

The Contribution of Romanticism to Modernism as seen in Keats, Ibsen and Yeats

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ABSTRACT

This thesis primarily focuses on the Romantic poet John Keats's poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, the Modernist poet and playwright Henrik Johan Ibsen's play *When we Dead Awaken* and the Romantic Modernist poet and critic William Butler Yeats's poem *Sailing to Byzantium* in order to demonstrate Romanticism's contribution to the so called modernist movement in terms of idealism. The thesis begins with a demonstration of Keats as a representative of Romanticism and the explanation of the crucial Romantic traits. *Ode on a Grecian Urn* is analyzed through the Romantic features such as imagination, emotion, nature and beauty. Then it continues with a revelation of Ibsen as a Modernist playwright who has romantic roots and *When we Dead Awaken* as a romantic and modernist play. Afterwards, it maintains Yeats as a Romantic Modernist and *Sailing to Byzantium* as an example to Yeats's transition from Romanticism to Modernism. Finally, it concludes by declaring the fact that although all three works were written in different years, they have a number of similarities that constitute their basic principles.

This thesis aims to depict that the artists are influenced by the social, political, cultural and economic developments that occur in their time and shape their artistic visions according to their thoughts about the crisis. They reflect their reaction to their current social problems by protesting the established order and mostly create substitutes for reality which are idealized human beings in order to avoid the effect of time and mortal limitations. In addition to this, these artists try to reflect an ideal world, which they cannot achieve to have in the material realm. Therefore, they depict

this ideal world in a transcendental level. While idealizing human beings the artists demonstrate a human paradox which indicates the thirst to live forever. At the end it displays a picture that the human beings are transient however, immortality can be achieved through creating a work of art and being remembered forever.

Keywords: Romanticism, Modernism, John Keats, Henrik Johan Ibsen, William Butler Yeats, Idealism, Immortality.

ÖZ

Bu tez Romantizm'in Modernizm'e olan idealistik katkılarını göz önüne çıkarmak için özellikle Romantik şair John Keats ve şiiri *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, Modernist şair ve oyun yazarı Henrik Johan Ibsen'in oyunu *When we Dead Awaken* ve Romantik Modernist şair ve eleştirmen William Butler Yeats'in şiiri *Sailing to Byzantium*'a değinmektedir. Tezin ilk bölümü Keats'i Romantizm'in temsilcisi olarak göstermekle birlikte Romantizm'in önemli özelliklerini açıklamaktadır. İkinci kısım ise Ibsen'ı romantik özelliklere sahip bir modernist olarak ortaya koyarak *When we Dead Awaken*'ı bu özelliklere sahip bir oyun olarak tanımlamaktadır. Bir sonraki bölüm ise Yeats'i romantik modernist olarak tanımlamakla birlikte *Sailing to Byzantium*'u Yeats'in değişimini örnekleyen şiir olarak ortaya koymaktadır. Son olarak üç eserin de farklı zamanlarda yazılmalarına rağmen temellerini oluşturan benzer özelliklere sahip olduklarını ifade etmektedir.

Bu tez sanatçıların yaşadıkları dönemde ortaya çıkan sosyal, politik, kültürel ve ekonomik gelişmelerden etkilenecek artistik görüşlerini oluşan krize göre şekillendirdiklerini göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. O dönemdeki problemlere karşı reaksiyonlarını yaptıkları protestolarla göstermeye çalışmaktadırlar. Çoğunlukla zamanın etkilerinden ve ölümcül olmanın getirdiği sınırlamalardan kaçınabilmek için hakikatin yerine vekillik eden idealler yaratırlar. Gerçek dünyada başaramadıklarını yarattıkları ideal dünyada başardıklarını yansıtmayı denerler. Bu yüzden de bu ideal dünyayı metafizik dünyasında yaratarak yansıtmaya çalışırlar. İnsanları idealleştirmeye çalışırken sanatçılar sonsuz yaşamı arzulayan ikilemeyle karşılaşırırlar. Sonuçta insanların ölümlü olduklarını fakat ölümsüzlüğe ancak yarattıkları eser sayesinde kavuştuklarını belirtilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Romantizm, Modernizm, John Keats, Henrik Johan Ibsen, William Butler Yeats, İdealizm, Ölümsüzlük.

Dedicated to my grandma, mum and beloved

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ÖZ.....	v
DEDICATION.....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	viii
TABLE OF CONTENTES.....	ix
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Romanticism and Modernism	3
1.3 Idealism in <i>Ode on a Grecian Urn</i> , <i>When we Dead Awaken</i> and <i>Sailing to Byzantium</i>	6
1.4 Chapter Division.....	7
2 JOHN KEATS AS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF ROMANTICISM.....	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 John Keats as a Romantic Poet and <i>Ode on a Grecian Urn</i> as a Romantic poem.....	9
2.3 Keats, Imagination and Emotion	13
2.4 Keats, Individualism, Senses and Nature	14
2.5 Romanticism and Beauty.....	17
2.5.1 Beauty in <i>Ode on a Grecian Urn</i>	19
2.6 Keats and Politics	22
2.7 Idealism and Human Paradox.....	24
3 HENRIK JOHAN IBSEN	28
3.1 Introduction	28
3.2 Henrik Ibsen as a Modernist who has a Romantic Background.....	28
3.3 Ibsen and Politics.....	33
3.4 <i>When we Dead Awaken</i>	34
3.4.1 Romantic features in <i>When we Dead Awaken</i>	35
3.4.2 Modernist features in <i>When we Dead Awaken</i>	37
3.5 Ibsen’s use of Romantic Idealism and Human Paradox.....	41

4 WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS.....	42
4.1 Introduction	42
4.2 The Metamorphosis of Yeats	42
4.2.1 Yeats and Politics	44
4.3 <i>Sailing to Byzantium</i>	45
4.3.1 Romantic Features in <i>Sailing to Byzantium</i>	46
4.3.2 Modernist Features in <i>Sailing to Byzantium</i>	49
4.4 Yeats' use of Romantic Idealism and Human Paradox	52
5 CONCLUSION	54
5.1 Modernism's Affiliation with the Romantic Movement.....	54
REFERENCES.....	59
End Notes	68

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

“Human life and happiness may be brief, yet Art enshrine them with an ideal beauty that outlives the years” (Westland, 145).

Human beings are mortal creatures who have limited time on the planet earth. They are all aware of the fact that they will die one day, and this fact leads many human beings to desire to be able to live forever in their prime, as one of the most frightening facts of getting closer to death is decrepitude. Individuals reach their ideal beauty when they are young in terms of appearance. There are obvious differences between a young person and an old person’s appearance. A young person represents happiness of living, whereas an old person represents sorrow of the loss of ideal beauty. Therefore, it is possible to assert that old age entails a conscious acceptance of one’s physical decline and loss of beauty.

Arnold Rubek the protagonist of Henrik Ibsen’s play, *When we Dead Awaken*, reflects on the issue of beauty and tries to create an unstained statue of his lover, Irene. He desires to create a substitute for Irene which would be “a pure young girl, unstained by life” (II, 250). According to Rubek, on the one hand life makes a human being dirty and spoils what is pure, which could be considered as one’s inner beauty. As time passes on and the one goes through hard experiences, the attitude towards life

becomes subjected to change. For instance; Rubek desires to create his masterpiece as perfectly as possible, yet, as time passes and he comes face to face with sordid, selfish and insolent people he decides to add the ugly sides of these people to his masterpiece. On the other hand, art is a way of protecting the represented object from the effects of time, change and destruction in order to keep it “unstained”, which invests the objects with immortality. This is the reason why Rubek thinks his marble statue is pure: because it is not alive and cannot be affected by disturbing events in life. Similarly, the third stanza of John Keats’ *Ode on a Grecian Urn* is about the image of two young lovers who sit joyfully under the trees, and the speaker compares this image of the happy lovers to real lovers who have “a burning forehead, and a parching tongue” (30). Thus, the image of the two content lovers functions as an escape from the miserable and painful sides of life. In addition, Keats mentions the importance of present beauty throughout his poem. Likewise, the old man in William B. Yeats’ *Sailing to Byzantium* desires to be a golden bird in the city of Byzantium in order to regain his youth. He wants to escape the reality of gradual decrepitude, which is an unavoidable fact of life, “therefore I have sailed the seas and come/ To the holy city of Byzantium.” (15-16). He thinks in this way he will be able to regain his ideal beauty, which is his youth.

Many people wish to be remembered after they die thus, they put a great effort to leave something behind that might make them unforgettable. Artists are such people who wish to create a work of art, which can make them adorable and immortal. They try to reflect their imaginary world, which they build up in their subconscious. They live in a landscape of their subconscious where they are not worried about death. This is what Rubek in Henrik Ibsen’s play *When we Dead Awaken* is trying to ensure by creating the perfect statue of an unblemished woman, which will reflect that beauty forever. Moreover, the speaker in John Keats’s poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn* admires

the happy moments on the urn and says that the urn will be there forever in order to show the happiness of the people on the pictures on it as well as the eternal beauty of the urn. Finally the old man in William Butler Yeats's poem *Sailing to Byzantium* desires to be like the golden bird, which will never witness the signs of old age and death. All three of the artists show that even though they have limited time on the planet earth as mortal human beings, they try to create an "ideal beauty" through the help of art, which will represent them forever and make them immortal. Due to the fact that this thesis is going to be about the idealistic move, which is related to transcendence, from Romanticism to Modernism, the idealistic figures in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, *When we Dead Awaken* and *Sailing to Byzantium* throughout this thesis will be examined.

1.2 Romanticism and Modernism

Romanticism emerged in the late eighteenth century and continued until the middle of the nineteenth century, whereas Modernism came into sight in the middle of the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth century. The turn of the centuries, which indicated the coming change, gave birth to new literary movements. Both of the movements were against the Enlightenment thinking, which claims that the "world is a rationally ordered whole" (Seyhan, 115). In comparison to this, both of the movements predict that the world is disorganized because of social, political, economic and cultural problems. Therefore, they tended to challenge the existing system with the hope of creating a new one, which would be able to fulfil the needs and expectations of the people who were living in unsatisfying circumstances. Thus it is possible to say that both of the movements were influenced by the social, political, economic and cultural problems of the time they emerged, which lead to the modernist crisis.

In the eighteenth century the Enlightenment thinking was based on reason and logic. However, as time passed people started to deny solving the existing problems with the help of maths and science, they began to use their emotions. Therefore, “Romanticism...[became] a sharp break with the rationalizing...Enlightenment” (Peckham, 1). By discovering the importance of emotions and thoughts people started to put their feelings in the first place. According to Brown, this opened a path for Nationalism and French people started the French Revolution in the eighteenth century. This can be seen as the effect of Romanticism on the politics of the eighteenth century (Suite 101).

The Industrial Revolution emerged in the eighteenth century, and it is one of the important initiative effects that caused the modernist crisis. It started in Britain because the British Empire was one of the most powerful empires of the time. As a result of the Industrial Revolution, in Britain cities started to expand rapidly. Peasants started to seek life in big cities because there were technological machines on the farms which could do the same work as human beings. Therefore, there was a shift from an agricultural based economy to machine based manufacturing economy. Deane defines it as “a revolution took place in the social and economic life of Britain which transformed the physical appearance of the land and established a totally different way of living and working for the mass of its people” (4). Day by day a great amount of workers migrated to cities from the countryside. With the fast increase of population and the growth of urbanization many devastating side effects of the Industrial Revolution came into sight. Industrialization became one of the economic and social problems, which caused inequality as a result of class division in urban life. Humans came to be seen as a commodity, which could be used in the factories. Urbanization became a cultural problem, which caused the routine and monotony to become a social factor which led to the alienation of people from their cultural past leading to a crisis

in creativity. In addition, political problems occurred as a result of the Industrial Revolution, bringing economic, social and cultural problems within it. War was one of the most influential events that shed light to the political views in those years. The French Revolution was one of the most important political influences which had an impact in those years.

In general the Modernist movement is a representation of fragmentation in every field of life. There was a huge progress in economy in terms of making profit out of every single opportunity. Poor people were working harder in order to make the rich wealthier. This was the economic problem of the time. The social and cultural problems were related to each other which were based on capitalism. Marian Corker and Tom Shakespeare describe this situation by stating that:

Modernity describes the social institutions, belief and value systems of capitalist civilization ... *Capitalism*, or ideological hegemony of market of forces and the endless search for profit and capital accumulation, along with its social counterpart *modernization*, runs the risk of a cultural imperialism that submerges traditional ways of life (2).

With the fast growth of industrialization, the need for the human labor started to increase. The rich countries of the world, which reached to a certain economic prosperity started to buy or invent modern weapons with the development of technology. Therefore, the term “Capitalism” began to show itself in those years and create the risk of cultural imperialism which could destroy the traditional ways of life. To a certain extent, as a result of these developments, the First World War began with the involvement of all European countries and others who got into the war in order to protect their own imperial benefits.

Shortly, Romanticism is closely associated with the French Revolution whereas Modernism is more closely associated with the First World War. In the French Revolution people desired to regain their freedom and national integrity and free themselves from oppression whereas in the First World War each country was fighting

for its own imperial benefit. Therefore, it is possible to say that both of the movements include the individuals' against the established conventions, which had a great influence on their poets and writers too. Raymond Williams mentions the relation between the two movements by stating that:

Romanticism is the most important expression in modern literature of the first impulse of revolution: a new and absolute image of man. Characteristically, it relates this transcendence to an ideal world and an ideal human society; it is in Romantic literature that man is first seen as making himself (71).

With the emergence of Romanticism the world had been introduced to the idea of 'individualism' and Modernism had taken this idea and improved it into a deeper and more understandable sense. The concept of individualism is related to independence and self-confidence. Both of the movements present the individual as a free being. In Romanticism the individual is isolated from the society and united with nature in order to find himself. Romantics believe that individuals feel and act better in nature and they reject being in society because of the corruption. Romantics are driven by individual inspiration whereas in Modernism the individual is driven by outside factors such as society. In other words, Romantics give importance to the emotions of an individual and get inspired by the nature. On the other hand, the celebration of self-confidence is associated with the admiration of the individual creativity which is connected to the process of idealization in both of the movements.

1.3 Idealism in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, *When we Dead Awaken* and *Sailing to Byzantium*

Ode on a Grecian Urn, *When we Dead Awaken* and *Sailing to Byzantium* deal with the issue of creating an ideal in order to avoid the pitfalls of life. Keats, Ibsen and Yeats try to create a landscape of subconscious, which does not exist in real life and which denies reality. The protagonist, Arnold Rubek, in *When we Dead Awaken* is a sculptor who creates a marble statue of Irene who is a real woman. *Ode on a Grecian*

Urn is about the various figures of happy moments from life, and in *Sailing to Byzantium* the old man desires to be a golden bird on a “golden bough” (30).

It is essential to mention that idealism is a theory where the nature of reality lies in the core of consciousness. In other words, it is possible to say that idealism is a process of transition from the real (material) to the ideal (spiritual). Recreating the existing objects or people as in Keats’ urn, Yeats’ golden bird and Rubek’s statue are representatives of a transcendental level. Therefore, this depicts the ability of transferring objects or people from material realm to a spiritual realm by idealizing and the human paradox which will be explained in the further chapters. It also displays that the reality becomes the inspiring source of the people such as the speaker in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, the speaker in *Sailing to Byzantium* and Rubek in *When we Dead Awaken* who desire to create an ultimate perfection which becomes the ideal. They all try to reflect the ideal which lies in their subconscious onto their work of art. This thesis will make use of the ideas of modernist critics and poets such as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, E.E. Cummings and William Carlos Williams. Especially American modernist critic T.S. Eliot’s famous essay “Tradition and Individual Talent” will be considered.

1.4 Chapter Division

With this in mind this thesis will focus on the contribution of Romanticism to the so called ‘modernist’ movement, and this will be supported by tracing romanticism’s move towards the modernist ideal through literary figures such as John Keats, William Butler Yeats and Henrik Ibsen’s selected works. Three of these literary figures try to go beyond the so called reality by reflecting their ideal world through their poems and plays. Idealism was applied in the romantic poet John Keats’ *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, the modernist playwright Henrik Ibsen’s *When we Dead Awaken* and

the final poet, who is caught between both of the movements, William B. Yeats' popular poem *Sailing to Byzantium*.

In Chapter Two in what ways Keats is a representative of the Romantic movement, and how he got affected by the political problems of the eighteenth century will be discussed. Furthermore, the Romantic agenda towards the concept of beauty will be conferred. Moreover, how Keats regards the concept of beauty and how he reflects this in his *Ode on a Grecian Urn* will be depicted. Due to the fact that this thesis is dealing with idealism, the idealistic figures in the poem will be examined and the human paradox will be demonstrated.

In Chapter Three in what ways Ibsen is a representative of the Modern drama, and how he got affected by the political problems of the nineteenth century will be exemplified. In addition to this, the relation between Modernism and idealism, and how Ibsen depicts this in his play *When we Dead Awaken* will be analyzed.

In Chapter Four to which literary movement W.B. Yeats belongs will be emphasized. The Romantic and the Modernist characteristics in *Sailing to Byzantium* and how Yeats reflects the concept of idealism in the poem will be mentioned.

In Chapter Five Modernism's affiliation with the Romantic movement will be demonstrated.

Chapter 2

JOHN KEATS AS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF ROMANTICISM

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to elucidate in what ways John Keats is a representative of the Romantic Movement and how he reflects his romantic feature in his poem called *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. The use of binary oppositions will be demonstrated to put an emphasis onto the important themes in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. In addition, the use of imagination, emotion, senses and nature in the poem will be explained. Furthermore, the Romantic agenda towards the concept of beauty and how Keats regards the concept of beauty as reflecting onto his *Ode on a Grecian Urn* will be discussed. How Keats got affected from the political problems of the nineteenth century and how this reflects onto his poem will be demonstrated. Finally, due to the fact that this thesis is dealing with idealism, the idealistic figures in the poem will be discussed and the human paradox will be depicted.

2.2 John Keats as a Romantic Poet and *Ode on a Grecian Urn* as a Romantic poem

John Keats is known as an English Romantic poet who was born in London in 1795 and died in 1821 because of tuberculosis (Bloom and Trilling, 493). Throughout

his short life time he achieved to create many unforgettable and impressive poems and letters. He is one of the most famous poets of his time, and his poems are still widely studied. Because he created all his works in the nineteenth century, it is possible to trace the impact of the Romantic Movement, which was “ubiquitous” (Everest, 30), in his works. Therefore, his works reflect the major characteristics of Romanticism such as imagination, emotion and nature. Kelvin Everest argues that:

The theory of Keats has often been interpreted as an example of a ‘typical Romantic’ subjective recoil from the pain, ugliness and transience of actual human experience. Keats’ medievalism, his association of poetry with dreaming, with drugs and alcohol, or even with peaceful death, all seem to point towards some intense desire to shelter from reality in a visionary realm of imagination (49).

What makes Keats a Romantic is his intention to attempt to run away from the hazards of life by creating a new world in his imagination, which he hopes will protect him from the pitfalls of life. He builds a dream world in his poems, like the other Romantics in order to break away from the actuality. He seeks for an escape from the hard conditions of life in a realm of beauty and romance as he says in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (which is going to be interpreted throughout this chapter) “What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?” (9). He mentions the effort that he puts in to escape from the horrific sides of life such as ‘pain and ugliness’ as Everest pointed out, as well as the idea of being mortal and always being close to the end. He creates a ‘visionary realm of imagination’ in order to be able to get away from the reality. Moreover, Reiman (659) states that according to Harold Bloom there is “an acceptance of death and all mortal limitations” in “Keats's late poems” such as *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. This idea could be associated with Westland’s ‘ideal beauty’ mentioned in the previous chapter. Everest emphasizes the same point by shortly summarizing that everybody refuses the fact that they are going to lose their ideal beauty one day, therefore, the acceptance of this change gives pain to the individual.

However, no matter what they do it is impossible to run away from death as a result of 'mortal limitations'.

The concept of change is one of the significant elements in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* which should be mentioned. The speaker of the poem states that the denial of time and change are represented through the trees, which are portrayed on the Grecian Urn and can never "be bare" (16). The speaker assumes that these images on the urn are not changing despite the passing time as he refers to the frozen images as being stable by personifying "Silence" and "Time" (2). The speaker refers to Silence with an oxymoronic phrase by calling it "still unravish'd bride of quietness" (1). Despite the centuries that passed the urn is still there that is the reason why it is 'unravish'd'. Although he describes the urn as a "Sylvan historian" (3), he admits that it "canst thus express/ A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme" (3-4) because it is just an object that does not have the ability of talking. He uses the word "slow" (2) as an adjective in order to describe "Time" (2) because the time that changes living beings frequently cannot do the same effect to the frozen images on the urn. This also shows that the Grecian Urn will remain "in midst of other woe/ Than ours, a friend to man" (47-8) in order to pass on its story from this generation to the others. Although time passes the blissful moment of the trees in the third stanza, the piper and the young lovers in the second stanza will never fade away; consequently, it will always represent that very moment of happy young people now and after decades.

Here, if we interpret the Ideal beauty as "youth" (15) which stands at the core of the poem, it can be said it functions as the key means of trying to prevent change. Keats mentions the loss of youth by stating that the "old age" (46) will be "waste[d]" (46). Because human beings are mortal, they are going to die one day or another, and as a result of their mortality as they come closer to death, they come face to face with old age which causes the loss of youth. This is the reason why people see themselves

as ugly, and this gives them pain. As Keats himself was ill the fear of death must have haunted him constantly, and he reflects this fear in his poetry too, which leads one to think that dreaming plays an important role in Keats' poetry.

Keats also uses his talent of giving meaning to ordinary things to build his dream world. For instance, in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* he puts an ordinary urn in the centre of the poem and writes his poem according to the images on this simple urn. This vase from Ancient Greece becomes the central object of the poem which inspires the speaker throughout the poem. Westland explains this by asserting that

The great Romantic poets found it [the sense of mystery] not only in the inspiration of the Middle Ages and Greek art, but also in the simplicities of everyday life; an ordinary sunset, a walk over the hills, a cluster of spring flowers, the rain-bearing west wind, the song of the nightingale, a cottage girl, a simple old dales man – such are a few of the subjects that inspired to supreme achievement a Wordsworth, a Coleridge, a Shelley, a Keats (19).

Keats is also inspired by the antiquity because he seeks for an escape into the past too. His imagination is lured by the past, therefore, he writes a poem on a Grecian Urn which is a representative of the antiquity as it is an urn from Ancient Greece. He calls the urn a "Sylvan historian" (49) which is silent but tells stories of a pastoral scene from the past. This is also revealed in the first stanza of the poem when he asks the urn:

What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady? (5-6-7)

The words 'legend' and 'haunts' stand as representatives of the past too. He also refers to immortality by emphasizing the binary opposition between the gods and humans. 'Deities' represent the gods and immortality whereas 'mortal' represents the transience of human beings. In the seventh line Keats wonders whether the scene takes place either in Tempe or Arcady. Tempe is a valley in Greece which can be considered as a representative of rural beauty of Greece, and 'the dales of Arcady' refers to the

valleys of Arcadia which was a region in ancient Greece and which was as a representative of the rural ideal. Therefore, one can notice that Keats puts an emphasis on the progress of the concept of beauty from the past to the present. This is another reason why he is lured by the past. According to the famous American modern critic T.S. Eliot

This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most accurately conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity (3).

The Grecian Urn helps Keats to make a connection between the past when it was created and the day when he lives in. The urn carries the traces of the past with itself and gives inspiration to Keats in order to contemplate on his poem. Furthermore, this connection helps him to be both in the past and in the present.

2.3 Keats, Imagination and Emotion

As is known, Romanticism emerged with the understanding that even the impossible can be made possible through passion, devotion and vitality which are very suggestive of youth, leading to the preference of the emotion over reason. These led Romantics to give more importance to imagination which is one of the main characteristics of the Romantic movement. Westland claims that “Romance... expresses ... the peculiar appeal to the imagination made by the great writers of this time” (9). Imagination was mostly operated as a way of escaping from unpleasant realities and reflecting an ideal world. John Keats in his poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn* uses his imagination to write about an urn which has various figures on it. The speaker interprets the urn as a representative of human happiness through several frozen figures on the vase and the beauty through these images. The whole poem is written under the impact of Keats’ imagination and creativity as evidence of the power of human imagination.

There are a number of important emotions which dominate the poem from the beginning to the end. The first emotion in the first stanza is “wild ecstasy” (10) which is pointed out with the paradox of the mortal men and the immortal gods. In the second stanza, the speaker talks about the “sweet” (11) melodies which are not played for the “sensual” ear (13). The speaker tells the lover to be “bliss[ful]” (19) instead of “grieve” (18) because his “love” (20) will be eternal. In the third stanza the repetition of the word “happy” emphasizes its significance for the whole poem. The speaker brings up the “happy, happy boughs” (21) which will always be covered with leaves and the songs of the piper which will be “enjoy’d” (26) forever. The speaker turns his attention to the lovers again by stating that their love will be forever, unlike mortal love, which lapses into breathing human “passion” (27) and in time disappears and leaves behind a heart high “sorrowful” (29). In the fourth stanza the speaker mentions a “peaceful” (36) citadel whereas he talks about being “overwrought” (42) in the last stanza.

2.4 Keats, Individualism, Senses and Nature

Other significant aspects of Romanticism are Individualism and the love of Nature. As mentioned in the introduction, with the influence of industrialization and urbanization which occurred with the Industrial Revolution, Romanticism highlighted Individualism and the love of Nature. According to *The History Guide* “one of the fundamentals of Romanticism is the belief in the natural goodness of man, the idea that man in a *state of nature* would behave well but is hindered by civilization”. This indicates the harmony between man and nature, which is destroyed by the urban life. Therefore, Romantic rejected to live in a city. As a result of this faith, Individualism came into sight with the acceptance of man as an independent valuable entity. “The idea of man's natural goodness and the stress on emotion also contributed to the

development of Romantic individualism, that is, the belief that what is special in a man is to be valued...” (*The History Guide*). Thus, with a great emphasis on the expression of emotion and passion of man opened a path to the significance of a poet’s individuality. The American modern poet and critic T.S. Eliot mentions this in his famous essay called *Tradition and The Individual Talent* by asserting that “...not the best, but the most individual parts of his [a poet’s] work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously” (3). What Eliot means here is the pivotal impact of the past affects the poet’s feelings and thoughts. Thus this pushes him to write under the impact of these influences and they constitute a poet’s individuality as well as subjectivity.

Poets refer to escape from the urban life to nature in their poems. Westland examines this situation by stating that “The new attitude towards Nature was indeed only part of a larger naturalism that sought to bring us back to the bosom of Nature, and reclaim us from the superfluous conventions with which we had choked the elemental verities of life” (19). As mentioned in the Introduction, Romanticism is a reaction against convention, and that is what Westland claims the case to be in the above quotation. He adds by stating that

Keats is content to express his [nature] through the senses; the colour, the scent, the touch, the pulsing music – these are the things that stir him to his depths; there is not a mood of Earth he does not love, not a season that will not cheer and inspire him (140).

The pure and generous Mother Nature operates as one of the fundamental characteristic of Romanticism. Keats as a Romantic poet follows the previous Romantic poets such as Wordsworth by deriving inspiration from Nature. Keats connects senses such as sight, smell, touch and hearing with Nature in his poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. It is possible to find these aspects in this pastoral poem. Keats enriches his depiction of nature by highlighting various colours of Nature as an

example to sight through many different examples. For instance; in the first stanza he talks about “A flowery tale” (4) which indicate the colourfulness of the scene that inspired the speaker. The speaker continues his description of colours by emphasising the fact that none of the scenes on the urn will ever change “nor ever can those trees be bare” (16). Those trees will stay green forever because the “happy boughs” (21) will never “shed/ Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu” (21-22). Then he names the colour “green” (32) which is associated with Nature throughout the poem as it is associated with the word “forest” (43) in the last stanza in order to help the reader to draw not only a pastoral scene in their minds, but also through the connotation of the word green, to keep in their mind the everlasting youth and vitality.

The speaker associates smell with the scent by stating that he “express/ A flowery tale” (3 & 4) as flowers have different smells throughout the poem, and this will be “Forever panting” (27) like the love of the young lovers. The speaker tries to make the reader to feel like they are experiencing the moment by asserting that the lovers “never canst thou kiss” (17) or touch each other. Finally, the speaker associates hearing with pulsing music which is mentioned nearly in each stanza. He starts with “rhyme” (4) and continues with “melodies” (11) which come from “pipes” (12) and turns into “songs” (24) which will be forever new. All these examples demonstrate Keats’ power of demonstrating his love of Nature and his desire for eternal beauty.

Just as senses and nature were upheld by the romantics, so too was individualism. It is possible to relate individualism with nature because people were bored with urbanization; therefore, they were looking for relief in nature. Keats emphasizes the importance of “man as man” (Westland, 11) by giving significance to the “inner resources of the self” (Everest, 22). He thinks it is important to be spontaneous which means to put a person’s feelings in the first place in order to create a work of art. In addition to this, according to Hutchings

' the romantic spirit ' exalts the freedom of the individual genius; that it judges a work entirely as it succeeds or fails in giving adequate expression to the artist's 'vision'; that the creator is free to range all times and climes, to explore to the utmost the whole circuit of human imagination; that this work, in consequence, becomes subjective, intimate, lyrical, moulded by the artist's feelings, rather than by any consideration of his audience; that such work has the charm of strangeness, remoteness, or mystery (791).

Because the poet creates his work of art spontaneously, he becomes subjective and this adds not only strangeness to the beauty of the poem as well as remoteness and mystery to it, but this subjectivity also indicates the poets' individuality. Because the individual reflects his own imagination and inspiration to the work that he created becomes the representative of his personality. E. E. Cummings claims that "So far as I am concerned, poetry and every other art was, is, and forever will be strictly and distinctly a question of individuality"(Dendinger, 351), because art is a subjective matter.

2.5 Romanticism and Beauty

The concept of beauty has a fundamental impact on Romanticism as imagination, emotion and nature. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, Romantics use their imagination to escape from the sordidness of life, and they try to emphasize the beauty of simple objects in order to be able to cover those negative sides of the material world. Michael Ferber explains this in his book "Romanticism: A very Short Introduction" by stating that "Beauty alone makes the whole world happy, and each and every being forgets its limitations while under its spell" (20). When the whole attention is on the beauty of something, the person forgets about his/ her limitations and this gives him/her joy. For instance; in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* the speaker ignores the fact that the trees cannot be covered with leaves in four seasons by stating that "Ah, happy, happy boughs! That cannot shed / Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu" (21-22). According to the speaker those trees are very special, only because

they are not going to shed their leaves ever. Hence, he explains this with a joyful excitement, which is reinforced with the repetition of the word 'happy' in the same line. The trees are stable and the eroding effects of time will never influence them as they are carved on a vase. Thus, it is possible to say that beauty has an important role in romantic works and Parker interprets Walter Pater's ideas about the beauty in his article "Reflections on Romanticism" by asserting that

the author [W. Pater] wisely reminds the reader that "the romantic spirit is, in reality, an ever-present, an enduring principle, in the artistic temperament," and he argues that "it is the addition of strangeness to beauty that constitutes the romantic character in art." To him the essential elements of the romantic spirit are curiosity and the love of beauty" (308).

The strangeness of beauty attracts the attention of the reader and leads them to see the features of the romantic spirit. Westland writes about Pater in his book "The Teach Yourself History of English Literature: The Romantic Revival 1780-1830" too by stating that Pater divides the romantic spirit into two elements. One of them is 'curiosity' which constitutes the "intellectual" factor of the Romanticism and the other is 'the love of beauty' which establishes the "emotional" (Westland, 10) factor. Being curious leads the artist to use his imagination to reveal the hidden mysteries under the subject that he is writing about. The love of beauty leads him to write about the positive sides of his subject. Romantics believe that with the destruction of the harmony between man and nature, beauty in nature and in urban life destroyed too. Because Keats as a Romantic poet cannot find beauty and happiness in material life, he moves to spirituality, which he sees as a salvation. He idealizes every single beauty and reflects them as the inspiration of happiness in transcendental level. Anthony Synnot mentions "the beauty mystiques" which is "rooted not only in physiognomy and philosophy, linguistics, ethnic relations, war and criminology, but also in our literary heritage" (57). He continues by asserting that

Our fairy stories imbue children with the mystique. In Grimm's story, 'Cinderella', it is the remarkably beautiful and amazingly good Cinderella who wins the heart of the prince. Grimm's story 'Beauty and the Beast' and Hans Andersen's story 'The Ugly Duckling'.... exemplify the beauty mystique, and socialize children into the cosmic value and practical utility of beauty; and 'Sleeping Beauty' and 'Snow White' transmit the same morals (57).

Synnot reminds us that beauty has a place in many subjects, and he puts an emphasis on the beauty from a different dimension by mentioning the poet and philosopher Kahlil Gibran²

“Perhaps the most lyrical writer on beauty today is the poet and philosopher Kahlil Gibran. In his bestseller *The Prophet* he writes
beauty is . . . an ecstasy
. . . a heart enflamed and a soul enchanted.
. . . an image you see though you close your eyes and a
song you hear though you shut your ears
. . . . a garden for ever in bloom and a flock of angels
ever in flight...” (Synnot, 60)

Gibran's poem sounds very romantic as he writes about ecstasy, songs and nature as the Romantic poet John Keats did in his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. According to Gibran beauty gives happiness, arouses passion and charms one's soul as the beauty of the lovers, passion of the love and the enchanting song of the piper in Keats' Ode. Synnot continues by stating that

Poets and artists, philosophers and theologians, politicians and criminologists, novelists and dramatists, naturalists and scientists, psychologists and cosmeticians ... people in all walks of life have adored beauty, even where they have perceived it and defined it differently (60).

Even though everyone described beauty differently, they all have worshiped it. The devotion to beauty gave inspiration to Romantics as it did to many other people because beauty never fade away, it always prevails and presents itself forever.

2.5.1 Beauty in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*

It would seem appropriate to present the words used by Keats in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* in order to refer to the concept of 'beauty'. In the first line of the first stanza the speaker personifies the urn by calling it a "bride" (1). As is well known the

wedding day for a bride is one of the most important days of her life thus, she desires to wear the best wedding dress in the world and to appear the most beautiful. Hence, the speaker thinks the urn looks beautiful just like a beautiful bride. In the second stanza, he explains the “unheard” (11) melodies as “sweeter” (12) than the heard melodies, which is associated to the beauty of the young lover who “cannot fade” (19) as the mortal beings. In the third stanza the speaker describes the “boughs” (21) as “happy” (21) because they will never be bare and look ugly². He portrays the “melodist” (23) as “unwearied” (23) whose songs will be forever new. He also depicts the lovers as “for ever young” (27) which is associated with Westland’s ideal beauty. In the fourth stanza he mentions that the “heifer” (33), which means a female cow, has got “silken flanks” (34). Finally, in the last stanza he uses the word beauty itself to describe “truth” (49).

According to John Keats “...the excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth.”³ In one of his letters Keats mentions the greatness of Art as being intense and associated with Beauty and Truth just as he says in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty, – that is all/ Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know” (49-50). The final lines of this poem have been interpreted by many critiques, and they haven’t decided if this is what Keats thinks or the message that the ode on the urn gives or the message of the speaker to the readers. For example; T.S. Eliot considers these lines as “blight upon an otherwise beautiful poem” (Poem of Quotes) and according to Kroeber and Ruoff it “remains an extroverted lapidary cry” (427). However, if we consider this poem as an ode ‘on’ a Grecian urn, it is possible to say that this is the message of the urn to its readers. Even after centuries this beautiful urn will stand against the eroding effects of time and continue to depict its beauty from one generation to another. The only thing which is going to stay the same after years is

its beauty. And that is the only truth of the vase that the readers are going to realise.

Reiman claims that

"Ode on a Grecian Urn" examined the role of art in transmitting and preserving the inspired moments of the human imagination beyond the ephemeral individual life, and here the poet found a modicum of comfort. Although he could not know what the destiny of the individual soul might be, long after he and his generation were dead and gone, this antique work of art-and, he hopes, his own poetry-would remain (661).

Keats thinks that this immortal object and his poem will remain longer in this world reminding the reader of the poet and an age of gold long before him. This therefore, gives him comfort, because he will be remembered through this poem and many others after his death. It seems to be his belief that art has the power of transmitting unpleasant truths into pleasant experiences. He mentions that this is possible by showing the greatness of beauty and truth over those unpleasant realities, as he also states in one his letters

I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and truth of Imagination—What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth—whether it existed before or not – for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty – ...⁴

He puts a great emphasis on the importance of emotion and imagination⁵. He adds that if one's imagination accepts something as beautiful, that is the only truth for that person. He also declares that passion and love are crucial in revealing beauty. Moreover, Kroeber and Ruoff interprets how Keats portrays beauty in his poem by asserting that

Keats's urn -- ... aims to be taken as both a real concrete object and as an ideal; for it is central to the Romantic understanding of Greek art that such art actually produced, at its finest moments, perfect and complete embodiments of a perfect and complete idea of the Beautiful (447).

According to Kroeber and Ruoff, Keats achieves in presenting the urn both as a real and an ideal object. It is real because it is just an ordinary urn, which has a number of images on it. On the other hand, it is ideal because it is a representative of eternity as

Keats says “Thou, silent form! Dost tease us out of thought/ As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!” (44-45). The urn cannot speak but it exists bearing a significance such as eternity or immortality. He thinks the urn is teasing him because it might live longer than the poet himself⁶. He calls it ‘Cold Pastoral’ because it is not alive like human beings who have force and energy, but it tells a pastoral story “with brede/ Of marble men and maidens overwrought,/ with forest branches and the trodden weed” (41-42-43). Yet, nevertheless it occupies space just as the poet and moreover has for centuries before the poet ever did, bridging the past to the poet’s present. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, Romantics are lured by the past thus they usually refer to Greek art as it represents the ‘idea of the Beautiful’. This is one of the reasons why Keats wrote about a Grecian urn. Westland claims that Keats “took from Medievalism and Hellenism material for fashioning his sequestered land of beauty, but what he found here he used for sensuous delight” (140). Thus, it is possible to assert that Keats uses Medievalism and Hellenism in order to find an inspiration for his ‘sequestered land of beauty’ which is closed to worldly pains. He ignores the problem causing and the pain giving conventions in his ideal world which is covered with beauty and happiness.

2.6 Keats and Politics

Romanticism is known as a movement of rejection and rebellion against established rules and conventions of the Enlightenment Era. There are a number of reasons which caused the emergence of this movement. Poets, as representatives of the public, create their works under the influence of the time that they live in. They cannot escape from the political, social, economic and cultural crises that take place during their life time⁷. Westland explains the emergence of Romanticism by stating that

The Romantic Revival was the result of no one cause. Broadly speaking, it was the inevitable corollary of the Renaissance and Reformation. The dignity and importance of man as man, the glories of the world of Nature – these ideas, of which we hear so much at the close of the eighteenth century, were born

centuries before, and had been gradually working in men's minds through all the political unrest of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first flowering of Romanticism in England, the bloody horrors of the French Revolution, the kindling of a new idealistic philosophy in Germany under Kant and Hegel, the political upheaval in America – all these things were but varying symptoms of a general ferment that had lasted on from the fifteenth century (11 - 12).

In the nineteenth century, when Keats was writing his poems the world was under the influence of the French Revolution⁸, which started in 1789 and the works of Jean Jacques Rousseau who claims that the “Original impulses are good because they are natural. Men have become evil because they left uncontaminated Nature, growing luxurious and artificial. To escape from this state of sickness we must return to the mountains and meadows”⁹. Rousseau encourages poets to be inspired by Nature and create a utopia by using their imaginative creativity in their poems. He thinks materialism makes people evil because they become luxurious, and they suppose that they can own everything in the world. Keats as a Romantic poet overlooks the problems of the material world in the spiritual world that he creates in a transcendental level. Watkins claims that Keats gets affected by the politics of his time by asserting that

Many of the oppressive features of Keats's world that he desperately sought to push out of his poetic vision come back to haunt that vision in different ways. His work is politically and historically significant not only for its utopian dimension, its dream of a better world, but also for the way it is saturated in the loneliness, tensions, contradictions, and struggles that characterize the bourgeois culture... (104)

Keats creates a utopia in order to depict his dream of a better world, which would be remote from the tensions of everyday life. He also gives importance to the meditative solidarity which helps him to find inspiration of his poems. He reflects a utopian dimension in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* when he talks about his dream of being surrounded with different kinds of beauty forever. There are a variety of oppositions which were addressed before¹⁰. According to Watkins, Keats reflects the pressure and

the struggle of the bourgeois culture in his poem. In addition to this, Watkins claims that

Historical and social contradiction can be seen quite clearly in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, one of his [Keats'] most beautiful and problematic works. Despite this poem's expressed and laudable desire to find permanence and beauty behind the turmoil and mutability of everyday life, it duplicates ideologically a form of oppression that Keats and his age never escaped, even when they situated themselves knowingly and firmly against political and religious tyranny, as Keats clearly did – namely, the oppression of women. ... By investigating and documenting its role in the *Urn*, it is possible to show how even Keats's most sincere utopian impulses against the atrocities he elsewhere describes with abhorrence inevitable are marked by elements of oppression and sometimes even by violence (105).

Watkins considers Keats's Ode as a problematic poem, because he believes that Keats reflects the political problems of his time, religious tyranny¹¹ of Christianity and the oppression of women in his poem. He insists that Keats reflects oppression and violence in the poem. However, because *Ode on a Grecian Urn* is a reflection of Keats's ideal world, and because this spiritual world is the place where Keats overcomes the unrests of everyday life, he does not express his hatred with the elements of oppression or violence but replicates them. For instance, in the fourth stanza Keats portrays a Pagan ritual in contrast to Christianity. Keats's is not a Christian believer because he thinks Christianity as a religious institution strives to control the thoughts and free will of individuals. Therefore, he expresses a totally different religious ceremony in his utopia in order to demonstrate his reaction and that he is very far away from the religious belief of the material world. He demonstrates that oppression or violence cannot repress beauty because real beauty is equal to immortality.

2.7 Idealism and Human Paradox

In this last part of the chapter, idealism and human paradox will be demonstrated in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. Due to the fact that idealism and human

paradox are related to each other, they will be considered together. Romantics estimate idealism in their works.

Romanticism, when it touches philosophy, favours mysticism and idealism. For the more subtle our sense of mystery the less satisfied we are with the materialistic explanation of the universe, and the more we demand an ideal rather than an empirical solution of phenomena (Westland, 13). Westland claims that Romanticism considers mysticism and idealism which are related to the idea of creating an immortal realm. The sense of mystery can be interpreted as the unknown, and that can be related to 'eternity or immortality' in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. The speaker idealizes the urn itself, melodies, lovers, the trees, the piper and the heifer that he sees on the urn.

Here, the romantic ideals such as beauty, truth, eternity and perfection will be examined throughout the poem. The poem itself is a work of art therefore, it gives the message that art is superior to life because art is not subject to time. Every living being is subject to change because of the passing time. The urn is a Grecian urn which is an example to idealistic Greek art. Apart from this, the urn does not get affected from the passing time, and it represents abstract notions such as beauty, truth, eternity and perfection. The speaker imagines the urn as a story teller, which will be able to tell the same story after decades. This is a proof of an admiration to Art in order to demonstrate that Art is superior to Life and it will last longer than an earthly being. In the first stanza the poet is speaking to some frozen images on the urn who are frozen in time too. He calls the urn the "foster-child of Silence and slow Time" (2) as it does not get affected from the passage of time. This is an example to idealism because the speaker admires those people who will never change and will be immortal. He idealizes the melodies by putting a great emphasis on the "unheard" (11) melodies on the urn, because he believes in that it is more crucial to "Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone" (14). This demonstrates that the poet prefers spirituality to sensuality. He

immortalizes the lovers who will be “for ever young” (27), and glorifies the love of these lovers on the urn because he claims that “All breathing human passion far above/ That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy’d” (28-29). What he means here is that pain will be far away from these lovers, because they will stay the same no matter what happens. He also exalts the trees which will never “be bare” (16) and this is an example to worship of perfection. He also apotheosizes the piper as he is “For ever piping songs for ever new” (24). Finally, he venerates the “heifer” (33) which is going to be “sacrifice[d]” (31) in “this pious morn” (37). Thus, it is possible to mention that he idealizes the people on the urn as forever young and immortal. He tries to ignore the mortal limitations by idealizing those people on the urn. He gazes at the urn with an optimistic point of view and portrays the images free of mortal limitations, pain, oppression and violence.

Human paradox comes into sight as a result of going beyond something or in other words idealizing something. Sandbank mentions that the “paradox of ‘to feel forever’” (Sandbank, 43) is the main human paradox in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. The speaker claims that the people, trees, melodies, the heifer and Art will be there forever.

According to Reiman:

Keats is merely exploring the humanistic paradox in which all man's god sand ideals are subject to flux and change because they are products of the human mind-and are all the more vulnerable to change or destruction because they are recognized to be so (659).

Reiman claims that anything which is created by human beings is subject to change because Time is one of the most affective causes. Hence, Keats tries to overcome the human paradox by idealizing the images on the urn because although the anonymity of the artist and the figures on the urn may lead one to think that none of them can be immortal, one may then think that rather than specific individuals it is the beauty of the urn that becomes immortal. He admires the hand that created the figures on the urn

as well as the way of life depicted on it and wishes to be like them; nevertheless, Keats does acknowledge the impossibility of ignoring mortal limitations.

Chapter 3

HENRIK JOHAN IBSEN

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter Three Henrik Ibsen will be discussed as a representative of the Modern drama, and how he got affected by the political problems of the nineteenth century. The romantic and modernist features in *When we Dead Awaken* will be analysed in order to show the relation between Romanticism and Modernism.

3.2 Henrik Ibsen as a Modernist who has a Romantic Background

Henrik Johan Ibsen was a Norwegian poet and playwright who was born in 1828 and died in 1906 in Norway. He is known as the founder of modern realistic prose drama and Modernism in theatre. Although he is famous for being a modernist, it is possible to affirm that he wrote some romantic works from 1850 to 1858. Because the aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the fact that Romanticism is a precursor of Modernism, it is appropriate to mention Henrik Ibsen's transition from being a romantic to being a modernist. He moved away from the Romantic style, and started to write about the conflicts and ideas of the day of his times. According to Robert Brustein

The progression of Ibsen's career, in fact, is as dialectical as any of his plays. Works like *Brand*, *Peer Gynt*, and *Emperor and Galilean*, are relatively overt expressions of the author's early Romanticism, in which he creates an architecture of poetry and metaphysics out of huge, irregular blocks of stone.

But beginning with *The League of Youth*, and continuing through his "modern" phase (an eleven year period, ending with *Hedda Gabler* in 1890), Ibsen suppresses his Romanticism along with his poetry, his mysticism, and his concern with man in nature to satisfy a pull towards prose, objective reality, and the problems of modern civilization (124).

As Brustein affirms in the quotation above, Ibsen used to be a Romantic like William Butler Yeats (see Chapter 4 for more information) and transformed his style as a reaction to the existing order and established conventions. Ibsen was able to create remarkable works during the chaotic developments in the nineteenth century. He tried to replace his romanticism with new traits such as mysticism, objectivity and revelation of the conflicts of humanity, which are the most obvious features of Modernism. Brustein finds it crucial to declare that "...Ibsen's revolt, his desire to probe the appearance of things to expose the true motives of mankind, that distinguishes him from many of his lesser contemporaries and followers..." (135) characterizes Ibsen as a new kind of dramatist. As mentioned in Chapter 1, both Romanticism and Modernism revolt against the traditional. Therefore, it is acceptable for Ibsen to put a great effort to reflect man with his positive and negative sides and feel rebellious in order to reflect this "rebellious spirit within a new form" (Brustein, 124). Thus, there was an alteration in Ibsen's style of writing as well as form, scene, characterization, language and theme. Brustein exemplifies this change by asserting that

...Ibsen's art has been totally transformed. The rebel against God is domesticated into a rebel against society; the scene focuses on the collective as well as on the individual; the humanistic medical doctor becomes an important character, as Darwinist notions of heredity and environment begin to impinge on the action; the language becomes more thin and chastened; the characterization more specific; the themes more contemporary; and the entire drama takes on, first, that manipulated quality we remember from the well-made play, then, that precision of form we associate with Sophoclean tragedy (124).

Everything turned into being against the order of the society and a reflection of the disenchantment towards it. Ibsen gave importance to the individual as well as collective thinking. He was aware of the fact that making some alteration in the society would not be possible with an individual but it could be possible if people come together and have a common aim. As Adrienne Rich states “The sleepwalkers are coming awake, and for the first time this awakening has a collective reality; it is no longer such a lonely thing to open one's eyes” (18). The sleepwalkers are Norwegian people who were not aware of the fragmented system of the society and for the first time they would open their eyes and see the reality. This idea of fragmentation is totally a modernist trait, which operates as one of the most important characteristics of those times and it is one of the crucial factors that affects Ibsen subconsciously. This can be considered as the initiative factor of Ibsen's idealism. Ibsen as a playwright gets affected from the fragmentation and alienation of his society thus, expresses an awaking in his play *When we Dead Awaken*. Ibsen also made an ordinary person the protagonist of the play who brings up the truth. He simplified the language of his plays so that the reader or the audience would understand it easily. As Johnsen cited “Ibsen...could no longer allow his characters to speak in verse, the language of the gods” (141). Ibsen found it ridiculous to speak in verse as it is in the religious books or in earlier forms of drama (such as Sophocles, Shakespeare and other classical Renaissance dramatists). He thought this would only confuse people's minds and limit the poet or the playwright in expressing himself so, he chose to write in free verse, which is another trait of Modernism. Moreover, Ibsen mostly set his plays on everyday life problems so that he would be able to make people think about themselves. Thus he developed a dramatic form in which he could highlight serious problems by presenting stories from everyday life.

Ibsen solved the technical difficulties involved in translating his tragic vision from the romantic forms to a realistic form in two central ways. First, he developed a retrospective technique whereby, as the play progresses, the past events leading to the climax are gradually brought to light through the words and acts of the characters. In Ibsen's hands (but not always in those of his followers), the past is not just dead matter: it grips the present and changes its significance. Ibsen's characters live in a continual, exciting "now," moving toward the truth about themselves and their condition. Second, and equally important, was Ibsen's exploitation of visual imagery, whereby he gave his plays, through set, costume, and stage direction, much of the poetry denied the dramatist who deals with modern people speaking in everyday prose.¹

It is possible to notice the retrospective technique in *When we Dead Awaken* because the past plays a very crucial role in the play. Rubek and Irene's past have the power of changing their decisions in the present. For instance; near the end of the first act the reader finds out Irene has wasted her life for Rubek and his art; however, she has nothing in hand but despair. As the play progresses in the second act, the reader realizes that Rubek calls his relationship with Irene an episode thus, Irene deserts him. Finally, in the last act where the truth comes up, Irene and Rubek commits suicide in order to regain their lost love and happiness in the spiritual world. It is also obvious to see the exploitation of the visual imaginary in *When we Dead Awaken* because unlike poetry, Ibsen presents his story with stage directions, set and costume which play a significant role in completing the whole play. Hence, these modifications in Ibsen's art represent his unconformity towards the existing order and marked him as the father of the Modernist theatre in Norway. He explains his transformation by stating that

... And what does it mean, then to be a poet? It was a long time before I realized that to be a poet means essentially to see, but mark well, to see in such a way that whatever is seen is perceived by the audience just as the poet saw it. But only what has been lived through can be seen in that way and accepted in that way. And the secret of modern literature lies precisely in this matter of experiences that are lived through. All that I have written these last ten years, I have lived through spiritually.²

Henrik Ibsen was a very successful playwright who achieved in reflecting the conflicts of humanity in his plays. As he mentioned, it is significant to be able to transfer the main idea to the audience in an understandable way. He put a great emphasis on the

importance of experiencing life, and in order to be able to reflect the problems of morality he “lived through spiritually”. What he means here is that he did not really experience everything that he mentioned in his plays, but he observed people around him and put himself in the position of his characters in order to reflect his observations sincerely. His talent of reflecting everyday life problems led his readers and audience to be able to judge themselves. W. D. Howells declares that “Unaided, I should say ... that, the great and dreadful delight of Ibsen is from his power of dispersing the conventional acceptations by which men live on easy terms with themselves, and obliging them to examine the grounds of their social and moral opinions” (3). As one of the most conspicuous traits of Modernism, revealing the conflicts of humanity such as judging morality is the main purpose of Ibsen’s plays. He chooses a subject which will make the reader or the audience consider and try to make a judgement. Charles R. Lyons comments on Ibsen’s talent by citing Joyce’s idea

Joyce concludes that the riveting element in Ibsen's plays is not action, events, or characters, but "the perception of a great truth, or the opening up of a great question, or a great conflict which is almost independent of the conflicting actors, and has been and is of far-reaching importance" (435)³.

Therefore, at the end of the play there is always a staggering result which makes the reader or the audience think. In my opinion, in order to create a staggering result action, events and characters play a very important role too. It would not be fair to ignore the significance of such techniques because a play is a whole with every single part of it. What Lyons is trying to emphasize here is the characteristic of Ibsen’s theatre. Hence, revealing the unacceptable truth is one of the most common endings of Ibsen’s plays. He usually referred to his homeland, Norway in his works in order to protest and demonstrate his reaction against the developments in his country.

3.3 Ibsen and Politics

Most of the artists cannot avoid mentioning the political changes that occur in their time. Political, social, cultural or economic alterations have an important role in artists' life and work. Henrik Ibsen as a Norwegian poet and playwright reflected such problems in Norway in his works. It is convenient to give brief information of the political developments in Norway mentioned in the Gyldendard Collection⁴. In 1848 when Ibsen was 20 years old, there was a famine and revolution took place in European countries such as France, Germany and Italy. Bourgeois reformers revolted against the existing order in order to achieve a better social order. Thus, the citizens of Norway started to call for a democratic change in Norway too. In 1864 Prussian-Danish War took place and as a consequence of this war a territorial dispute began between the two nations. Norway remained neutral and did not support the Danes in the conflict. As well as the disappointment of the decision of Norway and not being a successful writer in his country, Ibsen moved to live in Italy for twenty-seven years in 1864. When Ibsen was in Italy, from 1874 to 1880 Norwegian political leaders struggled against the Swedish monarchy in order to gain more political power for the Norwegian parliamentary body. In 1884 Liberals took control of the Norwegian parliament and prosecuted the prime minister. As a result of this control, the Swedish monarchy was forced to recognize Norway's parliamentary system. Ibsen turned back to Norway in 1891 and one year before his death Norway declared its independence from Sweden.

It is obvious that, Ibsen deserted his homeland in order to show his reaction against the decisions made by Norway. He also refused to be a member of any political group in Norway. Although he was in Italy for twenty-seven year "...the characters in his plays were based on people he had observed and, in spite of his exile,

the people to whom his thoughts returned were the Scandinavians. Ibsen was tied to his home country in a hate-love relationship...” (Oster, 387). No matter what happened Ibsen just like Yeats never forgot his country, and both playwrights always fought for the sake of their country. Ibsen reflected his revolt against the social order in Norway by writing realistic dramas because

Realism in the arts was as revolutionary as any other social movement of Ibsen’s day... realistic dramas revealed and criticized the ills of their own society, making them dangerous to established Victorian traditions. Realism became so widespread ... to rebel against the tradition [and] ...to engage the audience more directly in the quest for social reform.⁵

Hence, the reason why Ibsen was trying to write in the simplest form was because he wanted the public to get involved in the “social reform”. However, at the end of his career he came to a conclusion that he failed in changing the existing social order. *When we Dead Awaken*, which was written in 1899 when Ibsen returned to Norway is an excellent example to Ibsen’s representations of his failure and doubts. The famous sculptor Arnold Rubek declares that a “revolution has occurred” (II, 244) in him, which demonstrates Ibsen’s transition from the romantic style to modernist style. At first Rubek created a statue of a woman which was supposed to be the representative of youth and purity. This could be seen as Ibsen’s Romantic style as it carries an optimistic point of view. Then, Rubek “began to envisage “the Day of Resurrection” as something bigger, ...more complex” (II, 250). Therefore, he carved “swarmed people, with the faces of beasts beneath their human masks. Women and men, as I knew them, from life” (II, 251). The second modification can be a representation of Ibsen’s modernist style as it represents the ills of society.

3.4 *When we Dead Awaken*

Henrik Ibsen was 71 years old when he wrote this play, and it is possible to notice his doubts in the play about his achievements throughout his life as it is a

confessional work. *When we Dead Awaken* was written in 1899 and it is about an artist called Arnold Rubek, who destroys his masterpiece because of the disorder in the society.

3.4.1 Romantic features in *When we Dead Awaken*

Henrik Johan Ibsen is famous for being a modernist but even in his last play he has some romantic indications that prove his romantic modernist identity. This also demonstrates the fact the Romantic traits constitute Modernism's basic principles. Brustein explains Ibsen's romantic modernist identity by asserting that

On the other hand, Ibsen's art has changed much less radically than is first apparent, for, in his realistic plays, he has merely contained his rebellious spirit within a new form. As if to prove that this spirit has remained unsullied, Ibsen returns, in his last great plays, to his early prophetic autobiographical, and metaphysical concerns, dramatizing them in a way which combines the Romantic freedom of his youth with the Classical restraint of his middle years (124).

Thus, it is possible to see Ibsen in Rubek as he returned to his prophetic autobiography and to find idealism related to metaphysics. In the following paragraphs imagination as escape to the past, nature and beauty will be discussed as the main Romantic traits in *When we Dead Awaken*.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Romantic imagination operates as a way of escaping from the unpleasant realities and reflecting an ideal world. Therefore, escaping from the present is a trait of Romanticism and Ibsen mentions this in his play. Rubek desires an escape from the present similar to the speaker in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. In *When we Dead Awaken* Irene offers Rubek to go "Higher, higher – always higher" (I, 234). This can be considered as a romantic trait which indicates the Romantic quest of going beyond life. Irene and Rubek desire to escape from their current situation and search for what they have lost. As an artist Rubek desires to get back his inspiration, and as a lover he desires to regain the happiness that he dare to

desert years ago. As a model, Irene wants retribution because she was unhappy throughout her life and as a lover, she desires to be completed spiritually. Furthermore, Maja goes up to the mountains in order to find freedom and excitement, which she could not find when she was with Arnold Rubek. The song that she sings in the second and third acts represents the desire for a Romantic Freedom when she says “I can fly like a bird! And I’m free” (II, 256). Birds are representatives of independence and this is the reason why she resembles herself to a bird. The same bird figure is going to be discussed in Chapter 4 as a representative of freedom too.

Nature operates as one of the main aspects of Romanticism which makes the individual be a human being and act better than being in urban life. As uttered in the previous section nature is seen as a life giving realm. The play opens up at a Spa Hotel which is covered with fountains, shrubs, trees, ivy and wild vine. The second Act takes place in a mountain health resort, which is located next to the mountains and a lake. There is also a stream lined with brushwood, plants and boulders. And the last act begins on a rocky mountain top. The scenes of the play are covered with the curing nature. In the first act Irene offers Rubek to “Go high up into the mountains” (I, 234) in order to fulfil their missing love. Searching for happiness in the mountains can be considered as a romantic vision of nature.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Beauty has a very crucial role for the Romantic Movement. It symbolizes perfection and immortality, which are important aspects in *When we Dead Awaken*. Irene’s beauty is the main concern of the play as it is associated with her youthfulness and purity when she was Rubek’s naked model. Rubek confesses that Irene’s “beauty often drove me [him] almost out of my [his] mind” (I, 232). As “an artist”, Rubek was “sick with a longing to create the one great work of my [his] life” (I, 232). He desired to reflect the ideal beauty⁶ of a woman therefore he “envisaged Resurrection as something perfect and beautiful – a pure

young girl, unstained by life” (II, 250). Irene was an “ideal to inspire” Rubek (I, 233). Hence the statue was going to represent a perfect figure of a woman who has not been affected by the passage of time. She was going to be young in order to reflect vitality, beautiful in order to depict devotion and perfect in order to represent immortality.

3.4.2 Modernist features in *When we Dead Awaken*

The Modernist traits that are going to be considered in this section are innovation, social problems and mysticism. The American Modernist critic and poet Ezra Pound demonstrates the importance that is given to innovation by his slogan “Make it new” (Schauble, 51). Modernism can be associated with the quest of searching for the original. Rochberg explains this by asserting that

Some have described it [Modernism] as a state of “chronic revolution”, that is, revolution against the past, against tradition, against history itself. Others have pointed to its voracious appetite for innovation, for the search for the “new”, for the hunger to be “original”—to be the first and last with something unique and different, whatever that something might be or in whatever area of human endeavor it might arise (318).

The search for the new was a reaction against the past, tradition and history. Because people were disappointed with the developments in the world, artists desired to express this reaction through creating something new, not related to the past. The repetition of the word “new” (I, 216) in *When we Dead Awaken* reminds the reader of the idea of searching for the innovative. The sculptor Rubek desired to form a unique work of art which “was to be called: “The Day of Resurrection” (I, 232). Because the title of the play is *When we Dead Awaken*, Rubek’s masterpiece is associated with the idea of demonstrating the “awakening to light and glory” (III, 251) of “a mortal woman!—in the higher, freer, happier kingdom, after the long and dreamless sleep of death” (I, 233). This can be considered as a metaphor to the citizens of the society who do not react against the developments and the girl operates as an example to this awakening. The previous life that before the death, belonged to an earlier era, an era

from which Rubek wishes to be set free, or an era from which Ibsen wishes society to free itself. Thus, Rubek is a modern artist who indicates the hunger to create something original. He forms the statue in “the likeness of a young woman” which symbolizes “pure; perfection in woman” (I, 232). Rubek desired to create a statue which would be one of a kind.

As is known Modernism is a reaction against the fragmentation and disorder in the everyday life. The unsatisfying developments in Norway forced Ibsen to move to Italy⁷. When he decided to return to Norway he noticed that nothing has really changed when he was abroad. The title of the play *When we Dead Awaken* is an indication of this problem. He desired his community to make a social reform. There is a repetition of the word dead in the beginning of the first act such as “deafening” (I, 215) and “dead” (I, 216). What he means here is that people are like zombies who cannot think and act through their decisions. They repeat the same things everyday and this makes them robots who only work for the profit of capitalism. Ezra Pound exemplifies the sordid life of people by stating that “The people are hollow, dehumanized, and utterly superficial. Society lacks creativity and originality”⁸. Thus, Ibsen highlights the fact that Norwegians are living deads who do not do any benefit for themselves. The play opens up with a discussion of how silent and lifeless Norway is. Arnold Rubek’s “youthful” (I, 215) wife Maja states that the silence is deafening “Everywhere in Norway” (I, 215). Rubek replies by asserting that people act like “nothing ever happened” (I, 217) and they always talk “softly, tonelessly, meaninglessly” (I, 217) because they metaphorically become blind and deaf at the same time. Rubek also mentions that Norwegians “’ve changed..., a little, no doubt. And not for the better. That I’m prepared to concede” (I, 217). It is obvious from this line that Ibsen is declaring his ideas through Rubek about his homeland.

Ibsen also explains how he sees the zombies or robots in Norway by letting Rubek portray them like animals. Rubek states that

Superficially, there are these “striking likenesses” as they call them, at which people gape, entranced. But deep within, I have sculptured the righteous and estimable faces of horses, the opinionated muzzles of donkeys, the lop ears and shallow brows of dogs, the overgorged chaps of swine, and the dull and brutalised fronts of oxen (I, 219).

The people are “opinionated” because they are conservative and biased. They judge people before listening to them. They are “overgorged” like pigs because the only thing that they do is to eat in order to survive. They are “dull” because they are lifeless and finally they are “brutalised” because they are selfish. Rubek underlines the hypocrisy of people.

The lack of communication is another proof to dullness and lifelessness of the country. Rubek is the one who “wander[s] around restlessly, as though you [he] couldn’t find peace, at home or anywhere else. And you’ve [he’s] began to avoid people lately” (I, 218). Rubek explains his restlessness by stating that “the task of the artist and the vocation of the artist was empty, hollow and meaningless” (II, 243). Rubek was not as happy as he expected to be after finishing his masterpiece. Thus, he decided that creating something unique is not going to change the world. Instead of “wasting one’s years in raw, damp cellar, wearing oneself to death wrestling with lumps of clay and blocks of stone” Rubek desires to be able to live his “life in sunshine and beauty” (II, 243). This is an indication of the inescapable modern condition of living. This is the reason for the tragic guilt of Rubek and Irene. Rubek is “Guilty of leaving me [Irene] no future but death” (I, 231) which indicates Irene’s “young human life” (II, 248). The importance of time is highlighted here. And Irene explains her guilt by stating that “I, too, had a life to live, and a human destiny to fulfil. But I turned my back on it... to serve you. It was suicide; a mortal sin against myself. And that is a sin I can never expiate” (II, 252). Therefore, both Irene and

Rubek regret letting time pass away without fulfilling their “inmost being” (I, 232) which is their affection.

Rubek regrets ignoring Irene’s beauty and tells Irene that “some string inside you has broken” (I, 231). There is something missing in Irene and that could be her spirituality. Rubek considered their relation as an inspiring episode” (II, 252) and this is what caused Irene’s spiritual death. This indicates that they were in love but Rubek did not attempt to have a relationship with his model. He was scared to ruin his masterpiece. Thus, he sacrificed Irene’s love and his youthful vitality for his ambition and the demands of his art. As declared in the second act trying to live without Irene “has drained my [Rubek’s] vitality” (II, 244).

Another social problem that is brought up in the play is morals which are unintentionally taught. Rubek demonstrates this by feeling forced to act according to the rules of the society when Maja offers to sit on his lap. He tells her that she “mustn’t do that – people can see” (II, 239).

Mysticism is another feature of Modernism which emphasizes the mystic life of humanity. According to Henderson cited in Matless’s article “the emergence in the late nineteenth century of new theories about the nature of reality and the nature of the self created an openness towards mystical and occult ideas that increasingly can be identified as a major characteristic of modernism itself” (282). Therefore, there are a number of examples to spirituality throughout the play. When artists cannot find happiness in the material realm they search for it in the spiritual realm. Rubek knows that he lost his spirituality and inspiration when Irene was gone as she was the “only one—for everything I have [he has] created” (I, 224). According to Rubek, Irene is the person “who is one with me [him] in everything I [he] strive for” (II, 242), because she has the key for the “casket” (II, 244) which represents Rubek’s “visions” (II, 244), creativity and imagination. Therefore, the statue that Rubek formed in the likeness of

Irene becomes their child “in spirit and in truth” (II, 249). Furthermore, Irene claims that she has given “[her] soul” (I, 235) to Rubek in order to enable him to create his masterpiece and make it glorious, asserting that her “young and alive” (I, 235) soul is the reason why the “living clay” (II, 245) resembles the real Irene. She left herself “empty; soulless” (I, 235) by providing her life giving soul to Rubek.

3.5 Ibsen’s use of Romantic Idealism and Human Paradox

In Romanticism, idealism represents an imagined reality independent from man’s existence. For example, in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* Keats idealized images on the urn in order to demonstrate beauty, truth, eternity and perfection. As *When we Dead Awaken* reflects the romantic style of Ibsen, it has some romantic ideals too. The concept of “beauty” (I, 232) is represented through Irene’s “young and alive” (I, 235) body, which inspired Rubek to create a masterpiece. Truth is demonstrated through Rubek’s realization of his guilt of setting “that dead figure of clay above life, and happiness, and love” (III, 265) and losing the chance of living a life in happiness. Eternity is depicted through Irene’s “immortalize[d]” (I, 235) “naked beauty” (I, 235). Finally, perfection is displayed through the desire to picture the “perfection in woman” through Irene’s statute which is a representation of youth and purity of humanity.

Human paradox is related to idealism which is about immortalizing a living being. In *When we Dead Awaken* the famous sculptor Arnold Rubek creates a marble of his model Irene who has mortal limitations. He idealizes Irene in order to demonstrate the transition from the real to the ideal. The play evokes the idea of resurrection which is an ideal. The human paradox that is expressed here is the image which constituted from the likeness of a real woman. However, Irene is not the one who is going to be immortalized; the statue is the one which is going to be “transfigured” (II, 247) and “resurrected” (II, 255).

Chapter 4

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 will discuss to which literary movement William Butler Yeats belongs and how he reflects the concept of idealism in his *Sailing to Byzantium* (written in 1926). In addition to this, the romantic and modernist elements in *Sailing to Byzantium* will be analysed.

4.2 The Metamorphosis of Yeats

William Butler Yeats is known as an Irish poet and playwright who was born in Dublin in 1865 and died in 1939 in France. Because he won the Noble Prize for literature in 1923 some people think he was the greatest poet of the twentieth century. Since he started to write in the nineteenth century when the Romantic Movement was at its peak and continued to write until the middle of the twentieth century when the Modernist Movement was widely spread, “the works of William Butler Yeats form a bridge between the romantic poetry of the nineteenth century and the hard clear language of modern poetry.”¹ Similar to Henrik Johan Ibsen, some of Yeats’s early works were written under the influence of Romanticism whereas some of his later poems were written under the impact of Modernism. Mulhall asserts the same conviction; “I believe it is fair to say that Yeats’s early work was part of the tradition

of English language romantic poetry that stretches back to Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and Shelley” (2). Yeats was influenced by the major Romantics in his early years therefore, he wrote a number of romantic poems. Hough, in his book *The Last Romantics*, begins by mentioning what William B. Yeats declared

We were the last romantics-chose for theme
Traditional sanctity and loveliness;
Whatever’s written in what poet’s name
The book of the people; whatever most can bless
The mind of man or elevate a rhyme (vi).

Yeats was aware of the change that occurred in his literary career so in these lines he affirmed that he was one of the last romantics who wrote about traditional purity and gave importance to individualism. He considers himself as one of the last romantics however, he can be seen as a Modernist literary figure too. Munhall asserts that “Early in the 20th century something in Yeats’s work began to change. He began to find a new voice, with a more modern air” (4). Thus Yeats was influenced by the new literary movement which was carrying a new way of expressing thoughts. In fact, there was a reason for this transformation in Yeats’ works and it was political. As a patriot, Yeats was very close to his nation, and he always worked hard for his homeland, Ireland. Ireland was under the control of England for many years and there were a number of problems between the two nations. Therefore, the uncomfortable developments in Ireland disappointed him, and he reflected this disenchantment through transforming his style of writing. Munhall explains this by saying that

The background to this poetic transformation was the fact that in the first decade of the 20th century, Yeats began to feel uncomfortable with developments in Ireland. He complained about what he saw as a narrow definition of Irish nationalism asserting itself in Ireland to the detriment of his own ideals for Ireland’s future (4-5).

Yeats was worried about the future of Ireland thus, this anxiety led him to a transition from Romanticism to Modernism.

4.2.1 Yeats and Politics

Throughout his literary career, as an Irishman, Yeats referred to Ireland in his works. He used his talent as an opportunity to comment on political problems of Ireland and to give information about Irish culture. Mostly, he commented on cultural crisis and conflicts by using images of war, disorder and chaos in his works. Yeats asserted that “Politics are, indeed, the forge in which nations are made” (867)². Therefore, it was vital for him to be in politics in order to fight for Ireland’s rights. Yeats always supported his country in order to prepare a better future for the coming generations. In 1919 Irish people started a revolution in order to gain their independence from the United Kingdom. The Irish Revolution continued until 1921, and in 1922 many countries of Ireland seceded from Britain and established the Irish Republic. During these upheavals many people were executed and died for the independence of their country. Yeats as a patriot Irish citizen got affected from these developments in Ireland therefore, he had to find a new way to express these developments, emotions and sentiments and so he tried to express his ideas through his changed writing style. He explained this situation by stating that

When the valleys and the hills had almost become clay and stone, the good citizens plucked up their heart and took possession of the world and filled it with their little compact thoughts; and romance fled to more and more remote fairylands, and forgot that it was ever more than an old tale which nobody believes. But now we are growing interested in our own countries, and discovering that the common people in all countries that have not given themselves up to the improvements and devices of good citizens, which we call civilization, still half understand the sanctity of their hills and valleys; and at the same time a change of thought... (865)

Yeats depicts how the natural beauty started to be spoiled by the technological developments and industrialization. He associates his metamorphosis from romanticism to modernism to the side effects of Industrialization such as the loss of the natural beauty, loneliness and fragmentation. Although Romanticism is not all about romance, he mentions the fact that he lost his faith in Romanticism and started

to look for a new faith which would fulfil his needs. As a consequence of this unconformity to the war, revolution and violence in Ireland he began to follow a new literary movement; Modernism. Therefore, the optimistic point of view of Romanticism was substituted with the pessimistic point of view of Modernism. Romanticism is associated with optimism because it stresses on emotion rather than reason, and this adds it a positive point of view which sees beauty in every single object and entity. Although Romantics were also largely influenced by struggles of independence, they usually try to use the best word in order to express their feelings. On the other hand Modernism is associated with pessimism because it highlights the despair of mankind. For instance, *Sailing to Byzantium* is about a miserable old man who does not want to get older and die. He expresses his despair towards life throughout the poem with negative words. The poem opens up with the word “no” (1) which reinforces the verb “neglect” (7), then “paltry” (9) is associated with “tattered” (10), and finally the verb “consume” (21) is connected to a stronger adverb “never” (25).

4.3 *Sailing to Byzantium*

In this chapter, *Sailing to Byzantium*, which was written in 1926, right after the Irish Revolution, will be evaluated to depict how Yeats uses both romantic and modernist elements in the same poem. This will demonstrate Yeats’s transformation from Romanticism to Modernism and Modernism’s affiliation with the Romantic Movement. As Jessica Godwin claims "Sailing to Byzantium"... accurately depicts the transformation of Yeats from a romantic, natural poet to the mystical and philosophical poet of the twentieth century". He was a natural poet who referred to nature in *Sailing to Byzantium* and a mythical poet who was aware of the fact that mysticism is known as a modern trait which has an important role in the poem.

As is known, the desire for escape is one of the essential features of Romanticism and it is not surprising to see the same desire in Yeats as well. The title of the poem *Sailing to Byzantium* refers to an escape to an idealized place. Byzantium, which is an old name for Istanbul in Turkey, has a lot of historical monuments. The old man in the poem is fascinated with the beauty and immortality of the monuments located in Byzantium.

4.3.1 Romantic Features in *Sailing to Byzantium*

A list of words and phrases will be presented in the following paragraphs in order to demonstrate the important romantic elements in *Sailing to Byzantium*. Firstly, Imagination in terms of escape from the present to the past, then nature and beauty will be discussed in *Sailing to Byzantium*.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the first romantic feature can be traced with the word “*Sailing*” in the title, which indicates an escape from the present to the past. This is a part of the poet’s imagination which is one of the most emphasized features of the Romantic Movement, (which was discussed in the second chapter of the thesis). For instance, in Keats’s *Ode on a Grecian Urn* the speaker imagines two content lovers who function as an escape from the miserable and painful sides of life. In *When we Dead Awaken* Irene and Rubek climbs to a mountain top in order to escape from their tragic guilt. Likewise, the old man in *Sailing to Byzantium* desires to be a golden bird in the city of Byzantium in order to regain his youth.

Greek art is another Romantic trait used in the poem. The whole poem is about moving to the holy city of Byzantium which has numberless monuments of Greek art and culture. Like Keats, Yeats’s imagination is lured by the Greek art thus he mentions “Grecian goldsmiths” (27) in the last stanza, whom he wishes might turn him into a golden bird. The speaker desires to be transformed into a golden bird like a piece of gold jewellery made by a Greek goldsmith. Similar to Keats, Yeats is inspired by the

antiquity because he seeks an escape into the past too. However, in Ibsen's play *When we Dead Awaken* there is not one reference to antiquity but Rubek and Irene desire to turn back to the old days in order to regain what they have lost.

There are a number of references to nature, which is another feature of Romanticism. For instance, in the first stanza the speaker talks about a number of animals. He mentions some "birds in the tree" (2) which represent freedom and depicts the "salmon" and "mackerel" (4) which are born, live and die in the "sea" (4) in order to highlight the life span of both animals and humans. In the second stanza, the repetition of the word "sea" (15) takes us back to the first stanza in order to emphasize the significance of the sea in terms of escaping from the current country and the youth who are full of life and sees old people as "a paltry thing" (9). "The holy fire" (19) in the third stanza refers to the "sages" (17) who will make the "dying animal" (22), which is the old man, immortal like themselves. There is a repetition of the word "nature" in the last stanza which signifies the transformation of nature into art. The old man turns into an independent and immortal bird, which is not natural or transient.

Beauty is another vital romantic feature which plays a significant role in the poem. Gold is one of the most valuable metals in the world because it does not corrode or become oxidized like other metals, it is therefore considered to be pure thus; it signifies purity. It also has got significance for the old man in the poem, as it is repeated five times in the poem, he is looking at "the gold mosaic of a wall" (18). The beauty of the independent and immortal bird is indicated with the adjective "golden" (30). The old man will get rid of his mortal limitations by turning into a golden bird which will "sing" (30) songs on a "golden bough" (30) in order "To keep a drowsy Emperor awake" (29). He feels happy when he imagines that he will be very valuable and eternal. He wants to be an object, a part of art in order to live forever. He wants to discard the main mortal limitation, his old age which is indicated with the words "old"

(1), “dying” (2-22) and “age” (8-9). Because he has wrinkles and grey hair he claims that “THAT is no country for old men” (1) and feels “neglect[ed]” (7) within “The young/ In one another’s arms” (2-3). However, he reminds those young people that those old men are “Monuments of unageing intellect” (8) who fought for their country and still have more life experience than the younger generation. Here, the speaker also glorifies the love of young lovers which operates as a very crucial point for the whole thesis. Because glorifying or exalting love is a romantic trait and Keats mentions it in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and Ibsen in *When we Dead Awaken*, this proves the close relationship of the three literary figures that lived in different countries in different times. The speaker in *Sailing to Byzantium* continues by using a metonymy by calling himself “A tattered coat upon a stick” (10). He is tattered because he has experienced many things and the stick is used to represent the old man’s bones. A. L. Johnson interprets this as “a Neoplatonic garment of “flesh” which has become frightening” (136). This is a Neo-Platonic approach because according to this approach body is ugly but soul is beautiful as is emphasized in the poem. Therefore, the point here is the idea that body is seen as a part of the material world and soul is seen as a part of the spiritual world. Keats, Ibsen and Yeats carry their imagination into a transcendental level in order to overcome the unpleasant problems of the material world in an immortal realm. Thus, three of the literary figures put spiritual life in a higher level than real life.

The acceptance of the loss of the ideal beauty is associated with the ugliness of the aging body and it gives pain to the individual and the fear of death occurs. The individual desires to fight against the inevitable deleterious effect of the concept of change, which is expressed through the yearning for eternal youth. Change only affects living beings and occurs through time. Youth, or the loss of it, lies at the heart of Yeats’ poem *Sailing to Byzantium*, which begins with “THAT is no country for old

men. The young/ In one another's arms," (1-2) so the old man feel as an outsider. Therefore, the old man wishes from the prophets who stand "in the gold mosaic of a wall" (18) to "gather [him]/ Into the artifice of eternity" (23-24); thus, he will not be affected by time and change as a result of it. The old man wants to be a part of this deception, and he will have the power of standing against the effects of time by staying the same despite the passing time. Thus, this idea of being artificial would help him to stay young and blissful forever.

4.3.2 Modernist Features in *Sailing to Byzantium*

The modernist characteristics that are going to be illustrated in this section are innovation, mysticism and fragmentation. Modernist poet William C. Williams' saying "Nothing is good save the new"³ comes close to T.S. Eliot's idea of "novelty is better than repetition" (4). Both of them highlight the importance of novelty, a new response to a new world which had rapidly changed and was changing every day. Yeats changed his style of writing and he began to write in a more Modernist style as a response to the new world with the beginning of the WWI and the uniformity that he was witnessing in Ireland's civil war. He started to be engaged with the present rather than the past as found in Romanticism. According to Bradbury and McFarlane

...we are derivatives not of the past but of the surrounding and enfolding environment or scenario, that modernity is a consciousness, a fresh condition of the human mind – a condition which modern art has explored, felt through, sometimes reacted against (22).

Sailing to Byzantium is about the present situation of an old man who wishes to become a mechanical bird and live forever. The Modernists celebrate the present in order to build the future. They do not emphasize past because they see themselves as alienated from the past. In contrast to this, the Romantics forget about the present and celebrate the past.

Another modernist trait is mysticism, which is related to occult mentioned in the poem. Although the modern age is scientific in terms of improved technology, it is possible to trace mysticism in it. For instance, the gods in the third stanza is an obvious revelation of mysticism. This is related to the state of spiritual excitement which is defined with “unless/ Soul claps its hands and sing, and louder sing” (10-11) because that soul is the one who will give him a spiritual rebirth and his youth back. He is waiting for a “clap” to be able to transform himself. There are three stages to this spiritual journey which is indicated with the word “come” in the following lines 15-19-32.

...I have sailed the seas and come 15
To the holy city of Byzantium. 16
O sages standing in God’s holy fire 17
Come from the holy fire... 19
 ...to sing 30
Of what is past, or passing, or to come. 32

In line 15 he is already in Byzantium so there is a reference to the past. In line 19 he is standing in front of the gold mosaic and asking the prophets to help him in the present. Finally, in line 32 he summarizes his spiritual journey by reminding that he has been in Byzantium, he is there and he will be there in the future.

The “birds in the tree” in the first stanza represent time whereas the bird in the last stanza is a substitute for eternity and a reflection of Yeats’ imagination. He makes the golden bird a part of the world. He secularizes the bird in his imagination. The speaker wants to transcend his “mortal dress” (12) into a golden bird in order to live forever. Here is a mythical unification with the eternity and beautiful monuments of Byzantium. This could be interpreted as a spiritual journey to the ideal world of Byzantium. According to A.L. Johnson “Byzantium [is expressed] as an existential (historical) reality and as an artistic (timeless) one. Such a situation is characteristic in Yeats’ later poetry...” (137). Therefore, Byzantium operates as a combination of Life

and Art. It exists in the reality, and it has the ability of reflecting the concept of immortality. The old man asks the sages to “Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre, / And be the singing-masters of my soul” (19-20) because his soul is “sick with desire” (21) of rescuing from the state of being “fastened to a dying animal” (22). He tells the sages to make him immortal because he does not want to be mortal anymore. The speaker refers to his mortal limitations and makes references to the concept of death, which is the scariest mortal limitation.

Another modernist trait is “fragmentation” (McFarlane, 80), which operates as one of the most important modernist elements. Fragmentation is about being separated or alienated from the whole. Modern age brought the problem of disintegration of the established systems and absolutes. According to modern writers Man is unable to create a relationship with others because he is naturally asocial. Thus, Man only has superficial contact with the other individuals. However, this idea is not related to the Romantic alienation of man. Thus, solitariness is always considered as a fragment according to the modernist writers. Being away from the society, having no historical relations, having no natural form and being inexplicable are related to the idea of fragmentation. The sense of being alienated from the whole is very obvious in *Sailing to Byzantium* because the old man sees himself as isolated from the younger generation and this makes him feel fragmented. He also cannot find an appropriate natural form for himself because he thinks he has been thrown to the world meaninglessly. He also expresses himself as being inexplicable by the younger generation around him. Thus, he desires to escape to Byzantium where operates as a bridge between East and West and might give him an appropriate form to live forever.

4.4 Yeats' use of Romantic Idealism and Human Paradox

In this last part of the chapter, idealism and human paradox are going to be mentioned in *Sailing to Byzantium*. As mentioned in Chapter 2 the speaker in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* idealizes the urn itself, melodies, lovers, the trees, the piper and the heifer that he sees on the urn. Here in *Sailing to Byzantium*, the speaker idealizes the city of Byzantium, the sages on the gold mosaic and the Grecian goldsmith.

Similar to *Ode on a Grecian Urn* the poem itself is a work of art therefore, it reminds the reader of the fact that art is superior to life because art is not subject to alteration. Because Byzantium is considered as a historical place full of monuments, and the goldsmiths who make the mosaics are Grecian this can be considered as an example to idealistic Greek art. Apart from this, the poem itself stands as a substitute for the abstract notions and as romantic ideals such as beauty, truth, eternity and perfection as well. The speaker defines the city of Byzantium as "holy" (16) because it has "sages standing in God's holy fire" (17). "The holy city of Byzantium" (16) which is worth to sail "the sea" (15) has "gold mosaic" (18) and is a representative of "the artifice of eternity" (24). All these adjectives reinforce Byzantium's beauty because it is made of "gold" (18), one of the most valuable jewellery of the world. The speaker idealizes the city of Byzantium because of its perfect beauty and eternal monuments. The old man does not care about his old age and goes onto a journey of perfection. Moreover, he idealizes the sages who will "be the singing master of my [the old man's] soul and "gather" (23) him into a magnificent place. Therefore, the sages operate as representatives of wisdom and truth. Furthermore, he idealizes the "Grecian goldsmiths" (27) who will turn him into a golden bird "set upon a golden bough" (30). They can be seen as the creators of beauty, perfection, truth and eternity.

As in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and *When we Dead Awaken* the old man falls into a human paradox which is related to the idea of putting a great effort to be able to live forever. The old man wants to be idealized in order to live forever. This is the reason why he stands in front of “living clays” as Ibsen referred to the statue in his play and pray to them to immortalize him. However, those monuments are not immortalized they are only created in the image of reality in order to substitute for real life. They are reflections of the imagination of their human creators.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Modernism's Affiliation with the Romantic Movement

The main purpose of this thesis was to demonstrate the contribution of Romanticism to the so called modernist movement. There are many critics who claim that Modernism is a continuation of Romanticism. Although Modernism can be considered as a movement which reacts against Romanticism, there are a number of characteristics which it borrowed from the Romantic Movement. According to Bradbury and McFarlane "A number of critics have been tempted to see Modernism as a resurgence of Romanticism, though conceivably in a more extreme and strained form of pure irrationalism" (46). Irrationalism is a very important element of Modernism because it emphasizes the irrational forces within man himself. Bradbury and McFarlane accept the fact that there are similarities and differences between the two movements. It is pure irrationalism because it is a cultural reaction towards the social, political, cultural and economic disenchantments in the nineteen and twentieth centuries. Bradbury and McFarlane mention Hiller Miller's claim about the same issue by stating that "Hiller Miller [says that] 'a new kind of poetry has appeared in our day, a poetry which grows out of romanticism, but goes beyond it'" (47). Briefly,

Modernism operates as a more improved version of Romanticism which took place in the nineteenth century and continued until the middle of the twentieth century.

It is appropriate to display the similarities between Romanticism and Modernism by giving examples from Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, Ibsen's *When we Dead Awaken* and Yeats' *Sailing to Byzantium*. The first similarity is the infatuation with youth. Andrew Sandlin in his article called "Christian Romanticism" mentions that "Romantics seemed to overlook the ignorance of youth and stressed rather its innocence". In *Ode on a Grecian Urn* Keats deals with passion, devotion and vitality which represent the young lovers who are portrayed on the urn. Here, Keats highlights the innocence of the young lovers who he calls "Fair youth" (15). In *When we Dead Awaken* Ibsen defines Irene as "a pure young girl" (250) who can be considered both innocent and ignorant. As Ibsen is a modernist he dealt with both of the issues. Irene is innocent because she is defined as pure, and she is ignorant because she sacrificed her life for Rubek's ambition. In contrast to Sandalin, in *Sailing to Byzantium* Yeats only dealt with the concept of ignorance rather than innocence. The old man blames "The young" (1) of being ignorant because they only live the day without thinking of the future but also he blames himself too. The concept of youth is also related to the idea of change in other words old age. All the three works highlight the fear of getting old by creating a work of art as a representation of the rejection of the effects of time and change. Nonetheless, they all bring up the truth that none of the human beings can escape from old age and its effects because it is a part of life cycle that every individual on earth goes through.

The second similarity is the endeavour to escape from the present which is another common subject of the three works. In *Ode on a Grecian Urn* Keats gazes at a Grecian urn which was created in the past and he imagines the piper, the lovers, the trees and the villagers as being located in the past forever and be away from the

unpleasantness of the real life shaped by the capitalist materialist distortion of the purity of nature both literally, as well as human nature. In *When we Dead Awaken* Rubek regrets his decisions which he made in the past and desires to go back in order to find happiness and in *Sailing to Byzantium* the old man sails to the holy city of Byzantium in order to regain his youth and immortality. Modernist critic T.S. Eliot claims that “the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past”. What he means here is that what an individual has experienced can be changed by his/her present experience and the present decisions are always affected by the past experiences. This can be traced in *When we Dead Awaken*. Rubek was not aware of Irene’s affection and admiration towards him in the first place however, when they meet after years he noticed the uncorrectable fault that he has done in the past. Therefore, the “uncompromising truth” (Schenker, 153) that he found out in the present has changed his point of view towards the past. On the other hand, because Rubek and Irene did not struggle to be together in the past, they are aware of the fact that it is too late for them to find that happiness in the present. Hence, the mistakes which were made in the past have influenced the present.

Although at times, Modernism stands against the romantic tradition, it does borrow from it giving significance to individuality from the Romantic Movement. Individuality is one of the most important common characteristic of the both movements. Individuality is expressed through the idea of independence. Keats as a Romantic poet reflects his imagination influenced not only by his present external effects but also by his understanding of a better past as he conceives of on the urn. He reveals the power of his imagination through effective descriptions of the frozen images on a simple vase, of which value increases throughout the poem. Ibsen as a Modernist playwright celebrates the importance of freedom by the repetition of the

word and Maja's yearning for independence. Correspondingly, Yeats as a Romantic Modernist signifies independence by using birds as the symbols of freedom.

Another similarity is immortality which is expressed differently in three of the works. In *Ode on a Grecian Urn* Keats reflects eternity through the beauty of the urn and gives the message that a work of art immortalizes beauty. However, Keats reminds his reader of the impossibility of being immortal by speaking to the urn "dost tease us out of though/ As doth eternity" (44-45). Similarly, in *When we Dead Awaken* Rubek's thirst to reflect eternity is shown through the beauty of Irene's statue too. However, because he "set that dead figure of clay above life, and happiness, and love" (III, 265) he regrets to adore the beauty of art and to give more importance to his ambition. Likewise the old man in *Sailing to Byzantium* depicts immortality through the monuments in Byzantium. He desires to be a work of art in order to live forever however, because his "bodily form" (26) is "natural" (26) it is impossible for him to be immortal too.

The final similarity between the poems and the play is idealization of the people, plants or animals. For instance, in Keats's poem the trees on the urn are reflected as being free from the constraints of the material world. And he images the people on the urn as the dwellers of an ideal world. In Ibsen's play Rubek idealizes Irene and believes that a statue is "unstained by life" (250), which is not subject to earthly effects such as being subject to change. He expresses this by saying that her beauty "fit[s] only to be worshipped" (I, 233). In Yeats's poem the old man wishes to purge himself of the effects of life by the help of "God's holy fire" (17), in this way he can become immortal and so escape the ugliness of old age. Therefore, he imagines himself as taking the form of an idealized bird which operates as a symbol of freedom and immortality. Briefly, Rubek, the speaker and the old man are in search of perfection in life, which leaves them with dissatisfaction instead of contentment. The

images on the urn, Irene's statue and the golden bird are the representatives of perfection which are the imitations as much as idealizations of real life.

In conclusion, the idea of idealization and immortality militates against the earthly fact of being transient. Rubek, the speaker and the old man all want to find happiness through fulfillment in the ideal, which is impossible. Rubek believes that he will be satisfied when he finishes his idealization of youth. Nevertheless, he is never able to fulfill his desires because when the perfect statue of Irene is finished, he destroys it because of the horrors of the society that he observes around him. Because of his unstable vision of art which is altered with the effect of the society, he wants to add his changed vision to the statue, and consequently destroys his dream. Rubek's vision kept changing because he is a human being who is influenced by the conditions around him; however, neither he nor his sculpture can escape the effects of time. The speaker in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* first talks about the ideal of a happy life but at the end he states that: "beauty is truth" (49) which militates against his idea of appreciating the image on the urn, which has "sweeter" (12) melodies than the "heard melodies" (11) of real life. The same contradiction occurs in *Sailing to Byzantium* when the old man desires to be "set upon a golden bough to sing" (30) just like a golden bird. The speakers in the two poems and Rubek in the play may seem to deceive themselves that it is possible to be satisfied with an ideal that they themselves have created, but they actually celebrate the idea that their creators will be remembered forever with the presence of their work of art.

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APPENDIX A: END NOTES

Chapter 2

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³Keats, John. "Letter to George and Tom Keats, December 21,27 (?) 1817".The Oxford Anthology of English Literature: Romantic Poetry and Prose.Ed. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling. Oxford Uni Press: New York, 1973. 766-8.

⁴Keats, John. "Letter to Benjamine Bailey, November 22, 1817".The Oxford Anthology of English Literature: Romantic Poetry and Prose.Ed. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling. Oxford Uni Press: New York, 1973. 764-6.

⁵See 2.4 Keats, Imagination and Emotion

⁶as he is suffering because of his illness.

⁷See Introduction: 1.2 Romanticism and Modernism

⁸According to Palmer "the men of 1789 took steps which never could be retracted. The Oath of the Tennis Court, the decrees of August, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the repudiation of legal class, the relegation of the King to the position of a first magistrate, the expropriation of the church, all accomplished or at least proclaimed before the end of 1789, were a series of such irrevocable commitments". (447)

⁹Westland cites Rousseau ideas in his book. (28)

¹⁰See 2.3 Binary Oppositions in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*

¹¹According to Štěpaník "Keats was not hostile to religion on principle — and many of his intimate friends (e. g. Haydon, Severn,Taylor, Bailey etc.) were orthodox Anglicans (while some were deists or atheists), but he inclined more and more strongly, as time went on, to purely ethical deism, so that in the eye of any Christian church he would be an atheist. His attitude to official churches was almost uniformly hostile, particularly in the last years of his life". (93)

Chapter 3

¹Encyclopedia of World Biography. "Henrik Ibsen". 2004. *Encyclopedia.com*. 1 Aug. 2012<http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Henrik_Ibsen.aspx.

²Speech to the Norwegian Students, September 10, 1874, from *Speeches and New Letters*, 1910. Ibsen's famous comment is in a letter to Edmund Gosse, 15 January, 1874: "Speaking generally, the dialogue must conform to the degree of idealization which pervades the work as a whole. My new drama is no tragedy in the ancient sense. What I sought to depict were human beings, and therefore I would not let them talk the 'language of the Gods'" (Sprinchom 145).

³Quoted in Susan Mason's article *Critical Essays on Henrik Ibsen* by Charles R. Lyons.

⁴Gyldendar Collection "Timeline of Ibsen's World".

http://www.shakespearetheatre.org/_pdf/first_folio/folio_enemy_about.pdf

⁵Shakespeare theatre.org, 6

⁶See Chapter 1 for more information.

⁷ See Chapter **3.3.3 Ibsen and Politics**

⁸ <http://www.directessays.com/viewpaper/53361.html>

Chapter 4

¹ Encyclopedia of World Biography www.notablebiographies.com

² William Butler Yeats, "The Literary Movement in Ireland"

³ Quoted in Bram Dijkstra's book *Cubism, Stieglitz, and the Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams*