CHAPTER IV
A COMPARATIVE AND EVALUATIVE ANALYSIS OF SHELLEY AND EMERSON

A comparative and evaluative analysis of Shelley and Emerson would entail an examination of the convenient common components of their poetics namely: (A) The Poet; (B) The Poetic Process; (C) The Nature of Poetry and (D) The Language of Poetry against the issues discussed in Chapter One under the four broad approaches, that is, (I) Author Oriented; (II) Context Oriented; (III) Language Oriented and (IV) Reader Oriented.

Shelley and Emerson’s poetics, though mainly associated with Romantic theory, traverse a broad spectrum of issues, especially some of contemporary theories and concerns, notable being New Historicism, Feminism, Ecociticism, Psycho-analysis, Post-colonialism and Formalism. Besides these, there are relevant aspects of Hermeneutics, Marxism, Myth Criticism/Dialogism, Structuralism and Stylistics, Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction and Reader-responses/Reception theory.

The first part of this chapter analyzes Shelley’s postulates against the relevant literary theories and a comparative and evaluative analysis with Emerson follows in the second section. P.B. Shelley’s poetics begin with (A): “The Poet” Like the traditional approach to Literature assumes that the relevant meaning of a text is the one that the author intended. The author oriented issues in Shelley and Emerson’s poetics have a marked humanistic perspective. In his inherent emphasis on the author’s intention, Shelley also has a Hermeneutic, Phenomenological and Psychoanalytical approach to literature Critics too, interpret his work by referring to the social and cultural aspects of his biography and the literary and generic conventions of the British Romantics.

Authorial intention is a central point of reference in interpreting Shelley. His biography reveals a great deal of information about his personality and inclinations. He wrote a number of pamphlets in which he aired his views on atheism. His “Necessity of Atheism,” (1811) is an expression of his religious skepticism and disbelief in God. It was responsible for his expulsion from Oxford.
Influenced by John Locke and David Hume, Shelley argues that the senses are the sources of all knowledge to the mind and hence denies the existence of God, because such a proposition does not have empirical validity, that is, it fails demonstration by sensible experience and by reason reflecting on experience.\(^1\) God for Shelley, following the Lockean tradition remains an elusive reality.

Using the “Necessity of Atheism” pamphlet as a long footnote to his poem Queen Mab, Shelley clarifies that the argument applied only to a theistic creator and not to “the hypothesis of a pervading spirit co-eternal with the universe.”\(^2\) This hypothesis is imperative to Shelley’s humanism. A formative, inexhaustible, and unifying power makes reality prolific. Though unknowable and “imageless,” this power justifies hopes in an ultimate bias towards good, a favouring of “Love,” persistent through “Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and change.” Shelley’s celebrated dramatic poem Prometheus Unbound celebrates this persistence. The poem suggests that for Shelley, atheism demanded that we redirect rather than suppress religious sentiments and motivation: awe, sacrifice, hope, and love must invest in immanent and not transcendent reality. Another pamphlet of Shelley, “A Refutation of Deism” (1814), is a vindication of Shelley’s rejection of Christianity. Shelley had profound regard for Jesus Christ, but he was strongly opposed to the orthodoxy and dogmas of the Church. In Prometheus Unbound Shelley’s powers of reconciliation are a reworking of the Christian virtues of compassion, faith, hope and love. Blind faith of traditional Christianity, which demanded sacrifice of thought, is not acceptable. Thought is fundamental to Shelley’s poetics; for it is thought and imagination, which are the key to enlightenment and the task envisaged by Shelley for poetry. In his revolt against church Christianity Shelley adopts a more worldly and secular philosophy. Through his mouthpiece Prometheus, Shelley conceives of mankind as the most important element of existence. The traditional Prometheus of Aeschylus, who surrenders to Jupiter is not acceptable to Shelley. The character of the Shelleyan Prometheus seeks to ennoble and dignify man. Amending biblical and theological language, Shelley liberates human thought from oppressive religion.

In spite of Shelley’s aversion to didactic poetry, Prometheus Unbound is decidedly instructive and ends on a note of sermonic exhortation. Any interpretation of it,
without taking into consideration Shelley’s intention would be inadequate. Shelley’s poetics is a vital hermeneutic tool in understanding his poetry, especially his stress on the author. The Defence involves considerable and compelling Biblical exegeses set within Shelley’s own perspectives; particularly on his notion of poetry and religion. This approach is like that of E.D. Hirsh in The Aims of Interpretation, (1976) who retains the author at the center because he is the one who is the source for determining the validity of an interpretation. Valid interpretation is the one that is represented by the text of the author. Meaning is the outcome of consciousness. This consciousness may belong to the reader or the author. The author’s consciousness should be taken as the standard, while that of the reader’s can be part of multiple meanings. The author’s meaning is the only determining norm to compare different interpretations.

An author’s consciousness is also pertinent from the critics point of view. This approach is a part of Phenomenological criticism and literary theory. It is a way to understand experience and to respond to Literature. It is associated with the “Geneva School” which conceived of Literature as a manifestation of the author’s consciousness. P.B. Shelley’s “cogito” or mental universe abounds in the Defence and also his work. It is manifest as the subjective correlate of the content and theme of his poetics. The objects, characters, imagery and style and thrust of Shelley’s feelings and awareness in the Defence are evident. We can identify the immanent consciousness of Shelley’s theory of Literature and work by “ bracketing” his personal prepossessions and particularities-even through a passive application. The “Geneva School,” or more appropriately “critics of consciousness” were more specifically phenomenological critics who identified themselves with the Singular consciousness of the author; unlike the earlier form of Phenomenology, which dealt with the common human consciousness as the basis of the existence of a work of Literature.

By his singular consciousness, an author is able to create great works of Literature. In the hierarchy of value ranks describing a person’s predisposition to artistic creation: capable-gifted-talented-genius; it is genius which ranks the highest. A genius creates works of literature symbolizing exalted human values universally relevant for all times.
Shelley’s poetics and aesthetics are inexorably and interminably inextricable. He envisaged the poet to be a genius in his own way, having the creative power of God; poetry for Shelley being the creative principle in man.

The Psychological aspects of author oriented issues can be studied in conjunction with Sigmund Freud’s analytical psychological criticism and analytical psychology. Shelley’s psyche is palpable in his theory of literature especially in the unequivocal manner he goes about defending poetry. The issue is primarily that of poetry as a mode of self-expression. In this ‘expressive’ view of Literature, poetry is seen mainly as:

an expression, or overflow, or utterance of feelings, or as the product of the poet’s imagination operating on his perceptions, thoughts and feelings; it tends to judge the work by its sincerity, or genuineness, or adequacy to the poet’s individual vision or state of mind; it often looks in the work for evidences of the particular temperament and experiences of the author who, consciously or unconsciously, has revealed himself in it. Such views were developed mainly by romantic critics in the early nineteenth century and remain current in our time, especially in the writings of psychological and psychoanalytic critics and in critics of consciousness such as George Poulet and the Geneva School.

Shelley was not a practical revolutionary like Byron. Through his id or unconscious personality he derived immanent pleasure in poetry. It is an active part of his aesthetics and creative process, being vigorously involved in the Freudian “pleasure principle.”

For Shelley a happy state of mind is an inherent prerequisite in the creative process. When the poet is in a joyous and ecstatic mood poetry becomes:

The record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds, we are aware of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling sometimes associated with place or person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond all expression.

Thus, the role of unconscious, in the creative process, and as a manifestation of the author’s personality was recognized by Shelley (1792-1822) long before Sigmund Freud’s (1856-1939) psychoanalytical approach.

Shelley’s views on (B): The Poetic Process are singularly relevant to the socio-cultural-psychological contexts, especially myth criticism. Carl Gustav Jung (1875-
1961), a protegé of Freud deliberates extensively on the poetic imagination and the poetic or creative process, archetypes, myths and the collective unconscious in his essay “Psychology and Literature.” Shelley had anticipated some of Jung’s opinions as well, especially his notion of the poetic process and the unconscious. Jung quotes K.G. Caurus, another eminent psychologist on genius and the creative process:

Strange are the ways by which genius is announced, for what distinguishes so supremely endowed a being is that, for all the freedom of his life and the clarity of his thought, he is everywhere hemmed round and prevailed upon by the unconscious, the mysterious god within him; so that ideas flow to him he knows not whence; he is driven to work and to create—he knows not to what end; and is mastered by an impulse for constant growth and development—he knows not whither.  

Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. Shelley’s corresponding view in that a man cannot say:

I will compose poetry. The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness. This power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our nature are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure.

The “invisible influence” Shelley is referring to and which “arises from within” is an early acknowledgment of the role of the unconscious. Shelley’s “Genius” is Caurus’ “mysterious god within” who creates the thoughts ideas, language, feelings images visions, social, cultural and intellectual ethos all of which are needed to restore our psychic balance and sustain civilization.

As Carl Jung observes:

Art is a kind of innate drive that seizes a human being and makes him its instrument. The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realize its purposes through him. As a human being he may have moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is ‘man’ in a higher sense—he is ‘collective man’—one who carries and shapes the unconscious, psychic life of mankind.

As the “collective” man he is attuned to the civilizational need of society. This advanced stage of system of human social and cultural development can only be achieved
through the genius of the poet or men of arts especially Literature.

As Jung further adds:

Whenever the creative force predominates, human life is ruled and moulded by the unconscious as against the active will, and the conscious ego is swept along on a subterranean current being nothing more than a helpless observer of events. The work in process becomes the poet’s fate and determines his psychic development. It is not Goethe who creates Faust, but Faust which creates Goethe. And what is Faust but a symbol? ........ an expression that stands for something not clearly known and yet profoundly alive. Here it is something that lives in the soul of every German.

Just as Faust as a symbol lives in the soul of every German, likewise classic works of Literature influence the human psyche. In the social-cultural-psychological context, Jung views great literature as the expression of the archetypes of the “primordial image” which lives as in the “collective unconscious” of mankind. This “primordial image” is of the archetypal image of the wise man, the figure of a physician or a teacher of mankind, the saviour or redeemer that has been dormant in man’s unconscious since the dawn of culture. A great author has the quality to provide for readers an access to the archetypal images buried in the racial memory and thus ensure a realization and revitalization of those aspects of out psyche that assure the self-integration of an individual and emotional well-being of society.

Shelley also alludes to archetypes in his Defence:

Poets are not only subject to these experiences as spirits of the most refined organization but they can colour all that they combine with the evanescent hues of this ethereal world; a word, a trait in the representation of a scene a passion will touch the enchanted chord, and reanimate, in those who have ever experienced these emotions, the sleeping, the cold, the buried image of the past.10

(emphasis added)

The representations of poetry or “the expression of the imagination” as ascribed by Shelley arise from experiences determined by the free play of the mind; Shelley had anticipated Jung; who contends that:
The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind 'plays' with the objects it loves.\textsuperscript{11}

P.B. Shelley also sets great store in the play aspect. In Shelley’s theory and practice of poetry, perception is a mirror image of the psychology of artistic creation. Yuri Borev’s aesthetics, like that of Jung’s, endorses the fact that the element of play in artistic perception is rooted in the play aspects of art, that is, both through imitating and copying man’s working activity. In the act of perceiving a work of art, all those essential and genetic elements of art are respected.\textsuperscript{12}

Shelley’s views are similar and even more profound. His emphasis is on the “play aspect,” in the perception of art, notably the tendency of the creative mind to play with the objects it loves. The poet has a refined and superior sense of perception which helps him apprehend and record the “rare impressions” which go to make poetry. He avers that “Every man in the infancy of art, observes an order which approximates more or less closely to that from which this highest delight results....”\textsuperscript{13}

Unlike Part (B): The Poetic Process, which can only be associated with the analytical psychology of Freud and Jung, Part (C): The Nature of Poetry covers a wide range of concerns. In Shelley’s delineation of the nature of poetry the context oriented issues are the most dominant. Basically these are issues related to life, truth and ideology, that cover socio-economic, historical, gender, colonial and ecological concerns. The socio-economic contexts deal with Marxism and gender issues like Feminism. The historical contexts are concerned mainly with New Historicism and Cultural Materialism and Post/neo colonial criticism, while Nature is the crux in the emerging discipline of Ecological criticism.

Poetry for Shelley is basically anything, which the imagination creates in its efforts to satisfy the desire for perfection. These can be actions, inventions, institutions, ideas and moral dispositions, that reveal the arts of life and virtues of religion, and which embody the excellence of justice and love in the search for order, harmony and rhythm in life. It is the expression of an elemental force within human nature; a force that turns the personality outward in imitative and rhythmic response to its environment. The aesthetic sense in man is the essence of art.
It is the imagination, which is the source of everything that has intrinsic value in life. For want of imagination we have no sympathy in our hearts and do not feel what we know. Poetry in general, a force for good and through the creative and expansive nature of imagination, generous and humanitarian feelings are developed. The imagination lies at the root of love. Since poetry is akin to imagination, it is also akin to love.

The active involvement of the imagination gives rise to images of perfection. The images are of perfect harmony of will or of feeling a virtue; or of the perfect union of soul with soul (love), or of the perfect order of certain social relations or forces (a law or institution); or of the perfect adjustment of intellectual elements (a truth).

The formal character of the imaginative idea is one of beauty. This is because it is always the image of an order, harmony rhythm (action) or unity in variety. And poetry is not something that is created out of nothing but has society and nature as its source of material. Poetry by its creative insight into reality and beauty of rhythm starts a resonance in the mind giving new insight into life and language. It is the imagination, which is actually responsible in effecting rhythm (action), order and harmony.

The relationship between society, literature and the economic structure has always posed a problem for literary theory and criticism. Klassovost, the theory of the class nature of art, is a complex one. Though P.B. Shelley was not a diehard Marxist, he was one of the very few English poets to have been taken to heart by a great number of workers of the Labour Movement. Bernard Shaw tells us that he became a socialist as a result of reading Shelley. Marx maintains that the artistic and spiritual life are inseparable from the processes of material existence in the early phase of human history, but the division of labour and capitalistic economy separated the mental and the manual forms of work; as a result of which the proletariat were forced to do manual work without the joy of creation. The ruling classes, on the other hand engaged themselves in mental work. Shelley’s opinion on work is that a person should work only to satisfy his creative urge. The type of Literature he propagates supports this view. His writings reveal deep insights into the social developments of his time. His poetics truly espouse poets to not only be the “unacknowledged legislators” of the world but also the “engineers of the human soul.”
Like Marx and Engels, Shelley also viewed “morality, religion and philosophy” as “phantoms formed in the brains of men.” However he did not conceive of what is known as economic determinism whereby everything is determined by the nature of the economic structure. He was a vitriolic critic of Church Christianity and the kind of morality and philosophy practiced by the Church. Shelley was a great admirer of Jesus Christ and was not against Christianity and religion in general but only against organized and institutionalized religion as a prop of tyranny and the tendency of religious doctrine to harden into blind dogma.

Just as Shelley was very popular with the workers of the Labour Movement, he would surely be the darling of the Feminist and the champion of the post-colonialist and New-Historicists. The marginalized have always been very dear to Shelley’s heart. A text was never seen by him to be a battleground where actual power relations between the sexes are played out.

A number of Shelley’s poems convey his themes, notable ones being Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam, Prometheus Unbound, Hellas and The Mask of Anarchy. In all of these poems Shelley condemns wars, tyranny, commerce, wealth, hypocrisy, organized religion, sexual discrimination, slavery and government.

A dominant theme in Queen Mab is social injustice. With an unjust application of the principle of the division of labour rendering mind inactive, the good which industrial progress might bring is lost. Men are turned into machines for the pursuit for wealth:

The harmony and happiness of man
Yields to the wealth of nations.16

The Revolt of Islam is a biting attack on Theism and extant Christianity. It proclaims a bloodless revolution and the regeneration of man by love. It is a story of man’s revolt against tyranny and presents a glimpse of the Golden Age. The story of Loan and Cythna who go to battle for freedom against tyrants and haters of the world, and find triumph in their deaths—is only a veil for Shelley’s own searching and impassioned idealism. One of the central themes of the poem is the liberation of women from the position of inferiority imposed upon them by society. Cythna rightly questions: “Can man be free if woman be a slave?”
Shelley believes in the equality of the sexes and insists that there cannot be lasting liberty and progress if women are treated as inferior. Free children can only be reared by free women. Men cannot be free if women are slaves. Domestic tyranny is incompatible with social liberty. Cythna is the woman warrior of heroic valour and impassioned purity. Her ideals are of a relatively modern time. She seeks the intellectual liberation of her sex, and is mated with Loan in a comradeship of kindered spirits. Through her person, Shelley seeks to eradicate the myth of inferiority and subordination of women. Cythna kindles an intense zeal in Loan and in her he finds his own sense of purpose strengthened. Cythna feels fully the power of his thought and returns to him a richer sense of the meaning of his liberating ideas. She also liberates Loan from despair and solitude.

In *Prometheus Unbound*, (1818-20) Shelley shows that it is only some external tyranny—the power of priests, kings and rulers, the weight of custom, the pressure of superstition—which keeps mankind from rising to its ideal stature. Based on Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*, Shelley’s Prometheus is an ideal figure of progress and man’s desire for intellectual light and spiritual liberty. For Shelley no symbol of humanity could suffice which excluded the perfected man of future whom he anticipated with confidence.

Aeschylus had made Prometheus to surrender to the tyrant Jupiter and reconcile with him. This conclusion was intolerable to Shelley, who modified the myth, to fit in with his faith in the perfectibility of man. A Prometheus who is the representative hero of humanity and the symbol of the perfect man of the future, had necessarily to triumph over his enemy. Prometheus’ defiance and tenacity, and eventual victory reflect the extant historical era and movements engendered by the American and French Revolutions.

The essential meaning of *Prometheus Unbound* is quite clear. Shelley seeks the removal of the repressive forces which restrict and subdue the human mind and will; and shows how this can be done. Shelley wishes man to realize the tremendous potential of his intellect and spiritual pleasure which has for so long been stifled by fear, hate, selfishness, greed and despair. He wishes man to reach a new state, where all things will have shed off their evil nature.

Shelley was an eminent ecocritic and had anticipated many ecological issues. Of all the Romantic poets, he is the only one who foresaw the impending environmental
crisis almost a century before its advent. In an eloquent portion of the defence, he observes:

We have more scientific and economic knowledge than can be accommodated to the just distribution of the produce which it multiplies. The poetry in these systems of thought is concealed by the accumulation of facts and calculating processes.... We want the creative faculty to imagine that which we know, we want the generous impulse to act that which we imagine, we want the poetry of life; our calculations have out run Our conception; we have eaten more than we can digest. The cultivation of those sciences which have enlarged the limit’s of the empire of man over the external world, has, for want of the poetical faculty, proportionally circumscribed those of the internal world; and man, having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave. 17

How true his words have proved to be does not need any verification. Man having discovered the undisputable secrets of science and benefits of nature, lacks the imaginative insight to use them for the happiness and betterment of mankind and lives in perpetual fear of ecological disasters. With “mere reasoners” and “the calculating faculty” to use two of Shelley’s own terms—we seem to have the insight of the nineteenth century men and are rushing inevitably towards self-destruction.

Shelley also perceives the inseparable link between ecology and politics to be responsible for this. For Shelley the physical environment is a social product. In his first major poem itself—Queen Mab (1813), Shelley highlights this aspect. It is “kings, and priests, and statesman” who produce the “venomed exhalations” that “spread/Ruin, and death and woe.” 18

The subsequent stanza renders a beautiful ecological description of man’s role:

Hath Nature’s soul,
That formed this world so beautiful, that spread
Earth’s lap with plenty, and life’s smallest chord
Strung to unchanging unison, that gave
The happy birds their dwelling in the grove,
That yielded to the wanderers of the deep
The lovely silence of the unfathomed main,
And filled the meanest worm that crawls in dust
With spirit, thought, and love; on Man alone,
Partial in causeless malice, wantonly
Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery; 19
Queen Mab, "the fairies midwife," appears in a famous speech by Mercutio in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* (I.v. 53-941). During the eighteenth century, Queen Mab was the title character in numerous children’s stories, just like Mother Goose. Shelley chose this innocent-sounding name as an intermediary between the divine and the human, which teaches us the revolutionary lessons of the past, situation of the present and hopes of the future. He had given instructions to his publisher to have the poem printed "on fine paper. So as to catch the aristocrats: They will not read it, but their sons & daughters may." 20 In the contemporary context, looking at the ecological concerns evident in the poem, a parallel may be drawn between Queen Mab and Mother Nature. Shelley’s environmental ideas are similar to those of the French naturalist Comte Georges-Louis Leclere de Buffon, who believed that large areas of the earth need improvement if they are to become suitable human habitats. In the concluding utopian vision of Queen Mab, the fairy describes a world in which a total ecological transformation has taken place.

Shelley’s sonnet “Ozymandias” (1818) can be read from an ecocritical perspective and is an object lesson in unsustainable environmental practices. Well versed in history, Shelley was certainly aware that the ancient Mediterranean world was once the granary of the Roman Empire. Over many centuries the dense forests were destroyed and converted into barren deserts. The statue of Ozymandias lies shattered in the midst of a barren desert, and the surrounding landscape offers a grim commentary on the relatively brief duration of the civilization that he commanded:

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My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings,
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare.
The lone and level sands stretch far away. 21
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The poem implies a critique of any society that believes it can ultimately dominate the natural world: The Mighty will inevitably despair at the price paid to achieve glory.

Shelley is the most radical of the English anti-imperial poets. In his work *Romanticism and Colonial Disease*, Alan Bewell notes how Shelley sees the physical
environment as a social product and the environmental changes are linked to changes in social and political institutions. Colonial regions, associated with poverty and disease, far from being “naturally” this way, were seen as having undergone deforestation and ecological degradation. Shelley shares the anxieties that shaped early conservationist thinking, as he sees in tropical colonial regions the forces that produce social ruin. Tyranny, which is inborn in colonialization spells ruin. “Ozymandias” is thus symbolically, also a poem about colonial space, which sees the ecologically degraded character of such regions as a sign of the continuing survival of desolating power. Ecology and politics are thus inseparably allied and Shelley echoed many post-colonial concerns much before these, were taken up by the East.

Poetry is not something manifest in society alone, but nature also is a constituent part. It is nature, which preceded man and hence inspires and influences him. Talking about the “faculty of approximation to the beautiful” Shelley says:

Those in whom it exists in excess are poets, in the most universal sense of the word; and the pleasure resulting from the manner in which they express the influence of society or nature upon their own minds, communicates itself to others, and gathers a sort of re-duplication from that community. Their language is vitally metaphorical;.... These similitudes or relations are finely said by Lord Bacon to be “the same footsteps of nature impressed upon the various subjects of the world.”

Shelley is referring to the formation of abstract words from concrete ones and the tendency to forget their concrete origin, which is normally from the environment. In the “Ode to the West Wind” which is a major statement of Shelley’s poetical creed, he aspires to be like the wind:

Be thou, spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one

The origin of the word “spirit” and “inspiration” is from the Latin word spiritus, meaning breath, the breath of a god. Shelley addresses the West Wind as the “breath of Autumn’s being,”—he is seeking inspiration—wanting the breath of the god to enter into him and give him its powers.
The poem also incorporates a range of ecocentric concepts such as birth, growth and energy—all of which are symbolized by the West Wind. Nature for Shelley is the cycle of growth, maturity and decay. It affects our thinking, behaviour, emotions, inspiration, intuition and over all existence.

Delving further into the contemporary nature of poetry, the issue of the reader has gained cogent acceptance. Readers of late, have become a vital hermeneutic tool. They are being seen as a vital source of meaning. They are no longer extraneous, unreliable and fallacious in interpreting a text. Whatever meaning a text has, is also inherent in the reader and hence it is he who correspondingly generates the meaning. The readers’ response creates the text as much as the author. To arrive at meaning, critics should reject the autonomy of the text and concentrate on the reader and the reading process and the interaction that takes place between the reader and the text. It is not what the text is that is important, but what the text does.

In Shelley’s poetics, the issue of the reader is of paramount importance since he is also concerned not with what the text is but with what the text does. His views are like that of I.A. Richards who is the forerunner of reader response criticism. In Richards’s opinion, the arts are storehouses of wisdom, since they affect us by playing upon our emotions. They satisfy our “appetencies”, and enlarge our potentialities, leading to a richer and fuller life. One is never the same before and after reading a book. Richard conceded that the scientific conception of truth is the correct one and that poetry provides only pseudo-statements. These pseudo-statements, however, are crucial to the psychic health of humans because they have now replaced religion as fulfilling our desire—“appetency,”— the term coined by Richard for truth, that is, for some vision of the world that will satisfy our deepest needs. Mathew Arnold had in the twentieth century predicted that Literature would fulfill this function.

Poets and poetry have been playing this role since the dawn of civilization. Shelley points out in his essay, that the poets of ancient Greece helped in laying the foundation of Greek civilization and also created edifying patterns for the Greeks to follow, especially the poems of Homer and his contemporaries. The potential of the Greeks reached a level where a whole generation was inspired to be like Achilles, Hector and Ulysses. After the age of Homer, the progress of Greek civilization continued
unabated and reached its zenith during the century preceding the death of Socrates. The poets through their poetry brought man closer to god and religion and this epoch in the history of mankind is unparalleled—with “records and fragments stamped so visibly with the image of divinity in man.”

A similar role has been carried out by the poets of ancient Rome. Poets have thus been associated with religion from the onset of civilization and Shelley further gives the example of Christianity and Jesus Christ. Its sources are the poetry and wisdom of antiquity. Religious sentiments initially took their birth in poetry arousing noble sentiments and creating high ideals, as a consequence of which the quality of life improved.

Shelley defines poetry as “the expression of the imagination,” and the principle by which the imagination operates is that of “association.” He believes the imagination to be the prime source of everything that has intrinsic value in life. For want of imagination we have no sympathy in our hearts and do not feel what we know. It is also through the reader’s imagination that the meaning of a work of literature is manifest. As Shelley elucidates in the Defence:

...poetry acts in another and divine manner. It awakens and enlargers the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand un apprehended combinations of thought. Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar,...

Imagination in both creative and expansive, as a result of which, it helps in interpretation and adds to the meaning. While for the writer it works in the creation of a work of art, for the reader, imagination adds to interpretation and understanding. It sends the mind outward and the reader responds with generous and humanitarian feelings. The imagination lies at the root of love and the reader also responds with love. The imagination generates many ideas, which are often accompanied by emotion. The reason why ideas delight the imagining soul is because they are images or forebodings of its own perfection and of itself become perfect in one aspect or another. These aspects are as various as the elements and forms of its own inner life and outward existence. The formation and expression of such ideas is thus the work of poetry in the broadest sense, and has been the general function of “the arts” and literature since the beginning.
Such ideas for Shelley can come only from an active involvement of the imagination and the imaginative ideas are always, regarded by Shelley as beautiful. It is desirable for itself and also as a means to a further result. It has the formal character of beauty because it is always the image of an order, harmony or unity in variety of the elements concerned. The poet is someone who has “a certain order or rhythm” different from that of the rest; and from this “order” the audience receives “an intenser and purer pleasure” than from any other. Hence the poet who creates this particular “order” and has a special “faculty of approximation to the beautiful,” writes a kind of poetry based on these principles. Poets and artists in all fields differ not in kind but in degree from their followers, for as all people have something of this “order or rhythm” in them, they can respond to it. Hence, there can be a close link between the artist and the audience. Turning specifically to the poet as a writer and the effect of the poet and response of the reader, Shelley argues that because the poet has more insight intro reality than most people, which he conveys in a language that by its imaginative insight and beauty of rhythm starts a resonance in the mind, he gives new insight into life and new meaning to language. And each reader has his individual imagination, but where a consensus is reached among all readers a final meaning is accepted. A reader thus has a more productive role in this heterogeneous critical approach, whereby he is seen as another author or producer. Shelley’s poetics is as already mentioned, a vital hermeneutic tool in recognizing the meaning of his poetry, especially in his stress on the author. Though traditionally most critics have assumed that the correct meaning of a text is the one the author intended, recent critical thinking, however, has emphasized both the extent to which the reader possibly creates the meaning of the text and also the inadequacy of all interpretations. Shelley also echoes similar hermeneutic views in the context and relevance of the reader in his Defence:

Veil after veil may be drawn from the poem, and the inmost naked beauty of the meaning never exposed. A great poem is a fountain forever overflowing with the waters of wisdom and delight; and after one person and one age has exhausted all its divine effluence which their particular relations enable them to share, another and yet another succeeds, and new relations are ever developed, the source of an unforeseen and unconceived delight.\textsuperscript{27}
Thus, reader oriented issues, besides being concerned with Reader-response criticism, also involve Reception-theory criticism, which is also known as “aesthetics of reception.” It refers to the ways in which a text has met with its reception over a historical period of time, as Shelley had anticipated in the above quotation. As reader-response theory is concerned with the microcosm of response, reception theory in concerned with the macrocosm of response. It was Robert Jauss, who in 1967, proposed a shift in the study of literature from a preoccupation with authors and texts to a concern with reading and reception. He believed that a literary work in an object which cannot stand by it self, especially if it offers the “same face to each reader in each period.”

It is a diachronic study, which reveals the time value of an object of art. A literary work is an object, which reveals its timeless essence. A true literary work is one, which has an inherent enduring, universal and timeless essence, as in the work of William Shakespeare. Furthermore works of the past are affected (and even conditioned) by current events and writings, as is the literature of P.B. Shelley.

P.B. Shelley’s views on (D) : The Language of Poetry, when studied from the text/language oriented perspectives reveal aspects of critical approaches like Practical/New Criticism, Formalism, Structuralism, Stylistics, Post-Structuralism: Deconstruction.

Shelley touches aspects of Practical/New Criticism at the surface level only, with his specific views on the language of Literature, especially on the function of language in a work of art. He conceives Literature to be, particularly poetry, as a special kind of language. He understands clearly the superiority enjoyed by the poetic medium over other arts. Poetic language for Shelley is measured language and not like the language of logical discourse or the language of science. The New Critics conceived Literature to be a special kind of language, whose properties are defined by systemic opposition to the language of science and logical discourse. The key elements of this criticism deal with the meanings and interactions of words, figures of speech and symbols. There is great emphasis on the “organic unity” of structure and meaning.

Shelley’s views seem like precursors of the Formalist, wherein he observes that poetry “makes familiar objects be as if they are not familiar,” “it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being,” and “strips
the veil of familiarity from the world." The Russian formalist focused their attention on the means by which the effect of defamiliarization was achieved, for example the manner in which literary texts disrupt ordinary linguistic usage. Similarly, for Shelley, the principal means by which poets accomplish their end is by the coining of new and hence unfamiliar metaphors. Literary language is "vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things, and perpetuates their apprehension," but it is inevitable that such metaphors should in the course of time lose their power to defamiliarize, and as they do so, Shelley argues, again anticipating the Russian Formalists, they lose their literary value, becoming "signs for portions and classes of thoughts, instead of pictures of integral thoughts: and then, if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse."

One of the currents of thought that went into the development of structuralism is Russian Formalism. The Russian formalist studied the properties of literature in order to determine what it is and how it works. The core issue is of how meaning is produced, rather than with the meaning itself. Structuralism seeks to find out how a work of art generates meaning and how a narrative works. Structuralism seeks to understand Literature in the network of the larger frame of references or structures—of which Literature is a part such as language, culture and genre.

Shelley's Literature consists entirely of poetry and he conceives this genre as a special kind of language. Poetic language for Shelley is a product of the imagination and it receives it poetry in a peculiar form. Since in its meaning it represents a perfection which is always a rhythm, order or harmony, Shelley lays great store by the role of rhythm in poetry and sees very little difference between metrical verse and rhythmic imaginative prose. Poetic language for Shelley is measured language, and not the proper vehicle for mere "reasoning" and recital of facts. This measured language need not of necessity be metrical. The metrical form is convenient, popular and preferable, especially in poetry containing much action.

It is however not essential and no true poet remains tied down to it. Measure on the other hand is an absolute intention. Measure or rhythm in poetry, that is the regular succession of sounds is the basic structuralist principle of Shelley's language, culture and
genre. As sensitiveness to the order of the relations of sounds is always connected with sensitiveness to the order of the relations of thoughts, so also the harmony of the words is scarcely less indispensable than their meaning to the communication of poetry.

Like Coleridge, Shelley has a strong feeling for the role of rhythm in poetry. He tries to minimize the distinction between metrical verse and rhythmic imaginative prose. Shelley's sense of the specificity of the structure and syntax of language is so strong that he denies the possibility of translation:

It were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as to seek to transfuse from one language to another the creations of a poet. 31

The metrical form or rhythm in verse is important for Shelley in poetry containing much action. Structuralism is concerned with how a narrative works and meaning is generated.

In Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives, (1996) Roland Barthes developed a structuralist mode of reading literary and cultural texts and put forward three hierarchical levels of narrative structure:

a. Functions
b. Actions (by which he refers to characters)
c. Narration (equivalent to discourse)

Further in his S/Z, (1970), he presents the codes underlying both the production of texts and their reading and proposes certain codes for analyzing all stories developed on the structuralist mode of reading literary and cultural texts. These five codes are the equivalent of the langue, informing the structure of all narratives. These five codes are (i) semic (ii) proairetic (iii) hermeneutic (iv) cultural and (v) symbolic. Of all these codes, symbolic is the most relevant in Shelley's poetics. It moves from textual details to symbolic and simultaneous attractions and repulsion of contrasted elements (binary opposites) such as male/female (Loan and Cythna in The Revolt of Islam); good and bad, tyranny and freedom (Prometheus and Jupiter in Prometheus Unbound) and winter and spring (Ode to West Wind) —especially the polarities and antitheses that cannot be reconciled.
Shelley's verse has a distinct lyrical style. He expresses his emotions in a very imaginative and beautiful way. In fact he is recognized as one of the greatest lyrical poets that England has ever produced. His epistemological choice of words is staggering. Our habitual patterns of thought and feeling, determine our style. Shelley's habitual patterns of thought and feeling also determined his style, which is highly lyrical and served as a way of sorting out the phenomena of experience. His stylistics reveal his habitual patterns of thought and feeling signified by his language. Basically Shelley's language and verse style is a search for rhythm and order. He incorporates concepts of modern linguistics — "the formal properties", stylistics features like patterns of speech sounds, meter or rhyme, syntactic, (definite sentence structures), Lexical (abstract versus concrete words and relative frequency of parts of speech such as nouns, verbs and adjectives) and rhetorical devices by his characteristic use of figurative language and imagery.

The "creative or poetical principle" of Shelley has deconstructionist overtones, especially his stress on imagination and creativity. In his dictum of poetry as an expression of the imagination, Shelley exhibits, like the deconstructionists his expanded consciousness and awareness of the inherent play of language as thought. His language has great vigor and like Derrida, he did not believe in restraining meaning by repressing the limitless vitality of language. Like Derrida, he also dismantles the boundaries between Literature and non-Literature. In the Defence he avers that "it is poetry alone, in form, in action, and in language" that the Greek and Roman civilizations rose to great heights. The poetry of Greece and Rome existed not only in "form and language" but also in its institutions. 32

Shelley also gives a deconstructionist interpretation of Christianity and poetry, when he refers to the sources of Christianity as being the poetry and wisdom of antiquity:

Jesus Christ divulged the sacred and eternal truths contained in these views to mankind, and Christianity, in its abstract purity, became the exoteric expression of the esoteric doctrines of the poetry and wisdom of antiquity. 33

R.W. Emerson views on the theory of Literature show many correlates to Shelley. Emerson was essentially an intrepid scholar and he conceived of the poet to be the same. As a scholar a poet is distinguished for the breadth of his knowledge, experience, wisdom and sound judgment. Emerson was an unconventional scholar even though he was
grounded in the conventions of the British Romantics. His biography and writings are a testimony to this. He was profoundly influenced by Coleridge, Wordsworth and Thomas Carlyle, all of whom he met on his visit to England in 1833. Carlyle, (1795-1881) became his life-long friend and they remained in regular correspondence.

Emerson’s biography reveals that he was against any kind of dogma and authoritative and formalized Christianity. He felt acutely the bankruptcy that had crept into institutionalized religion and began to advocate the need for a reassessment of orthodox Christianity. In his “Divinity School Address” at Harvard in 1838, he made a scathing attack on Christian dogma, and in its place stressed the need for “direct intuitive perceptions.” It is in this context that an author and his perceptions are important for Emerson. His defiant questioning of established and restrictive Christian beliefs and his resignation from pastorship over his disbelief in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper lead to him being ostracized by the orthodox church and disowned by Harvard, his alma mater. His maternal grandfather denounced him severely and declared that he had literally gone insane. Despite the adverse reaction against his stand, he remained steadfast in his convictions.

Emerson’s theory and practice of poetry also revolves mostly around (A): The Poet. The biographical information about his personality and inclinations reveals that he considered the author and his intention vital to the meaning of a text. His emphatic stress on the role, vocation and worth of the poet underlines his belief in the importance of the poet and his intention. The poet is the one who can comprehend the secret of the earth as Emerson avers in essay “The Poet.” In his emphatic stress on the role and vocation of the poet he conceives the author to be a divinely gifted individual and a creator, that is, a creative genius. True poets for Emerson are divinely inspired and they explore the multiple meanings of sensuous facts.

The poet being the representative figure stands for the complete man. The function of the poet is to acquaint us “with the commonwealth.” He is the complete man amongst partial men. This aspect of Emerson’s poetics is partially Hermeneutic. As the poet in concerned with the “commonwealth” he helps us to establish a hermeneutic or general theory of “understanding.” The true poet being divinely inspired and having a holistic approach to life, touches on the inner life of man.
The highest poets have an infinite power of expression about their experience, that is the “lived experiences.” They have a much greater range of experience than other people. They have traveled the whole scale of experience and thus are representative of mankind by virtue of their extraordinary power to experience and express what others only dream of and in a way, which reaches out to the “inner life” of man. Poets make us see truths we had not seen before and it is through them we understand the real and the eternal. A poem in really made up of thought, which is intensely felt by the poet and hence the inherent intention in his work cannot be ignored. Emerson avers that the true poet has an exceptional capacity to experiences even hidden mysteries or truths and equally exceptional power of expression to convey his insights into transcendental truths.

In his theory on (B): The Poetic Process, Emerson conceives beauty to be the bedrock of creativity. The true poet represents beauty and beauty itself is the matrix of all creation. The poet perceives this beauty and he is faithful to his function of expressing and affirming beauty. Beauty becomes a new and higher beauty when expressed by a poet of genius. It is an immanent part of Emerson’s psyche. Every man is a poet to the extent that he is responsive to the enchantments of Nature, because all man have the thoughts (consciousness) of which the universe in the celebration. Emerson’s poet is inspired by Nature, by the living power, which he feels to be present there. A poem is really made of a thought which is intensely felt by the poet and because the poet really experiences in Nature the living power which acts as a source of inspiration to him. Just as soul makes the body, Nature is an externalization of divine beauty and glory. Beauty thus emerges out of the matrix of the poet’s consciousness. A true poem, avers Emerson, should tally with some text in Nature.

It is through his imagination that a poet expresses his insights. The imagination is described by Emerson as, a “wonder-working power.” The imagination for Emerson is not limited to the poet alone, it intoxicates other men as well. It is because of the lack of imagination that we feel that being “on the brink of life and truth, we are miserably dying.” Poets have clear access to every thought that they conceive, unlike most of us, to whom thoughts remain inaccessible and remote. This is because of the imagination and intellect of the poet. Emerson also opines that every thought is also a prison; just as every
heaven is. It is the poet who in "any form whether an ode or in an action, or in looks and behaviour" yields a new thought. He unlocks our chains and the emancipation the poet offers comes from his intellect. The creative ability of the poet is the key and this is the reason why Emerson asserts that "all books of the imagination endure." They take us to the truth, that the poet sees in nature and expresses in his verse. Such writings are immortal and the religions of the world, affirms Emerson "are the ejaculations of a few imaginative men." It is thus the imagination that helps us to envisage, realize and accept this reality. Only someone with the soul of a poet can really achieve this.

Emerson valued the poet because of his ability to use his imagination to discern the meanings of sensuous facts and thereby express the beauty in Nature. He recognizes the spiritual meaning of events. He takes old symbols and gives them new uses. Nature for the poet is a symbol of God. The symbols of the poet emerge out his "collective unconscious." Symbols are an integral part of the poet's myth making process. Relationships, association and conventions are all part of the poet's insight "which expresses itself by what is called Imagination" and is a "very high sort of seeing." It is a way of transcending conventional modes to reach directly to the form of things and make them clear. The insight of the poet operates through his omniscient intellect. The intellect shares the path or circuit of things through forms-thereby making them clear to us. The path of things is however silent, asserts Emerson, thus in a way alluding to the "collective unconscious." Emerson elaborates further and refers to the silent path as "the divine aura which breathes through forms."

Emerson inadvertently refers to Jung's concept of literature as being the expression of the archetypes buried in the racial memory. This access of the poet to the archetypes of the collective unconscious are like the myths whose patterns recur in different cultures. They ensure a realization and revitalization of those aspects of our psyche that are essential for our self-integration and the mental and emotional well-being of mankind. One of Emerson's perennial images, the Aeolian harp, which throws light on his theory of the creative process is also one such archetype. Emerson is actually referring to the preliterate stage of civilization and hence he that poetry professes was all written before time was and whenever "we are so finely organized that we can penetrate into that region where the air is music, we hear those primal warblings and attempt to
write them down.” The poet is conceived by Emerson to be “the sayer, the namer.” that
is, a creator who generates great works of Literature.

It is the thought of the poet or “meter-making argument” that makes a poem. The thought of the poet is often passionate because he always has a whole new experience to reveal. Since the thought of the poet is of paramount importance, his intention cannot be ignored. The intention of the poet operates at the unconscious level. In Emerson poetics the ego (consciousness); the super-ego (conscience) and the id (unconscious) are all influenced by Nature. Primordial images are influenced chiefly by Nature. Poetry is based on the primordial life principle which Freud also calls the pleasure principle. Emerson derived immanent pleasure from Nature. The structure of a poem should be like the organic structure of things in Nature. Emerson’s “distinctive subjectivity” is his faith in Nature as the base of all creation. The original poet is not a mere ryhmer and versifier. It is his “meter making argument” that makes a poem. Such a poem is made up of a thought so passionate and alive that it takes it own form. The thought exists prior to the form and by the “meter making argument” the poem develops organically from its theme. It denotes a harmonious relationship between all the aspects as a whole, characterized by natural development. The harmonious relationship is in consonance to that of Nature.

This is in a way related to phenomelogy or objects of direct experience. The poet has a new thought; he has a whole new experience to reveal and tells us what happened to him. It concentrates on the phenomenal reality of objects as they appear to our consciousness. It is a study of thought and essences. The question is of the ultimate reality or knowability of the world and not of describing it as given to our consciousness. Emerson elaborates this by describing the thoughts and experience of the poet; as expressed through his poetry; as the truest and the most musical words ever spoken and the poet as a man who expresses eternal truths.

In Emerson’s views of (C): The Nature of Poetry; the context oriented issues are not as dominant. Nature, the physical universe/natural environment is the leitmotif. It is central to Emerson’s philosophy and the matrix of his poetics. It is the source of all artistic activity for Emerson. It inspires an artist to create beautiful works of art. An artist reflects the beauty of nature. His mind, heart and soul are fired by some beauty of
nature—whereby his imagination is stirred to create forms of beauty. Beauty does not exist in beautiful sights, asserts Emerson, but in the eye of the beholder. Every landscape is wonderful and has its beauties but it is only the poet who pays due heed to it and looks at it imaginatively.

Emerson believes that it is important not only to understand the beauty in nature but also the ways of nature. One should not treat Nature casually or indifferently, but try to understand her ways imaginatively, opines Emerson. A casual or frivolous interest in Nature is barren and unworthy. Emerson sees “Literature, poetry and science” as “the homage of man to the mysterious secret of Nature...” Nature for Emerson is a differential thermometer, not something which is passive, but in reality, a most active source of pleasure and inspiration. He did not agree with the medieval philosophers, who called nature “Natura Naturata” or passive nature. Emerson saw nature as “Natura Naturars,” that is, as an active principle which gives life and movement to all objects and phenomena. Emerson’s ecological concerns are manifest in his reference to Nature as a “differential thermometer to detect the presence or absence of the divine sentiment in man.” Efficient Nature” also assumes different forms, to which it gives all life and movement and has been at work through the ages. He believes that:

Every moment instructs, and every object; for wisdom is infused into every form. It has been poured into us as blood; it convulsed us as pain; it slid into us as pleasure.

The poet through his grand perception knows the reality of things and sees the flux and metamorphosis that is inherent in Nature. His speech flows and surges with the flow of Nature. He sees all facts of animal life and human existence—sex, nutrition, birth, growth—as symbols and he uses the most ordinary objects and phenomena of nature as symbols of higher truths and eternal poetry. R.W. Emerson’s postulates on Nature are pioneering ideas on aspects of ecocriticism in American Literature.

Besides some psychological allusions of Jung in Emerson’s poetics, Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic assumptions can also be traced in his creative process. Harold Bloom in his essay “The American Sublime” discusses some of these psychoanalytical aspects of Emerson’s theory of Literature. Bloom begins by first comparing Emerson as a moral theorist of interpretation to Freud and St. Augustine. Augustine, points out Bloom,
parallels Freud by speaking of a “Fall” in consciousness. While for Freud it the creation of an unconscious by repression; for Augustine, it is the outcome of the “Fall”. The resulting dualizing split in human consciousness or “Fall” is not a descent to a lower degree of being but is seen as “a most willful and terrible of catastrophes.” Bloom compares this catastrophe theory of Augustine with that of Freud and Emerson. All three doctors of the soul—Augustine, Emerson and Freud—agree basically that consciousness initiates itself because of a catastrophe. Emerson insists upon catastrophe as the invariable inaugural act for consciousness because he believes that man has lost the power to live in what he sees:

It is very unhappy, but too late to be helped, the discovery we have made that we exist. That discovery is called the Fall of Man. Even afterwards we suspect our instruments. We have learned that we do not see directly, but mediatly, and that we have no means of correcting these colored and distorting lenses which we are, or of computing the amount of their errors. Perhaps these subject lenses have a creative power; perhaps there are no objects. Once we lived in what we saw, now the rapaciousness of this new power, which threatens to absorb all things, engages us. 58

This passage from Emerson’s essay Experience is quoted by Bloom to be Emerson’s equivalent of the Augustinian or psychoanalytic division into consciousness. It is, Bloom further asserts, “the authentic vision of the daemonic in Emerson, the apocalyptic frenzy of the American Sublime.” 59 The mystery of this passage, claims Bloom “is in the paradox of repression, of the power brought into being by an enormous fresh influx of repression.” 60

In his experiences and description of his influxes of the American Sublime, Emerson is creating the great trope of the specifically American Unconscious, or what he himself calls “Spontaneity or Instinct”:

The magnetism which all original action exerts is explained when we inquire the reason of self-trust. What is the aboriginal Self on which a universal reliance may be grounded? What is the nature and power of that science baffling star, without parallax, without calculable elements, which shoots a ray of beauty even into trivial and impure actions, if the least mark of independence appear? The inquiry leads us to that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst all later
teachings are tuitions. In that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin.61

The American Unconscious is the spirit of the American Sublime. At its core are the qualities of spontaneity or instinct, a wisdom we call Intuition-governed by the specific Emersonian self-reliance, dominating the consciousness. Self-reliance avers Emerson, should be so great as to bring about a transformation in all the functions and relations of the people—in their religion, in their education, in their pursuits, in their modes of living, in their association, in their property and in their speculative views. A man should be self-reliant in religion and prayer, in education, in matters pertaining to culture, art and Literature.62

Bloom compares the Emersonian American Sublime with Freud’s concept of the unconscious. Freud’s version of the unconscious was based on his theory of repression and intended to explain discontinuities in the psychic life of every individual. Ideas are repressed and thereby shut out from consciousness by an ongoing process of repression. Unconscious ideas that could break back into consciousness, Freud refers to as “preconscious” and are distinguished sharply from repressions that could never return, which constitute the unconscious proper. These latter repressions, according to Freud are ideas and not affects. The permanently repressed ideas, however, do not make up the whole of the Freudian unconscious. Mysteriously there is an original unconscious; indeed Freud finally thought that the mind originally was totally unconscious, and that gradually part of the mind became preconscious and part conscious, with yet another part always remaining unconscious. To this unrepressed unconscious, the augmenting ego added materials through fresh repressions.

Emerson’s version of the unconscious is a purer instance of poetic or hyperbolical repression. Bloom opines that the Freudian unconscious is not structured like language. The Emersonian “Spontaneity or Instinct” is structured like rhetoric, that is, it is both a system of tropes and also a mode of persuasion. Like Freud’s unconscious, it is originary, and again like Freud’s giant trope, it is augmented by fresh and purposeful forgettings, by evasions that are performed in order to present something other than the something that is being evaded. But in Freud, the something evaded is any drive objectionable to ego—ideals, whereas in Emerson, the something takes a single drive, the thrust of
anteriority, the mystifying strength of the past, which is profoundly objectionable to Emerson's prime ego-ideal: Self-Reliance. He asserts emphatically that "when we have new perception, we shall gladly disburden the memory of its hoarded treasures as old rubbish." 63

A poetic repression brings about the sublime wildness of freedom. Emerson gives a magnificent instance of the American Sublime when he says:

There are also the noble creative forces. The revelation of Thought takes man out of servitude into freedom. We rightly say of ourselves, we are born again, and many times. We have successive experiences so important that the new forgets the old, and hence the mythology of the seven or the nine heavens. The day of days, the great day of the feast of life, is that in which the inward eye opens to the Unity in things, to the omnipresence of law:--sees that what is must be and ought to be, or is the best. This beatitude dips from on high down on us and we see. It is not in us so much as we are in it. If the air comes to our lungs, we breathe, and live; if not, we die. If the light come to our eyes, we see; else not. And if truth comes to our mind, we suddenly expand to its dimensions, as if we grew to worlds. We are as lawgivers; we speak for Nature; we prophesy and divine. 64

Emerson's emphasis is sublimely upon what he calls successive rebirths, while meaning successive re-begetting of ourselves, during a life time. This, asserts Bloom is:

The distinguishing mark of the specifically American Sublime, that it begins anew not with restoration or rebirth, in the radically displayed Protestant pattern of the Wordworthian Sublime, but that it is truly past even such displacement. Not only rebirth, but the even more hyperbolical trope of self-begetting, is the starting point of the last Western Sublime, the great sunset of selfhood in the Evening Land." 65

Unlike the Freudian Id or Unconscious, which functions to fulfill the primordial life principle and which Freud considers to be the pleasure principle, the Emersonian Unconscious demands a paradigm, which is beyond the "pleasure-principle."

Emerson's insistence on self-reliance denies the possibility of dependence on any school of thought. The overriding nature of Emerson's poetics and Literature, especially his thrust on self-reliance is based on his belief that new perceptions can only come about by discarding the influence of the old. Every text is a privileged work of art. Emerson read widely and his essays cover a wide; diverse and eclectical range of issues. His
dissertations cover a treasury of topics that include abstract relations; intellect; volition and affections. One needs an extremely close reading of Emerson’s texts in order to comprehend his eclectical and New Historicist orientation. The range of Emerson’s subjects traverse a host of concerns. His work and theory is embedded, like the New Historicists, in the context of other texts, such as those of nature, science, philosophy, religion, transcendentalism, individualism, creativity and language—with poetry as the bedrock.

Emerson’s creative output is essentially limited as compared to his critical output, which is not only vast but has multiple references. Though Emerson perceived each text to be a privileged work of art, one can also interpret his work from the new Historicist perspective. His essays helped form the socio-cultural and literacy conventions that laid the foundation of the American literary ethos and subsequently acted as a catalyst and inspiration for the future especially for his progeny—Whitman, Thoreau, Dickinson, Hart Crane and Stevens.

The socio-political and economic contexts shape the literary and non-literary written matter of a an author or period. Cultural materialism, the British equivalent of New Historicism, sees Literature as bound by the material conditions of production and economic context of society as enunciated by M.H. Abrams.66

Two of Emerson’s “great outbursts of prophetic vocation” coincide with such a situation, the two national economic and moral crises in American history, the Depression of 1837 and the Mexican war of 1846. The origins of the American Sublime, points out Harold Bloom, are inextricably linked to the economic crises of 1837. Emerson was drawn into meditation in a self-reliant attitude of creativity and productivity, all of which arose as a reaction to repression. Whatever had been forgotten, on purpose in the depths, made possible the sudden elevation to the heights:

Behold the boasted world has come to nothing. Prudence itself is at her wits end. Pride, and Thrift, and Expediency, who jeered and chirped and were so well pleased with themselves, and made merry with the dream, as they termed it, of Philosophy and Love, behold they are all flat, and here is the soul erect and unconquered still. What answer is it now to say, it has always been so? I acknowledge that, as far back as I can see the widening procession of humanity, the marchers are lame and blind and deaf; but to the soul that whole past is but one finite series in its infinite scope.
Deteriorating ever and now desperate. Let me ascend above my fate and work down upon my world.\textsuperscript{67}

It is the Transcendental vision of the seer which triumphs over crass materialism. The past is projected as a lame, blind and deaf, march which introjects a Sublime future mounted over fate, the finite and the cosmos. Each expressive act is firmly grounded in some specific material practice. The poetic repression that comes about by the material forces ultimately brings about the Sublime wildness of freedom.

Emerson’s break from the past also marked the beginning of post/neo colonial criticism in America. The beginning of the Romantic movement in England is often traced to 1776, when America’s War of Independence ended and it got freedom, and also to 1789, when the French Revolution was launched. These two historical events and the ideas behind these movements had great influence on the shaping of Romantic literature in England and America. Both the revolutions made a great impact on the minds of young Englishmen. The ideas behind these historical events were not altogether political; they were also cultural and spiritual and were drawn from diverse sources such as books of philosophy, theology, politics and economics. All of these ideas were radically imbibed by Emerson. The two Revolutions not only symbolize the ideas of “liberty”, “equality” and “fraternity”, but also human dignity and transcendental reality; all of which was the motif of post/neo colonial writings.

The early attempts of post-colonial literacy criticism concentrated on stereotypes and distorted portrayals of the East or colonialized countries in the literary tradition dominated by European writers. Emerson on the other hand was against the imperial psyche of the West and he held the East in great reverence and looked to it for inspiration. In his “Divinity School Address” (1838) at Harvard, he declares:

I look for the hour when that supreme Beauty which ravished the souls of those Eastern men, and chiefly of those Hebrews, and through their lips spoke oracles to all times, shall speak in the West also... I look for the new Teacher that shall follow so far those shining laws that he shall see them come full circle....\textsuperscript{68}

Emerson had strong mystical leanings and his marked oriental attitudes were probably influenced by his sound knowledge of Eastern religious texts, especially the Bhagavadgita. He also introduced this great Hindu scripture to his literary progeny] walt
Whitman. Stanzas from Emerson’s poem “Brahma” have close parallelism to those in Sanskrit, in the second chapter of the Bhagavadgita. Similarly, Emerson has drawn from the Upanishads too. His concept of the “Over Soul” is typically Indian. The Over Soul is a literal translation of the Sanskrit parmatma, which is its analogue. The “Over Soul” is a very good exposition of this concept by a Western mind. This over soul is to Emerson synonymous with man’s instincts or intuition, which is but Emerson’s own Super-Ego. The titles of poems like “Brahma,” “Hamatreya,” “Maia” suggest how deeply Emerson was indebted to the Hindu scriptures. The poem “Hamatreya” is based upon a passage in the Vishnu Purana, Book IV. The Concord edition suggests that the title is a variant of “Maitraya”. The qualities of “Hamatreya” are those with which Emerson had concerned himself in his essay The Poet. There he had recognized the symbolic nature of poetry: “things admit of being used as symbols because Nature is a symbol, in the whole and in every part.” Emerson further writes that the poet has “never ceased to explore the double meaning, or shall I say the quadruple or the centuple or the much more manifold meaning of every sensuous fact.” Further, on the authority of Jamblechus he says that “things more excellent than every image are expressed through images.”

And his original poetic creed, that of metre, he opines “it is not meters, but a meter-making arrangement (argument) that makes a poem—a thought so passionate and alive that like the spirit of a plant or animal it has an architecture of its own and adorns nature with a new thing.”

American “Romanticism” is inherently nativist American discourse. It is post-colonialism, based on ideological issues involving opposition to British literary hegemony. American writers notably Emerson, “aligned themselves ideologically with Words worth’s and Coleridge’s celebration of the transcendent poetic value of originality.”

Emerson writings, like post colonial theory, explore strategies of resistance, independence and underpinning for native cultural values and literary ethos. It marked the beginning of the rise of nationalist faith for American writers. For them it was an issue of how to write “American,” a search for the authentic American literary “voice” free from the linguistic tools of centuries of British experience and a renewal of the classical relation between form and content. The American voice was the voice of
emancipation, independence, difference, discovery, regeneration and novelty. Above all, it was the voice of American literature, especially Emerson’s beliefs, which were associated with change, new beginnings, egalitarian ideas about humanity, struggle for freedom, engagement with nature, the realization and defeat of the designs of the empire and self-discovery. American Literature and Emerson’s writings as a self-consciously conceived subject is inseparable from the aesthetics of Romanticism and ideology of nationalism. Romanticism was in every sense a transatlantic movement. The spirit of American Romanticism can be said to be the forerunner of post-colonial ethos. It became an article of faith. Before France, America was the location for revolutions and new beginnings. American “Romanticism” is inherently associated with emancipation from colonial status. Emerson’s poetic creed was a search for independence of American literature in historical reality and literary imagination.

Emerson’s philosophy of life is based essentially on the authority of intuition and genuine emotion. As it is subjective and emotional, the readers role in interpreting texts in Emerson poetics also has relevance. I.A. Richards, who heralded reader-response criticism in Principles of Literary Criticism, based his system of interpretation on emotional responses. Richards view is that the arts being the storehouses of wisdom, affect us by playing on our emotions. They satisfy our “appetencies”, and enlarge our potentialities-leading to a richer more fulfilling life.

Emerson recognizes that every man is a poet to the extent that he is responsive to the enchantments of nature and because all men have thoughts of which the universe is a celebration. Hence every reader is also a poet and a co-creator in his interpretations. Nature is the pivot of Emerson’s poetic philosophy. He beholds in nature a “higher end” which leads to the production of new individuals or to the passage of the soul into higher forms. Nature is an omniscient teacher. Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact for Emerson since he believes that there is a universal soul within or behind man’s individual life, out of which arises and shines-justice, truth love and freedom. Accordingly Emerson alludes to each reader as being a co-author. This universal soul is inherent in all men and also the property of all men. This universal soul, which intellectually, Emerson also calls Reason, when considered in relation to nature is also
seen by him to be the human spirit. This spirit has life in itself and is referred to by Emerson as the universal soul, Reason or spirit and is also the creator or Father.

That which intellectually considered we call Reason, considered in relation to nature, we call Spirit. Spirit is the Creator. Spirit hath life in itself. And man in all ages and countries embodies it in his language as the Father. 

Thus the reader is also inadvertently seen by Emerson as a source of meaning. The universal soul is what strikes a chord in the reading process and helps and adds to interpretation. In this the imagination also has its role to play. Emerson defines imagination as the use which Reason makes of the material world. The thrust of Emerson’s argument in Nature is that there is a radical correspondence between visible things and human thoughts. Man is an analogist and studies relations of all objects. He is placed at the center of all things and a “ray of relation passes from every other being to him”. The analogies are not capricious but constant and pervade nature.

Emerson’s conviction on symbols is effusive and all prevalent. An “imaginative and excited mind” and an omniscient man can render the “poorest experience” rich for the purpose of expressing thought. Every man is a poet to the extent that he is responsive to the enchantments of nature, because all men have the thoughts of which the universe is a celebration. And nature is an omniscient teacher. While the true poet is a genius whose creative powers are close to god, the reader imbibes the thought of the poet to be influenced into new thinking.

The insights of the poet express themselves through the imagination, and the Imagination for Emerson is “a wonder working power”. The Imagination, which intoxicates the poet, is active in other men also states Emerson. The metamorphosis it causes, excites in the beholder (or reader) an emotion of joy. The use of symbols has a certain power of emancipation and exhilaration for all men. We seem to be touched by a magic wand, which makes us dance and run about happily. By reading symbolic poetry, we feel like persons who have come out of a cave or a cellar into that open air. Such is the effect on us of figures of speech, fables and all poetic farms. The poets are thus liberating gods:- “They are free and they make free,” by their poetry. Thus Emerson
envisages a mutual two-way existence and relevance of a work of art, between the creator and the reader.

R.W. Emerson’s views on (D): The Language of Poetry, reveal insights into critical theories like Practical/New Criticism Formalism, Structuralism and Stylistics.

Language for Emerson has a special function in a work of art. Like the key elements of the critical approaches of Practical/New criticism, which deal with the meaning and interactions of words, figures of speech and symbols; Emerson believes that words are signs of natural facts and particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts. This faith in nature underlines his concept of language itself and it is seen to be a symbol of the human spirit. It is the vehicle of thought as enumerated above.

The influence of nature on the expressive act and power is a predominant vision of Emerson’s poetics. Every word, argues Emerson, when traced to its root will be found to be borrowed from some material appearance especially those used to express a moral or intellectual fact. The human spirit is affected by nature just as it is by religion or religious beliefs. This transformation took place in remote time when languages originated, but it can be witnessed even now in children and savages. They use mostly nouns but convert them into verbs and apply these to analogous mental acts. In this way the genesis language which has a spiritual import, that is, relating to the human spirit, is a debt to nature.

In Emerson’s stress on the role of nature, it is things more than words that are emblematic. He was one of the first to emphasize the importance and use of non-literary devices and properties in literature. Every natural fact and every appearance in nature corresponds to some spiritual fact and some state of the mind. The state of the mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance or its picture. Emerson emphatically believed that there is a universal soul within or behind man’s individual life, which is the faculty and fountain head of all that is noble in man—justice, truth, love and freedom. He calls this universal soul reason and it is in born in all men and also the property of all men. In intellectual or philosophical terms, Emerson sees the universal soul not only as Reason but also as Spirit and he considers this to be the Creator. This
Spirit has life in itself and has been embodied throughout history in his language as the Father. 82

For the practical critics, a text needs close reading with a subtle analysis of the complex interrelations and ambiguities or multiple meanings of the component elements inherent in a work of literature. Emerson maintains that man is an analogist and studies relations of all objects and language took its birth through natural objects and their characteristics. In its infancy language was “all poetry” or “all spiritual facts” and was represented by symbols. 83 The foundational tenet of Emerson’s philosophy is that Nature is the symbol of spirit. Emerson rationalized the world to be emblematic. Parts of speech are metaphors because the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind. 84 Like the practical critics, Emerson attaches great significance to the importance of symbols and the ability of only a true poet or man of literature of use them. 85 He is the one who is a namer or sayer and puts the world “under the mind for verb and noun.” He is the maker and the creator in the true sense of the word. His language in truly the language of poetry and he uses symbols to create language. 86

Almost a century before to the Anglo-American Practical/New critic’s way of seeing the text as a self-contained verbal organization, Emerson addressed this issue and laid emphasis on the “organic unity” of structure and meaning. The key concepts of this criticism dealt with the meanings and interactions of words, figures of speech and symbols. There is great emphasis on the “organic unity” of structure and meaning and warning against separating the two.

The poet, contends Emerson “made all the words,” and “language is fossil poetry.” 87 It is made up of “images, or tropes,” 88 like the “infinite masses of the shell of animalcules,” 89 and words now in their secondary use have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin. The poet names things because he sees and comes closer to them than any other. This power of expression of the poet is organic like a second nature out of the first, “as a leaf out of a tree.” 90 Like the metamorphosis of things into higher organic forms, is their change into melodies. The soul of everything is reflected by a melody of Nature. 91 Thus in Emerson’s vision, poems are a corrupt version of some text in nature with which they ought to tally. 92
The expressive power of the poet is conceived by Emerson to be organic in nature. He had a firm belief in the organic nature of art and lays great stress on the "organic unity" of structure and meaning. Poetry for Emerson, in line with American New Criticism/Practical criticism is something that emerges as a natural development and conveys or carries a harmonious relationship between the elements as a whole. It is a systemic phenomena:

\[ \text{it is not meters, but a meter making argument that makes a poem, a} \]
\[ \text{thought so passionate and alive that like the spirit of a plant or an animal,} \]
\[ \text{it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing.} \]

Emerson had anticipated some views of the Formalist, in his belief of the role of poetry in refreshing our awareness of familiar objects and realizing the wonder of our being by purging and removing the veil of familiarity. The Russian Formalist were concerned with the manner by which the effect of defamiliarization was achieved especially of the manner by which literary texts descript ordinary linguistic usage. Emerson has something similar in mind in his observation that "it is not meters but a meter making argument that makes a poem..." For Emerson, like the Formalist, the literariness of literature is in its meter making argument. It involves, like French Formalism, a systemic study of the constituents of a language and the fundamentals governing their combination and organization. The Formalist applied to literature the concepts and analytic distinctions propounded by saussure and adopted by French Formalism as the explicit model of structural linguistics, whereby all human performances, literature included, are seen as system of differential relations of signs. Diversity and even contrariness is manifest in Emerson’s grand perception of things. To the poet’s privilege of metaphor, Emerson adds the idealist prerogative of paradox.

The drop is as a small ocean;/

The near explains the far;/One design unites and animates the farthest pinnacle and the lowest trench;/Everything that tends to insulate the individual... tends to true union as well as greatness.

Deliberating about defamiliarization in Nature, Emerson has this to say about the poet:
He unfixes the land and the sea, makes them revolve around the axis of his primary thought, and disposes then a new.96

Like the Formalist’s view of literature the poet’s perspective strips the film of familiarity and not only apprizes us of a dualism but also the wonder of our being.97

Deliberating indirectly about defamiliarization, Emerson observes that the most common human activities seem insignificant to ordinary people but, “The least change in our point of view gives the whole world a pictorial air.”98

Emerson further elaborates in Nature the role played by nature in defamiliarization.

Nature is made to conspire with spirit to emancipate us, certain mechanical changes, a small alteration in our local position, apprizes us of a dualism. The least change in our point of view gives the whole world a pictorial air....the most wanted objects....please us most. In a camera obscura,... the figure of one of our own family amuse us. Turn the eyes upside down, by looking at the landscape through your legs, and how agreeable is the picture, though you have seen it any time these twenty years.99

In all these cases we experience a sublime pleasure but it is the poet asserts Emerson who conveys the same pleasure in a higher manner:

In a higher manner, the poet communicates the same pleasure. By a few strokes he delineates as on air-the sun, the mountain, the camp, the city, the hero, the maiden, not different from what we know them, but only lifted from the ground and afloat before the eye. He unfixes the land and the sea, and makes them revolve around the axis of his primary thought and disposes them.100

For the poet, the pertinacious refractory world is actually plastic and flexible:

The refractory world in ductile and flexible, he invests dust and stones with humanity, and makes them the words of the Reason. The imagination may be defined to be the use which Reason makes of the material world. Shakespeare possesses the power of subordinating nature for the purposes of expression, beyond all poets. His imperial muse tosses the creation like a bauble from hand to hand, and uses it to embody any caprice of thought that in uppermost in his mind. The remotest spaces of nature and visited, and the farthest sundered things are brought together, by a subtile spiritual connection. We are made aware that magnitude of material things is
relative, and all objects shrink and expand to serve the passion of the poet.\textsuperscript{101}

Thus this power of the poet to transfigure material objects referred to by Emerson is a sort of defamiliarization. He has, further this to say about it:

The perception of real affinities between events (that is to say, of ideal affinities, for those only are real) enables the poet thus to make free with the most imposing forms and phenomena of the world.\textsuperscript{102}

The question of defamiliarization is focused primarily on the issue of language and this is the distinctive power of the Formalist. Emerson achieves defamiliarization by the use of symbols which he employs to create language. His poetics attaches great significance to the importance of symbols in poetry. Emerson states that defamiliarization can be achieved by the use of symbols. He claims that even though all men are conscious of the symbol through which the wonderful and extraordinary human life is named, "yet they cannot originally use them." This is the domain of the poet:

The poet, by an interior intellectual perception, gives them a power which makes their old use forgotten, and puts eyes, and a tongue, into every dumb and inanimate object. He perceives the independence of the thought on the symbol, the stability of the thought, the accidency and fugacity of the symbol. As the eyes of Lyncaeus were said to see through the earth, so the poet turns the world to glass, and shows us all things in their right senses and procession.\textsuperscript{103}

Emerson recognizes the special expressive power of the poet to defamilirize. His concept of the symbol is in a way the harbinger of the Formalist (French and Russian) concept of defamilization.

Russian Formalism, one of the streams of thought that went into the development of Structuralism, studied the properties of Literature in order determine what it is and how it works. The issue or concern is of how meaning is produced, rather than with the meaning itself. Emerson talks in a similar vein when he observes that "it is not meters, but a meter argument that makes a poem." In Structuralism the basic issue is also of how meaning is produced rather than the meaning itself. Structuralism seeks to find out how a work of art generates meaning. It looks for a way to understand Literature in the network of the larger frame of reference or structures of which literature is a part such as
language, culture and genre. Emerson alludes to the “network” or “frame of reference or structures” of a poem as something organic, having “an architecture of its own” and meaning being thus produced. The “conditions of meaning,” to use a phrase of Jonathan Culler is the “meter making argument,” which is generated by the thought and passion of the poet.104

From the Stylistics perspective, Emerson’s prose style reveals his ideas about the language of poetry. His style is aphoristic and has epigrammatic terseness. One can trace the habitual patterns of thought and feeling signified by the literary style of Emerson. His prose style reveals distinctive Stylistic features. Prose is for Emerson the other harmony, that is, poetry. His sentences have the rhythmical form of poetry. We often witness glimpses of Milton’s grand style by the eloquence, amplitude and sweep of his sentences and by the rhythm and poetic quality of his descriptions. Emerson’s Stylistics or literary style or language of poetry is like one of his favorite images, the Aeolian harp, the lyre that plays when its strings are caught by the breeze:

For poetry was all written before time was...and whenever we are so finely organized that we can penetrate into that region where the air is music, we hear those primal warblings and attempt to write them down,...105

The poet’s ear for the music of words is part of Emerson’s Stylistics. A phonetic and musical satisfaction of verse can be found in his prose. There is also a balance of sound with sense, characteristic of his of antithetical construction. The devices of rhythm and balancing of sound through repetition and contrast are notable features of his Stylistics. There are also a number of other Stylistic devices, such as figures of speech, analogy and rhetorical devices like inversion, repetition and interrogation.
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17. Shelley 249.


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