

**Literature for Competitive Exams**  
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**Module - 04**  
**Lecture - 13**  
**The Romantic Period**

Welcome back friends. So, the romantic period as I was just telling you we are going to do this one of the most important periods also the theory of romanticism, but it is a movement it is a period, it is an epic, it is a water shed period in the history of English literature and also in the social history of England.

We have English in American romanticism I will be talking about an American romanticism soon when we come back on discussing American literature and it is grades, but here let me talk about Wordsworth and Coleridge, the French revolution which was served as a background especially for the English romanticism. The lyrical ballads publication of the lyrical ballads in 1798 of course, you know the year publication of biography or literary are one of the most eminent works of literary criticism by Coleridge, who also gave us the concepts of fancy and imagination; difficult to understand perhaps at the under graduate level.

But still extremely important and very interesting they will always come back to you fancy and imagination in various forms. Poet addiction that a term that is usually associated with Wordsworth and Coleridge in their lyrical ballads, French revolution and it is emphasis on liberty equality and fraternity and that was sort of the inspirational motto for the English romantics. Romantics as well we will be talking about Keats Blake and Shelley also.

So, preface to lyrical ballads should be one of the most important documents biography literary 1817 is another important document, you should also know someone called William Hazlitt who wrote his immortal on poetry in general. The romantic period in English literature the period is 17 perhaps 89 to 1832, but 89 is just you know where the tremors of the French revolution were felt the water shed year the key year of course,

was 1789 the public 1798 the publication of a lyrical ballads, and 1832 perhaps this is the period 1798 to 1832 the peak years of romantic the romantic period, 1832 why because it is the year of sir Walter Scott's death.

Now, the idea of neoclassicism, that then prevalent ideas of neoclassicism such as decorum an order were re displaced by an emphasis on individual experience. In France Russo famously pointed out man is born free, but everywhere he is in chain. So, the emphasis was on individual liberty, there was an emphasis on originality and genius and this replace the idea of imitation of classical authors. So, remember this is one of the key features of romantic pe of the romantic period; originality, genius, individualism. The writers of this age were influenced by thinkers such as Locke Hume and berk.

Wordsworth one of the most eminent names associated with the English romantic period was born in 1770, 1770 to 1850 those are his years, he was impacted by the French revolution and it is ideals of liberty quality and fraternity. However, he was disillusioned with the turn that the French revolution had ultimately taken. In 1795 he met Coleridge Samuel Taylor Coleridge and together they selvaged the ideals of romanticism from the anarchy that to that French revolution had soon become. So, together they worked on a collaborated on the lyrical ballads collection of 23 intimate poems about rustic life told in simple language and giving expression to romantic ideals.

The idea was to redefine literary taste towards a new language, they shunt the godinez and enane frezology of many modern writers, an aim towards and I am quoting them an austere purity of language. The emphasis is based on the idea that I am humble and eristic life leads to a more permanent and more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets. Wordsworth ascertain that they are neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of pros and metrical composition; three words avoidance of frezology, elegant turn of free deliberate elegant of phrases. So, the idea was to mark a shift towards natural world order, grammar, sentence structure etcetera in poetry.

So, linguistically also it was very important as distinct from the conventional poetic style of earlier poets; grand, elegant, deliberately classical imitating the classics. For

Wordsworth a poet is a man speaking to men this signifies that the focus is not just on the poet who has a superior intellect, but also on the reader, who is understood by the poet as informed and imaginative. So, therefore, you get these words see individualism is important; for a reader should not be condescending too reader is important.

Let us not stretch it as far as a death of the author, but here the writer is important the reader is also important he is a man with intelligence. This was a literary world where the, or ordinary period people and the misfits also the non conformist had a voice. The common people had a significant role to play where women and children also had a places therefore, imagine so many poems are about the predicament of women and children, this was the pee poetry of the individual conscience the idea was no less democratic then the principles behind the French revolution, Wordsworth and Coleridge gave politics a human face.

Coleridge was born in 1772, 2 years younger to Wordsworth, and he died in 1834; for him the distinction between fancy and imagination was very important this is the major feature of Coleridge's theory of poetry, and his general theory of mental processes in his *Biographia Literaria*. He asserts that the imagination I consider as primary or secondary; *Biographia Literaria* which was published in 1817 as I just told you he says that no man was ever yet a great poet without being at the same time a profound philosopher. With this he changed the belief that poetry and philosophy are at loggerheads with each other they go hand in hand according to Coleridge. His concepts of fancy and imagination and he famously says fancy has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no more than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space. Fancy is a mechanical process which receives the elementary measures the fixities and definites.

However it is the imagination that produces the much higher kind of poetry and dissolves diffuses dissipates in order to recreate, remember that is what Coleridge says. Dissolve diffuse, dissipate in order to recreate. While fancy is merely mechanical for Coleridge imagination is vital. Wordsworth however, attaches more significance to fancy and he calls it a creative faculty, in *Biographia Literaria* therefore, Coleridge differs from Wordsworth on this and states that what Wordsworth think is fancy alone is really fancy

and imagination blended and that poetic genius is shaped by the depth of imagination. For Coleridge imagination is heralded as the ultimate synthesising faculty enabling humans to reconcile differences and opposites in a world which is full of appearances, this imagination for Coleridge generates and produces a form of its own while its rules are the very powers of growth and production.

He also talks about synthetic power and says imagination reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposites or discordant qualities of sameness with difference of general with a concrete, the idea with the image. The faculty of imagination assimilates and synthesizes the most disparate elements into an organic whole. The reconciliation of opposites is a central idea for the romantics. Imagination is inextricably bound up with other two major concepts for it is assumed to be the faculty which enables us to read nature as a system of symbols.

To Coleridge the archetype of all geniuses was Shakespeare; he became all things yet forever remaining himself for Coleridge again the imagination goes beyond a transcendence of experience and creates and realism did not matter as much as imagination. *Kubla Khan* published in 1797 is one of the greatest achievements of these considerations or theories of poetic imagination. We had often told and it is an after repeated story that Coleridge was under the influence of opium he fell asleep and had a dream. He dreamt that he was writing a poem and when he woke up a few hours later, he sat down and penned a few lines while writing he was called by someone and when he came back he realized that he had forgotten the rest still whatever is fragmentary dream we get a poem that is ostensibly grown out of a dream. Here are a few lines from *Kubla Khan* please look at the slide here.

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- That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
- And all who heard should see them there,
- And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
- His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
- Weave a circle round him thrice,
- And close your eyes with holy dread
- For he on honey-dew hath fed,
- And drunk the milk of Paradise.

That sunny dome those caves of ice and all who heard should see them there, and all should cry Beware! Beware! His flashing eyes his floating hair! Weave a circle round him thrice and close your eyes with holy dread, for he on honey dew hath fed and drunk the milk of paradise. That is Kubla Khan one of the greatest poems ever written. Wordsworth and Coleridge literary criticism found expression in preface to lyrical ballads and of course, Biographia Literaria they continued to be of central importance in the history of literary criticism. Moving on to William Hazlitt who lived between 1778 and 1831 a poet painter essayist historian he was mentored by Coleridge, and published an essay on the principles of human action in 1805, he also wrote the spirit of the age and the life of napoleon in 1830.

Hazlitt associated romantic poetry with the French revolution like Coleridge Hazlitt had great respect for the imagination, which he knew could change the way we see everyday things. He wrote an essay on genius and common sense and says you decide from feeling and not from reason. Along the lines of impressionistic critics he emphasises on the felt qualities of a work and says the imagination is the faculty which represents objects not as they are in themselves, but as they are moulded by other thoughts and feelings in to an infinite verity of shapes and combinations of powers. In poetry in general that is 1818 he says poetry is an invitation of nature with the imagination and the passions are a part of

man's nature.

Two great ideas or ache ideas in Hazlitt's criticism are the issue of style and the idea of sincerity. He says the courage to say as an author and he stressed upon the courage to say as an author what he felt as man. So, those are the important concepts categories of the English romanticism. Remember romantic literature was highly subjective saturated with emotional intensity, idea was as I have already told you what Wordsworth and Coleridge, but especially Wordsworth emphasized on the common man could be the hero; remember the classics the Greeks common man cannot be the hero and again nature was a place of refuge. The romantics valued nature as suppose to social order and a key literary device was the pathetic fallacy very favourite devise of Wordsworth and Shelley, also we have just seen in one of our recent lectures personification. The pathetic fallacy nature is not a passive observer, but a sympathetic to people.

The romantics proposed certain realistic techniques such as the use of local colour; for example, down to earth characters and Wordsworth, Wordsworth's rustics. So, those are the important features of the romantic poetry and important critic or recent critic still alive of the romantic period and important author of or observer of romantic period is Harold bloom; an eminent critic and a scholar he conducted a defence of the tradition of romantic poetry particularly against the efforts of the new critics. He wrote Harold bloom wrote three books on romantic poetry, Shelley's myth making, the visionary company and Blake's apocalypse.

In Blake's apocalypse he conducts a several blooms conducts several readings of Blake's prophetic poetry. In 16 1860 oh sorry 1967 bloom wrote a very visionary poem the covering sherob or poetic influence, the poet the poem is the out of waking dream that foregrounds poets quest for romance and revisits blooms interpretation of Blake's prophecies; we are going to do Blake in details soon. So, therefore, it is important to understand that how relevant the romantics still are we will be doing American romanticism soon when we come back on American literature. Blake's romanticism and conscientiousness a book published in 1970 is a collection of essays including blooms own the internalization of quest romance.

And then of course his one of his greatest works the anxiety of influence 1973, where he challenges the accepted notion that literary tradition is benign and empowering source of influence on modern poets. Instead bloom argues for poets since Milton the achievements of their great precursors are barriers for their own aspirations to originality. Before I sum up I would like to quote from Shelley who said the function of the sublime is to persuade us to end the slavery of pleasure; this is what a writers job is and that is what he considers important and those who of you who want to know more about the romantic era please look at the slides here.

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- **M.H. Abrams**, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (1958)
- **M.H. Abrams**, *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971),
- **Harold Bloom**, *The Visionary Company* (1971)

These are reading list for you, M.H Abram's the mirror and the lamp romantic theory and the critical tradition. M.H Abram's natural supernaturalism Harold bloom the visionary company.

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- **Marshall Brown (ed.)**, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, vol. 5: Romanticism (2000)*, an excellent topically arranged survey of Romantic-era criticism and theory
- **Douglas Bush**, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry (1937)*
- **Marilyn Butler**, *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background, 1760–1830 (1981)*
- **Paul de Man**, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism (1984)*

And Marshall Brown's *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Douglas Bush's *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry*, Marilyn Butler's *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background*, and Paul de Man's *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*.

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- <http://www.online-literature.com/forums/showthread.php?16344-Coleridge-quot-imagination-and-Fancy-quot>



And before I wind up please look at this video on Coleridge imagination and fancy.

Thank you very much we will continue with English poetry romantic poetry in our next class.