

English Romantic Poetry

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Please Silence Cell Phones

William Blake (1757-1827)

- Humble Origins
- Left school at age of 10 to go to drawing school
- At 15 his father could not afford entrance to send him to a painter's studio; Sent to apprentice at the workshop of a master-engraver
- At age of 22 entered the Royal Academy, but his art was too unconventional to be accepted
- Not fully recognized until the late 19th and 20th centuries
- <http://www.blakearchive.org/blake/>

“Songs of Innocence and Experience”

- Mature reflection on the poems from Songs of Innocence
- Published both sets together as *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, 1794
- Objective: to show the “two Contrary States of the Human Soul”
- Colored prints accompanied each poem.

Holy Thursday I

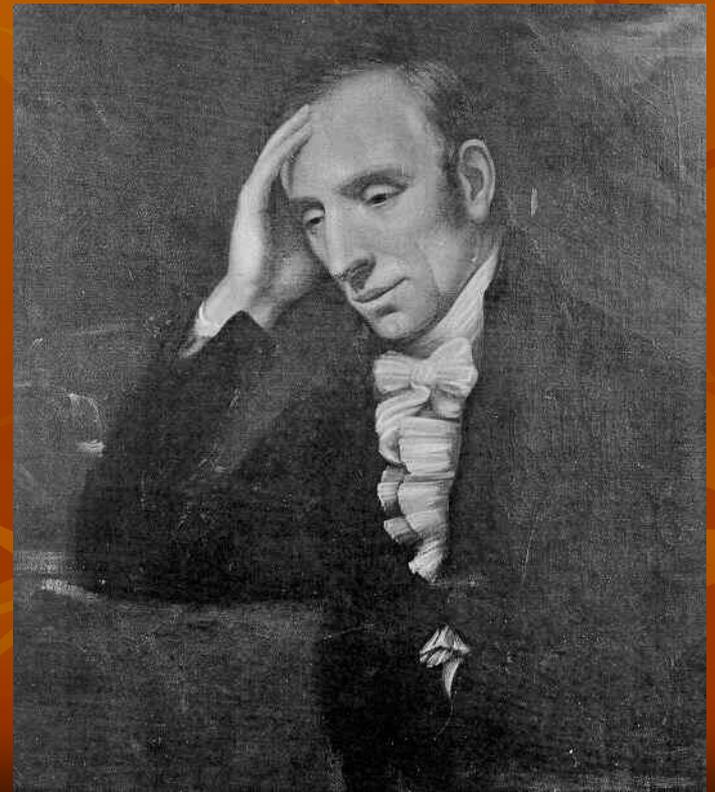
- Parade of children is orderly and colorful
- Children appear as a natural phenomena
- Their Voices in St. Paul's Cathedral also are a natural simile: "like harmonious thunderings"
- The beadle, who supervise the orphans, are "wise guardians of the poor"
- The last line likens the orphans to angels

Holy Thursday II

- Poses a series of Rhetorical questions about the parade of orphans to St. Paul's
- Is it holy?
- The natural metaphors of the first poem are revealed to be false metaphors
- Sun doesn't shine; Fields are bleak and bare; Paths are full of thorns; Eternal Winter;
- Final Stanza: In a land with Sun and Rain, there should no babes in hunger and poverty
- Questions both the idealism of Religious Charity and the idealism of Romantic Naturalism

- <http://members.aol.com/wordspage/bio.htm>
- Childhood in Lake District
- 1790s, visited France and sympathized with Revolutionaries
- After War between England and France, he was conflicted
- 1804, Rise of Napoleon and Wordsworth becomes a Royalist
- Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798, with Samuel Coleridge

William Wordsworth



Controlling Ideas of Wordsworth's Preface

- Sympathy of Nature and Man
- Use of Natural Language of Men
- Focus on Simple Men, Farmers (Pastoral?)
- Passion over Reason: Interest in feelings
- Poet as a man who feels more intensely than most men.
- Imagination

Emotion in Poetry

- Poetry should evoke an emotional reaction, but it should not aim at “outrageous stimulation...” He comments on the “extraordinary incidents” of the time and the “increasing accumulation of men in cities” as a cause. The objective is to provide a counter stimulus, which is emotive, but not destructive or overwhelming. Other romantics will disagree with Wordsworth.

Lines Written in Early Spring, 1798

■ I HEARD a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.
To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.
Through primrose tufts, in that green bower
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,

Their thoughts I cannot measure:--

But the least motion which they made

It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,

To catch the breezy air;

And I must think, do all I can,

That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,

If such be Nature's holy plan,

Have I not reason to lament

What man has made of man?

My heart Leaps Up...

My heart leaps up when I behold

A rainbow in the sky:

So was it when my life began;

So is it now I am a man;

So be it when I shall grow old,

Or let me die!

The Child is father of the Man;

And I could wish my days to be

Bound each to each by natural piety.

1802

■ I wandered lonely as a
cloud

That floats on high o'er
vales and hills,

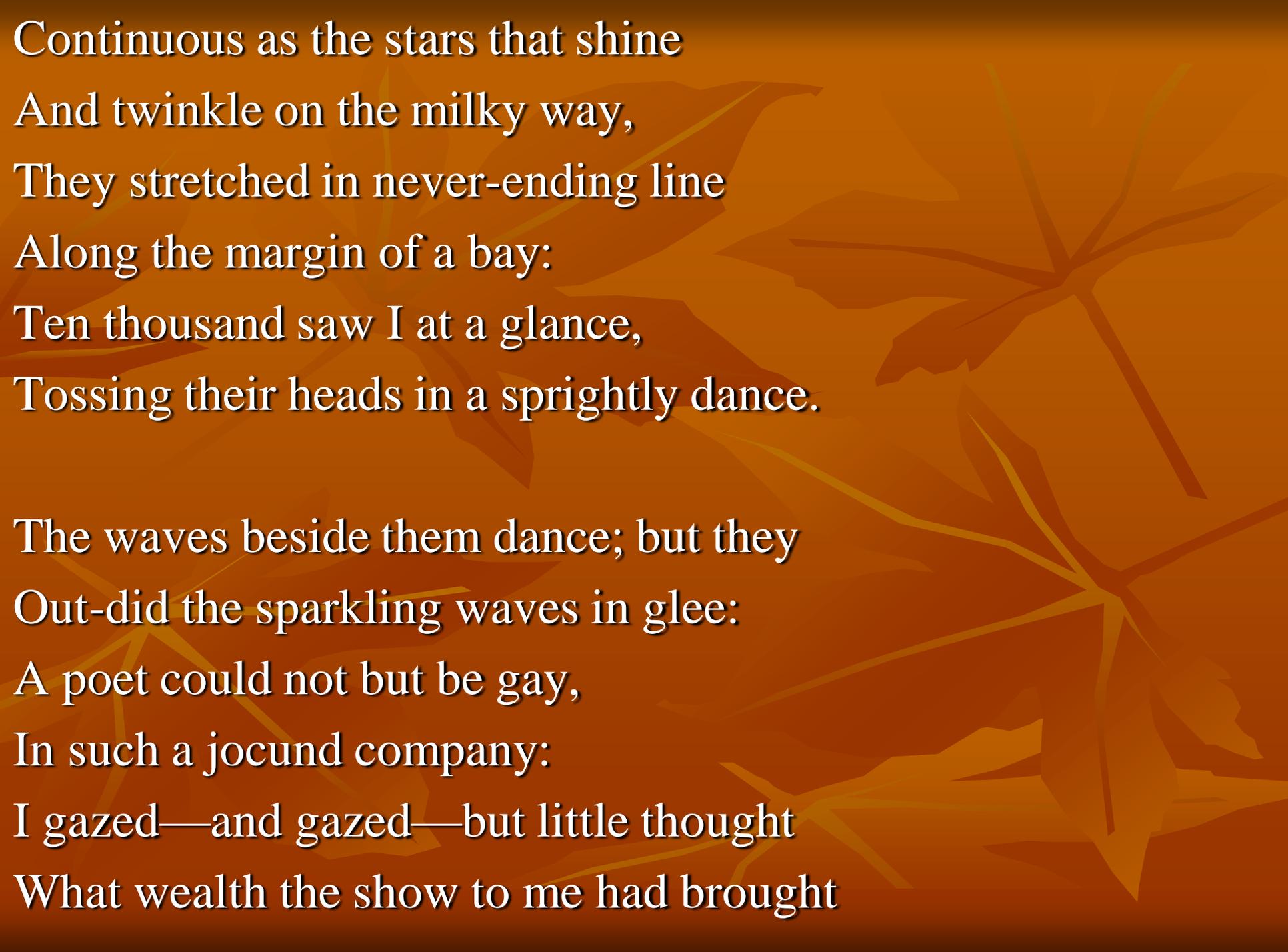
When all at once I saw a
crowd,

A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the
trees,

Fluttering and dancing in
the breeze.

I wandered Lonely as a Cloud...





Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in a sprightly dance.

The waves beside them dance; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

- Poet amidst Nature senses the power of its Beauty
- The recollection in a moment of melancholy reawakens the joyful dance of the daffodils in the mind
- This brings the “bliss of solitude”

Intimations of Immortality:

<http://www.bartleby.com/101/536.html>

- Natural connection of Children with Nature: “Child is the Father of the Man”
- Loss of “Immediacy” with Nature as we Age
- From Grief to Joy in Apprehension of Nature
- Joyful Exuberance is purpose of existence
- Loss; Tree; Is it Tree of Knowledge? Fall of Man?
- We still get glimpses of immortal, transcendent world in Nature
- “Trailing clouds of glory do we come/From God”

Samuel Coleridge, *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

- Poetic Narrative
- Harmony of Man and Nature and God is disrupted: the Albatross as a symbol
- Remorse: need for confession
- Mariner: the simple man with simple words
- <http://www.bartleby.com/41/415.html>

Kubla Khan

- <http://www.bartleby.com/41/416.html>

Summary

- English Romantic Poets believed in the power of the poet to shape the moral fiber of society
- Natural Sympathy of Man and Nature; the divide is transcended by the sheer Beauty upon our senses
- Natural sympathy of Man and Nature leads to Sympathy of Man and Man
- The power of Nature to influence and shape us continues long after we are in its immediate presence; a residue resides in the Mind