

Romantic Prose and Poetry

An Overview

Ishfaq Hussain Bhatt

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I dedicate this work
To
Mr. Ishtiaq Ahmad Bhat
&
Mr. Shafqat Shafi Hussain Lone
Without whose resolute encouragement,
It would have been very difficult to finish the book.

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*Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service!
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!
We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves!
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
—He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!
(The Lost Leader by Robert Browning)*

1. INTRODUCTION

The book, *Romantic Prose and Poetry: An Overview*, aims to address the subject under investigation - Prose and Poetry in Romantic age - in a plain, unostentatious, simple and lucid manner. The main objective of the book is to talk about the Romantic Movement and literature produced by poets, essayists, novelists and critics associated with this movement. The style of the work is, by and large, conversational, straightforward and plain. The purpose of employing a conversational, effortless and simple style and diction is to appeal to students of English literature who find it very difficult and arduous to go through, and comprehend, books written by foreign authors. The book, to begin with, provides various definitions of Romanticism, in order to help the readers gain an accurate and deep understanding of the term. Furthermore, the book also provides considerable information about the evolution of the movement by alluding to various historical events that ultimately led to the emergence and development of the Romantic Movement in English literature. The book not only talks about the evolution of the movement but also outlines the main features, characteristics, and traits that are very seminal for understanding Romantic Movement. The subject matter of the book also includes a detailed analysis of the main works produced during the Romantic age. The book discusses works produced by writers like, Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey, John Keats, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley, Walter Savage Landor, etc. The book also addresses some very important terms like negative capability, fancy and imagination, etc. For the convenience of the readers, and in order to make them fully understand the subject under investigation, comparison has been made between Romanticism and Neoclassicism at regular intervals. The book as such, attempts to present an overview of the Romantic Movement in English literature – its evolution, development, literary works produced in this period, approach/style, and techniques adopted and employed by the writers associated with the Romantic Movement.

2. THE SUBJECT DEFINED

Let us start our discussion by quoting some definitions of the term Romanticism in order to gain an accurate as well as, deep understanding of the term:

“A literary, artistic, and philosophical movement originating in the 18th century, characterized chiefly by a reaction against neoclassicism and an emphasis on the imagination and emotions, and marked especially in English literature by sensibility and the use of autobiographical material, an exaltation of the primitive and the common man, an appreciation of external nature, an interest in the remote, a predilection for melancholy, and the use in poetry of older verse forms.”¹

“Romanticism (also known as the Romantic era) was an artistic, literary, musical and intellectual movement that originated in Europe toward the end of the 18th century, and in most areas was at its peak in the approximate period from 1800 to 1850. Romanticism was characterized by its emphasis on emotion and individualism as well as glorification of all the past and nature, preferring the medieval rather than the classical. It was partly a reaction to the Industrial Revolution, the aristocratic social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment, and the scientific rationalization of nature—all components of modernity. It was embodied most strongly in the visual arts, music, and literature, but had a major impact on historiography, education, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. It had a significant and complex effect on politics, with romantic thinkers influencing liberalism, radicalism, conservatism and nationalism.

The movement emphasized intense emotion as an authentic source of aesthetic experience, placing new emphasis on such emotions as apprehension, horror and terror, and awe—especially that experienced in confronting the new aesthetic categories of the sublimity and beauty of nature. It elevated folk art and ancient custom to something noble, but also spontaneity as a desirable

characteristic (as in the musical impromptu). In contrast to the Rationalism and Classicism of the Enlightenment, Romanticism revived medievalism and elements of art and narrative perceived as authentically medieval in an attempt to escape population growth, early urban sprawl, and industrialism.”²

“The importance the Romantics placed on emotion is summed up in the remark of the German painter Caspar David Friedrich, "the artist's feeling is his law".³

“A movement in the arts and literature that originated in the late 18th century, emphasizing inspiration, subjectivity, and the primacy of the individual.”

“Romanticism was a reaction against the order and restraint of classicism and neoclassicism, and a rejection of the rationalism which characterized the Enlightenment. In music, the period embraces much of the 19th century, with composers including Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, and Wagner. Writers exemplifying the movement include Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats; among romantic painters are such stylistically diverse artists as William Blake, J. M. W. Turner, Delacroix, and Goya.”⁴

“Romanticism is the artistic movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which was concerned with the expression of the individual's feelings and emotions.”⁵

“A movement in art and literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in revolt against the Neoclassicism of the previous centuries...The German poet Friedrich Schlegel, who is given credit for first using the term romantic to describe literature, defined it as "literature depicting emotional matter in an imaginative form." This is as accurate a general definition as can be accomplished, although Victor Hugo's phrase "liberalism in literature" is also apt. Imagination, emotion, and freedom are certainly the focal points of romanticism. Any list of particular characteristics of the literature of

romanticism includes subjectivity and an emphasis on individualism; spontaneity; freedom from rules; solitary life rather than life in society; the beliefs that imagination is superior to reason and devotion to beauty; love of and worship of nature; and fascination with the past, especially the myths and mysticism of the middle ages.

English poets: William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats

American poets: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allen Poe, Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman.”⁶

“In *The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal* (1948) F.L. Lucas counted 11,396 definitions of 'romanticism'. In *Classic, Romantic and Modern* (1961) Barzun cites examples of synonymous usage for romantic which show that it is perhaps the most remarkable example of a term which can mean many things according to personal and individual needs.”⁷

“Romanticism, attitude or intellectual orientation that characterized many works of literature, painting, music, architecture, criticism, and historiography in Western civilization over a period from the late 18th to the mid-19th century. Romanticism can be seen as a rejection of the precepts of order, calm, harmony, balance, idealization, and rationality that typified Classicism in general and late 18th-century Neoclassicism in particular. It was also to some extent a reaction against the Enlightenment and against 18th-century rationalism and physical materialism in general. Romanticism emphasized the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental.”⁸

“Romanticism was an artistic and literary movement that originated in Europe toward the end of the 18th century and peaked in the first half of the 19th century. Romanticism was characterized by its emphasis on emotion and individualism as well as glorification of all the past and of nature. In English

literature, the key figures of the Romantic movement were a group of poets whose works still remain hugely popular. They include Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Lord Byron, P. B. Shelley and the much older William Blake. The best known American romantic writer is Edgar Allan Poe who is known for his dark romanticism; while in France, Victor Marie Hugo was the leading figure of the movement. Some of the best known poetry in the English language comes from the Romantic era.”⁹

3. BACKGROUND

It is an established fact that English literature cannot be isolated and alienated from the events taking place all over the world in general, and Europe in particular. Whatever happens in English literature is always related to whatever has already happened in the neighbouring European countries, particularly, France and Germany – countries just adjacent to England. Therefore, all the literary movements that we have in Europe, they are in one way or the other, interlinked with one another - a movement may start in Germany and it may spread to France and England; it may start in Italy and spread in other countries like England and France. So, that is one thing that we need to understand. The fact is that, we cannot understand a literary movement properly if we try to isolate it from the happenings and events occurring in Europe and European literature.

In English literature, there has always been a sort of, action and reaction - there is an action that occurs in a particular country, and there is also a reaction against it initiated by literary or historical figures, writers, journalists, politicians, et cetera which spreads in other countries as well. And the same is the case with most of the literary movements in English literature. In some areas an action occurs and there is a reaction to it, so on and so forth. This results in a chain of actions and reactions. When we analyze the history of English literature, we see that the progression of English literature, its development, its evolution has been through its principles of opposites - reacting against each other and progress taking place. That is like the Newtonian Third law of motion about action and reaction. English literature also is a result of actions and reactions. So, friction will come as a reaction and the movement takes place because of that friction. If the opposition was not there, there would be no progression. In this way we can develop a link between the statement of Newton and the progression of English literature. We can also see that how close the statement about literature by William Blake "*without Contraries is no progress.*"

Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate are necessary to Human existence."¹⁰ is to Newton's law of action and reaction. Here, we have the comparison between statements in literature by William Blake and in science by Isaac Newton. Newton and William Blake lived in the same period and here, what is important is that, we can have two similar movements, in two different fields like science and literature, occurring simultaneously, in the same period. This establishes our statement that English literary movements were more or less, interlinked with, or influenced by other literary movements and happenings occurring in different European countries.

4. HISTORICAL EVENTS INFLUENCING ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

Romanticism, as a literary movement, did not come about on its own, there were many historical events and literary figures, thinkers, philosophers who influenced it. It, actually, began in Germany with Hegel and Kant - they were the thinkers who brought about, in the closing years of the 18th century and beginning years of the 19th century, the thought/idea of social justice, idea of equality, idea of individualism, and the idea of going back to nature. Therefore, the scheme about this became germinated in Germany. Later in France, we have thinkers and writers like Rousseau and Voltaire. Rousseau was the worshiper of the idea of natural justice, idea of equality, autonomy of the individual. Voltaire was, of course, more politically and historically oriented, and he wrote about the change that was coming about historically from Germany to France, and ultimately to England. This is how things generally travelled in Europe from one country to the other, and that is the reason why you cannot look at literature of any of these countries in isolation, you cannot study English literature without relating it to the French or the German literature. Therefore, it may be about general ideas of life and literature, it may be about writing of poetry, drama or the novel. We have to place it, and relate it, to the larger European context because the entire Europe for these considerations - socio-political, economic, literary - has to be considered one large unit and if we try to detach the literature of England, for example, from the rest of Europe, we will be misunderstanding many things, half understanding many things. So, for a proper appreciation, for a proper understanding of English literature including the Romantic rebellion, it has to be placed in the larger context of Europe.

Therefore, as far as the Romantic Movement is concerned, as has already been pointed out, it was not confined to England only - It had actually started outside of England in Germany. After spreading to France, it finally spread to England. Another important factor that we need to understand is that, we see a link between the historical events and the literary movements. So far as the Romantic literature and movement is concerned, there were certain events of history that influenced it. The first major event that influenced Romantic literature was the American War of Independence which began in 1775 and ended in 1783. It was followed by the very famous French Revolution of 1789 where the royalty, dedicated the rulers, were removed and each individual got his share in the governance of the country. These two events greatly influenced the literature produced during the Romantic period. Therefore, while dealing with Romanticism, and literature produced during this period, these two important events are to be taken into consideration because they had a very deterministic, enormous and great influence on the mindset of the writers of the period. As has already been mentioned, the Romantic Movement actually had started in Germany. There we had the Schlegel brothers – Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel and August Wilhelm Schlegel – who played a very seminal role in the promotion of Romanticism. Friedrich Schlegel in particular inspired S.T. Coleridge who got in touch with him and looked closely into the ingredients and features of this new movement and brought those ideas back to England and thus from England these very ideas travelled to America, so on and so forth. So, that is how literary movements travel from one place to another - from Germany to France to England to America. In Germany the two important figures in connection with this literary movement Kant and Hegel. Their philosophy was essentially a philosophy of idealism and that is essentially the nature of the Romantic writers and Romantic way of writing literature.

Romanticism as such, was as reaction against materialism of the neoclassical age. Romantic writers revolted against the promotion of materialism by the neoclassical writers, philosophers, scholars, et cetera. During the 17th and

18th century, the period of neoclassical movement, there was dominance of materialism, and rightly so, because the scientific inventions were also, at that time, confined to this Newtonian company and they had discovered some physical laws. Consequently, it was focus on physical sciences during the neoclassical period which was reflected in the writings of neoclassical writers as well. But, as we move from the neoclassical materialism to the Romantic spiritualism and idealism, things underwent a drastic change - the focus now was not on the external life, on the surface life, on material life but the life inside, the focus was on the internal because the view of the Romantic writers was that life is organic - things are linked up with one another and the entire universe, as well as, the entire life of an individual is an expression of something spiritual inside them, and that the outer expression of the materialism was nothing but an expression of what is there inside. Therefore, this was something very new, it was not there earlier. Earlier, material reality was on the surface and as such, it was materialism that was emphasized in literary writings and movements. The focus of such writings was on the material reality, on the surface which propounded that there is nothing behind or nothing before. Therefore, the Romantic writers revolted against this state because they believed that you do not have to be stuck up with the surface alone in fact, you have to be more concerned with what is behind it. Consequently, they laid emphasis on the spiritual aspect of life, literature and art. They propounded that behind the surface reality there is a greater reality which is spiritual, emotional, imaginary, ideal, which has very little to do with what is there on the surface in fact, what is there on the surface is nothing but an expression of what is there in the inside so this is the organic way of life, this is the biological view of life, not the physical, or the material. Nothing can be viewed in isolation and it cannot be isolated because everything has to be looked at in terms of its relations with other aspects, etc. So, Romantic Movement in English literature came from its neighboring countries like Germany and France. Romantic movement was largely an individualistic moment and it was in sharp contrast with the

neoclassical movement and literature produced by the writers associated with this movement because their writings were based on generalization, general principles and they worked it out in terms of already established and socially acceptable rules, regulations and conventions. But now you could not split any reality into, some kind of physical surface material divisions, its nature being organic, it has to be viewed as a whole, you cannot look into two parts so that is why its impact on literature was that the Romantic lyrics, the Romantic lyrical Poems by nature were comparatively shorter because emotions cannot be sustained for long. Hence, the Romantic lyric poetry is in the form of short poem, it is lyrical and since lyric, just like the songs of a bird, is very short. And that is what Romantic lyric poetry is.

5. ROMANTIC PROSE

(i) PROSE IN THE ROMANTIC AGE

One thing which is basic about the Romantic prose and, is same about Romantic literature in general is that, it is innovative, it is individualistic intuitive, it is imaginative. All these factors mark a sharp difference from the classical or neoclassical poetry or writing in general. Neoclassical poetry and prose was socially bound, it was politically bound, it was determined by rules and conventions: there were rules laid down for every genre - it may be poem, it may be drama, it may be novel, criticism, and the like. There you could not transgress the rules - you had to write within the established rules and conventions. You had to move and write within the rules. In other words, you had to move within the bounds of rules. On the contrary, in the Romantic age, there is total individuality - each individual has his or her freedom to respond to the poem or any other literary writing in accordance with his or her own best understanding. So, there is this element of individuality: no two poets, no two prose writers, no two critics in this age are alike; they may be similar but they are not alike because, they follow their own instincts, they follow their own philosophy, they follow their own understanding of what literature is. So, this is the basic characteristic and feature of, Romantic literature in general and Romantic prose in particular.

Now, so far as the major practitioners of Romantic prose are concerned, there are many writers who, almost every writer of worth the name, during these years, wrote one thing or the other, and are all very important in their respective ways. In this book we shall focus on the major prose writers during this period.

(ii) CHARLES AND MARY LAMB

To begin with, one of the names that come to my mind is, Charles Lamb. One good thing about Charles Lamb is that he did not publish anything under his own name alone – for it was always Charles and Mary Lamb - his sister. So, they published together, they did it together, they always would divide other works between themselves and do it. Therefore, there are similarities of style between the two - the intent and purposes being the same, the interest being the same. Since there are many similarities between the two of them, brother and sister, they are always mentioned together. The two siblings, Mary Lamb and Charles Lamb, were born in around 1775 and died in 1834. Therefore, between these years we have a brother and a sister writing very engaging, artistic and interesting pieces of literature. One of the most seminal works of the Romantic period, of the romantic prose to be precise, is the work known as *Essays of Elia*, published in 1823. These essays became so popular among the people that the collection earned Charles Lamb the title of Prince of English essays. These essays were originally contributed to *London Magazine*. Later, they were published as a separate book. These essays have become so popular and important that whenever we have a course in English prose, we will always have the *Essays of Elia* prescribed. These essays have earned Charles Lamb an international critical acclaim.

When we study and go through the *Essays of Elia*, there we come across two characters namely, Bridget and Elia. These two characters are, in a way, pseudonyms for Mary and John Lamb - John Lamb was the brother of Charles Lamb. Since it is the siblings of Charles Lamb who have been made the characters in the essays, therefore, the pseudonyms are used as Bridget Elia and James Elia.

- ***Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago:***

In his collection of essays, *Essays of Elia*, there are many memorable essays, but some are very popular, they are generally prescribed in B.A. Honours and other syllabi and they are liked by most readers. Among the most famous essays written by Charles Lamb in this collection is the essay titled "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago." The Christ's Hospital, mentioned in the title of the essay, is not a hospital as such, because it is actually a charity school run by the Christ Hospital and, it was in this Charity School that those who could not afford the education of the public schools like Harvard, etc, used to study. Public schools were, actually meant for the sons and daughters of the Lords, the rich. On the contrary, the children of the ordinary citizens had to study in the Charity schools. However, in spite of studying in these ordinary school, Christ's Hospital, Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb turned out to be the greatest writers in the romantic period. What Charles Lamb does in his essays is that, he recalls his days at the school - how he studied there, what kind of atmosphere and climate there used to be, and what kind of fellow students they had. The essay as such, throws an immense light on overall atmosphere in the school and how Charles Lamb and S.T. Coleridge grew up in the atmosphere and environment of the Christ Hospital Charity School. Since both S. T. Coleridge and Charles Lamb hailed from poor families, they studied in the Christ Hospital Charity School. This essay talks about the friendship between two prominent Romantic writers, S.T. Coleridge and Charles Lamb and, how they spent their days in the school. It is because of its subject matter i. e. talking about the lives of the most prominent Romantic writers, together with the way the subject matter has elegantly and artistically been presented by Charles Lamb in this essay, which makes the essay one of the very popular and important essays written in the history of English literature.

- **TWO RACES OF MEN**

Charles Lamb, as has already been mentioned, has composed many essays. However, the essay that I would be dealing with now, is a very popular piece of literature. The title of the essay is "Two Races of Men". Two Races of Men, when we compare it with the essay that has already been discussed, it comparatively is a shorter essay. It is very humorous because in this particular essay Charles Lamb states that there are only two races of men - one is the lender and the other is the borrower. Since there are people who borrow things from other people and there are people who lend things, particularly money, to other people, he argues that there are only two classes or races of men:

“The human species, according to the best theory I can form of it, is composed of two distinct races, the men who borrow, and the men who lend. To these two original diversities may be reduced all those impertinent classifications of Gothic and Celtic tribes, white men, black men, red men. All the dwellers upon earth, “Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites,” flock hither, and do naturally fall in with one or other of these primary distinctions. The infinite superiority of the former, which I choose to designate as the great race, is discernible in their figure, port, and a certain instinctive sovereignty. The latter are born degraded.”¹¹

He brings in his friend S.T. Coleridge and he says that Coleridge belongs to the race of borrowers because he used to borrow books from everybody, from all his friends, because he could not afford to buy himself the books. He would borrow books from others but, Charles Lamb says that, he would borrow, borrow and borrow and never return.

“Thus furnished, by the very act of disfurnishment; getting rid of the cumbersome luggage of riches, more apt (as one sings):

To slacken virtue, and abate her edge, Than prompt her to do aught may merit praise,

he set forth, like some Alexander, upon his great enterprise, “borrowing and to borrow!” In his periegesis, or triumphant progress throughout this island, it has been calculated that he laid a tythe part of the inhabitants under contribution. I reject this estimate as greatly exaggerated:—but having had the honour of accompanying my friend, divers times, in his perambulations about this vast city, I own I was greatly struck at first with the prodigious number of faces we met, who claimed a sort of respectful acquaintance with us. He was one day so obliging as to explain the phenomenon.”¹²

This is what makes the essay a prose piece replete with humour - showing through humour the chief quality of his friend, Coleridge - one of the most popular poets in the entire history of English literature. In this essay, Charles Lamb argues and thereby implies that, Coleridge was too much given to reading books, no wonder that he turned out to be a philosopher, a philosophic prose writer and, he produced one of the most famous and seminal texts of the Romantic period i.e. “Biographia Literaria” - a compendium of biographical material, philosophical material – which has been a very seminal book of literary criticism, and has had a great influence on the literary theory and criticism.

“With such sources, it was a wonder how he contrived to keep his treasury always empty. He did it by force of an aphorism, which he had often in his mouth, that “money kept longer than three days stinks.” So he made use of it while it was fresh. A good part he drank away (for he was an excellent toss-pot), some he gave away, the rest he threw away, literally tossing and hurling it violently from him—as boys do burrs, or as if it had been infectious,—into ponds, or ditches, or deep holes,—inscrutable cavities of the earth ;—or he would bury it (where he would never seek it again) by a river’s side under some hank, which (he would facetiously observe) paid no interest—but out away from him it must go peremptorily, as Hagar’s offspring into the wilderness, while it was sweet. He never missed it. The streams were perennial which fed his fisc.

When new supplies became necessary, the first person that had the felicity to fall in with him, friend or stranger, was sure to contribute to the deficiency.”¹³

He again praises his friend by saying:

“When I think of this man; his fiery glow of heart: his swell of feeling: how magnificent, how ideal he was; how great at the midnight hour; and when I compare with him the companions with whom I have associated since, I grudge the saving of a few idle ducats, and think that I am fallen into the society of lenders, and little men.”¹⁴

He also praises him by stating:

“One justice I must do my friend, that if he sometimes, like the sea, sweeps away a treasure, at another time, sea-like, he throws up as rich an equivalent to match it...Reader, if haply thou art blessed with a moderate collection, be shy of showing it; or if thy heart overfloweth to lend them, lend thy books; but let it be to such a one as S. T. C. —he will return them (generally anticipating the time appointed) with usury: enriched with annotations, tripling their value. I have had experience.”¹⁵

Biographia Literaria has, in a way, earned S.T. Coleridge a universal and international critical acclaim. We call it compendium because in this particular book, Coleridge has mixed together several things - that was the manner of the Romantic prose writing. Almost all of the Romantic writers were mixing different genres and literary forms because they were not hung up by the neo-classical rules and conventions - they were free to write about anything and everything, using their imaginative faculty without any concern for the already established rules and conventions for writing prose and poetry. Unlike the neoclassical writers, their works were not already decided, predetermined to be a piece of prose or a poem. Unlike the neoclassical writers, they were not inclined to write in the ready-made form available, just like a bottle or a box, whether it is square or round and, you have to put something in it, and it takes the shape of

the box or the bottle. They were not writing in that manner, in fact, they questioned this. Neo-classical writers used to conform to the already established rules and conventions of writing poetry and prose and, in the Neoclassical writings, everything would be measured, the total shape, every individual line, rhyme scheme, etc. But on the contrary, in the Romantic writings, there are no such established or outside rules governing the piece of literature written by a writer. In Romantic literature, it is the genius within a poet - his own individual self, his own genius, his own intuition - that determines the kind and style of writing. Therefore, it is entirely the intuition, individual imagination that shapes a piece of writing in the Romantic literature.

USE OF HUMOUR IN ROMANTIC AND NEOCLASSICAL WORKS

Similarly, we have these essays by Charles and Mary Lamb recalling their own personal life at a school or at any other place, and portraits of their friends in the school like S.T. Coleridge. Humour, of course, is the hallmark of these essays. However, it has to be taken into consideration and thereby acknowledged that, it is not the kind of humour that we find in the neoclassical writers, which is the same everywhere - you may read one writer or more writers, it will be a template or a formula-kind of humour. Therefore, no change, no difference can be seen in the humour used by the neoclassical writers. On the contrary, as far as the humour used by the Romantic writers is concerned, it is, or it will, be typical of every writer. The humour used by Charles Lamb in the essay *Two Races of Men* is quintessentially romantic. He portrays the life of his friend, a very renowned poet in English literature, S.T. Coleridge. By using this literary device in this essay to its perfection, Charles Lamb conveys to us that how great and deterministic reader Coleridge was - since he could not afford to buy the books himself, he would rather borrow from others. But once he borrowed the books, he would not bother to return those books to their owners. This essay, in a way,

throws an immense light on the life of S.T. Coleridge as far as his habit of not returning the books is concerned.

- ***Mrs. Battles Opinion on Whist***

“Mrs. Battles Opinion on Whist” is another remarkable essay composed by Charles Lamb which again is a very humorous essay in that, the kind of funny things that we have in this essay and the kind of opinion that she had and the fact that no one on earth could change to those opinions.

- ***Dream Children: A Reverie***

Another remarkable essay written by Charles Lamb is Dream Children: A Reverie – a very different kind of an essay. This, in a way, manifests the variety, individuality that can be found in the Romantic literature in general and, Romantic prose in particular. This manifestation of variety, individualism is a typical feature of the literature produced during Romantic period.

Since it would be absurd to talk about the artistic and quintessentially romantic presentation beauty and emotions in the essay without quoting some lines from the text itself, let us go through some important lines/sentences of the essay:

“Here Alice put out one of her dear mother’s looks, too tender to be called upbraiding. Then I went on to say, how religious and how good their great-grandmother Field was, how beloved and respected by everybody, though she was not indeed the mistress of this great house, but had only the charge of it (and yet in some respects she might be said to be the mistress of it too) committed to her by the owner, who preferred living in a newer and more fashionable mansion which he had purchased somewhere in the adjoining county; but still she lived in it in a manner as if it had been her own, and kept up the dignity of the great house... Then I told what a tall, upright, graceful person their great-grandmother Field once was; and how in her youth she was

esteemed the best dancer—here Alice’s little right foot played an involuntary movement, till upon my looking grave, it desisted—the best dancer, I was saying, in the county, till a cruel disease, called a cancer, came, and bowed her down with pain; but it could never bend her good spirits, or make them stoop, but they were still upright, because she was so good and religious.”¹⁶

“The essay is in one paragraph of over four pages: the writer imagines telling his 'little ones', called Alice and John, some tales of their great-grandmother Field and her house, and of his own courtship, in hope and eventual despair, for another Alice before, at the end of the essay, mysteriously.”¹⁷

“Then I told them how for seven long years, in hope sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W——n; and, as much as children could understand, I explained to them what coyness, and difficulty, and denial meant in maidens—when suddenly, turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of re-presentment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: “We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice call Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence, and a name”—and immediately awaking, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor armchair, where I had fallen asleep, with the faithful Bridget unchanged by my side—but John L. (or James Elia) was gone forever.

And while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mourn-ful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon

*me the effects of speech: "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all."*¹⁸

The tendency to use imagination, to imagine a life beyond this worldly life and to dream of something which does not exist anywhere on the earth or around us is what is Quintessential romantic. This feature can very well be seen in the essay *Dream Children* written by Charles Lamb. The most striking thing shown in the essay is that Lamb, though a lifelong bachelor, longed for family life which he was incapable of attaining. In a strange fit of passion he imagined all this in a dream-like state.

- ***The Praise of Chimney Sweepers***

And then we have a very interesting essay- *The Praise of Chimney Sweepers*. In this essay, another feature of the Romantic literature gets manifested - romantic literature besides its being individualistic, imaginative, and intuitive, was also socially inclined towards the lower sections of the society. The following statement exemplifies his appreciation of the chimney sweepers:

*"I reverence these young Africans of our own growth — these almost clergy imps, who sport their cloth without assumption; and from their little pulpits (the tops of chimneys), in the nipping air of a December morning, preach a lesson of patience to mankind."*¹⁹

*Reader, if thou meetest one of these small gentry in thy early rambles, it is good to give him a penny. It is better to give him two-pence. If it be starving weather, and to the proper troubles of his hard occupation, a pair of kibed heels (no unusual accompaniment) be superadded, the demand on thy humanity will surely rise to a tester."*²⁰

During the neoclassical age, the focus was on the upper classes, feudalists. The mindset of the neoclassical writers was feudalistic - they were committed to feudal ideology and as a result, they would write in praise of those people – the

upper class and, they would make fun of the lower classes, the servant class, and so on. They would eulogize the upper class and they would present a distorted and derogatory picture of the people belonging to lower classes, in order to evoke moods and fun. Since they were committed to uphold feudalism et cetera, they used to make fun of the customs of the lower class to the degree that, the lower class during the neoclassical period symbolised something funny and satirical. On the contrary, when we go through the literature of the Romantic period - the Romantic writers show sympathy for the lower classes and the subject of matter of their works is focused on the lower middle class and the people belonging to the countryside. Here, the rural life and rural customs, rituals and traditions become important and they no longer tend to appear satirical and funny but, on the contrary, they are presented in a very positive light. Consequently, in the essay *The Praise of Chimney Sweepers or Dream Children*, we can see Charles Lamb portraying a very sympathetic picture of the two Chimney sweepers and drawing our pity, our compassion for them. When we imagine these boys and the way they have to work hard, and work for hours together, not for a very sophisticated and posh kind of a work but, on the country, a dirty kind of work, whereby they are covered with dirt and black soot, we tend to appreciate and develop a sense of belongingness for them:

*“I like to meet a sweep — understand me — not a grown sweeper — old chimney-sweepers are by no means attractive — but one of those tender novices, blooming through their first nigritude, the maternal washings not quite effaced from the cheek — such as come forth with the dawn, or somewhat earlier, with their little professional notes sounding like the peep peep of a young sparrow; or liker to the matin lark should I pronounce them, in their aerial ascents not seldom anticipating the sun-rise?”*²¹

They, being very poor, have to live in those conditions - working very hard to make both ends meet, by not being able to cover their bodies from the dirt while sweeping the chimney, this portrayal and presentation of the working class

of a society makes us appreciate the class and develop sympathy for the class in the real sense. Thus, Charles Lamb being a typical Romantic presents them in a very positive light. We, as the readers of the works like this, develop a kind of sympathy, even empathy, for such people and which, in turn, affects and influences our attitude towards the lower classes. So, this again is a very imperative feature of Romantic literature – it is against the feudal mindset of the neoclassical writers. When we read the literature of Romantic period, we come to the conclusion that the poets and prose writers of the period are more socially committed to the lower sections, to the lowest strata of society. The chimney sweepers, in the essay *The Praise of Chimney Sweepers*, who would have appeared to us as ugly and repulsive, had they been presented by a Neo-classical writer, appear, on the contrary, to us as heroes and we cannot help but appreciate their approach towards life, towards overcoming the hardships that they have to face and presenting a very appreciable and symbolic models of honesty. The celebration and appreciation of the work done by the chimney sweepers in the essay *Chimney sweepers*, implies that the Romantic writers upheld the rural life and people and, revolted against the feudalistic society and the upper class.

- ***A Dissertation Upon Roasting Pig***

Another very remarkable, artistic and quintessentially romantic piece of literature is the essay entitled *A Dissertation Upon Roasting Pig*. In this essay Charles Lamb presents the meat eaters who have roasted meat. What makes this essay humorous is that since there are many types of meat available but they prefer this meat – the meat of pigs:

“China pigs have been esteemed a luxury all over the East, from the remotest periods that we read of. Bo-bo was in the utmost consternation, as you may think, not so much for the sake of the tenement, which his father and he could easily build up again with a few dry branches, and the labour of an hour or two, at any time, as for the loss of the pigs.”²²

“His father might lay on, but he could not beat him from his pig, till he had fairly made an end of it, when, becoming a little more sensible of his situation, something like the following dialogue ensued:

“You graceless whelp, what have you got there devouring? Is it not enough that you have burnt me down three houses with your dog’s tricks,—and be hanged to you!—but you must be eating fire, and I know not what! What have you got there, I say?”

“Oh, father, the pig, the pig! Do come and taste how nice the burnt pig eats.”

The ears of Ho-ti tingled with horror. He cursed his son, and he cursed himself, that ever he should beget a son that should eat burnt pig.

Bo-bo, whose scent was wonderfully sharpened since morning, soon raked out another pig, and fairly rending it asunder, thrust the lesser half by main force into the fists of Ho-ti, still shouting out, “Eat, eat, eat the burnt pig, father! Only taste! Oh, Lord!” with such-like barbarous ejaculations, cramming all the while as if he would choke.”²³

Another feature that adds to the humour of the essay is the way Charles Lamb has given details about how a pig is roasted to make it delicious for eating, when you should stop roasting, and the like. Charles Lamb's remarkable and artistic use of humour gets exemplified in the following lines:

“There is no flavour comparable, I will contend, to that of the crisp, tawny, well-watched, not over-roasted, crackling, as it is well called—the very teeth are invited to their share of the pleasure at this banquet in overcoming the coy, brittle resistance—with the adhesive oleaginous—oh, call it not fat!—but an indefinable sweetness growing up to it—the tender blossoming of fat—fat cropped in the bud—taken in the shoot—in the first innocence—the cream and quintessence of the child-pig’s yet pure food—the lean, no lean, but a kind of animal manna—or, rather, fat and lean (if it must be so) so blended and running

into each other, that both together make but one ambrosian result, or common substance."²⁴

This exemplifies an essential characteristic/feature of the Romantic literature that the Romantic writers not bound by any artificial and established rules and conventions, could write about anything and everything. It is this feature of romantic literature – being able to write about anything and everything and, not being bound by any publicly accepted norms, as was the case with the neoclassical literature, that makes it different from other literary movements. It is the variety, the individuality and not conforming to any publicly accepted norms and writing about anything and everything that makes romantic literature imaginative, intuitive and free from the established rules and conventions:

As far as the neoclassical age is concerned, in that age you could not write about anything and everything, you had to pick up a subject which was socially acceptable and which did not affect the sensibility of the ruling class and the authorities. But here in the Romantic age there is total freedom and scope for using individual imagination and here you could say anything about anything and, about anyone. In this essay, *A Dissertation Upon A Roasting Pig*, Charles Lamb takes makes use of the feature of nonconformity to the established rules and conventions, and writes about a very ordinary subject and presents it in a very humorous manner.

- ***Tales From Shakespeare***

Tales from Shakespeare is another seminal contribution to English literature by, brother and sister, Charles and Mary Lamb. The book is a collection of stories taken from Shakespeare's plays. The book aims to familiarize children with the works of the greatest writer in the entire history of English literature – Shakespeare. This work actually has been more popular and has, in a way, earned Charles and Mary Lamb, an international critical acclaim. The *Tales from Shakespeare* are wonderful summaries, prose summaries of the

plays of Shakespeare. Meant to familiarize the young with the writings of Shakespeare, they have been written in a very plain, simple and lucid style. They are very easy to understand because they have been written in a very simple diction which again was a feature of romantic poetry artistically and elegantly employed by Wordsworth - the representative Romantic poet. Since the common people/readers could not actually comprehend and understand Shakespeare's plays in their original Elizabethan language - you have to be an expert at understanding the meaning and decoding the language used by Shakespeare in this plays, you have to be very well versed with the Elizabethan English, its dramatic practices and techniques, Charles and Mary Lamb try to compose the tales in a language that could be understood by the common masses. Therefore, this work of Mary and Charles lamb is a very seminal work so far as the elucidation/simplification of Shakespeare's plays is concerned. Therefore, in order to make the common people appreciate Shakespeare as a dramatist and, to make him most popular and to make his plays easier and accessible for the common people, Charles and Mary Lamb wrote short summaries of each play so that it is available accessible/readable just like a short story to them. Mary Lamb wrote the comedies and her brother took up the responsibility of writing tragedies. However, it has to be taken into consideration and thereby acknowledged that the details of Tales from Shakespeare written by Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb so appreciable and artistically engaging that one would not go to the original plays after reading them - they are so neatly done, so briefly and precisely done that the readers generally prefers reading them instead of watching or reading the plays for three hour because they can grasp and comprehend the essence of the play in a short span of time by reading the tails. The Tales from Shakespeare certainly are among one of the most popular works written in the period of Romanticism. Therefore, Tales from Shakespeare is another important book that Charles and Mary Lamb wrote, and that they have become so popular and likeable that even after some two hundred years, their works are still read and appreciated.

(iii) WILLIAM HAZLITT

Romantic age can be considered as the golden age in the history of English literature - here, we have variety of works, variety of themes, variety of almost everything concerned with literature. There are several other authors who also became very popular and wrote very artistic and engaging works. One of the prose writers and critics – very seminal as far as the Romantic prose is concerned - is William Hazlitt. William Hazlitt, in fact, had greater prestige because apart from being an essayist, he was a critic as well – he was writing magazines, he was bringing out his own publications, and the like. Now let us try to touch upon all of them, at least briefly, because they are equally important and no less than Charles Lamb.

- ***On Going a Journey***

William Hazlitt, apart from being a very good critic, was a critic of great repute. He has composed many essays which have earned him an international critical acclaim and recognition. *On Going a Journey* is a very important and very popular essay written by William Hazlitt. He talks about the pleasures of a morning walk and the enjoyment of nature and solitude:

"I like to go by myself. I can enjoy society in a room; but out of doors, nature is company enough for me. I am then never less lone than when alone...I cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country, I wish to vegetate like the country...I like solitude, when I give myself up to it, for the sake of solitude..."²⁵

- ***On the Fear of Death***

On the Fear of Death is another important essay written by William Hazlitt. As far as the fear of death is concerned, it is pretty obvious that everybody experiences it and nobody wants to have that day and everybody

wants to put it off as far as possible. This is the human tendency that people have fear and they do not want to die. Here, I would like to quote King Lear:

“Men must endure their going hence even as coming hither. Ripeness is all. Come on.”²⁶

It means that if you have no objection to your being born, why do you have objection to your going from here? So, that is the wisdom from King Lear, and the natural kind of instinct he describes here is, the fear of death.

- ***Other Essays Written by Hazlitt***

On Reading Old Books, My First Acquaintance with Poets, On the Feeling of Immortality in Youth, On Disagreeable People are some of the famous essays composed by William Hazlitt. On the Feeling of Immortality in Youth presents illusion among the youth that life is forever and they are not going to die, so on and so forth:

*“No young man believes he shall ever die. It was a saying of my brother's and a fine one. There is a feeling of Eternity in youth which makes us amends for everything. To be young is to be as one of the Immortals. One half of time indeed is spent -- the other half remains in store for us will all its countless treasures, for there is no line drawn, and we see no limit to our hopes and wishes. We make the coming age our own.”*²⁷

In the essay On Disagreeable People he talks about people you would not like to know, you would not like to sit with nor talk to them. So, we find all kinds of people in his essays. He has written another piece in which he argues about people you would like to know, people you would like to talk to and make friends with. William Hazlitt is better known as a literary critic who wrote on the characters of Shakespeare's plays and which is an important piece of literature in that he highlights the importance of each character in the Play.

Therefore, here it is the opposite. So, this kind of variety based on your moods, your feelings, your reveries, your dreams is that internal and inner stuff that Romantic writing is all about.

- ***The Spirit of the Age: Or, Contemporary Portraits***

Another important work of William Hazlitt is *The Spirit of the Age: Or, Contemporary Portraits*. It is a very significant work produced in the Romantic age in which Hazlitt presents character sketches of twenty five men who, according to him, represented significant trends in different fields in the Romantic age. Consequently it provides an artistic and vivid panorama of the Romantic age.

“*The Spirit of the Age: Or, Contemporary Portraits*”- a collection of character sketches of twenty five men, mostly British, who, according to William Hazlitt, represented significant trends in the literature, thought, and politics of his time. The year of publication of the book is 1825. *The Spirit of the Age: Or, Contemporary Portraits*, from the title itself suggests the portrayal of different personalities of the time in this work – poets, essayists, politicians, social reformers, novelists and his acquaintances. It has rightly been called his masterpiece and “the crowning ornament of Hazlitt’s career, and...one of the lasting glories of nineteenth-century criticism.”²⁸ The title of the work is very important because, for the first time in the history of English literature, any writer discovered that every age is dominated by a thing - a separate, a driving force or formula, dominating the concern of the age, and which is very true - the neoclassical was were governed by the social concerns of their time, the romantics were governed by their individual imagination, intuition and emotions. Therefore, that is the difference between the neoclassical and romantic writers. And William Hazlitt, being a critical mind and a leading one at that, tries to make out a case for the romantic age that, like any other age, it has a separate and distinct driving force of its own and therefore, by and large, naturally, all writers are moving towards the same goal and towards the same path - they may

not be doing precisely the same thing, but they are doing something very similar and they are not very dissimilar, nor poles apart from each other so, that is what the Spirit of the Age means. And in this work he gives us the contemporary portraits of many of his colleagues.

In this book, Hazlitt portrays the life and contribution of many poets, essayists, social reformers, thinkers, novelists and others. Here, we have portraits of Jeremy Bentham – the proponent of Utilitarianism; William Godwin – a social reformer and writer who advocated the idea of political justice, etc; S.T. Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Robert Southey, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron, etc. Since it is imperative to quote some of the observations made by Hazlitt about these important figures of his age, here they are:

"His works have been translated into French.

*They ought to be translated into English."*²⁹

*"The Spirit of the Age was never more fully shown than in its treatment of this writer—its love of paradox and change, its dastard submission to prejudice and to the fashion of the day."*³⁰

*"What is become of all this mighty heap of hope, of thought, of learning, and humanity? It has ended in swallowing doses of oblivion and in writing paragraphs in the Courier.—Such, and so little is the mind of man!"*³¹

(iv) *Thomas De Quincey*

When we compare Romantic writings with the neoclassical writings, we come to the conclusion that, the works produced in the neoclassical period were about the external, about what is public but Romantic poetry, on the contrary, dealt with the private and internal – that is a big difference between these two kinds of writings. Well, that takes us to another important Romantic prose writer after Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt that is Thomas De Quincey.

- ***Confessions of An English Opium Eater***

Now we shall discuss one of the interesting writers of the period - Thomas De Quincey - and the famous book that he wrote "Confessions of an English Opium Eater." To begin with, the book is a very funny book. Here, it is imperative to draw your attention towards the phenomenon that used to take place during this period - those days there were many writers like Thomas De Quincey, S.T. Coleridge, who were given to eating/taking opium, not by choice to begin with; this was a medicine suggested to them because there was no other pain reliever those days. These days we have a lot of tablets, medicine - all kinds of tablets are available there. Since in those days there was nothing like that, so their only way to get over intense feeling of pain was opium – that would desensitized their body and therefore, make the pain tolerable. Thomas De Quincey, we can see, used to eat that but he made the best use of it - he wrote a very interesting and funny book - Confession of an English Opium Eater, which reveals the experiences of how after eating opium he would also experience funny things and those experiences have been mentioned in the book.

- ***The English Mail Coach***

Later, in the year 1849 he wrote another interesting and engaging book entitled "The English Mail Coach". Since there was no other way to distribute letters those days and letters must reach everybody's home, so the Postal department would use this coach that would go from home to home and deliver the letters. So, you can see, being a typical Romantic writer, De Quincey wrote an interesting piece about the English Mail Coach. The subject matter itself reflects the quintessential, important and seminal feature of romanticism - giving importance to ordinary things and activities. In works like this, we have another Romantic writer, another individual, another imaginative faculty at work. The beauty of the Romantic literature vis-à-vis neoclassicism is that when you read one writer of the neoclassical period it is as if you have read all of them because

they were all, by and large, similar but, on the contrary, when you read works of a writer belonging to Romantic movement, you would be experiencing a separate world - a separate and distinct imaginary world. When we read the new classical literature we see that John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson were similar in so far as their approach towards their works was concerned, and as far as the themes, techniques that they used in their poems is concerned. When you read Addison and Steele, for instance, their works are, more or less, similar - they share similar attitudes, similar approaches in their writings. On the contrary, in Romantic period every individual poet or prose writer is different, he is, in a way, only himself – presenting his own understanding of the world through highly individualistic and intuitive works.

(v) WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

Another important literary figure of the Romantic literature – Romantic prose writing was Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864). He was a poet, prose writer and activist. He produced a considerable amount of works in various genres – poetry, prose, political writings, etc. His international critical acclaim, however, rests on a very interesting, significant and engaging book, “Imaginary Conversations”.

- *Imaginary Conversations*

In his book, *Imaginary Conversations*, he brings in characters from Greek and Roman philosophy, and from the works of his contemporary writers, and composes imaginary conversations between them. When one studies the Romantic prose writing in detail, one comes to the conclusion that there is variety in romantic prose and imaginative literature - each writer comes up with something altogether new – there are works replete with humour, works about the writers lives themselves, works which exemplify the imaginative freedom and independence of the writers, works about ordinary things and the countryside, and above all, works that use science and technology and futuristic setting and plot to tell a story. Walter Savage Landor comes out with his own innovative idea of imagining the conversation between pairs of characters in his very famous work *Imaginary Conversations*. The beauty of this book is that here we do not have a single conversation rather we have fifty two imaginary conversations. It took the writer almost 30 years to complete this work - from 1824 to 1853. Who are these characters involved in conversations in this particular book? They are mythical characters, literary figures from the works of famous writers. So, he picks up characters - interesting, famous, mythical, legendary, popular pairs of characters, mostly lovers, and then he creates imaginary conversations of what they must have talked to each other. By doing so he brings out interesting pieces, imaginary situations, characters, and talks between these pair of characters. That is the beauty of Romantic literature that

here, we have the variety. There is a conversation between Dante and Beatrice, Southey and Porson, Henry VII and Anne Boleyn, Epictetus and Seneca, and others in this particular work. Dante, as most of you would be familiar with, had written so many sonnets for Beatrice, the girl he loved, and all those sonnets were addressed to her. So, what Landor does is that, he brings them together by putting them in characters and involving them in conversations and this is what makes it a very funny and seminal book. Bringing characters from history and imagining their conversations, is what imagination is all about, and this shows the power of imagination and that is the Romantic side to it - making it humorous. Another story is of Henry VIII and Mary Boleyn – it portrays a very famous love affair between Henry VIII and Mary Boleyn. Henry VIII, as we know, had a terrible record of getting all the four of his wives killed - he would marry them and get them killed, marry another girl and get her killed. He was always in love with the next woman and as such, the present one was destined to be eliminated. As far as Mary Boleyn, the mother of Queen Elizabeth, is concerned, at one time he was crazy about her, he wanted to marry her, but once he married her, he got her killed. The story had come to the fore when, somewhere at a restaurant, a musician found a piece of writing, a confessional letter by a lord - one of the lords who had been assigned the job by Henry VIII to put Anne Boleyn down the stairs and kill her. But later, his conscience pricked - he felt very bad and guilty for being a murderer, that he had killed a woman against whom he had no personal grudge. Therefore, he wrote that confessional letter which is still available in the British Museum and this became the basis for the dialogue that we can see in Landor's book *Imaginary Conversations*. Here we have another conversation between Pericles and Aspasia. Pericles was Greek statesman, orator and general of Athens which, at that time was an imperial state and they ruled the entire Asia, Africa, Europe, etc. Aspasia as such, was the beloved of Pericles. Therefore, Landor imagines the conversation between these two lovers in his book *Imaginary Conversations*.

(vi) S.T. COLERIDGE AND BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA

S.T. Coleridge occupies a very significant position and status in Romantic literature –in both poetry and prose. He along with William Wordsworth are, generally, and rightly so, considered the pioneers of the Romantic Movement in English literature. *Biographia Literaria*, is one of the most important books written in the Romantic period which, in a way, is a representative Romantic work in so far as Romantic prose is concerned. The book occupies a very seminal position in English literary theory and criticism in general and, Romantic prose in particular and, as such, it would be inappropriate to move on without mentioning and talking in detail about this particular book. *Biographia Literaria*, essentially is an autobiography -in this book Coleridge is writing about himself, his own experiences, and what he came across in life and the kind of people, kind of events, kind of things, so all that the poet experiences in his life becomes a part of this famous book. Even though S.T. Coleridge in this particular book talks about his own life, his own experiences, his own imaginative faculty, etc but at the same time, he is writing about criticism or literary theory. Thus, he mixes different genres of literature, which again is a typical trait and feature of romanticism. Coleridge here exemplifies the tendency of the Romantic writers to use their own imaginative faculty and intuition to write whatever you wanted, to write and about anything and everything. *Biographia Literaria* is the book that earned S.T. Coleridge an international critical acclaim because in this very book he, for the first time in the entire history of English literature, defines what fancy is, he talks about imagination and furthermore, he makes certain distinctions between fancy and imagination, and divides imagination as well into primary and secondary imagination. It has to be taken into consideration and thereby acknowledged that, no other writer had done so before, no other critic had distinguished between these two terms.

Coleridge, being a typical Romantic writer makes a work of criticism a personal tale – in *Biographia Literaria*, he talks about his own life:

“At school I enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a very sensible, though at the same time, a very severe master. He early moulded my taste to the preference of Demosthenes to Cicero, of Homer and Theocritus to Virgil, *The Rev. James Bowyer, many years Head Master of the Grammar–School, Christ Hospital. and again of Virgil to Ovid..”³²*

Moreover, Coleridge in his famous book, *Biographia Literaria*, redefined poetry through new definition of fancy and imagination. Before him, we thought of imagination in a general way that, there is reason and there is imagination. But, after Coleridge’s groundbreaking definition and distinction between fancy and imagination, we will have to think in terms of the lower imagination, the lower order of imagination and the higher order of imagination. In the lower order he says it is fancy and in the higher order it is imagination.

- ***DISTINCTION BETWEEN FANCY AND IMAGINATION***

“The IMAGINATION then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and

space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.”³³

The difference between the two is that the lower order i.e. fancy - it just assembles things, it even divides, so it does this kind of surface work but imagination, on the contrary, recreates, it comes out with something altogether new. Therefore, creativity of the human mind comes out, according to S.T. Coleridge, through the faculty known as imagination. It neither comes out in fancy nor in reason. It comes out in the higher order of the imagination which is a higher faculty than both reason and fancy. So, he gave these ideas, these ideas were new.

In this very book Coleridge exemplifies how imagination is a higher faculty and fancy is a lower faculty of the mind. Fancy can do the work of putting things together, dividing them and bringing about an understanding through these methods - which are as old as Aristotle because it was from there that we have the methodology of understanding by dividing, by combining, et cetera. And this exactly is what fancy does. Coleridge says that fancy is the lower level of the mind's faculty but, imagination on the contrary, is something higher, in fact, the highest faculty. Imagination cannot only combine things but, after combining them, it can recreate something altogether new and something higher, something superior. So, that is what imagination is it. And this is what makes it a higher or highest faculty of the mind. According to S.T. Coleridge, lower down the scale we have several other faculties of mind like fancy, reason, understanding but imagination, he says, comes at the top and that is the highest, the most creative faculty that human mind is blessed with. Moreover, S.T.

Coleridge distinguishes between two forms of imagination as well - primary imagination and secondary imagination. This is something that had not been done before. This is what makes Coleridge a very original and innovative writer. His works are replete with the individualistic ethos. His ideas about imagination and fancy, difference between primary and secondary imagination are in line with the Romantic ethos and sensibility whereby a writer is free to write something new, something imaginative, something intuitive and individualistic.

These are some of the important prose books that we have during the Romantic age. Prose, obviously should also include the novel, comedy, short story, but the novel and the short story were not so popular during the Romantic age, as Romantic prose was. Romantic literature was characterized by the strain of individualism, strain of something private, something personal, something emotional, something intuitive, something imaginative. These were the qualities and features that governed Romantic literature. It is an established fact that Romantic poetry overshadowed Romantic prose and other genres of literature during the Romantic period. But Romantic prose comes next to Romantic poetry because it not only overshadowed the Romantic novel and short stories but other forms of literature as well with an exception of Romantic poetry. But, this should not mean that the novels and prose fiction, short stories produced during this period were not of that literary merit. On the contrary, they were of great literary merit earned their writers an international critical acclaim. Therefore, the fact is that Romantic poetry and prose occupy a very seminal position in the Romantic period.

6. ROMANTIC NOVELISTS

Sir Walter Scott and other novelists wrote their works adhering to the maxim and the most important feature of Romanticism that, you have absolute freedom to write about anything and everything, according to your own imaginative faculty in which, your individualistic posture gets manifested. Therefore, they wrote novels that were equally individualist, intuitive, emotional and imaginative. On the contrary, the novel during the neoclassical period was, by and large, based upon models, rules, conventions and manners that were acceptable to the society, that were formally approved by the society. The neoclassical writers wrote within that framework of the social approval. On the contrary, the Romantic writers like Walter Scott developed or evolved an innovative way of writing novels altogether - which was highly individualistic, intuitive, imaginative, and different from the neoclassical novel. It was more intuitive, more emotional and imaginative and it was not so based on social and political conventions. The Romantic novelists like Walter Scott, Jane Austen, Mary Shelley wrote very famous, seminal and engaging novels - each writer producing a new kind of the novel form - historical novel, evolution of science fiction, etc.

(i) SIR WALTER SCOTT

Sir Walter Scott, in particular, became famous for writing historical novels. He wrote a very long book concerning the entire history of Scotland. Therefore, fiction and history combined to produce and constitute a historical novel. His novels were called ‘Waverley novels’ and under that title he wrote many books, not publically acknowledging authorship until 1827. “Ivanhoe,” “Kenilworth,” “The Heart of Midlothian” are some of the famous novels written by Walter Scott.

(ii) MARIA EDGEWORTH

Maria Edgeworth, another prominent novelist of the Romantic period, wrote two famous novels “Castle Rackrent” (1800) and “Belinda” in (1801). The first one satirically condemns the Anglo-Irish landlords, four generations of an Irish landholding family, the Rackrents. The later was a novel that dealt with love, marriage, courtship, and conflicts between reason and feeling.

(iii) MARY SHELLEY

Any discussion about Romanticism and its practitioners is partial, insignificant and absurd unless and until there is a discussion on the significant contribution of Mary Shelley in the field of literature. Mary Shelley as such, holds a very seminal position in the Romantic literature. Mary Shelley, in her own right, was more radical than P. B. Shelley himself was. Therefore, Mary Shelley is another famous and important novelist of the Romantic period who wrote some interesting, seminal and engaging novels. Mary Shelley has written many books. However, her two novels which are very seminal, and which would briefly be discussed in this book are Frankenstein and The Last Man. The first one has become so popular that today even a common man would talk about the term without often knowing what it actually means.

- ***Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus***

The most important novel that she wrote is “Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus” (1818). As far as Frankenstein is concerned, it is a self destructive science-fiction novel. It presents the story of Frankenstein, a scientist, who builds an ugly but emotionally sensitive, 8-foot tall creature/monster in his laboratory. The monster after being shunned by society, seeks revenge against his Frankenstein. The novel thus foreshadows the kind of thing we are doing now - the scientist producing men-like figures/creature/robots who can destroy

themselves, as well as, others. Therefore, the novel was a futuristic because it told what was about to come.

In this very novel, she presents the story of Frankenstein, a scientist, and who creates a man-like creature but this man-like creature is very vicious and self-destructive. Mary Shelley is rightly called the mother of science fiction because when we read her novels we come to the conclusion that she had better understanding of human nature and mankind than any other romantic writer. With the passage of time, we have proved that we do belong to Frankensteinian species - we are self destructive, and the two world wars fought in the 20th century, are a very seminal and quintessential example of that. In her novel Frankenstein, Mary Shelley, in a way, also makes prophetic statement by implying that humans, the scientists, could create man-like creatures - creatures very much like humans, robots who would be dangerous for themselves as well as for other human beings. Therefore, Mary Shelley had, in a way, visualized this thing many centuries ago. Because nowadays, we have man-like creatures, created by scientists, who, in a way, do wonders and they do things more accurately than the humans.

- ***The Last Man***

Another very important book written by Mary Shelley is *The Last Man*. *The Last Man*, again, is a futuristic novel, a prophetic novel - prophetic in that, it propounds a prophecy that in 2073 humanity will destroy itself and only one man would be left and that is the last man. That is the reason why the title used for the novel is *The Last Man*.

“The story is discovered, in 1818, in fragments buried in an ancient cave, rumored to be the cave of the Sibyl. The writings contain the recollections of a “past” history occurring well into the future. The writings have been left for future generations as a record of the devastating plague of the late twenty-first century. The narrator is Lionel Verney, age thirty-seven, who is, to his

knowledge, the last surviving human on Earth. He has left this record in the year 2100, before setting out to sea.”³⁴

Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man* is a lengthy, tragic novel which describes the rise and fall of the fortunes of a circle of friends, set against the backdrop of a merciless plague which is inexorably exterminating humanity:

It is not much of a spoiler to point out that the story ends with a single man on the earth, a solitary survivor who marks the history and downfall of his friends and all of humanity. Shelley provides a wonderful eulogy for humanity, which may very well have been written by her late husband:

"But the game is up! We must all die; nor leave survivor, nor heir to the wide inheritance of earth. We must all die! The species of man must perish; his frame of exquisite workmanship; the wondrous mechanism of his senses; the noble proportion of his godlike limbs; his mind, the throned king of these; must perish. Will the earth still keep her place among the planets; will she still journey with unmarked regularity round the sun; will the seasons change, the trees adorn themselves with leaves, and flowers shed their fragrance, in solitude? Will the mountains remain unmoved, and streams still keep a downward course towards the vast abyss; will the tides rise and fall, and the winds fan universal nature; will beast pasture, birds fly, and fishes swim, when man, the lord, possessor, perceiver, and recorder of all these things, has passed away, as though he had never been? O, what mockery is this! Sure death is not death, and humanity is not extinct; but merely passed into other shapes, unsubjected to our perceptions. Death is a vast portal, a high road to life: let us hasten to pass; let us exist no more in this living death, but die that we may live!"³⁵

Therefore, another novel that became very popular and on which the image of Mary Shelley as a representative and innovative novelist rests is, *The Last Man* - the novel that again manifested futuristic setting. Mary Shelley in this novel shows that the world will end itself, and mankind will destroy itself.

Therefore, by going through Mary Shelley's prophetic and futuristic novels, *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*, we conclude that they are interlinked and they have continuity. Mary Shelley visualised in *Frankenstein*, the kind of humans we are, and the kind of wonders we can do - we can recreate man-like creatures and we have been doing that for a long time now. With the advancement in science and technology, we have been able to send them to the moon also. The point that I am trying to make is that, this prophecy was made by Mary Shelley and not by any other Romantic writer. It was Mary Shelley who wrote these futuristic novels based on science and technology. This establishes the fact that, Mary Shelley occupies a very seminal status and position in English literature in general and Romantic literature in particular, and that she in no way inferior to other writers of the age.

7. ROMANTIC POETRY

(i) PIONEERS OF THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

In English literature, the originators, the pioneers of the Romantic Movement were two friends - William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge. Most of the critics are of the opinion that the Romantic Movement began in 1798 with the publication of a very famous book *Lyrical Ballads* by these two famous poets. The year 1798, thus, is a very seminal and important year as far as the Romantic Movement in English literature is concerned because it was in this year that William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge, brought out a collection of poems which laid the foundation of Romanticism in English literature. To begin with, it has to be taken into consideration and thereby acknowledged that, lyric was one such genre which was not there in the neoclassical age because, in the neoclassical age, the model was the epic and the epic by its very nature is rhetorical because the kind of characters we have in an epic and the way they try

to influence each other results in the indulgence in rhetorical speech. On the contrary, in lyric you are not really communicating with anyone else, outside of yourself – it is talking to your own self, it is internal, and not external. And since it is related to emotions, it has to be short lived because emotions cannot be sustained for a very long time. You have a feeling and then it vanishes and something else comes to your mind, which, in turn, gives way to something else. Therefore, lyric by its very nature has to be short lived and has to be internal, inward-looking. The neoclassical poetry was about the external, it addresses what is before us, it addresses the material life, it addresses things that you can see, that you practice. On the contrary, in the romantic poetry addresses things that you do not really see on the surface but you feel it, it is inside you, but it cannot be shown out. Therefore, you are not “holding mirror up to nature as Hamlet says in Shakespeare play. It is just holding mirror up to yourself, to the inside. Therefore, the Romantic poetry by its very nature is individualistic. The focus in Romantic poetry is not on the society, on the humanity as a whole, but on a single man - on an individual.

The second most important feature of the Romantic poetry is that it is lyrical, musical and that is why the Romantic poets went back to the medieval folklore which was discarded by the neoclassical poets. The Romantic writers reviewed the medieval folklore and that's the reason that they wrote ballads, lyrical ballads. On the contrary, the neoclassical poetry was, in a way, more talking to each other and talking in terms of region, rationality, rules - what to do and what not to do. But here in the Romantic poetry we are entering our feelings, our emotions and how we feel the joy of life, sorrow of life. Therefore, Romantic lyric poetry is individualistic, short, musical and lyrical.

Romantic poetry as such is a revival of the ballad because ballads are popular songs, popular because they are short - you quickly sing them just while passing through streets. So this was the overview of the Lyrical Ballads composed by William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge and the introduction of,

or, revival of ballads into English literature. It was a kind of poetry which Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge created in the form of Lyrical Ballads which was published in 1798. So Romantic Movement as such, began in 1798, around the turn of the century. And the early part of the 19th Century is, therefore, officially the period of the Romantic movements.

(ii) TWO GENERATIONS OF ROMANTIC POETS

Romantic period can be divided into two phases, generations. William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge and Southey belong to the first generation of the Romantics who were actually born in the 18th century in between 1770 to 1780. On the contrary, the younger ones like Keats, Shelley, etc born just before the turn of the century or in the 1790s, to be precise, belong to the second generation of the Romantics. The first generation Romantic poets were born in an atmosphere which was near classical, materialistic. On the contrary, the second generation Romantic poets were born in a different atmosphere - atmosphere which was comparatively more radical, revolutionary, individualistic, and the like.

(iii) FIRST GENERATION OF THE ROMANTICS

The elder Romantics who belonged to the first generation were Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey. As has already been implied, the elder Romantics were, comparatively, less radical than the younger ones. They did come out with new thoughts and approaches but then, they did not drastically break the links – social, political, economic, literary. They continued, in a broader sense, and within the framework of the broad spectrum, they brought about changes.

Coleridge, it has to be taken into consideration, was not an activist. He wrote a book "Aids to Reflection" which had great impact, more than in England, in America and it brought about a revolution there in the form of the transcendentalism. Transcendentalists like Emerson, Thoreau, Parker, Walt

Whitman were, in a way, influenced by S.T. Coleridge. The phrase of ‘transcendentalism’ was, in a way, created and triggered by Coleridge's book "Aid to Reflection and the Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit". Therefore, both Wordsworth and Coleridge were, in a way, quite thinkers in comparison to the second generation of the Romantics.

(iv) THE LAKE POETS

William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey are generally called the “Lake Poets” because they deliberately decided to live together - they went into, in a way, self imposed exile. They thought that England was not a very fit country for poets like them. In the same way W.B. Yeats states in his poem “Sailing to Byzantium” about Ireland:

“That is no country for old men.”³⁶

In the same poem, he states:

*“An age man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upom a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.”*

³⁷

Therefore, he said that he would go to Byzantine because this country is for the young, and so on. In the same way Wordsworth and Coleridge realized

that England is not the right type of country for the poetry they are producing and for the kind of a poetic life they want to live because there had to be something antisocial, anti-establishment, Bohemian about it - something not very common in everyday life. These Romantic poets wanted to live away from the common people though they were writing about them because, the poets were relatively more sensitive, more introvert, more individualistic and more revolutionary. Therefore, they thought that they have to have a place of their own, a place of their choice, a place celebrating autonomy of the individual, which is not disturbed by the humbug, by the noises of the material world/outside world. Hence, these three poets along with, of course, others moved to the English Lake District of Cumberland and Westmorland (now Cumbria). They lived in the Lake District because the district, they thought, was the proper place to compose their poetry. Moreover, they thought that the Italians had a very proper aptitude, a proper attitude to life and letters which was not being appreciated in England. Therefore, to feel more at home, and to be comfortable and to help fellow writers who would understand them, who would appreciate them and from whom they would learn something, they decided to move to the Lake District.

The pioneers of the Romantic Movement were the three poets - William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge and Robert Southey. They were, in a way, the leaders of the movement. William Wordsworth and Coleridge, in particular, brought out the *Lyrical Ballads* and *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, which was largely written by Wordsworth. The *Preface*, in a way, can well be considered a manifesto of the movement i.e. Romanticism because how Romantic poetry is different from neoclassical poetry and what are the ingredients and features, the emphasis, the world view, or, literary view - all that was explained in detail by Wordsworth in the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* which was, in a way prefixed to those poems, *Lyrical Ballads* - a collection and collaboration of William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge. So, that is how it came about. Later, after this pioneering work, the individually wrote their own poems because the movement

had been launched and now they got down to their individual compositions/business.

(v) WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Wordsworth having greater poetic talent or gift wrote very significant, artistic, interesting, engaging and long poems. He wrote a very long poem “The Prelude or, Growth of a Poet’s Mind; An Autobiographical Poem”. The Prelude is generally called a Romantic epic. The genre of epic, it has to be mentioned, is traditionally associated with classical and neoclassical poetry in fact, more properly the classical because even neoclassical is not epic proper that becomes a mock epic also trying to follow the same traditions. But the Romantic poets were not the imitators of the classical school of thought they were not imitators of the classical rules of creating and constructing poems. They were, actually, reacting against classical rules and conventions. And constantly they were propagating a counter philosophy of life, counter politics of literature and counter or opposite world of men. That is the reason why in Wordsworth and Coleridge we have Lyrical Ballads, which are very different from what the neoclassical writers like John Dryden and Alexander Pope had written. So, now we have short poems, intense poems speaking to our heart and speaking about everyday things that we live through. On the contrary, neoclassical literature had, more or less, nothing to do with our daily life - that was confined to a special kind of activity of life i. e. bar rooms, club life, coffee houses, and the like. So, neoclassical poetry was largely pastime kind of a thing that dealt with the past time aspects of one's life but in the Romantic poetry it addresses the serious aspects of life, it addresses the emotional life of a person - his joys, sorrows, so on and so forth. The same approach and attitude of writing poetry gets exemplified in the Lyrical Ballads written by Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge.

● PREFACE TO LYRICAL BALLADS

“Lyrical Ballads is a joint publication by William Wordsworth and an equally accomplished poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, which is cited as the most prominent reason responsible for the launch of Romantic Age in English Literature. Preface to this text therefore is of utmost importance to me, being a student of English literature. It is evident that this collection of poems is intended at the masses and not merely the aristocracy or those highly placed as previously the case would be, and specially so, common men. Never before had poems dared to address the theme of ‘low and rustic’. This quality defines well the reason why a work of this nature must be called ‘revolutionary’. It didn’t only change the way humanity would look at poems but also attempted to question the moral values of the then society and hoped for much needed change, which brings me to say that the intension of the initiative was as noble as the cause. Lyrical Ballads is an exhausting.”³⁸

In order to familiarize the readers with the kind of poetry Wordsworth aims to write in Lyrical Ballads and other works, it is imperative to quote some important statement written by Wordsworth himself in Preface to the Lyrical Ballads:

“I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes, is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment.”³⁹

“It is not, then, in the dramatic parts of composition that we look for this distinction of language; but still it may be proper and necessary where the Poet

speaks to us in his own person and character. To this I answer by referring the Reader to the description before given of a Poet.”⁴⁰

“Among the qualities there enumerated as principally conducing to form a Poet, is implied nothing differing in kind from other men, but only in degree. The sum of what was said is, that the Poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men. and with what are they connected? Undoubtedly with our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these; with the operations of the elements, and the appearances of the visible universe; with storm and sunshine, with the revolutions of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow. These, and the like, are the sensations and objects which the Poet describes, as they are the sensations of other men, and the objects which interest them. The Poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions. How, then, can his language differ in any material degree from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly? It might be proved that it is impossible. But supposing that this were not the case, the Poet might then be allowed to use a peculiar language when expressing his feelings for his own gratification, or that of men like himself. But Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men.”⁴¹

- ***THE PRELUDE OR, GROWTH OF A POET’S MIND; AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEM***

The expression of personal emotions and feelings in poetry – which is an imperative feature and hallmark of Romantic poetry - gets manifested in Wordsworth’s very seminal book *The Prelude* which, was completed and published in 1850, consisting of fourteen books, shortly after Wordsworth’s death. The book, as we know, is generally called the Romantic epic. However, it

is very different from the classical epic - it does not have those battles and wars, it does not have heroes and a focus on public life. On the contrary here we have emphasis on the private life of the poet and in so far as the hero of this epic is concerned, we do not find that glorification of public heroism. The poem is a quintessentially romantic, individualist, emotional and lyrical poem. It is a very highly individualistic and emotionally intense. It is a kind of a poem that instead of celebrating the heroics of the hero in his public affairs/life, glorifies the private life of the poet himself. Even though *The Prelude*, like a typical epic poem runs into several hundred pages, yet it is different from other classical and neoclassical epics. What William Wordsworth does in this poem is that, he does not tell the story of any divine or heroic figure, on the contrary, he is telling his own story. He is employing the most formal type of poetry – replete with seriousness of subject and treatment, elevated in style – to portray the growth of his own mind. Therefore, Romantic epic essentially is autobiographical because Wordsworth is writing about himself and not about any public, political or heroic figure. It is internal, it is the exploration of what is there inside a personality - it is not about external life. So, that is the difference between the neoclassical and the romantic poetry in general, and in composing an epic in particular.

Acknowledging his literary merit, he was made Poet Laureate of England. This was the honour bestowed on him by the government. Romantic poets were, largely, anti-political and antisocial in that they believed in individual imagination and they wanted their poetry to be free from the influence of the political establishment and authorities, etc. And when Wordsworth accepted the patronage of the government, other poets especially the younger poets did not approve it. They did not like this kind of patronage because they thought accepting the patronage of government would curtail their independence as poets - they would not be critical of what government was doing. And they would have to approve of what the government was doing, which, in turn, would result in the end of the artistic independence of a poet. Accepting the patronage of the

government means an end to the autonomy of self. They did not approve this step taken by Wordsworth because they thought that by doing so, he had greatly disappointed and let them down - they thought that they had been let down by their leader.

One of these young poets, Robert Browning, who, later, became a great poet in his own right in the Victorian age, has written a poem on Wordsworth's acceptance of the royal patronage and thereby letting them down. When Wordsworth became the poet Laureate, Browning who had greatly been influenced by Wordsworth, who had seen in Wordsworth a sort of a Guru, sort of a fatherly figure, from whom he could learn a good deal but he was greatly and deeply disappointed so much so that he could not help writing the poem - "The Lost Leader". Therefore, Robert Browning who had appreciated Wordsworth called him The Lost leader - lost to the public as a whole. According to Robert Browning he sold himself to the government and that was the acquisition that Browning leveled against Wordsworth in his poem "The Lost Leader ". The first line of the poem, The Lost leader, is very engaging and artistic:

“Just for a handful of silver he left us.”⁴²

To understand the woes of the younger poets, who had seen in Wordsworth a leader – a leader in favour of free and independent individual imagination, in favour of autonomy of the self, we must go through the full poem The Lost Leader:

• ***“THE LOST LEADER” BY ROBERT BROWNING***

“Just for a handful of silver he left us,

Just for a riband to stick in his coat—

Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,

*Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service!
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!
We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves!
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
—He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!
We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!*

Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!

There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,

Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,

Never glad confident morning again!

Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,

Menace our heart ere we master his own;

Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,

Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!”⁴³

So, that is what Robert Browning thinks about Wordsworth’s decision of accepting the royal patronage. According to Robert Browning, by accepting the poet Laureateship of the government, Wordsworth sold the community of poets, he sold them at commercial price, he sold the artists just for a few pennies, and he sold them just for a handful of silver. They had previously seen Wordsworth as the leader of the Romantic Movement and for the emancipation and independence of the poetic faculty and creativity of poets but now they felt that they had been let down by the leader. Hence, the tag of the Lost Leader was applied to him.

(vi) SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

S.T. Coleridge, another famous and important poet of the Romantic period, also wrote many artistic, significant, and engaging poems. He wrote poems like Kubla Khan, The Rime of The Ancient Mariner, Christabel, To William Wordsworth, Frost at Midnight. Chritabel, being one of his famous poems, is an interesting story, more like a Ballad or a folktale. Coleridge here is not writing about himself but about someone else, and he is writing it in a way that would appeal to people in general. So, that is the difference between Wordsworth and

Coleridge as a poet. And that is the reason why Wordsworth is often accused of being egotistical - egotistical in that, he does not move above from himself. He is almost always talking about himself. No doubt, he writes about many subjects but, he ultimately makes it a personal tale. So, that serves as a limitation of Wordsworth as a poet. Coleridge, on the contrary, being a philosophical in nature, not hung up about his own self, not being egotistical but rather philosophic and thoughtful, is more interested in the general philosophy/idea of life. So, he turns to generalize, externalize and philosophize what Wordsworth tends to interiorize and individualize. So, these two personalities having different and distinct approaches towards writing poetry, obviously, would produce different kinds of poetry. But then one thing is common between them - both of them share the essential traits of the romantic poetry, romantic aesthetics, romantic ethos – their poetry essentially is internal rather external, it is essentially individualistic rather than generalistic, and then essentially it is lyrical and not dramatic. Therefore, these are some of the general features which are essential to romantic poetry and which make it a different kind of poetry altogether.

Coleridge, as has already been mentioned, wrote a different kind of poetry - he was not hung up/concerned with his own self, with his own emotional life. In his poem *Christabel* and even in his ballads, we do not find anything that has to do with his own self and we do not find anything indirectly reflecting his personality or life related to him. On the contrary, when we read Wordsworth's poetry, it is related to his personal life, to its own self and the hallmark of his poetry is that it is replete with subjectivity.

Well, as far as Coleridge is concerned, he neither was leader nor was he someone who disappointed the later poets. He was more interested in his own ideas - he was more of a philosopher than a poet. He was more curious to learn philosophy. So, that is the reason why he went to Germany and got in touch with Kant and Hegel, Schlegel brothers and exchanged his philosophical ideas with

them and came back home with a good deal of new ideas about romantic thought and that, in turn, brought about a great change in English literature - in the movement, direction, and nature of English literature and later, of course, it did not remain confined to England alone. Coleridge greatly influenced the Americans also. Consequently, almost all of the American transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Theodore Parker, Henry David Thoreau were influenced by the ideas of Coleridge.

(vii) SECOND GENERATION OF THE ROMANTICS

Having discussed the poets belonging to the first generation of the Romantics, let us now discuss the Romantic rebellion in English literature with a focus on the younger generation of the Romantics. We call it a rebellion because until that point of time in the history of English literature, there have been in every age, visions and revisions, new outlooks, new movements, historical changes but, at the same time, there remained the continuity between the age of Chaucer when English literature commonly begins and the subsequent literary movements. This continuity can be seen until the end of the 18th century -until the end of the neoclassical age. Till the end of the 18 century the neoclassical age, that is, for nearly about five centuries, there remained a continuity of the basic elements or aspects of life and literature. Looking at the political, the socio-economic and the literary side in these five centuries, we find that neither the politics, nor economics or any other aspect of life was in favour of the common man. Politics was the rule of monarchy, law of monarchy and feudalism; Economics and social setup also related to feudalism although with the advent of Renaissance, things started taking turn towards the justice for the common man but then the real ideas of equality, fraternity and justice started to come to the fore at the end of the 18th century. In literature, the promotion and establishment of these ideas are generally attributed to the Romantics in general and to the younger Romantics in particular. Looking back to where the change begins, we will have to locate it in the American War of Independence and the

French Revolution. Therefore, these two historical events of international significance brought a major radical change in the outlook of the west, in Europe and America. It has to be taken into account that things were moving from the top to the bottom, from the royalty to democracy, and it was the common man who was coming to the forefront.

Literature, of course, is nothing but a reflection of life itself. As Hamlet says, "holding mirror up to nature"⁴⁴ in Shakespeare's play Hamlet when Hamlet advises the players how to act on the stage. His advice is to stay close to reality, close to the natural behaviour and not to be too bombastic nor too low and almost invisible, stay in between, stay in the middle, and stay close to reality that's why he gives the example of holding mirror up to nature, so that is what literature does:

“Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as lief the town crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, by use all gently, for in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise. I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant. It out-herods Herod. Pray you avoid it. Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskillful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve, the censure of the which

*one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly (not to speak profanely), that neither having th' accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably. Reform it altogether! And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them, for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the mean time some necessary question of the play be then to be considered. That's villainous and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go make you ready."*⁴⁵

All these ideas, obviously, had an impact on literature also. So, when we come to the Romantic age which begins at the end of the 18 century and beginning of the 19th we find that there is a major shift in the social, political, economic and literary outlook. The shift in the approach towards literature becomes prominent at the beginning of the 19th Century with the advent of the Romantic Movement.

Now, what are those changes that we see and which get reflected and get translated into stories, literature, poems, plays, novels, short stories, prose writing? All forms of literature reflect that major shift or major change. As has already been mentioned, the American War of Independence and the French Revolution, in a way, revolutionized the mind of the writers, philosophers and politicians, and common masses. Writers like Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, Richardson and Henry Fielding, and or the dramatists of the neoclassical age were not questioning the basics – the basics of religion, of politics, of social structure/ fabric. These remained broadly the same. Therefore, whatever changes were taking place, they were within the frames of these forces - the political, social, and the economic force. So, all the three frames remained the same. They were undisturbed. It was within the frames that changes took place – the socio-

political and economic structures were not questioned by the writers. However, when we reach the age of the Romantic period, we experience a major shift in all the spheres of life - we find that the very frames are being questioned, the very basics are being questioned. Take the case of Christianity. Christianity as such, had not been questioned until the end of the 18th century - God is God and Satan is devil, so are angels and devils. But in the writings of the Romantic poets, William Blake then subsequently Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Byron, Shelley, and Keats, we find a reinterpretation of the Bible itself - for the Romantics Satan becomes heroic, it is the devil who becomes the central character and not God. So, obviously they are on the devil's side. In fact, one of the Romantics, William Blake, had said about Milton that, "Milton was of the devil's party without knowing it." It means, unconsciously, his sympathies are with Satan that is why in *Paradise Lost*, the epic, we find that it is Satan who remains at the centre of the poem, and not God. So, the entire action of the story, action of the epic, centers round the character of Satan. So, the Romantics adopted the Satanic line and therefore, said that he was for the common man since he was challenging the authority of God, he was celebrating the power of individual self. Otherwise, it is the inherited power, inherited political power which remained at the centre for all these five centuries from Chaucer to the neoclassical writers. It was by inheritance - father's son - would become the king, so on and so forth. But then after The American and the French Revolution people started thinking in terms of everybody is right, common man is right. They started cherishing the ideas of equality, liberty, fraternity and social justice. This approach to life and literature was never there before - the dignity of the common man and justice on the basis of objective criterion and not as per the will of the authority. All this concentrates and precipitates in the period of the Romantics and it is in their literature that, this spirit of rebellion gets expressed – first, of course, in the beginning not so violently, it begins about rather mildly e. g. Wordsworth raises the slogan of going back to nature, the implication is going back to the pre-civilized man, the natural man and another important

implications is for going back to the pre-Christian era, setting aside the Bible and looking at men and mankind, life and literature in terms of the original human nature, not through literary or political text but through the original human nature. So, the slogan for going back to nature meant discarding the later formulations about man, about human nature, about society, about politics/authority, and so on. So, Wordsworth did all this very quietly. He in that sense is not really a rebel, in the sense Byron was, in a sense Shelley was. Wordsworth remains a respectable man of society and yet he is departing from the social codes, the political codes and departing into a new form of literature because before him, or at his time, when he comes on the scene, we have the neoclassical thought dominating literature and other forms of art. Neoclassicism, as has already been pointed out, was nothing but an imitation of the Classics – life, as well as literature, for them had to be governed by the laid down rules – rules, for example, as laid down in the Bible, rules laid down by Aristotle's in his *Poetic* or *Politics* or, by Plato's *Republic* or Horace's *Ars Poetica*, or *The Art of Poetry*. These were the main/basic authorities, which governed the neoclassical world. So they went by the dictates of these authority – they did not question these authorities and tried their best to fit their own works into the frames and templates established and suggested by these authorities. On the contrary, the difference that comes about in the romantic period is that they, by and large, do not accept any of these older authorities and strive for fresh outlook on life and mankind, society and literature. For instance, no longer the rules are the guiding authority for writing a poem, for writing a play or a novel.

Wordsworth defines poetry as the “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”.⁴⁶ It is an overflow of powerful and spontaneous feelings. Here, what is important is that, it overflows the walls, it overflows the frames, and the boundaries which were laid down by the authorities. So, obviously the authorities are no longer available - they are being challenged, they are being jumped over. And the Romantic writers want to go beyond the boundaries. Therefore, another difference between the Romantic literature and the literature

written before this period is the overflow of powerful feeling. Since feelings, during the neoclassical age, were undermined, underplayed were even discarded because it was considered untruly, not governed by any rule, authority and therefore, dangerous for the individual, and for society as well because, it would destroy the established social and political structures. In Romantic literature, primacy is given to emotions as against reason because the 18th Century, also called Age of Jonson, by and large, was the age of reason. The writers of the 18th century they laid emphasis on the mind, on reason as against feeling and emotion. So, they were guided by reason, by rationality. These were the parameters for the neoclassical poets, artists and thinkers. So, neoclassical writers wrote within the boundaries already laid down by the authorities and they followed the authority. When you read the essays of Pope, for example, An Essay on Man, or, An Essay on Criticism, from the very first line, one can see that he is invoking the authorities and those authorities anybody daring to violate, is ridiculed, he is made fun of, and he is painted as if he were a fool. So that is what the representative neoclassical poets like Dryden and Alexander Pope did. Any deviation, any defiance of the authority had to be condemned and condemned outright. But now in the Romantic age, as a mark of heroism, Satan is defying the authority of God, he is the hero and he is the champion of man and mankind, and that is the reason why we call the Romantic Movement a rebellion - rebellion in life, rebellion in literature. Here, the old authorities are not only discarded, they are defied and discarded. Consequently, they follow their own instinct, their own emotions and feelings. So, it is looking within your own self and composing poetry. In the first sonnet of the sonnet sequence, when Sydney trying to invoke his muse asks her to help him write his poem, the muse replies in a quintessential romantic manner, and says:

“Fool, look in thy heart, and write.”⁴⁷

Looking within oneself, and writing is, to be precise, the philosophy of the Romantics - looking within, and not looking outside because, in the philosophy

of Romanticism, the individual is the universal and individual is autonomous, it is the individual personality that is the cosmos. Later, in American literature, we have Walt Whitman, singing of this autonomy, of the individual, of the universality of the individual.

As far as the younger generation of the Romantics is concerned, we cannot say that they were great thinkers but, on the contrary, they were great activists. They confronted and challenged the authority, they revolted against the authority, and they actively opposed it. Byron, Shelley, Keats were the leading second generation Romantic poets. Byron was a lord - he was from the high class, the uppermost strata of society. Consequently, he was not afraid of anyone. First of all, he rebelled at his own home, against the authority of father, then society as a whole. As a result, he was turned out of the country. He was exiled because of his rebellious nature. He was so rebellious that he even defied and discarded the sexual taboos. Being rebellious in nature, he wrote against the royalty, he wrote against the high class people, including his own family. That is that reason why he was expelled from the country and had to live in Italy where he was joined by Shelley - another young Romantic with a radical thought. Shelley, because of his radicalism and his anti-Christian and anti-authority ideas, had also been expelled from the college when he was a student, pursuing his studies. Interestingly, he also wrote a piece when he was at the Oxford University "A Vindication of Natural Diet" in defence of vegetarianism and animal rights. Imagine an Englishman, genuinely, making a plea for the vegetarian food. And he writes a long document in defence of vegetarianism and how it is superior to the non-vegetarianism. Therefore, Shelley in his own right, Byron in his own right was rebellious. They questioned the authorities in their works and composed literary works at odds with the socio-political establishment. Shelley, of course, also was the son of Lord. Therefore, both came from the high class families, the uppermost strata of the society. Keats, on the contrary, belonged to an ordinary family and he was rather poor. But, so far

as his verse and his ideas about literature and poetry are concerned, he was in no way less radical than either Byron or Shelley.

(viii) Keats and Negative Capability

Keats' radical ideas about poetry, and even his letters, which are often quoted, are very thoughtful, very philosophic and propagate novel ideas about poetry. The idea of **negative capability**, for example, on the basis of which, he holds Shakespeare as the greatest poet of the world. Because according to him, Shakespeare had that greatest quality of the artist, that is, negative capability.

In a letter to his brothers, George and Thomas, on 22 December 1817, Keats described a conversation he had been engaged in a few days previously:

“I had not a dispute but a disquisition with Dilke, upon various subjects; several things dove-tailed in my mind, and at once it struck me what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in Literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason—Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge. This pursued through volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.”⁴⁸

Now what is negative capability? It is the capability to negate your own personality, your own self. It means when an author, not directly present in his work, is indirectly present in his work in that, his own feelings and emotions are represented by the objects and things he creates. In Keats' view the problem with Wordsworth and Coleridge, particularly with Wordsworth, was that he could not think beyond "I". Be it *Biographia Literaria* of Coleridge, or, *The Prelude* of Wordsworth both are about that "I". Both these books are about their own

personalities, about their own self. This is the reason why Keats thought that both Coleridge and Wordsworth were egotistical - they would almost always write about their own self. Shakespeare, on the contrary, he thought, rose above himself, and that is why he could create such large number of engaging and interesting characters in his plays and poems. In his works, he could become Iago, Desdemona, Othello, Hamlet, King Lear, Shylock, Portia, The Merchant of Venice, so on and so forth. He could assume any character by rising above his own self. Shakespeare, as such, was an absolute genius of creativity. That exactly is how Keats thought of Shakespeare and thereby Keats gave this new literary and critical term that we call negative capability - the highest stage of the artist where you completely negate your own self, and you become whatever you want to create; whatever you imagine, you become that thing. That precisely is the reason, why Walt Whitman, one of the prominent American Romantics, states in his very famous poem "Song of Myself" that whatever he looks upon, that object he becomes:

“I celebrate myself, and sing myself,

And what I assume you shall assume,

For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.”⁴⁹

So, this is precisely what Keats is saying. Shakespeare, according to Keats, became the object that he took up in his hands, and that he wrote about, every character he created, that character Shakespeare became, and that is what negative capability is. Therefore, the three poets – Byron, Shelley and Keats - in their own different ways were radical and their different types of radicalism get reflected in their writings.

(ix) LORD BYRON

Byron, for example, in his very long poem “Child Harold’s Pilgrimage” running too many cantos and broadly in four parts, exemplifies this trait in his poetry as well. When we analyze his poem, Child Harold’s Pilgrimage, we come to the conclusion that Byron, himself, is the hero of the poem because we cannot get away from his own personality. Moreover, his radicalism, his rebellious character/nature also gets ample manifestation in this particular poem. The subject of the poem can be compared to a picaresque novel because the hero in the poem goes from place to place, from country to country, and travels through entire Europe in the poem, showing us various communities, states, countries, and nationalities of Europe and their manifold traits of life. So, that is what Byron does in Child Harold. And the purpose of all this - presenting a picaresque kind of a poem is to describe the misadventures of the hero who has no place in the society. Moreover, it also manifests the typical trait of the romantic writers who present their subject in the most individualistic, intuitive and imaginative manner.

- ***DON JAUN***

Don Jaun, is another famous poem written by Byron and it again is on the same pattern of a picaresque novel. It is based on the legend of Don Jaun. However, Byron, adhering to one of the most important features of Romanticism, reverses the legend and instead of presenting Jaun as a womanizer, he presents him as someone easily seduced by women. Moreover, he calls it an Epic satire. The poem as such, is replete with satire. In this poem we have the hero who again is on a journey to Europe. Moreover, many funny incidents, misadventures are narrated in this very poem. The subject matter of both these poems i.e. Child Harold’s Pilgrimage and Don Jon, exemplify and establish that, Byron was the only poet among the Romantic writers who had a sense of humour. The rest of the Romantic poets - William Wordsworth, S. T. Coleridge, P.B. Shelley, John Keats and Robert Southey were, more or less, humorless. When we compare

their works with the works of Byron we do not find much humour in their works because they were very serious about what they were writing, what they were thinking and it was this seriousness that defined their works. Therefore, in the Romantic period itself, we have writers, adopting different, distinct and opposite approaches towards composing poetry. Therefore, the works of Byron are in a stark contrast to the works of other poets associated with the Romantic Movement - William Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, P.B. Shelley, Keats - because his model was Alexander Pope and not Shakespeare. Since he follows Pope, his works are replete with irony and satire. Irony and satire, therefore, are the main weapons in his poetry. Don Juan is actually the longest poem written by a Romantic writer; it is even longer than Wordsworth's *The Prelude* which, Wordsworth thought was a Romantic epic but, actually, *Don Juan* is more typical of the Romantic psyche, of the Romantic ethos, of the Romantic rebellion. Therefore, Byron stands out among the Romantics, as a practical rebel because he not only was an activist but also was able to break/do away with anything and everything that was against his convictions, no matter, whether it was his family, society, nation, or the entire continent of Europe, he would stand against all these challenges and would find his own ground since had that courage.

Don Juan, as has already been mentioned, is replete with humour, satire and the critique of entire Europe. It has to be acknowledged that Byron, had so broad a canvas that it was not there in the works of other Romantics like William Wordsworth, Coleridge, P.B. Shelley or John Keats.

(x) PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

P.B. Shelley also belonged to family of lords and he had, to some extent, royal temperament but not like Byron. P.B. Shelley was comparatively more radical in thought and that is why he could write in favour of the common man,

he could glorify the French revolution, and the American War of Independence, and could hold the common man against the royalty and authority and also could consider Satan the hero of Paradise Lost. Therefore, he had that capability in him, not Byronic, of course, Byron was glamorous, he made so many opposite sets of people crazy for him, and for those license was activity. Shelley, on the contrary, was not of that kind, he was a very sober person, serious about himself, serious about his thoughts and his poetry. Since he was a disciple of Godwin, who was the philosopher of the Romantic age and thought, Shelley was influenced by his works about political justice in which he, for the first time, spoke about the equality of the common man, and so on. Godwin being the teacher and *guru* of Shelley had inculcated in him the traits of radicalism.

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11. ALSO BY THE AUTHOR

- 1) *An Insight into the Horrors of Partition, Colonialism and Women's Issues: "A Saga of Oppression, Exploitation and Conflict."*
- 2) *Rights of Women in Islam: Protected or Subjugated?*