful woodalleys, and copses, and quick freshes. As for Primroses- the island ought to be called Primrose Island: that is, if the nation of Cowslips agree thereto, of which then are diverse clans, just beginning to lift up their heads and how the rain holds whereby that is bird’s eye abate-[….] I have not seen many specimens of ruins- I don’t think however I shall see one to surpassing Caserbrooke Castle. The trench over grown with smoothest turf and the walls with ivy- a colony of jackdaws have been there many years.[…] on the road from Cowes to Newport I saw some extensive barracks which disgusted me extremely with the Government for placing such nest of debauchery in so beautiful a place.  

In a letter to his sister Fanny written on Wednesday 10th September 1817, he is in full praise of Oxford as a place.

This Oxford I have no doubt is the finest city in the world- it is full of old Gothic buildings- Spires- Towers- Quadrangles- Cloisters, Grooves & (C) and is surrounded by more clear streamsthan ever I saw together.
- In another letter written to Jane Reynolds on 14th September 1817, once again Keats professes about is love for the sensuous beauty of the sea and the evening when he says-

-I mean in what mood and with what accompaniment do you like the sea best? It is very fine in the morning when the sun ‘opening on Neptune with fair ,blessed beams turns into yellow gold his salt sea streams’ and superb when ‘the sun from the meridian height illumines the depth of the sea, and the fishes beginning to sweat Cry damn it how hot it shall be’ and gorgeous when the fair planet hastens-‘to his home within the western foam’ but don’t you think that there is something extremely fine after sunset, when there are few white clouds about the few stars blinking- when the waters are ebbing and Horizon a mystery? The state has been so fulfilling to me…

Alleviated grief also played an important role in inspiring Keats to write poems. In his hours of grief he absorbed himself in poetry. It was on such occasion he wrote Hyperion. Keats experienced grief from different sources. Unreciprocated love from Fanny Brawne, poor health, unstable financial condition and awareness of impending death worked together to bring about this grief. He has time and again alluded to this grief in his letters.

Fanny Brawne played a significant role in Keats’ life. His love for her came as compensation after his brother Tom’s death. She was eighteen year old daughter of a widow who lived next to Charles and Maria Dilke’s place. She was witty, lively and spirited girl. On meeting her for the first time he described her to his brother George in a letter written on December 1818.
She is about my height— with a fine style of countenance of the lengthen’d sort…Her shape is very graceful and so are her movements— her arms are good [,] her hands badish— her feet tolerable….but she is ignorant—n monstrous in her behavior flying out in all directions, calling people much names— that I was forced lately to make use of the term minx…. 

However with the passage of time his attitude changed towards her and soon began to love her. In 1819 they became engaged to one another. The happiness of engagement was however a short lived one. Keats was very much conscious of his deteriorating health and impending death. In his letter to Fanny Brawne written on 25th July 1819 he writes—

I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your Loveliness and my death. O that I could have possession of them both in the same minute. I hate the world: it batters too much the wings of myself will, and would I could take a sweet poison from your lips to send me out of it.

In his life he always felt the tension between the ideal and the real. For him Fanny was the ideal and his impending death the real. This can be well found in a letter he wrote to Fanny in September 1819.

if I were to see you today it would destroy the half comfortable sullenness I enjoy at present into down[n]right perplexities. I love you too much to venture to Hampstead, I feel it is not paying a visit but venturing into a fire….Knowing well that my life must be passed in fatigue and trouble, I have been endeavouring to wean myself from you….
Then again on 11th October 1819 in a letter written to Fanny Brawne he wrote-

I have had a thousand kisses, for which with my whole soul I thank love- but if you should deny me the thousand first-‘t would put me to the proof how great a misery I could live through.63

And again in the same letter he writes-

I cannot exist without you….You have absorbed me. I have a sensation at the present moment as though I was dissolving….My creed is Love and you are its only tenant….I have endeavoured often ‘to reason against the reasons of my love- I can do that no more- the pain would be too great- my love is selfish- I cannot breathe without you.64

As he was dying he told Brown with a note of regret ‘I should have had her when I was in health, and I should have remained well. I can bear to die- I cannot bear to leave her’. We can well understand from the above instances how much Keats was in love with Fanny Brawne at the same time also coming to the conclusion about her role in influencing his ideas and work either directly or indirectly.

He is so much intrigued and influenced by the older poets that he ends the letter written to Haydon on 10th and 11th May 1817 he writes-

So now in the name of Shakespeare, Raphel, and allour saints I Commend you to the care of heaven.65
However at the same time he was against being bullied by the literary theories of other people. In a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds written on 3rd February 1818, he says that they should read and admire their contemporaries but at the same time not get bullied or affected by their poetic theories and ideas. The reason he gives is that there might be certain Philosophies which are ‘engendered by the whims of an Egotist’. He feels that every man has his speculations but he should not continuously brood over them and peacock over them until he deceives himself.

This idea of not being dogged by the ideas of other writers reaches its utmost when he decides to quit writing his Hyperion. In a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds written on 21st September 1819, he writes—

I have given up Hyperion- there were too many Miltonic inversions in it- Miltonis verse cannot be written but in an artful or rather artist’s humour. I wish to give myself upto other sensations. [...]every now and then there is a Miltonic intonation- But I cannot make the division properly…

True to Romantic spirit Keats does not want to follow any man when it comes to poetic theories and ideas. He felt that one can have them uncontaminated and unobtrusive. In a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds written on 3rd February 1818, he writes—

I will have no more of Wordsworth or Hunt in particular- Why would we be the tribe of Manasseh, when we can wander with Esau? Why should we kick against the pricks, when we walk on Roses? Why should we be owls when we can be Eagles? Why be teased with nice Eyed wagtails? When we have in sight the ‘Cherub Contemplation’? – Why with Wordsworth’s
‘Matthew with a bough of wilding in his hand’ when we can have ‘Jacques under an oak & c.’? The secret of the bough of wilding will run through your head faster than I can write it […]- I don’t mean to deny Wordsworth’s grandeur and Hunt’s merit, but I mean to say we need not be teased with grandeur and merit when we can have them uncontaminated and inobtrusive.⁶７

Keats through these lines definitely points out the fact that he is not going to be dogged by someone else’s poetic theories. He has his own ideas and beliefs when it comes to poetry. This is an important reason why his poetry stands apart and distinct when compared to the other poets of the Romantic era.

It is not only the influence of his contemporaries and other literary men he detested but he was against writers being dogged by the public thoughts. In a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, written on 9th April 1818, he writes-

-but among multitudes of Men- I have no feel of stooping , I hate the idea of humility to them- I never wrote one single line of poetry with the least shadow of public thought.⁶⁸

We well know that Keats’ early works were devastatingly criticized by Blackwood and Quarterly so much so that many claimed that these criticisms played an important role in worsening his illness. However in a letter to James Augustus Hessey written on 9th October 1818 we find a contrary idea. Keats firmly declares that the criticism of the outer world is less effective than that of him. He writes-
Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what Blackwood and Quarterly could possibly inflict, and also when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary reception & ratification of what is fine. […] had I been nervous about it being a perfect piece, & with that view asked advice, and trembled over every page, it would not have been written; for it is not in my nature to fumble–I will write independently – I have written independently without judgment.[…] the genius of poetry must work out in its own salvation in a man: it cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation and watchfulness in itself. 69

These lines once again points out that Keats firmly believed in his own precepts about poetry. The poets own critique about his work is important. Other people’s criticism counts little in front of one’s own criticism. According to him the poetry cannot flourish if the artist is too concerned about other people’s views and ideas. A creative artist should work independently. At the same time poetry should also be allowed to work in its own accord. Mere laws and regulations do not help poetry mature.

The year 1821- in which Charles Baudelaire was born, also falls in the period ascribed to as the Romantic Age in the literary history of the French Literature. The Romantic trends however had started long time before Baudelaire was born and when Baudelaire wrote it was the fag end of the Romantic Movement in France. In fact it is believed that with Charles Baudelaire a voyage to Modernism begins for the French literature. It was he who sounded the death knell to the Romantic period of French literature.
Romanticism did not sweep France all at once. The progress was rather a slow and a gradual one. Writers as well as the readers had that tendency of clinging on to the conventional thoughts, ideas, and styles of the past.

The eighteenth century French literature was purely propagandist in nature and the writers always thought about the practical purpose of their works. In their works writers put forward their religious, administrative, political thoughts and theories. Their works were light hearted and full of buffoonery. The writers of the time came to be known as ‘Philosophes’ and their ideal was reason and humanity or in other words these things held an important place in their works. They loved pure reason and looked for logical solutions. They were fond of systems. In search of these things they narrowed their sympathies. They failed to realize the beauty and importance of religious and mystical state of mind. They wanted clear light of reason to dispel prejudice, superstition, and ignorance. It was during the middle of the 18th century that various ill-defined forms very much contrary to the classical works had started to surface, strongly asserting their presence. The vitality they were gaining certainly did point towards the turn French literature was taking. This new literature, known as the Romantic literature, and the philosophers of the time, played important role in Baudelaire’s writings.

Romanticism was an age which perpetually remained dissatisfied with the thwarted emotions and was continuously wearied with the imperfect and frustrating reality. Romanticism was a searching for what cannot be found on Earth or in the sky. The Romantic Mind in other words, was a constant attempt to construct its own versions of paradise. This constructed paradise might be artificial and fragile which would easily be doomed with time, death, emotional erosion and internal frailties. Romantic mind sought to
return time and again to the self constructed ideal paradise through nostalgia, through evocation of memory, and at times through drug-induced trance. Baudelaire was well aware of and loved Romanticism’s dream, its ‘goût de l’infini’, which meant ‘longing for the infinite’.

Romantic age was also a period of reaction against realism. Romanticism introduced new forms, meters and rhythms. Innovations were made in the field of vocabulary. Words used by common people in everyday life, till then thought to be base and unfit for poetry was introduced in the French poetry. These words were used to bring about strange, multiple and remote effect. They infinitely increased the range of poetic expression. Another thing that Romanticism did was, it brought the French poetry out to the open from the drawing rooms. The romantic writers started to write about many things of the outside world.

Rousseau was an important person who played a very important role in bringing about radical changes in thinking and way of life in France. During 1760’s he preached ideas that were new, and these new ideas changed the thought process of the people of the coming ages. He considered future more important than the past. This might be the reason why many of the ideas now in vogue have their sources in his preaching. He gave much importance to sensibility which according to him was ‘the chief mistress of truth and virtue and owes to it chief intuitions’. In his discussions, he presents human heart as enthusiastic and chief principle. We must remember that when Rousseau was glorifying intuition France was a nation that encouraged rationality, clear and orderly ideas and ideals. Rousseau believed that ‘man was born free but everywhere he is in frettters’ and this statement became the main source of inspiration for French Revolution. He preached the idea of freedom. Rousseau’s teachings influenced many. The Monarchy slowly lost support of the middle class and
the nobles. The spirit of revolt started to spread. On the political front the fall of Bastille can be said to be one of the direct and important results of Rousseau’s philosophy. In the literary sphere a similar kind of revolt- a revolt against the rational classical(s) was taking place.

Like most of the writers of the time and the later years, Baudelaire was also much influenced by the thoughts and ideas of Rousseau. Baudelaire revolted against the standard norms of the then literature. Throughout his life Baudelaire led a life of revolt. He revolted against his family, authorities, and society. In literature he chose themes and styles, which were not accepted by the established writers and academy. He none the less carried on following his free spirit.

Baudelaire shared his new ideas about syntax and theme with Mallarmé, another great poet of the time. Mallarmé thought that each word was living and their life was a sacrosanct. So instead of mutilating the existing words he believed that disruption of normal word order gave new values to the words. In poetry words were to be placed in such a manner so that ordinary reader could not understand. Some of the syntactic innovations introduced by Mallarmé were (a) inversion of nouns and verbs, (b) separation of adjective from the noun it qualifies, (c) avoidance of relative pronouns and conjunctions, (d) omission of articles. All these various techniques helped to condense and make his verse concentrated.

Buffon was another poet who played an important role in shaping Baudelaire’s works. His literary background was that of Enlightenment. He preached the importance of reason and believed that the structure of the universe was rational and subjected to strict laws. His works display imaginative power along with a glow of intellect and superb literary style. His works possessed many elements of pre Romantic poetry such as poetic
diction, phrases, images, and sparing choice of subjects. In his works he greatly respected the poetic traditions and enthusiastically loved Classicism. He reveled in the themes of the pagan mythology. His erotic poems deal more with the physicality of the subject. Much emphasis was given to the architectonics thus making it more musical. Buffon’s style, technique, love for the classics and ancient models can be plentifully found in Baudelaire’s poems. Like Buffon, Baudelaire too emphasized a lot on the physicality of his subjects.

In the hands of Madame de Staël French literature saw a renewed outlook. Like the romantics who were to come later she laid more stress on intuition. In her works common ideas were treated in a broader manner. They gave preferences to taste and this signaled new faith. During the time various different groups used artistic forms according to their needs. A revolt against poetic diction had already started for failing to satisfy the need of genuine personal feelings. In her poems she gave full scope to the search for mystery and emotion. She advocated a cosmopolitan spirit and advocated that German thoughts should fertilize French literature. Many critics also considered her as a prophet of international culture. Her thoughts and ideas profoundly influenced Baudelaire’s works.

It is considered that with François René de Chateaubriand, Romanticism reached its fullest. He was a strong supporter of liberalism and opposed Napoleonianism. He is also considered to have anticipated the symbolist movement in France. He was very imaginative and he chose himself as the theme for his poems. He takes up the pains and maladies of modern life and portrays them in the pages as glowing beauties. He glorifies the pains of human fate in his poems. His Memories talk about his early life, which broadens out to the general vistas of events and men. A close analogy can be drawn between Chateaubriand and Baudelaire’s works when they take
up autobiographical colour, and in their glorifying the pathos of men. Chateaubriand’s works were full of colour, movement and imagery. He wrote about nature, himself and Christianity. Baudelaire too invested all these things in his writings. He, like Chateaubriand seems to be very much disintegrated in his poems. He was also greatly influenced by Chateaubriand in his choosing and dealing of various themes.

Another important influence for Baudelaire is the Romantic age itself. After the French Revolution various artistic impulses where allowed by degrees. A new mood predominated in the groups and individual writers. The publication of Lamartine’s *Méditation* is symbolic as it met with little resistance in spite of it being a new kind of work.

In the works of this new age the mood was richer. It gave emphasis to emotion and sensibility, which increased its freshening appeal. The inspiration was drawn from the distant middle ages. Images of ruins, death, primitive, wild, and nature at its untouched state were found in plenty. Melody became an important part of literature. A shift from the intellectual to the intuitive took place. Vagueness was preferred to clear cut precise ideas of the previous age. Many great English, German, and other foreign writers were read and this broadened public taste. With this, the scope of literature enlarged and independence of each writer was proclaimed in France.

The great poets of the age also influenced Baudelaire in various ways. Lamartine in his works used elaborate rhetorical manner, which was musical, soft, and flowing. He dealt his subject matter with sincere feelings. There was a kind of sympathetic affinity woven between the writer and the reader, which was intimate and personal. The lines were at times made up by grand images. Many a time memories of childhood and youth sought
space in his works. The works were filled with everyday impressions. Many of the characteristics of Lamartine’s poetry can be found in Baudelaire’s poems.

Vigny too influenced Baudelaire with his polished language, where each word was pregnant with meanings. His preoccupation with the present and way of his alluding to the contemporary problems frequently can also be found in the works of Baudelaire. Vigny felt sad about man’s plight but at the same time never forced any doctrine upon his reader. The past was portrayed in his works imaginatively. There was Victor Hugo, who was another great French romantic. He freed literature from the cramping bonds of doctrines and schools. In his poems he used fresh and arresting images. His works talked about the poet’s individual visions. Arch Romantic Alferd De Musset wrote about his whims, and fancies along with the cruel realism. He told stories about love, jealousy, death, and revenge in a cool witty and cynical composure. The bitter experiences of his life grew up into his great poetry and they had a lot of autobiographical element in them. These things were again found in Baudelaire’s works in plenty.

Another French writer famous for his realism is Balzac. In his works he writes about the sordid, squalid, and the ugly. He reveals the horrible side of civilization. The things that ruin and embitter one’s life get place in his works. The works of Baudelaire too give us the picture of the ugly Paris where he lives. For Baudelaire also, civilization has darker aspects, which ought to be exposed.

Baudelaire admired Edgar Allen Poe and in one of his letters to his mother written on 17th March 185274 he says that he has been able to fully understand Poe. Both had marked similarities in nature and role given to them by society was common. They were dreamers dreaming of an ideal
world. Both were aware of man’s dual nature. According to Poe a human self was divided into intellect, conscience and soul. Only the third was important for the writing of poetry. To put in other words poetry according to him was a product of soul and a means to the discovery of beauty. He believed that poetry had nothing to do with truth and morality. In an age when poets instructed and spoke about morals Poe stood for beauty. He was a rebel at war with his own age. According to him poetry was inspired by beauty and beauty was an activity of a soul. Let us here contemplate at what soul is. Poe’s soul is an immortal part of man that lives even after body’s death. In that case when he talks about beauty he is talking about beauty that exists beyond grave, beauty not of this world. For Poe the only thing that mattered was the supernal and his poetry always tried to catch a glimpse of it. In his works Poe asserted that poetry was not concerned with anything else but beauty and to find beauty one ought to first search for supernal reality. He also believed in the innate sadness that existed in poetry. The broken character in man’s experiences made him long for the supernal world.

Grief is one of the various things that inspire poetry. Grief arose from dissatisfaction and thus roused the longing for another world. Melancholy took Poe closer to another existence. The troubled state between waking and sleep, the haunted, the dark framed, and creatures of fear and dread were inspirations for his poetry. Here too we find a striking resemblance between Poe and Baudelaire. Baudelaire too chooses to write about the darker side of life that existed in his society. The melancholic, the ugly, the pains, so on and so forth formed the theme of his poetries.

Again Baudelaire shared similar views about love with Poe. Poe thought love to be the only purest and truest of all poetical themes. Love is of the soul and soul exists in its truest form in heaven. Love in this world is only
the foretaste of the heavenly one. The love that one experiences in the world is evolutionary in nature. Worldly love is important to understand and experience the Platonic love.

Poe dreamt about another world a glorious one and he also knew that to enter it one had to experience death. Death appealed him and he had a constant longing for death. He knew that well and he was ready to undergo grief and suffering before gaining his desires.

For Baudelaire, Poe’s poetry was something profound that reflected as in a dream something mysterious and perfect as the crystal. He always thought that Poe would conquer the admiration of the people as a reader can appreciate beauty just like a poet does. The profound and mournful poetry though ornate and decorated is transparent and perfect like a crystal. His admirable style pure yet strange is like a soldier’s armour, tight, detailed and beautiful. The lightest of the intention of the poetry pushes the reader gently towards the intended goal.

J. A. Symonds in his essay *Personal Style* claims “the style is the man” is true. According to him the style of a particular writer is greatly influenced by the writer’s own life and personality. Similarly if we look at Baudelaire’s work we find that they are greatly influenced by his personal life. His character is betrayed in his writings. He poured the gloom, bitterness and despair of his life in his works. Since his early childhood days Baudelaire had an unhappy life which led to the building of a complex character in him. He had in him a restless energy, feeling of failure, sense of revolt, and love for colour. He was very close to his mother. However at a very tender age he was separated from his mother and this imbued in him a sense of isolation. He led a very extravagant lifestyle and this added to his misery. He frequently went into debts. He caught syphilis which brought
about bouts of despair and lethargy in his life. His voyage to India also stocked his mind with images and exotic sensations. He had a special liking for clothes, furniture, and works of art. All these affected Baudelaire’s writings in various manners. Charles Baudelaire considered Memory as the mother of the Muses. He believed that inspiration and memory produced poetry. Poetry according to him is a flower which rises from personal sufferings. So according to him memory played an important role to raise the status of poetry. He considered his childhood days as the best days of his life so time and again he refers to them in his poems. He considered them to be full of love, peace and happiness. Thus as an artist he fed his works with rich sense impressions of his childhood days. Like the romantics Baudelaire believed the necessity for an artist to enjoy a rich life of sense experience.

During his lifetime he also came into contact with different people. In one hand he spent his time with his father who lived much in the 18th century world engrossed with its ideals and spirit. He was a painter of excellent talent and a true representative of the enlightened world of wit. On the other hand he enjoyed a close relationship with his mother who was typically a middle class woman with a mixture of deep 19th Century sensibility, goodness, Catholicism, and love of respectability.

During his student life he came to know about Edgar Allen Poe’s works and Delacroix’s paintings. Frequently in his works he alludes to these men and their works. Baudelaire firmly believed that poetry is related to other forms of art like painting, cuisine and cosmetics. This is possible by expressing the sensations of mellowness, bitterness, happiness and of horror, through coupling of a certain noun with a certain adjective analogous or opposite.
When we think of his idea of attaining beautiful from ugly life we are immediately reminded of Dante’s idea of hell, purgatory and paradise. For Dante to reach paradise one has to go through hell and purgatory. In other words to understand the ultimate beauty one has to first understand what ugliness is. Another Dantesque idea that Baudelaire borrows is the idea of Earthly Paradise. If there is a gateway to a higher state of being it is through the summit of the Mount of Purgatory, after the long hard climb. If the Earthly Paradise is not to be found and if we are more akin to the Inferno, then mind itself must create its own mountain, fashion its own wings, plant its own Garden, re-win its lost innocence and invoke the Idyll. Baudelaire is often compared to Dante in whom the Vision fades. *Paradiso* is no more than a distant passing gleam for him. His is a spirit who with Satan has fallen into the pit, *le gouffre*. The voyage inspired by Dante, that Baudelaire makes is not towards Byzantium but it is towards Hell. Dante is a traditionalist too and his main concern was the moral centre. He wanted to turn the mud of despair into gold of poetry. He sought to turn the mud of the abyss into clear water and green fields of the Idyll. For that he turned to his own mind and spirit to begin with. While Dante ascended towards the idyll, Baudelaire in spite of trying hard was denied any kind of such perfect ascent. Baudelaire’s vision of Hell is also borrowed from Dante. The vision of hell or the inferno is meaningless until and unless one is sensitive to pain, harms, deathliness, betrayal, personal failing, pride, lust, every kind of sins, vices, anxieties and fevers. Baudelaire’s hell though borrowed from Dante, it lacks the feelings of divine retribution and punishment which so often Dante’s expresses. Baudelaire’s hell is a hell of reality, of human condition, imposed, or accidental but without any divine meaning. Baudelaire’s hell is Dante’s but without its rationale. But none the less the Dante’s moral dilemma and agony is as valid in Baudelaire’s hell too. So the question that now arises, is that of the existence of something equivalent to Dante’s Purgatory in Baudelaire’s writing. To answer this question
however we have to first understand Dante’s concept of the universe founded on the idea of relationship. Hell for him is where relationship fails. There is betrayal and denial of faith, truth, hope, and love. Accordingly for him Purgatory is a realm where relationship is re-established. The fractured and destructive language of the Inferno is purified in the purgatory and it becomes a vehicle of hope. On close study we find that for Baudelaire too relationship is the fundamental problem. He constantly thinks about achieving and preserving relationships against all odds. The relationship he talks about is between an individual with another individual; an individual and society and finally an individual and Nature. Here we might remember the fractured relation Baudelaire experienced as a child with his mother and step father. He always desired for a fruitful relationship with women which he achieved in only swift flashes of light between periods of darkness. In the sphere of art the old relationship of art with deity, nature and society was broken in his time. It was this realization of the reality of human situation, the spiritual isolation and loneliness. This separation which is brought about by consciousness and culture spawned us and defines us. It is brought about because of our mechanization of society and the re-definition of work, home, individual and purpose of life that the modern industrialized, urbanized world has forced upon us. Similarly Baudelaire’s purgatory is also at the same time this life. His idea of purgatory overlaps with his idea of hell. It is the re-working of experience by mind in an effort to understand and transmute the real. In other ways we can say that it is hell revisited but from a different perspective. However here too the fundamental pain of existence, and its torments are no less severe than the experience of hell itself.

Voyage is another thing that inspired Baudelaire in his poems. For Baudelaire voyage becomes the deepest symbol to which all his poetry returns, for poetry is a voyage in itself towards some known or unknown
creative harbor. Many of his greatest poems are about voyaging, - some voyages are from the dark sea of the sordid city, some are towards another sea, some to a blaze of splendour that is blue, bright, deep as virginity, and some towards that sea which is the Infinite and out of this world. Speaking about voyage in Baudelaire’s poetry there are many impulses to it. Romantic restlessness is powerful impulse in Baudelaire.

True voyagers are those who leave only to move those who surrender themselves to the wind and the sea. They are like the great sea-birds and the swans. The voyagers of the sky like Icarus on the wings of Daedalus fly and are often doomed to fall. Some other voyagers like the Classical travelers, voyage because they are driven by circumstances. They are like Ulysses or Orestes or Aeneas who are at times referred in his verses indirectly. They are however less powerful images for him. His true travelers have no destination. Their voyage is evoked by their own dreams and fantasies.

His travelers voyage into the unknown’s depths always trying to find a new world. They are constantly travelling beyond the accepted and familiar into new realms which can relieve the pain and monotony of an existence anticipating new hopes and salvation. It is not only the poet and the characters that voyage but the invitation is also extended to the Reader, and the Reader likewise is expected to accept the invitation to the voyage. This invitation to the voyage is also the invitation to the idyll or to the pursuit of the idyll. It is also a pursuit of paradise- even though it might be a paradise of the indolent Lotus Eaters, or the paradise of a dream, or the paradise of the doomed lovers, or the paradise of the ocean calm, or that of the moonlit night where a weary soul might just achieve a momentary rest.
Baudelaire’s sense of destiny, history, of being at the focal point of a new sensibility, his sense of individuality is again influenced by Dante. Dante in his works always tried to blend history with mythology and present with past, in the living moment. So does Baudelaire’s Individual who is humble at times humiliated travel forward, as a hero or an anti-hero, and journeys through the universe. Dante’s life, his love, his feelings, his form, goes out into the voyage through the three realms of abyss, purgatory, and paradiso, as ‘one alone’. Similarly Baudelaire, who sees his own age more clearly, lives it more intensely, and analyses it more fiercely than others. Both Dante and Baudelaire give a clear image of their age, and send its echoes resonating across the streets and fields across land and sea into the deepest recesses of their time. Baudelaire is even greater voyager than Dante, often identifying with all other voyagers, vessels, wanderers, passers-by, and everything else that moves, sails, swims, flies, and falls. He attempts the heroism even though the chances of success are negligible. The heroic age is of the past yet he contends that heroism lives in modern life. He believed in facing life squarely with clarity, courage, intellect and full awareness. Baudelaire, without following any comprehensive system, explores his universe while on the other hand Dante explores his system closely watching, waiting, listening, longing, and hoping.

Baudelaire can at best aim for some vision of that Earthly Paradise at the top of the Mount of Purgatory after undergoing this exercise. Paradise or the Idyll flees from us leaving behind just memories, feelings and sensations locked within us which can be evoked and re-evoked. At different ages limitations varied. For a Classical poet this world was enough. It was celebrated incorporating their Gods. Medieval poet thought that the other world was real. Accordingly Dante and Petrarch celebrated its reality and its impact on this world. As for the Romantics this world was
never enough, and the paradise that they dreamt about is lost and cannot be retrieved. They believed that it can be never recovered in its physical aspect. It can be safely stored only within us and no external power can restore it. It cannot be created by us too as we don’t have that power. This idea of loss also inspires Baudelaire. He is one of the great poets of that loss like Shelley.

Like Dante, Baudelaire also takes his vision of hell as a city and the city as hell. In a city Baudelaire sees the different aspects of humanity crammed in a tiny space. Varied human behaviour, potential callousness, indifference, insanity, the juxtaposition of human states, the conflict of extremes, wealth with poverty, beauty with ugliness, truth with deceit, kindness with crime, love with hatred exist juxtaposed in a city. The city Baudelaire describes is humanity objectified. This city looks monstrous but it also has its own veils and enchantments. Some images of a city that frequently recurred in Baudelaire’s poems are seductive whores, theatres, landscape of arcades, canals, buildings, streets, vehicles and passers-by. As we have already discussed that there is no Mount of Purgatory and Paradise for Baudelaire. The city can more aptly be described as Hell. The city of Baudelaire is not a city of Church or God but on the other hand it is only a city of man and harsh realities. To flee from this city is but just to the Idyll of imagination. Dante’s city of hell was Florence, while Baudelaire’s city of hell is Paris. In Baudelaire’s Paris all the sins and vices of hell are there. Dante proclaimed that we re-visit the sins of hell in purgatory and going by this we might conclude that there is a flattened purgatory in Baudelaire’s city.

Dante’s works is also full of political resonance. Dante’s city is full of factions. The faction is between the Church and State, the struggle for order both in the spiritual as well as in secular life. Baudelaire in his works follows Dante and takes a stance of a non-conformist. He focuses on
various topics of the society both private and individual. He has purely private opinions on topics regarding sexuality, vice, addiction, dream, and on every other thing around him. He is a celebrator of the strange beauty of the desolate landscape of a modern city.

Dante’s vision of Beatrice is an image of an Ideal beloved. Dante could never import her to the physical realm or realize her into his world but none the less he met her in purgatory. This purgatorial voyage towards Beatrice which is so often found in Dante’s universe can be equated to Baudelaire’s Voyage to Cythera which led to ultimate self-disgust. This was yet another idea which Baudelaire borrows from him. Baudelaire is a poet of love. All throughout, love has remained as his main theme, his main desire, his primary object of search. However he fails to find an analogue for love and relationship in external reality and it is because the real world fails us in our deepest longing. The Voyage to which he invites us is also our voyage towards Cythera, Venus, and the Ideal.

The various themes of the Idyll, Venus or Cytherea, Hell, Voyage, Individual, and Calm borrowed by Baudelaire from Dante are treated within each but at the same time there lies an intricate relationship between them. Baudelaire was not a systematic thinker, and a system-builder, but his poetry bear a witness that they are reactions to his age. He approaches same themes from many directions, which often leads to contradictions and unresolved dilemmas.

Apart from all these there were some women who greatly influenced his works. They were Caroline Aupick his mother, Jeanne Duval his love whom he often alludes to as the dark lady, Apollonie Sabatier to whom he wrote anonymously for many years and Marie Daubrun an actress.
19th Century France also experienced a kind of tussle between artists and the bourgeoisie. Many times the poets were victimized and Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs Du Mal* is a classic example. On the other hand the poets and different artists took their revenge through different ways, especially by not confirming to the existing rules and codes of conduct. They also countered through irony, abuse, and unflattered portraits.

Social Utopias dreamt by these poets were shattered. July revolution of 1830, June days of 1848, Louis Napoléon’s ‘Coup d'Ètat’ of 1851, and the Commune of 1871 affected as well as inspired the French poets. A number of works came into existence because of these events. To put in other words poetry was considered to be a safe port of refuge.

A poet’s sensibility is so great that he can feel the emotions of the others. Like Keats, Baudelaire also firmly believed that a poet had no definite identity of his own. Baudelaire considered imagination above all other faculties. According to him sensibility without imagination is useless. The imagination Baudelaire talks about is however not just a crude fancy but a constructive imagination which creates and upholds his universe. Here Baudelaire is actually speaking about primary and secondary imagination as described by S T Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria*. Coleridge speaks about two kinds of imagination. He writes-

> The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in
the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, 
and in the mode of its operation.77

According to Coleridge primary imagination involves the faculty of sight only. It is instinctive so may be an unconscious activity. On the other hand secondary imagination involves all faculties or senses. It is a conscious activity in contrast to the primary imagination. Of the two Coleridge felt secondary imagination to be better. Coleridge also points out the fact that the difference between the two kinds of imagination is that of degrees only. Baudelaire believed in this kind of constructive imagination which Wordsworth, Coleridge and others believed in.

As pointed out in the beginning of the chapter both Keats and Baudelaire were influenced by different factors. At times it was their character, at times the age, at times the different events of the age and at times the various writers and literary works that played part to shape them as poets distinct from others. The influence was at times thematic, stylistic and at times on the approach. Though John Keats wrote in the second half of the English Romantic period Keats’ writings were not only tempered by the traits of the age but shaped by the trends of the preceding ages. His works are replete with the themes from Classical, Medieval and oriental ages. The mythical Classical Gods and Goddesses like the Titans and Olympians, satyrs, fauns and dryads relive in his works like Hyperion, Fall of Hyperion, Ode to Psyche, Ode on a Grecian Urn etc. The knights, horses, damsels, mysteries and magic of the medieval age find ample space in his works like Eve of St Agnes and La Bell Dame Sans Merci. Poets from the past like Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Dante to name few influenced Keats’ poetry in different ways. The rich sensuousness of Spenser’s Faeirey Queene is reflected plentifully in Keats’ poems. Milton’s Paradise Lost inspired him to take up his Hyperion project which he had thought of making an epic on
the lines of Milton’s work. He ultimately gave up *Hyperion* and the reason he cited was that it was becoming too Miltonic. Poets of the Transitional age like Thomson, Chatterton, Gray and Collins influenced the works of Keats in different ways. Chatterton’s personification of nature is again found plentifully in Keats’ works like *Ode to Autumn* and *Ode to Nightingale*. Chatterton was very fond of medieval style and diction and these are again reflected in Keats’ works. Thomson’s *The Seasons* gave the age a new perspective of nature and Keats faithfully represented them in his works. From the works of Gray, Cowper, Burns, Collins and Crabbe, Keats learnt to give importance to and look sympathetically at the rural life and people belonging to the lower strata of the society. Keats was also influenced by the people around him. Leigh Hunt and the Cockney school too influenced him. Hunt’s *The Story of Rimini* gave him diction and a heroic couplet. Apart from these the philosophies of the time, and the trends of romantic literature also played a considerable role to shape up Keats’ works.

As stated earlier when Baudelaire wrote, the new literature of Romanticism with new forms, meters, rhythms and themes had just started to blossom. Baudelaire was immensely influenced by these thoughts and ideas and they were reflected in his works. Rousseau encouraged intuition and free spirit and following him Baudelaire revolted against the standard norms of the time. Mallarme’s syntactic innovations like inversion of nouns and verbs, separation of adjective from the noun it qualifies, avoidance of relative pronouns, conjunctions and omission of articles were also taken up by Baudelaire to make his verse condensed and concentrated. From Buffon’s works Baudelaire borrowed elements of pre Romantic poetry such as poetic diction, phrases, images, sparing choice of subjects and more of the physicality of the subject. He also took up the architectonics which made Buffon’s poems musical.
Baudelaire was also immensely influenced by Madame de Staël who laid stress on intuition, treated common ideas were in a broader manner and gave more scope to the search for mystery and emotion. François René de Chateaubriand was a strong supporter of liberalism and takes up the pains and maladies of modern life and portrays them in the pages as glowing beauties. He glorifies the pathos of human fate in his works. A close analogy can be drawn between Chateaubriand and Baudelaire’s works when they take up autobiographical colour, and in their glorifying the pathos of men. Like from Chateaubriand, Baudelaire also looked upon Vigny who also in his works wrote about man’s plight. Similarly he was also influenced by others like Hugo, Musset, Balzac and Dante. Dante’s idea of hell, purgatory and paradiso is reflected in his concept of evolution of beauty. He was profoundly influenced by Edgar Allen Poe who advocated the idea of art for art’s sake. Apart from these men Baudelaire’s own life, his childhood, his journey to India, love affairs and relationships played important role in shaping up his poetic ideas and ideals.

Whatever the sources of influences might be, we cannot in any case disregard the fact that the ideals of new romantic poetry, spirit of revolution, spirit of freedom from the rules and bondages of earlier literature, new perspective towards nature and common things of life, new ideas in diction and architectonics were similar in both Keats and Baudelaire.
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