

## *Poetic Theory and Practice*

- *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) and *Preface* (1800)
  - Vs “poetic diction” of Augustan poets
  - “authentic”, natural language of poetry
  - Poetry as “the real language of men”
  - Poet as “man speaking to men”
- ❑ Precursor: Joanna Baillie’s *Introductory Discourse to Plays on the Passions* (1798)

- Definitions and objects of poetry
  - No mimesis but re-creation of reality through the poet’s consciousness
  - Form originating from within
  - Concerning not the outer world of people and events but the inner one of the poet’s feelings
  - “*the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings*”
  - Poem as “*effusion*” – outpouring of emotions

- The organic form of poetry

- Self-originating and self-organizing process
- First idea/seed originating in the poet's mind
- Assimilation of poet's feelings and sensory experiences
- Development into an organic whole/living plant

- Poetic process

- *"if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all"* (Keats)
- Spontaneous overflow
- "Emotion recollected in tranquillity"
- Model: Italian "Improvvisatore" – rhapsodic spontaneity

- Poetic genres

- The lyric – “I” identifiable with the poet
- The epic /long poem – characters/personae (e.g. *The Prelude*; *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*; *Milton*; *Endymion*)
- Almost a new genre - The fragment poem
- ❖ Romantic ceaseless striving for the attainable
- ❖ Unsatisfiable longings for truth: “*the desire of the moth for a star*” (Shelley)
- ❖ Meaning of the unexpressed and absent
- ❖ Too grand a vision to be encompassed in a poem

- Genre hybridity – vs fixity and categorisation

- Lyrical ballad
- Elegiac sonnet
- Lyric drama
- Epistolary epic poem
- Verse autobiography

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- Nature poetry

- Reaction to urbanisation
- Outer reality as a stimulus to the workings of the mind
- Meditative mood – from outside to inside (crisis)
- “pathetic fallacy” – sympathetic exchange
- Ante-litteram symbolism: natural transcendentalism/supernaturalism



- Vertical vs horizontal axis (men vs women)
- Glorification/sublimation of the ordinary
- ❖ The wonder of the ordinary
- ❖ Child's eye's view of the world
- ❖ Reverence for the lowly and common

- The romance and the supernatural / medieval revival / exploration of the subconscious
- 1. Exotic romance (e.g. *Kubla Khan*)
  - Strange adventures
  - Far-off places
  - Distant pasts
- 1. Native romance (e.g. *Manfred*)
  - Gothic heritage
  - Shakespearean influence (e.g. witchcraft)

*John Martin, Manfred and the Alpine Witch*



- Nature/supernaturalism – alienation
  - Natural or supernatural world as refuge
  - Search for solitary places
  - Desolate landscapes for the alienated hero
  - ❖ Cain
  - ❖ Wandering Jew
  - ❖ Napoleon
  - ❖ Satan
  - ❖ Woman of genius – Sappho figure (vs domesticity)

