

Between Awe and Terror: The Sublime in Romantic Poetry through Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley

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Citation: Shashwat Tyagi, (2023), Between Awe and Terror: The Sublime in Romantic Poetry through Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 29(4) 4814-4820
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v29i4.9736

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

As discussed by Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, the sublime is one deeply structured facet of human experience and imagination which certainly shaped the Romantic period's involvement with poetry. Burke's notion of the sublime was rooted in the simultaneous feelings of awe, terror, and beauty. Burke's sublime dictated the romantic poet's endeavour with nature. The objective of this document is to focus on how William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Percy Bysshe Shelley, responds to the sublime and how they use it to further reinterpret the myriad layers of poetry.

With Wordsworth's *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, the reader observes a sublime that is meditatively tranquil. Here, nature serves as a catalyst for self-growth and introspection, leading to spiritual rejuvenation. In contrast with this, Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* exhibits terrifying dimensions of the sublime which are linked to the supernatural. Human culpability and weakness become the main focus form. Shelley's *Mont Blanc* exhibits yet another dimension, the sublime being absolute chaos and fury, deliberately dismissing any hint of purpose and giving limitless scope for nature to engage with its occupants. Thus, through close examination of the primary materials, this paper aims to illustrate the multitude of ways the sublime can be interpreted and incorporated into more modern Romantic literature.

This is the overall argument of this paper. It is in the subtitles of these sections that we demonstrate how Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley portray nature as an entity that 'nurtures' a profound psychological breakdown while at the same time offering an opportunity for transcendence.

Key Ideas: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Burke, Kant, Romanticism, The Sublime, Nature, Transcendence, Terror.

Introduction

The romantic era focused on eclecticism customarily fuelled with passionate regard to nature, creativity and feelings. Nature and its mystique along with individual's imaginative engagement evokes expression within all human beings regardless of caste or creed. One of the most significant aesthetic and philosophical concepts that emerged during this period was sublime. Its unmatched beauty would be ideally captured by poets and depicts, existence of breathtaking beauty. The concept of "sublime" was for the first time elegant and exquisitely detailed by Burke in "*A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*" written in 1757.

According to Burke, the sublime emerges when we face something so massive or powerful like colossal mountains, powerful storms, or vast landscapes, that our comprehension fails, which is beyond our control. Burke's view of sublime is close to physiological and psychological response that impacted Romantic poets, especially with respect to nature's beauty and enigma.

Immanuel Kant, unlike Burke, has a more philosophical and metaphysical view. He separates the sublime into two types: the mathematical sublime which bursts when a human tries to measure something immeasurable, and the dynamic sublime, which erupts when a storm or an earthquake's violent movement presupposes a human's obliteration. He does not stand with Burke, however, and states that sublime ultimately conforms to human logic and moral authority; even while nature's presence is powerful beyond reason, a human can reflect

upon their ability to think of nothingness and nature is void of essence. Unlike Burke and his emphasis on fear, whose sublime drew on debatably adverse to Burke's theory, Kant withdraws on the idea of calmness arising spiritually and mentally.

Each of the Romantic poets employed this thesis in constructing their own definition of the sublime in whatever distinct manner possible. In the instance of William Wordsworth, he perceives nature as a realm of spirituality and self-examination.

In *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, he explains how nature's beauty brings emotions to the surface and recalls memories of the past. Wordsworth's sublime has strong ties to memory, meditation, and a harmonious relationship between people and their environment.

As for Samuel Taylor Coleridge, he depicts the sublime as frightening and bordering on the magical. Through the poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, we can observe the more sinister sides of the sublime where nature transforms into a source of punishment and terror. Coleridge's mariner traversing an empty ocean teeming with metaphysical phenomena reflects Edmund Burke's perspective on the sublime, which originates from fear and the unknown. Much in the same fashion, Coleridge's extravagant depiction of the sublime is deeply intertwined with the Gothic and the visionary because it accentuates the uncontrollable and mystifying elements of nature.

Many argue that Percy Bysshe Shelley takes the most liberal view of the sublime, having nature as an unfeeling and anarchy-driven entity. While in *Mont Blanc*, he analyses nature's ability not as a spiritually reassuring one (as it is with Wordsworth), or as a punishment (Coleridge's stance), but rather, as something omnipotent, and to the borderline of nihilistic. Shelley's formulation of the sublime casts doubt on human place within nature's vast and impersonal reality. Rather, he rejects the claim that nature provides morals, claiming it to be both life-giving and soul-destroying.

This paper seeks to illustrate how Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley contend with the sublime's concept and analyse how Romantic poetry translates nature into an active and at times, disturbing phenomena which redefines humanity's comprehension. Through the analysis of significant poetic works, this research contends that the sublime in Romantic poetry is not simply left as an aesthetic notion, but is considered in its deepest philosophical implications: as something that obligates a person to face the boundaries of perception, harsh truth of human feelings, and the enigma of the outside universe.

Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant: Theories of the Sublime.

It is crucial to appreciate the Burke and Kantian sublimities before exploring Romantic poetry. These two profound thinkers Burke and Kant had starkly differing philosophies yet they complement each other while analysing the sublime, which in turn shaped the way Romantic poets conceptualized Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley nature, human perception and art.

Burke's Sublime: Fear, Terror, and Awe

In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Edmund Burke asserts that experiencing the sublime is a deeply emotional experience that mixes awe, terror, and admiration in equal measure. Burke differentiates between the sublime and the beautiful: beauty is linked with pleasing emotions such as harmony and delight, whereas the sublime invokes emotions such as obscurity or overwhelming power. Burke suggested that the vastness and the unknown evoke feelings of terror which greatly surpass our comprehension.

Burke also argues that the immense sensations of nature, for example, towering mountains, violent storms or gaping chasms, tend to generate a surprisingly thrilling feeling that engages the mind. In the face of danger, these feelings activate self-preservation instincts. Burke suggested that feeling terror from a safe distance can prove pleasurable. The paradox of the sublime is that while it is deeply unsettling, it also evokes an intense reaction that goes far beyond normal.

Burke's treatment of the sublime had a deep impact on romantic poetry, especially with regard to how poets portrayed nature as a source of beauty and fear at the same time. For example, in Coleridge's *The Rime of Ancient Mariner*, Burke's approach is clearly seen in the depiction of the boundless and ruthless ocean which instils a sense of fear and dread. In the same vein, Burke's sublimity is evident in Shelley's *Mont Blanc* where he argues the indifference of nature's power is sublime.

Kant's Sublime: The Limits of Human Understanding and Transcendence

Burke's theory deals with the psychological and physiological dynamics of a response, while Kant approaches the sublime with a more rational perception, and examines it in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790). In contrast to Burke, Kant argues that there are two forms of the sublime:

The shortcomings of human reason led him to propose that The Mathematic Sublime is experienced when our minds are faced with something so immense that it cannot be grasped such as the cosmos or the seemingly unreachable depth of the ocean. In Kant's view, unlike Burke, who's exquisitely frightened by the immeasurable space, attempts to formulate ideas regarding the vast blank, even if it is beyond one's comprehension. The

sublime in this regard, along with marking the ontological boundaries of a particular category, signifies the capabilities of the human cognition.

The Dynamic Sublime emerges when we experience the nature's violence, for instance, storms, sea tides or volcanic eruptions. Kant describes powerful natural forces as threats, which, in the end, validate human rationality and moral courage. In contrast to Burke's position, he views the sublime not only as something which provokes fear, but also as an event of uplifting oneself. Considered small in relation to the raging Nature, one can intellectually and morally overcome such fears through rational thinking.

A romantic poet may bend nature to reflect Kant's theory of the sublime because nature is not just an exterior element, but also something a person can ponder and philosophize about. For instance, in *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* by Wordsworth, I find Kant's sublime when he reflects upon his wonder towards nature, shifting it into contemplation of memory, time and self development. For Wordsworth, unlike Coleridge or Shelley, the response to the sublime is purely subjective, which highlights the balance between the soul of man and the earth.

How Burke and Kant Influenced Romantic Poetry

Both Burke and Kant contributed to the Romantic conception of the sublime, which was interpreted differently among various poets. Burke's focus on terror and nature's power is apparent in Coleridge's ethereal landscapes and Shelley's turbulent imagery of nature. On the other hand, Kant's view on the mind's capacity to rise above terror corresponds to Wordsworth's nature-centered philosophical thoughts to a greater extent.

In the end, the romantic poets incorporated the sublime while addressing profound issues concerning human apprehension, ethics, and the boundaries of understanding. Whether using Burke's dread or Kant's transcendence, these authors' attention towards the sublime changed its meaning to one of the most crucial aesthetic and philosophical ideas of Romanticism.

Wordsworth and the Meditative Sublime

To Wordsworth, the sublime is not an external aspect that invokes awe or terror; instead, it is an internal, meditative experience that profoundly changes a person. Burke focuses on the physical and emotional violence of the sublime, and Kant considers the sublime an exercise in acknowledging human reason. For Wordsworth, the sublime is highly unique, personal, and spiritual. His poetry reflects overwhelming communion with nature, in which its beauty is not only an object of his reflection, but also a tool for his memories and transcendence.

Nature, for Wordsworth, is not a phenomenon; it is a virtue that encourages the cultivation of the mind and soul. Wordsworth's interactions with nature, unlike Burke's, do not instill terror, but, give a sense of peace, continuity, and knowledge. His poetry demonstrates how people's formative experiences of nature during childhood condition their adult consciousness, and bond his self to the landscape for eternity. In Wordsworth's vision, the sublime is not about terror, but describes the profound, nearly spiritual feeling of oneness with nature.

William Wordsworth's *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* (1798) illustrates his profound interpretation of nature. The poem was written after he took a trip to The Wye Valley five years later. It emphasizes the profound influence nature has in shaping a human's mind alongside the marvel's memory captures. The same Burke philosophy of sublime as a fantastically overwhelming experience takes on an entirely different form in Wordsworth's thinking. He presents it as inward and an experience that needs deep perception to be treasured.

The poem opens with a detailed description of the smooth landscape, including the rolling waters, steep cliffs, and the calm pastoral scenes. These details conjure feelings of peacefulness instead of dread, further consolidating Wordsworth's views that nature is primarily a healing mechanism. He states:

"These beauteous forms, through a long absence, have not been to me As is a landscape to a blind man's eye: But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din Of towns and cities, I have owed to them, In hours of weariness, sensations sweet..."

He suggests nature's greatness does not need immediate appreciation to be enjoyed, which is particularly helpful in remembering and in providing comfort, especially when living in a city. He refers to this idea as "the Inward Eye," which is further elaborated in the poem *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*, which reinforces the idea that greatness is found not only in other people and places, but in one's mind.

The poem reflects Wordsworth's changing attitude toward nature. In his youth, he savoured nature without reflection, feeling ecstasy in its magnificence. As he gets older, his bond with nature becomes more profound and deep, leading him to the realm of thinking and spirituality.

"That time is past, And all its aching joys are now no more, And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts Have followed; for such loss, I would believe, Abundant recompense."

This is a verse that describes how Wordsworth's sublime evolves from overly emotional to a more comprehensive appreciation of what nature can offer, which is to think and provide moral guidance and nurture. Instead of nature being harsh and daunting, it becomes a form of wisdom and a portal to a greater being beyond the self. Wordsworth's feeling of sublime is not just pristine and implacable, it is graceful.

While Tintern Abbey has a calm and calming serene aspect, Wordsworth handled the more unsettling aspect of the sublime through a dramatic lens in *The Prelude* (1850). One of the more famous episodes of this autobiographical poem is the "boat-stealing" episode wherein young Wordsworth rows a boat across a lake at night without the owner's permission. For some time, he is filled with a sense of freedom, until, nature grows menacing:

"A huge peak, black and huge, As if with voluntary power instinct, Upreared its head. I struck and struck again, And growing still in stature the grim shape Towered up between me and the stars, and still, For so it seemed, with purpose of its own And measured motion like a living thing, Strode after me."

His nature is more the frightening sublime Burke describes. That mountain, cold and obscure mad mature, is near as if sentient. It is inexplicable. It is not man-made unlike *Tintern Abbey*, which provides constancy and interval. Rather, this moment in *The Prelude* plunges Wordsworth into the depths of anguish and compels him to accept his lack of significance.

The experience is deeply enlightening, even if it is scary. The poem continues with Wordsworth recalling the encounter as not just a fearsome experience, but as an event that forever changes how he views nature. The memory remains not only changing his perception of the world but also increasing his wonder. This change corresponds with Immanuel Kant's notion of the sublime being an intellectual and moral comprehension. Even though nature appears to be frightening, the essence of humanity is to rise above fear and incorporate the experience into a wider scheme of philosophical reasoning.

The Supernatural Sublime: Coleridge's View on Nature

For Coleridge, nature was an exquisite vision to behold while at other times an unexplainable and supernatural aspect. Coleridge's vision of sublime is greatly Gothic as it relates to the terror, supernatural and the irrational. Nature for Wordsworth is a source of wisdom whereas for Coleridge, it is beyond comprehension.

In his poetry, sublime is almost synonymous with Burke's definition, terror. But at the same time, Kant's philosophical elements are present in his exploration of the mind and its ability to process the unfathomable. His poetry eloquently describes nature as a metaphysical being that exists beyond the comprehension of humans, blurring the lines between what is real and what is imaginary, a spoke deeply revered in magic and naturalism. Nature, as he suggests, possesses truths that borders on the supernatural.

A Deep Dive into Analysis of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner published in 1798 was a stark display of Coleridge's supernatural sentiment—the imagery of adventure at sea combined with wondrous elements of horror and deep-seated philosophy. This piece captures the life of a sailor who, after killing an albatross, is doomed to suffer through a long, solitary and haunting journey at sea. The sublimity in the piece and the moments it embodies is defined by Burke - in the emptiness of the ocean, ghostly appearances and strange transformations of the environment.

The sublime in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is immediately apparent in the vastness and isolation of the sea:

*"Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea!"*

The 'mariner' and everything in his surroundings is fully devoid of life, drowning in the depths of the ocean's power. Here, the philosophical perspective of marvellous beauty and self-reflection. The oceans invoke an existential classical condition. This line shares Burke's explanation of feelings nurtured from being powerless and tiny against the infinite.

Another key sublime moment occurs when the ghostly ship appears:

*"A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared..."*

Carried along by death in Life-in-Death, the spectral ship embodies the supernatural sublime, the ship's motion sent eerie shudders through the very things that filled nature with dread and the existence of superhuman beings. Everything else helps illustrate nature as a physically splendid and beautiful world and besides that, the nature shift is beyond much when compared to that of civilization thoughts. Coleridge's sublime unlike Wordsworth, charms like a nightmare, is unsettling in the worst of ways and is surreal case morally.

The killing of the albatross is another central moment of the supernatural sublime. The bird initially represents nature's harmony, but its senseless death disrupts that balance, unleashing chaos. Nature, in response, turns into a vengeful force:

*"The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!"*

*Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea."*

This grotesque transformation where the sea becomes decayed highlights nature's shift from awe-inspiring to horrifying, depicting her Gothic sublime. Coleridge further portrays his reliance on the sublime by emphasizing the Mariner's suffering as a moral lesson. It is only after an incredibly long ordeal that he is capable of treasuring nature's sacredness. His ultimate redemption is when the Mariner learns to appreciate the beauty in alive things:

*"He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast."*

The cult of Coleridge's sublime is infused with a sacred mystery: the message is that no one is able to understand without comprehending the natural world. Coleridge unlike Burke, who views the sublime predominantly as aesthetic and emotional perception, deeply steeped it with moral importance, implying that a sublime experience brings assistance and leads toward enlightenment and redemption.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner focuses on sublime aspects of terror and moral judgment, while *Kubla Khan* (1816) illustrates a more fantastical version. This poem depicts a reality filled with scary yet beautiful elements with nature at its core.

*"A savage place! As holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!"*

This portion describes the sublime through awe and terror. Untamed wilderness exists, as suggested by "savage place" which proves that nature can never be controlled by man. The "demon-lover" portion speaks of supernatural components which adds to eeriness of the poem. It is a complete depiction of Coleridge's awareness and admiration of the coexistence between the natural and supernatural.

Another powerful sublime image in *Kubla Khan* is the depiction of the underground river:

*"Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea."*

The sentence "measureless to man" has no bounds and goes with "caverns" which further gives a sense of terror and mystery of nature. It follows Kant's philosophy on the mathematical sublime. The addition of "sunken sea" serves to darken and increase the danger which shift the tone towards Gothic.

Compared to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* where the purpose of the supernatural is moral, *Kubla Khan* shows the sublime as a creation of imagination.

The poem indicates that the sublime is not primarily an external phenomenon but a product of the mind's attention, which is the poet's imaginative faculty. This relates to Romanticism's focus on all cultures and how the unique mind is capable of a sublime experience.

Shelley and the Chaotic Sublime: Shelley's View of Nature

Percy Bysshe Shelley's understanding of the sublime diverges sharply from that of Wordsworth and Coleridge. For Wordsworth, nature offers a too-often-needed spiritual comfort while in it, and for Coleridge, it has supernatural and ethical values. Shelly, on the other hand, sustains that nature is a force of indifferent unreasoning chaos. It operates beyond human thought or significance. His sublime attitude is radical, disquieting, and at times nearly nihilistic.

Edmund Burke's understanding of terror and greatness is fully coherent with Shelley's view of the sublime, but only to a point. Burke's idea is accompanied by an existential dimension of a political revolution while Shelley emotionally focuses the observer of the sublime, unlike Burke, who is singularly focused on the feeling it brings, and Kant, who seizes a moment of human existence transcended by nature. The difference puts humanity poring nature's huge power in indifference. He does not attempt to bring together human's solitary condition with nature as is typical for modern poetry, rather grants nature freedom and existence without human review, ethics and aim.

This viewpoint on sublime is extremely connected with Shelley's radical philosophy and political outlook. He was an atheist, a revolutionary skeptic, and a free-thinker who opposed the concept of religion as well as social institutions. Within his poetry, sublime serves as a metaphor for great things like upheaval, destruction, and great possibilities for rejuvenation in nature and human society.

Analysis of *Mont Blanc*

Romanticists poetry is filled with The Sublime and even includes Shelley's most meticulous meditation piece "*Mont Blanc*" released in 1817. The French Alps served as Shelleys muse while writing the poem as he describes not only the mountains' abundance, but also the rock which cannot be separated from time and is unmoved by humanity. In comparison to Wordsworth, who appreciates abuses in nature, or Coleridge who praises moralizing the sublime also Shelly's work draws comparison to *Mont Blanc* which embodies nature devoid of any form of kindness, rather it is described as self reliant, strong and apathetic.

From the outset, the poem establishes the mountain's sublime power:

"The everlasting universe of things Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves, Now dark, now glittering, now reflecting gloom, Now lending splendour, where from secret springs The source of human thought its tribute brings Of waters, "

This passage portrays reality as something complex and fluid. Unlike classical romanticism, which is often static and comforting, Shelley's sublime is vainglorious, overwhelming, and chaotic. The imagery of flowing water and flowing light indicates a universe that exists outside and is completely apathetic towards humanity.

Besides imagination, anthropocentrism is yet another aspect of life striking in *Mont Blanc*. That self-centred view which places mankind at the centre of all important phenomena. The mountain stands as a symbol of nature's permanence, indifferent to human presence:

"Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal Large codes of fraud and woe, not understood By all, but which the wise, and great, and good Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel."

Here Shelley suggests with more eloquence that nature has a voice. But it is an intricate one that is largely incomprehensible to man. Unlike Wordsworth who takes personal pride to find a meaning in nature, Shelley naturally suggests that it exists outside the control of human interpretation.

The mountain neither teaches nor consoles; it simply is. This is aligned with Kant's concept of the mathematical sublime, during which the mind fights to comprehend the dimensions and force of the world. Shelley's concept of the sublime is also existential in identity. He refuses to present the world as something that cares, or as a teacher; but he regards it as an overpowering action that reveals the weakness of humans. In this sense, *Mont Blanc* takes on the Romantic features that try to attain balance between humanity and nature, and instead reveals a reality that is enormous, neutral, and even hostile.

While *Mont Blanc* displays nature's sublime disinterest, *Ode to the West Wind* (1819) provides a strikingly radical alternative vision of the sublime. The focus of the poem suggests the existence of a spirit that holds the power to cause action and change. The poem opens with an invocation to the West Wind:

"O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being, Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,"

The wind is seen as both a preserving and destructive force as it blows the dead leaves in order to make space for the new ones. This destructive and creative nature embodies Shelley's dynamic sublime. In contrast to Wordsworth's gentle and reflective sublime or Coleridge's moralizing sublime, Shelley's sublime centres on revolution as a symbolic of upheaval and renewal. Just as Shelley demonstrates in "Ode to the West Wind," nature's force of the wind extends beyond the natural and dominion of humanity into thought and art. *"Drive my dead thoughts over the universe Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!"*

In these lines, we see the fusion of political and poetic change being discussed along with the lovely, but terrifying force of nature. The wind becomes more than just an external force, it becomes the metaphor for deep and radical change that transforms the old ways of thinking and institutions into history. This idea of the sublime certainly coincides with Shelley's beliefs, he believed that, for evolution to happen in nature, society and the individual mind revolution was essential.

Unlike *Mont Blanc* with its detached sublime nature, *Ode to the West Wind* delightfully portrays an engaging and active sublime. The wind does not only exist, it plays on the earth, reshapes it, and it disturbs. Still, it is here where he does not place any human elements on nature or suggest that it bears any moral meaning. Rather, even here he does not dismiss the overwhelming power of nature that inspires, terrifies, and can be at times both.

Conclusion

The sublime for each Romantic poet tells a story of their individual philosophical and aesthetical vision which was unique to every single one of them. All three, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley explore the theme of man's relationship with nature, but each one approaches it in a completely distinct manner. For Wordsworth, nature is a provider of inner sublime, a healer to retreat to. Coleridge adds tragic dramatization to nature by amalgamating the superhuman and moral with its beauty. To Shelley, nature is indifferent and often cataclysmic; an adversary which sets man into motion, but for what purpose is beyond us.

Sublime for Shelley is contemplative, relating it to the inner self and memories. In Shelley's sublime, in Tintern Abbey, evokes a sense of contradiction considering nature's gifting and cursing as every youthful individual matures into an adult. During the act of *The Prelude*, in the opening of it, he comes across the very frighteningly sublime Split Mountain of which, in the end, inspires wow. But as we climb mountains, fear will ultimately be overcome with wisdom. Unlike Burke's astoundingly terrifying sublime, which is undoubtedly a hard and pristine garden, Wordsworth is without change and sought for under the surface delight which calls to the merging spirit bound within the bosom of nature.

Coleridge contrasts with Wordsworth's romanticism in the mystical fountain of the sublime. In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, a nature that is viciously beautiful but devilish denotes Burke's sense of terrible awe.

These aspects of terror beyond compare suggest that magic accompanied by a demonic ship hint at the existence of nature independent of humankind. In *Kubla Khan*, nature is illustrated as existing within a duality of absolute imbalance. It represents one's creative potential which, alongside life's unpredictability, is refreshing. Shelley redefines the sublime as an object which can be taken to extremes. Unlike Wordsworth and Coleridge, he sees nature as an entity in itself having her independent existence as well as a nonchalant attitude towards humanity. The mountain in *Mont Blanc* is a metaphysical representation in which Kant's mathematic sublime is existent. The mind is left to wonder at the vastness of nature and is only met with awe. Nature is at the same time destructively and creatively beautiful in *Ode to the West Wind*. In Shelley's sublime, which appears to respond to his radical politics, beauty is indeed suggestive that there is chaos in order for there to be progress.

The nuances of how Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley depict the sublime reveal the implicit conflict of the Romantics between reason and hallucination, order and chaos, and the value and meaning of humanity. The manner in which nature is made an active and troubling component of being marks a change in literary and philosophical thinking. As the sublime is present in Wordsworth's careful self-exploration, in Coleridge's enchanted nature, and even in Shelley's revolutionary dreams, it heralds Romanticism and calls for meditation on one's purpose in a developing and uncertain world.

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