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Influence of Napoleonic Wars on British Literature

Bakalářská práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně a uvedl jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

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Introduction

Napoleonic wars and British romanticism are closely related. The era of the Wars saw the birth of the great names of British romantic poetry. William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake, Percy Bysshe Shelley and George Gordon Byron are considered the major poets of their age. Each of the authors lived a significant part of his life during the time of the immense changes in the whole of Europe. Great Britain, as the protector of the old values played the major role as an opponent of the revolutionary France, which spread the ideas of liberty and equality.

The Wars lasted for more than twenty years. Nations, beliefs and ideals were disrupted all around Europe during this period. Even though Britain was not exposed to an invasion, it was the only country which remained in the state of war with France throughout the entire conflict apart from the short-lived Peace of Amiens. Many important and influential events took place during the years of the Napoleonic wars, such as famous battles, unexpected invasions or changes of government. On the other hand, death, famine, pain and sadness became the parts of everyday life. A person who lived during the Napoleonic wars and witnessed the changes in the world had to be influenced in some way.

The aim of this bachelor's thesis is to find any traces of the influence of Napoleonic wars in the poetical production of the major authors of romantic poetry mentioned at the beginning. To proceed with this task the selected poems will be analysed. The poems have been chosen according to their thematic connection to the conflict. Each of them will also be supported with related historical background.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Each of them focuses on one author. Every chapter begins with a short introduction to the author's life, which describes his background, education and relation to France and the French revolution. These are the important information, which should help to understand the author's perception of the Wars. The introduction of the author is followed by the analyses of the selected poems. These are introduced chronologically in order to connect them with the development of the events of the Wars. For better understanding of the analysis, the sections of the poems are presented as well. Each chapter then ends with a short summary to recapitulate the main points.

The thesis is formed by a combination of analyses and descriptions. It focuses on the poetical production of the five major British romantic authors in the time span from 1789 up until 1815, from the beginning of the French revolution up until the end of Napoleonic wars.

Texts of poems for the analyses were mostly provided by the online sources *bartleby.com*, *poemhunter.com*, *poetryfoundation.org* or *gutenberg.org*. The most valuable monographies for the thesis were J. R. Watson's *Romanticism and the War: A study of the British Romantic Period Writers and the Napoleonic Wars* providing the relations of historical events with many of the poems and Catriona Kennedy's *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* offering the overview of the historical development. Various university study guides were useful for providing the needed information about the authors.

1. William Wordsworth

1.1. Beginning of War and the stay in France

William Wordsworth was one of the principal authors of British romanticism. He was also one of the Lake District poets and probably the most active writer in the period of Napoleonic Wars between 1793-1815. Shortly before the outburst of the war, at the turn of years 1791 and 1792, Wordsworth came to visit France, where he soon grew interested in the ideas of the French Revolution. F. B. Pinion in his *Wordsworth Companion* remarks that ‘To one who had never questioned the principle of equal rights, the Revolution seemed ‘nothing out of nature's certain course’.¹ He became even more attracted to France through falling in love with Annette Vallon, who soon became pregnant. Even though she was anti-revolutionary minded, Wordsworth’s dedication to liberty and equality grew stronger. Wordsworth presents his enthusiasm for Revolution in *Ninth* and *Tenth* Book of *Prelude*, where he mentions his experience in France during the revolutionary years:

*‘Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
Of the Bastille, I sate in the open sun,
And from the rubbish gathered up a stone,
And pocketed the relic, in the guise
Of an enthusiast;²
Cheered with this hope, to Paris I returned,
And ranged, with ardour heretofore unfelt,
The spacious city, and in progress passed
The prison where the unhappy Monarch lay³*

He depicts his primal interest in the revolution when he travelled around France and visited the sights where important events took place. He also welcomed the fall of monarchy and imprisonment of the French royal family.

Wordsworth shared the view of revolutionaries about absolutism. They saw it as an evil form of government and that is why he tried to excuse the execution of the French king

¹ F. B. Pinion, *A Wordsworth Companion* (London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1984), 33.

² William Worsworth, “The Prelude: Book Ninth” (Complete Poetical Works, bartleby.com, 1888).
<http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww295.html> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

³ William Worsworth, “The Prelude: Book Tenth” (Complete Poetical Works, bartleby.com, 1888).
<http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww296.html> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

in January 1793. He presented the act, as a necessity to deliver the power into the hands of people, enabling the future formation of the republic.

*'By public power abused, to fatal crime,
Nature's rebellion against monstrous law;
How, between heart and heart, oppression thrust...'*⁴

The French declaration of war on Britain was unexpected and came as a shock to many. J. R. Watson in his influential book *Romanticism and War* states that for Wordsworth, the declaration of war was 'the turning upside down of all his assumptions and beliefs. It involved the sudden realisation that the government did not share his views.'⁵ Wordsworth was a patriot who never supported the war. Now, the regime he believed in fought against the country he loved.

Numerous British citizens were present in France at the time, and rumours of new conflict spread quickly. Most of the Brits wanted to head back to their homeland. It was a difficult period for Wordsworth. He could not stay any longer in an enemy state with almost no money, but he waited for the news of his daughter being born.

1.2. Lyrical Ballads and the change of perspective

Wordsworth returns to his native Lake District by the end of the year 1793. He was caught in the fight between his conviction and his country, what lead into anti-war themes in his writing. Also, he had to leave his love and child back in France. Therefore, the enthusiasm from writing about years in France was gone with his arrival back to Britain. The loss of his enthusiasm is noticeable in his poem, *Salisbury Plain*. He shows his anti-war feelings as well. The author depicts the cruelties of war through a woman's eyes, as she loses her husband, who leaves his family to join the Navy:

*'Me and his children hungering in his view.
To join those miserable men he flew.
We reached the western world a poor devoted crew.'*⁶

⁴ William Wordsworth, "The Prelude: Book Ninth" (Complete Poetical Works, bartleby.com, 1888). <http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww295.html> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

⁵ J. R. Watson, *Romanticism and War: A Study of British Romantic Period Writers and the Napoleonic Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 46.

⁶ William Wordsworth, "Salisbury Plain" (ucsb.edu). <http://oldsite.english.ucsb.edu/faculty/ayliu/research/around-1800/FR/salisbury-plain.html> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017), 34.

Later, she loses her children as well, in consequence of the famine, which is imminent to a family without an adult male:

*'Disease and Famine, Agony and Fear...
It would thy brain unsettle even to hear.
Husband and children one by one, by sword
And scourge of fiery fever: every tear...'*⁷

A dark mood and sadness prevail, which can be strongly felt throughout the whole poem. These may be an evidence of Wordsworth's internal fight, but it is also possible, that the loneliness created by war represents his solitude, as also he was forced to leave his family back in France.

Meanwhile, in France, the Jacobins held their place only by applying absolute power, executing anyone who opposed their rule. Such actions disillusioned many of the sympathisers of Revolution in other countries. Despite these events, Wordsworth was among those, who remained loyal to the idea of Revolution, as he declares in the *Eleventh* book of *Prelude*:

*'Yet, in me, confidence was unimpaired;
The Senate's language, and the public acts
And measures of the Government, though both
Weak, and of heartless omen, had not power
To daunt me; in the People was my trust'*⁸

A breakthrough in Wordsworth's views about Revolutionary France comes in 1798 when the French armies invaded Switzerland. The French presented themselves as 'bringers of liberty' but Switzerland was no monarchy. Therefore there was no excuse for the act of war against them. And what is more, as Watson puts it, 'the traditions and myths of Swiss independence were legendary.' Violation of Swiss independence was seen as a destruction of something precious, that was built for centuries.⁹ Wordsworth, in his *Thoughts of a Briton* depicts the land as a representative of Liberty, who is forced away by a usurper. By the

⁷ William Wordsworth, "Salisbury Plain" (ucsb.edu).

<http://oldsite.english.ucsb.edu/faculty/ayliu/research/around-1800/FR/salisbury-plain.html> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017), 34.

⁸ William Wordsworth, "The Prelude: Book Eleventh" (Complete Poetical Works, bartleby.com, 1888). <http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww297.html> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

⁹ J. R. Watson, *Romanticism and War: A Study of British Romantic Period Writers and the Napoleonic Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 73.

usurper, or 'tyrant', author most likely means Napoleon, even though he did not lead the French forces to Switzerland himself.

*'They were thy chosen music, Liberty!
There came a Tyrant, and with holy glee
Thou fought'st against him; but hast vainly striven:
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven...'¹⁰*

The Swiss tried to make a brave stand against the invaders but had no chance of victory.

1798 was also the year when Wordsworth and Coleridge finished their first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. According Watson the collection may at first 'seem to have nothing to do with the war, to be an experimental volume which related particularly to common practice in poetic diction.'¹¹ Although the authors clearly did not want to bring poetry closer to common man just through the use of simple language. Poems *Old Man Travelling* and *Female Vagrant* presented situations from everyday, war-time life too. In the first mentioned, an old man is walking through villages but is questioned, where and why is he travelling:

*'The object of his journey; he replied
"Sir! I am going many miles to take
"A last leave of my son, a mariner,
"Who from a sea-fight has been brought...
and is dying"'*¹²

Catrina Kennedy in her *Narratives of the Revolution and Napoleonic Wars* points out that navy was the main force of Britain during the war, with almost 150 000 sailors.¹³ It surely was quite common to have a relative somehow engaged. The sight of someone visiting a dying family member was terrible but most likely not unusual. The *Female Vagrant* was also a part of *Salisbury Plain* mentioned earlier. As it was stated, it depicts the suffering from a woman's perspective, as she witnesses the extinction of her family.

¹⁰ William Wordsworth, "Thought Of A Briton On The Subjugation Of Switzerland" (poemhunter.com). <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/thought-of-a-briton-on-the-subjugation-of-switzerland/> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

¹¹ J. R. Watson, *Romanticism and War: A Study of British Romantic Period Writers and the Napoleonic Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 72.

¹² William Wordsworth, "Old Man Travelling" (Lyrical Ballads 1798. online-literature.com). <http://www.online-literature.com/wordsworth/lyrical-ballads-1798/20/> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

¹³ Catriona Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Military and Civilian Experience in Britain and Ireland* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 35.

Wordsworth has no longer been living in illusion about the Revolution at that time. He rather supported the idea of peace for the sake of lives, families and future generations by presenting the dark side of the war.

1.3. Poetry against war and criticism of France

The Peace of Amiens was signed in 1802 between Britain and France lead by Napoleon, who named himself a consul for a lifetime. British citizens started crossing the Channel in large soon after. They were keen to see how the Revolution has changed France and its people. Wordsworth with his sister too used this opportunity, although not to visit Paris but Wordsworth's old love, Annette Vallon, and their daughter, Caroline. They chose to do so in Calais rather than in Paris, as Wordsworth according Watson, did not want to 'be caught up in the crowd of English visitors, of whose tolerance of Bonaparte he could not approve.'¹⁴ This detachment from the support of Revolutionary France can be seen, as well, in his poem *Calais, August, 1802* written during this visit:

*'Post forward all, like Creatures of one kind,
With first-fruit offerings crowd to bend the knee
In France, before the new-born Majesty.
'Tis ever thus. Ye Men of prostrate mind!
What hardship had it been to wait an hour?
Shame on you, feeble Heads, to slavery prone!'*¹⁵

Napoleon was at first seen as a bringer of culture and liberty, but by usurping power for himself in 1799, he became a target of contempt, as can be seen in rhyme 'bent the knee, before the new-born Majesty.' It is most likely that Wordsworth is pointing out Napoleon's lack of royal blood. He also criticises people of France, for letting someone take the rule of the country, which finally achieved the creation of a republic. They soon got themselves 'enslaved' once more and without much resistance.

The peace was not long lasting and the war started again only fourteen months later, in 1803. Events of the war forced Wordsworth to think about his previous loyalties quite often and with shame. He shows it in his *Ode to Duty*. The events of the Wars turned his opinion of the new French regime more and more the opposite way:

¹⁴ J. R. Watson, *Romanticism and War: A Study of British Romantic Period Writers and the Napoleonic Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 89-90.

¹⁵ William Wordsworth, "Calais, August 1802" (poemhunter.com).
<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/calais-august-1802/> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

*'I, loving freedom, and untried;
No sport of every random gust,
Yet being to myself a guide,
Too blindly have reposed my trust...'¹⁶*

The idea of him falling for the French revolution have been haunting him. In the year 1804, when the poem was written, France continued in the expansion of German states. What is more, Napoleon crowned himself an Emperor in the same year. Therefore, the author asks for future guidance not to be misled by his heart again:

*'I call thee: I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour;
Oh! let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me, made lowly wise...'¹⁷*

1.4. Rise of patriotism

As a reaction to the Battle of Trafalgar, Wordsworth wrote a poem called *Character of the Happy Warrior*. It is dedicated to Lord Nelson and written shortly after news of his death in reached Britain.

*'Who is the happy Warrior? Who is he
Whom every Man in arms should wish to be?'¹⁸*

The poem begins with author asking, what are the true qualities of a good ('happy') soldier. He then provides his idea of the features needed:

*'Whence, in a state where men are tempted still
To evil for a guard against worse ill...
- Who, if he rise to station of command,
Rises by open means; and there will stand
On honourable terms, or else retire,
And in himself possess his own desire;
Who comprehends his trust, and to the same*

¹⁶ William Worsworth, "Ode to Duty" (poetryfoundation.org). <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/45535> (Accesed 24. 4. 2017).

¹⁷ William Worsworth, "Ode to Duty" (poetryfoundation.org). <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/45535> (Accesed 24. 4. 2017).

¹⁸ William Worsworth, "Character of the Happy Worrior" (poetryfoundation.org). <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/45512> (Accesed 24. 4. 2017).

*Keeps faithful with a singleness of aim;*¹⁹

Among other qualities, the ‘happy warrior’ should be able to differentiate good and evil, but should always choose the good side. He needs to be honourable and persistent in pursuing his cause otherwise he should give up his place to someone else. Wordsworth is probably referring to Napoleon's actions Napoleon was the one who fought for something else all the time. At first for the monarchy, then for the Republic and then for himself, forcing the pope to crown him as an Emperor. In opposition to him was Nelson. A true warrior not getting involved with politics much but fighting for his country, later giving his life for that cause:

*’Tis, finally, the Man, who, lifted high,
Conspicuous object in a Nation's eye...
Who, whether praise of him must walk the earth
Forever, and to noble deeds give birth*²⁰

Wordsworth shows his patriotism in a poem 1810, where he celebrates Wellington and his victories over the French in Portugal. His successful campaign pushed the French armies out of the country and finally brought some hope after a series of failures all around Europe. Practically, this brought a turnover to the Peninsular War.

*’Methinks that we shall hail thee, Champion brave...
And through all Europe cheer desponding men
With new-born hope. Unbounded is the might
Of martyrdom, and fortitude, and right.
Hark, how thy Country triumphs!—Smilingly...*²¹

Wordsworth keeps his thematic character up to the poem dedicated to the last battle of Napoleonic Wars, the Waterloo. *After Visiting the Field of Waterloo* depicts view and feelings of a visitor of the famous battlefield. The poem begins with presenting the importance of the battle and victory, which the British achieved:

’A WINGÉD Goddess, clothed in vesture wrought

¹⁹ William Wordsworth, “Character of the Happy Warrior” (poetryfoundation.org).
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/45512> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

²⁰ William Wordsworth, “Character of the Happy Warrior” (poetryfoundation.org).
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/45512> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

²¹ William Wordsworth, *The Poems of William Wordsworth*, ed. Jared Curtis (Penrith: Humanities-Ebooks, LLP, 2009), 18-19.

*Of rainbow colors,—one whose port was bold,
Whose overburdened hand could scarcely hold,
The glittering crowns and garlands which it brought,*²²

A winged goddess is a patron and a symbol of victory. Here, she is bringing the victory, even though it was not easy to achieve. The British suffered a great deal in this battle, and even more throughout entire war. Wordsworth's disagreement with the conflict and violence connected to it can be seen in the following lines of the poem:

*'She vanished, leaving prospect blank and cold
Of wind-swept corn that wide around us rolled...
While glory seemed betrayed, while patriot zeal
Sank in our hearts, we felt as men should feel
With such vast hoards of hidden carnage near;
And horror breathing from the silent ground.'*²³

When one sets aside the glory of battle, he will find the sad truth, which is not colourful and glittering but 'blank and cold.' The author certainly presents some level of proudness, which it was his country which has won. On the other hand, he is disgusted with the 'carnage' and destruction around him.

1.5. Summary

The period of Napoleonic Wars was very productive for Wordsworth from the perspective of his writing. His career began with the outburst of the War in 1793, and he remained connected to it the whole time of its duration. Although today, his war-themed writings are not counted among his most brilliant works, they surely are a beneficial source of information about author's political views and orientation. This chapter analyses only a portion of the total amount of Wordsworth's poems dedicated to Napoleonic Wars but it serves as a cross-section of his works to point out the development of author's opinions. It is evident that at the beginning, Wordsworth was a sympathiser with the French revolution and a supporter of its ideas. His attitude was changed only with the arrival of Napoleon Bonaparte, who usurped the rule over France for himself. By that, Revolutionary France lost its purpose. It changed one tyrant for another. Wordsworth kept writing against war since, and the whole situation had only deepened his patriotism.

²² William Wordsworth, "After Visiting the Field of Waterloo" (The Book of the Sonnet. bartleby.com, 1867). <http://www.bartleby.com/341/95.html> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

²³ William Wordsworth, "After Visiting the Field of Waterloo" (The Book of the Sonnet. bartleby.com, 1867). <http://www.bartleby.com/341/95.html> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

2. Samuel Taylor Coleridge

2.1. Early years of the war and his revolutionary ideas

Samuel Taylor Coleridge is another member of the Lake District poets, born into the family of a vicar. He died while Coleridge was still a child, which led to a difficult life in the future. Even though he was sent on studies at Jesus College on Cambridge University but without father's financial support, lived on the brink of poverty. As a poor young man at University, he became vulnerable to the radical views. Ideas of liberty and equality combined with British political environment made Coleridge a social thinker and an advocate of humanitarian values. He was influenced by Thomas Paine during his stay at University, where he started to sympathise with reformists and revolutionaries.

In later years, Coleridge produced pamphlets and gave lectures about the reformist ideas. His sympathies for France can be seen in the poem *La Fayette*.

*'Thou, Fayette! who didst wake with startling voice
Life's better Sun from that long wintry night,
Thus in thy Country's triumphs shalt rejoice
And mock with raptures high the Dungeon's might:
For lo! the Morning struggles into Day,
And Slavery's spectres shriek and vanish from the ray!'*²⁴

Coleridge praises the French general, who was one of the important participants in the Revolution. At the time of writing this poem, La Fayette was imprisoned in Olomouc, and therefore he could not enjoy life back in the Republic. The author gives him hope, however, because as morning passes into day, his imprisonment is shorter and has to end one day. The general will then have the opportunity to appreciate what was achieved.

In opposition to the positive note of the previously mentioned poem, stands a poem dedicated to the British Prime Minister and named after him - *Pitt*.

*'Beseem thee, Mercy! Yon dark Scowler view,
Who with proud words of dear-lov'd Freedom came
More blasting than the mildew from the South!
And kiss'd his country with Iscariot mouth
Seize, Mercy! thou more terrible the brand,*

²⁴ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "La Fayette" (The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge Vol I and II. [gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). 2009). http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29090/29090-h/29090-h.htm#stcvol1_Page_82 (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

*And hurl her thunderbolts with fiercer hand!*²⁵

Coleridge compares Pitt to Judas, a traitor of the highest rank, who infects freedom and mercy like 'mildew' only by pronouncing them. The author is expressing strong negative feeling towards the Prime Minister, who is portrayed as a disgrace for the country. These Coleridge's feelings were based on the suppression of political opposition ordered by the Pitt's government. Pitt feared that the revolution would spread into Britain if the opposition would have absolute freedom in the manifestation of their policies.

Other countries in the coalition against France also became a target of Coleridge's criticism. He focused on the events in Poland after the year 1793, when Russia and Prussia attacked and divided the Polish lands among themselves. Coleridge points out that these are the countries standing against Revolutionary France, aggressors and oppressors of freedom standing in the way of liberty. France was not the only place from which the idea of freedom could spread. Polish reformers succeeded in the ratification of a written constitution as early as 1791, and therefore Coleridge and other supporters of the Revolution saw Poland, with its electoral monarchy, as one of the examples for ruling system. In his poem *Koskiusko*, the author refers to the Polish rebellion against the oppressors from the year 1794, led by General Koskiusko. Watson states that he became a hero, when he defeated the Russians, with 'peasants with scythes' in battle 'against a trained and experienced army.'²⁶The victory was followed by an uprising in Warsaw. Even though the entire rebellion was soon crushed but the Polish general made one last stand:

*'O what a loud and fearful shriek was there,
As though a thousand souls one death-groan pour'd!
Their Koskiusko fall! Through the swart air
(As pauses the tir'd Cossac's barbarous yell
Of Triumph)... The dirge of murder'd Hope! while Freedom pale
Bends in such anguish o'er her destin'd bier...'*²⁷

²⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Pitt" (The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge Vol I and II. [gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). 2009). http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29090/29090-h/29090-h.htm#stcvol1_Page_83 (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

²⁶ J. R. Watson, *Romanticism and War: A Study of British Romantic Period Writers and the Napoleonic Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 61.

²⁷ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Koskiusko" (The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge Vol I and II. [gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). 2009). http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29090/29090-h/29090-h.htm#stcvol1_Page_82 (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

Coleridge depicts the battle and the fall of the General. He compares his importance to a 'thousand souls.' The Cossacks represent the Russian army, which began celebrating victory after the fall of the Polish leader. The author points out, that with Kosciusko gone all the hope for freedom and liberty was also defeated. Russians were victorious, retaking the Polish lands and the Poles had to suffer again. For Coleridge, this was a model of what politics should not be like, strengthening his belief in the cause of the Revolution. The tyranny depends mainly on the decisions of a single person who is superior to others. In contrary, Revolution carries the idea of equal right both for the people and the countries. It is unlikely that two states with the same revolutionary ideas would wage war against each other. And Coleridge surely wanted a peaceful and equal society.

2.2. Increased radicalism and departure from revolutionary ideas

All the pamphlets, lectures and the poems mentioned before led to Coleridge being spied on by the government during the crisis of the French invasion to Britain in 1797. The invasion itself became a threat to Britain in late 1795 when several powers started to withdraw from the First Coalition against France. Peace with Prussia practically placed Netherlands in their hands, and Spain decided to turn sides completely by joining France against Britain. This created a threat unknown to Britain for centuries. The fleets of the Netherland, Spain and France combined could easily match the British one, what lead to a chance of invasion on the Isles. This tense situation continued for the following two years. The British public was terrified by the image of a French invasion. Catriona Kennedy describes the situation among British citizens in her *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic War*. She points out the Brits never experienced what it is like to fight for the own homeland. 'The war was brought home to Britons in other ways – by the militarization of everyday life; through the letters of friends and relatives fighting abroad; and in press reports, literature and drama – but the central activities of war tended to remain beyond their immediate experience.'²⁸ Coleridge also reminds us, that the British do not know, what real war is in his poem *Fears of Solitude*:

(Peace long preserved by fleets and perilous seas)
Secure from actual warfare, we have loved
To swell the war-whoop, passionate for war!
Alas! for ages ignorant of all

²⁸ Catriona Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Military and Civilian Experience in Britain and Ireland* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 160-161.

*Its ghastlier workings...
We, this whole people, have been clamorous...
Spectators and not combatants!*²⁹

Coleridge does not promote peace in this poem, neither he promotes the idea of Britain standing back. Despite his positive attitude towards the Revolution, the poem is rather nationalistic. The author is giving himself entirely to the cause of his homeland. He is rousing a unity, strength, and faithfulness for the country:

*'O dear Britain ! O my Mother Isle !
Needs must thou prove a name most dear and holy
To me, a son, a brother, and a friend...'*³⁰

The evils of a long lasting conflict are also notably presented in *Fire, Famine, And Slaughter : A War Eclogue - Poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge* written in 1798. The poem consists of a conversation between the 'spirits', Fire, Famine and Slaughter. It is located in Vendee, in western France, where most of the fighting of the French civil war took place.

*'...the men have bled,
Their wives and their children faint for bread.
I stood in a swampy field of battle;
With bones and skulls I made a rattle...
...Fam. A baby beat its dying mother;
I had starved the one and was starving the other!'*³¹

This poem was composed at a time of Coleridge's increasing disillusionment. The fighting in France stopped being about achieving freedom from monarchy, but it started to be a fight between different political groups, for who shall take the rule. The brutality and straightforwardness, with which the author is presenting the situation is breath-taking. The men have been dying in the battles. There was no one to provide food for the families, so they starved to death.

²⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Fears In Solitude" (poemhunter.com).
<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/fears-in-solitude/> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

³⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Fears In Solitude" (poemhunter.com).
<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/fears-in-solitude/> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

³¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Fire, Famine, And Slaughter : A War Eclogue" (poemhunter.com).
<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/fire-famine-and-slaughter-a-war-eclogue/> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

Similarly, like Wordsworth, Coleridge also reacts to the French invasion of Switzerland in his *France; an Ode*. He depicts there the development of his relationship with France. He admits that he supported its actions but now realises it was not acceptable and is ashamed of himself:

*'When France her front deep-scarr'd and gory
Concealed with clustering wreaths of glory;
When, insupportably advancing,
Her arm made mockery of the warrior's ramp;'*³²

Only the subjugation of Switzerland made him completely realise, that the French cause is not just. The Revolution had lost its purpose, and France is no longer a valid representative of freedom and equality, as it started to act the same way, the oppressors did during the years past. The author is feeling betrayed and is asking for forgiveness for his previous beliefs:

*'Forgive me, Freedom! O forgive those dreams!
I hear thy voice, I hear thy loud lament,
From bleak Helvetia's icy caverns sent—
I hear thy groans upon her blood-stained streams!'*³³

After his disillusionment, Coleridge abandoned the usage of the war themes in his poetry. Simon Bainbridge in his *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* states, that 'over the next two decades Coleridge would increasingly separate the imaginative form from the political texts'³⁴ and rather use the simple fitting language in prose texts, where he would present his criticism or advice.

2.3. Summary

Coleridge's poetic production during Napoleonic Wars was noticeably poorer than Wordsworth's regarding correspondence to the events in the world. His reactions to the events through poetry was limited to the first decade of the conflict. Shortly after the French Revolution, the author displayed his support for the ideas of freedom and liberty promised

³² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "France: An Ode" (poemhunter.com).
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/43985> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

³³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "France: An Ode" (poemhunter.com).
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/43985> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

³⁴ Simon Bainbridge, *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 78.

by the revolutionaries. He criticised the British government and its allies for fighting against true values labelling them as oppressors. The situation has changed over the following years. Coleridge's conviction to the real cause of France had decreased, and patriotism became prominent. After 1800, the medium for writing about the War remained pamphlets and prose contributions in periodicals, with these themes disappearing from poetic production.

3. William Blake

3.1. Blake's radicalism and the French Revolution

William Blake was the eldest of the Romantic poets. Although he was mostly known as a visual artist during his lifetime and his poetry was unnoticed, Blake is today considered as one of the most influential writers of Romanticism. He spent the majority of his life in London, where he also studied at a drawing school and later became an apprentice of an engraver. However, his passion from boyhood was writing and poetry. Combining his passion and skill in the visual art, Blake invented a new form of poem presentation, where the text is supplemented with a design. Even though, his first two works, *Poetical Sketches* and *The French Revolution*, had a classic, printed format. The second mentioned was printed by Joseph Johnson, a known radical who also published the works of Thomas Paine. Blake always shared Paine's views about the independence of USA, and they both agreed on the French situation as well. It was no problem for him to fit in among the radicals. Blake also showed some level of radicalism in the question of religion as he declined any religious doctrine. Morris Eaves in his *Cambridge Companion to William Blake* states, that 'established religion was anathema to Blake all his life long: "Priest and King" were for him twin symbols of tyranny.'³⁵ Blake prefers his religious exploration and cognition. Despite that, he did not share his anti-church view in any of his earlier works. On the other hand, anti-monarchical themes were quite common for him, and they were even built up by the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789. The author welcomes this event in the poem *The Voice of the Ancient Bard*.

*'Youth of delight, come hither,
And see the opening morn,
Image of truth new born.
Doubt is fled, and clouds of reason,
Dark disputes and artful teasing.
They stumble all night over bones of the dead,
And feel they know not what but care—
And wish to lead others when they should be led.'*³⁶

³⁵ Morris Eaves, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 24.

³⁶ William Blake, *The Complete Poems*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (New York: Routledge, 2014), 79.

Blake praises the revolutionaries for bringing an 'image of truth' and repelling 'clouds of reason.' These represent the old ruling system and the age of classicism, against which authors of Romanticism fight as well. The own experience, emotion and imagination need to become dominant. Blake also points out the bloodshed connected to the Revolution but wishes that also others, people or nations, will follow the example.

The author continues on a similar note in the poem *A Song of Liberty* included in the book *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, which was composed in time between the start of Revolution and the beginning of the War. The poem itself was a reaction to the fall of the French monarchy in June 1792.

*'Albion's coast is sick, silent;
France, rend down thy dungeon!
Look up, look up! O citizen of London, enlarge thy
countenance;'*³⁷

Blake mocks Britain for its idleness. There is a revolution in France and people fight for their freedom while in Britain, they do nothing. The author is indicating, that British citizens should take an example from their southern neighbour and act.

*'Down rushed, beating his wings in vain, the jealous king;
Falling, rushing, ruining! Buried in the ruins, on
Urthona's dens.
Empire is no more! And now the lion & wolf shall cease.'*³⁸

Jealous king represents King Louis XVI. of France and Blake most likely points out his final efforts to stop the revolution and save his life. To do so, he and his family tried to escape France in 1791. The King hoped for help from foreign powers and anti-revolutionaries, but he miscalculated. Failed escape had far-reaching consequences. Kings popularity was lower than ever before, and ranks of Republican radicals expanded. Louis, under pressure from all political parties, was then forced by National Assembly to set some course for the country and by that show his support to one of the groups. National Assembly and the king came to an agreement in April 1792 and decided to declare war on Austria. The decision was made partly to satisfy masses with the war against hated rival. But from the king's perspective, as Mike Rapport points out in his *Napoleonic Wars: A Short*

³⁷ William Blake, *The Complete Poems*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (New York: Routledge, 2014), 127-128.

³⁸ William Blake, *The Complete Poems*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (New York: Routledge, 2014), 128-129.

Introduction, mainly because he believed that the French would be easily defeated and Austrians would restore his power.³⁹ However, the situation has evolved differently for him. In June, he was imprisoned, and France was declared a republic. Empire ceased to exist, what corresponds to the words of the last line of the poem. ‘Empire is no more.’

3.2. Criticism of Britain and question of religion

After the execution of the French king, Britain needed to decide whether it would join the coalition against France or if it should hold back. British society became also divided between those who wanted to preserve peace and those who wanted to protect the old system by war with France. The majority of the opposition to the war was formed by the supporters of the Revolution but also other groups like industrialists and merchants, whose primary motivation was to secure trade were against any conflict. The group of radicals and sympathisers with the ideals of the French Revolution around Blake was no different. For Blake, Revolution brings advancement and open-mindedness, something, that in Britain is missed as it can be seen in *Europe: A Prophecy*:

*‘Round Albion’s cliffs and London’s walls: still Enitharmon slept.
Rolling volumes of grey mist involve Churches, Palaces, Towers;’⁴⁰*

Enitharmon in Blake’s mythology is a symbolic character for inspiration and beauty, and as he writes, it ‘still slept’ in Britain, pointing out the British conservativeness, which shall lead to its fall. This conservativeness is inseparably connected to the Anglican and Protestant church of Britain. The Catholics were oppressed and did not have the same rights. Moreover, the author points out the ‘Palaces’ and ‘Towers’, which are representing the royalty, which is still tolerated. Further, in the poem, the author also predicts the impact of the war in Europe, which will bring only suffering and blood:

*‘And in the vineyard of red France appear’d the light of his fury,
The Sun glow’d fiery red!
The furious Terrors flew around
On golden chariots, raging with red wheels, dropping with blood!’⁴¹*

³⁹ Mike Rapport, *The Napoleonic Wars: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 27.

⁴⁰ William Blake, “Europe: A Prophecy” (*Poetical Works. bartleby.com*. 1908). <http://www.bartleby.com/235/258.html> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

⁴¹ William Blake, “Europe: A Prophecy” (*Poetical Works. bartleby.com*. 1908). <http://www.bartleby.com/235/258.html> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

Blake continues to criticise Britain and its political system in his poem, *London*, published in collection *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. He depicts London as a modern city, which is inseparably connected with filth, dissatisfaction and suffering:

*'I wander through each dirty street
Near where the dirty Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.'*⁴²

Blake puts himself into a role of observer, who walks in the streets among the impoverished citizens. He sees weakness in them, as they are not able to stand against the oppression, which caused their suffering.

*'How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackening church appals,
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls;'*⁴³

The author further points out the problems of British society. Chimney-sweeper is a symbol of hard child-labour, which was dangerous for their health and miserably paid. Children often had to provide some income for their families, because the fathers went to war, where they often died. All of this, according to Blake, was the fault of the government and the system. Last two mentioned lines of the poem probably refer to the unsuccessful campaign to the Lowlands, where many British soldiers died because of the utter incompetence of their superiors.

During years after 1800, when authors like Wordsworth and Coleridge became disillusioned, Blake came through, as Eaves put it, an 'estrangement.'⁴⁴ He did not become disillusioned himself, and he did not become patriotic either. Blake began to be more religious. His works often led up to hopeful judgement day, rather than destructive apocalypse like before. In his *Auguries of Innocence* from the year around 1803,⁴⁵ This religiousness is quite noticeable:

'Kill not the moth nor butterfly,

⁴² William Blake, *The Complete Poems*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (New York: Routledge, 2014), 161.

⁴³ William Blake, *The Complete Poems*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (New York: Routledge, 2014), 161.

⁴⁴ Morris Eaves, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 31-32.

⁴⁵ The precise year of the composition is not known. It was published after his death for the first time.

*For the Last Judgement draweth nigh.
He who shall train the horse to war
Shall never pass the polar bar.*⁴⁶

It can, of course, be taken as an anti-war urging but it carries much more of the religious context. One should not kill even a moth, as one should have clear consciousness because the Judgement Day is near. And he should not prepare for war as well because that would mean not passing 'the polar bar', what most likely represents heaven or purgatory.

*'The harlot's cry from street to street
Shall weave old England's winding sheet;
The winner's shout, the loser's curse
Dance before dead England's hearse.'*⁴⁷

Blake again criticises the life in Britain. Its 'unclean' and 'ungodly' ways will bring it its doom. Men fight for a prostitute, which is seducing them but with their pleasures, they are reproofing the whole country in the eyes of God. What is different in this poem, is that the common man is spoiling the image of his nation, not the nobility, royalty or government.

3.3. Summary

William Blake, as the eldest romantic poet started his literary production much sooner than the Napoleonic Wars began. Even though he was a radical supporter of the French Revolution, he deals with the issues of the conflict, which commenced as a result, only marginally. Blake's brilliance can be seen in his imaginative power and presenting spirituality rather than political circumstances. The depiction of his radical views can be found in his earlier poems which were mainly produced before the war. During the Napoleonic Wars and especially after 1800, Blake's intense radicalism disappears. He remains critical to some issues within Britain but does not deal with the global affairs. A possible explanation for that is that radicals around Blake did not have any understanding of his religious ideas. That may be why he became even more focused on those. Nevertheless, from the little what could be taken from his poems, it is very probable, that events of the Napoleonic Wars did not influence Blake's poetical production.

⁴⁶ Morris Eaves, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 613.

⁴⁷ Morris Eaves, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 613.

4. Percy Bysshe Shelley

4.1. Portraying the war

P. B. Shelley is one of the major romantic poets of the younger generation. In the time of the fall of the Bastille, he was even not yet born. He nevertheless quickly found his place on the literary scene after the publication of his first major poetical work, *Queen Mab*, in 1813. In contrast to the previously mentioned authors, Shelley came from the prominent family of a member of the parliament. Thanks to his father, he was able to receive a prestigious education. He attended Eton College after which he began his studies at Oxford University. However, he was expelled after only one year, in 1811, for producing a pamphlet, in which he argued against the existence of God. Not even the effort and influence of his father could change something because Shelley had no interest in studies himself. He chose to live as a writer and presenter of new ideas. This was also the period when he produced his first poetic writing, called *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things*. Martin Garrett in his *Palgrave Literary Dictionary of Shelley* connects this writing with the name of Peter Finnerty, who was a radical journalist from Ireland. According to Garrett, Shelley published his work to raise money for Finnerty, after he was imprisoned for libel.⁴⁸ Despite that, the *Poetical Essay* was a critical poem, pointing out the horrors of the war and the suffering it brings to all.

*'Destruction marks thee! o'er the blood-stain'd health
Is faintly borne the stifled wail of death;
Millions to fight compell'd, to fight or die
In mangled heaps on War's red altar lie.'*⁴⁹

Every country and every person are already 'marked' by the war after all those years of fighting. The war went on already for eighteen years, in the time of the publishing, only with the temporary peace of Amiens between years 1802-1803. The death was all around, and the author sees no end to it.

*'Fell Despotism sits by the red glare
Of Discord's torch, kindling the flames of war.
...Ye cold advisers of yet colder kings,*

⁴⁸ Martin Garrett, *The Palgrave Literary Dictionary of Shelley*, eds. Briand G. Caraher and Estelle Sheehan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 68.

⁴⁹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things* (Oxford: Munday and Slatter, 1811), 9.

*To whose fell breast no passion virtue brings...
...Your's is the power to breathe
O'er all the world the infectious blast of death...'⁵⁰*

Shelley explicitly accuses the rulers and the ruling class of bringing the war upon common people. The despotism itself incites the conflicts, then spreads them to the world. Only the rulers have the power to stop the bloodshed, but they decide not to, bringing only suffering and death. The poem continues on the similar note through all of its length. The criticism is 'paused' only when the author wants to present, what he believes in:

*'Yet let me pause, yet turn aside to weep
Where virtue, genius, wit, with Franklin sleep;
Still let us hope in Heaven (for Heaven there is)
...Which endless goodness to its votary gives.'⁵¹*

Shelley presents his loyalty to ideas of United States of America and their government. Franklin, as one of the founding fathers, is a symbol for positive features, needed by every leader. Shelley also states, that he believes in Heaven and Saint spirits, even though he was expelled from University for writing a pamphlet against the existence of God. He prays to them for bringing a long and fruitful future for the United States. The poem then continues in author's criticism again, sharing his reformist and radical views. However, he does not side with France. France is also an oppressor, which acts as a superior to its colonies. Shelley mentions India, which he rouses against its oppression. The author curses Napoleon in the poem because he is the one, able to stop the war, but he does not. The poem ends positively. Shelley believes that the suffering has to end one day. In his vision, the countries and the people will be equal, and they will learn from their previous mistakes:

*'Oppressive law no more shall power retain,
Peace, love, and concord, once shall rule again...
...and error's night be turned to virtue's day.'⁵²*

⁵⁰ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things* (Oxford: Munday and Slatter, 1811), 10.

⁵¹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things* (Oxford: Munday and Slatter, 1811), 14.

⁵² Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things* (Oxford: Munday and Slatter, 1811), 18.

Another Shelley's critical, politically concerned poem is *A Tale Of Society As It Is: From Facts, 1811*. Watson points out that Shelley adds to the authenticity of the poem by the selection of its title, naming it 'A Tale... As it Is: From Facts.'⁵³ The poem presents a story of an old, disabled lady, who had only one son, which was forced to go to war:

*'She was an aged woman; and the years
Which she had numbered on her toilsome way
Had bowed her natural powers to decay.
One only son's love had supported her.
But, when the tyrant's bloodhounds forced the child
For his cursed power unhallowed arms to wield--
Bend to another's will--become a thing...'*⁵⁴

The son was forced to fight for a tyrant and the tyrant's cause. He was turned into 'a thing', a soldier without emotions and an own will. Shelley does not mention which tyrant he has in mind. It is possible that he means a specific monarch or monarchies with their rulers in general. On the other hand, it is more than likely, that the tyrant described in the poem is Napoleon. The old lady's son was taken and forced to fight by 'tyrant's bloodhounds', and it was the French, who used the forced mobilisation to replenish their armies during Napoleonic Wars. In contrary, in Britain the participation in the military was voluntary. Even the prisoners had a choice whether they want to serve their time in the army or spend it in prison. Therefore, it is more likely the poem acts as a criticism of France rather than British system. Despite that, there is no doubt, which the poem is a criticism of the war.

*'Her son, compelled, the country's foes had fought,
Had bled in battle; and the stern control
Which ruled his sinews and coerced his soul
Utterly poisoned life's unmingled bowl...'*⁵⁵

The son suffered enormously during the war and the battles. His soul is shattered, and it is hard for him to come back to normal life. He is to be marked forever. Shelley presents brutality of the war and its destructive power not on nations and political systems

⁵³ J. R. Watson, *Romanticism and War: A Study of British Romantic Period Writers and the Napoleonic Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 35.

⁵⁴ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Tale Of Society As It Is: From Facts, 1811" (poemhunter.com). <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-tale-of-society-as-it-is-from-facts-1811/> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

⁵⁵ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Tale Of Society As It Is: From Facts, 1811" (poemhunter.com). <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-tale-of-society-as-it-is-from-facts-1811/> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

but on common men. The entire family is forced to suffer when one goes to war. The son in the poem had only his mother, but the author also portrays her mental suffering and fear for the beloved one.

4.2. Political criticism

The year 1812 is seen as a year of breakthrough in Napoleonic Wars, t. The British led their successful campaign across Spain under the command of Duke of Wellington and Napoleon was finally defeated in Russia. Although for Britain alone, the situation was not that positive. Not only the state of the treasury was worrying, but the USA declared war on Britain as well. And that meant even more expenses. What is more, the main reason for the declaration of war were the trade disputes between the two countries. The British government, therefore, had to introduce certain economic reforms. As a reaction to these reforms and other forms of oppression, Shelley had written *The Devil's Walk: a Ballad*. It is a satirical poem, where in opposition stands the Devil and Reason.

*'He sate him (Devil) down, in London town,
Before earth's morning ray;
With a favourite imp he began to chat,
On religion, and scandal, this and that...'⁵⁶*

The Devil can walk freely through the streets of London and among its people, he speaks to them accompanies them and by that, he is acquiring new followers.

*'A Priest, at whose elbow the Devil during prayer
Sate familiarly, side by side...
Satan next saw a brainless King,
Whose house was as hot as his own;'⁵⁷*

The Devil visits a church during the prayer and later also the residence of the royal family. Shelley points out that the priest and the king, or in the year 1812 rather the Prince Regent, are both followers of the Devil. The author indicates that this fellowship continues for a longer time, by they 'sate familiarly' next to each other.

⁵⁶ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "The Devil's Walk" (poemhunter.com). <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-devil-s-walk-a-ballad/> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

⁵⁷ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "The Devil's Walk" (poemhunter.com). <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-devil-s-walk-a-ballad/> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

*'Fat as the Fiends that feed on blood,
Fresh and warm from the fields of Spain,
Where Ruin ploughs her gory way,
Where Hell is the Victor's prey,
Its glory the meed of the slain.'*⁵⁸

The Devil is also inseparably connected to the war. Shelley brings up the Peninsular War, where the British soldiers have been already dying for several years. The author points out that the war is led only for the good of the Devil and only he is profiting from it, 'feeding on blood.' The poem ends by the prophecy, which only the Reason sees, that the tyranny will end one day.

Shelley brings the view of the absolute corruption in Britain, which is profitable only for some and brings suffering to the others. Once again, the author speaks openly against monarchy and its institutions, and he criticises the functioning of the state.

Three years after the end of Napoleonic wars, Shelley publishes a poem called *Ozymandias*. The poem bears a name of an Egyptian pharaoh, whose old majesty was forgotten and buried under the sand. By this, Shelley again reminds the finality of monarchs:

*'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.'*⁵⁹

It is quite possible that Shelley depicts the story of Napoleon through the *Ozymandias*. *Ozymandias* was a Pharaoh, a king of kings. The same as the emperor, who is also known as the king of kings. And Napoleon was crowned an emperor in the year 1804. What is more, Napoleon also led a campaign in Egypt in 1798. Once a great leader feared all around Europe, was defeated his memory begins to fade away. Either way, Shelley most certainly repeats his most frequent theme, and that is the necessity of the fall of the tyranny.

⁵⁸ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "The Devil's Walk" (poemhunter.com). <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-devil-s-walk-a-ballad/> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

⁵⁹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias" (poetryfoundation.org). <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/resources/learning/core-poems/detail/46565> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

4.3. Summary

As a young poet, Shelley lived almost his entire life during the Napoleonic Wars. From the beginning of his writing career, he was strongly critical towards the idea of monarchy and tyranny. He had no chance to support the French Republic, as it collapsed before Shelley could reach maturity but his affection to similar ideas can be seen on his admiration for the United States and their system. The author almost constantly criticised the ruling system in Europe and did not care whether its Britain, France or Russia. He points out the corruption of such government. The difference Napoleonic Wars brought into Shelley's poetical production is the criticism of war and depiction of its brutality. As Watson points out, that 'All Shelley's poems of this period when they mention the war, recoil in horror from the suffering which it engenders, and the inhumanity which it produces.'⁶⁰

⁶⁰ J. R. Watson, *Romanticism and War: A Study of British Romantic Period Writers and the Napoleonic Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 154.

5. George Gordon Byron

5.1. Early life and writing

G. G. Byron is considered one of the major writers of the younger generation of British romantic poetry. He was born in the year 1788 to a family of a nobleman and was raised by his mentally unstable mother in Scotland. Byron's father lived in debt most of his life and was forced to go into exile, where he died soon after his son was born. When Byron was ten years old, his uncle died, and he inherited the title of Baron Byron of Rochdale. Young Baron was educated at Aberdeen Grammar school and later started attending Harrow. Harold Bloom in his study of critical views focused on Byron, called *George Gordon, Lord Byron* states, that the young nobleman 'formed his first passionate attachments to other boys'⁶¹ At the time of his studies at Harrow. At the time, he also started writing, mostly passionate poems about love. Byron became a student at Trinity College at Cambridge University in 1805, where he met John Cam Hobhouse. They became friends for life. Byron began to be interested in politics as well and later joined the liberal Whig party. In the following year, he was publishing his first collection of poems, *Fugitive Pieces*. This was later revised, edited and in 1807 published as *Hours of Idleness*. Most of the poems were the same, although the passionate, sexual ones were skipped. Even though, this collection contains a poem *On the Death of Mr. Fox*, in which Byron commemorates Charles James Fox:

*'What though our "nation's foes" lament the fate,
With generous feeling, of the good and great;
Shall dastard tongues essay to blast the name
Of him, whose virtues claim eternal fame?
FOX shall in Britain's future annals shine...'*⁶²

Fox was a Whig party member who was fighting against war with France. Watson points out that he had full support of the major romantic authors, who all opposed the war as well⁶³ but in parliament, the politician did not have the full support of his party. Despite that, Fox openly sympathised with the French Revolution, and after unsuccessful attempts to cease the war against France, he withdrew from the politics. Byron presents Fox in the

⁶¹ Harold Bloom, *George Gordon, Lord Byron* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 1.

⁶² George Gorgon Byron, *Hours of Idleness*, ed. Peter Cochran (London: Wordpress, 2009), 13.

⁶³ J. R. Watson, *Romanticism and War: A Study of British Romantic Period Writers and the Napoleonic Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 68.

poem as an inspiration for the nation, who will always be remembered. The first line of the stanza reminds that Fox was also known and respected in other countries.

Byron began to attend Parliamentary assemblies in the House of Lords in 1809, although he did not last very long because he wanted to travel. Despite his debts, caused by extravagant way of life, he decided to follow his dreams. His first journey was supposed to be to visit Balkan peninsula. The journey is depicted in the first two Cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Byron saw many places marked by the Napoleonic Wars during his travels, and he depicts them in the *Pilgrimage*.

5.2. Childe Harold's Pilgrimage

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage is an epic poem divided into four Cantos. The First Canto of this epic poem describes Harold's travelling from Britain to Lisbon and then through Spain. It ends with his arrival in Greece. The part of crossing the Iberian Peninsula is most important from the perspective of Napoleonic Wars. Harold witnesses battles, death, bloodshed and cities full of soldiers.

*'What beauties doth Lisboa first unfold!,
But now whereon a thousand keels did ride
Of mighty strength, since Albion was allied,
And to the Lusians did her aid afford
...Who lick, yet loathe, the hand that waves the sword.
To save them from the wrath of Gaul's unsparing lord.'*⁶⁴

Byron, after the arrival to Portugal, realises how much had the British done for their allies. Not only they helped to preserve the capital in its former glory, but they also, at the time of Byron's visit, kept a considerable force present in Lisbon as a protection. This was all a part of Wellington's defensive tactics. Rather than pushing into Spain and getting surrounded, he chose to hold Lisbon, secure it and its supply routes, and only after that, attack. Even though the Brits were helping to save Portuguese homeland, they were not liked in the Portugal. For both countries, preserving trade and alliance was essential to overcome the French conquerors.

*'...Policy regained what Arms had lost:
Woe to the conquering, not the conquered host,*

⁶⁴ George Gordon Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (The Project Gutenberg EBook. [gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). 2004), 1: XVI. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5131/5131-h/5131-h.htm> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

*Since baffled Triumph droops on Lusitania's coast,
And ever since that martial synod met,
Britannia sickens, Cintra, at thy name;*⁶⁵

This stanza is Byron's reaction to the Convention of Cintra and the previous battle. The convention was a controversial agreement from a year earlier. Britain finally brought their troops on the land in Portugal under the command of Sir Arthur Wellesley, future Duke of Wellington, who led the Brits to a decisive victory in the Battle of Vimeiro in August 1808. The victory was significant, because it covered a disembarking of more British troops, under the command of Sir Harry Burrard and Sir Hew Dalrymple. Both older than Wellesley, they took the initiative in negotiating the terms of capitulation of the French army, which led to the Convention of Cintra. This guaranteed a safe transport of all the French troops with their baggage back to their homeland. Thanks to this, the entire enemy army was allowed to fight another day.

Even though the Convention was foolish from the wider perspective, it allowed the British forces to enter Spain.

*'Awake, ye sons of Spain! awake! advance
Lo! Chivalry, your ancient goddess, cries,
In every peal she calls—'Awake! arise!'*⁶⁶

The author is urging the Spanish nation into rebellion against their French oppressors. Even though in 1809, when Byron, or Harold, was travelling through Spain, there already was a strong existing resistance but the French still controlled the majority of Spanish the territory. What is more, Napoleon put his brother on the Spanish throne.

*'Such be the sons of Spain, and strange her fate!
They fight for freedom, who were never free;*⁶⁷

Byron points out the strange situation for the Spaniards. They are fighting and dying to regain their freedom but do not realise, that before, they were oppressed as well. The only

⁶⁵ George Gordon Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (The Project Gutenberg EBook. [gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). 2004), 1: XXV-XXVI. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5131/5131-h/5131-h.htm> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

⁶⁶ George Gordon Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (The Project Gutenberg EBook. [gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). 2004), 1: XXXVII. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5131/5131-h/5131-h.htm> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

⁶⁷ George Gordon Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (The Project Gutenberg EBook. [gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). 2004), 1: LXXXVI. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5131/5131-h/5131-h.htm> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

difference was, that before the oppressor was Spanish, at least partly, as he was a member of Bourbon dynasty.

*Three hosts combine to offer sacrifice;
To feed the crow on Talavera's plain...
O Albuera, glorious field of grief!
A scene where mingling foes should boast and bleed.*⁶⁸

Byron is also putting into attention the two famous battles of the Peninsular War. Both Talavera and Albuera were extremely bloody. They were fought on the Spanish soil and in both of them, the main participants were the British against the French. For Byron as an opponent of the war, such wasting of human lives was incomprehensible.

The Second Canto takes its place in Greece. Therefore it is not that important for this thesis. Although the Third Canto partly covers a subject connected the Napoleonic wars. It depicts Byron's later journeys. The author speaks about his travels from Dover through the field of Waterloo into Switzerland. The time spent in the field of the last battle of Napoleonic wars is more important for this thesis.

*'...is this all the world has gained by thee,
Thou first and last of fields! king-making Victory?'*⁶⁹

Harold arrives at the field of the battle and thinks what has the event, which took place on it brought. It is the first, and the last time something happened there, but the world has changed because of it. The field had seen the pain of many and bloodshed as never before. But what else did it bring? The author is asking, whether it will be only a new king, that changes.

*'There have been tears and breaking hearts for thee,
And mine were nothing, had I such to give;'*⁷⁰

As next, Byron speaks through Harold to Napoleon, even though he is not present. Byron tells him about the suffering which he caused to those who fought against him and

⁶⁸ George Gordon Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (The Project Gutenberg EBook. [gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). 2004), 1: XLI, XLIII. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5131/5131-h/5131-h.htm> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

⁶⁹ George Gordon Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (The Project Gutenberg EBook. [gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). 2004), 3: XVII. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5131/5131-h/5131-h.htm> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

⁷⁰ George Gordon Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (The Project Gutenberg EBook. [gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). 2004), 3: XXX. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5131/5131-h/5131-h.htm> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

now, by his defeat, to those who loved him. Napoleon was a symbol for many. He offered glory and greatness for those who seek it. Byron states that he was neither of those.

*'There sunk the greatest, nor the worst of men,
Thy throne had still been thine, or never been;
For daring made thy rise as fall: thou seek'st
Even now to reassume the imperial mien,'⁷¹*

Byron continues in his speech to Napoleon by highlighting his unyielding impotency. He had risen only to fall again, fighting for a throne, which was not even his. By this, Byron declares Napoleon, a usurper. It can also be viewed as a reprehension because Napoleon did not care about others. He had his ambition and wanted it to be fulfilled. No matter the consequences. By such recklessness, he brought suffering on others. The third Canto is much more philosophical than the first one. The mood is also darker. Byron opens the question of the future, which he finds uncertain.

5.3. Summary

G. G. Byron was surely an essential writer of romantic poetry who matured in the turbulent times of Napoleonic wars. Despite that, there is not much in his poetic works that would indicate any interest about the situation. Apart from the two Cantos of the *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, there is nothing that would discuss the conflict. He does not even share his political beliefs in the poems. The only found poem dealing with a political theme was *On the Death of Mr. Fox*. and even there, Byron does not clearly point out his political ideas. It is known only from his biography, that he showed some interest in liberal politics but it was still in his school years. It is very likely that Byron did not want to spend his time on solving political problems and he would rather use the time for his passions. It can also be seen in his attempt to become a valid member of House of Lords. Byron withstood only about three months after which he went away on a trip around Europe.

⁷¹ George Gordon Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (The Project Gutenberg EBook. [gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). 2004), 3: XXXVI. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5131/5131-h/5131-h.htm> (Accessed 24. 4. 2017).

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to find any traces of the influence of Napoleonic wars on the poetical production of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, Shelley and Byron through the analyses of their selected poems.

William Wordsworth was at the beginning of his career a Revolutionary enthusiast. He depicts happiness, which he felt when he had the opportunity to visit monuments connected to the Revolution. In his early works he praises the ideas of the French radicals and to show them support, he writes against war with France. The war themes are very common in Wordsworth's works. He depicts the suffering which is brought by the war, and he points out all the horrors of suffering like agony, hunger and destruction. Although, Wordsworth's radical enthusiasm was not long-lasting. After the Revolution, France became the aggressor even though it was viewed as the bringer of liberty at first. After violating the independence of Switzerland, Wordsworth realised the truth and became disillusioned. Even though, he continued to write against war but no longer to protect France. He thought, that the suffering was all around and people needed to be notified. The death of children and young ones while the elders survive, even if mentally broken, became the much-used theme for Wordsworth. Therefore, when the peace came in 1802, he celebrated it. For a certain amount of time, Napoleon became his new target of criticism. When the war started again, the author became more patriotic. Especially when the British army was able to achieve some goal, like at Trafalgar or Waterloo. From the amount of writing by which he reacted to the events of Napoleonic wars, it can be said that Wordsworth's poetical production was strongly influenced by the conflict.

Coleridge's attitude was very similar to Wordsworth's. At the beginning of the Wars, he supported the Revolution as well. The poems connected to it were full of hope and positive. On the other hand, domestic themes were much more critical, especially those about British government. Coleridge also criticised the old regimes in general and did not agree with the governments and nations at war. Even though, when France started to be a threat, he became disillusioned and patriotic. His poems about Britain became more cheering, positive and rousing. Nevertheless, themes against war remained. He used the picture of dying youth as well as Wordsworth. Coleridge was also quite active during the Napoleonic wars and used the events as themes to depict reality as he viewed it. Therefore, it can be said, that Coleridge and his poetical production was strongly influenced as well.

William Blake was again the supporter of revolution at the beginning of the Wars. What is more, he took his support even further by becoming a member of radical movement

in London. He strongly criticised the British government for its corruption, and British public for its inactivity against the government. Blake also writes against the war but much less than Wordsworth or Coleridge. He remains to be a critic of the system. The most frequent theme in Blake's works is religion. It is hard to say if the war helped him realise his faith or not but in the time, when Wordsworth and Coleridge became disillusioned, Blake became more religious. He always played with imagination as well. The imaginative themes became dominant in his later poems. It is hard to say how much Blake was influenced by the Napoleonic Wars but it is quite possible that to a certain degree, yes. The themes of war and suffering caused directly by it had only minor role. Shelley as the poet of the younger generation was in a slightly different situation. He never saw France as a positive power. In the time of Republic, he was still a child. Napoleonic wars and the suffering connected to them play an important role in Shelley's poems. Maybe the themes brought by the Wars were not used as often as in the case of his colleagues, but when they were used, the author depicts a lot of negativity, anger and suffering. Shelley criticises British government, as well as he criticises the ruling class in general. Tyranny for him is the evil and it doesn't matter in what country does it root. There is no doubt Shelley was influenced by the life during Napoleonic wars, as he got to know peace only when he was an adult. Even though he did not react to the exact events of the Wars, Shelley clearly knew, how to portray suffering and pain.

G. G. Byron is another member of the younger generation of the poets and the same as Shelley, he saw peace for the first time when he was already an adult. Even though they were both from the upper-class families, Byron reacted on Napoleonic Wars much differently than Shelley. He could not see an example in France as well, but his poetic production seems to be completely distant from the events in Europe, which were connected to the Wars. His writing creates an impression that he does not care much about what happens around him. The themes of the Napoleonic Wars are almost unused. Therefore, it is very likely, that if he did not visit Spain during the war, Byron would not write about it at all.

In general, it can be stated that the Napoleonic wars did influence British literature through the contribution of a variety of themes. Furthermore, Romantic literature began to form with the French Revolution and later with the culminating Napoleonic Wars. Therefore, the Romantic movement is closely related to the events of the conflict. It is more than possible that Romanticism, as it is known today, received its values due to the Wars. It would have evolved quite differently during the peacetime.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá analýzou vybraných básní pětice předních autorů britského romantismu, kteří se věnují tématu napoleonských válek. Autoři, jejichž poetická díla budou rozebírána, jsou William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake, Percy Bysshe Shelley a George Gordon Byron. Účelem zmiňované analýzy je tedy zjistit vliv napoleonských válek na tvorbu básníků a tím i na britskou literaturu.

První část práce pojednává o vývoji tvorby Williama Wordswortha. Autor byl v popisovaném období na vrcholu své slávy, a právě z tohoto důvodu dokázal vyprodukovat značné množství básní, které vypovídají o událostech napoleonských válek. Jeho počáteční poezie poukazuje na sympatie, jež choval k idejím francouzské revoluce. Důkazem jsou výňatky z *Deváté*, *Desáté* a *Jedenácté knihy* z jeho životopisného *Prelude*. Po vypuknutí války mezi Velkou Británií a Francií se autor věnuje převážně protiválečné tematice. Poukazuje na hrůzy způsobené tímto konfliktem, například v díle *Salisbury Plain*, a rovněž nesouhlasí s válkou, která by mohla zničit odkaz revolucionářů zastupovaných Francouzskou republikou. Autor je však nuce svůj názor zanedlouho přehodnotit, jelikož se Francie začíná chovat jako agresor. Na tuto změnu Wordsworth reaguje i ve svých *Thought Of A Briton On The Subjugation Of Switzerland*. I nadále však kritizuje válku, i když už s podtónem patriotismu. Ten se projevuje v oslavných básních, které souvisejí s významnými úspěchy Britů jako například *Character of the Happy Warrior*, kde dává za příklad vojáka a vůdce admirála Nelsona.

Druhá část práce je věnovaná S. T. Coleridgeovi a jeho dílům. Autor na počátku napoleonských válek rovněž podporoval myšlenku revoluce. Svoji loajalitu k francouzským idejím projevil oslavnou básní *La Fayette*, jež věnoval francouzskému generálovi. Naopak svůj odpor k britské vládě zaznamenal v ostré kritice premiéra v básni *Pitt*. Coleridge se ve svých dílech často negativně vyjadřuje o monarchistickém systému ve světě, například v básni *Koskiusko*. Avšak stejně jako Wordsworth, i Coleridge si později uvědomuje nebezpečí, které představuje Francie, a proto se v jeho tvorbě začíná objevovat myšlenka patriotismu. Na ní je poukázáno v dílech *Fears of Solitude* a *France; an Ode*. Nejednou reaguje na hrůzy spojené s válkami a tím zastává protiválečnou rétoriku. Jako příklad je možné uvést *Fire, Famine, And Slaughter: A War Eclogue - Poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge*.

Třetí část je zaměřena na tvorbu Williama Blakea, který se jeví jako přední zastánce revolucionářských myšlenek, jelikož sám působil v radikálních kruzích v Londýně. Hlavním tématem jeho tvorby jsou náboženství a kritika tyranie. Samotnou válkou se však příliš

nezabývá, toto téma je v jeho tvorbě zmiňované pouze okrajově. Autorova náklonnost k Francii je podložena básněmi *The Voice of the Ancient Bard*, kde oslavuje revoluci a *A Song of Liberty*, ve které kritizuje britskou vládu. Tyto náměty se u Blakea opakují nejčastěji. Změna nastává v období, kdy u Coleridge a Wordswortha nastává obrat k patriotismu. U Blakea je však rozdíl v tom, že místo náklonnosti k Británii, se přiklání k tématice náboženství.

Čtvrtá část práce analyzuje tvorbu P. B. Shelleyho. Ten na rozdíl od předchozích autorů nikdy nepodporoval Francii, jelikož se narodil až po revoluci, tudíž období republiky zažil pouze jako dítě. Převážnou část svého života prožil v období napoleonských válek, což se odzrcadlilo i v jeho tvorbě. Od počátku byl nesmírně kritický k válce, častým tématem je poukazování na hrůzy, které válečný spor přináší. To dokazuje i jeho prvotina *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things*. Dané téma rozvíjí i popisováním psychických následků vojáků a dopadem na jejich rodiny, například v díle *Tale Of Society As It Is: From Facts, 1811*. Autor je kritický také k monarchistickému politickému systému. Vidí jej jako zkorumpovaný a nefunkční. Negativně se staví převážně k tyranii a boji o moc. Ten mu přijde zbytečný, jelikož moc je pomíjivá, což naznačuje v básni *Ozymandias*.

Pátá a poslední část je věnovaná tvorbě G. G. Byrona. Ten se však tématem napoleonských válek téměř nezabývá. Některé události související s tímto konfliktem popisuje v *Prvním a Druhém Cantonu* epické básně *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Zde však schází emoční projev, který by naznačil autorův postoj. Jediným náznakem Byronovi politické orientace je možné nalézt v básni *On the Death of Mr. Fox*, jež oslavuje Foxe, který byl protiválečný politik.

Z analýz zmíněných básní je zřejmé, že napoleonské války měly značný vliv na tvorbu britských romantických autorů. Kromě samotného tématu války, se do popředí dostávají i náměty přibližující tehdejší společnost, jednotlivce a jeho schopnost vypořádat se s těžkým životem. Důležitá jsou i témata patriotismu, politického systému či svobody. To jsou rovněž základní myšlenky romantismu. Proto je velice pravděpodobné, že napoleonské války dopomohly k vytvoření romantismu v podobě, jakou známe v současnosti.

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Práce se zaměřuje na analýzu vybraných básní pětice významných autorů britského romantické s cílem zjistit, jakým způsobem a do jaké míry byla britská literatura ovlivněna napoleonskými válkami. Práce rovněž přibližuje samotné autory a historické události, které jsou úzce spjaty s danými básněmi. Na základě analýz je poté vyhodnocen samotný vliv na tvorbu autorů.

Annotation

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Department: Department of English and American Studies

Title of Bachelor's Thesis: Influence of Napoleonic Wars on British Literature

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Key words: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, Shelley, Byron, poetry, romanticism, Napoleonic Wars, French Revolution

The thesis focuses on the analysis of the selected poems of five major British romantic writers with the aim to find out how much and in what way was the British literature influenced by the Napoleonic Wars. The thesis also introduces the authors and the historical events, which are inseparably connected with the selected poems. The influence on the authors' poetic production is then determined according the provided analyses.