A Defence of Literary Theory
A psychoanalytical study of selected works by Percy Bysshe Shelley with a view to didactic usage

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Subject: English
Level: G3
Course Code: 2ENÄ2E
Abstract
This essay argued the importance of literary theory in the classroom. As a teacher, it is possible to achieve the empathetic goals of the English curriculum and Judith A. Langer’s ambition of literate thinking by using poetry and literary theory in school. The essay demonstrated this with a Lacanian reading of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poems “To a Skylark” and “Ode to the West Wind.” The analysis focused on readable and unreadable aspects of the poems. The readable aspects centred on the role of the Imaginary in “To a Skylark” and the representation of the fragmented body in “Ode to the West Wind.” Furthermore, the unreadable elements of the poetry demonstrated the discrepancy between the performative and declarative dimensions and the role of the pathetic fallacy in the signifying chain.

Finally, this essay argued that, although all aspects of psychoanalytic literary theory should not be used in the classroom, elements of Lacanian thought can be used to combat the prevalence of individualism in Swedish upper secondary schools.

Key Words
Literary didactics, Lacan, Shelley, literary psychoanalytic criticism, upper secondary school
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1 Introduction

We are living in an increasingly tailored experience of reality. The ubiquity of social and digital media has fundamentally changed the way information is obtained and, subsequently, how the outside world is perceived (Viner, "How Technology Disrupted The Truth"). Social media, on-demand television and biased news sources create a filter bubble that perpetuates our existing ideals and values (Jackson, "Eli Pariser: Activist Whose Filter Bubble Warnings Presaged Trump And Brexit"). This echo chamber of information was poignantly highlighted by the shock of many when the results of the UK’s referendum and the US election were announced. As a result, this must be treated as a relevant issue in schools. If Skolverket (Nat. Agency f. Ed. “Curriculum”) strives to create democratic citizens and for pupils to be able to empathise with the existential experiences of others, then we need to, using Gadamer’s terms¹, create larger horizons for the pupils. A recent study undertaken by Maritha Johansson indicates that the literary analysis of Swedish upper secondary pupils is defined by a strong sense of individualism; this suggests the pupils struggle to approach a literary work without constantly referring to themselves. In light of these aspects, how can literature be used to help pupils to understand perspective and differing horizons?

Literature is intrinsically entwined with psychology and reflections, projections and enactments of the human psyche. Whether we are examining the author, the reader or a single work, psychoanalytic literary criticism can provide insight and perspective. Psychoanalysis does not only investigate the content of a literary work and how it is constructed; it also scrutinises why the piece is written the way it is. What hidden aspects can be found beyond and because of the diction, thematic aspects and style? This essay shall attempt to demonstrate the worth of literary theory in the classroom and how it can be used to broaden horizons in the Gadamerian sense of the term. The aim of this essay is not to indicate how a certain work or poet should be used, but instead establish that they could be used in order to create new perspectives and analytical insight with the pupils. The didactic elements of

¹ Gadamer uses the term fusion of horizons to describe the hermeneutic process. The term horizon refers to the social and historical context that defines both the reader and the text itself. Understanding occurs during the fusion of horizons because a common horizon emerges between the reader and the text. In the case of this essay, horizons involve the ability to understand and interpret texts or people from other social settings or eras and beyond one’s own horizon. (Gadamer 138-47).
this essay will be based upon Judith A. Langer’s concept literate thinking, which emphasises the importance of using different perspectives to boost the analytical and empathetic skills of pupils (“Contexts” 51).

This essay focuses on two poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley; namely, “To a Skylark” (1820) and “Ode to the West Wind (1820).” These particular pieces have been selected because the language and themes are appropriate and relevant for a Swedish upper secondary school class. Shelley was a poet who wanted to change the world with art and aesthetic expression (Stillinger and Lynch 743). Without wishing to sound overly pretentious, I wish to argue that teachers should strive towards a similar goal. Teachers will, for better or for worse, have some sort of an impact on the lives of their pupils. How can teachers use literature and thought provoking theories to light a spark in the minds of the pupils that may instigate the aesthetic revolution prompted by Shelley? The syllabus’ intention for pupils to relate to ethical and existential aspects and poetry is undoubtedly a clear way to achieve this. To quote Shelley himself:

A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasure of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. (Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry” 844)

This essay aims to demonstrate how theory and poetry can be used to broaden the minds of pupils by achieving what Judith A. Langer describes as literate thinking and envisionment building. In order to demonstrate the possible usage of theory, this essay will examine the, in Lacan’s terms, readable and unreadable aspects of “To a Skylark” and “Ode to the West Wind” through the light of psychoanalytical theory.
2 Theory

2.1 Materials and Previous Research

The primary sources for this essay are the poems “To a Skylark” and “Ode to the West Wind” by Percy Bysshe Shelley. The didactic aspects of the essay are based upon the theories of Judith A. Langer found in her book *Envisioning Knowledge* (2011) and *Handbook of Adolescent Literary Research* (2009) edited by Leila Christenbury, Randy Bomer and Peter Smagorinsky. The secondary sources are based around the theories of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Three of Lacan’s books have been used: *Écrits* (2001), *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (2010) and *The Language of the Self* (1981). The works of Lacan are focused on psychology and the practice of psychoanalysis rather than literature.

The previous research of this essay is based upon research that applies the theories of Lacan on literature and other cultural expressions. Slavoj Žižek uses Lacanian theory to elaborate on a number of factors in popular culture in his work *How to Read Lacan* (2007). This study also utilises strictly literary usages of Lacanian theory with *Lacan and Literature* (1996) by Ben Stoltzfus and *The Purloined Poe* (1998) edited by John P. Muller and William J. Richardson. The methodology of this essay is psychoanalytic literary criticism and the previous research has been used to demonstrate how psychoanalysis can be implemented on literary texts. *The Purloined Poe* contains the chapter “On Reading Poetry” written by Shoshana Feldman that describes how poetry can be psychoanalysed. Furthermore, the inspiration behind focusing on the performative and declarative aspects of the poetry stems from Žižek’s analysis on the declarative statement. These works function as previous research because they demonstrate how Lacan’s theories can be utilised outside of psychology. The translated secondary sources of Lacan also contain Translator’s notes and other inputs that have been used as previous research.

2.2 The Syllabus and ’Literate Thinking’

The main focus of the subject English in Swedish upper secondary schools is language acquisition rather than literary analysis. This prioritisation is highlighted by the content of the syllabus; in fact, literature is not even mentioned in the introductory paragraph “The Aims of the Subject” (Nat. Agency f. Ed. “Syllabus” 1). However, the usage of literature is implied throughout the guidelines:
Students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used. Teaching should encourage students' curiosity in language and culture, and give them the opportunity to develop plurilingualism where skills in different languages interact and support each other. /…/ In teaching students should meet written and spoken English of different kinds, and relate the content to their own experiences and knowledge. /…/ Teaching should make use of the surrounding world as a resource for contacts, information and learning, and help students develop an understanding of how to search for, evaluate, select and assimilate content from multiple sources of information, knowledge and experiences. (Nat. Agency f. Ed. “Syllabus” 1-2)

This passage demonstrates how the usage of literature is present by implication. The extract establishes the importance of empathetic schooling, the ability to approach different types of texts and the capacity to combine personal experiences with other sources of information. Consequently, it is possible to justify the usage of poetry within these parameters. The final lines, and the focus on “the surrounding world as a source for contacts” (Nat. Agency f. Ed. “Syllabus” 2), also allow for the introduction of theory into the classroom. It is worth noting that literature is listed in all of the individual courses (Eng. 5, Eng. 6 and Eng. 7) and poetry is explicitly mentioned in the Reception paragraph of English 6.

The didactic relevance of this essay stems from the concepts of Judith Langer and how the introduction of theory into the classroom adheres to her theories. It is Langer’s concept literate thinking that is of most interest to the aims of this essay. Literate thinking is described as a notion of literacy that extends beyond merely reading and writing to include how the mind responds: “when people gain knowledge, reason with it, and communicate about it in a variety of contexts” (Langer, “Contexts” 51). This means that Langer wants pupils and students to reflect on what actually makes a literate person, and “to call upon the kinds of reasoning abilities people generally use when they read and write” (“Contexts” 51). Langer describes:
It involves the use of signs, the ability to gain meaning from them, and the ability to understand and control them. Literate thinking assumes individual, cultural, and group differences and leaves room for teachers to invite students to use what they understand and have experienced as a starting place for learning. It expects differing perspectives and gives students a place to try ideas out, to manipulate what they think, and to use language in ways that help them refine and rethink. It moves students to become analytic about the content at hand as they gain skills and knowledge to relate to new content and learning. Thus, literate thinking is literacy with a bigger-than-traditional context (“Contexts” 51).

In light of this, it is important to allow for the pupils’ own subjective views in tandem with “objective places” or theories in order to achieve Langer’s goals. This becomes exceedingly relevant when one considers the recent study by Maritha Johansson on the differences between French and Swedish pupils’ analytical skills. The study found that Swedish pupils were more prone to adopting overly subjective views with very little relevant terminology or structure (Johansson 211). By contrast, the French pupils used a much more analytical but impersonal style, which reflects the greater focus on literary theory in French schools. Johansson’s conclusion is that both countries should learn from one another and that a combination of subjective thought and theory should be consolidated. This seems to tie into Langer’s vision. Langer calls for a combination of “point of reference thinking” and “exploring horizons of possibilities” in the classroom (“Contexts” 60). “Point of reference thinking” is related to critical thinking and reaching an informational goal, while “exploring horizons of possibilities” describes a more creative thinking strategy and has maieutic tendencies. In the case of this study, the introduction of theory into the classroom can be seen as “point of reference thinking,” and the interpretation of poetry reflects the concept of “exploring horizons of possibilities.” Langer refers to the ideal teaching environment as an “envisionment classroom”:

In envisionment classrooms, it is assumed that ideas change and grow over time as one reads, writes, hears and
thinks. Therefore, teachers endeavour to help pupils engage in “meaning in motion,” questioning ideas, leaving them open to new refinements and connections as they are in the act of gaining fuller understandings (“Contexts” 59).

2.3 Psychoanalysis

2.3.1 The Mirror Stage

Many of Lacan’s theories focus on the early stages of life and two especially important factors are the Oedipal complex and the mirror stage. It is during, and as result of, our involvement in these stages that the notion of a subject and the concept of the “I” are shaped. During the pre-oedipal stage, the child exists in a state where language does not exist and where the child does not have a central identity or the capability to differentiate between itself and the outside world (Eagleton 132); this state is named the Imaginary by Lacan. However, this begins to change as the child enters the mirror stage. Children are, from a young age, able to recognise their own image in a mirror (Lacan Écrits 1). According to Lacan, the mirror stage should be seen as “an identification” and exceptionally important element of the ontological structure of the human world (Écrits 2). This identification is described as: “the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image – whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by /…/ the term Imago” (Écrits 2). This imago is also referred to as the Ideal-ich², which means that the specular image represents an ideal image or idealised version of the subject. This ideal-ich only exists in the Imaginary.

An important factor for the allure of the specular image is the fragmented body. Children experience themselves as physically inept and vulnerable due to “the specific prematurity of birth in man” (Écrits 5); i.e., children are born helpless and their survival is entirely dependent upon others. The fragmented body explains why the seemingly whole and coherent specular image is so alluring to the uncoordinated child. Lacan depicts this phenomenon in a poetic fashion:

The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial

² Freudian term. The concepts of imago, ideal- ich and other refer, by and large, to the same concept; i.e., the idealised image of the other in the mirror.
identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic- and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject’s entire mental development (Lacan Écrits 5).

Thus, it is this initial identification that creates the “I”\(^3\) and commences a lifetime of phantasies about “who we are.” The previous quotation elucidates the alienating effect of the “I” because it means the subject identifies with the specular image of the seemingly complete other rather than his own reality, or fragmented body. The usage of the word orthopaedic is especially interesting here because it indicates the supportive significance of this other; it holds together our frail concept of self. This process of identification is metaphorically described with the image of a mirror with good reason; it is because, as Culler states, “the self is created by what is reflected back: by a mirror, by the mother, and by others in in social relations generally” (116). Consequently, the mirror stage should not be seen as the only stage of identification, we constantly see our reflection, or ideal-ich, in other people\(^4\). The process of identification is ultimately alienating because the subject relates to an image that does not correspond to his/her own body; the image exists only in the Imaginary:

The Imaginary for Lacan is precisely this realm of images in which we make identifications, but in the very act of doing so are led to misperceive and misrecognise ourselves. As the child grows up, it will continue to make such imaginary identifications with objects, and this is how its ego [“I”] will be built up. For Lacan, the ego is just this narcissistic process whereby we bolster up a fictive sense of unitary selfhood by finding something in the world with which we identify (Eagleton 143).

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\(^3\) Lacan’s concept of “I” is connected to the ego.

\(^4\) This is called the Other by Lacan. The difference between the Other (capitalised) and other is that the former refers to the Symbolic order and social laws of the time, whilst the latter refers to the specular “I” that constitutes the ego (Lacan, “Four Fundamental” 129).
The aim of psychoanalysis is to help the analysand to “resolve as I his discordance with his own reality” (Lacan Écrits 3), which was originally created in the mirror stage and continues throughout his/her life.

The creation of the subject is also affected by the Oedipal conflict. As stated earlier, the pre-oedipal years are experienced in the Imaginary where language or a concept of self does not exist. We go from the pristine wholeness of the Imaginary to the cut-up and distorted world of language and the Symbolic order. As a baby – one feels a drive and screams, laughs or cries in order to to fulfil this drive. However, this ability to express meaning in a clear-cut manner disappears as we enter language, or the Symbolic order. Lacan’s theories were heavily influenced by Ferdinand Saussure’s concept of signifier and signified, which relates to how language functions; we have an idea of an object we call tree (signified) and use the phoneme “tree” to represent it (signifier). The problem with this, for Lacan, is that there is always a gap between signifier and signified because there is no universal “tree” that everyone can relate to. Language is always an approximation and metaphorical because the signifier merely “stands in- for the signified; there is not absolute meaning for the sign ‘tree’” (Eagleton 146). This is highlighted by a concise quote “we can never mean precisely what we say and can never say precisely what we mean” (Eagleton 146). The signs only have meaning by means of absence, or by difference; one’s concept of tree as an oak exists because it is not a pine- its meaning exists only by what it is not.

This is vital to the Lacanian concept of identity because he considered the unconscious to be structured like a language (“Four Fundamental” 203); this means that our sense of self also consists of signifiers and is defined by what it is not. The Oedipal conflict reveals that we cannot stay with the mother in the Imaginary because of the father: we recognise that we are not the father or connected to the mother. It is precisely this emergence of the father that disrupts the dyadic relationship between the child and mother and leads to the triadic relationship that includes the father. The triadic relationship is considered as the entry point into language, or the Symbolic order, because we become aware of our “position” in a social setting. As a result, we are forced into a certain identity and role by the Symbolic order and language; or, as Žižek notes, we are colonised by language (12). This is because we can only express ourselves in accordance with the Symbolic order. Once we embrace the gift of language, it controls us; the signifiers and constructs of the Symbolic order shape our concept of reality.
At this point, it is also important to mention the big Other, which can be described as everything outside of ourselves and part of the Symbolic order. Žižek depicts the big Other as the “yardstick against which I can measure myself” (9). In other words, it is what we define and redefine ourselves by. It operates on the Symbolic level and the Symbolic order is part of the big Other; this explains why Lacan states: “the unconscious is the discourse of the Other” (“Purloined" 32). As stated earlier, our understanding of the world, i.e. the relationship between signified and signifier, is defined by language and therefore the big Other. Subsequently, we are not as autonomous and independent as we imagine. As Lacan states: “I am not a poet, but a poem. A poem that is being written, even if it looks like a subject /…/ He [the subject] is divided by the effects of language. Through the effects of speech, the subject always realizes himself more in the Other, but he is already pursuing there more than half of himself. He will simply find his desire ever more divided, pulverized, in the circumscribable metonymy of speech” (Lacan, “Four Fundamental” 188).

The final concept that needs to be introduced is the Lacanian notion of desire. Lacan considers the concept of desire to be “the essence of man” and the central concern of psychoanalysis. Desire emerges as a result of language acquisition and relates to manqué. This is because, as stated earlier, all language is merely representative and words stand in for objects that are lost or missing (Hook 67): or, as Alan Sheridan puts it, “all speech is demand” (“Translator’s Note” 278). Lacan (“Four Fundamental” 239) connects this process to the Freudian concept of Fort-da. It is manqué that forces us into the Symbolic order and commences our incessant search for the original lost object (Hook 67). An aim of psychoanalysis is to uncover the signifying chain and repetitions that lead back to, and try to replace, the initial loss of

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5 The big (capitalised) Other can be regarded as everything in society outside of yourself. Žižek likens it to a God-like entity: “It is as if we, subjects of language, talk and interact like puppets, our speech and gestures dictated by some nameless all-pervasive agency” (8). Žižek also states that the Other exists only insofar as the subject acts as if it exists. This is indicated by sociopaths or other people who disregard social conventions- the rules of the Symbolic order and big Other do not apply for them (10-13). Another example of how the big Other functions is guilt. We experience guilt in privacy and when there is no one who has “seen” us. The big Other is similar to Michel Foucault’s concept of panopticon in this regard.

6 Lack. This term is related to the eccentric and insatiable notion of desire (Sheridan “Translator’s Note” 278).

7 Freud initially used the fort-da! game to illustrate the infant’s symbolic mastery of the mother’s absence. Fort-da! is a game that involves the child throwing a toy out of its pram and saying “Fort!” (gone away) and then pulling it back on a string whilst calling out “Da!” (here) (Eagleton 160). For Lacan, this reflects the function of the Symbolic order and the absence that lies at the heart of language; the child learns to signify absence with phonemes and, thus, the function of language.
the Imaginary and mother (Lacan, “The Four Fundamental” 62-63). Here, the objet petit a becomes exceedingly relevant. The objet petit a refers to:

… the objects which we vainly use to plug the gap at the very centre of our being. We move among substitutes for substitutes, metaphors of metaphors, never able to recover the pure (if fictive) self-identity and self-completion which we knew in the imaginary. There is no ‘transcendental’ meaning or object which will ground this endless yearning (Eagleton 146).

In reading literature we may be able to find the objet petit a of the speaker represented in the text. Žižek states: “the original question of desire is not directly “What do I want?”, but “What do others want from me? What do they see in me? What am I for the others?” (49). This quote elucidates the fact that desire can manifest itself as the desire to be desired.

2.3.2 Performative Language
A major aspect in psychoanalysis is the separation of the subject of the statement and the enunciation of the subject.\(^8\) The difference between these two aspects can be simplified by an analogy from the world of grammar. In grammar there is a distinction between grammatical form and pragmatic meaning. For example, the question “have you come by car?” can be used to ask for a lift (Downing and Locke 176); the pragmatic meaning and illocutionary force of this interrogative differs from its grammatical form. The difference between subject of the statement and the enunciation of the subject works along a similar line because there is a difference in what the “I” is saying and what the unconscious actually means. This is related to helping the analysand to acknowledge the méconnaissances\(^9\) and phantasies that constitute the Imaginary construct “I.” The psychoanalysing of the analysand’s language can uncover the difference between the two. In the case of literary analysis, we ask why the work is written the way it is; or, as Žižek states: “what more does this

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\(^8\) The subject of the statement refers to the ego or “I.” The enunciation of the subject refers to the unconscious and is at variance with the ”I.” The latter can be seen as the ”true” subject and free from the distorting effects of the ego and ”I.”

\(^9\) To misrecognise or misconstrue. Our identification with the specular other in the mirror stage is an example of méconnaissance.
statement contain, that has caused you to make it?” (19). So, which elements of language are of interest? One part of the analysis will focus on the difference between the performative and declarative dimensions of statements. The performative utterance was coined by J. L. Austin and aimed to designate between two types of utterances: declarative utterances\(^\text{10}\) and performative utterances. Declarative utterances: “describe a state of affairs in the world and has a truth value, which can be confirmed, questioned or denied” (Downing and Locke 197). Whilst performatives: “carry out the speech act to which they refer /…/ and don’t have truth value\(^\text{11}\)” (Downing and Locke 198). This is an intriguing distinction in literary analysis because it raises compelling questions related to meaning, effects of language and the identity and nature of the subject (Culler 95). There may be a direct performative dimension to a literary work that states a certain intent, but that might be contradicted by the declarative dimension. As Eagleton states: “the very structure [of a literary work] conspires with the speaker’s unconscious” (153). This reveals a fascinating aspect of psychoanalytic theory: what is the speaker really saying?

3 Method

This part of the essay will discuss the methodology of the essay. This will include a description of the psychoanalytical model used for the analysis of the poems.

The methodology for psychoanalytical readings of texts is influenced by the act of ‘psychoanalysing’ that is prevalent in psychology. This relates to the encounter between analyst and analysand in a therapeutic environment. In a psychoanalytical setting, the analyst listens to the discourse of the analysand through the method of free association. This method consists of the analysand speaking freely and, importantly, uninterrupted by the analyst (Lacan, “Four Fundamental” 9-10). For Lacan, the unconscious is not, as is the case with Freud, hidden under the masking powers of civilised life and only accessible through hours of therapy and free association; the unconscious is in and defines every utterance. It is therefore not hidden by language, politeness, and etiquette, it is all of these things. This is an important detail to bear in

\(^{10}\) The declarative utterances are actually referred to as constative utterances in Austin’s original theory. However, the constative will be referred to as the declarative in this essay. This is due to Žižek’s usage of the term declarative rather than constative (see previous research).

\(^{11}\) Examples of: Declaratives: "She is at home; Is she at home? She is not at home." Performatives: "I promise, we advise you to book early, I recommend the Kashmir." (Downing and Locke 197-98).
mind about how the unconscious functions: the unconscious is not hidden in language; it is language itself (Žižek 21).

This aspect is also discussed by Anthony Wilder:

… even if what the subject says is ‘meaningless,’ what the subject says to the analyst cannot be without meaning, since it conceals what the subject wants to say (what he means) and the relationship he wishes to establish (“Translator’s Introduction” xi).

Subsequently, the analyst will interpret this discourse and attempt to aid the subject to “resolve as I his discordance with reality” (Lacan, “Écrits” 3). The aim of this practice is to reveal the méconnaissances and phantasies that were created as a result of the ideal-ich and how they are merely constructs in the Imaginary. Lacan describes the process as dismantling: “the object constructed by the subject to satisfy them” (Lacan, “The Function of Language” 12). In order to achieve this, the analyst must first distinguish between the subject of the statement and the enunciation of the subject. The subject of the statement refers to the “I” of the statement, which is created as a result of the mirror stage and the ego. Conversely, the subject of enunciation refers to the unconscious and our natural reality rather than our construction of “I” in the Imaginary. Lacan also describes the distinction between the two as distinguishing between “the person lying on the couch from the person who is speaking” (Lacan “Language of the Self” 100). As stated earlier, the aim of therapy is to reveal the discrepancies between the subject’s natural reality and the imaginary and alienating construct of the ego called “I.” As a result, Lacan states that the analyst cannot possibly achieve dealienation of the subject if: “you cling to the idea that the Moi of the subject is identical to the presence speaking to you” (“The Function of Language” 68). In order to separate the “I” from the subject, analysis focuses on aspects of the language such as repetition; or, as is the case in this study, the declarative dimension of language. Lacan quotes Freud when he states: “what cannot be remembered is repeated in behaviour” and goes on to write “this behaviour, in order to reveal what it repeats, is handed over to the analyst’s reconstruction” (“Four Fundamental” 129). It is important to note that “behaviour” is related to the speech act itself: “The reflexive twist pertains to communication as such: one should not forget to include in the content of an act of communication the act itself, since the meaning of each act of

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12 The “object” refers to the specular other or ideal-ich from the mirror stage. See Theory.
13 Untranslated version of “I.”
communication is also to reflexively assert that it is an act of communication” (Žižek 21). In light of this, it is not merely what you say that carries significance, but how you say it. The method and reasoning behind psychoanalysis have now been elucidated, but how do these mentioned aspects correlate to literary analysis?

The interpretivistic elements of psychoanalysis and the focus on language mean that Lacanian psychoanalysis is a post-structuralist discipline (Culler 142). Therefore, one could argue that the methodology for literary psychoanalysis becomes a post-structuralist version of discourse analysis. However, one could also argue that the analytical experience described in the previous paragraph is an adequately sufficient method for literary analysis; and the latter description serves as the methodological base of this essay.

The process of psychoanalysis is transferable to literary analysis due to Lacan’s focus on language and his maxim: “the unconscious is structured as a language” (“Four Fundamental” 203). The focus of analysis is placed on the language of the analysand, and psychoanalysis as a whole was regarded by Lacan as method of reading texts in oral or written form (Žižek 5). This process bears similarities to literary analysis because of the reader’s interchangeability with the role of the analyst. The reality of reading is that the reader merely reads or “listens” without disrupting the flow of the author’s discourse; this relationship also mirrors that of the analyst and analysand. Stoltzfus states the aim as being to “join between visible language and invisible effect” and to “work from the macrotext of the plot to the microtext of the traces embedded in it” (8). The method in this essay is based upon the following description of analysis: “psychoanalysis has only a single intermediary: the patient’s Word” (Lacan, “The Function of Language” 9). Consequently, this essay is structured on the same logic; the only intermediary in this analysis is the poetry. There is no additional biographical information about Shelley as an individual and the analysis distinguishes between Shelley and the speaker in the poem. It is the speaker that is psychoanalysed rather than the poet himself. The inclusive scope of the essay focuses on the speaker and the two poems.

The poetry was approached with focus on the readable and unreadable aspects. The readable aspects were examined to see how elements of psychoanalytical theory are represented in the thematic content and diction of the poetry. Additionally, the unreadable elements of the poetry were analysed using the aforementioned aspects
such as repetition and the difference between the “I” of the statement and the subject of the statement.

3.1 Limitations
There are a number of factors that must be taken into account for an essay of this size. Firstly, the limited range of this investigation resulted in the usage of a single poet and two poems. This relatively small selection of literature is justified by the necessity of maintaining detailed analysis whilst remaining within the structural limits of the essay. Another factor that must be considered is the question of subjectivity and my reading of the poetry. This dilemma is, however, somewhat resolved by the usage of Lacanian theory. The problem of an analyst’s objectivity when confronted by the analysand is a recurring theme in Lacan’s work and is referred to as transference and counter-transference. Counter-transference can be regarded as an overly intrusive and subjective analysis from the analyst, which means the analyst’s own projections overwhelm the interpretation of the analysand. This is something to consider during any type of analysis. In an attempt to combat this, the analysis will contain two short summaries of my reading of both poems. This will demonstrate how certain aspects of the poetry have been interpreted and highlight the subjective analysis that forms the foundation of the psychoanalytic reading.

One of the aims of this essay is to demonstrate the worth of using theory in the classroom as a tool to help pupils reach a level of literate thinking. Furthermore, the aim of using theory in the classroom is to help pupils to get new ideas and leave their filter-bubble. Nevertheless, this study could be accused of being slightly hypocritical in that sense. One could argue that the usage of Shelley for this essay is somewhat contradictory due to his demographic as a white European man. The vast temporal difference between contemporary pupils and Shelley is significant and does lead to new perspective; however, it was pointed out that this is the only “new” aspect. If the goal is to break filter-bubbles then perhaps a more diverse choice of poet would be more appropriate. Having said that, the language and universal themes of Shelley make him an ideal poet to use in a classroom. Shelley’s poetic prowess and standing as an archetype for romantic poetry do justify the usage of his work, and he could be a good introductory step to using theory in literature for the pupils.
4 Analysis

This part of the essay will contain a short summary and analysis of the poems. It will then present a psychoanalytical reading of both the Readable and Unreadable aspects in the poetry. The analysis will start with a brief summary of my reading of both poems because the subjective interpretation will likely differ to others.

4.1 ”To a Skylark”

”To a Skylark” describes an encounter between a poet and a Skylark. The poem describes the speaker’s sense of adulation towards the bird and its wonderful natural art. This admiration leads the speaker to attempt to learn from the Skylark’s “profuse strains of unpremeditated art” (5). However, the speaker realises that man would be incapable of ever achieving the Skylark’s level of happiness or artistic prowess. Stanzas 15-19 highlight the speaker’s sombre realisation that Man is forever hindered by the human condition: “Yet if we could scorn Hate, and pride, and fear; / If we were things born / Not to shed a tear, / I know not how thy joy we ever should come near” (91-95). The poem ends on a remarkably melancholic note and reflects the speaker’s sense of insignificance in comparison to the bird. The final stanza contains the lines: “Teach me half the gladness / That thy brain must know, / Such harmonious madness From my lips would flow / The world would listen then, as I am listening now” (101-105). The speaker is pleading to the Skylark to reveal its secrets, thus making him a great poet. At first glance, this seems to be the logical conclusion of the poem, and the speaker would sermonise to the entire world if only he/she could learn the Skylark’s secrets. However, this becomes problematic when one considers the diction of Shelley. The oxymoron “harmonious madness” is especially compelling as it distorts the image of beautiful poetry flowing from the speaker’s lips; harmonious madness would seem to suggest that although the words would be melodic, they would be incomprehensible and impossible to understand. The aporetic final line of the poem strengthens this interpretation. What does it mean to “listen as I am listening now”? Undoubtedly, the beauty of the birdsong enthrals the speaker, but he/she does not understand its true meaning. As a result, one must deduce that “the world” would also fail to grasp the innermost secrets of the speaker’s art. The audience would not understand either and would place their own meaning or essence onto the “harmonious madness.” The final lines redefine the entire poem and leave the reader with a sombre tone. Furthermore, the stylistic aspects of the poem enhance the stinging aftertaste of the final line’s
melancholy. Shelley’s usage of the straightforward ABABB rhyme scheme and euphonic sound textures results in a very melodic, soft and beautiful poem. The whole poem becomes a display of, ultimately, inadequate beauty trying to reach the abstract heights of the birdsong.

4.2 ”Ode to the West Wind”
“Ode to the West Wind” portrays a speaker’s address to the West Wind of autumn. The speaker describes how the Wind signals the end and “death” of the year. However, the destruction of Wind also facilitates the emergence of life during the “rebirth” or spring: “… O thou / Who charioteest to their dark wintry bed / The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low, / Each like a corpse within its grave, until / Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow” (6-9). The wind is simultaneously “destroyer and preserver” (14), and the speaker elucidates how the Wind destroys the aestival seas and forests with its might. The speaker is envious of this overwhelming power and laments his own inability to spread his message to the world. As a result, the speaker implores the Wind to: “… lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud! /…/ Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is: /…/ Be thou, Spirit fierce, My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!” (53-62). The ideas of the speaker are metaphorically depicted as the dead leaves of autumn that will shape the new world in spring. It is in the final lines of the poem that the speaker expresses his hopes of significance: “Scatter, as from an unextinguish’d hearth / Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind! / Be through my lips to unawaken’d earth / The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind, / If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?” (66-70). The final two lines are compelling in a number of ways. They abruptly break from the overall structure of the poem by going from terza rima to a concluding couplet. This underlines the importance of the final couplet. However, there is an underlying sense of doubt in the line: “If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?” (70). It is the usage of the modal verb “can”- a grammatical softener- that creates this sense that perhaps the speaker doubts his words will be scattered among mankind. This is also enhanced by the sense of suspense that is created by the aposiopesis and sudden cessation of the lines. There are, as far as this study is concerned, two possible interpretations of this final line; either the speaker believes that spring will come, or that, in view of the softener, the speaker doubts that the new awakening will occur. This study views the latter, in light of the rhetorical
devices, as the strongest interpretation. This aspect will be elaborated upon in a later stage of the analysis.

The structure of the poem means that the stanzas spill into one another, which mirrors the tempestuous autumn wind. The structure is, therefore, jagged and harsh; this sense is enhanced by the diction and imagery. The diction conjures images of death and emphasises the destructive power of the West Wind: “Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead / Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing” (2-3). There is also a distinctly cacophonic sound texture to the poem that stands in stark contrast to the euphony of “To a Skylark” An example of this occurs in the following lines: “Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red / Pestilence-stricken multitudes” (4-5). The polysyndeton of the initial line creates a distressing sense of urgency that is complemented by the harsh and dissonant sounds of “pestilence-stricken multitudes.”

4.3 The Readable
4.3.1 The Imaginary in "To a Skylark"
The entrance of man into the Symbolic order signals the start of his entrapment by language. It is precisely the avoidance of this colonisation of language that the speaker envies in the Skylark. The speaker wants to be able to express himself in the same “strains of unpremiated art” that the birdsong embodies. In light of this, it is compelling to analyse the poem by way of comparing the Imaginary of the Skylark to the Symbolic order of the speaker.

To leave the Imaginary is to leave one’s conception of wholeness and be introduced to the gap between signified and signifier, reality and language. “All that ever was / Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass” (59-60). This line is especially indicative of the dichotomy between the Imaginary and Symbolic order. The polysyndeton of the phrase and accumulation of adjectives highlights the inability of language to pinpoint the signified emotions and art of the bird. The speaker’s exuberance, and hopelessness, is emphasised by these rhetorical devices. This sense is also highlighted in stanzas eight to eleven, or, as they are referred to in this study, the anaphoric stanzas. They are named the anaphoric stanzas precisely because each stanza commences with the anaphora “Like a” and then commences to provide similes and metaphors to describe the Skylark. The stanzas remind us of Lacan’s insistence that language is based upon metaphor and metonymy and, therefore, always
Despite using four stanzas comprised of metaphors, the speaker is unable to accurately depict the Skylark because, as we have established, meaning or identity only exist insofar as there is difference. In light of this, the speaker is only able to present what the Skylark is not. The gap between signified and signifier renders these lines a hopeless attempt to describe the Imaginary with the discourse of the Symbolic order.

The encumbering shackles of the Symbolic order do not hinder the Skylark’s expressions of art due to their place in the Imaginary order. The birdsong’s place in the Imaginary is rendered beautifully by the leitmotif of water and the images of an outpouring of emotion. For example, the usage of water is utilised as a metaphor for the birdsong in the lines: “Pourest thy full heart / In profuse strains of unpremeditated art. /.../ As from thy presence showers a rain of melody. /.../ I have never heard Praise of love or wine / That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine” (4-65). The image of flowing water as symbolic of the Imaginary is pertinently apt because the birdsong is an unfiltered flow of absolute expression, rather than the laboured approximations of the speaker. The motif of water is not the only element of the poem that reflects the distinction between the speaker and the Skylark, or, the Symbolic order and the Imaginary. As stated earlier, it is the Oedipal conflict and loss of the mother that facilitates our entry into the Symbolic order. There is no death, suffering or desire in the Imaginary; these terms are all the result of language acquisition. This is also highlighted by the speaker’s descriptions of the inherent melancholia of man: “Shadow of annoyance / Never came near thee: / Thou lovest: but ne’er knew love’s sad satiety /.../ We look before and after, / And pine for what is not” (78–87). Is this not exceedingly reminiscent of Lacan’s description of our descent into language and desire? It is the experience of manqué that separates the speaker from the Skylark; the secret behind the Skylark’s joy is precisely this “ignorance of pain” (75).

**4.3.2 The Fragmented Body in “Ode to the West Wind”**

The presence of the Lacanian notion of the fragmented body is a compelling aspect in “Ode to the West Wind.” Dreams are important aspects of psychoanalysis because they reveal dimensions of the unconscious, and Lacan states that dreams, and art, are often beset with images of the fragmented body (“Écrits” 5). The images of the fragmented body remind the “I” of the fragility of the body in natural reality (Lacan, 14 Based on Roman Jakobson’s theories.)
“Écrits” 5). As mentioned earlier, the mirror stage is a process of identification that creates an orthopaedic identity in the *ideal-ich*. This is underlined in the poem: “If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee; / A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share / The impulse of thy strength (44-46).” “Share the impulse of thy strength” is a particularly significant line because it symbolises the orthopaedic support of the Wind’s strength. This image is furthered: “Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud! I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed! A heavy weight of hours has chain’d and bow’d One too like thee” (53-56). This reflects the identification of the mirror stage because the speaker is drawn to the *ideal-ich* of the famous poet; the Wind heals and facilitates this transition from “insufficiency to anticipation (“Écrits” 5),” as Lacan puts it. The West Wind embraces the speaker’s body like an armour and provides a sense of unity and completeness to his physical embodiment. The *ideal-ich* of the speaker is to become renowned for his ideas; he/she wants to create a new world in his image! The wounded (fragmented) body of the speaker is made complete by the *ideal-ich*.

The sense of doubt expressed by the final couplet of the poem was introduced earlier in the analysis and becomes especially relevant in regard to the *fragmented body*. This lingering uncertainty is furthered when one considers the imagery of the poem. Lacan describes how, akin to the *fragmented body*, the ego and neurosis are often represented in dreams. These oneiric representations feature in the form of fortifications. This is an interesting facet to bear in mind when one considers whether to interpret the final lines as an indication of self-perpetuating doubt. The West Wind is seen as a force of change; its emergence indicates a state of change from one season to another. It also signals the emergence of new ideas and art. Nevertheless, we should not forsake the cyclical nature of the seasons and the West Wind. The speaker describes the summer as languorous, slow and tired:

Thou who didst wake from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull’d by the coil of his crystalline streams,
Beside a pumicle isle in Baiae’s bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers (29-33)

In the context of the speaker’s seasonal and metaphysical imagery, this means that the ideas and art of the time are apathetic and stagnant. This can be interpreted in two
ways; either the speaker’s empowerment by the West Wind and the coming of spring will lead to a radically new world. Or, these new ideas will also become the tired ideas of summer that the speaker intended to obliterate. This study leans towards the latter because of imagery of summer, the doubt in the last lines and Lacan’s theories on the ego. The imagery of summer coincides with Lacan’s theories on the representation of the ego and neurosis. It is as if the speaker is imploring the West Wind to release him from his own mental limitations, as well as the fragmented body, and enable him to change as the seasons do. The dormant ruins on the volcanic island represent the speaker’s limitations and the ego through the “old palaces and towers.” The speaker implores the West Wind to “lift me” and help him to achieve his ideal-ich. However, the doubt expressed in the final lines is ineluctable because even if Spring does follow Winter, then Summer will come after and the process of stagnation and neurosis will recommence. The speaker pleads to the West Wind, but seems to doubt whether he is capable of escaping his psychological constraints.

4.4 The Unreadable

4.4.1 The Performative and Declarative Dimensions in "To a Skylark."

We have established the sense of hopelessness felt by the speaker; despite his/her best attempts, he cannot pinpoint the Skylark. However, one must ask whether this front of humility and submissiveness genuinely describes the speaker’s intentions. The hidden agendas or asymptomatic neuroses of individuals can be found in plain sight and in the language of the subject. Lacan states “I am not a poet, but a poem. A poem that is being written, even if it looks like a subject /…/ There is no truth that in passing through awareness, does not lie” (Lacan, “The Four Fundamental” vii-viii). Therefore, one, or the analyst, must first distinguish between the subject of the statement and the enunciation of the subject. This is an intriguing prospect in literature and an interesting standpoint from which one can delve deeper into a literary text. In order to do so, it is vital to distinguish between linguistic elements in the poetry that create implicit or tacit meaning and constitute the unconscious. In the case of “To a Skylark,” a compelling starting point is the different meanings that can be found when the performative aspects of the poem are compared to the declarative. The poem starts with the line “Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!” This line functions as a performative because it carries out the act it names (Downing and Locke 197); it initiates the oral celebration of the Skylark. Assuming the verb Hail is read as an exclamation expressing greeting
and acclaim, the first line can be seen as synecdochic of the poem as a whole. As a consequence, the performative dimension of the poem is a celebration of the Skylark. This should be viewed as symptomatic of *the speaker of the statement* and the *readable* aspect of the poem. Hence, the performative and readable dimension of the poem is an expression of the speaker’s sense of insignificance in comparison to the beauty and prowess of the Skylark. The fundamental meaning of the poem becomes this articulation of inferiority from the speaker.

All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.
/…/ I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.
/…/ If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.
/…/ Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scornor of the ground! (60-100)

The sense of inferiority created by the performative dimension is enhanced by the honorific and deferential diction. However, this meaning differs from the declarative dimension of the poem. If the performative aspect creates the meaning “I am insignificant” then the declarative dimension states “I am significant.” Žižek states “the proper moment of subjective transformation occurs at the moment of declaration, not at the moment of the act” (16). This is very relevant here because the poem is an ode, which indicates that the speaker is articulating these words to the Skylark; the poem creates, with apostrophe and personification, the sense that the poet is confronting the Skylark. In view of this, the performative aspect becomes vital because the speaker is “actually” speaking to and hailing the bird, which is the moment of the act. This performative act then is not indicative of the speaker’s
subjective transformation; it is the declarative aspects that are the most revealing in this sense. It is not just what the speaker is articulating, but how he is articulating it.

The declarative dimension, “I am significant”, is highlighted by the style and euphony of the poem. The performative aspect of stanzas eight to eleven seems to indicate the mercurial nature of the Skylark and how its beauty is impossible to capture in words. However, one must question the usage of four stanzas to articulate one’s incapability to define what cannot be defined. This may appear to be a humble approach and the anaphoric similes create a sense of the bird’s elusiveness. Consequently, the declarative dimension of these lines seems to indicate arrogance more than humility. If the speaker genuinely believed in this relative insignificance then it seems peculiar to express it with 21 stanzas of exceedingly euphonic poetry. One must bear in mind the vital question “what does this statement contain, that has caused you to make it?” (Žižek 19) when confronting the declarative dimension of an utterance. The stanzas are defined by euphonic sounds and pleasant diction: “Soothing her love-laden Soul in secret hour /…/ Like a glow-worm golden In a dell of dew” (46-47). The apogee of the poem’s pleasing style occurs, arguably, when the speaker describes the flight of the Skylark: “Higher still and higher /…/ The blue deep thou wingest, / And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest” (6-10). These lines highlight the adroit style of the poetry. It is as if the speaker is flying with the bird and this effect is accomplished by the usage of tautology and chiamus: “Higher still and higher /…/ And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest” (6-10). These devices mimic and accentuate the circular and darting flight of the Skylark. Furthermore, the alliteration and resulting sibilant sounds of the latter line enhance the sound texture of hissing wind and the spritely movements. Rather than an expression of the impossibility of describing the Skylark, the poem seems to function as a vessel to indicate the speaker’s own erudite verboseness. This verboseness is precisely expressed by the elaborate style.

An interesting aspect is that the speaker actually articulates a distinction between the enunciated content of the subject and the act of enunciation in the 14th stanza.

Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,
Match’d with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt, (66-70)
Is this poem also an empty vaunt then? These lines are, surprisingly, Lacanian; the speaker identifies the fact that a “hidden want” lies at the heart of enunciation and corrupts the meaning of even the most grand expression (a difference between the enunciated and the act of enunciation/ performative and the declarative). One might be presumptuous in assuming the speaker refers to this dilemma without subsuming his/her own “triumphal chant.” Nevertheless, upon reading the poem this realisation does not appear to be extended to his verse. Despite the explicit statement that all human art is an empty vaunt it does not feel like he considers this to be one. There is a sense of distance between the speaker’s discussion of “chorus hymnale” and “triumphant chant” contra his own utterance or poem: ergo this is not an empty vaunt for the speaker. For Lacan, this poem would constitute an empty vaunt and the very act of apostrophe and personification becomes an empty gesture of phatic communication. The “hidden want” or declarative dimension of the poem is the speaker’s highlighting of his own eruditeness, “I am significant/ a poet,” and goes against the initial performative celebration of the Skylark. In light of this, the style and exceedingly euphonic style seem to be just that, vaunts. Žižek states: “This reflexive moment of declaration means that every utterance not only transmits some content, but, simultaneously, conveys the way the subject relates to this content” (Žižek 16). The exceedingly beautiful and euphonic style elucidates the speaker’s true feelings towards his poetry or, in this case, content. It is worthy of print and can be measured against the song of the Skylark! This aspect is emphasised when one compares the poem to “Ode to the West Wind.” The style and tone of “Ode to the West Wind” is much more staccato and urgent, despite the fact that they address a similar theme. The speaker of “Ode to the West Wind” is decidedly more frantic, which indicates that the tone of the utterance says something about the content. The “hidden want” of this poem is to create gratifying art and to match, or even usurp, the Skylark. In Lacanian terminology, the hidden want in the case of “To a Skylark” is the desire of the speaker to be heard himself (the desire to be desired) – the empty gesture of the apostrophe is once again highlighted as the speaker is not speaking to the Skylark, he is speaking to his audience.

There are many noteworthy aspects that can be found when one attempts to distinguish between the subject of the statement and the enunciation of the subject. The speaker states “Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought” and this
may explain the inherent distinction that can be found between the performative and declarative dimensions of the poem. In order to make “To a Skylark” one of our sweetest songs, the speaker had to approach the subject from a place of inferiority. The beauty of the poem is enhanced by this sense of sadness, even if a reading of the declarative dimensions of the poem indicate that the humility of the speaker may be slightly exaggerated and empty. As indicated earlier, the literary devices of pathetic fallacy, personification and apostrophe should be regarded as empty gestures and indicative of the usage of phatic communication; they are empty insofar as these exclamations of admiration mask the true meaning of the communication content. For Lacan, this is indicative of the “aggressivity that underlies the activity of the philanthropist, the idealist, the pedagogue” (Lacan, Écrits 8). This aggressiveness is caused by the inherent absence caused by desire and alienation from the ideal-ich. The poem may be presented as adulation, but there is an undercurrent of aggressive narcissism in the lionising lines.

4.4.2 The Representation of The Signifying Chain and the Phantasy of Essence in The Pathetic Fallacy
The sense of essence within the Skylark and West Wind is highlighted through Shelley’s use of pathetic fallacy, personification and apostrophe, which humanise the entities. Personification and apostrophe create a sense of essence in both the Skylark and the West Wind. They create the effect that the speaker is actually speaking to two subjects: “O wild West Wind /…/ Lift me (1)” “Hail to thee, blithe Spirit! /…/ Teach us, Spirit or Bird” (1- 61) The personification and grammatical elements of these lines turn the objects into subjects. This attribution of human qualities into animals or inanimate things is known as the pathetic fallacy. Culler states that the usage of these literary devices demonstrates the hyperbole of romanticism in Shelley’s poetry (77). He insists this does not mimic real life and is merely a case of over poeticising and Shelley's ambition to “identify its identity as poetic and prophetic voice” (78). This is, perhaps, a valid interpretation. However, in psychoanalysis, every facet of language reflects the real life intentions of the speaker and must be considered as utterances of the unconscious. In light of this, it is interesting to quote Shelley’s contemporary Wordsworth on how objects infused by the pathetic fallacy: “derive their influence not from properties inherent in them… but from such as are bestowed upon them by the minds of those who are conversant with or affected by these objects” (qtd. in Greene and Cushman 245). This is very interesting because this means any essence or
characterisation of these two natural subjects exists only insofar as the speaker allows it to exist or creates it. In traditional literary analysis, the two personified beings could be conceived as poetic symbols, or as signified. However, Lacan constantly reinforces the idea of signifier over signified and, as a result, the Skylark and West Wind should be considered as signifiers. But what do they signify? To answer this, one must consider the methodology of psychoanalysis; it is by interpreting the repetitions in the discourse of the analysand that the analyst can start to uncover the skeleton of desire. According to Lacanian theory, the unconscious “could only be satisfied by finding again the object that had been radically lost, hence it is caught up a process of ‘repetition’ from the very beginning” (Muller and Richardson 68). As discussed in the Theory section, individuals are driven by an incessant search for the *objet petit a* that they think will satiate their desire.

So what are the *objets petits a* in this case and how does this process of repetition manifest itself? It may be helpful to reconsider Eagleton’s quote on the *objet petit a* once again: “objects which we vainly use to plug the gap at the very centre of our being. We move among substitutes for substitutes, metaphors of metaphors, never able to recover the pure (if fictive) self-identity and self-completion which we knew in the imaginary” (146). In light of this, the Skylark and West Wind should be considered as empty signifiers on the signifying chain of the speaker’s desire. The theme of fame and the presence of God-like entities that can grant the speaker his desire reverberate in both poems, and is emphasised by the usage of the pathetic fallacy. It is the secrets of the birdsong and the transcendental power of the West Wind that the speaker hopes will help him/her reach the *ideal-ich*. It becomes clear that the speaker pines for fame and recognition through the repeated themes in both poems. This is why he “creates” the Skylark and West Wind as things that can “Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth / Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind! / Be through my lips to unawaken’d earth (66-68, “Ode To the West Wind”), and “Teach me half the gladness / That thy brain must know (100-101, “To a Skylark”). This hunger for fame and recognition reminds us that: “the original question of desire is not directly “What do I want?” but “What do others want from me? What do they see in me? What am I for the others?” (Žižek 49). This notion of the desire to be desired appears to be a strong element in the signifying chain of the speaker. His yearning for recognition and for “the world to listen” reflects this aspect. Therefore, the usage of repetition and pathetic
fallacy are indicative of “indestructible persistence of unconscious desire” (Muller and Richardson 71).

The notion of essence becomes relevant in light of the usage of the pathetic fallacy. As we have established, any perception of essence exists only insofar as the viewer, or in this case, the speaker creates it. This is indicated by the final lines of “To a Skylark:” “Such harmonious madness / From my lips would flow / The world would listen then, as I am listening now” (103-105). Even if the speaker were to “learn” the joy of the Skylark, he would only be able to speak “harmonious madness.” The speaker hears beauty and meaning in the birdsong because he places it there; there is no inner essence. In both poems, the Skylark and the West Wind are signifiers rather than symbols. This is significant in a Saussurean sense because, as Lacan states “the signifier is a unit in its very uniqueness, being by nature symbol only of an absence (Lacan, “Seminar on the Purloined Letter” 39). This “absence” is a compelling notion because it represents the fact that the signified the Skylark and West Wind signify does not actually exist; there is no essence. The absent and “missing” aspect is of great interest when one considers the imagery of the Skylark and West Wind. They are both defined by a phantasmagorical appearance. The Skylark is described as follows: “Like an unbodied joy /…/ Thou art unseen /…/ Whose intense lap narrows… until we hardly see, we feel that it is there” (15-25). The West Wind is defined in a similar way due to its immaterial nature. The emptiness of the entities echoes the manqué that created them. This reflects the Sartrean notion that l’existence precedé essence.15 We are determined after the fact, just as the essence of the Skylark and West Wind are imposed by the speaker rather than existing a priori. The imposed essence of the Skylark and West Wind are constructs of phantasy. For Lacan, we use phantasy to hide the traumatic Real and natural reality. It is through phantasy that we create the objects that will satiate our desire (objet petit a) and provide us full satisfaction and jouissance. However, the alienating nature of desire and jouissance ensure that desire is always desire for desire itself. In other words, the jouissance is always disappointing and unfulfilling; our desire drives us to always want more or something else. Even if the object of desire is acquired, Lacan describes fulfilment of phantasy and, ultimately, the disappointment as "the gift of shit" (Johnston, "Forced Choice Of Enjoyment"). The phantasy of the Skylark and West Wind is that they will inspire the speaker to greatness. He/she pines for the world to listen, for his words to spark a new

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15 Existence precedes essence. Things, people or animals are not created to “be something”-essence always occurs after creation (existence) rather than before.
awakening, but would this fulfilment of jouissance merely result in abject disappointment? The reason he/she "fills" the Skylark and West Wind with this phantasy and, as the declarative dimension demonstrated, the reason the odes are articulated is fame. They represent his desire and constructed phantasy of becoming the ideal poet. The Skylark and the West Wind are the objet petit a that are framed and screened by phantasy and, according, to Lacan, mask the "gift of shit" that would await the speaker if his/her wishes are answered. Would fame and recognition live up to his/her lofty expectations? The doubt in the final couplet of "Ode to the West wind" and the final stanza of “To a Skylark” are very interesting because they indicate a level of recognition from the speaker that the “essence” of the Skylark and West Wind are pure phantasy. He seems to acknowledge that human existence is mired by desire and that his phantasies are tinged by melancholy: “We look before and after / And pine for what is not: / Our sincerest laughter / With some pain is fraught; / Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought (“To a Skylark” 86-90).

The role of repetition in psychoanalytical interpretation is momentous and it is through repetition that the unconscious is revealed. Kierkegaard and Sartre insist upon the absolute freedom of man. For them, the repetition of the theme of legacy and the specific usage of the pathetic fallacy in the poems reflect this freedom; the speaker is radically free to choose to speak about these themes. However, for Lacan, the speaker is trapped in this repetition because he/she was determined by the mirror stage, ideal-ich and entrance into the Symbolic order. The speaker is determined and functions along a “chain of possible combinations” (Muller and Richardson 73). He is not radically free, as Sartre would state, but trapped by the Symbolic order and his unconscious determination: “the speaker is not a poet, he is a poem” (Lacan, “The Four Fundamental” viii). Once again the importance of repetition is highlighted; the desire of the speaker is manifested in the repeated manifestations of phantasies shrouding the objet petit a in the signifying chain. The recurring instance of the pathetic fallacy represents the desire to become a great and recognised artist. The speaker will continue to “see” his desire manifested in empty signifiers and objet petit a, such as the Skylark and West Wind. Therefore, this circular repetition and searching for the objet petit a that will satiate his/her desire is the defining aspect of both poems.

4.5 Didactic Reflection
One of the aims of this essay is to discuss how theory can be used in the classroom in order to help the pupils achieve literate thinking. Langer prescribes the combination
of critical and creative thinking. I argue that this would be achieved by using elements of psychoanalytical theory in the classroom. The interpretative dimension is, arguably, creative because the pupils would have to find hidden meaning beyond the text itself. This combines the critical reading of the work with the creative reading of the analysand/speaker. The psychoanalyzing model could be an interesting method to use in literary teaching precisely because it can help to realise Langer’s goals. As a teacher, one could allow the pupils to approach a literary character or speaker as they would an analysand. This could be a novel way to ask the conventional questions of literary study such as: what is the speaker saying, how are they expressing this desire, what is it they really want? The aim is to help the pupils in “exploring horizons of possibilities” (Langer, “Contexts” 60), and the introduction of different theories and perspectives is a way to achieve that goal. Furthermore, Langer has distinctly social constructivist tendencies in her insistence on the importance of combining the subjective knowledge of the pupil with the objective knowledge of theory. The psychoanalytical method balances this partnership in a satisfactory way due to Lacan’s acknowledgement of the transference (subjectivity) of the analyst; any interpretation depends upon the analyst as a subject. The combination of the pupils’ own knowledge and the guiding hand of theory can be seen as resulting in Langer’s concept of “meaning in motion” in envisionment classrooms. Pupils should be ingrained with openness to new ideas and connections that can lead to a fuller understanding (Langer, “Contexts” 59). The goals of literate thinking and the empathetic ideals of the curriculum can, therefore, be reached by introducing theory into the classroom.

There are a number of didactic considerations that must be taken into account. Any introduction of theory would have to be applied with care and to a class that has the ability to embrace the new ideas. Psychoanalytic theory would, most likely, be most effectual in an experienced class. Furthermore, the required level of literary, linguistic and analytical skills entails that, on paper, an English 7 class would appear to be most suitable. Nevertheless, there are several problems with introducing psychoanalysis into the classroom. Firstly, there is a distinct jargon that is necessary to learn in order to fully grasp the theory. Furthermore, the ideas are complicated and ambiguous at the best of times. This means that it would not be worthwhile, or relevant, to teach the pupils all of the technicalities of psychoanalysis.
This essay has demonstrated the difficulty of compressing such a gargantuan theory into a small study.

The second problematic aspect concerned with psychoanalysis in the classroom is the idea of explaining the Oedipal complex and the incestuous elements to a room of sniggering adolescents. In light of these problems, I suggest using relevant snippets rather than the entire theory. This analysis has highlighted interesting dimensions of the poetry that would have been missed had it not been for the supporting gaze of Lacan. Intricate themes of identity, desire and ideals emerged as a result of, as Langer states, point of reference thinking and openness to new ideas. The mantra for this essay stems from a quote, the origin of which I cannot quite remember, that states: “be quick to see where religious people are right, make use of what they offer.” It is obvious to see where religion is wrong and any literal reading of the Bible elucidates this dilemma. However, one should not discard the entirety of Christianity on the synecdoche of Jonah being swallowed by a fish; conversely, one should ask what can be learned from the Bible as a whole and how values such as solidarity and morality can be found and learned from it. This rhetoric should also be considered when using theory, especially one as criticised as psychoanalysis. The incestuous and patriarchal tendencies of the theory are immediately disagreeable for some, but this should not invalidate the elements of the theory that are seminal and illuminating. Ask not what is wrong with psychoanalysis but what can be learned from it instead. In view of the filter bubble and Langer’s literate thinking, this is the approach teachers should try to instil in the classroom and reflects the goal of this essay. All of the theory and analysis cannot and, probably should not, be used in the classroom, but there are clear empathetic lessons that can be learnt from a psychoanalytical approach. There is a clear didactic advantage in “cherry picking” interesting aspects of a theory that can inspire new ideas in the classroom. The ideas of the mirror stage and an ideal-ich appears very relevant; do we identify with ourselves, or with what others want us to be?

Furthermore, with the latest developments in social media, the concept of an imaginary “I” is becoming more and more pertinent; is the online version of ourselves reality, or a photo-shopped, filtered and unattainable ideal-ich? This is the analytical element that seems most transferable and usable in a didactic setting as there is not as much background information required as the other aspects, such as
the Imaginary contra the Symbolic order. As we determined in the analysis, we can find concealed dimensions of desire when we ask *Che vuoi?*

It seems appropriate to return to Shelley in order to conclude this didactic reflection. But first; this essay commenced with a description of the *filter bubble* and how the current state of media and technology feeds us a self-perpetuating view of the world. The role of the teacher must be to combat this phenomenon, to bring in new ideas that challenge and provoke meaning in motion within the pupils. Teachers can spark a change in pupils by introducing poetry and new theories. One of the aims of the curriculum is the empathetic development of pupils and this is the raison d’être of poetry! Shelley describes this aspect as such:

… Poetry acts in another divine manner. It awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar; it reproduces all that it represents, and the impersonations clothed in its Elysian light stand thenceforward in the minds of those who have once contemplated them, as memorials of that gentle and exalted content which extends itself over all thoughts and actions with which it coexists (Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry” 844).

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16 What do you want?
5 Conclusion

This essay has raised a number of questions in regard to using theory and, specifically, psychoanalysis in the classroom. It has affirmed the value of psychoanalytical method and theory in literary analysis by revealing a number of compelling aspects about the poems “To a Skylark” and “Ode to the West Wind.” The analysis of the poetry was divided into the readable and the unreadable. As a result, the interpretative dimension of psychoanalysing illuminated the role of the Imaginary and Symbolic orders in shaping the readable poetic content. Furthermore, the limitations of language and the despair of human existence, as symbolised through the fragmented body, are shown to be major themes in the poems. It was by virtue of examining the performative and declarative dimensions of the language and the significance of the pathetic fallacy that the unreadable dimensions of the poetry were elucidated. The difference between the declarative and performative dimension was presented as the separation of the subject of the statement and the enunciation of the subject. The performative dimension of the poem indicated a humble and timid speaker, whilst the declarative dimension revealed a sense of arrogance and hubris. The Lacanian reading of the pathetic fallacy indicated the manifestation of desire in the poetry. The speaker’s desire is demonstrated by the phantasmatic representation of the Skylark and the West Wind and their status as objet petit a in the signifying chain.

The didactic reflection of this essay discussed the possible correlation between using literary theory in the classroom and achieving Judith A. Langer’s goal of literate thinking. This reflection argued the importance of introducing alternative perspectives to pupils and emphasised the necessity helping pupils to look beyond the myopic glare of individualisation. The Lacanian concepts of identity, language and desire are all topics that can resonate with the pupils and work in tandem with the empathetic aims of the curriculum. Whilst all of the analytical and theoretical aspects are not realistically usable in a classroom, the method of analyst and analysand can be very interesting idea to implement in school. Similarly, the difference between the performative and declarative dimension of discourse is another topic that could be very enlightening for pupils. Future research could include similar studies with different theories, such as Marxist or structuralist literary criticism. Furthermore, it would be interesting to perform a case study on the proposals established in this study to determine whether or not they would have the desired effect on the pupils.
To conclude, the introduction of this essay presented parallels between Shelley’s prescribed role of the poet and the role of the teacher. If the role of the poet is to change the world through aesthetic transformation, then the role of the teacher should be to broaden the horizons of their pupils. Teachers should function as cultural beacons, constantly introducing new ideas and poking at the insulating bubbles that surround the pupils’ perceptions of the surrounding world. Whether it be by presenting 19th century poetry or Delphic theories, the formation of democratic citizens should be considered with literature in mind. It is by rigorously waving different theories and perspectives in front of the pupils that the bubble of individualisation can be burst. This constant sense of renewal and evolution should also extend to the teachers themselves.
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