

## UNIT-1

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### WILLIAM WORDSWORTH : PREFACE TO LYRICAL BALLADS

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Structure :

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Summary of *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* with important prose passages
- 1.3 Self Assessment Questions
- 1.4 Answers to SAQs
- 1.5 Let us Sum up
- 1.6 Review Questions
- 1.7 Bibliography

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#### 1.0 Objectives

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the Age of the writer and his concept of study.
- Know the characteristics of the writer's contemporary scene.
- Know about a literary prose.
- Develop a critical analysis about the theory and the prose.
- Use the word as referred to in its context.

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#### 1.1 Introduction

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In this unit, you are going to study about the poet and its language. In a way, you will reinforce your study of prose evaluation. Various theories and concepts of the writer have been made simple to enhance your understanding. Also remember to make use of dictionary so as to understand the words and their meanings according to the context.

According to the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth principle object was to trace in the incidents of common life, the primary laws of human nature, the low and rustic life and also the language of rustic people.

The Preface of 1800 is most remembered by what may be regarded as a paradox, namely, that 'there neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition'.

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#### 1.2 Summary of Preface to Lyrical Ballads With Important Prose Passages

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##### (a) The Occasion and Limitations of his Critical Work:

Wordsworth was dragged into criticism in spite of himself. For neither by temperament nor by

training was he qualified to be a critic. Nor was his upbringing in the beloved lap of Nature, that bred an indifference to books, at all conducive to a critical frame of mind. Had his share of the *Lyrical Ballads*, published by him and his friend Coleridge in 1798, not been violently attacked by the neo-classical critics of the Edinburgh and the Quarterly Reviews, it is doubtful whether he would have penned a single line of criticism. As it is, he had to take the field in sheer self-defence where, however, he not only made the issue more confounded but, unwittingly, proved the opponents' point more than his own. The chief of his critical papers is the preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* dated 1800, which was revised and enlarged in the subsequent editions of 1802 and 1815. The revision and enlargement also included an Appendix to the edition of 1802 and an Essay Supplementary to the Preface to the edition of 1815. In all of them Wordsworth's subject is poetic diction and his view of poetry, which from their original enunciation in the others. The work, it appears, was originally to have been eventually left to Wordsworth who incorporated some of those notes into its.

### **(b) Neo-classical Poetic Diction**

The question of poetic diction or the language fit for poetry, which chiefly compelled Wordsworth to write his *Preface*, had also engaged the attention of the neo-classical and earlier writers. Spenser, thus, had preferred the archaic language to that in vogue in his day. Milton had, similarly, a predilection for the uncommon in word and phrase in his great rule-loving critics of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to substitute this caprice or chance in the selection of poetic language by system. The great Roman orator Cicero had divided style into three categories: the low, used to prove; the middle, used to please; and the high or lofty, used to move. Although the categorization originally applied to oratory, it proved no less useful in distinguishing the 'kinds' of poetry by their style. The elegiac, thus, used the low style, the pastoral the middle, and the epic the lofty. The eighteenth century reduced these three categories to only two: the low and the lofty. It summarily rejected low words and phrases as unfit for poetic use, those, that is to say, which being in everyday use became too familiar to the ear and so lost all their power to impress. There was another variety of words not covered by any of these categories which also Dr. Johnson found unfit for poetic use- the technical ones which, though uncommon and therefore perhaps high, are too much so to be intelligible to any but the professions concerned. With these two exceptions therefore, the low and the technical, poets were free to use any language they liked. This, according to him and to the neo-classical critics in general, was the true poetic diction – a 'system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestic use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular art'. Its difference from the diction of prose by its 'happy combinations of words' or 'flowers of speech', plucked from the bramble of current forms of expression. Employed judiciously by gifted writers, it served its purpose well enough, but falling into the hands, of mere versifiers, it soon degenerated into artifice. In their verses the devices employed to turn the commonplace into the grand-personification, periphrasis, inversion, antithesis, Latinisms – appear bereft of all the graces found in those of the former. To illustrate the use of periphrasis only, the device most commonly resorted to, they turned shepherds into 'the rural race', a bright expanse of flowers in the fields into 'their' flowery carpet', singing birds into 'gay songsters of the feather's train'. In this way poetry drifted away from natural expression altogether.

### **(c) Wordsworth's Concept of Poetic Diction**

It was rather this abuse of poetic diction than perhaps poetic diction itself which Wordsworth originally disapproved. For in the Advertisement of the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798 he stated that his object in adopting a simpler diction for his poems was merely 'to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society was adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure'. But when in spite

of this modest apologia they were attached mercilessly by conservative opinion, his tentative experiment turned into a definite concept. The publication of a second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800 provided him with the occasion to explain it. His principal object in these poems, he says, 'was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect.' Explaining why only low and rustic life was chosen for this purpose, he says that in that condition, free from all outside influences, men speak from their own personal experience and 'convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions'. Such a language, therefore, 'is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression in order to furnish food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites of their own creation.'

From this he is led to attaché the diction of the day. 'The reader,' he says, 'will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and are utterly rejected as an ordinary device to elevate the style and raise it above prose. My purpose was to imitate and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language . . . There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; as much pains has been taken to avoid it as is ordinarily taken to produce it. . . to bring my language near to the language of men.' In poetic diction, besides the use of personification, Wordsworth includes 'phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of poets' – periphrasis, inversion, antithesis, and other devices – and even those expressions, 'in themselves proper and beautiful', which were so frequently repeated by bad poets that they began to arouse disgust rather than pleasure.

Finally, Wordsworth points out that as a natural corollary to his concept of poetic style the language of poetry cannot differ materially from that of prose: 'that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose; but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose, when prose is well written.' As an instance, he cites some lines, the only ones he considers valuable, from Gray's sonnet. On the Death of Richard West which, in spite of that poet's insistence on the difference between the language of poetry and prose, are hardly different from what they would be in prose; such as the concluding two:

I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,  
And weep the more because I weep in vain.

Whence Wordsworth is led to conclude, 'that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.' To the possible objection that metre itself constitutes a distinction between the two and that therefore there are other distinctions equally valid, such as those of diction, Wordsworth replies that he is only recommending 'a selection of the language really spoken by men' and 'that this selection, wherever it is made with true taste and feelings, will of itself form a distinction far greater than composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life; and if metre be superadded thereto, I believe that a dissimilitude (i.e. distinction) will be produced altogether sufficient for the gratification of a rational mind.' It is as much as to admit that there is a distinction between the language

of poetry and that of prose or 'the very language of men', which was Wordsworth's original object, and that the distinction lies not only in metre but also in the choice of words and phrases, which in the case of poetry must be made 'with true taste and feeling'.

Not only this: Wordsworth even admits the possibility of what Johnson called 'flowers of speech' arising in the process: 'for, if selected truly and judiciously, must necessarily be dignified and variegated, and alive with metaphors and figures.' How, then, with the vulgarity of common speech refined by taste, and dignity and variety added to it by metaphors and figures, is Wordsworth's concept of poetry? Is not the prodigal son back home, again after all his wanderings? 'Wordsworth,' as Rene Wellek says, 'actually ends in good neo-classicism.'

His poetic practice 'doth the same tale repeat'. His greatest poems – Tintern Abbey, The Immortality Ode, The Solitary Reaper, and others too numerous to mention – are not written 'in a selection of language really used by men.' But this is not to deny that a good part of Wordsworth's poetry, of 'incidents and situations from common life,' does succeed nobly in the language advocated in the Advertisement of 1798. Which all comes to this: that there is a class of poetry for which such language is certainly suited, and that neo-classical opinion only showed its inherent narrow mindedness in not judging it on its merits. And from this initial mistake on its part Wordsworth, as uncritical as his assailants, was led to overstate the possibilities of his own concept of poetic diction.

#### **(d) His Concept of Poetry**

From a consideration of the language of poetry Wordsworth is led to a consideration of the poetic art itself. But here, too he is not quite clear in his assertions. To begin with, he defines good poetry as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings', in which case there is no difference between it and the song of Shelley's Skylark that also pours his full heart in profuse strains of an unpremeditated art.

But if it is only this, how is it that it comes to be clothed 'in selection of language really used by men', with metre superadded thereto, for no sudden rush of emotions can leave a poet any leisure for these? Wordsworth makes no attempt to explain the anomaly but modifies the statement later in the Preface in this way: '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 its actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on.' It will be noticed here that though 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' and 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' are the very opposite of each other – the one coming on a sudden, the other deliberately recalled to memory – Wordsworth makes no difference between the two and endeavours to explain the one by the other. Did he mean the same things by the two? If he did, as appears from this elucidation of the first statement by the second, his meaning in the first seems to have been that poetry 'is the final product' of the 'unforced' overflow of powerful feelings. For it is only by some such interpretation that these two opposed statements can be reconciled. That his second statement is the more considered one and explains his meaning more truly is plain enough. For his own greatest poems were composed in the way therein set forth. A moving sight – say the solitary reaper or the daffodils – was seen during a walk, stored in the memory, and recalled in moments of calm contemplation to be bodied forth into a poem. In this process the emotion originally aroused by the sight was re-created in contemplation as nearly as possible till it overpowered the mind completely, driving contemplation thence. So this is how poetry originates in emotion recollected in

transquillity and is therefore, ultimately, the product of the original free flow of that emotion. Had no emotion been aroused of itself in the beginning, there would have been no recollection of it in transquillity and so no expression of it in poetry. The first stage in the poetic process is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, the next their recollection in tranquility, and the last their expression in poetry. That by spontaneity in poetry Wordsworth did not simply a complete rejection of workmanship, or artlessness, is poems with the greatest care, not trusting his first expression which he often found detestable. 'It is frequently true of second words as of second thoughts,' he wrote to Gillies, 'that they are best. Nor is the principle of spontaneity in poetic composition advocated anywhere else in the Preface except in that solitary phrase. Here, too, therefore Wordsworth is not so revolutionary in his concept as he appears.

He also considered the function of poetry. It is not sheer self-expression, as its 'spontaneous overflow' might suggest. It stands or falls by its effect on the reader. For the poet 'is a man speaking to men': apart from them his song is a mere voice in the wilderness. His over-all object is, no doubt, pleasure but it is pleasure in which the moral gain far outweighs the aesthetic. The

latter chiefly arises from the poet's way of saying things and from his use of metre or rhyme which with their pleasurable recurrence, make even pathetic situations and sentiments painless. The moral consists partly in the refinement of feelings which true poetry effects, partly in the knowledge of 'Man, Nature, and Human Life' which it conveys, and partly in its emphasis on whatever makes life richer and fuller: 'Truth, Grandeur, Beauty, Love, and Hope –

And melancholy Fear subdued by Faith',

As the poet is possessed of a greater power to feel and to express his feelings than other men, he has a ready access to the reader's heart; and as his feelings are saner, purer, and more permanent than can be aroused by the same objects in other men, the reader is induced to feel the poet's way in the same situation and even in others. He emerges saner and purer than before.

Next, poetry is the pursuit of truth- of man's knowledge of himself and the world around him. Science is engaged in the same pursuit, too, but while the truths it discovers benefits us only materially, the truths of poetry 'cleave to us as a necessary part of our existence', for they concern man's relation to man, on the one hand, and his relation to the external world of nature, on the other, both illustrated in 'incidents and situation from common life', as in the Lines Written in Early Spring where while man harms man, the world of Nature, where everything is happy, caters for his hourly delight. It is an instance of unpleasant truth, no doubt, but in the context of its 'overbalance of pleasure' in Nature, its sum total is pleasure. While the pursuit of science pleases the scientist, there is nothing in its truths that can equally please the common man. They must remain the pleasure of the few who know science. Nor, being purely the product of the 'meddling intellect', are they 'felt in the blood, and felt along the heart', as the truths of poetry are. 'Poetry (therefore) is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science'.

Finally, poetry is a greater force for good. Wordsworth's own object in writing poetry was 'to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier, to each the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous.' From this he drew the general conclusion that every great poet is a teacher; I wish either to be considered as a teacher or as nothing.' This is also what Plato, with whom Wordsworth has much in common, wanted poetry to be but as the latter everywhere insists on pleasure as being a necessary condition of poetic teaching, he may be said to follow Horace more than Plato. But so far as teaching alone

is concerned, Wordsworth, in a famous passage concerning his own poems, seems to echo the very sentiments of Plato: they will cooperate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, and will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier.' In the preface these benign tendencies are defined as 'relationship and love' which it is the great function of poetry to promote. But they are to be induced through a purgation of feelings rather than through a mere appeal to the intellect or good sense. This is what distinguishes Wordsworth's concept of teaching from that of his neo-classical predecessors.

**(e) The Value of his Criticism**

Whether in his attack on poetic diction or in his judgement of poetry by its appeal to the emotions, wordsworth Opposed the neo-classical practice of judging a work of art by the application of tests based on ancient models. These tests could at the most judge the external qualities of the work – its structure, diction, metre, and the like. A work might be flawless in all these and yet fail 'to please always and please all'. It may please the critic intent on looking for these niceties in its extent to which it moves him? Wordsworth applied himself to this great question – the ultimate test of literary excellence – and came to the conclusion that it lay neither in a particular diction nor in a particular mode writing. It lay rather in the hearty pleasure it afforded to the reader; and this may arise as much from the use of common language as from the customary language of poetry, and as much from the writer's individual mode of writing as from that laid down by new classicism. What Wordsworth says in this connection of the style of his Lyrical Ballads applies equally to his generally poetic practice: 'I am well aware that others who pursue different track may interest him likewise; I do not interfere with their claim, I only wish to prefer a difference claim of my own.' This is actually all that he meant in the Preface and all that Romanticism means too. It is an application of the common principle of 'live and let live' in the sphere of letters.

Wordsworth also saw that neo-classicism made no provision for originality of genius and seldom judged it on its merit. It stood all for the beaten track. So consciously or unconsciously it often proved a hindrance to writers who followed their own path. From the attacks made on his own works therefore the conclusion was forced upon him 'that every author, as far as he is great and at the same time original, has had the task of creating the taste by which he is to be enjoyed; so has it been, so will it continue to be.' For what he has in common with his predecessors (i.e. with the older school) his path has already been smoothed by them, 'but for what is peculiarly his own, he will be called upon to clear and often to shape his own road: he will be in the condition of Hannibal among the Alps.' This, too, his Preface sought to do: to wean the reader away from the old mode of writing and to accustom him to his own. This, in spite of opposition, succeeded in doing. His critical writings therefore mark the end of the old school and the beginning of a new or rather the revival of an older one – the Romantic school of the Elizabethans.

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**1.3 Self Assessment Questions**

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1. Who were the main collaborators in the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* and when was it published?

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2. What is the subject of thought in his *Preface to the Lyricall Ballads*?

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3. Why did Wordsworth write his *Preface to the Lyricall Ballads*?

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4. What was the principal object of Wordsworth in these poems?

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5. What is the view of Wordsworth on the simplicity of the language?

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6. What is the theory of poetic diction of Wordsworth?

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7. What is the natural corollary to his concept of poetic diction?

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8. What should be the effort of a poet or a prose writer according to Wordsworth?

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9. Did Wordsworth himself adhere to his concept of poetic diction? Duscuss.

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10. What is the concept of poetic art according to Wordsworth?

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11. What according to Wordsworth is the function of poetry?

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12. What is the difference between science and poetry?

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13. Discuss Wordsworth's views on meter.

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14. What does Wordsworth's Theory of Poetry and poetic diction represents?

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15. What was the poetic diction according to the neo classical poets and writers?

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16. What kind of "Nature" became the subject of Wordsworth's poetry and poetic creation?

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17. What was the subject of "Nature" for the neo-classic writers?

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18. What are the main characteristics of Romantic Age?

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19. What was the "Nature's" formative and educative influence on the growth of Wordsworth's mind as a poet?

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20. Comment on Wordsworth's *Prefaces*.

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21. Comment on the Role of “Imagination” in Wordsworth’s concept of creativity?

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### 1.4 Answers to SAQs

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1. It was the Collaboration of Wordsworth and Coleridge’s poem in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* which was published in 1798 and later on modified in 1800.
2. In all of them, Wordsworth’s subject is poetic diction and his view of poetry.
3. It was an experiment against the inane and gaudy phraseology of the previous writers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society was adapted to the purpose of poetic pleasure.
4. His principal object in these poem, he said, “was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect.
5. Wordsworth choose only low and rustic life for his purpose because in that condition free from all outside influences, men speak from their own personal experience and “convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions.” According to Wordsworth simple language” is more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that, which is frequently substituted for it by poets, which is tough and furnishes food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites of their own creation”.
6. Wordsworth theory of poetic diction was to imitate, and as far as possible to adopt” the very language of men” . . . . To bring “my language near to the language of men”.
7. It is that the language of poetry cannot differ materially from that of prose; it is only the addition of metre that the pleasure is superadded to a rational mind.
8. According to Wordsworth if the poet’s subject be judiciously chosen, it will naturally, and upon fit occasion, lead him to passions the language of which must necessarily be dignified and variegated, and alive with figures and metaphors.
9. His greatest poems, *Tintern Abbey*, *The immortality Ode*, *The solitary Reaper*, and others poem, are not written” in a selection of language really used by men”. But a good part of Wordsworth’s poetry adheres to “incidents and situations from common life”.
10. Wordsworth defines good poetry as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”, it takes its

origin from emotions recollected in tranquility; the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction, the tranquility gradually disappears and an emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation is gradually produced and does actually exist in the mind. In this mood, successful composition generally begins and is carried on.

11. Since poet is a “man speaking to men,” his poetry should give pleasure to the common men reading it. The moral consists partly in the refinement of feelings which true poetry effects, partly is the knowledge of “Man, Nature and Human life” and on things that makes life fuller and richer.
12. According to Wordsworth, while the happenings in science please only to a scientist, the poetry is the breath and fines spirit of all knowledge, it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science.”
13. Wordsworth believes that meter added to a piece of poetry is pleasure superadded and calls it the flowers of speech which is variegated and dignified.
14. It represents his aim to bring the language of poetry to naturalness and simplicity. When he declared that his chosen theme was no other than the very heart of man that the language of poetry should be the language really used by men, even peasants, he stood out as the champion and interpreter of new democratic faith.
15. A system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestic use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to a particular cut.
16. Wordsworth believed in the nature, which consisted of common men and landscapes and solitary reaper, subjects which were almost untouched by the no- classiest.
17. The no-classiest wrote about the ‘Nature’ whose subject was the rich and artificial men and women and consisted of the nature and physical attributes of high society.
18. Characteristics of Romanticism. An analysis of the definitions of Romanticism reveals the following characteristics :
  - (i) Mystery : The romantic spirit seeks the strange and the mysterious and reveals the wonder of things removed from real life. According to the romantics, there are more things in heaven and earth than are perceived in the ordinary course of life, and it is this feeling that arouses their curiosity in the unearthly and the supernatural.
  - (ii) Interest in the Past: The romantics sought to get away from the pressure of present reality and to find “modes of deliverance from the dead weight of routine.” So they looked to the past for the past was remote from present reality, and it is remoteness and distance that lends a wonder and enchantment to the panorama of life.
  - (iii) Love of Nature : The Romantics discovered a new beauty and wonder in the world of nature. The Romantic poets were all lovers of nature; they minutely observed nature in all her aspects, and expressed in poetry their emotional reactions to her beauty and magic. Wordsworth was the first of the Romantics to discover a new wonder in nature.
  - (iv) Interest in Inhumanity : The Romantics took great interest in humanity and dealt with the lives of common men and women. It was the essential character of man as man that interested them. Their hearts overflow with sympathy for the poor and the downtrodden. They glorify

the innocence and simplicity of the common man. The humanitarian philosophy of Rousseau and the ideal of French Revolution spearheaded the democratic movement. The doctrines of “freedom, equality and brotherhood inspired the poets of this age. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Byron were humanists.

- (v) Love for the elemental Simplicities of life: romanticism is characterized by “an instinct for the elemental simplicities of life.” Rousseau’s call “return to nature” was part of a larger naturalism that sought to bring people back to the bosom of nature, and reclaim us from superfluous conventions.
- (vi) Freedom of Imagination : Imagination is the cardinal characteristic of romanticism. It is the “freeing or unfettering of passions or emotions in art and letters.” The artist is not bound down by any law apart from the law prescribed by the law of his own artistic genius. It is a revolt against the stereotyped conventions of art, and gives a free play to imagination.
- (vii) Subjectivity and Spontaneity: The romantics were concerned not so much with the external facts of life as with their own feelings and emotions. Poetry to them was the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. It is poet’s own emotions that finds expression in his poetry.
- (viii) Speculative and Inquisitive Tendency : Romanticism induces a speculative and inquisitive turn of mind. Besides the expression of the heightened sensibility of the imagination a stronger undercurrent of the speculative, intellectual power underlies the best works of Wordsworth.
- (ix) Regeneration of Poetic Style : Poetic style acquired a rich variety in the hands of the Romantics. Their interest in the past led them to experiment with old metres and poetic forms.

20. Wordsworth was of the opinion that nature can add in Wordsworth’s poetry for the revelation of a sense of mystery and uncommonness in the ordinary objects of nature and human life. He threw a colouring of imagination upon the common things of life and nature so as to make them appear to be uncommon – to make the natural appear like the supernatural by the iridescent colour of imagination. The ordinary objects are so heightened and glorified by the poet’s imagination that they seem completely transmuted and transfigured.

Wordsworth adds from his imagination a new light to what he sees and hears:

The ordinary things of life and nature thus assume new appearance and acquire a new charm under the imaginative treatment of the poet. In fact, the whole of Wordsworth’s poetry is an integrated vision of nature and man revealed through his imagination.

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## 1.5 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit the following points call for comment:

- In search of themes Wordsworth goes straight to common life.
- Secondly, in the treatment of such themes, he sets out to employ the language “really used by man”; but it should be a selection of such language.
- He avoids “the gaudiness and inane phraseology of 18<sup>th</sup> century poets.

- It should be the language of men in a state of vivid sensation.
- It should have a certain colouring of imagination.
- Lastly, Wordsworth emphatically declares: “There neither is nor can be any essential distinction between the language of prose and metrical composition”.

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## **1.6 Review Questions**

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1. Discuss Wordsworth’s theory of poetic diction.
2. Write a note on Wordsworth’s views on meter.
3. Write an essay on Wordsworth’s concept of poetry.

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## **1.7 Bibliography**

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1. Wordsworth by W.H. Garrod
2. Essays in Criticism by Mathew Arnald
3. Oxford Lectures on Poetry by A.C. Bradley
4. Hours in a Library by Leslie Stephen
5. A Guide to English Literature edited by Boris Ford

## UNIT-2

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### WILLIAM WORDSWORTH: TINTERN ABBEY

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#### Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 William Wordsworth and his Poetry
- 2.3 Introduction To the Poem
- 2.4 *Tintern Abbey*
- 2.5 Glossary
- 2.6 Self Assessment Questions
- 2.7 Answers to SAQs
- 2.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.9 Review Questions
- 2.10 Bibliography

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#### 2.0 Objectives

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While going through this unit, you will be able to know:

- The age of the writer and its contemporary scene.
- The features of the poetry and prose of the time that the writer belongs to;
- The concept of thought and framework of the text and its meaning;
- The concept of thought and framework of the text and its meaning;
- About the poem and its surface meaning, with various words and phrases used within the poem's text.

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#### 2.1 Introduction

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- (a) Broadly speaking, the earlier decades of the nineteenth century saw the full harvest of the promises that slowly came into existence during the latter half of the eighteenth century. This age, therefore, is more easy to understand. It is more of a unity, and there is less of the interweaving of different influences. In European history the great event was the French Revolution, which, long in its development, came suddenly to a head in 1789. In England, as in most other European countries, it was hailed with joy by all liberal thinkers. Wordsworth, who was typical of this class among the poets, has chronicled in immortal blank verse the thrill of delight that pervaded enthusiastic souls at that stirring moment:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,

But to be young was very heaven.

But as the dawn grew into day the earlier transports disappeared. The excesses of the revolutionaries turned many of their friends against them. Then came war between England and France, which lasted from 1793 with hardly a break till 1815.

The exhaustion caused by this prolonged conflict meant misery and starvation in England. To remedy these evils a race of young and devoted revolutionaries sprang to life in this country. Among such writers we observe Leigh Hunt, Shelley, Godwin, Ebenezer Elliott, and many more who desired to alleviate the lot of their less fortunate countrymen.

**(b) The Poetry of Romanticism**

Compared with the complex nature of the transition period the poetry of this time is outstanding of them.

- (i) It is the poetry of nature. This is the real nature, observed in Burns and Blake. Instead of being an ornament and convention, nature becomes an essential part, almost the essential part, of poetry. In the case of Wordsworth it becomes almost a religion.
- (ii) It is the poetry of man. Pope said that “The proper study of mankind is man.” The Romantic poets carried this theory to its greatest development.
- (iii) It is the poetry of revolt. And it means revolt in its widest sense – in subject and in form. There are no more rules, if these rules mean bonds and confinement. Every poet is accustomed to write as the spirit moves him. This enthusiastic spirit of liberty led to an enormous output of poetry, some of the highest merit. Not even the Elizabethan age can surpass this period in abundance.
- (iv) It is the poetry of simplicity, turned to the high seriousness of the time. Wordsworth, in the preface to *The Lyrical Ballads*, which with the assistance of Coleridge he published in 1798, says that he intends to “choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout in a selection of the language really used by men.” This is the challenge to the ‘classical’ school, with its theory of ‘correct’ style.

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## **2.2 William Wordsworth and his Poetry (1770-1850)**

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In the history of English literature this poet stands for two dominant ideas in poetry, the poetry of nature and the poetry of simplicity.

He devoted his genius and his life to the working out of these two theories. As a young man he was infected by the Revolutionary fever, and left his university of Cambridge to go to France and assist the new French Republic. He narrowly escaped death at the hands of the people he wished to assist, and was compelled to seek safety in England. After some wandering in the country he at length settled down in the Lake District of England, near which, at Cocker's mouth, he had been born. In this romantic neighborhood quite a school of literary men assembled, who in the course of time came to be known as the Lake School of poets. Among them were Coleridge, Southey, De Quincey, Christopher North, and several more.

As first Wordsworth's literary theories were derided, but he lived to see them generally applauded. In 1842 he was awarded a State pension, and on the death of Southey (1843) he was appointed Poet Laureate.

(a) **Wordsworth and Nature:**

An extract from one of his best poems may reveal this vital part of his poetic faith.

For I have learned  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns.  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all object of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye, and ear, - both what they half create,  
And what we perceive ; well pleased to recognize  
In nature and the language of the sense  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
OF all my moral being

(Tintern Abbey)

This passage tells us what he found in his contemplation of nature :

- (i) “The still, sad music of humanity” – the sympathy of nature with man and his sorrows.
- (ii) An inner presence, a mysterious and compelling force, that permeates all things; in other words, a kind of religious ecstasy.

- (iii) A wide and plenteous joy that embraces all things.
- (iv) A sense of nature everywhere – in meadows, woods, and mountains, but also in stars, setting suns, and in the mind of man. This omnipresence of nature gives Wordsworth’s theory its distinguishing touch.

In its wide scope, in its sense of beauty and in its piercing vision, Wordsworth’s treatment of nature is the most wonderful of its kind in English literature.

**(b) Wordsworth and Simplicity:**

Wordsworth’s theory of poetical style, as set out in the preface to *The Lyrical Ballads* (1799). He expounds his doctrine : ‘Humble and rustic life was generally to be chosen because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil ... and speak a plainer and more emphatic language.

From this statement two points emerge. His choice of subjects was humble and rustic life. To this plan he generally adhered, for nearly all his poems deal with simple rustic them. His style was to be “the language really used by men.

We have to admit that in the course of his poetry Wordsworth used two species of vocabulary. In his simple rustic poetry, such as *Lucy Gray* and *We are Seven*, he employed the simplicity of language suited to the theme, and so he could be faithful to his theory. When he attained to thoughts of great elevation, as in his wonderful “**Ode on the Intimations of Immortality**”, he was compelled by the very nature of his subject to go beyond the language used by ordinary men.

In a fair number of cases Wordsworth’s theories came into conflict with his common sense. He used language of such simplicity that it became ridiculous.

**(c) His Poetical Works :**

During his long life Wordsworth composed a large amount of poetry, but only a small proportion of it is of the highest class, and most of this was written in the early stage of his carrier. The years 1799-1814 are his best period, for they saw the production of the three following volumes:

- (i) *The Lyrical Ballads* (1799), written in collaboration with his friend Coleridge. This book contains some of this most famous pieces, including *The Idiot Boy* and *Tintern Abbey*. The nature of this volume was so little understood by the critics of the day that it was received either with neglect or derision.
- (ii) *Poems*, published in 1807. This is Wordsworth’s most important single book, for it contains the majority of his best shorter poems, such as *Lucy Gray*, *Ruth*, and *Nutting*.
- (iii) *The Excursion* (1814), the first portion of an enormous blank-verse poem, the subject of which was to be his own education and mental development. The complete poem was to be called *The Recluse*. Already in 1805 he had written the *Prelude* to this, but this part was not published till after his death. The entire scheme was not completed. Though much of the poem is dull and heavy, it contains many magnificent passages upon his observation of nature and the effect this had upon his growing consciousness.

During the later years his poems are many, but the really good ones are few. Perhaps the best in is *Yarrow Revisited* (1835)

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## 2.3 Introduction To The Poem

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In the summer of 1798 Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, walking from Alfoxden to Bristol, visited the beautiful ruins of Tintern Abbey, located on the Wye River in Monmouthshire, Wordsworth had been there in 1793, and in this poem he records his impression after a five-year absence. Summing up Wordsworth's creed of the ministering power of nature (especially through the function of memory) and the development of his appreciation of nature from childhood to maturity, Tintern Abbey is a key poem to any understanding of Wordsworth's nature philosophy.

### Four stages in Wordsworth's Poetic Development

Wordsworth's poetic career consists of four periods. He gives an account of the growth of his mind in *The Prelude* or *Growth of a Poet's Mind* and *Tintern Abbey*. These poems show a definite development in Wordsworth's conception of nature and human life.

#### (i) First Period :

Wordsworth's early years were spent in solitude among the hills. The "ceaseless music" of Derwent filled his soul and gave him an unconscious foretaste of the calm – "That Nature breaths among the hills and groves." In the Book I of *The Prelude* Wordsworth describes his feelings and impressions of his childhood. He begins the Second Book of *The Prelude* with a description of the tumultuous joy and eagerness of boyhood in its sports among a rich and varied scenery. During his boyish days, nature was;

But secondary to my own pursuits  
And animal activities, and all  
Their trivial pleasures.

His early intercourse with natural objects developed in him a calmness and tranquility of soul, which was to be a characteristic feature in later years:

The visible scene  
Would enter unawares into his mind,  
With all its solemn imagery.

#### (ii) Second Period :

Then followed the period of senses, when the young poet drank in the beauty of nature with the passion of a lover:

The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,  
The mountain and the deep gloomy wood,  
Their colours and forms, were then to me  
An appetite, a feeling and a love  
That had no need of a remoter charm

By thought supplied, nor any interest

Unborrowed from the eye.

During this period “nature was loved with an unreflecting passion altogether untouched by intellectual interest or associations – the kind of interest that found such full expression in the poetry of Keats.”

**(iii) Third Period:**

This stage of “dizzy joys” and “aching raptures” came to an end with his experience of human sorrow and suffering in France. He had kept watch over “human mortality” and in his eyes nature now took on a “sober colouring”. He heard “the still, sad music of humanity,” and his love of nature became linked with the love of man. He found strength and force and beauty in the character of humble people. He saw into the depths of human souls:

Souls that appear to have no depth at all

To careless eyes.

He bent in reverence

To Nature and the power of human minds,

To men as they are men within themselves.

**(iv) Fourth Period:**

The final stage was the period of the soul, when the poet’s love of nature became reflective, mystical and spiritual. He felt in Nature “a presence” that disturbed him with “the joy of elevated thoughts,” He now felt God in nature and its creations; His Pantheism or Mysticism.

a sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns

And the round ocean and the living air,

And the blue sky, and in the mind of men.

Wordsworth now felt that there is one soul immanent through the universe, but it objectifies itself into various forms and phenomena perceived by the sense. This was the greatest period of Wordsworth’s poetic life. His poetic powers gradually declined after 1808 and his later poetry became didactic and even prosaic.

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## **2.4 William Wordsworth : Tintern Abbey**

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COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY, ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A TOUR. JULY 13, 1798.

Five years have past; five summers, with the length

Of five long winters! And again I hear

These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs

With a soft inland murmur. – Once again  
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,  
That on a wild secluded scene impress  
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect  
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.  
The day is come when I again repose  
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view  
These plots of cottage ground, these orchard-tufts,  
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves  
‘Mid groves and copses. Once again I see  
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines,  
Of sportive wood run wild : these pastoral farms,  
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke

Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!  
With some uncertain notice, as might seem  
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,  
Or of some Hermit’s cave, where by his fire  
The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms, Through a long absence,  
have not been to me As is a landscape to a blind man’s eye:  
But often in lonely rooms, and ’mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
With tranquil restoration: - feelings too  
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,  
As have no slight or trivial influence

On that best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered acts  
Of kindness and of love. 'Nor less, I trust, To them I may have owed another gifts,  
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
In which the burden of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight,  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened :- that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us one, -  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power,  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things,

If this  
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! How oft-  
In darkness and amid the many shapes  
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir  
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world  
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart –  
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,  
O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer thro' the woods,  
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,  
With many recognitions dim and faint,  
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
The picture of the mind revives again:

While here I stand, not only with the sense  
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
That in this moment there is life and food  
For future Years. And so I dare to hope,  
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first  
I came among these hills; when like a roe  
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
Wherever nature led: more like a man  
Flying from something that he dreads than one  
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then  
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,  
And their glad animal movements all gone by)  
To me was all in all – I cannot paint  
What then I was. The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,  
By thought supplied, nor any interest'  
Unborrowed from the eye. \_ That time is past,  
And all its aching joys are now no more,  
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this  
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts  
Have followed ; for such loss, I would believe,  
Abundant recompense. For I have learned  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power

To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye, and ear, - both what they half create,  
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize  
In nature and the language of the sense  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,  
If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
Suffer my genial spirits to decay,  
For thou art with me here upon the banks  
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friends,  
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch  
The language of my former heart, and read  
My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! Yet a little while  
May I behold in thee what I was once,  
My dear, dear Sister! And this prayer I make,

Knowing that Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
From joy to joy: for she can so inform  
The mind that is within us, so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon  
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;  
And let the misty mountain-winds be free  
To blow against thee: and, in after years,  
Thy memory be as a dwelling place  
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! Then,  
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,  
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance-  
If I should be where I no more can hear  
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams  
Of past existence – wilt thou then forget  
That on the banks of this delightful stream  
We stood together; and that I, so long  
A worshipper of Nature, hither came  
Unwearied in that service : rather say  
With warmer love – oh! With far deeper zeal  
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget

That after many wanderings, many years  
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me  
More dear, both for themselves and for the sake!

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## 2.5 Glossary

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Seclusion: away from bla-bla of town and public life

beauteous forms : sensuous, subjects of eye and ear

Coarser pleasures: unintelligible enjoyment, no stress on intellect and reason

still sad music of humanity: sorrows and sufferings of human being

sense sublime: elevated feelings

interfused : intermingled, intermixed

perceive : look into surface

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## 2.6 Self Assessment Questions

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1. After how many years has Wordsworth returned to the Tintern Abbey?

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2. Who has accompanied Wordsworth during his visit to the Abbey?

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3. What are the beauteous forms of nature referred to in this poem?

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4. What was it that Wordsworth always missed amid the din of town and cities?

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5. When did Wordsworth very often miss the company of nature and its form?

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6. Which lines describe the serene blessed mood of the lover of nature in his extasie?

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7. At times of perplexity, where did Wordsworth use to go ?

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8. What was the first stage of the poet's growth of mind?

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9. What are the things that made the poet use his intellect at the second stage?

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10. Did the French Revolution influence Wordsworth during the third stage of the development of the poet's mind?

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11. Why is the fourth stage called as the stage of pantheism or mysticism during the poet's growth of mind?

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12. "Nature was his guide and nurse" Do you agree with this statement as Wordsworth poses in his poetry?

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13. What kind of faith did Wordsworth have in the nature and its company?

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14. What do you feel about Wordsworth's concept of nature after going through the poem?

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15. In what form of verse Wordsworth's long poem *Tintern Abbey* has been written?

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16. What do you mean by the Blank Verse?

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17. What are the main features of Wordsworth's poetry?

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## 2.7 Answers to SAQs

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1. After five long years, has Wordsworth turned to Tintern Abbey.
2. His sister Dorothy has accompanied him to the ruins of Tintern Abbey
3. The waters, rolling from their mountain springs, steep and lofty cliffs, secluded scene, landscape, quiet of the sky dark sycamore, cottage ground, orchard tufts, unripe green fruits, hedge – rows, sportive wood wreath of smoks and trees are the beauteous form of nature.
4. Often in lonely noon Wordsworth missed those beauteous forms of nature and landscape.
5. During the hours of tranquil restorations, and weariness, the surest sensations of the company of nature, were felt by him in his blood and heart.
6. That serene and blessed mood, In which the affections gently lead us on – until, the breath of this corporeal frame, And even the motion of our human blood Almost suspended, we are laid asleep, in body, and become a living soul – We see into the life of things”.
7. At during perplexed moments Wordsworth turned to the company of nature and its beauteous forms.
8. The first stage of the development of the poet's mind was, when nature war a play companion to him during his childhood years, when:  
“like a roe, I bounded over these hills, by the sides of deep rivers, and the lonely streams wherever nature led. They were his boyish day in fact all glad animal movements.”
9. The second stage was when he grew sensuous towards nature and its forms. When:  
The sounding cataract haunted me like a passion, the tall rock, the mountain and the deep and gloomy wood, their colors and their forms pulled him and supplied him with a thought for nature.
10. In the third stage, Wordsworth overcome the dizzy raptures and acting joys of nature and realized the importance of human being during the sufferings and sorrow he viewed at France.
11. The still sad music of humanity, with thousands of innocent people being killed, children crying and women weeping. Now he looked upon nature with a softer and painful view. Now his love for nature intermingled with his love for man.

12. The fourth stage has been termed as the stage of inflection, mysticism and spiritual awareness stage. It is also called as Wordsworth's pantheism because now Wordsworth had 'felt a presence of some sublime authority amidst the beautiful form of nature and provided him with a sense of elevated thoughts of something far more deeply interfused and dwells in the suns, air, ocean, sky and mind man. In fact pantheism means, he felt god in nature and god in man and rolls through all things.
13. Wordsworth found in nature a view of God, nature to him was an anchor of his purest thoughts, it was his nurse and guide and also guardian of his heart and soul in fact of all his moral being. He believed that "nature never did betray the heart that loved her" for him nature provided him with ease and quietness and with lofty thoughts and is full of blessings.
14. After going through the poem we feel that nature is meant to be 'worshipped, just as Wordsworth was the worshipper of nature. And nature is a great company during lonely hours. Nature seems to be a great teacher and it never did betray the heart that come to it with pure thoughts.
15. It is a long poem composed in blank verse, devoid of any kind of metrical scheme.
16. BLANK VERSE consists of lines of iambic pentameter which are unrhymed – hence the term "blank." Of all verse forms it is closest to the natural rhythms of English speech, yet the most flexible and adaptive to diverse levels of discourse; as a result, it has been more frequently and variously used than any other type. Soon after blank verse was introduced by Surrey in his translations from *The Aeneid* (about 1540), it became the standard meter for Elizabethan and later poetic drama; a free form of blank verse is still the medium in such recent plays as those of Maxwell Anderson and T.S. Eliot. Milton used blank verse for his epic poems, James Thomson for his descriptive and philosophical *Seasons* (1726-1730), Wordsworth for his autobiographical *Prelude*, Tennyson for the narrative *Idylls of the King*, Browning for *The Ring and the Book* and many dramatic monologues, and T.S. Eliot for much of *The Waste Land*. Many meditative lyrics have also been written in blank verse, including Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight," Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," Tennyson's "Tears, Idle Tears," and Wallace Stevens' "Sunday Morning."
17. Wordsworth's nature poetry is characterized by accuracy of observation and truthfulness of representation. The main features of his nature poetry are – Imagination, far-fetched love for nature, human life idealized optimism, mysticism reflecting living god, and bold poetic art.

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## 2.8 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit, we have given you a practice in the study of the poem and blank verse, along with the Age of the writer. You should now be able to evaluate and realize the surface meaning of :

- The passages of a given extract of the poem
- The special meanings conveyed by the words and phrases or and when used in their extended senses.
- The word pictures created by the writer.
- The real meaning and idea of the poet that he wishes to convey.

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## **2.9 Review Questions**

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1. Write a critical appreciation of the poem.
  2. Trace the four stages in Wordsworth's poetic development.
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## **2.10 Bibliography**

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## UNIT-3

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### SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE:KUBLAKHAN, CHRISTABEL

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Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 ‘Kubla Khan’
- 3.3 ‘Christabel’
- 3.4 Self Assessment Questions
- 3.5 Answers to SAQs
- 3.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7 Review Questions
- 3.8 Bibliography

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#### 3.0 Objectives

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After going through the unit, you will be able to

- understand the theme and content of the poems
- explain, interpret and rewrite the meaning of the text in your own words
- understand the literary terms, the characteristics of the Romantic Age and the ballad form of poetry

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#### 3.1 Introduction

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##### The Romantic Revival

With the publication of the Lyrical Ballads by Coleridge and Wordsworth in 1798, a new mode of writing evolved. ‘Romanticism’ is the name given to this new literary trend. Walter Pater defines it as “the addition of curiosity to the desire of duty”. More than this it was a revolt against authority, tradition and convention, whether political, social, religious or literary. If classicism had kept too closely to the beaten tract, romanticism struck out in bewildering number of directions. It expressed a new delight in simplicity of theme, feeling, and expression, in the worship of nature, and in familiarity with the lives and thoughts of humble men and women, but at the same time it was fascinated by the morbid and the supernatural, by whatever was remote in time, like the pagan world and the Middle Ages. The romantics had a fervour and vitality, ‘a free, onward impulse’, that their predecessors had not known had restrained.

The teachings of Rousseau and the principles of the French Revolution helped to form the ideas of the Romantics and to make them widely accepted in England. Rousseau preached the return to Nature, the superiority of feelings to ideas and the need for a great change in the established order of things to secure the rights of the individual. In the French Revolution, with its three fold ideal of Liberty,

Equality, Fraternity many of them saw, as the young Wordsworth did, the dawn of a new hope for the human race.

### **Characteristics of the New School**

#### **i. A Reaction against Rule and Custom.**

In the words of Victor Hugo, Romanticism is 'liberalism in literature'. It insist upon spontaneity and freedom of expression. Individualism is its keynote. It was not, however, altogether unguided. It derived much of its inspiration from Spencer, Shakespeare and Milton and was therefore in most respects a revival and not an innovation.

#### **ii. Return of Nature and the Simple Life**

The Romantics commended the simple natural country life of which so many poets had written before them. While for the Augustans, country life meant nymphs and shepherds, the idylls and pastorals; for Wordsworth and his friends the country side meant simple, rustic characters engaged in simple labour. On such themes, the poets of the Lake School, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey and their followers, achieved most moving effects by using as Wordsworth puts it 'a selection of language really used by men'.

#### **iii. Variety and Individuality**

Romanticism had another aspect, which we associate with the work of other poets such as Shelley, Keats and Byron. It favoured subjectivity and emotionalism, impulse, colour rather than line, and the free play of the imagination over a limitless variety of subject.

#### **iv. The Return of the Lyric**

The free expression of feeling demanded a lyrical mode of expression. Poetry once more became musical, non-intellectual, sensuous and impassioned. In the hands of Shelley, in particular, lyrical verse attained new heights.

#### **v. Interest in the Middle Ages**

The art and culture of the middle ages, made an appeal to the feeling for the picturesque strongly in these writers especially Scott and Keats. One of the result of this interest in the period was the revival of the ballad form, of which Coleridge became a master craftsman.

In units 3-4 you are going to study some poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. You will be able to comprehend the poetic qualities that characterized his poem and thereby be able to compare him with the contemporary poets of this period, discussed in the order units.

S.T. Coleridge (1772-1834), poet, critic and metaphysician collaborated with William Wordsworth in bringing out 'Lyrical Ballads' in 1798. The famous poem 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' appeared in this collection. Among other well-known poems are 'Kubla Khan' and 'Christabel'. He had great poetic qualities and mastered the ballad form of poetry. These poems are marked by Gothicism and are a unique blend of naturalism and supernaturalism. Apart from his poem his prose writings like 'Biographia Literaria' and 'Table Talk' and his critical comments on Shakespeare are still much valued and discussed.

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## 3.2 'Kubla Khan'

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Humphrey house the great critic and scholar has described 'Kubla Khan' as "a fragment of inspired incoherence, a piece of verbal magic to ask the meaning of which would be impertinent." 'Kubla Khan' was written in 1797 and can best be described as a dream poem. The poem is as unusual as the circumstances that led to its writing. Coleridge has been ill and having taken an anodyne (or opium) for pain fell asleep reading an account of the magnificence of Kubla Khan's summer palace in Xanadu from a book called 'Purcha's Pilgrimage'. He had been asleep for about three hours during which some three hundred lines but was called away on business. Unfortunately, after he returned he could not recall the poem clearly and therefore calls it a 'fragment'. But although it is called a fragment, the poem is perfectly structured with a definite rhyme pattern and clearly divided verses. It is divided into two parts - the first describes the magnificent palace and the source of the river Alph while the second part describes the power of poetic creation. The poet can, by his divine poetic imagination and creative power create the miraculous palace in air. The images flow easily into one another and the poem builds up tension steadily. It is characterized by a remote dream like quality, elements of romance, mystic features and native imagery.

Read the following poem and try to do the given exercises. After completing each exercise check your answers with those given by us. Notes and annotations are given wherever necessary.

### **KUBLA KHAN :**

### **OR, A VISION IN A DREAM, A FRAGMENT**

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea

So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round:  
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,  
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;  
And here were forests ancient as the hills,  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted  
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!  
A savage place! as holy and enchanted

As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!  
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,  
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,  
A mighty fountain momently was forced:  
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst  
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,  
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:  
And' mid these dancing rocks at once and ever  
It flung up momently the scared river  
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion  
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,  
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,  
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:  
And's mid this tumult Kubla heard from far  
Ancestral voices prophesying war!  
The shadow of the dome of pleasure  
Floated midway on the waves:  
Where was heard the mingled measure  
From the fountain and the caves  
It was a miracle of rare device,  
a sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!  
A damsel with a dulcimer  
in a vision once I saw:  
It was an Abyssinia maid,  
And on her dulcimer she played,  
Singing of Mount Abora.  
Could I revive within me  
Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight would win me,  
That with music loud and long,

I would build that dome in air,  
 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!  
 Wave 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.

### Notes and Annotations

- L.1 Kubla Khan : (1216-1294) was the founder of the Mongol Dynasty and was the grand son of Ghenghis Khan.
- L.1 Xanadu : name changed, by the poet from Purcha's Xambu, the summer residence of Kubla Khan, 100 miles north east of Peaking.
- L.3 Alph : a reference to the river Alpheus in Greek legend which flows underground and then comes up a fountain
- L.8 rills : small streams
- L.13 athwart : from one side to the other side
- L.13 cedarn cover : a cover of cedar trees
- L.17 seething : bubbling
- L.19 momentarily : every now and then, from moment to moment
- L.21 vaulted : jumped up
- L.22 flail : old fashioned tool used for threshing
- L.31 ancestral voices: a belief that voices of their forefathers guided them to war
- L.35 device : invention, plan
- L.39 Abyssinia : (Ethiopia) is a country in Africa. It has intersected deep valleys. A mysterious land for the non-African
- L.41 Mount Abora : It seems to be the poets own inventions and may be a fusion of two references
- a) Mount Amara from Milton's Paradise Lost' (BK IV 280-284)
- b) Tributary of River Nile called Abola or Albora that flows through Abyssinia.
- L.53 Honey-dew : 'Manna', food fit for Gods.

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### 3.3 'Christabel' Part-I

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The first part of 'Christabel' was written in 1797 and the second in 1800. Although intended for publication in the 'Lyrical Ballads' (1798) Coleridge failed to complete it and it was ultimately published in 1816. As in the Rime of the Ancient Mariner in this poem also Coleridge successfully achieved the task he assigned to himself in the 'Lyrical Ballads' i.e. the task of creating "a willing suspension of disbelief".

In this poem he renders the marvelous real and intimate by investing it with vivid details of daily life and the shifting shades of nature. The chief merit of the poem lies in its power of suggestiveness threatening some unknown danger and thereby casting a spell of the supernatural. 'Christabel' is a piece of romantic composition, a narrative ballad characterized by a strange melody, chivalry and a medieval atmosphere. The tale is about a sorcerer named Geraldine whom the innocent maiden Christabel befriends and brings to her father's castle. The woman casts an evil spell on Christabel and prepares to destroy her. But Christabel partially succeeds in breaking the trance with the blessings of God and her Guardian Spirit.

Read the following extracts of the poem and try to do the exercises given here. After completing the exercise check your answers with those given by us.

#### CHRISTABEL - PART I

Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,  
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock;  
Tu-whit! - Tu-whoo !  
And hark, again ! the crowing cock,  
How drowsily it crew.  
She Leoline, the Baron rich,  
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch ;  
From her kennel beneath the rock  
Shri maketh answer to the clock,  
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour ;  
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,  
Sixteen short howls, not over loud ;  
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?  
The night is chilly, but not dark.  
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,

It covers but not hides the sky.  
The moon is behind, and at the full ;  
And yet she looks both small and dull.  
The night is chill, the cloud is gray :  
'Tis a month before the month of May,  
And the Spring comes slowly up this way

The lovely lady, Christabel,  
Whom her father loves so well,  
what makes her in the wood so late,  
A furlong from the castle gate?  
She had dreams all yester night  
Of her own betrothed knight ;  
And she in the midnight wood will pray  
For the weal of her lover that's far away.  
She stole along, she nothing spoke,  
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,  
And naught was green upon the oak  
But moss and rarest mistletoe ;  
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,  
And in silence prayeth she.  
The lady sprang up suddenly,  
The lovely lady, Christabel !  
It moaned as near, as near can be,  
But what it is she cannot tell. -  
On the other side it seems to be,  
Of the hug, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill the forest bare ;  
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?  
There is not wind enough in the air

To move away the ringlet curl  
From the lovely lady' cheek -  
There is not wind enough to twirl  
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,  
That dances as often as dance it can,  
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,  
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

hush, beating heart of Christabel!  
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!  
She folded her arms beneath her cloak,  
And stole to the other side of the oak.  
What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,  
Drest in a silken robe of whit,  
That shadowy in the moonlight shone :  
The neck that made that white robe wan,  
Her stately neck, and arms were bare:  
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,  
And wildly glittered here and there  
The gems entangled in her hair.

I guess, 'twas frightful there to see  
A lady so richly clad as she -  
Beautiful exceedingly!  
Mary mother, save me now!  
(Said Christabel,) and who art thou?  
The lad strange made answer meet,  
And her voice was faint and sweet :-  
Have pity on my sore distress,

I scarce can speak for weariness :  
Stretch fourth thy hand, and have no fear!  
Said Christabel, How camest thou her here?  
And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,  
Did thus pursue her answer meet :-  
My sire is of a noble line,  
And my name is Geraldine

.....

Then Christabel stretched fourth her hand,  
And comforted fair Geraldine:  
O well, bright dame! May your command  
The service of Sir Leoline;  
And gladly our stout chivalry  
Will he send forth and friends withal  
To guide and guard you safe and free  
Home to your noble father's hall.

She rose ; and forth with steps they passed  
That strove to be, and were not, fast.  
Her gracious stars the lady blest,  
And thus spake on sweet Christabel :  
All our household are at rest,  
The hall as silent as the cell;  
Sir Leoline is weak in health,  
And may not well awakened be,  
But we will move as if in stealth,  
And I beseech your courtesy,  
This night, to share your couch with me

The crossed the moat, and Christabel

Took the key that fitted well:  
A little door she opened straight,  
All in the middle of the gate;  
The gate that was ironed within and without,  
Where an army in battle array had marched out.  
The lady sank, belike through pain,  
And Christabel with might and main  
Lifted her up, a weary weight,  
Over the threshold of the gate  
Then the lady rose again,  
And moved, as she were not in pain

So free from danger, free from fear,  
There crossed the court : right glad they were.  
And Christabel devoutly cried  
To the lady by her side,  
Praise we the Virgin all divine  
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!  
Alas, alas! said Geraldine,  
I cannot speak for weariness.  
So free from danger, free from fear,  
They crossed the court : right glad they were.

Outside her kennel, the mastiff old  
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.  
The mastiff old did not awake,  
Yet she an angry moan did make !  
And what can ail the mastiff bitch?  
Never till now she uttered yell  
Beneath the eye of Christabel.  
Perhaps it is owlet's scritch :

For what can ail the mastiff bitch?

They passed the hall, that echoes still,  
Pass as lightly as you will!  
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,  
Amid their own white ashes lying;  
But when the lady passed, there came  
A tongue of light, a fit of flame;  
And Christable saw the lady's eye,  
And nothing else saw she thereby,  
Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall,  
Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall.  
O softly tread, said Christabel,  
My father seldom sleepth well.

.....

And with low voice and doleful look  
These words did say:  
'In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,  
Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!  
Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow,  
This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow ;  
But vainly thou warrest'  
For this is alone in  
Thy power to declare,  
That in the dim forest  
Thou heard'st a low moaning,  
And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair;  
And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,  
To shield her and shelter her from the damp air.'

**The Conclusion to Part I**

.....  
A star hath set, a star hath risen,  
O Geraldine! Since arms of thine  
Have been the lovely lady's prison.  
O Geraldine! One hour was thine -  
Thou'st had thy will! By train and rill,  
The night-birds all that hour were still.  
But now they are jubilant anew,  
From cliff and tower, tu-who! tu-who!  
Tu-who! Tu-who! From wood and fell!

And see! The lady Christabel  
Gathers herself from out her trance;  
Her limbs relax, her countenance  
Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids  
Close o'er her eyes; and tears she sheds -  
Large tears that leaved the lashed bright!  
And oft the while she seems to smile  
As infants at a sudden light!!

Yea, she doth smile, and she doth weep,  
Like a youthful hermitess,  
Beauteous in a wilderness,  
Who, praying always, prays in sleep.  
And, if she move unquietly,  
Perchance, 'tis but the blood so free  
Comes back and tingles in her feet.  
No doubt, she hath a vision sweet.  
What if her guardian spirit 'twere,  
What if she knew her mother near?  
But this she knows, in joys and woes.

That saints will aid if men will call:

For the blue sky bends over all!

**Notes and Annotations**

- L.7 toothless mastiff : a large sized female dog. ‘toothless’ suggest decay and death.
- L.13 lady’s shroud : the ghost of ‘Christabel’s mother.
- L.28 betrothed knight : medieval touch; the knight to whom she was engaged.
- L.30 weal : welfare, health, happiness
- L.33 naught was green : all the leaves of the oak tree had dried up

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**3.4 Self Assessment Questions**

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1. Explain the following:-

i) ‘Stately pleasure dome decree’

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ii) ‘caverns measureless to man’

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2. How many miles of fertile ground was girdled round and with what?

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3. Describe the nature imagery in II. 9-11.

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4. What is meant by “that deep romantic chasm”? Where was it located?

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5. Pick out the words/phrases that convey supernatural, mystic features.

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6. Describe the source of the river in your own words.

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7. Explain the words “chaffy grain’ and “thresher’s flail”.

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8. Why does the poet refer to the rocks as “dancing rocks”?

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9. Describe the course of the river.

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10. What was the "miracle of rare device"? Why does the poet call it a 'miracle'?

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11. What is the poet recalling and why?

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12. What is the power of the poet?

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13. Describe the appearance of the poet. What is he looked upon as?

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14. Explain the following phrases:-

i) "sunless sea"

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ii) "waning moon"

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iii) "mingled measure"

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iv) “holy dread”

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v) “honey-dew”

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vi) “milk of Paradise”

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vii) “ancestral voices”

15. Pick out a word from the poem which means the following:-

i) encircles, like a belt \_\_\_\_\_

ii) gaps \_\_\_\_\_

iii) deep opening in the ground \_\_\_\_\_

iv) decreasing \_\_\_\_\_

v) stopping at intervals \_\_\_\_\_

vi) frozen rain drops \_\_\_\_\_

vii) thrown \_\_\_\_\_

- viii) fore-telling \_\_\_\_\_
- ix) musical instrument with strings over a box \_\_\_\_\_
- x) musical composition \_\_\_\_\_
- xi) with great noise and confusion \_\_\_\_\_
- xii) bubbling over \_\_\_\_\_

16. Pick out four alliterative phrases from the poem.

- i)
- ii)
- iii)
- iv)

17. Write a summary of the poem *Kubla Khan*

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18. Give the full name of the poet who wrote 'Christabel'

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19. When was 'Christabel' (Part-I) written? In which year was 'Lyrical Ballads' published?

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20. i) Pick out words and phrases from stanza I that create an atmosphere of mystery and suspense.

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ii) Give an example of onomatopoeia.

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22. Fill in the blanks with appropriate words and phrases.

- i) Sir Leoline was a rich .....
- ii) Sir Leoline lived in a .....
- iii) It was the month of .....
- iv) Christabel went to pray under a huge ..... tree covered with moss and rarest .....
- v) The richly clad, beautiful lady was .....
- vi) ..... would shield Christabel .
- vii) ..... was weak in health.
- viii) ..... made an angry moan.
- ix) The ..... are jubilant again
- x) ..... praying always, prays in sleep.

23. Give five qualities that characterize Coleridge's '*Christabel*'. Give examples.

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24. Why was Christabel praying and for whom?

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25. Name the elements of Nature mentioned in lines 43-52. How does the poet describe them.

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26. Explain the following :-

i) "Shield her well"

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ii) "the neck that made the white robe wan"

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iii) "Have pity on my sore distress"

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iv) "I beseech your courtesy"

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v) "Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall."

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27. Why did the appearance of the lady instill fear?

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28. “and the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,/Did this pursue her answer meet:-”

i) who is the lady referred to here?

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ii) What does “meet” mean here?

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iii) Whom did the lady answer to?

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29. What do we learn about Christabel from lines 104-112?

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30. i) Why did Christabel ask Geraldine to walk “as if in stealth”?

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ii) Pick out one simile and one alliteration from the poem.

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31. Give the meanings of the following words/phrases:-

- i) moat
- ii) weary
- iii) threshold
- iv) devoutly
- v) moan
- vi) owl's scritch
- vii) in charity
- viii) hermitess
- ix) jubilant
- x) countenance

32. Mention three things that indicate that Geraldine is evil.

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33. Explain these lines:

“In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell/ which in lord of thy utterance,  
Christabel! / Thou knowest tonight and will know tomorrow, / This mark of my shame, this seal  
of my sorrow,”

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34. Explain “A star hath set, a star hath risen, ... lady's prison.”.

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35. Quote the lines which convey that the spell is broken .....

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36. What does Christabel know?

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37. Attempt to write a poem/story with similar mystic features.

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### 3.5 Answers to SAQs

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1.
  - (i) Kubla Khan ordered a magnificent summer palace to be built for recreational pursuits.
  - (ii) The sacred river made its way through caves so deep that their depth could not be pursued.
2. Ten miles of fertile ground was girdled with a fencing of walls and towers.
3. Within the palace compound were sun-lit gardens, meandering streams and many fragrant flowering trees. There were dense forests as old as the hills enveloping sunny spots of verdant green foliage.
4. The chasm means the deep and narrow slanted mysterious opening in the ground. It was located across the slope of a hill covered with cedar trees.
5.
  - i) “sacred”
  - ii) “romantic chams”
  - iii) “savage”
  - iv) “waning moon”
  - v) “haunted”
  - vi) “demon lover”
  - vii) “enchanted”
  - viii) “thrice”

- ix) "holy dread"
6. Below the chasm there was an incessant bubbling disturbance as if the earth was gasping for breath. From this opening or source, a jet of water was thrown out at regular intervals alternating with big pieces of rocks which bounced like hail stones. This was an incessant rhythmic process and the fountain of water was the source of the sacred river.
  7. : "Chaffy grain" means the old fashioned tool used for threshing i.e. separating the grain from the chaff. The poet compares the huge fragments of rock as they are being flung about with the chaffy grain under the thresher's flail.
  8. The rocks are being flung out and are rebounding just like the rhythmic measured dancing steps.
  9. The river took a five mile mazy, zig-zag course through the forests and the valleys and reached the deep caves measureless to man and flowing through it finally sank into the subterranean sea with a loud turbulence.
  10. The sunlit domes of the palace and its reflection on the waves of the water running through caves of ice was the "miracle of rare device." It is a remarkably unique and extraordinary sight.
  11. The poet is recalling the vision he once had of a Abyssinian maid playing upon a dulcimer and singing of mount Abora. He wants to recall musical composition because that would inspire him to a state of poetic creativity.
  12. The poet has the divine power to create the palace in air, by means of his poetic imagination.
  13. The poet has glittering eyes and flying hair and is in a state of creative frenzy. He is looked upon with sacred awe as a man with divine powers.
  14.
    - i) subterranean/underground sea
    - ii) decreasing moon
    - iii) the twin sound of the fountain source of the river and its water flowing through the caves.
    - iv) sacred fear
    - v) 'manna' - food for Gods
    - vi) milk of heaven.
    - vii) voices of his forefathers telling him to prepare for future wars.
  15.
    - i) "girdled"
    - ii) "pants"
    - iii) "chasm"
    - iv) "Waning"
    - v) "intermitted"
    - vi) "hail"
    - vii) "flung"
    - viii) "prophesying"

- ix) "dulcimer"
  - x) "symphony"
  - xi) "tumult"
  - xii) "seething"
16. i) "sunless sea"
- ii) "sunny spots"
- iii) "mazy motion"
- iv) "mingled measure"

17. *Kubla Khan* is a poem about the act of poetic creation, about the 'ecstasy in imaginative fulfilment'. It is a triumphant positive statement of the potentialities of poetry which are revealed partly in the substance and content of the first part and partly at the ending of the second part of the poem. Kubla builds the dome for himself and the poet with his music will build a dome in air matching and surpassing the mightiest of human material power.

The precision and clarity of the opening part are the first things to mark - even in the order of the landscape. In the centre is the pleasure - dome with its gardens on the river bank: to one side is the river's source in the chasm, to the other are the caverns "measureless to man" and the "sunless sea" into which the river falls; Kubla in the centre can hear the "mingled measure" of the fountain of the source from one side and of the dark caves from the other. The dome rises above an artificial (manmade) paradise, ten miles in diameter, including both elaborate gardens and ancient forests. Amid these forests, across a "cedarn hill" is a chasm from which a fountain suddenly bursts out. "Momently" the underground river is forced up and runs five miles above ground until it reaches the caverns again and sinks down. It is clear that this upheaval is only a momentary affair and so is the "miracle of rare device". Kubla and we can visualize the dome (with sunlight upon it), the dome's shadow floating midway upon the waves of the seething, forced up river the fountain with its hurling rocks, just next to the dome; and the exposed icy caverns beneath from which the fountain has momently removed the covering earth. The effect is apocalyptic, for what is revealed is a natural miracle.

It was a miracle of rare device,

A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

It is here that Kubla hears the voices of his dead ancestors prophesying war. The river winds across the whole landscape and is sacred. The chasm is holy and enchanted, and is associated with the waning moon. In the second part of the poem the poet recalls the vision of an Abyssinian maid whom he saw in his vision playing upon her dulcimer and singing of Mount Abora. If he could now revive within himself her song of Eden he will enter a state of such deep delight:

That with music loud and long,

I would build that dome in air,

That sunny dome! those caves in ice!

He would rival Kubla's decreed dome, and also produce the imaginative miracle of the sunlit dome and caves of ice. For this is the potential of the poetic imagination to create more lastingly than even Nature and Art. can do together. And those who heard the divinely inspired poet's song would see his visionary creation, for that is the inventive power of poetry. And they would grant him the awe, due, to the one who has eaten the divine food and drunk the milk of Paradise.

18. Samuel Taylor Coleridge
19. 'Christabel' Part I was written in 1797  
'Lyrical Ballads' was published in 1798
20. i) "middle of the night",  
"castle clock,"  
"crowing cock",  
"owl"  
"toothless mastiff",  
"howls",  
"lady's shroud"  
ii) "Tu-whit! - Tu, whoo! Is an example of onomatopoeia.
21. i) Baron  
ii) Castle  
iii) April  
iv) oak, mistletoe  
v) Geraldine  
vi) Jesu, Maria  
vii) Sir Leoline  
viii) mastiff bitch  
ix) night-birds  
x) Christabel like a youthful hermitess
22. i) 'Christabel' is a narrative ballad. It begins abruptly with a story e.g. "Tis the middle of night by the castleclock.  
ii) It uses repetition of words and situations. 11 135-136 and 11 143-144  
iii) It employs the interrogative method.  
e.g. 'Is the night chilly and dark?

The night is chilly but not dark."

- iv) It reverses the ordinary and romantic setting g  
eg "The moon is behind, and at the full  
and yet she looks both small and dull".
  - v) The conflicting element essential to drama is also present. e.g. The innocent Christabel and the evil Geraldine.
24. Christabel had seen dreams all night of the knight with whom she is engaged to marry. She was praying for the welfare of her own "betrothed knight."
25. The elements of nature are described thus; the night is chilly, forest is bare, wind is moaning and the leaf is red.
26. i) May Jesus and Mary protect Christabel.  
ii) The lady's neck was so white that it made her white gown look pale and dull.  
iii) The lady is asking for mercy and sympathy from Christabel in her hour of sorrow.  
iv) Christabel is requesting Geraldine to share her bed for the night and hopes that she will not mind it.  
v) Sir Leoline's shield hung in a dark and gloomy corner of the wall.
27. The lady was overwhelmingly beautiful and was dressed in extremely rich clothes.
28. i) Geraldine  
ii) The word "meet" here means suitable, a suitable answer.  
iii) Christabel
29. Christabel is compassionate, merciful and helpful.
30. i) Christabel asked Geraldine to walk quietly because her father was sick and did not sleep easily.  
ii) "The hall as silent as the cell" (simile); "free from fear" (personification).
31. i) defensive pit around the castle  
ii) tired, weak and miserable  
iii) entrance  
iv) a strong religious sentiment  
v) groan, angry growl  
vi) the screech of the owl  
vii) woman ascetic  
ix) happy

x) face

32. Firstly, at the iron gate of the castle Geraldine pretends to be in great pain and slumps down. Christabel has to lift her over the threshold. Once inside Geraldine easily rises up as if in no pain. Secondly, when Christabel asks her to pray and prays to the divine Virgin, she excuses herself saying she is too weary to speak. Evil spirits cannot pray. Thirdly, as they crossed the court the mastiff bitch let out a yell and an angry moan, which she had never done before in Christabel's presence. The mastiff, probably sensed the evil spirit.
33. Geraldine curses Christabel and tells her that the touch of her bosom will act as an evil spell and Christabel will never be able to speak a word of what has happened. She will only know that night and the next morning that she saw the stamp of disgrace, an expression of sorrow.
34. The night birds were silent because that night they were under the evil spell of Geraldine. They are happy now because it is morning and Geraldine has lost her evil power.
36. "And see! the lady Christabel gathers herself from out her trance".
37. Christabel knows and firmly believes that all men live under the love and protection of God in the same way as the blue sky bird over all.

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### **3.6 Let Us Sum Up**

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In this unit, we have given you practice in the study of the age of Romantic Revival and theme and context of Coleridge's two most famous poems *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan*.

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### **3.7 Review Questions**

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1. Write a note on the supernatural element in Coleridge's poetry with reference to the poems you have read.
2. Critically appreciate 'Kubla Khan' as a dream fragment.
3. Show instances of medievalism in 'Christabel'.

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### **3.8 Bibliography**

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1. Oxford Companion to English Literature : Sixth edition, Sep 2006
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## UNIT-4

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### SAMUEL TAYLER COLERIDGE:

### THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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#### Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Samuel Taylor Coleridge : ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’
- 4.3 Self Assessment Questions
- 4.4 Answers to SAQs
- 4.5 Let us Sum up
- 4.6 Review Questions
- 4.7 Bibliography

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#### 4.0 Objectives

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After going through the unit, you will be able to

- Understand the ideas contained in the poem
- Understand the ballad form of poetry, the literary terms and the characteristics of the Age
- Rewrite, explain and interpret the meaning of the text in your own words

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#### 4.1 Introduction

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In this unit you are going to study a poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. You will be able to comprehend the poetic qualities that characterize Coleridge’s poetry. S.T. Coleridge (1772-1834) poet, critic and metaphysician collaborated with William Wordsworth in bringing out ‘Lyrical Ballads’ in 1798. His famous poem ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ appeared in this collection. Among his other well known poems are ‘Kubla Khan’ and ‘Christabel’. He had great poetic gifts and mastered the ballad form of poetry. He was particularly good at making the unfamiliar seem familiar and at evoking a sense of mystery. His poems are a unique blend of naturalism and supernaturalism.

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#### 4.2 The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner

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Ballad was a term originally used for folk narrative compositions. They tell a story in which a refrain, or a couplet, or a verse is repeated at frequent intervals. It is subject to change on account of its oral transmission. Wordsworth and Coleridge by publishing ‘Lyrical Ballads’ conferred on them the status of author identifiable poetry. The subject matter of most ballads is tragic and the language is simple.

The poem is a story about a sailor who kills an innocent bird, the Albatross. He undergoes great

suffering and does penance to atone for the sin committed by him and finally gains redemption with the realization that all living creatures big or small are to be looked upon with equal love and compassion.

This narrative ballad is characterized by its 'terseness of expression, directness of narration, abrupt introduction of new elements, repetition and a large number of archaic (old fashioned) words. The Gothicism or medieval trappings of the poem used with dramatic effect include marvelous happenings like, the visit of a ghost ship,, its strange passengers, the atmosphere of superstitions, beliefs, spiritual terror and the eerie presence of the Mariner himself which forces the Weddings Guest to doubt the reality of the narrator's existence.

Stylistically, the ballad form is quite different from other forms of poetry as belongs to the oral tradition. Since it is recited and important points of the story must be firmly planted in the memory of the listeners, certain epithets and phrases are often repeated. Note the skillful use of repetitions in these lines.

"The ice was her, the ice was there

The ice was all around;"

Incremental repetition which may be defined as a line or stanza repeated several times with some small but, significant substitution at the crucial point is a common rhetorical device among English and Scottish ballad writers. Coleridge uses it with extraordinary effect in two key stanzas of identical lines.

The Sun came up upon the left,

Out of the sea came he!

And he shone bright, and on the right,

Went down into the sea"

After re-crossing of the equator the direction changes.

"The sun now rose upon the right:

Out of the sea came he!

Still hid in mist, and on the left

Went down into the sea"

Note the small but significant substitution of 'left' for 'right'

English verse is a regular succession of stressed and unstressed syllables and the unit of verse is a foot, which is a recurring group of syllables, usually one stressed and one or two unstressed syllables.

The unit of the verse of this poem is iambic (rising rhythm), one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, and each line contains three or four iambic feet (**XI**).

"And straight the sun was flecked with bars"

Throughout the poem Coleridge makes dexterous use second version and stamped out any trace of uneven and irregular rhythm. For its resultant metrical brilliance A.C. Swinburne (that master

of melody) has called the poem” one of the supreme triumphs of poetry.”

Read the following extract from Coleridge’s ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ which is a narrative ballad.

Notes and annotations are given wherever necessary. After you have read the extract try to do the given exercise. After completing each exercise, check your answers with those given by us at the end of the unit.

### **The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**

#### **Part I**

An ancient Mariner  
meeteth three Gallant  
bidden to a wedding-  
feast, and detaineth one.

It is an ancient Mariner,  
And he stoppeth one of three.  
By they long grey beard and glittering eye,  
Now wherefore stopp’st thou me?  
The Bridegroom’s door are opened wide,  
And I am next of kin;  
The guests are met, the feast is set:  
May’st hear the merry din.  
He hold him with his skinny hand,  
‘There was ship’, quoth he.  
‘Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!  
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

12

The Wedding-Guest is  
spellbound by the eye of  
the old sea faring man, and  
constrained to hear his tale.

He hold him with his glittering eye-  
The Wedding-Guest stood still,  
And listens like a three years’ child:  
The mariner hath his will.  
The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone;  
He cannot chose but hear;  
And thus spake on the ancient man  
The bright-eyed Mariner.

20

‘The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,  
Merrily did we drop

Below the kirk, below the hill,  
Below the lighthouse top.

The Mariner tells how the  
ship sailed southward with a  
good wind and fair weather,  
till it reached the line.

The sun came up upon the left,  
Out of the sea came he!  
And he shone bright, and on the right  
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,  
Till over the mast at noon-  
The wedding-Guest here beat his breast,  
For he heard the loud bassoon.

32

The wedding-guest heareth  
the bridal music; but the  
Mariner continueth his tale.

The bride hath paced into the hall,  
Red as a rose is she;  
Nodding their head before her goes  
The merry minstrelsy.  
The wadding-Guest he beat his breast,  
Yet he cannot choose but hear;  
And thus spake on that ancient man,  
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The ship driven by a storm  
toward the south pole.

‘And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he  
was tyrannous and strong:  
He struck with his o’ertaking wings,  
And chased us south along.

44

With slopping masts and dipping prow,  
As who pursued with yell and blow  
Still treads the shadow of his foe,  
And forward bends his head,  
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,

And southward aye we fled.  
And now there came both mist and snow,  
And it grew wondrous cold:  
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,  
As green as emerald. 54

The land of ice, and of  
fearful sounds where no  
living things was to be seen.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts  
Did send a dismal sheen:  
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken-  
The ice was all between.  
The ice was here, the ice was there,  
The ice was all around :  
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,  
Like noises in a swound!

Till a great sea-bird called  
the Albatross, came  
through the snow-fog, and  
was received with great joy  
and hospitality.

At length did cross an Albatross,  
Thorough the fog it came;  
As it had been a Christian soul,  
We hailed it in God's name.  
It ate the food it ne'er had eat,  
And round and round it flew.  
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;  
The helmsman steered us through! 70

And lo! the Albatross  
proveth a bird of good  
omen, and followeth the  
ship as it returned  
northward through fog and  
floating ice.

And a good south wind sprung up behind;  
The Albatross did follow,  
And every day, for food or play,  
  
Came to the mariner's hollo!  
In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,

It perched for vespers nine,  
Whiles all the night through fog-smoke white,  
Glimmered the white Moon-shine’.

The ancient Mariner  
inhospitably killeth ‘the  
pious bird of good omen.

‘God save thee, ancient Mariner!  
From the fiends, the plague thee thus!  
Why look’st thou so?’ -With my cross-bow  
I shot the ALBATROSS.

82

## PART II

The sun now rose upon the right :  
Out of the sea came he,  
Still hid in mist, and on left  
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind  
But no sweet bird did follow,  
Nor any day for food or play  
Came to the mariners’ hollo!  
And I had done a hellish thing,

91

His shipmates cry out  
against the ancient  
Mariner, for killing the bird  
of good luck.

And I would work ‘em woe :  
For all averred, I had killed the bird  
That made the breeze to blow.  
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,  
That made the breeze to blow!  
Nor dim nor red, like God’s own head  
The glorious Sun uprist:

98

But when the fog cleared

Then all averred, I had killed the bird

off, they justify the same,  
and thus make themselves  
accomplices in the crime.

The fair breeze continues;  
the ship enters the pacific  
Ocean and sails northward,  
even till it reaches the  
Line.

The ship hath been  
suddenly becalmed.

And the albatross begins  
to be avenged.

That brought the fog and mist,  
'Twas night, said they, such birds to slay,  
That bring the fog and mist,  
The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,  
The furrow followed free;

We were the first that ever burst  
Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails drop down,  
'Twas sad as sad could be;  
And we did speak only to break  
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,  
The bloody Sun, at noon,  
Right up above the mast did stand,  
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, every where,  
And all the boards did shrink;

Water, water, every where,  
Nor any drop to drink.

106

118

The very deep did rot: O Christ,  
That ever this should be!  
yea, slimy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slimy sea

About, about, in reel and rout  
That death-fines danced at night;  
The water, like a witch's oils  
Burnt green, and blue and white.  
And some in dreams assured were  
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;  
Nine fathom deep he had followed us  
From the land of mist and snow.

134

A spirit had followed them:  
one of the invisible  
inhabitants of this planet,  
neither departed soul nor  
angels ; concerning them  
the learned Jew, Josephus,  
and the Platonic  
Constantinopolitan, Michael  
Psellus, may be consulted.  
They are very numerous,  
and there is no climate or  
element without one or  
more.

And every tongue, through utter drought,  
Was withered at the root;  
We could not speak, no more than if  
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well a-day! what evil looks  
Had I from old and young

The shipmates in their sore  
 distress, would fain throw  
 the whole guilt on the  
 ancient mariner : in sign  
 whereof they hang the dead  
 sea bired around his neck

### Epigraph

This was introduced by Coleridge in 1817. The source is Thomas Burnet's *Archaeologiae* (1692). The translation reads:

I can readily believe that in the sum of existing things there are more invisible beings than visible. But who will explain this great family to us—their ranks, their relationship, their differences, and their respective duties? What do they do, and where do they live? Man's intelligence has always sought knowledge of these matters, but has never attained it. Meanwhile, I do not deny that it pleases me sometimes to contemplate in my mind, as in a picture, the idea of a greater and better world; lest the mind, grown used to dealing with the small matters of everyday life, should dwindle and be wholly submerged in petty thoughts. Nevertheless we should be vigilant of truth a sense of proportion, so that we may discriminate between things certain and things uncertain, daylight and darkness.

### Notes and Annotations

- L.1 "ancient Mariner" : the old sea faring man. Note the abrupt beginning.
- L.2 "three" : Odd numbers like three, five, seven and nine have mystical significance.
- L.6 "kin" : Closet relative, a touch of antique
- L.10 "quoth" : deliberate archaism
- L.11 "loon" : worthless fellow
- L.12 "Eftsoons" : immediately archaic word 'dropt' : archaic form of "dropped"
- L.23 "Kirk" : Church, in the Scottish dialect
- L.36 "minstrelsy" : a collective noun meaning 'minstrels'. They were signing poets employed by kings and nobles during the Middle Ages
- L.62 "swound" : Archaic form of 'swoon', to faint
- L.63 "Albatross" : This largest of sea birds, is white in colour and is considered holy and a good omen by sailors
- L.76 "vespers nine" : Though 'vespers usually means 'evening prayers', here it retains the original meaning of evening

L.81 “Cross Bow” : an old fashioned bow fixed in a horizontal position on a frame. The arrow was shot by pulling a trigger.

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### 4.3 Self Assessment Questions

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#### Part-I

1. What feature of ballad poetry do you find in the opening lines of the poem?

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2. Does the Wedding Guest serve any useful propose in the poem?

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3. What is the significance of the Mariner’s appearance in the poem?

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4. What is the significance of the Wedding Guest?

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5. What is meant by the word “kin” and “din”?

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6. Why does the Mariner ignore the protest of his listener and plunge directly into his story?

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7. Comment upon the word “quoth”? Give similar examples

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8. Comment on the language of II 10-12 and explain why the mariner dropped the hand of the Wedding Guest.

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9. How do you account for the order in which objects disappear from the sight of the mariner in II 21-24?

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10. Comment on the stylistic feature of II 25-28. What words in the stanza indicate the directions in which the ship sails?

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11. What does I 31 indicate about the condition of the Wedding Guest? What purpose does it fulfill in the narration?

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12. Explain the word “minstrelsy”.

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13. What is an alliteration? Pick out the alliterations in the poem.

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14. Explain the simile used in II 45-48? Pick out other similes from the given extracts of the poem.

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15. Mention three literary devices used by the poet.

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16. What is an Albatross? What is the religious significance according to the sailors?

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17. What is meant by “It ate the food it ne’er had eat”?

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18. What is the significance of the number nine in 1.76? Collect similar example from the poem.

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19. Explain the word ‘hollo

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20. Explain the Wedding Guest’s dramatic interruption in II. 79-81.

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21. Comment upon the nature imagery. How does the poet describe the Sun, Moon and Ice?

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22. Give one word answers :-

a) Give another word for ‘Kirk’.

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b) Who was ‘red as a rose’?

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c) Give another word for ‘loon’?

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d) Name the musical instrument.

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e) In which direction did the storm blast chase the ship?

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f) What was the Albatross hailed as?

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g) Who steered the ship?

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h) Why did the Albatross come to the mariner's hollo?

23. What does the Mariner do to the Albatross?

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24. What is the central theme of the poem?

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25. Have you read any books/poems on sailors and sea-voyages? If yes, name them.

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**Part II**

1. a) Give the meaning of the following words / phrases.

- i. mist.
- ii. hellish thing
- iii. woe.
- iv. averred.
- v. upriser
- vi. bloody sun
- vii. nor breath nor motion
- viii. boards
- ix. shrink
- x. shiny
- xi. rot.
- xii. reel and rout
- xiii. spirit
- xiv. plagued
- xv. fathom withered at the root
- xvi. choked

xvii. soot

xviii. cross utter drought

2. i) From which side did the sun rise now?

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ii) In which side did the sun set?

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iii) Which good wind blew form behind?

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iv) Who had done a “hellish thing”?

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v) What was the “hellish thing”?

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vi) What would be its consequence?

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3. i) What did the shipmates say to the Mariner initially?

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ii) What did they say later on? Why?

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4. Pick out the alliterations from part-II?

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5. How do the shipmates became accomplices in the crime?

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6. What poetic devices has the poet used in lines 115-122.

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7. i) Why was the “water” undrinkable?

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ii) "The very deep did rot". Why?

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8. What did the water look like at night?

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9. i) What does the poet mean by the "spirit"?

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ii) How deep had it followed the ship?

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iii) Where did it come from?

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10. i) Why couldn't anyone speak?

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ii) What did the shipmates finally do?

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iii) How would you in one word describe the simple in Part-II of the poem.

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11. What are Coleridge's distinctive features as the poet of the supernatural. Illustrate from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Kubla Khan* and *Christabel*

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#### 4.4 Answers to SAQs

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##### Part-I

1. The abrupt beginning is characteristic of ballad poetry. It rivets over attention on the protagonist of the story without waste of words.
2. Yes, The reader can identify with the Wedding Guest who is not a superficial character. The abrupt introduction of the Wedding Guest is another feature of ballad of ballad poetry.
3. The poet by describing the mariner as an old sea-faring man with a hypnotic gaze, invests the character and the story with an aura of mystery, remoteness and ancientness.
4. By the introduction of the Wedding Guest the tale is saved from slipping irrevocably into the supernatural world of mystery.
5. There is a touch of the antique in the use of the word "kin". It means, the closest relative "din" means the confused noise of the wedding feast. But it comes after 'merry' which means it is a happy voice of celebration.
6. The Mariner, deliberately plunges directly into his story, brushing aside the protest of the Wedding Guest to show his urgency and power of hypnotism. The poet uses it as a device which makes the story more dramatic and the character of the narrator weird.
7. "Quoth" is a deliberate archaism meaning 'said'. Other archaic words are "Eftsoons", "dropt", "Kin".

8. "Eftsoons" is an archaic old fashioned word. Meaning immediately "Dropt" is the archaic form of the modern past tense, 'dropped'. The mariner is able to hold the attention of the Wedding Guest with his hypnotic gaze and so even though the Mariner drops his hand the Wedding Guest listens spellbound the story.
9. The order of disappearance of the objects from the sight of the ship (kirk, hill and light house top) is very realistic as the moving away from the land into the sea, from the world of the familiar into the region of the unfamiliar.
10. This is a typical example of the amazing simplicity of language of the poem, illustrating the Wordsworthian formulation of 'a selection of language really used by men'. The fact that the "Sun came up upon the left" indicates that the ship is sailing due South.
11. The ship is now near the equator and hence the sun shines almost overhead at midday.
12. The Wedding Guest is frustrated and protests in a strange way but we must remember that he is under a spell and therefore without a choice. Henceforth a realistic story become more dramatic and the Wedding Guest interrupts the narration only when he is overcome with horror and fear.
13. A collective noun, meaning 'minstrels'. They were singing poets employed by kings and nobles during the Middle Ages.
14. Alliteration is repetition of speech sounds in sequence either at the beginning of a word or of a stressed syllable within a word. The term is applied to consonants "Merry minstrelsy" is a fine example of alliteration.

The ship is compared to the victim who is being chased by his enemy - the storm-blast. The victim (ship) is running in fear and the enemy (storm-blast) is so close that the shadow of the foe is being extract are:

- (a) "Red as a rose is she", - The bride is compared to a rose.
- (b) "As green as emerald", - The ice is tinted green as emerald.
- (c) "And listens like a three years' child".- The Wedding guest is listening to the Mariner's tale with the rapt attention of a child.
16. The poet makes effective use of three literary devices. Firstly, repetition; the word "ice" is repeated three time. Secondly, onomatopoeia; defined as "the use of words whose sounds seem to express or reinforce their meanings' e.g. "cracked and growled and roared and howled." Thirdly, simili - there is a state comparison of the sounds to the noises heard by one falling into a swoon.
17. It is the largest of sea birds, with a wing span measuring fifteen feet and is white in colour. It is said to bring good luck and is looked upon as the soul of the dead by superstitious sailors.
18. Coleridge makes the bird's food deliberately vague to intensify the supernatural atmosphere. It means that the bird was given the best or extraordinary food by the Sailors.
19. The odd numbers like three, five, seven and nine, have mystical, magical or supernatural significance attached to them. This is commonly found in old fairy tales and the Bible e.g.

- (a) “And he stoppeth one of three”
- (b) “It perched for vespers nine”
- (c) “And listens like a three years’ Child”,
20. An onomatopoeic word, meaning ‘call’.
21. A dramatic interruption by the Wedding guest illustrates the poet’s craftsmanship in preserving the reality of the situation described and in suggesting a crucial moment in the narration of the Mariner’s story. There is a sudden look of horror on his face which evokes a terrified exclamation from the listener followed by the abrupt painful reply, that the Mariner killed the bird with his crossbow.
22. Nature imagery is central to the poem and the poet describes nature in graphic details. The “Sun” is described as rising out of the sea, shining all day long and going back into the sea. The “Moon” has been described as glimmering and white shining all night long through the white haze. The “ice” is described as hug, floating as high as the mast, just as icebergs and tinted green like emerald.
23. The term personification applies to the act conferring a human status on non-living or abstract qualities often indicated in poetry through capitalization e.g.
- (i) The Sun - “out of the sea came he!”
- (ii) The Storm Blast - “.... He/was tyrannous and strong”.
24. (a) Church
- (b) Bridge
- (c) Insane
- (d) Bassoon
- (e) South
- (f) Christian Soul
- (g) Helmsman
- (h) Food or play
25. The Mariner mercilessly kills the pious bird of good omen and commits a sin. This is the first reference to the central theme of the poem, the Mariner’s Rime.

## Part-II

- Ans.1 i) fog, haze.
- ii) misery,
- iii) swore
- iv) arose
- v) scorching sun

- vi) still or static, without any movement
  - vii) planks of wood (of which the ship is made)
  - viii) contract
  - ix) creepy
  - x) decay
  - xi) frisking about, to and fro
  - xii) here Polar Spirit
  - xiii) tormented
  - xiv) unit to measure the depth of an ocean/sea
  - xv) dried till the end; here thirsty
  - xvi) suffocated
  - xvii) black powdery deposit from smoke
  - xviii) symbol in the shape of a cross worn by Christians
  - xix) absolutely parched.
- 2.
- i) Right side
  - ii) Left side
  - iii) Good south wind
  - iv) The Mariner
  - v) The Mariner had killed
  - vi) It would bring misery to the Mariner and all his crew.
- .3.
- i) The shipmates initially blamed the Mariner and told him that he was a sinner, who had killed the bird that made the breeze blow.
  - ii) When the fog cleared and the lovely sun came out the shipmates changed their tune and told the Mariner that he had done the right thing by killing the bird that brought the fog and mist.
  - iii) This tells us that human nature is fickle, memory short - lived and also that men accuse other easily.
4. The alliterations are :
- i) “blew behind”
  - ii) “breeze blew”
  - iv) “foam flew”
  - v) “furrow followed free”

- vi) “silent sea”
- vii) “slimy sea”
5. The shipmates become accomplices by justifying the Mariner’s act of crime.
6. The poet has used two poetic devices in II. 115-112.
- i) Repetition -
- Eg. “Day after day, day after day”  
“water, water, every where,  
 and all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, every where,  
 Nor any drop to drink”.
- ii) Simile
- Eg. Day after day, day after day,  
 We stuck, nor breath nor motion;  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.”
7. i) The “Water” was undrinkable because it was sea-water and sea water is saline.  
 ii) “The very deep did rot” because the water was stagnant.
8. The water looked like fries of death under the moonlight and reflected many colours like blue, green and white shades of witch’s oils. Stagnant water generally appears oily and multicoloured.
9. i) The poet means the Polar spirit - one of spirits belonging to the various elements of Nature.  
 ii) It had followed the ship nine fathoms deep.  
 iii) It came from the cold land of mist and snow (Polar regions).
10. i) No mariner could speak because their tongues (mouth) were absolutely dry due to thirst and they felt too choked to utter any sound.  
 ii) The shipmates hung the dead Albatross round the neck of the Mariner. They did so because they gladly wanted to put all the guilt on the Mariner and project themselves as innocent.  
 iii) Picturesque Simile.
11. When Coleridge started writing, the cult of the supernatural that formed the basis of the Gothic romance was already on the decline; in fact it was practically dead. But lured by its strangeness and discovering in it vast possibilities of exploitation, Coleridge gave it a new prominence in his new poetry. But whereas, the conventional literature dealing with the supernatural tended to be

a little fictitious, Coleridge made his poetry not only convincing and exacting but also a positive criticism of lie. Coleridge succeeded where the orders had failed because he treated the supernatural as a subordinate element in a wider scheme of human experience and unlike the other writers who had cultivated this creed as fashion but had no belief in it, Coleridge wrote with full conviction. When he collaborated with Wordsworth in the publication of the Lyrical Ballads, it was agreed that he would deal with supernatural subjects in his poems so as to “transfer from inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith”. Coleridge largely succeeded in this aim and is known to be the greatest poet of the supernatural in English poetry.

The scene set in distant times and remote places. The three important poems in which Coleridge has made use of the supernatural are *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan*. It is significant that in all the three poems, Coleridge takes us to distant times and remote places. *The Ancient Mariner* narrates the experiences of an ancient (suggesting both old age and belonging to olden times.) mariner voyaging around polar regions in unknown seas.

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.

The remoteness of scene in all the three poems is quite deliberate. ‘Medieval times are traditionally associated with magic and witchcraft. The appearance of evil spirit in Sir Leolin’s castle does not strike us as improbable nor do we feel any inappropriateness in Kubla Khan’s hearing ancestral voices prophesying war amidst the tumultuous noises heard from the fountain as well as the caverns measureless to man. The moment the poet effect temporal and spatial remoteness, the rigorous logic governing the familiar world of reality is suspended and the poet feels free to create a new logic in a comparatively new world.

Gradual introduction of the supernatural elements. Coleridge is careful not to show any abruptness in introduction of supernatural elements. He first takes his reader around familiar place and wins his faith in the narrative through vividly portrayed minute details. Then minor hints of the supernatural are gradually dropped. Finally, the entire scene puts on a supernatural look. But by now the reader’s sensibility is attuned to the mood of the narrative that he readily accepts whatever he is told. In *The Ancient Mariner*, there is a very vivid description of the ship’s journey southward to the equator with good wind and fine weather. Then a storm blast drives it towards the South Pole. With the introduction of mist and snow the scene takes on a weird look. Ice, mast-high, and as green as emerald, sends a dismal sheen and occasionally cracks and growls. In Part II, the mariner announces:

We were the first that ever burst  
Into that silent sea

Then the atmosphere is given some more supernatural touches. The breeze drops and the sea becomes perfectly still. The sun stands high in a hot and copper sky. Their ship looks as ‘idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean’. On account of intense heat, the mariners have

a weary time. Their throats are parched and their eyes are glazed. It is in such a background that the spectre ship is introduced with its ghastly crew of Death and Life-in-Death. In *Christabel* also the supernatural atmosphere is very gradually built up. We hear the hooting of the owl as the clock strikes the midnight hour. The toothless mastiff bitch makes answer to the clock shrieks the midnight hour and quarter and is said to be able to see Christabel's dead mother. A thin grey cloud spreads on high and the moon behind it looks both small and dull. Geraldine is introduced in an air of hushed expectancy. But her cumulative touches suggest that she is an evil spirit. She collapses at the massive iron gate 'belike through pain'. She refuses to join Christabel in prayer. The mastiff bitch makes an angry moan as she passes by the kernel. When they enter the hall, the dying ashes give out 'a tongue of light, a fit of flame', in the light of which Christabel is able to see Geraldine's eye. Even at this moment the poet does not tell us that it's serpent's eye. Thus the poet prepares us fully well before revealing her reality as she exposes her ugly bosom and puts a spell on Christabel.

The experience projected through supernatural machinery was to be essentially human. This is seen in all the three poems. How true it is to the psychology of Kubla Khan to hear a war prophecy. Towards the end of Kubla Khan the poet is presented as an extraordinary divine being; a poet caught in a spell of creative inspiration, he transcends his ordinary existence and rises to the level of a supernatural being.

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.

We thus find that Coleridge make his supernatural acceptable mainly through a fateful adherence to the dramatic truth of human emotions.

Another important feature of Coleridge's treatment of the supernatural is a subtle blending of the natural and the supernatural. The two are so intricately fused with each other that it becomes to distinguish where the one ends and the other begins, In *The Ancient Mariner* who can say with exactness whether the bloody sun no bigger than the moon standing right above the mast in a hot and copper sky, the death-fires dancing at night and the water burning green, and blue and white like a witch's oil constitute natural or supernatural phenomenon? In *Christabel* does the mastiff bitch make an angry moan because she sees Geraldine as the evil spirit or because she is disturbed by the hooting of the owl? In *Kubla Khan*, the mighty fountain being momentarily forced is perhaps invested with supernatural energy but the similes employed to describe it are so familiar we accept the fountain as quite natural:

Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst

Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,

Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:

And 'mid these dancing rock sat once and ever

It flung up momentarily the sacred river

Suggestiveness is the key note of Coleridge's treatment of the supernatural. He does not describe the supernatural; he simply suggests it. Mystery unravelled seems to be mysterious. So Coleridge's doesn't make any effort to unravel the mystery; he subtly suggests, leaving it to the reader's imagination to fill in the necessary details. In *Christabel*, when Geraldine exposes her bosom Coleridge suggests it's disgusting and horrifying ugliness through two very suggestive lines:

A sight to dream of, not to tell!

O shield her! shield sweet *Christabel*!

In *Kubla Khan* this suggestiveness is seen to better advantage. In this poem the description of the deep romantic chasm slanting down the green hill across a cedarn cover is perhaps unsurpassed for its sheer suggestiveness:

A savage place! as holy and enchanted

As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted

By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

It has been remarked that these three lines contain the seed of a complete love story comparable to Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*.

Today we have come a long way from the days of supernatural belief. Ghosts and Goblins no longer capture our imagination. Still we are able to enjoy Coleridge's poetry and appreciate its relevance. It is meaningful because it's intensely human. Like Charles Lamb we might be skeptical of the supernatural machinery in it, but like him we would keep reading it as if dragged on by 'Tom Piper's magic whistle.

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#### **4.5 Let Us Sum Up**

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In this unit, we have given you practice in the study of

- Ballad poetry
  - Meaning and interpretation of Coleridge's famous ballad *The Rime of Ancient Mariner*
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#### **4.6 Review Questions**

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1. Write a critical appreciation of the poem.
  2. Discuss *The Rime of Ancient Mariner* as a ballad.
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#### **4.7 Bibliography**

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1. Oxford Companion to English Literature : Sixth edition, Sep 2006
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## UNIT-5

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### JOHN KEATS : (1) TO AUTUMN (2) TO GRECIAN URN

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#### Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 About the Age
- 5.3 Texts
  - 5.3.1 To Autumn
  - 5.3.2 To Grecian Urn
- 5.4 Critical Summary
  - 5.4.1 To Autumn
  - 5.4.2 To Grecian Urn
- 5.5 Explanations
  - 5.5.1 To Autumn
  - 5.5.2 To Grecian Urn
- 5.6 Critical Appreciation
  - 5.6.1 To Autumn
  - 5.6.2 To Grecian Urn
- 5.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.8 Review Questions
- 5.9 Bibliography

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#### 5.0 Objectives

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In this unit our purpose is to discuss the salient features of the Romantic Movement, Keats as a writer of odes and also their qualities such as unity of impression, elements of drama, their style, etc- which make them so remarkable in themselves. This we shall do by discussing in detail the two major odes of John Keats- *To Autumn* and *To Grecian Urn*.

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#### 5.1 Introduction

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John Keats (1795-1821) was born in London in October, 1795. His father, a stable keeper, died when the boy was nine years old and his mother when he was fifteen. He was sent to a good school at Enfield where he was befriended by the master's son Charles Cowden Clarke later well known in literary circles. On leaving school in 1810 he was apprenticed to a surgeon, passed his

examinations and practiced surgery in London till 1817 when he gave up the profession and devoted himself to poetry. Though denied the advantage of public school and university culture, he was fortunate in being introduced by the Clarkes to such literary men as Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, Haydon, Shelley and Godwin. The Clarkes lent him books including the *Fairy Queen* of Spenser, the poet who made a lasting impression on the poetry of Keats. In 1817 he published his first volume of poems, which was not a success. In 1818 appeared his *Endymion* which was mercilessly criticized by the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*. By this time signs of consumption, from which his mother and a brother had died, began to show themselves in him. Nevertheless he kept up his labours and during the next two years produced his best work which appeared in his third volume, *Lamia, Isabella, and Other Poems* (1820). His disease which had now taken a firm grip on him was aggravated by a violent passion for Fanny Brawne, and he left for Italy in September 1820 accompanied by his friend, the painter Severn. He died at Rome in February 1821 at the age of 25. He was buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome and on his tomb is the inscription made by himself: *here lies one whose name was writ in water*.

John Keats tried his pen at various forms of writing, but none of them yielded him as great success as the ode form. After every reading of his poetry, his odes alone fascinate our attention to the highest degree. Therefore, Keats is always remembered chiefly as a writer of odes. Not only this, Keats holds a leading rank among the ode writers of English literature. We shall analyse as to what qualities of his odes make them so remarkable in themselves. Before we do that, let us discuss the ode as a literary form/ device.

Originally Ode was a Greek form of verse. It meant a poetic composition written to be sung to the music of lyre. But when the Ode form came into the hands of the English writers the idea of musical accompaniment ceased to be considered essential. It came to mean a type of lyrical poem only. Thus in the context of English poetry, the Ode can be defined as a lyrical poem which expresses exalted emotion in respect of a theme which is dignified, and it does so in a metrical form which is as a rule complex or irregular. It is an address to an abstract object which means that it is written to and not written about. The Ode must be highly serious in character by virtue of its exalted and dignified theme.

The unity of impression, the elements of drama and the style employed by the author make the odes so fascinating. The major odes of Keats, *To a Nightingale*, *To Autumn*, *To a Grecian Urn*, *To Psyche*, *To Melancholy*, etc have a common subject, mood and theme to depict. In all the odes of Keats, the development of mood is more or less similar and the mood develops in the shape of a drama, i.e. first the mood takes birth, it develops, reaches a climax and finally the anticlimax takes place. Thus when we read Keats' odes we feel that we are reading an abridged drama, and in this lay the secret of their success. Their style is as unifying a fact as their mood and theme. Every ode has the same perfection of language. The language is concise, exact and concentrated. There is not a word which we can afford to dispense with, without doing damage to the very structure of the poem.

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## 5.2 About the Age

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The book *The Lyrical Ballads* produced jointly by William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge and published in 1798 marked the beginning of Romantic Movement. The Romantic Movement was a deliberate and sweeping revolt against the literary principles of the Age of Reason. Just as Dryden and Pope had rejected the romantic tradition of the Elizabethans as crude and irregular and had adopted classical or more correctly neo-classical principles of French literature in their writings, so now

Wordsworth and Coleridge, in their turn, had rejected the neo- classical principles in favour of the romantic.

Now the question is what distinguishes Classic from Romantic? Simply put, Classical writing is characterized by reason or common sense in matter, expressed in a restrained style-style, that is to say, which has order, proportion and finish. Romantic writing, on the other hand, is characterized by Imagination in matter, expressed in a style more or less free of restraint-a style, that is to say, which may be simple or grand, picturesque or passionate, depending on the mood or temperament of the writer. In other words, Classicism subordinates matter to form; Romanticism subordinates form to matter. Classicism stands for regimentation, regulation, authority; Romanticism for individuality, informality, freedom.

It is important at this point to note that while there is great similarity between the Elizabethan age and the age of Wordsworth, the latter is romantic with a difference. That difference consists in its attitude to external Nature. Wordsworth and his group of poets looked upon Nature from points of view unknown to the Elizabethans, except Shakespeare. The intensity of their feeling for Nature and the subtlety of their interpretation of it are such that all other Nature poetry beside theirs pales into insignificance.

The causes and the character of the Romantic Movement have been subjects of endless debate and discussion by literary historians. To name only two, Professor Herford's famous introduction to his *Age of Wordsworth*, and Theodore Watts- Dunton's article on 'The Renaissance of Wonder in Poetry' in *Chamber's Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, are fascinating reading. The chief cause of the movement was a desire to enlarge the bounds of poetry by freeing it from the shackles of Neo- Classicism. The neo-classic creed laid down definite rules for the writing of poetry. These, according to R.D. Trivedi, may be stated as follows:

- i. Write only what is rational, choosing your subjects from every day life-axioms, truths, mottoes, which have been uttered by wise men of the past. Avoid flights of fancy and imagination. Avoid also passion and enthusiasm as unbecoming of a gentleman. They are not 'good form'.
- ii. Embellish your subject with a style that is elegant and polished. For this confine yourself to one regular, smooth metre- that of the closed couplet- and to polished language- language, that is to say, which has been hallowed by poetic custom. Don't stray beyond this stock of 'poetic diction'. Within these limits you may show your skill as much as you please.

These rules, the Romantics felt, artificially and unnecessarily restricted the freedom of the poet. They believed that genuine poetry was a free and spontaneous utterance of the poet's imagination and not mere embellishment of other people's thoughts. They believed, further, that the poet was free to follow his own fancy in the matter of language and versification. Besides this desire for freedom in the substance as well as the technique of the poetry, there was among the new writers a revived passion for Nature, and an yearning for the past, something 'remote and affair'-the world of medieval ballads, Celtic chivalry and legend, ancient Greece, the mysterious East, etc.

Desire for imaginative freedom, passion for Nature, and yearning for the past-these three impulses had been stirring through the 18<sup>th</sup> century and preparing the way for the romantic revolution almost from the time of Pope himself. They had created, as it were, a distinct line of poetry opposed to Pope's and parallel to it which is traceable through the work of Thomson, Collins, Grey, Percy, Macpherson, Chatterton, Blake and Burns. These earlier rebels exemplified in their writings all the

characteristics which were to distinguish the latter romantics- Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley and Keats. From one point of view they were innovators, and yet from another, they were simply returning to the older, Elizabethan way of writing, to the literature, that is, of imagination, intuition, emotion. They are thus the connecting links between the two ages of romance.

While a general desire for change or reorientation of English poetry was the real cause of the Romantic movement, there were two external or accidental influences (not causes) which served to energise it. One was the influence of Germany, and the other of French Revolution. Germany, after an eclipse of nearly two centuries, had taken great strides in poetry and drama under Goethe and Schiller, and in philosophy under Kant and Schelling, during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. German thought, especially the transcendental philosophy of Kant fascinated Coleridge and De Quincey. This philosophy rejected the materialistic interpretation of the universe and held that Reality was a spiritual essence that transcends (lies beyond) sense experience.

The other influence, that of the French Revolution though great, has been much exaggerated, especially by French and American writers. It stimulated and accelerated the Romantic Movement in literature, but it did not initiate it. The French Revolution which started with the fall of the Bastille in 1789 came long after Thomson's *Seasons* (1726-30), which had fired the first shot in the Romantic Movement and almost all the romantics were infected by its ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity. It was the mightiest upheaval in recorded history and profoundly influenced civilized thought everywhere. England did not escape its impact. It intensified the feeling of revolt not only against kings but against the entire established order of things. The tide, however, did not last long in England and many turned away from it because of its horrors and cruelties. Wordsworth also went over to the anti-revolutionist camp, and by accepting the poet-laureateship provoked Browning's attack on him in his poem 'The Lost Leader'. Southey and Coleridge who similarly fired with revolutionary zeal in their youth had planned to build in America their utopian Commonwealth a "Pant isocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna"- were repelled by the excesses of the Revolution and drifted away to the conservative fold. The younger generation of romantics, however, that of Hazlitt, Byron, and Shelley, remained loyal to its principles right to the end.

In fixing the character of the Romantic Movement we had better keep clear of the learned and high sounding definitions given of it and grasp its essence instead. We all know what is romantic though we may not be able to define it. The romantic in ordinary life is an escape from its monotonous routine, its conventionality and custom. The charm of the romantic consists in novelty and variety. A picnic in the countryside, boating in the moonlight, exploring a mountain peak, a runaway marriage, colourful dress, mutton-chop whiskers, girl's pigtails, one hanging behind, the other in front- all these are manifestations of the romantic spirit. The same may be said of things that are separated from us by distance, either of time or space. They fascinate us by their remoteness: distance laid enhancement to the view. Keeping in mind the three impulses of the romantic- imagination, passion for Nature, yearning for the past- it is easy to say that the Romantic Movement was nothing but an extension to the field of literature of man's unquenchable thirst for beauty that lies in the strange, the extraordinary, the remote. Combination of strangeness and beauty constitutes the romantic in literature.

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## 5.3 Texts

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### 5.3.1 To Autumn

#### I

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness  
Close bosom friend of maturing Sun;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;  
To bend with apples and moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruits with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

#### II

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;  
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound sleep,  
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:  
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
Steady thy laden head across a brook;  
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,  
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

#### III

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are thy?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,-  
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,

And touch the stubble plains with rosy hue;  
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river shallows, borne aloft  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;  
Hedge-cricket sing: and now with treble soft  
The red-breast whistles from a garden croft;  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

### 5.3.2 To Grecian Urn

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness;  
Thou foster child of Silence and slow Time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
In Temple or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

## II

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone  
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Though winning near the goal—yet do not grieve;  
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

### III

Ah, happy, happy boughs! That cannot shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu;  
And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
For ever piping songs for ever new;  
More happy love! more happy, happy love!  
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd  
For ever panting, and for ever young;  
All breathing human passion far above,  
That leaves a heart high- sorrowful and cloy'd  
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

### IV

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?  
What little town by river or sea shore,  
Or mountain- built with peaceful citadel,  
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?  
And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
Will silent be: and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

### V

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! With brede  
Of marble men and maidens wrought,  
With forest branches and the trodden weed;  
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought  
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!  
When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
That ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,

‘Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty’,—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

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## 5.4 Critical Summary

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### 5.4.1 To Autumn

In the first stanza the poet gives us a description of the prolific bounties of autumn. Autumn is a season of “mellow fruitfulness”. Ripe fruits and flowers, grapes and apples, gourds, hazel-nuts and other ripe fruits appear at this time. Then late flowers and the bees together with honey come. In the second stanza, we have a splendid personification of autumn. Autumn is personified as a harvester sitting carelessly on the granary floor during winnowing; a tired reaper fallen asleep in the very midst of his reaping; a gleaner following his walk home across a brook in the evening with a load of sheaves on his head; cider presser watching intently the press that squeezes juice out of fruits. The poet then questions- Where are the songs of spring? The poet feels that though the beauties of spring are absent in autumn, yet autumn has a beauty of its own. Then follows a picture of the stubble fields which are coloured red in the crimson light of the setting sun. In autumn the full grown lambs bleat aloud, the grasshoppers chirp, the robin sings a treble note, and the swallows twitter as they fly in the sky.

### 5.4.2 To Grecian Urn

The poet sees a Grecian urn, and the human forms depicted thereon. He is filled with a sense of wonder and he speculates what might be the theme of the urn. The life-like attitude of the figures depicted strike him with astonishment- there are men who might be mistaken for gods; there are blushful maidens struggling to escape the importunities of lovers; there are pipers playing on with unwearied zest. These naturally make the poet conscious of the superiority of Art over Nature. The unheard music, suggested by the figure of the piper, gives ample scope to the imagination and is therefore sweeter, for in life the sweetest music must come to an end. In the piece of sculpture the lover cannot get his beloved, but at the same time she cannot escape his sight as she would have done in real life. Thus his love will be as eternal as the beauty of his beloved. From this thought Keats is led to the contemplation that the trees on the urn can never shed their leaves, nor the musicians ever weary of their songs, nor the love of the young people ever reach satiety. The joy of art is something eternal, and is far more satisfying than the joys of real life which end in a sad satiety. Keats is then led to create out of the figures represented on the urn a scene of classical Greece as though he was seeing it before his very eyes. It is a sacrificial scene that is depicted, and he contemplates the priests and the heifer and the altar arranged in a proper attitude. The sight of this makes him speculate what town it might be that had been made empty of its pious worshippers on this festive day. Having thus reviewed the entire scene in its details as well as its implications, Keats concludes the poem with the reflection that the urn will remain when the present generation of men will be long dead and gone. The urn will teach men this supreme lesson that Beauty is Truth and Truth is Beauty. To the poet it is a great discovery, and so he defiantly asserts that it is really all the knowledge that a man should know.

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## 5.5 Explanations

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### 5.5.1 To Autumn

#### Stanza I

Seasons of mists.....their clammy cells.

In this stanza, the poet has described the bounty of autumn. Autumn is the season of mists and of ripening of fruits. It seems that autumn actively cooperates with the sun in bringing about the maturity of the fruits. Autumn and the sun work together for the ripening of all kinds of fruits. The wines round the edges of branches of the apple trees are bent nearly to the ground with their weight of apples. The apple trees growing in the cottage gardens are covered with moss and are weighed down with fruits. All fruits are filled with sweetness through and through. The gourd grows bigger and bigger. The hazel nuts are filled with a sweet kernel. Certain varieties of flowers also bloom in autumn. The bees suck the sweetness of these flowers. To the bees, it seems that these flowers represent a continuation of summer; the sticky cells of the honeycombs are filled to overflowing with honey, and yet autumn provides more flowers in case the bees would like to draw more sweetness from them.

#### Stanza II

Who hath not seen.....hours by hours.

This stanza describes the occupations of autumn. Autumn is here personified as a winnower, as a gleaner, as a reaper and as a cider-presser. All these operations—winnowing, reaping, gleaning and cider pressing—belong to autumn and are here supposed to be performed by women. Autumn is, therefore, seen here as a woman. First, autumn is seen as a woman doing the work of winnowing, that is separating the chaff from the grains. If anyone wants to see autumn, he may go into the fields and he will see a woman engaged in the winnowing operation, while the breeze ruffles the locks of her hair. This is one picture of autumn. Secondly, we can see autumn in the shape of a reaper, who has been engaged in reaping corn but who, in the course of her work, is so overcome by the sleep-inducing smell of poppies that she falls asleep, with the result that the next row of corn remains unreaped. Thirdly, autumn may be seen in the character of a gleaner. A gleaner is a woman who collects grains from the field when the crops have been removed. A gleaner may be seen walking along steadily with the weight of grains upon her head, crossing a stream. The sight of the gleaner is also symbolic of autumn. Finally, autumn may be seen in the figure of a woman who is crushing the ripe apples in the wooden press to obtain their juice from which cider is to be made. This woman sits by the cider-press and watches patiently the apple-juice flowing out of the press, drop by drop. The sight of the cider press is also associated with autumn. Thus in this stanza, autumn has been given a concrete shape and a concrete personality. Autumn is seen in four different guises, corresponding to the different occupations of this season.

#### Stanza III

Where are the songs.....twitter in the skies.

In this stanza, the poet describes the sounds of autumn. Spring is distinguished by its sweet songs. These sweet songs are absent in autumn. But there is no need to feel any regret on that account. Autumn has its own peculiar music. The sounds of autumn are generally heard in the evening. When

the sun is setting, a soft glow irradiates the fields from which the crop has been reaped, leaving the stumps behind. The long drawn-out clouds in the sky look like the bars of a grate. At this time, the melancholy buzzing of the gnats is heard. The gnats fly about among the shrubs growing on the riverside. The gnats are carried upward when the wind is strong and they come downwards when the wind is feeble (or, the singing of the gnats is heard when the wind is blowing and it is not audible when the wind stops). In addition to the gnats singing in a melancholy chorus, the bleating of full grown lambs is heard from the hills which bound the landscape. Then there is the chirping of the grasshopper. Next comes the high, bold and delicate song of the twittering of the swallows which are gathering together in large number for their winter migration. The gnats mourn by the river; the lambs bleat on the hill; the grasshoppers sing from the hedge; the redbreasts whistle from the garden and the swallows twitter in the sky. Such is the glorious music of autumn.

### 5.5.2 To Grecian Urn

#### Stanza I

Line 1-7. Thou still unravished.....Arcady

Keats gazes at the Grecian Urn and contemplates with wonder its long existence on earth for centuries. It is wedded to quietness as it were. It stands silent through the slow march of time, as if it were the adopted child of Time. The poet sees the scene depicted on the urn and feels the charm of the pastoral story. The Urn has turned to him into the historian of a piece of pastoral life. Indeed, it seems to the poet as though sculpture can express a story of rural life much better than poetry. He enquires wonderingly as to what legend in rural surroundings is depicted on the urn. Is it a story of the gods who frequent the valley of Thessaly? Is it a story of men who lead a pastoral life in the Peloponnesian Arcadia? He is struck with wonder at these vital figures of men and maidens, of pipers and trees represented on the urn, and feels all their abandoned joy.

#### Stanza II(a)

Line 11-14. Heard melodies.....no tone

In these lines from the *Grecian Urn* Keats asserts the superiority of imagination over reality. On the Grecian Urn the poet sees the figure of a piper playing on his instrument. He cannot hear the music made by the piper, but he can imagine it. However great the pleasures of the senses may be, those of the imagination are still greater. The unheard music is far sweeter than the music heard by the mortal ears. Keats here affirms the power of the imagination to create and enjoy which surpasses the music heard in reality. For Keats “what the imagination creates on Beautiful must be true whether it existed before or not. Imagination has ample scope for divine enjoyment of music that on earth is not.” So the poet asks the sculptured piper to play on softly breathing instrumental music consistently, so that the imagination may ceaselessly enjoy the ‘unheard music’ far sweeter than any real pipe can make.

Critical Comments: For the idea expressed above, compare the following lines:-

I. To his capable ears

Silence was music from the holy spheres.

—Keats, *Endymion*

II Sweetest melodies

Are those which are by distance made more sweet.

———Wordsworth: *Personal Talks*

### **Stanza (b)**

Lines 15-20. Fair youth, beneath..... she be fair

In these lines the poet compares the permanence of art with the transitory nature of human life. The prerogative of the sculptor is suggested in these and the following lines. The figures created by him enjoy an immortal existence. The sculptured young musician under the trees has not to give up his song as the earthly musicians have, nor the sculptured trees can ever shed their leaves. The sculpture lover need not regret that he can never kiss his beloved, though, as depicted on the urn, he is almost on the point of attaining his object, i.e., kissing his beloved. Keats asks his lover not to feel sad at his inability to kiss the girl. The lover should find sufficient consolation in the fact that this girl will never grow old and that his love for her will never decline.

Thus in sculpture the various forms of life are eternized, the artist has been able to make immortal the changing aspect of life, he has depicted the situation of the moment and it is to last forever. The piper beneath the trees and the trees themselves in their inanimate life, the lover and his object in real life, have long passed away; but here upon the surface of the urn, in the life of Art, they will remain for all times to come.

### **Stanza III**

Lines 21-30. Ah happy love!.....parching tongue.

The lines reveal Keats' keen appreciation for the permanence of Art as contrasted with the transitoriness of human life. The poet contemplates with joy the happiness of the trees that cannot shed their leaves nor take leave of the spring season. He congratulates the happy musician who sings untiringly new songs for ever and ever. Even happier is the lover represented on the urn. His love is eternally fresh and enjoyable, eager, zestful and unique. The love of the bold lover never actually materializes but he is always, as painted on the surface of the vase, in a mood of expectancy and this expectancy is more delightful than fruition. This mood of expectancy does not know "love's sad satiety". Everything in this picture betokens a love which is higher than human love in real life; it is also free from human love's palatable after-effects. Human passions or earthly love leaves behind a heart steeped in sorrows and worries. Earthly love generally results in sorrow and weariness caused by unsatiety and great physical agony. Hence, sculptured love is above all earthly passions.

In these lines, an undercurrent of deep sorrow is perceptible. You know about the frustrations of the poet and his passionate love for Fanny Browne.

### **Stanza IV**

Lines 35-40. What little town..... can ever return.

In these lines the poet presents a picture of a little town situated by the side of a river or on the sea-shore or surrounded by mountains which must have been left by its inhabitants on this morning for worship. Just as the visible sacrificial scene is vividly expressed, so also the invisible town, though it has not been depicted. From where did all these people come? It must have been some little town. And that town must have been emptied of its entire pious folk. This little town whose folk has come

out on this happy morning will remain empty and silent forever. Not a single soul will return to its streets to tell why it was emptied. In other words, the inhabitants represented on the urn as engaged in the ritual of the sacrifice are forever fixed on the urn and will never return to follow their usual vocation in the little town.

### **Stanza V**

Lines 45-50. Cold Pastoral.....all ye need to know.

In these lines Keats interprets the lesson taught by the urn. Our thoughts can no more compass the ideas and feelings awakened by the urn than it can comprehend eternity itself. The same kind of baffled feeling is produced when we strive to grasp the infinite. When the present generation will lose the freshness and vigour of youth with the arrival of the old age, the urn will remain unwithered by old age amongst the coming generation of men on earth. It will soothe and comfort humanity with its beauty, like a friend conveying to them the great lesson. In this way, the urn will inspire the mankind to seek shelter in the ideal eternity of Art. And the knowledge of the identity between what is true and what is beautiful is all that we need to have. We need not know more than this fundamental maxim which Keats considers to be the sum and substance of wisdom for man.

### **Critical Comments:**

The message of the urn is summed up in five pregnant words: “Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty”. The concluding stanza of the poem expresses two philosophical ideas,(i) the incomprehensibility of the Infinite in Art and Nature and (ii) the Ethics of Beauty. To Keats, Beauty is the touchstone of truth.

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## **5.6 Critical Appreciation**

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### **5.6.1 To Autumn**

“To Autumn”, the last of Keats’ odes, was published in 1820. The Ode shows Keats in a rich mood of serenity. There are no question and conflicts in the poem. Autumn is not regarded here as the prelude to winter, but it is a season of mellow fruitfulness- a season of ripeness and maturity, i.e. fulfillment. The poet is not disturbed by the thought of the snows that will soon follow; he is content with his present happiness. Though apparently the Ode is objective and descriptive, there is behind the objective description the serene tranquility of the poet. The poet seems to convey that the poetry of earth is never dead. A momentary, however, crosses his mind:

*Where are the songs of spring, Ay, where are they?*

Immediately the question is stilled, and the momentary regret gives place to contentment:

*Think not of them, thou hast thy music too.*

Here the poet isolates the beauty of the present from the past and the future. This joy in the present, the isolation of the beauty of the hour, the making of it a divine possession and losing in its loveliness the pain of life-is one of the distinguishing features of Keats’ poetry. It lends a unique charm to the Ode.

The *Ode to Autumn* is faultless in its art and workmanship. It shows at their best all the qualities of Keats as a poetic artist- his pictorial power, his economy of expression, his classical restraint, his sense of proportion, and his grave and solemn music. In no other poem, again, does his simple and

direct love of nature find a better and fuller expression.

The Ode gives a graphic description of the season of autumn with all its richness. The first stanza describes its gifts of ripe fruits and new crops of flowers. The second stanza gives an authentic image of autumn through living personifications like those of a reaper, a gleaner and a wine-grower. The third stanza describes the music of autumn, the plaintive singing of the gnats, the bleating of lambs, the chirping of the crickets and the soft treble of the redbreasts.

In the *Ode to Autumn*, Keats wrote a poem which shows Greek spirit and Greek way of writing more than any other poem in English language. The Ode is classical in its truest sense; and there is no emotional agitation, romantic strangeness or mystery. Every thing here is simple, direct and clear and the poem is pervaded throughout by a mood of serene tranquility. Moreover, the living personifications of autumn are exactly in the myth making mode of the ancient Greeks. The *Ode to a Nightingale* and the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* may have a greater appeal by reason of their pathos and glow of emotion, but the *Ode to Autumn* is unique in its rounded perfection and felicity of loveliness.

To conclude, the Ode is another masterpiece; it is an ode where art is nearest to absolute perfection. Sidney Colvin writes “In words so transparent and direct we almost forget they are words at all, and nature herself and season seem speaking to us.”

### 5.6.2 To Grecian Urn

The Ode was written in the spring of 1819. Lord Elgin pillaged a collection of ancient sculptured marbles from Athens in 1812, and deposited them in the British Museum. Byron expressed his sturdy protest against this plunder in his *childe Harold*. Keats saw these pieces of sculpture, and one of them, a Grecian urn (an urn is a vase for the preservation of the ashes of the dead), inspired this beautiful poem.

The sight of the urn sets the poet’s mind in motion. The opening invocation is followed by a string of questions, which flash their own answers upon us out of the darkness of antiquity- questions are at the same time pictures—

What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

The second and the third stanza deal with the vital difference between life and art. Life has no doubt the vividness and warmth of reality, but it is subject to change and decay, whereas art is the unchanging expression of beauty. The happy piper would forever remain standing under the tree and the tree will never shed its leaves. The lover depicted on the urn would always love, without feeling the satiety or anguish of love of real life. There is another picture on the Urn- that of a sacrifice and an assemblage of men and women. The poet’s imagination goes beyond the actual scene represented on the urn; he imagines how the town from which the people have come to attend the sacrifice, must be forever in desolation. The pastoral legends represented in cold marble shall outlive future generations amidst their various moods, and shall remain forever a source of consolation to the world. They proclaim the noble message: Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty. This is the noblest ideal man can have, because it provides to man a shelter from the mutability and transitoriness of human life.

The urn brings to the poet's mind a host of associations. The beauty of the figures left intact even after the lapse of ages makes the poet think of the permanence of art as contrasted with the transience of human life and of sensuous beauty. Human emotions and human happiness are brief, but art can enshrine them with an ideal beauty that never fades. The actual men and women represented on the urn are gone, but art has conferred upon them a permanence which age cannot wither.

The *Ode on a Grecian Urn* unlike the *Ode to a Nightingale* is not a sad poem- no inquietude of spirit troubles its deep calm. The poet's contemplation leads him to the realization that beauty is identical with truth and that beauty is the highest ideal of mankind. Thus we find in this ode "the poetry of truth and the poetry of beauty." The poet enters the realm of metaphysics when he discusses the superiority of plastic art over human life in respect of permanence.

The Ode as does the *Ode to a Nightingale* takes us away from the world of time to the world of eternity. The beauty which art has enshrined on the urn belongs to the world of time; it is concrete beauty- beauty of form, and the concrete form of beauty is liable to decay and death in the world of time. But the poet says that art has preserved the beauty though its living form perished long since. Thus the imagination of the poet passes from the concrete form of beauty to the eternal spirit of beauty- that is from finite to the infinite. A concrete form of beauty perishes but the spirit of beauty is eternal. To the seeing eyes, however, the spirit of beauty which is eternally true, is present in the finite form of beauty which is perishable. Those who can see in the finite form of beauty the eternal spirit of beauty which is truth are true seers. Keats says that there is no higher knowledge attainable by man than this realization of the infinite in the finite.

The Ode is not a dream of unutterable beauty. It has a precious message to mankind, not as a thing of beauty which gives exquisite delight to the senses, but as a symbol and prophecy of a comprehension of human life to which mankind can attain.

The Ode is imbued with the spirit of Hellenism. Beauty with Keats as with the Greeks is the first word and the last word of Art. Keats worshipped Beauty as did the Greeks, and the Greeks alone in the world could say with Keats "Beauty is Truth". In brief, the poem is an excellent piece of art.

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## 5.7 Let Us Sum Up

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The brief span of Keats' life fell within, what is known as the age of Romantic Revival in English Literature, and Keats fully imbibed the spirit of his age. His poetry, especially his odes are fine examples of romantic poetry: in fact they touched almost all the aspects of romantic poetry- love of beauty, love of Nature, love of the past, supernaturalism, glow of emotion and the revealing power of imagination. The two odes discussed in this unit are representative of Keats' poetic genius. Keats loved not merely beauty but truth as well, and not merely the world of imagination but that of reality; and he saw beauty in truth and truth in beauty. He never escaped from the realities of life in pursuit of the beautiful visions of his imagination; in fact, the visions of his imagination are based on reality. He persistently endeavoured to reconcile the world of imagination with the world of reality.

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## 5.8 Review Questions

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1. Write an essay on the salient feature of the Age of Romantic Revival.
2. What do you think is the message of Ode on a Grecian Urn? Discuss.

3. Critically appreciate *To Autumn*.
4. Critically appreciate *To Grecian Urn*.
5. Write an essay on the pictorial quality of John Keats.

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## **5.9 Bibliography**

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## UNIT-6

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### JOHN KEATS : THE EVE OF ST. AGNES

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#### Structure

- 6.1 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Literary Terms Associated with Keats
  - 6.2.1 Hellenism
  - 6.2.2 Sensuousness
  - 6.2.3 Medievalism
  - 6.2.4 Negative Capability
- 6.3 The Eve of St. Agnes (Text)
- 6.4 Critical Summary
- 6.5 Critical Appreciation
- 6.6 Some Model Explanations
- 6.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.8 Review Questions
- 6.9 Bibliography

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#### **6.0 Objectives**

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The purpose of this unit is to enable you critically appreciate the poem *The Eve of St. Agnes* by acquainting you with the romantic character of the poem, its medieval superstitions, art and crafts, its pictorial quality, its sensuousness etc. We also intend to bring to you the qualities of a well sustained narrative present in the poem, its superb diction and style and the features of Spenserian stanza employed by the poet. All this we shall do by presenting to you some model explanations from the poem, its critical summary and critical appreciation, and also the literary terms associated with Keats.

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#### **6.1 Introduction**

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Keats lay aside *Hyperion* in January 1819 and took up the composition of *The Eve of St. Agnes*, an unsurpassed study in pure colour and clear melody. It is not a tragedy like *Isabella* and may not rival in it its human pathos and passion, but in every poetic quality it surpasses the former poem.

Porphyro, like Romeo, falls in love with the daughter of a hostile house and Keats brings it into association with the old popular belief as to the way a maiden might be granted a vision of her lover in a dream. The figure of Madeline brings back before the mind's eye the picture of Marlowe's Hero and the sleeping presence of Shakespeare's Imogen. Keats does not however, as you will find, depend in this story-poem on stress of incidents or depth of sentiment; "Its personages appeal to us, not so

much humanly and in themselves, as by the circumstances, scenery and atmosphere amidst which we see them move.” The charm of the medieval colour and mystery in the poem is an unfailing source of delight but it has not got the deep human interest of Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*. Keats achieves a marvellous effect by the use of contrasts. The wakeful lovers are contrasted with the fierce sleeping warriors tormented by nightmare, the happy Madeline with the joyless withered Angela, the youthful Porphyro with the aged beadsman. You will also note the skilful use of contrast between the cruel cold without and the warm love within, the noise and revelry and the hush of Madeline’s bedroom. The moonlight which is chill and sepulchral elsewhere is an angelic light to Madeline. It is also worth noting how inanimate things endowed by Keats with a sort of half-conscious life lend a mysterious charm to the poem.

*The carved angles ever eager-eyed  
 Star’d, where upon their head the cornice rests  
 With their blown back, and wings  
 put cross-wise on their breasts.  
 In Madeline’s chamber,  
 A shielded scutcheon blush’d with  
 blood of queens and kings.*

Similarly, by transferring dumb from person to place in ‘dumb orat’ ries’, he awakens in us a mysterious sense of life in inanimate things.

Stray reminiscences of his reading of Shakespeare and Chatterton are singularly felicitous. Keats, you will notice, is indebted though unconsciously to a similar contrast in *Hamlet*. ‘The kettledrum and the far-heard clarinet’ is reminiscent of

*The king doth wake to-night and takes his rouse,  
 Keeps wassail, and swaggering up spring reels;  
 And as he drains draughts of Rhenish down,  
 The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out  
 The triumph of his pledge. — (Hamlet, I.)*

The ‘Porter, in uneasy sprawl, may remind you of the Porter in Macbeth, and Porphyro’s assurance,

*There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see—  
 Drown’s all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead’ may be linked with  
 ..... when in swinish sleep,  
 Their drenched natures lie as in a death’. — (Macbeth, I.)*

Chatterton’s influence is specially felt in Keat’s favourite device of a collection of epithets, such as ‘meagre, barefoot, wan’ by which he describes the beadsman of ‘pale, lattice’d, chill” by which he described the ‘little moonlight room.’

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## 6.2 Literary Terms Associated with Keats

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### 6.2.1 Hellenism

The word ‘Hellenism’ is derived from the word ‘Hellene’ which means Greek. ‘Hellenism’ therefore stands for Greek culture and Greek spirit.

Shelley once said : ‘Keats was a Greek’. In what sense was Keats the Englishman, a Greek ? Keats did not know the Greek language, and therefore had no opportunity of reading Greek literature or knowing anything about Greek customs and ways of life. Still Keats was Greek in temper and spirit. The Greek influence came to him through his reading of (i) translation of Greek classics and (ii) Lempriere’s Classical Dictionary, and (iii) through Greek sculpture, but more important than these three sources was — his own tendency and nature.

- (i) One of his friends lent him a copy of Chapman’s translation of Homer. He was fascinated by the new world of wonder and delight, which Homer revealed to him. It was like a discovery, and Keats described its effect upon him in the famous sonnet, *On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer*. He felt as he had discovered a new planet.

*Then felt I like some watcher of the skies,*

*When a new plant swims into his ken.*

- (ii) His study of Lempriere’s Classical Dictionary fully acquainted him with the Greek mythology; and he loved every bit of it, and freely used it in his poetry. The stories of *Endymion*, *Lamia* and *Hyperion*, are based upon Greek legends. In his *Ode to Psyche* and *On a Grecian Urn*, the subjects are avowedly Greek, and the poet while expressing his passion for beauty transports himself in his imagination to the days of the ancient Greeks.
- (iii) The third source is Greek sculpture. His sonnet *On Seeing the English Marbles* indicates his emotional reaction to the sculptured “Wonders” of ancient Greece. He felt in them the calm ‘grandeur’ of Greek art, its symmetry and simplicity, and lastly, sense of proportion, its subordination of parts to the whole. The pieces of Sculpture were obviously in Keats’s mind when he was writing the *Ode on Indolence* and the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.

But the most important factor in Keats’s Hellenism was his own Greek temper — the inborn temperamental Greekness of his mind.

### 6.2.2 Sensuousness

Sensuousness is that quality in poetry that is derived from or affects the sense — of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. By the term “Sensuous poetry” is meant poetry which is devoted, not to an idea of a philosophical thought, but mainly to the task of giving delight to the senses. Sensuous poetry would have an appeal to our eyes by presenting beautiful and colourful word-pictures, to our ear by its metrical music and musical sounds, to our nose by arousing our sense of smell, and so on.

All poetry proceeds originally from sense-impressions, and all poets are more or less sensuous. Impressions of the senses are in fact the starting point of the poetic process for it is what the poet sees and hears that excites his emotion and imagination, and his emotional and imaginative reaction to his sense-impressions generates poetry. Wordsworth’s imagination was stirred by what he saw and heard

in nature — what he calls “the language of the eye and the ear”, and then he passed beyond his sense-impression and constructed his poetic view of life and nature. Milton was not less sensitive to the beauty of flowers than Keats ; the description of flowers in *Lycidas* and of the Garden of Eden in *Paradise Lost* bear witness to Milton’s sensuousness.

### 6.2.3 Medievalism

The Middle Ages have been said to be a source of romance, and some of the romantics freely drew upon this storehouse for their inspiration. Distance lends enchantment to the view, and so the distant days of the medieval past made a strange appeal to the romantics. Pater says that the romantic quality in literature is addition of strangeness to beauty, and this strangeness the romantic poets – Coleridge, Scott and Keats – found in the medieval life and medieval legends. Keats is one of those, who revelled in the past in preference to the present, and the two periods of the distant past, in which his imagination loved to dwell are the Middle Ages and the days of ancient Greece, with its beautiful mythology.

Medievalism in literature denotes a recapture of the spirit and atmosphere of the Middle Ages. Among the romantics, Coleridge, Scott and Keats, dealt with medieval life, touching upon those aspects of it, which were romantic. The most important centres of influence in the Middle Ages were the Church and the Castle. The Romantics did not care much about the religion of the Church, though they felt attracted by its colourful aspects. They laid stress upon the romance of chivalry and love on the one hand, and, on the other, upon superstitions and legends with supernatural background. Coleridge dealt with the supernatural in his *Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*; his suggestion of the weird mystery of supernaturalism in these two poems is unequalled in English poetry. Keats struck the note of supernaturalism in *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*. Medievalism with all its paraphernalia of romance and legend, love and adventure, is most prominent in *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

### 6.2.4 Negative Capability

Keats considered poetry to be the embodiment of the ripest and fullest experience mankind can achieve. Poetry should not have “a palpable design upon us.” It should be unobtrusive, something which the reader can accept with all its mystery. This is the general direction of thought, which emerges in all of Keats’s letters. Poetry, he recommends, should be the outcome of the “Negative Capability” which “is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts”, and is free of “any irritable reaching out after fact and reason.”

A first sight the doctrine appears deliberately anti-intellectual, but it is not so. What is aimed at is a rich comprehension of experience, largeness and compassion; not the egotistic self-assertion, but the negation of self which characterised Shakespeare. It is a capacity for objectivity to come to terms with this misery, not through fact and reason, but through an understanding of its true nature. It may be inadequately called acceptance. It involves the ability to identify oneself with the subject of one’s poetry or art. Shakespeare could enter and merge into the personality of Lear in his madness or the clown in his fun-fury. It is what makes his drama great. He, of all great poets, pressed the “Negative Capability” to create an Iago or an Imogen, dark villainy or pure innocence with equal perfection. Thus, according to Keats, “a poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no identity – he is continually in for and filling some other body.”

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## 6.3 The Eve of St. Agnes

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### I

St. Agnes' Eve — Ah, bitter chill it was !  
The owl, for all his feathers, was a cold ;  
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,  
And silent was the flock in woolly fold :  
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told  
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,  
Like pious incense from a censer old,  
Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,  
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

### II

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;  
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his kneess,  
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,  
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:  
The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze,  
Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails.  
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,  
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails  
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

### III

Northward he turneth through a little door,  
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue  
Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor ;  
But no — already had his deathbell rung :  
The joys of all his life were said and sung :  
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve :  
Another way he went, and soon among  
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,  
And all night kept awake, for sinners sake to grieve.

#### IV

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft ;  
And so it chanc'd for many a door was wide,  
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft.  
The silver, snarling trumpets' gan to chide :  
The level chambers, ready with their pride,  
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:  
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,  
Star'd, where upon, their heads the cornice rests,  
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their breasts,

#### V

At length burst in the argent revelry,  
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,  
Numerous as shadows haunting fiercely  
The brain, new stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs gay  
Of old romance. These let us wish away,  
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,  
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,  
On love, and wing'd St. Agnes' saintly care,  
As she had heard old dames full many times declare,

#### VI

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,  
Young virgins might have visions of delight,  
And soft adorings from their loves receive  
Upon the honey'd middle of the night,  
If ceremonies due they did aright ;  
As, supperless to bed they must retire,  
And couch supine their beauties lily white ;  
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require  
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

## VII

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline :  
The music, yearning like a God in pain,  
She scarcely heard : her maiden eyes divine,  
Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train  
Pass by—she heeded not at all : in vain  
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,  
And back retir'd not cool'd by high disdain,  
But she saw not : her heart was other where :  
She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

## VIII

She danc'd along with vagne, regardless eyes,  
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short ;  
The hallow'd hour was near at hand : she sighs  
Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort  
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport ;  
'Mid loods of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,  
Hoodwink'd with faery fancy ;all amort,  
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,  
And all the blies to be before to-morrow morn.

## IX

So, purposing each moment to retire,  
She linger'd still. Meantime, across the moors,  
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire  
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,  
Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores  
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,  
But for one moment in the tedious hours,  
That he might gaze and worship all unseen ;  
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things have been.

## X

He ventures in : let no buzz'd whisper tell :  
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords  
Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel :  
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,  
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,  
Whose very dogs would execrations howl  
Against his lineage : not one breast affords  
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,  
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

## XI

Ah, happy chance ! the aged creature came,  
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,  
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,  
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond  
The sound of merriment and chorus bland :  
And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,  
Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro ! hie thee from this place :  
"They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race !

## XII

"Get hence ! get hence ! there's dwarfish Hildebrand :  
"He had a faver late, and in the fit  
"He cursed thee and thine, both house and land :  
"Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit  
"More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me ! flit !  
"Flit like a ghost away." — "Ah, Gossip dear,  
"Were safe enough ; here in this arm-chair sit,  
"And tell me how"— "Good Saints ! not here, not here ;  
"Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier."

## XIII

He follow'd through a lowly arched way,

Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume,  
And as the mutter'd "Well-a-well-a-day !"  
He found him in a little moonlight room,  
Pale, lattic'd chill, and silent as a tomb.  
"Now tell me where is Madeline," said he,  
"O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom  
"Which none but secret sisterhood may see,  
"When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously."

#### XIV

"St. Agnes ! Ah ! it is St. Agnes' Eve—  
"Yet men will murder upon holy days :  
"Thou must hold water in a which's sieve,  
"And be liege. Lord of all the Elves and Fays,  
"To venture so: it fills me with amaze  
"To see thee, Porphyro ! —St. Agnes' Eve !  
"God's help ! my lady fair the conjuror plays  
"This very night : good angels her deceive !  
But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve."

#### XV

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,  
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,  
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone  
Who keepeth clos'd a wond'rous riddle-book,  
As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.  
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told  
His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook  
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,  
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

#### XVI

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,  
Flushing his brow; and in his pained heart

Made purple riot : then doth he propose  
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start :  
“A cruel man and impious thou art :  
“Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream  
“Alone with her good angels, far apart  
“From wicked men like thee Go, go ! I dream  
“Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem.”

### **XVII**

“I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,”  
Quoth Porphyro : “O may I ne'er find grace  
“When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,  
“If one of her soft ringlets I displace,  
“Or look with ruffian passion in her face :  
“Good Angela, believe me by these tears ;  
“Or I will, even in a moment's space,  
“A wake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,  
“And beard them, though they be more fang'd than wolves and bears.”

### **XVIII**

“Ah ! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul ?  
“A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,  
“Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll ;  
“Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,  
“Were never miss'd.”—Thus plaining, doth she bring  
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro ;  
So woful, and of such deep sorrowing,  
That Angela gives promise she will do  
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

### **XIX**

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,  
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide  
Him in a closet, of such privacy

That he might see her beauty unespied,  
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,  
While legion'd faeries pac'd the coverlet,  
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.  
Never on such a night have lovers met,  
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

## XX

“It shall be as thou wishest,” said the Dame :  
“All cates and dainties shall be stored there  
“Quickly on this feast night : by the tambour frame  
“Her own lute thou wilt see : no time to spare,  
“For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare  
“On such a catering trust my dizzy head.  
“Wait here, my child, with patience ; kneel in prayer  
“The while : Ah ! thou must needs the lady wed,  
“Or may I never leave my grave among the dead.”

## XXI

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.  
The lover's endless minutes slowly pass'd;  
The dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear  
To follow her ; with aged eyes aghast  
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,  
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain  
The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd and chaste ;  
Where Porphyro took covert, pleas'd amain.  
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

## XXII

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade,  
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,  
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,  
Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware :

With silver taper's light, and pious care,  
She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led  
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,  
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed ;  
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove fray'd and fled.

### XXIII

Out went the taper as she hurried in;  
Its little smoke, in palled moonshine, died :  
She clos'd the door, she panted, all akin  
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:  
No uttered syllable, or, woe betide !  
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,  
Paining with elopence her balmy side ;  
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell  
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

### XXIV

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,  
All garlanded with carven imag'ries  
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,  
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,  
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,  
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings;  
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,  
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,  
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings.

### XXV

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,  
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,  
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;  
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,  
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,

And on her hair a glory, like a saint:  
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,  
Save wings, for heaven :-Porphyro grew faint:  
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

### XXVI

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,  
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;  
Uncclasps her warmed jewels one by one:  
Loosens her fragrant bodice: by degrees  
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:  
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,  
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,  
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,  
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

### XXVII

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,  
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,  
Until the popped warmth of sleep oppress'd  
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away;  
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;  
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain;  
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray:  
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,  
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

### XXVIII

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,  
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,  
And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced  
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;  
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,  
And breath'd himself: that from the closet crept,

Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,  
And over the hush'd carpet, silent stept,  
And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where. Io! – how fast she slept.

**XXIX**

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon  
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set  
A table, and, silver anguish'd threw thereon  
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet :–  
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet!  
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,  
The kettle-drum and far-heard clarinet,  
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:–  
The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

**XXX**

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,  
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,  
While he from-forth the closet brought a heap  
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;  
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,  
And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;  
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd  
From Fez ; and spiced dainties every one,  
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

**XXXI**

These delicacies he heap'd with glowing hand  
On golden dishes and in baskets bright  
Of wreathed silver : sumptuous they stand  
In the retired quiet of the night,  
Filling the chilly room with perfume light,—  
“And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!  
“Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite:

“Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes’ sake,  
“Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.”

**XXXII**

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm  
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream  
By the dusk curtains :- ‘twas a midnight charm  
Impossible to melt as iced stream:  
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam ;  
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:  
It seem’d he never, never could redeem  
From such a stedfast spell his lady’s eyes;  
So mus’d awhile, entoil’d in woofed phantasies.

**XXXIII**

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,–  
Tumultuous,–and, in chords that tenderest be,  
He play’d an ancient ditty, long since mute,  
InProvence call’d, “La belle dame sans mercy.”  
Close to her ear touching the melody;–  
Wherewith disturb’d, she utter’d a soft moan:  
He ceased– she panted quick–and suddenly  
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:  
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

**XXXIV**

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,  
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:  
There was a painful change, that nigh expell’d  
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep  
At which fair Madeline began to weep,  
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;  
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;  
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,

Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

**XXXV**

“Ah, Porphyro !” said she, “but even now  
“Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,  
“Made tuneable with every sweetest vow;  
“And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:  
“How chang'd thou art ! how pallied, chill, and drear !  
“Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,  
“Those looks immortal, those complainings dear !  
“Oh, leave me not in this eternal woe,  
“For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go.”

**XXXVI**

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far  
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,  
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star  
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;  
Into her dream he melted, as the rose  
Blendeth its odour with the violet—  
Solution sweet ; meantime the frost-wind blows  
Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet  
Against the window-panes ; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

**XXXVII**

'Tis dark : quick pattereth the flew-blown sleet :  
“This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline !”  
'Tis dark : the iced gusts still rave and beat :  
“No dream, alas ! alas ! and woe is mine !  
“Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—  
“Cruel ! what traitor could thee hither bring ?  
“I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,  
“Though thou forsakest a deceived thing ;—  
“A dove forlorn and lost with sick upruned wing.”

### XXXVIII

“My Madeline ! sweet dreamer ! lovely bride !  
“Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest ?  
“Thy beauty’s shield, heart-shap’d and vermeil dyed ?  
“Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest  
“After so many hours of toil and quest,  
“A famish’d pilgrim,—sav’d by miracle.  
“Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest  
“Saving of thy sweet self ! if thou think’st well  
“To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

### XXXIX

“Hark ! ’tis an elfin-storm from faery land,  
“Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed :  
“Arise—arise ! the morning is at hand ;—  
“The bloated wassaillers will never heed :—  
“Let us away, my love, with happy speed ;  
“There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—  
“Drown’d all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead :  
“Awake ! arise ! my love, and fearless be,  
“For o’er the southern moors I have a home for thee.”

### XL

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,  
For there were sleeping dragons all around,  
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—  
Down the wide stairs a darking way they found.—  
In all the house was heard no human sound.  
A chain-droop’d lamp was flickering by each door ;  
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,  
Flutter’d in the besieging wind’s uproar ;  
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

## XLI

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall ;  
Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide ;  
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,  
With a huge empty flaggon by his side :  
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,  
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns :  
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide :—  
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones ;—  
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

## XLII

And they are gone : aye, ages long ago  
These lovers fled away into the storm.  
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,  
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form  
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,  
Were long be-nightmar'd Angela the old  
Died palsy-twitch'd, with meager face deform ;  
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,  
For aye unsought-for slept among his ashes cold.

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### 6.4 Critical Summary

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It was St. Agnes' Eve. The weather was bitterly cold. An aged Beadsman sitting in the chapel of a Baron's castle was telling his rosary. Because of the extreme cold his fingers were getting benumbed. His breath, as it went upwards carrying his prayer, was getting frozen, too. Soon he got up from his prayer. He was weak and bare-footed. He walked slowly along the chapel aisle towards his own cell. On both sides of the passage were the statues of dead ladies and knights. They appeared to shiver in the extreme cold of the night. As he turned northwards, he heard the strains of music proceeding from the castle hall. But he at once remembered that he was old and approaching death. On St. Agnes's Eve he must fast and pray. So he turned to another direction resolved to pass the night praying for the salvation of the sinners.

The Baron's chambers were ready to receive a thousand guests. From under the cornice, the caved figures of angels with their hair brushed backward and their wings folded on their breasts looked on eagerly. Music filled the air. Then came the revelers. They were dressed most gorgeously.

Among them was Madeline, the beautiful daughter of the Baron. Madeline had thought all day

about her lover. She had heard that virgins could get the visions of their future husbands on St. Agnes's Eve if they perform certain rituals i.e. they should go to their beds supperless, lay straight, and keep looking upward. Madeline was absorbed in this thought and paid no heed to the mirth and revelry. She remained indifferent to the invited young guests. She took part in the dance but all the time she thought only of St. Agnes and her lover.

While Madeline was thinking of leaving the dance hall, Porphyro came on horse-back and stood hidden beside the portal doors. He had boldly entered the castle which was full of his enemies, whose very dogs would have cursed him.

Porphyro met Angela, the old dame. She was Porphyro's only friend in that hostile house. She came reclining on her wand and was very much surprised to find Porphyro hidden behind a pillar. She asked him to leave the place at once. The castle, she warned him, was full of blood-thirsty foes of his. Finding Porphyro importunate to meet Madeline, she took him to a safe place in order to exchange a few words with him. She entered a lonely moonlit room. Here Porphyro told Angela about his desire to meet Madeline. Angela warned him that although it was St. Agnes's Eve, men would not stop from murdering man even on that holy night. She wondered, how, Porphyro had entered the castle. Surely he must have had some miraculous power to succeed in entering the castle without the notice of anyone.

However, she appreciated love and boldness of the young knight and smiled. Porphyro looked at her like a puzzled boy. She told him how Madeline had fasted that evening and how she had retired to bed praying for a vision of him. Suddenly an idea came to Porphyro's mind. He proposed a plan to Angela, which was strongly disapproved of by her. Porphyro wanted to hide himself in Madeline's chamber and look at her beautiful form. Angela became angry at this and said that Porphyro was not what he used to be before and that he had turned to be a wicked man. At this Porphyro assured her that he would do no harm to Madeline. He also threatened her, that if she did not agree to his proposal, he would shout at his enemies and challenge them openly. Angela was frightened at this. She asked him to stop causing trouble and anxiety to an old and weak woman, who was destined to die quite soon and who had always prayed for his good.

At this Porphyro was very much moved. He started talking to her in a gentle tone. Angela, too, agreed to his proposal, which was to lead him secretly into Madeline's chamber and to hide him in some closet, from where he might behold her beauty. She also promised to place some dainty foodstuffs in Madeline's room. She told Porphyro that there was no time to spare, as she herself was feeling very tired and weak. She had hardly any strength enough to do that hazardous work. Requesting him to wait there patiently, she went off to make arrangements.

Angela returned after a short while and whispered to Porphyro to follow her. She was pale with fear and anxiety. She led him through many dark pathways to Madeline's bedroom. There were silken curtains in the chamber of Madeline. It appeared as if it was a maiden's bedroom. Porphyro hid himself there. He was happy at his success. The old woman went back quickly, full of anxiety and narrow mindedness.

As Angela was groping her way in the darkness, Madeline came there unconsciously, in her sleep, to help her. With a taper in hand, she helped her to go downstairs. After that she returned to her chamber, closed the door, put off the light. She was very much excited. She did not utter a word for fear of breaking the spell of St. Agnes.

Madeline's chamber had a triple-arched window decorated with engravings of fruit, flowers and

leaves. It had diamond-shaped panes of exquisite pattern. They were of different colours like the gorgeous wings of tiger moths. In the midst of all these decorations, there was a shield, which was red with the blood of many kings and queens. The pale light of the wintry moon fell on this window and became multi-coloured as it passed through and fell on the bosom of Madeline who was kneeling down to pray.

Having finished her prayers, Madeline began to undress herself. She put off all her ornaments. Then, she loosened her scented bodice. By degrees, her dress fell down. Half hidden in her dress she appeared like a mermaid.

Soon, shivering on her soft cold bed, Madeline lay half asleep. She was thinking of St. Agnes all that time. After some time, she fell fast asleep and became insensible to joy and pain alike. She appeared like a rose, which had closed her petals and became a bud again.

Porphyro had been watching her from his place of hiding. He had been looking at her for all that time. When he was sure that she is fast asleep, he came out. He placed a table beside Madeline's bed and covered it with a cloth of a richly-coloured texture. While she was fast asleep peacefully on her beautiful and perfumed bed, Porphyro brought forth, from the closet, a heap of fruit and delicacies. He put them all on the table in dishes of gold and baskets of twisted silver wire.

Now Porphyro started courting Madeline in tones of passionate love. But Madeline was dreaming of her lover under the influence of St. Agnes' charm. The spell could not be easily broken. For some time, Porphyro thought that his beloved could never be brought back to life from her spell. For a moment, he remained absorbed in his own thoughts. An idea struck to him. He took Madeline's lute and began to play on it the melodious tune of an ancient song.

Madeline opened her eyes. She had, however, not yet completely recovered from her dream. She was very much shocked to see Porphyro before her. The real Porphyro was very pale and cold. He was so very different from the Porphyro of her dream. She began to weep. Porphyro was very much moved but could not speak. Madeline implored him to give her those bright and spiritual passions of love, which he had given to her in her dreams, and to profess love to her as had done in the dreams.

At this moving appeal of his sweetheart, Porphyro flushed up. He was transformed into a divine lover and was filled with passionate love far greater than a human being can feel. His real self mingled with the Porphyro of her dreams, like the fragrance of a rose mixing with that of a violet. In the meantime, a frosty wind began to blow outside. It struck against the windowpanes. The moon too, had disappeared. Porphyro passionately assured her that he was the real Porphyro. But this made Madeline all the more restless. She feared that Porphyro would have to leave her soon. Porphyro said that Madeline was like a temple to him and he was a hungry pilgrim, who had reached his destination after a good deal of effort.

Porphyro vowed eternal love to her. He prayed her to elope with him. "Let us go away quickly, my darling. No body will see us fly", he said. The storm blowing outside was a great boon to them. The Baron, his guests and other inmates of the house were all unconscious, as they had drunk heavily that night. He suggested that they should escape from the castle immediately as the morning was approaching.

At this, Madeline quickly got ready. She was afraid of the watchman sleeping beside, the lights. They followed a path that was full of darkness in order to escape without the notice of others. No sound

of any human being was heard in the whole castle. A lamp flickered at the door.

They moved softly like ghosts along the hall to the porch. The porter lay drunk and fast asleep. The watchful bloodhound got at once, but did not bark as he recognized Madeline as an inmate of the house.

One by one, they lifted the bolts and chains. The key moved and the door opened with a slight noise. They disappeared in the storm raging outside.

That night the Baron dreamt sorrowful dreams. His warrior guests also shuddered with dream of witches, devils and coffin worms. The old woman, Angela, died, palsy-stricken. The Beadsman also died, having said his prayers for others.

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## 6.5 Critical Appreciation

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The Eve of St. Agnes, remarks Drinkwater, “must be reckoned, on the whole, the most splendid of Keats’s poems”. Keats takes in the poem the simple, almost thread-bare theme of the love of an adventurous youth for the daughter of a hostile house, “a story where in something of Romeo and Juliet is mixed with something of young Lochinvar”,—and brings it very cleverly and skillfully into association with the old popular belief as to the way a maiden might, on the anniversary of St. Agnes’ Eve, win sight of her lover in a dream.

The poem was first published in 1820 along with *La Belle Dame, Isabella* and the five famous *Odes*, and *Lamia* and *Hyperion*. It is the finest book of poems ever given to the world.

The substance of the story is derived from a tale by Boccaccio. MacCracken writes “Keats’s narrative is truly like a magically refined and enriched quintessence distilled from the correspondence chapter in Boccaccio’s tale.” Another critic thinks that here Keats has drawn upon the story in Shakespeare’s play *Romeo and Juliet*. The jealousy that existed between the two houses finds a parallel in that story. Porphyro may will be compared to Remeo ; Madeline to Juliet, Angela to Julliet’s nurse and Madeline’s relatives to Juliet’s relatives called the Capulets.

*The Eve of St. Agnes* is the loveliest English pure romantic poem of its time. Its romantic character is due firstly, to the element of love which forms the basis of the story. Porphyro, the lover, has taken a great risk in coming to meet Madeline. What can be more romantic than a love-passion between the son and daughter of hostile houses reminding us of the Romeo and Juliet’s theme. Porphyro has come across the moors “with heart on fire”. Madeline’s words to Porphyro on waking are also full of passion.

“Oh leave me not in this eternal woe.

For if thou diest, my love, I know not full where to go.

Porphyro grows almost faint with love and is more passionate than any mortal man till he just melts into Madeline i.e. he enjoys the raptures of love in her warm embraces.

The second romantic quality of the poem is its medievalism. We have here medieval chivalry, medieval superstition, medieval piety, and medieval art. Medieval chivalry is seen in Porphyro’s risking his life for his beloved. Medieval superstition is seen in the belief that a maiden by observing certain rituals on St. Agnes’ Eve could win sight of her lover in a dream. The beadsman represents medieval

piety, while the poet's interest in medieval art is clear in his reference to the plume, tiara, carzed angles, and Gothic window.

Thirdly, the poem is marked by a rich sensuousness which is also a romantic trait. The description of the feast spread by Porphyro appeals to our senses of smell, sight and taste. The picture of the windowpanes with their splendid dyes is perfect in its beauty of colour and delights our sense of sight. Our sense of sight is also gratified when the poet refers to the moon throwing its light on Madeline's fair breast.

Finally, the music of the poem and its phrases of rare beauty lend it a romantic quality. Keats has handled the Spenserian stanza with great success while he gives us intoxicating phrases. We have the phrase "warmed jewels" which Madeline takes off, jewels warmed by her body. The phrase "purple riot", sums up the trembling eagerness and the love worship in Porphyro's heart. Another pretty phrase is Madeline's "fragrant boddice". When we read such expressions, we feel that we are far away from the stale, artificial and bombastic diction of the 18<sup>th</sup> century poetry. These phrases make the poem ornate i.e., they decorate and beautify it.

It is loveliest "English pure romance poem of its time" with a medieval background. It is a tale of medieval chivalry and is based upon the medieval superstition that a maiden might win sight of her future husband in a dream by going to bed supperless and sleeping on her back on St. Agnes' Eve. With this, Keats has woven the motive of a love passion between the son and daughter of hostile houses reminding us of *Romeo and Juliet*. As a poet of medievalism, you will see, Keats concentrates, upon the passion rather than the adventure of the period. He does not make Porphyro fight with his enemies but dwells upon his passion for Madeline. Porphyro came with his "heart on fire" for her. Madeline's words to Porphyro are also full of passion:

*Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,  
For if thou, my love, I know not where to go.*

Porphyro grows almost faint with love till he melts into Madeline's dream — "solution sweet." Keats was interested also in medieval art — this is borne out by his references to the plume, tiara, carved angles and the Gothic window.

Not only does the poet make use of such typically medieval incidents, but also he mentions medieval arts and crafts to give a medieval setting to the narrative. He refers to medieval architecture and describes the multi-coloured window of a medieval castle in the following lines:

*A casement high and triple-arched there was  
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,  
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes.*

Then there are the medieval curtains, the carvings of angles near the cornice. All these are described very clearly. Colour and perfume have their due shares. The rich perfumes have their due share. The rich perfume and the perfect silence of Madeline's room, the fine description of the Gothic chapel, and the various ceremonies connected with the festival of St. Agnes' Eve all combine to create an atmosphere of mediaeval romance.

However, there is ample compensation in the pictures, so richly and delicately painted in this poem. The drawing, the coloring and the expression of every picture is flawless. A person with imagination

will not regret that Keats did not handle a brush. Mark the following lines :

*St. Agnes' Eve — Ah, bitter chill it was:  
The owl, for all his feathers, was a cold;  
The hare limp'd trembling through the forzens grass,  
And silent was the flock in woolly fold;  
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told  
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,  
Like pious incense from a censer old,  
Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,  
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.*

The complete scene of a cold morning has been drawn by the mention of frozen grass, the limping hare, the shivering owl and the numb finger of the Beadsman. The limping hare, the cold owl and the numb fingers — these descriptions send a sympathetic shiver through the reader. If Keats improved anything upon Spenser, it was this quality of picture-painting.

Keats's pictures are rich in colour also. Note the following :

*Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,  
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,  
And on her hair a glory, like a saint ;  
The Lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam ;  
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies :*

Equally important is the sense of chiaroscuro (light and shade) Mark the sense of brightness in the following descriptions :

*The level chambers, ready with their pride,  
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests :  
and  
Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,  
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast  
And then the moon sets and all is dark :  
The dark : quick pattereth the flow-blown sleet :  
This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline :  
Tis dark: the iced gusts still rare and beat :*

Apart from the detailed picture of the above lines, there are, pictures created by single phrases

and lines, such as “azure-lidded sleep”, “the beauty’s shield, heart-sharp’d and vermail dyed”.

Another feature which goes to embellish the pictures of this poem is the employment of nine-line Spenserian stanza, the clock of fairy-land, as it has been called. Keats uses this stanza with an effect and mastery which, if it does not surpass Spenser’s own, is in no way inferior to it. In picture-painting this stanza is the best metre. Its first eight lines paints a picture while the ninth one frames it. The Spenserian stanza adds to the melodiousness of the poem. Every stanza is linked with sweetness long drawn out.

*The Eve of St. Agnes* is a rich feast to all the senses – the eye, the ear, the tongue, the nose and the touch. The pictorial descriptions, rich in colour provide an excellent appeal to the sense of sight. “It was an axion with Keats” says Groser, “that poetry should surprise by a fine excess. The pictures of Keats are all aglow with colour, not always very accurate painter’s colour but colour which captivates the senses.’

The Spenserian stanza adds to the melody of the poem and also appeals to the sense of hearing. Apart from the music created there is also music suggested. In the house of Madeline a feast is going on. The silver trumpets are being played upon. There is also the music of the clarion, the kettle-drum and the clarion. Porphyro himself plays upon the lute in chords that provides tender music.

Then the description of foods, heaped by Porphyro makes the reader’s mouth water. Mark the following:

*While he from forth the closet brought a heap  
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;  
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,  
And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon ;  
Manna and dates, in argosy transferred  
From Fez, and spiced dainties.*

The above lines have an appeal to the sense of smell also but Keats would not be satisfied with just a suggestion ; he makes the appeal more intense by the following lines:

*Filling the chilly room with perfume light.*

*The Eve of St. Agnes* is narrative poem. The argument of the poem is simple. It is based on a popular superstition according to which young virgins might get a sight of their future husbands if certain ceremonies were performed on the following day. Madeline, the heroine of the poem, observes all these ceremonies on St. Agnes’ Eve with a view to getting a sight of Porphyro, her lover. A grand feast is arranged at Madeline’s father’s place. To this many guests have been invited. They are all inimical to Porphyro. Porphyro comes to the castle and is secretly conducted to Madeline’s chamber by Angela, the old beldame. He awakens Madeline from her blissful sleep by playing upon her lute. After that, both slip away unnoticed by any one, in the darkness of the night and are united in the bonds of love.

The story in its present form is of Keats’s own invention though it may have been inspired by Boccaccio’s tale or Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. Like many of the famous narratives in English,

it has a very simple plot.

The narrative is well-sustained. There is no irrelevance, no digression, no intricate side-plot. But these are negative qualities in the poem. In themselves they would not give the poem the charm it possess. What really attracts us is the series of wonderful pictures and fine phrases, the skilful contrast – in a word, the glamorous appeal to the eye and the ear.

The movement of the narrative is slow. There is very little action. The story proper which Keats takes forty-two Spenserian stanzas to tell could have been told in a few lines. There is no swiftness as in Byron and Scott. We are likely to forget the plot proper in the wealth of pictures and other decorative details. The leisurely movement of the narrative resembles the march of a caravan which is heavily burdened with treasurers. Keats loads his lines with imagery and sensuous association

The story does reach its goal but it hangs fire at every step (threatnes to linger). Though a slow moving narrative, *The Eve of St. Agnes* is an organic whole. The story moves to a climax slowly but effectively.

The poem is a lovely dream of delight. The story does not matter. The poet concentrates on rich descriptions, vivid pictures and suggestions of beauty. All that is rude and violent has been excluded from the view. The noise made by Madeline’s kinsmen comes only as a faint sound from a distance. Nothing ugly or unpleasant reaches the eye or the ear. Every thing in the poem is full of beauty, love and sweetness. The poem gives expression to the poet’s joy in the presence of love and beauty.

Keats’s objective in this poem is more to convey a series of intense and definite sensation appealing to all the sense in turn. He contrasts one set of sensations with another. “What really attracts us,” says Weekes, “is the series of wonderful pictures and fine phrases, the skilful contrast — in a word, the imagination to the eye and the ear”.

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## 6.6 Some Model Explanations

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### Stanza 32

**Thus whispering, his ..... woofed phantasies.** Uttering the words in a whisper, his warm, enfeebled arm sinks in her pillow. It is however, impossible to disturb her dream, as it is shaded by dark curtains ; moreover, it is a midnight charm which it is as impossible to break as a stream frozen and basked into ice. The highly polished dishes glitter in the moonlight. The golden border of the carpet appears bright in the moonlight. It seems to Porphyro that he can never free her eyes from the bondage, of such deep sleep. In this mood he brooded for some time, his mind being confused as woven threads.

### Stanza 33

**Awakening up, he ..... smooth-sculptured stone.** Porphyro was lost in thoughts when Madeline did not wake up. She was overpowered by the charm and it appeared that her eyes could never shake off the effect of that spell.

Very soon Porphyro’s fancies were gone. He got up and was free from dreams. He devised a nice plan of awakening the beloved. He touched her lute which was lying idle. He sounded it loudly but the tunes that is produced were soft. He sang an old song which could not be heard for many days. In the south east part of France people called it a song in honour of a fair lady without mercy. He played upon the lute just near the ears of Madeline so that she might be awakened quickly. The beloved was

disturbed by the song. When she heard it so near to her she made a soft mourning utterance. She opened her blue eyes which also indicated fear. They remained open due to fear. At this, Porphyro knelt down before Madeline to pay homage to her. He did not speak a single word, but he remained pale like a calm state. How could he say anything? He had already disturbed a cultured lady in her sweet and secluded sleep.

#### **Stanza 34**

**Her eyes were.....look'd so dreamingly.** Madeline was now fully awake and her eyes were wide open. But it seemed that she was trying to prolong the sweet dream of her sleep which had been interrupted. On realizing that the dream was over, she felt much grieved. The change from sleep to waking distressed her much because the pleasure and delight of that dream in which she had seen the deep and holy love of Porphyro were now driven out of her mind. In her distress, Madeline began to sigh, to weep, and to utter incoherent words of grief and sorrow, all the time gazing at Porphyro. Porphyro was kneeling by her bed-side, with folded hands and with eyes that asked for Madeline's pity and forgiveness. Indeed, he was afraid to move or speak because the way in which Madeline stared at his face seemed to show that she was still asleep even though her eyes were open. He, therefore, dared not disturb her. Already he had caused her so much distress and so now he became more cautious.

#### **Stanza 35**

**'Ah, Porphyro !' said.....where to go.** Madeline said that only a little while ago she saw Porphyro in her dream and listened to his sweet voice vibrating in her ears with solemn oaths and promises of everlasting constancy and devotion. In her dream, his eyes had looked bright and shining with the light of holy love while now he was quite changed, looking so pale, sad, cold and lifeless. She appealed to him to speak again in that vibrating voice, to look at her with those very bright and glorious eyes, and make love to her again in those solemn and sincere tones. She entreated him not to leave her alone to suffer everlasting sorrow because if he died she would not know where to go and what to do. (The pale, cold and lifeless face of Porphyro filled Madeline with an apprehension that he might die and so she said that his death would mean everlasting grief for her).

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### **6.7 Let Us Sum up**

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*The Eve of St. Agnes* is the best narrative poem of Keats. There is great richness and concentration of poetic meaning and suggestion. The romantic atmosphere of the story is carefully managed. Keats vivifies what he touches. There is sensuousness and pre-Raphaelite minuteness of details. This makes the whole poem an exquisite piece of sensuous artistry. The action and emotions are happily blended. The supernatural element in the poem helps to create a medieval atmosphere, and the medieval atmosphere supports the supernatural suggestion. Keats has shown great skill in the use of contrast, which brings out clearly the romantic character of the poem. Keats also shows great skill in managing the Spenserian stanza.

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### **6.8 Review questions**

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1. Justify the dictum that *The Eve of St. Agnes* is "no more than a romantic tapestry or unique richness of colour." Narrate the essential aspects of Keatsian poetry in this poem.
2. Narrate the Keatsian characteristics of poetry in *The Eve of St. Agnes* in detail.

3. Illustrate that *The Eve of St. Agnes* is “the deliberate work of a trained craftsmanship.” Give examples from the poem.

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## 6.9 Bibliography

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## UNIT-7

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### SHELLEY: ADONAIS

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#### Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 About the author
- 7.3 Adonais
  - 7.3.1 The Main of the poem
  - 7.3.2 Annotations
- 7.4 Critical Summary of the Poem
- 7.5 Self Assessment Questions
- 7.6 Answers to SAQs
- 7.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.8 Bibliography

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#### 7.0 Objectives

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After reading this unit you will be able to

- understand the characteristics of Romantic age,
- know the definition of elegy.
- get knowledge about certain literary devices like personification.

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#### 7.1 Introduction

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*Adonais* is one of the greatest elegies in the English language. It is written as a tribute to the poet John Keats, on his premature death. Shelley commemorates the death of Keats. It is the most noble tribute not only to the dead poet but also to poetry itself. Though the two poet had never been close friends yet Shelley considered *Hyperion* as one of the greatest poetry of his time. Grief for a dead friend has hardly more part in *Adonais* than in *Lycidas*: but it is, in a far greater degree, an impassioned lament for a poet. The death of Edward King gave Milton an occasion for a meditation of unequalled splendour upon poetic fame; the death of Keats is felt by Shelley as a calamity for poetry, and for everything in nature and humanity to which poetry gives enduring expression, and the very soul of poetry seems to utter itself, now in sorrow, now in retributive indignation, through his lips. It is something more than literary artifice, or the example of antique elgy, that leads him to picture Muses and seasons, dreams, desires and adorations, joining in him lament. Shelley was greatly influenced by Plato and Godwin. In *Adonais* Shelley expresses the belief that one Universal mind animates the Universe, that every portion of the universe is but the expression of this animating principle, as is also each individual mind while subject to the limitations of mortality, Death, dissolving the ties of flesh, bring about

the perfect union of the individual with the universal mind. Death makes a man free of all worldly ties and brings the individual in a perfect union with this universal mind. Thus Keats, the poet will be united with this Infinite Spirit. He was absorbed in to this Infinite spirit, and thus he was again made a part of the world through which this Spirit was diffused, just as the river is lost in the sea.

John Keats died at Rome of a consumption, in his twenty-fourth year, on the 23rd of February 1821; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the Protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome . The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies . It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place . Shelley decides to believe, for the purpose of his elegy, that Keats was killed by the cruel reviews of *Endymion*, particularly the one published in the *Quarterly Review*.

Adonais in Greek mythology was a beautiful young man. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, fell in love with him. He was killed by a wild boar while hunting. Aphrodite's grief over his death was so great that Zeus(the chief god) allowed him to spend six months in the year with her. Aphrodite was worshipped in Greece both as Aphrodite Urania (the goddess of sky) and Aphrodite Pandemos, ( the goddess of all the people, or the goddess of marriage and family life). Later the distinction acquired a new meaning:Aphrodite Urania became the goddess of higher and purer love and ; Aphrodite Pandemos, the goddess of sexual lust. Shelley in this poem changes the spelling of "Adonis" to 'Adonais' and he makes Urania the mother of Adonais, not his beloved in order to keep out erotic element from his elegy.In writing this poem, Shelley makes use of two Greek poems in the pastoral tradition of Theocritus. The first is the Elegy of Adonais: written by Bion, a pastoral poet of the first century B.C., who was an imitator of Theocritus . Shelley at times copies Bion's lament for Adonais closely, particularly in the opening. The second Greek poem is the Elegy for Bion: written by Moschus. In this elegy, Bion is alleged to have been cruelly poisoned by an unknown hand.

Adonais is a wonderful threnody, or a song of grief, over the death of the poet Keats. Even in his grief Shelley still preserves a sense of unreality and calls in many shadowy allegorical figures,— Sad Spring, Weeping Hours, Glory, Splendors, Destinies, —all uniting in bewailing the loss of a loved one. The whole poem is a succession of dream pictures, exquisitely beautiful, such as only Shelley could imagine ; and it holds its place with Milton's *Lycidas* and Tennyson's *In Memoriam* as one of the three greatest elegies in our language.

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## 7.2 About The Author

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Percy Bysshe Shelley was born on August 4, 1792, at Field Place, near Horsham, Sussex. He was the eldest son of Timothy Shelley, a wealthy landowner who subsequently succeeded to a baronetcy. Shelley had a deep and passionate love of nature. Almost all of his poems abound in nature imagery. He was pantheist also and a believer in the healing influence of nature on the human mind. P .B. Shelley took pleasure by the abstract ideas of a thing, he was an optimist also. He always saw the beauty with an intellectual point of view. Shelley was a transcendentalist who was deeply influenced by Plato. Platonic ideal of love and beauty is beautifully expressed in his finest poetry. To Shelley, Beauty and Love are identical. The essential basis of Shelley's creed is that the universe is penetrated, vitalised and made real by a spirit, which he conceived as Love or Beauty. To Shelley as to Plato, Love is the perfection of all that is good and noble in life. Shelley's poetry has been called "the fabric of visions" - the vision of ideal Beauty and Love, or the vision of a regenerated world free from cruelty and hatred and oppression.

Symonds writes: "As a poet, Shelley contributed a new quality to English literature - a quality of ideality freedom and spiritual audacity." The French Revolution, which was a spent up force in Shelley's boyhood, influenced him by great ideas. He was attracted by the abstract creed of Revolution- viz., the ideas of aspects- of the Revolution.

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### 7.3 The Poem: Adonais

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#### I

I weep for Adonais——he is dead!  
O, weep for Adonais ! though our tears  
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!  
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all Years  
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,  
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: 'With me  
Died Adonais ; till the Future dares  
Forget the past, his fate and fame shall be  
An echo and a light unto eternity!'

#### II

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,  
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which Flies  
In darkness? where was lorn Urania  
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes,  
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise  
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,  
Rekindled all the fading melodies,  
With which, like Flowers that mock the corse beneath  
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.

#### III

Oh, weep for Adonais ——he is dead!  
Wake, meancholy Mother, wake and weep!  
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed  
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep  
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;

For he is gone, where all things wise and fair  
Descend;—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep  
Will yet restore him to the vital air;  
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

#### IV

Most musical of mourners, weep again!  
Lament anew, Urania!—He died,  
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,  
Blind, old and lonely, when his country's pride,  
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide  
Trampled and mocked with many a loathed rite  
Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,  
Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite  
Yet regins o'er earth; the third among the sons of light.

#### V

Most musical of mourners, weep anew!  
Not all to that bright station dared to climb;  
And happier they their happiness who knew,  
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time  
In which suns perished; others more sublime,  
struck by the envious wrath of man or god,  
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime;  
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,  
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abroad.

#### VI

But now, thy youngest, dearest one, has perished—  
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,  
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,  
And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew;  
Most musical of mourners, weep anew !  
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,

The bloom, whose petals nipped before they blew  
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;  
The broken lily lies— the storm is overpast.

## VII

To that high Capital, where kingly Death  
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay.  
He came; and bought, with price of purest breath,  
A grave among the eternal— Come away!  
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day  
Is yet his fitting charnel- roof !while still  
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay;  
Awake him not! surely he takes his fill  
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

## VIII

He will awake no more, oh, never more !—  
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace  
The shadow of white Death, and at the door  
Invisible Corruption waits to trace  
His extreme way to her dim dwelling- place:  
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe  
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface  
So fair a prey, till darkness, and the law  
Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

## IX

Oh, weep for Adonais ! — The quick Dreams,  
The passion-winged Ministers of thought,  
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams  
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught  
The love which was its music, wander not,-  
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,  
But droop there whence they sprung; and mourn their lot

Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,  
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

**X**

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,  
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries;  
'Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead;  
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,  
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies  
A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain.'  
Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise!  
She Knew not 'twas her own ; as with no stain  
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

### **7.3.1 The Main Idea of The Poem**

The poem Adonais begins with the death of Keats . In the second stanza he makes it clear that he is going to use the Adonais myth. Shelley's Urania laments the death of her son Adonais, who is killed by the brutal attacks of an anonymous reviewers of the Quarterly Review. Shelley personifies Hour which witnessed the death of the poet Keats. In the stanza second he urges Urania to mourn the death of her youngest and dearest son Adonais. In the third stanza the poet personifies Death who have taken the poet in its grip. Stanza fourth is dedicated to the third greatest epic poet Milton who turned blind at the age of 46 but he is still remembered after his death. The same applies to the poet Keats. In the fifth stanza the poet talks about the lesser known poets who earned fame without any great achievements. In the stanza sixth and seventh Urania is urged to haste as Keats is lying in the court of death i.e. Rome. Death is here personified. In the stanza eighth Death & corruption awaits to take the body or the poet in their grip. In the ninth stanza the poet asks fancy and imagination who were once the companions of Keats to grieve over the death of the poet Keats as now they no longer will gain the strength from him. In the stanza tenth the personification of Dreams continues, in this stanza Dreams weep over the death of the poet. Now these dream are no longer valid. They are referred as lost angels of a ruined paradise i.e. the mind of the poet where the used to take birth. Dream is seen here as a woman who is shedding tears on the dead body of the poet and after sometime she vanishes. She is compared with a cloud which dissolves itself in rain. In the stanza eleventh & twelfth Poetic thoughts and Fancies express their grief in their own way. One Dream tries to embalm the body while other one offers a wreath of her locks stewn with tears instead of flowers and one breaks its weapon out of despair; these dreams or poetic thoughts will not find any expression in the written form now. They are dead with the death of Keats .Along with these thoughts Desire, Adoration, Pessuasion and veiled Destiny, Splendours Glooms and Incarnation all came to pay their tribute the dead soul .In Stanza fourteen, fifteen, sixteen & seventeen nature is shown to be mourning the death. The morning, the Oceans, the winds, mountains, Spring all look desolate sad and gloomy because of the poet's death. They no longer appear cheerfull and joyous. In the Stanza eighteen, nineteen & twenty nature resumes its recourse again. It again starts

blooming and throbbing with a new life with the arrival of spring. All the higher as well as lower objects of nature take a new birth. This is nature's process since the advent of the earth world. Though the grief of Keats' death will be renewed every year. The flower blooms from the corpse and thus mocks the death. In the Stanza twenty one the poet asks several philosophical questions, he asks who are we and from where have we come from and what kind of the actors and spectators. But one thing is certain who ever we are, everyone has to die, the great as well as mean. In the Stanza twenty two the misery shakes up Urania from her heavenly sleep and exhorts her to go to the place where her dearest son is lying dead. In the Stanza twenty three the grief-stricken Urania rose like an automaton at night fled on her eternal wings to the place where Keats' body was lying. The earth looked very desolate as when the spirit had left the body. In the Stanza twenty four Urania flies very speedily to the place where the body of the poet Keats is lying. But in the way she meets many obstacles. She has passed through those cities and camps where people are very hard-hearted. They wounded her soft and tender feet. Her tender feet were injured because of the rough path and they started bleeding. But from these drops of blood flowers sprang up from the earth. In this stanza Urania is represented metaphorically as poetic spirit of poetry. The resistance that Urania meets means people's lack of appreciation of poetry. Urania's bleeding feet represent the slight and indignities to which poets are often subjected. The everlasting flowers growing from Urania's sacred blood are the poetic works which delight and inspire human beings in the tears to come. "That under serving way" means that the people do not really deserve those poetic works because they are unable to appreciate them. It is also possible to interpret this stanza in a different manner. Urania is a divinity. The earth, says Shelley, does not deserve to be honoured by the visit of the Divine. The feet of the goddess Urania are wounded feet eternal flowers of divine charity and pity spring up. In the stanza twenty five the clash between divine spirit and death is described in this death. Death is personified here as a lady, she was overpowered by the divine presence of Urania and life comes back to the poet for a moment. But when Urania cries with distress and sorrow, death immediately takes the victims in its grip. In the stanza twenty six, twenty seven, twenty eight & twenty nine are the speech of Urania, the Goddess of higher love. She implores the poet to speak to her once again. She expresses her helplessness. She is bound by time i.e. immortality. It reminds one of "Ode to the West Wind" last stanza where Shelley expresses his helplessness materialising his dreams of the golden age. She says that Keats began writing at an early age hence when he was severely criticised by the reviewer, he could not reply to them back. The metaphor here used that of various stages of the moon's development. Keats was evanescent had he reached to its full shape he would have easily replied those harsh reviewers and critics. She compares these critics & reviewers to wolves and raven vultures who would have fled. In stanza twenty-nine he compares these reviewers to small reptile which are seen during the sunlight but as sets they disappear. In the stanza thirty Shelley, following the convention of pastoral elegy, introduces the poet mourners as Shepherds who came in torn clothes and with unthreaded garlands mourn the death of the poet Keats & to pay their homage. They include Byron a far. Thomas Moore Byron is called the pilgrim of eternity in reference to his great poem, "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" and to the eternity of his fame (The pilgrim was an epithet often used by Byron.) In the stanza thirty one Shelley calls himself drifting worked, longely, frail and solitary mourner. He compares himself to the last cloud of a storm whose fury has been exhausted and whose thunder foretells its death. Shelley then compares himself to Actaeon who became prey of his own companions and was killed. Shelley had to suffer and bear the social wrath like Actaeon because of his revolutionary ideas. In the stanza thirty two, thirty three & thirty four Shelley devotes to self-analysis. He compares himself to a tameless and swift leopard but who is full of weakness. He compares himself to a dying lamp, to a dissolving cloud and to a breaking sea, each of which is about to lose its identity his head was bound with faded flowers.

He seemed to have nothing in common with the other mourners. He was a being apart and solitary. Stanza thirty five is dedicated to Leigh Hunt who was one of the sincer friend of Keats. He acted as a guide and was a source of comfort to Keats. He greatly loved and honoured and offers his tribute to him. To counterbalance his over-praise of the poet-mourner Shelley heaps invective on the suspected murderer, the reviewer, in Stanza thirtysix — thirty eight and warns him that he will live to be haunted by feelings of shame, remorse, and self - contempt, while the pure spirit of Adonais will flow back to the radiant fountain from which it had come. There is no need to weep, as Keats has joined the company of the illustrious dead, and his soul has become a portion of the eternal. The last seventeen stanzas of the poem (XXXI—LV) are an exultant denial of death's victory, from a typically Shelleyan angle. This is the best part of the poem in which the pastoral convention is abandoned. We are told, in Stanzas XXXIX—XLIII that we should not mourn for Keats. Keats is not dead, but has achieved a true life. He has climbed to a height where he is absolutely secure from all evil. There is no need for nature to lament the death of Keats who has now become one with Nature and whose presence is therefore to be felt and known in all aspects and phenomena of Nature. Keats has been absorbed into the immutable one spirit, the Platonic prototype which is the source of all worldly forms. The spirit of Keats has been fused with the One Spirit which injects the essence of beauty into all things by forcing stubborn material into approximations of the ideal forms, observed by us as "Nature ". The same of men of high intellectual gifts can never be totally extinguished, says Shelley (in Stanza XLIV). The spirit of the great dead poets live in the lofty thoughts of the young readers. Shelley compares the great poets to the stars of the sky. Death in the case of these poets is " a low mist which cannot blot the brightness it may veil." (Lines 391-92) In Stanzas XL V —XLVI, the great poetry -stars of the past, especially the "inheritors of unfulfilled reknown," who died in the prime of their life, rise to meet Adonais as he approaches his new celestial abode. These, Chattererton Sidney, Lucan, "and many more whose names on earth are dark " tell him that the sphere which he is to rule as its king has been waiting for him. He is Vesper because he is the latest, and also perhaps because he is to be the brightest of their company. In Stanzas XL VII—LI, Shelley advises anyone who persists in mourning to visit Keats grave in the beautiful Protestant cemetery at Rome. Keats needs no reflected *glory* from the ages, empires and religions which lie buried there rather Rome will gain some more *glory* because Keats lies buried there. Then follows a famous image (Stanza LII) : " The One remains, the many change and pass". "Life, like a dome of many -coloured glass, stains the white radiance of Eternity, until Death tramples it to fragments." This image has been called "the best epigrammatic expression of Platonism in English poetry," and has been interpreted variously. Shelley now gets ready (Stanzas LIII-LV) to join Keats in his heavenly abode. He imagines that divine light beauty are shining upon him and preparing him for his departure from this mortal world. (Shelley here accurately foretells his own death which came a year later. But he is visting Adonais only in fancy; so it is a chance prophecy, arising because he liked to travel by boat in fact as well as in fancy)

### 7.3.2 Annotations

1 Than -melt 2.frost —Ice or Snow 3. Compeers —companions 4.Echo— resound 5. Rternityforever 6. Mighty mother —urania, or the incarnation of the spirit of Heavenly Love 7. Thy son —Keats is regarded as the saw of Urania. 8.Pierced by the shaft which Flies —killed by the gavage ungivged criticism of Keats poetry 9. Lorn —also covered 10. Rekindled relight 11. Adorned —decorated 12. Fading— disappearing 13. Meancholy Mother —refers Urania 14. Quench within their burning bed — without her tears in her eyes 15. Mute —quite 16. Vital air —living 17.Musical of

mourners Milton author of a great epic 18. Sire -father 19. Liberticide— the murderer or fred on refers to Charles II 20. Unterrified —pure fearlessley 21. Clear Sprite— spint 22. Regins -rules 23. Bright station dared —poets have courage 24. Tapers —candles 25. Perished — destroyed 26. More sublime — more lofty 27. Envious wrath—jealousy & resentment 28. Extinct—died 29. Refluent— bright, young age early glory 30. Serene—pious holy 31. Nursling —reared 32. Sad maiden cherished —the references is of Keats poem “Isabella” 33. Nipped—withered 34. broken lily —Keats 35. High capital— Rome 36. Where kingly Death — Death as a king of Rome 37. The vault-dome 38. Italian day—Italian *sRY* Italy the capital Italy 39. Twilight chamber— Bright court 40. Apace— continuous 41. Pity & awe — Sympathy & fear 42. Invisible—unseen 43. Soothe —calm doum 44. Deface—spoil45. Mortal curtain draw— buried in the grave 46. Flocks— companions 47. Droop —died 48. Cold heart— because dead 49. One — Poetic Thought 50. Clasps— hold 51. Trembling hands— quiring 52. Moon light wings —silvery 53. Lost Angel—The thought 54. Ruined Paradise— Keats brain.

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## 7.4 Critical Summary of the poem

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### Stanza 1

The poet laments the death of Keats. The tears of mourners will not bring Keats back to life. The Hour of Keats’s death is itself in mourning. Keats fate and fame will never be forgotten .Shelley laments the death of Keats to whom he gives the name of Adonais. Shelley wanted by this name to point out the connection of his poem with the Greek poet Bion’s famous Lament of Aphrodite for Adonais .He changed the form of the word “Adonis “to “Adonais “. This change was probably made to correspond with the change of the spirit of Shelley’s poem. And thousand hour -Shelley addresses the particular hour when Keats died. That hour is personified. It is a sad hour because it witnessed the tragedy of Keats’s premature death.

Let the sad hour of Keats’s death rouse its less known companions. Hours are personified and they are imagined as companions or comrades. The hour when Keats died is regarded as a conspicuous hour, while the other hours are called obscure or little -known ones. Keats’s fate and fame will always be remembered and will serve as a light for the endless epoches which which are yet to come. The past cannot be forgotten by the future and, therefore, the poetic achievements of Keats and his premature death will never be forgotten.

### Stanza II

Urania was a absent when her son, Adonais, was killed by the cruel criticism of his work by anonymous reviewers and commentators. Urania was at that time sitting in her Paradise . The word “Urania” means “Celestial”. Urania sat in her Paradise, while Keats sang his exquisite songs in a soft loving voice on earth. With these songs or poems, Keats embellished and hid the approaching heavy figure of death. His songs were like flowers which are heaped over a dead body and which, by their beauty and fragrance, seem to mock the dead body.

### Stanza III

Let Urania weep over Keats’s death. And yet her tears will be of no use. Keats is gone to the deep regions of death and will never return to the earth . Let Urania withhold her burning tear of grief. Let Urania not imagine that Proserpina, the Queen of the regions of death, will restore Keats to the earth . The amorous Deep refers to Proserpina, the goddess of the under-world. “Amorous” because death is too fond of its victims to let them go back to the world of the living. The vital air means air breathed

by the living. Death is happy that Keats can no longer sing his songs. Death mocks the grief of those who are mourning Keats's departure from this world.

#### **Stanza IV**

Let Urania weep over the death of Keats. Milton, who was the third greatest epic poet died, but his spirit yet reigns over the earth. Urania, who is the goddess not only of heavenly love but also of poetry and song. Milton, who was the author of an immortal poem. Milton became blind at the age of 46. His old age was lonely because he lived to see the total collapse of the great principles of freedom and religious faith and the triumph of the reactionary forces under Charles II. The priest, the slave, and the liberticide crushed the proud independence of Milton's country with their hateful deeds of greed, cruelty, and bloodshed. The priest here represents the Anglican Church; the slave represents the Royalist Party; and the liberticide refers to Charles II. Milton met his death fearlessly. Milton died, but his pure spirit continues to hold sway over the earth. Homer was the first, and Dante the second epic poet & the Milton is called the third readers epic poet.

#### **Stanza V**

All poets dared not attempt to rise to Milton's lofty status poets who cherished no lofty ideals and yet famous are happier than Milton was. Some poets met a premature death because they fell victims to the cruelty of jealous men. Some poets yet live and are struggling against heavy odds to achieve fame. Not all poets dared to make efforts to rise to such a lofty ideal of the poet's duty as did Milton. Happier are those lesser poets who never tried to emulate Milton's example, who wrote no epic, cherished no high ideals, and are yet famous. Some tapers or candles continue to burn through the darkness of time although many suns have completely been lost. In other words, certain inferior poets are still remembered while some of the greatest poets are known today by name only, their works having been lost. Shelley says: "Ennius, Varro, Pacuvius, and Accius, all great poets have been lost." Some poets of superior gifts have died in their early career because of the jealousy and resentment of their fellow poets or because of the cruelty of fate. These poets had won glory but died prematurely. Shelley is here referring to the fate of Lucan, Chatterton, and of course Keats. Some poets, who are yet alive, are bravely struggling against heavy odds. They are being attacked by critics but they are facing these attacks with courage and they will ultimately reach their destination where they will be greeted by Fame. Shelley wordsworth who were bravely facing the attacks of critics and who were to reach the serene abode of Fame. Shelley here predicts an everlasting fame for these poets.

#### **Stanza VI**

Let Urania, the most musical of mourners, weep over the death her youngest and dearest son whose poetic genius has now been rendered utterly waste. Keats is here regarded as having been reared during the widowhood of Urania. The idea is that Keats, a child of the Muses, was born in an unpoetic age. Keats is compared to a pale flower looked after by some grief-stricken damsel. Thy extreme hope -the last hope of Urania, namely Keats. Keats has died in the prime of his life.

#### **Stanza VII**

Keats met his death in the city of Rome where many poets and artists have their memorials. Let Urania not try to wake him up because he is taking his fill of sleep. the city of Rome where Keats died. The city of Rome is regarded as the Court of Death because it is full of the memorials of departed artists and writers. Keats came to Rome and, at the cost of his own pure life, obtained a grave in the

company of the dead artists who lay buried in that city. Shelley calls upon Urania to come away and take a look at the dead Keats while he still lies unburied under the dome of the Italian sky. Let Urania not try to wake up the sleeping Keats because, foretold of all the evil of the world, he is enjoying a deep and restful slumber.

### **Stanza VIII**

Keats will wake up no more. Corruption waits to mar his body, but corruption will have to wait till he is actually buried in his grave. Soon the dead body of Keats will be marred by Corruption. The idea is that the dead body will begin to rot soon. Corruption is ready to mar Keats's beauty. But this action of Corruption is being delayed by pity and awe which are trying to diminish the fury of Corruption. Nor can Corruption dare to touch the dead poet till he is laid away in the darkness of the grave. Till the time of his burial in a grave, he will lie unpolluted.

### **Stanza IX**

The poetic thoughts and conceptions of Keats, which would have been communicated by him to other minds, are now fading away. The quick Dreams are the thoughts and fancies which Keats nursed in his mind. Had he lived longer, he would have communicated these thoughts and fancies to the minds of other people. These thoughts and fancies are described as the flocks of which Keats was the herdsman. Now these thoughts and fancies are fading at their very source. They are unhappy over their sad fate, and they are lamenting their unhappy lot round the cold heart of dead Keats. These thoughts and fancies are fading with the man who created them, but the pain that they are experiencing is sweet because death is coming to them in an easy form. These dying thoughts and fancies can never be revived and they can never find another home.

### **Stanza X**

One of Keats's poetic thoughts has shed a tear over Keats's dead body and, after shedding a tear, has vanished. The personification of Keats's thoughts and fancies continues. One of these thoughts and fancies holds the cold head of Keats with her trembling hands and flutters her moonlight wings in order to fan her dead creator. The thought or dream, conceived by Keats before his death, is here regarded as the lost angel. The mind of the dead Keats was the Paradise which is now a wreck. This thought did not realise that the tear on the silken fringe of Keats's eye was shed by herself, that is, by that very thought. Then, in an instant, dissolved itself in rain. The thought left no stain just as a dissolving cloud leaves no trace behind.

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## **7.5 Self Assessment Questions**

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1. Why are the companions of the hour obscure ?

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2. By the shaft flies in darkness what does the poet mean by this?

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3. How did Keats rekindle the melodies of Urania ?

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4. There is use of simile in this stanza. Elaborate on that simile.

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5. Shelley refers to a ultimate truth in this stanza. What is that?

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6. Where all things wise & fair descend, which is this place?

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7. What kind of similarity is shared between the poet Milton and the poet Keats?

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8. Whom does the poet consider more fortunate poets?

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9. The nursing of thy windowhood whom does the poet refer to ?

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10. Can future forget the past what does the poet mean to say' till the future dares forget the past?

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11. Why is Urania urged to haste to Rome where Keats is lying?

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12. How will the poet Keats be famous even after his death?

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13. Why should urania not wake him up?

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14. Where was Urania at the times of Keat's death?

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15. Who is personified woman in this stanza viii?

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16. Who try to subdue the anger of Corruption & why?

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17. In this stanza ix dreams are called the 'passion winged ministers of the thought.' What does the poet want to convey through this line?

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18. Elaborate on the similes and personification used in this stanza?

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19. Shelley has personified many object here. They are all shown to mourn the death of the poet Keats? who are thus personified objects in the stanzas and what is the poets purpose behind this personification?

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20. Discuss Shelley Imagery with reference to Adonais?

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## 7.6 Answers to SAQs

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1. The companions of the hour are obscure because they are not fortunate like the particular hour during which the poet Keats died. That hour gain significance and becomes a very important hour because of the death of Keats. Other hours look obscure in comparison to that hour. Here' Shelley personifies the hour.
2. Future can never forget the past. Future is made by past. Past paves the way for present and present builds our future thus they are interrelated to each other. This is the reason we always remember our past. The poet means to say that Keats will be remembered in future also.
3. He will be immortal because of his poetry.
4. Urania was asleep in her heavenly abode i.e. paradise when she came to know about the death of the poet Keats.
5. Shelley thought the reason of Keats death was the severe criticism in the *Quarterly review* by some anonymous critic. That's why he uses Adonais myth here. The comparison is Adonais who was killed by a wild boar; Keats was killed by shafts (arrows) which refers to anonymous reviewers.
6. Urania, is also regarded as the Goddess of poetry and song . Keats wrote sweet melodious songs dedicated to Goddess and thus rekindled the melodies of Urania.
7. Shelley has made use of a simile in that last line of this stanza. As flower and wreath are heaped over a dead body to decorate the dead body and thus mocks the death in the same manner Keats adorned his life by writing beautiful and melodious song and hid the approach of death.
8. Here Shelley refers to the ultimate truth that Death spares none. Every one has to die one day.
9. The place here referred is underworld. Proserpina, the queen of the region of death and the goddess of the under world is supposed to take everyone whether fair or wise to underworld after the death.
10. Milton was one of the greatest epic writers. He became immortal due to his epic and other poems. In the same manner Keats will be also remembered after his death because of his poetic creations.
11. The poet considers those poets more fortunate who earned fame without any great poetic achievements, while many great poets and writers were forgotten after their death.
12. The poet refers to Keats whom he calls the nursling of the widowhood of Urania because he was born in an unpoetic age.
13. The poet urges Urania to make haste to Rome because he is still lying unburied under the dome of Italian Sky. Urania who is considered as the mother of Keats can have a glimpse of the poet. Once he is buried, she won't be able to meet him and see his face.
14. Urania is asked not to wake up Keats because he is having a peaceful and quite sleep forgetting

al the evil and ill remarks targetted towards him.

15. Death and corruption are personified in this stanza. Corruption is personified as a woman who prepares to take the dead body of Keats in her grip. The dead body of Keats will soon start to decompose and deface . Corruption is ready to spoil the beauty of Keats body invisibly but she has to wait till the burial of the body.
16. Pity, awe try to subdue the anger of Corruption who wants to mar the beauty of Keats dead body. Corruption has to wait till the burial of the dead body. Pity and awe create a feeling of sympathy in corruption, who is personified as a woman.
17. The dreams are full of emotion and feeling. They are like ministers of thought which are full of passion, emotion and feelings and they are winged because they are very subtle and quick.
18. The similes used here is that of shepherded and his flock of sheep. As the shepherded takes care of his sheep in the same manner Keats is described as the herdsmen of his fanciful thoughts and dreams. The thoughts and fancies of which Keats was the creator have here been personified. With the death of the creator his product also die.
19. The quick dreams, thoughts and fancies are personified here. They are also called lost angels of ruined paradise because now Keats mind where they used to dwell is no longer alive. They have lost their paradise. These thoughts and fancies are shown to mourn the death of their creator in their own way.
20. Shelley's imagery in Adonais is rich and varied. We have here abstract and ethereal images so characteristic of Shelley's poetic genius; but we also find here a number of concrete and tangible images. Some of the images, too are colourful and sensuous. As in the rest of his finest poems, Shelley's imagery here gives evidence of his fertile and winged imagination. We get a graphic and pathetic picture of the sad fate that Milton, the third greatest epic poet, met. Milton was the "Sire of an immortal strain". "Blind, old, and lonely," he was subjected to deeds of "lust and blood" by "the priest, the slave, and the liberticide" (that is, by the Anglican Church, the Royalist Party, and King Charles II). In another pathetic and vivid picture, Keats is depicted as the "nursling" of Urania's widowhood. Keats grew like a pale" flower by some sad maiden cherished," a flower which is "fed with true-love tears, instead of dew." He was a "bloom" whose petals were

"nipped before they blew." Shelley introduces a large number of abstractions in the poem. These abstractions are personified. White Death, invisible Corruption, and the eternal Hunger are some of these personifications. Other abstractions are the quick Dreams Splendours, Desires, Adorations, Persuasions, Glooms, veiled Destinies twilight Phantasies. These abstractions come in slow pomp to express their grief. The quick Dreams are thoughts and fancies which Keats nursed in his mind. One of these Dreames seems to have embalmed Keat's dead body with glittering dew. Another has thrown a wreath of her loose locks over the dead body. Yet another Dream has broken her weapons (bow and arrows) in sheer grief. Such images, it is needless to pointout, are typical of Shelley's vagueness and incoherence. It was this trait of his poetry which made Arnold describe him as an "ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain." The abstraction in this poem also include Echo who "sits amid the voiceless mountains and feeds her grief "with Keat's remembered songs. We have next an elaborate picture of Urania hastening to the place where lies the dead body of Adonais (or Keat's). Urania is a

mythological personage, but once we accept her reality, the description of her journey and her grief becomes realistic and convincing too. We are then taken to the cemetery in Rome where Keats lies buried. Rome is the burial place of many ancient civilizations, empires and religions which in their time caused untold misery. But men like Keats do not derive their glory from the fact that they have been buried at the place where lie buried those conquerors, tyrants, and religious fanatics who perpetrated many cruelties and barbarities. Men like Keats are themselves a source of glory. They lend glory to places; they do not borrow glory.

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### **7.7 Let Us Sum Up**

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In this unit we have studied,

- one of the greatest elegy by P.B. Shelley,
- the figure of speech like Personification,
- the different meaning words have in different contrast.

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### **7.8 Review Questions**

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1. Examine Adonais as an elegy ?
2. Trace the development of mood and feeling in Adonais .

Or

Show that Shelley arouses several feelings, one after the other, in his elegy on the death of Keats?

3. Write a note on Shelley's treatment of Nature in Adonais .

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### **7.9 Bibliography**

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1. J.Shawcross: Shelley literary and Philosophical Criticism; (London 1909) Graham Hough: The Romantic Poets Neville Rogers: Shelley at work: A critical Enquiry.

## UNIT-8

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### SHELLEY : ODE TO WEST WIND

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#### Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 About the author
- 8.3 About the age
- 8.4 The Ode To The West Wind
  - 8.4.1 The Main Idea of Poem
  - 8.4.2 Annotations
- 8.5 Ode to Skylark
  - 8.5.1 The Main Idea of Poem
  - 8.5.2 Annotations
- 8.6 Self Assesment Questions
- 8.7 Answers to SAQs
- 8.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.9 Review Questions
- 8.10 Bibliography

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#### **8.0 Objectives**

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After going through the unit, you will be able to

- know one of the greatest romantic poet P.B. Shelley,
- understand the ideas contained in the poem,
- know more about romantic poetry,
- appericiate and Interpret poem and its various features.

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#### **8.1 Introduction**

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In this unit you are going to study two of the most famous lyrics of P.B. Shelley : Ode to the West Wind and To Skylark. Ode to the West Wind is addressed to the powerful and strong wind and the poem To Skylark is addressed to the bird skylark who sings melodious and happy songs. In the first poem the poet contrasts the miseries and sorrows of human life with that of powerful and energetic wild west wind and in the second poem the ecstasy and repatures of the birds song is contrasted with that of human life. To understand them in depth you have to read the poems very carefully and find the

literary as well as symbolic meaning of the poems. The list of annotation given after the poem will be of great help to you for understanding the meaning of the poem. The literary terms like symbols, metaphors and personification are explained, yet you should read the books suggested at the end of the chapter to have a clear idea of these concept.

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## 8.2 About the Author

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*Percy Bysshe Shelley* was born on August 4, 1792, at field Place, near Horsham, Sussex. He was the eldest son of Timothy Shelley, a wealthy landowner who subsequently succeeded to a baronetcy. Shelley had a deep and passionate love of nature. Almost all of his poems abound in nature imagery. He was panthiest also and a believer in the healing influence of nature on the human mind. P.B. Shelley took pleasure by the abstract ideas of a thing, he was an optimist also. He always saw the beauty with an intelctual point of view. Shelley was a transcendalist who was deeply influenced by Plato. Platonic ideal of love and beauty is beautifully expressed in his finest poetry. To Shelley, Beauty and Love are identical. The essential basis of Shelley's creed is that the universe is penetrated, vitalised and made real by a spirit, which he conceived as Love or Beauty. To Shelley as to Plato, Love is the prefecion of all that is good and noble in life. Shelley's poetry has been called "the fabric of visions" - the vision of ideal Beauty and Love, or the vision of a regenrated world free from cruelty and hatred and oppression. Symonds writes: "As a poet, Shelley contributed a new quality to English littraure - a quality of ideality freedom and spritual audacity. "The FRENch Revolution, which was a spent up force in Shelley's boyhood, influenced him by great ideas. He was attracted by the abstract creed of Revolution - viz., the ideas of aspects - of the Revolution.

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## 8.3 About the Age

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S.A. Brooke writes, "Pursuit of the unknown, the invisible and the infinite, impels all the romantic poetry of the world. It is out of hunger for the unknown, out of desire, not for the limited happiness but for the unlimitable in joy and in loveliness, that Romanticism sprang into being." It is the pursuit of the unlimitable and the infinite that makes Shelley most romantic of the romantic poets. Shelley's finest poetry is an expression of his unquenchable desire for "what is not", for the unreliable and the unknown.

Romanticism was a revival of the spirit of the medieval romances. It was a reaction against the Aristotelian traditions which had laid paramount stress on the reign of reason and the importance of form. Simultaneously it was a reaction against the pseudo-classicism or formalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Romantic, then, could mean emotional fervour, appetite for experience, escapism of one or another kind, and freedom from the shackles of tradition (in the choice of themes, in the use of words, in rhyme, in metre) a revolution in poetics paralleld to the social and political revolution in France.

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## 8.4 The Poem : Ode to the West Wind

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I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,  
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yerllow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,  
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,  
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed  
The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow  
Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
Driving sweet bunds like flocks to feed in air  
With living hues and odours plain and hill:  
Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;  
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

## II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's common,  
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,  
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,  
Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread  
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,  
Like the bright hair uplighted from the head  
Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge  
Of the horrizon to the zenith's height,  
The locks of the approaching strom. Thou dirge  
Of the dying year, to which this closing night  
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,  
Vaulted with all thy congregated might  
Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere  
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: Oh, hear!

## III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams  
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,  
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,  
Besidea pumice isle in Baiae's Bay',

And saw in sleep old palaces and towers  
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,  
All overgrown with azure moss and flowers  
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou  
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers  
Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below  
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear  
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know  
Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,  
And tremble and despoil themselves: Oh, hear!

#### IV

If I were a deaf leaf thou mightest bear;  
If I were a swift cloud to fly thee;  
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share  
The impulse of thy strength, only less free  
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even  
I were as in my boyhood, and could be  
The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,  
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed  
Scarce seemed a vision: I would ne'er have striven  
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need  
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!  
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!  
A heavy wieght of hours has chained and bowed  
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

#### V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is :  
What is my leaves are falling like its own!  
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies  
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,  
sweet though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,

My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe  
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!  
And, by the incantation of this verse,  
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth  
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!  
Be through my lips to unawakened earth.

The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,  
If Winter comes, can spring be far behind?

#### **8.4.1 The Main Idea of the Poem**

The poem was written in 1819 and published in 1820, along with Shelley's musical drama *Prometheus Unbound*. Shelley was living in Italy at that time. As Shelley himself wrote, this poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood round the Arno, near Florence (Italy). He wrote it on the day when the stormy wind was collecting the vapours that send the autumnal rains. At sunset as Shelley had foreseen, there was a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by an exceptional thunder of clouds and lightning.

The poet establishes the power and strength of west wind. The power of west wind can be felt everywhere on land, on air and on sea. The poet desires to feel this power so that he can bring a revolution and spread his message of the golden age to the world. The poet compares his helplessness to that of mighty wind. The poem is full of similes and metaphors. The imagery in the second stanza is abstract and ethereal while in the first and third stanza it is concrete. The picture of the blue Mediterranean, lulled to sleep by the coil of his crystalline in noteworthy. Shelley is also known for his myth-making quality which means that he rendered a separate and individual entity to the various objects of nature e.g. west wind, Atlantic ocean, Mediterranean sea; all of them are treated as separate individual entities. In spite of this his treatment to nature is scientific. He addresses west wind as destroyer and preserver because west wind destroys the dead leaves and preserves the living seeds. The west wind therefore becomes a symbol of change, which destroys but creates as well.

#### **8.4.2 Annotations**

Enchanter-magician

Pestilence-stricken multitude-Epidemic which affects a large number of people at the same time.

Lectic - Habitual

Azure - Blue

Clarion - Amusical instrument which is blown to give a call to soldiers.

Stream	-	Surface
Commotion	-	Noise
Angels	-	Messangers
Maenad	-	Bacchus
Sepulchre	-	Burrial place
Vaulted	-	Covered
Congregated	-	Collected
Lulled	-	Induced sleep
Crystalline	-	Clear and bright and shining like crystal
Cleave	-	Divide
Chasm	-	Hollow
Foliage	-	Sea vegetation
Despoil	-	Denaude or drop the leaves
Sapless	-	without any sap, dry, leathery stalk
Impulse	-	power
Comrade	-	complain
Outstrip	-	outrun
Skiey	-	very fast

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## 8.5 The Poem

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### ODE TO SKYLARK

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit !

Bird thou never wert,

That from Heaven, or near it,

Pourest thy full heart

In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher

From the earth thou springest

Like a cloud of fire;

The blue deep thou wingest,

And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning  
Of the suken sun,  
O'er which clouds are bright' ning,  
Thou dost float and run;  
Like a star of Heaven,  
In the broad daylight  
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight.

Keen as are the arrows  
Of that silver sphere,  
Whose intense lamp narrows  
In the white dawn clear  
Until we hardly see- we feel that is there.

All the earth and air  
With thy voice is loud,  
As, when night is bare,  
From one lonely cloud  
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;  
What is most like thee?  
From rainbow clouds there flow not  
Drops so bright to see  
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a Poet hidden  
In the light of thought,  
Singing hymns unbidden,  
Till the world is wrought

To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high- born maiden

In a palace - tower,

Soothing her love- laden

Soul in secret hour

With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow- worm golden

In dell of dew,

Scattering un beholden

Its aerial hue

Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view!50

Like a rose embowered

In its own green leaves,

By warm winds deflowered,

Till the scent it gives

Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged thieves:

Sound of vernal showers

On the twinkling grass,

Rain-awakened flowers,

All that ever was

Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass:

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,

What sweet thoughts are thine:

I have never heard

Praise of love or wine

That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymenal,  
Or triumphal chant,  
Matched with thine would be all  
But an empty vault,  
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains  
Of thy happy strain?  
What shapes of sky or plain?  
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance  
Languor cannot be:  
Shadow of annoyance  
Never came near thee:  
Thou lovest-but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.  
Waking or asleep,  
Thou of death must deem  
Things more true and deep  
Than we mortals dream.,  
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,  
And pine for what is not:  
Our sincerest laughter  
With some pain is fraught:  
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scron  
Hate, and pride, and- fear;

If we were things born  
Not to shed a tear,  
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures  
Of delightful sound,  
Better than all treasures  
That in books are found,  
Thy skill to poet were, thou scroner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness  
That thy brain must know.  
Such harmonious madness  
From my lips would flow  
The world should listen then-as I am listening now.

### **8.5.1 The Main Idea of the Poem**

In this Ode idealises the singing of the skylark. The skylark is, in fact, not a bird but a spirit which sings beautiful, melodious and spontaneous music somewhere from the great height in the sky. The poet appreciates the ecstasy and melody of its song and contrasts it with the human life. The poem is remarkable for its wonderful music and similies, its sensuous beauty, its spontaneity and melody. The poet visualises skylark as a cloud of fire, a spirit, as a star, as a glow worm, as a poet, as a flower and so many other things. The poem possesses a spontaneous quality. The singing of the skylark is unsurpassable. Even the happiest songs like marriage songs and victory song cannot be of any match to it, as there is no tinge of sorrow in skylark 's songs.

### **8.5.2 Annotations**

Blithe	-	Cheerful, Happy
Profuse	-	Full
Unpremeditated	-	Without effort & thought and spontaneous
Like a cloud of fire	-	Similie, as the cloud of fire movesn upward high in the sky likewise the bird soars higher and higher in the sky.
Golden Lightining	-	Like gold rays of the setting ren.
Unbodied Joy	-	Use of abstract similie like joy which does not have any concrete shape

Even	-	Evening or twilight
Like a star of Heaven	-	During the daylight the stars are not visible but we know them to be present there
Silver Sphere.....		Moon
Overflow	-	Filled with
Rain of melody	-	Musical outpouring
Hymns	-	Songs
Wrought	-	Changed
High Born maiden	-	Damsel
Heeded	-	Attention
Golden Glow Worm	-	An insect which shines while flies
Bower	-	Fort, Palace, Tower
Aereal Hue	-	Color, Light, Air
Emborowed	-	Covered up
Deflowered	-	Robbed of its fragrance
Heavy winged	-	Thieves wash wind which steals the fragrance of the roof & become heavy with fragrance, become slow in their movement
Verneal	-	Spring
Rain awakened flowers-		Flowers which look fresh & bright after the rain falls on their petals
Triumphant Chant	-	Epic, Victorious Songs
Hymeneal	-	Marriage Songs
Vaunt	-	Boast
Hidden Want	-	Lack in somewhere deficiency
Stain	-	Music
Joyance	-	Cheerfulness
Langour	-	Idleness, Indolness
Love Sad Satiety	-	Love of pain which one experiences after love reaches to its point of satisfaction
Crystal	-	Clear
Our sweetest Song	-	Saddest Thought
Scorner	-	Hater

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## 8.6 Self Assessment Questions

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1. Who is personified in the first stanza of the poem, 'Ode to the West Wind'?

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2. "Like ghost from an enchanter fleeing", in this line poet has used a simile what is that?

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3. 'Pestilence-stricken multitudes. 'Whom does the poet here refer to?

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4. Who will awaken the seeds from their grave. Which metaphor is used here?

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5. Who is called both the destroyer and the preserver in the first stanza of the poem?

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6. Who was fast asleep and What did he see in his dreams?

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7. Why did all the palaces & towers quiver in water?

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8. How do Mediterrean sea and Atlantic Ocean react at the power of west wind?

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9. The sea foliage shed their leaves at the approach by the west wind? What does it refer to?

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10. Explain all the similies used in this stanza?

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11. What is dirge and why will be a vaulted dome erected upon it?

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12. What does the phrase ‘congregated might’ mean?

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13. Why are locks of the hair of followers of Bacchus, the God of wine lifted?

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14. What does the poet want to become to taste the power of West wind?

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15. What is the similarity between the poet's boy hood and the west wind?

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16. What is the poet's appeal to the west wind?

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17. How does the poet make use of similies to make his point about his revolutionary ideas?

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18. In the first stanza of 'To Skylark' the poet addresses the bird as "a blithe spirit". Why?

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19. "Like a poet hidden" What does the poet mean by this stanza?

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20. "Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun" explain the use of simile in this line.

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21. "The music doth surpass" the music of the skylark surpasses many sounds. What are those sounds?

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22. What does the poet want to learn from the bird skylark?

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23. Why are the Hymeneal and Triumphant Chant like an empty vault?

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24. What does the poet mean to say when he says "Thou lovest but ne'er knew love's sad satiety."

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25. The stanza 'We look before — pain is fraught'. What is the comparison here?

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26. "Our Sweetest songs — tell of saddest thought." Explain the line in the reference to the poem.

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27. Why does the poet call the bird scorner of the ground?

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28. What is the secret of the cheerful, happy and melodious songs of the skylark?

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29. Explain the term 'similie' giving the examples from the poem.

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30. Write a critical Appreciation of the Poem "Odde to Skylark".

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## 8.7 Answers to SAQs

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1. The poet uses the poetic device personification in this poem. When an abstract object is given an individual entity or treated like a person; it is said to be Personification. In the poem west wind is treated as a powerful and strong person. Besides west wind Mediterrean sea and Altantic Ocean are also treated like human beings.
2. In this line the poet has made use of a simile. The West wind is compared to a magician whose very presence makes the ghost run away or disappear. In the same 'way with the approach of west wind all the dead and dry leaves run away and are destroyed.
3. Pestilence- Striken Multitude' refer to the dry, yellow, brown and withered leaves. When autmn comes all the trees shed their all dry and withered leaves and west wind takes them way. Pestilence stands for an epidemic disease which affects to a large number of people. In the autumn season it appears that some epidemic disease has affected the leaves because most of them are yellow, dry and diseased.
4. West wind will awaken the seed which are lying underground during autumn season.
5. West wind is called both destroter and preserver because it destroys the old yellow leaves but preserves the seed for rebirth of trees.
6. In this stanza Shelley has made use of abstract similes. Shelley builds up a beautiful picture of approaching storm with the help of similes in this stanza. Loose clouds are compared with dead leaves. The scattered clouds are like disordered hair of intoxicated follower of Bacchus the god of mine.
7. The west wind is dirge i.e. the funeral song or the dying year. Autumn annonnce the closing of the year and spring season celebrates the birth of Autumn. Here the poet refers it to the funeral song which is sung on the death of someone. Thus west wind is compared with dirge A valulted or arched tomb should be erected to commemorate the dead year.
8. The phrase 'congregated' means collective. It refers to the collectives strength and power of clouds which will serve as the arched roof of the tomb, which will be erected over the dead body of the year.
9. The hairs of the followers of Baccchus were lifted because Bacchus was the God of wine in Greek mythology. He was always drunk and travelled at the head of a procession consiting of intoxicated men and women. As these followers used to be drunk their hair were described as lifted and dishevilled. These disturbed hairs are the cloud which are scatterede through out the sky.
10. Mediteresean sea was fast asleep during summer time. The west wind has awakened the sea from its dream. In his dreams he is rudered the old palaces and towers near Baial bay which once stood on its shore.
11. They are frightened with the power and strength of west wind. West wind shakes the water and disturbs the sea and as a result ,the reflection of the palaces and towers standing at the shore of the sea also quivers in water.
12. The Atlantic Ocean divides itself in to two part to pave the way to west wind to pass through.

The power of west wind can be seen on the water or the Atlantic Ocean also. The powerful west wind creates chasm in the water and waves rise on the one side and waves rise on the otherside and a kind of hollow is created between the waves and this hollow appears to be like a dividing line.

13. Selley refers to a natural and scientific fact in this stanza. In autumn even the sea vegetation and foilage deopoil themselves and shed their leaves. The approach of west wind is indications to that natural phenomenon.
14. The poet wishes that if he were a dead leaf a cloud or a wave he would have shared and tasted the power strength of the west wind.
15. In his boyhood the poet was as swift, implusive and strong, free and powerful as the west wind. He says that he would have become his companions in the race and he is sure to defeat her in the race. He could exced the speed of the west wind and could accompany it on its wandering over the sky.
16. The poet appeals to the west wind to lift him as a wave a leaf or as cloud. He appeals to the west wind to give him its strength and power so that he can spread his ideas of the golden age to man kind. He appeals to the west wind to make him its lyre so that he can spread his message to the mankind.
17. The poet makes use of similes abundently to make his point. He first appeals the west wind.
18. The poet addresses the bird as a bilthe spirit because. It soars very high in the sky & from there it pours fourth cheerful & meledious songs. As it is invisible the poet calls him spirit which sings happy & sweet melodies.
19. The poet here compares the bird skylark to poet who is hidden from the public gaze by originality and obscurity of his ideas. The poet's message to mankind is so original that people cannot understand it. But the poet is not disappointed he continues singing the song till the the public starts appreciating his poem. In the same manner the skylark keeps singing till we are moved to admiration for its songs even though the skylark is invisible.
20. The phrase 'unbodied joy' means a happy soul that has shaken its mortal body. The poet here compares the skylark to this free soul who has freed itself from the earthly body and on its way to Heaven. The soul is full of happiness as it is now free from all earthly boundation in the same manner the skylark is a happy soul that has shaken of its earthly coil and set out on a journey towards Heaven.
21. The music of the skylark surpasses in beauty and joy and freshness everything that could claim its quality. The sound of rain falling on the bright grass in spring is inferior to the music of the skylark. It surpasses the beautiful flowers which have been awaken from thier sleep by the rain.
22. The poet wants to learn the secret of joyful, cheerful and happy music of the skylark. He appeals the bird to teach him even half of the joy of its song to enable him to write meledious and sweet songs.
23. The note of joy in the songs of the skylark is more greater than these songs. The poet writes that these songs suffer from some deficiency and they are meaning less and insingnificant in camparision to the meledious and rapatrous songs of the skylark.

24. Love when it reaches to its climax or culmination it gives pain s and suffering. Therefore there is no tinge of sorrow and pain in the songs of the skylark.
25. The poet makes a comparision between human life and the skylark's song. Human beings are never satisfied with their life. They regret and repent for their past and make big plans for their future, hence they cannot enjoy their present. Their life is always full of sorrows, disappointment and faliures. There is always a longing for the fulfillment, a desire for completness. On the other hand the skylark has never experienced these sorrows and pains.
26. This a very famous and quoted line of Shelley. The poet says that our songs are those which describe the saddest thought and idea. We always enjoy sad songs. The sad songs of human beings are always very melodious.
27. The poet calls the bird scrone of the ground because it always flies at a great height in the sky. It seems the skylark hates the earth that is why it soars high in the sky.
28. The secret of the cheerful, happy and melodious songs of the skylark is that it has deeper and true knowledge of the mystery of death. Death does not horrify it. It does not know the pangs of love.
29. Similie is a kind of compulsion between two things or object using the word 'as' or 'like'. The poem is full of similies. There is a series of similes in which melodious song the skylark is compared with many things.
30. In the poem 'Ode to Skylark' Shelley considers skylark not a bird but a spirit which pours forth rich melodies of spontaneous music from some where in the sky. The skylark flies higher, singing all the time. In the golden light of sunrise, the skylark flies and floats unseen in the aerial regions. The music of the skylark has been idealised by the poet. He wants to know the origin of skylark's melodious and ecstatic song. The poet contrast the suffering of mankind with the joyful songs of word.

The Pictorial Quality of the Poem :- The poem is remarkable for its abundance of similes each of which is a picture in itself. In To a Skylark we have glittreing quality because of the ornamental imagery. We have series of similes such as. "a cloud of fire," "The golden lighting of the sunken sun," "a star of heaven," "rainbow clouds". These are all colourful pictures. Here is a glittering picture of the Moon :

Keen as are the arrows  
Of that silver sphere,  
Whose intense lamp narrows  
In the white dawn clear  
Until we hardly see — we-feel that it is there.

Then there are the wonderful similes which decorate the poem. The skylark is compared to a "poet hidden in the light of thought ," "a high -born maiden soothing her love-laden soul with music sweet as love, " "a glow -worm golden in adell of dew", 'a rose embowered in its own green leaves. " All these pictures have a keen sensous appeal.

Its Spontaneous Quality:— The most striking quality of Shelley's lyricism is its  
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spontaneity. His lyrics are pure effusions, and they come directly from his heart. Here is an example of spontaneous writing :

Teach me half the gladness  
That thy brain must know,  
Such harmonious madness  
From my lips would flow  
The world should listen then-as I am listening now.

Contrast between human sorrow of Skylark songs :- Shelley's lyrics almost express an intensity of feeling, or a deep passion. There is, too, a note of desire and longing in most of his lyrics. In the poem To a Skylark, we have the following stanza expressive of human sadness:

We look before and after,  
And pine for what is not:  
Our sincerest laughter  
With some pain is fraught :  
Our sweetest songs those that tell of saddest thought.

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## 8.8 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit we have

- read two of the most famous lyrics of *P.B. Shelley*,
- learnt to read between lines,
- studied about certain figure of speech and poetic forms.

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## 8.9 Review Questions

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1. Write a note on the beauties of the Ode to a Skylark.
2. Write a note on Shelley's treatment of Nature in the Ode to the West Wind.
3. Examine the structure of the Ode to the West Wind and add a brief comment on its theme.
4. Discuss Shelley's as a romantic poet.

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## 8.10 Bibliography

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## UNIT-9

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### LORD BYRON: THE VISION OF JUDGEMENT

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#### Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 About the Age
- 9.3 About the Author
- 9.4 Extracts from the Vision of Judgement alongwith explanations
- 9.5 Critical Comments on Byron
- 9.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.7 Review Questions
- 9.8 Bibliography

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#### 9.0 Objectives

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After going through this unit, you will be able to understand -the age of Byron

- finer aspects of Byron’s poetry
- the references from the Bible
- and the meanings of words used in the passage

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#### 9.1 Introduction

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In this unit you are going to study some extracts from Byron’s poem **The Vision of Judgement**. This will enable you to understand the style of Byron. This unit will also make you familiar with the age of Byron. The extracts will be explained to you; this will enable you to understand them fully. Questions will be given and we are sure you can find their answers in the text provided to you.

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#### 9.2 About the Age

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George Gordon Byron (called Lord Byron), John Keats, and Percy Bysshe Shelley belong to the second generation of Romantic Poets. Their works exhibit passion and revolutionary zeal. These three writers offer many points of close resemblance hence they are often studied together. Byron was born on the eve of the French Revolution and Shelley and Keats were born shortly after that. The situation in England was one of unrest. Agricultural England was giving way to industrial England. Revolutionary ideas generated by the French Revolution was passionately accepted by some and denounced by others. Political unrest was prevalent in the whole of Europe. But despite that utilitarian philosophy progressed. This philosophy was popularized by Jeremy Bentham who believed in the concept of the “greatest happiness of the greatest number”. Liberalism was advocated: the middle class began to have a realistic outlook. Literature reflected the intensity of the period and the works of these writers were in a sense representative of the times.

The Lake Poets (William Wordsworth, S.T. Colridge and Robert Southey) were called the first generation of Romantic Poets. If they set the trend of poetry writing in England, the second generation

of poets carried it further ahead. Keats, Shelley and Byron freed poetry from all its restraints. They form a group by themselves. The intensity of their art was understood by the elite. Byron crossed the boundaries of his country and conquered Europe with his fiery imagination. Keats and Shelley also won name and fame in the continent.

The period after the French Revolution is called the post revolutionary era. Byron's was the most articulate voice of this era. He expressed the spirit of the age. Along with these three poets (Byron, Keats and Shelley) the other well known writer was Sir Walter Scott. Scott was an immensely learned man: he had translated works of Goethe and some German ballads. Scottish history often finds place in his works. His characters are often shaped by the environment they are in. Byron was very much influenced by Scott's works. Both Byron and Shelley (1792-1822) had a low view of 'public applause' and they had a distaste for the British Establishment. John Keats (1795-1821) was much influenced by poets both living and dead.

This period also saw the birth of some famous essayists. One such essayist was William Hazlitt (1778-1830) who along with Coleridge is one of the famous literary critics of this age. Hazlitt won fame also as a critic of Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama. Hazlitt's friend 'Elia' Charles Lamb (1775-1834) was also an essayist of great repute. Lamb enjoyed Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. His essays (written under the name of Elia) reveal a Londoner's pleasure with the streets and institutions of London and the attachment to a countryside situated at a distance from the town. Another famous writer of this age was 'Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859) whose most celebrated work was *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater*.

The Romantics Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Keats, Shelley and Byron defy definition. Their poetry has imaginative spontaneity, and elements of wonder. They reacted against classical standards of balance, order, restraint, proportion and objectivity. The polished wit of the Augustans appeared to the Romantics as shallow and artificial. The Romantics heightened in their works the dignity and simplicity of rural life. Emotions like joy, dejection, rapture, horror were highlighted by the Romantics.

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### 9.3 About the Author

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George Gordon, Lord Byron was born in 1788 in London. He became the sixth Baron of Rochdale in 1798. He went to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1805 and left it in 1807. His first collection of poems *Hours of Idleness* was published in 1807. This work was bitterly criticized by Henry Potter, Baron Brougham (1778-1868) and this provoked Byron into writing *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* in 1809. In 1809 Byron took his seat in the House of Lords and between 1809-11 he visited Portugal, Spain, Malta, Greece and the Levant. Byron wrote a number of poems and a couple of dramas.

Byron's first successful literary production was *Childe Harold* published in two cantos in 1812. In 1813 *The Bride of Abydos* and *The Giaour* were published. In 1814 he wrote two other literary pieces *The Corsair* and *Lara*. In 1815 *Hebrew Melodies* appeared. In

1816 Byron and his wife were separated and Byron went to Geneva where he stayed with Shelley.

Byron's works *Parisina*, *Childe Harold* Cantos III and *The Prisoner of Chillon* was published in 1816. In 1817 he wrote *Manfred* and the *Lament of Tasso* after seeing Tasso's cell in Rome. Between 1818-1819 Byron wrote Don Juan Cantos I, II and III. In 1820 *The Prophecy of Dante* was written and in 1821 *The Vision of Judgement* was published. It is interesting to note that Byron had a revolutionary zeal within him. He formed the 'Byron Brigade' at Missolonghi and gave large sums of money to the Greeks in their war for independence. In 1824 Byron died at Missolonghi.

Byron had a number of affairs with women. Therefore his poetry was condemned on moral grounds "Byron was unique among Romantic poets in that he respected the neoclassical poets and sought to some degree, to emulate them. Most Romantic poets sought to overturn the old conventions

and to create a new poetry based on creativity and individualism. Byron used diverse verse structures, but he, like Pope and Dryden, wrote satires about society and other poets.” (<http://www.literatureclassio.com/ancientpaths/byron.html>).

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## 9.4 Extracts from The Vision of Judgement

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Byron's The Vision of Judgement was written in response to Robert Southey's 'A Vision of Judgement'. Byron's poem parodies Southey's work. Southey, the poet laureate, had written a glorious account of George III's entry into heaven after his death. Southey had accused Byron of being a member of the "Satanic School" of poetry. In Byron's poem the reader gets to know how George III really got into heaven. The angel and the fallen angels were debating as to whether George III should be allowed to enter Heaven or not. Robert Southey was then brought in to read his version of the Vision of Judgement. According to Byron, the poem written by Southey was so awful that all the angels ran away. Finding the gate of Heaven open, George III crept inside.

### Stanza 1

Saint Peter I sat by the celestial gate<sup>2</sup>; His keys were rusty, and the lock was dull, so little trouble had been given of late, not that the place by any means was full, But since the Gallic<sup>3</sup> era, 'eight-eight' The devils had taken a longer, stronger pull,<sup>4</sup> And a pull altogether, as they say At sea<sup>5</sup> - which drew most souls another way.

1. A well known disciple of Jesus Christ.
2. Gates of Heaven
3. an ancient region of Europe, corresponding to France, Belgium, the south Netherlands, S.W. Germany and Northern Italy. The area south of the Alps was conquered by the Romans in 222 BC. The area north of the Alps was taken by Julius Caesar between 58 and 51 B.C.
4. Devils had pulled away the entrants from the gates of Heaven.
5. Lost

Saint Peter sat by the gates of Heaven, holding the keys of Heaven in his hands. The keys had become rusty (they were not being used) and the lock had lost its polish. Saint Peter did not have to face any trouble because there were very few souls entering Heaven. Heaven was not full. Ever since the Gallic era when Julius Caesar had established control over the Gaul regions, the devils had their hands full. The devils had pulled away a number of lost souls from the gates of heaven. These lost souls were taken to another place.

### VIII

In the first year of freedom's second dawn I Died George the Third; although no tyrant<sup>2</sup>, one who shielded tyrants, till each sense withdrawn<sup>3</sup>. Left him nor mental nor external sun; A better farmer never brushed dew from lawn, A worse king never left a realm undone! He died - but left his subjects still behind, One half as mad<sup>4</sup> - and the other no less blind.

1. Death of George the Third in 1820
2. dictator, cruel master
3. bouts of mental illness
4. refers to George IV. He had a bad reputation. He attempted to divorce Caroline of Brunswick just after coming to the throne.

George the Third died in 1820. Even though he was no tyrant, he shielded people who were tyrannical in their behaviour towards the subjects, (common people). George the Third was the grandson

of George II and became Monarch (king) in 1760. He exercised considerable political influence. After 1788 his influence decreased because of his bouts of mental illness. His son (later George IV was made regent in 1811. (Regent refers to a person who is appointed to administer a state because the king is a minor or is absent or is incapable of ruling the state). Byron writes that George III had no knowledge of how a State should be ruled. Therefore, he was a very bad king. His successor George IV was an inefficient Monarch. He was blind to the follies of the courtiers.

### **XVIII**

‘No,’ quoth the chreub 1; ‘George the  
Third is dead’

“And who is George the Third?” replied the apostle;<sup>2</sup> ‘What George? What Third?’ ‘The Kind of England’, said The angel, ‘Well, he won’t find kings to jostle<sup>3</sup> Him on his way; but does he wear his head ? Because the last we saw here had a tussle,<sup>5</sup> And ne’er would have got into heaven’s good graces,

Had he not flung his head in all our faces.

1. angel
2. disciple (reference is to Saint Peter who is the keeper of the gates of Heaven)
3. push
4. Is the head on the body
5. reference is to Louis XVI of France whose head was chopped off during the French Revolution.

George III is dead and there is a great noise near the gates of Heaven. St. Peter thinks that either it is some star that has crashed or Lucifer (Satan who ruled over hell) has come back with his supporters to quarrel with God. The angel tells St. Peter that the noise is due to the arrival of George III. St. Peter does not know who is George III. The angel informs him that George III was the king of England. To this St. Peter replies that George III would not find many kings in heaven. He wondered whether George III had his head attached to his body. The last king who came to the gates of heaven was Louis XVI and he was headless. It would have been difficult for Louis XVI to enter heaven without his head: but he flung his head in the faces of St. Peter and the other angels.

### **XXII**

The angel answered ‘Peter! do not pout!  
The king who comes has head and all entire<sup>2</sup>,  
And never knew much what it was about  
He did as doth the puppet - by its wire.  
And will be judged like all the rest no doubt:

My business and your own is not to inquire Into such matters, but to mind our cue<sup>3</sup> Which is to act as we are bid to do.

1. Sulk
2. body
3. part

The angel asked St. Peter not to sulk. He told St. Peter that the king’s head and body were intact. Even though the king had his head on his shoulders, he did not put his head to wise use. The

king was like a puppet in the hands of his ministers Just as a puppeteer pulls the puppets with the help of strings, similarly was George III pulled here and there by his ministers. George III would be judged according to the norms: this was the way the others had been judged. The angel tells St. Peter that it was not their business to inquire into such things but to play the part the way they have been told to do.

### XXXII

Hel and the somber, silent Spirit<sup>2</sup> met-  
They knew each other both for good and ill;  
Such was their power, that neither could forget  
His former friend and future foe; but still  
There was high, immortal, proud regret<sup>3</sup>  
In either's eye, as if it were less their will  
Than destiny<sup>4</sup> to make the eternal years  
Their date of war, and their 'champ clos'<sup>5</sup> the spheres.

1. The Good angel Michael; he was the chief amongst the angels.
2. Satan also called Lucifer. The Bible (Holy Book of the Christians) says that Lucifer rebelled against God and therefore, god threw him out of Heaven.
3. Probably Lucifer is sorry for going against the wishes of God and Michael feels sorry for Lucifer who went the wrong way.
4. fate
5. the place of meeting.

Michael the Good angel of God and Lucifer the Evil Angel (Satan) meet outside Heaven. Both these angels knew each other for better for worse. They could not forget each other: once upon a time they had been friends but now they were foes (enemies). Lucifer, immortal and proud, probably regrets going against God. Michael is sorry for Lucifer because Lucifer rebelled against God. Probably this was destined to happen: for years to come there would be clashes between them and their meeting place would be the spheres, the neutral space between heaven and hell.

### XXXVIII

Michael began: 'What wouldst thou with this name 1,  
Now dead, and brought before the Lord? What ill 2  
Hath he wrought since his mortal race began  
That thou<sup>3</sup> canst claim him? Speak! And do thy<sup>4</sup> will,  
If it be just: if in this earthly span  
He hath been greatly failing to fulfill  
His duties as a king and mortal, say,  
And he is thine, if not, let him have way.'

1. George the Third
2. sorrow, also problems

3. you
4. your

Michael and Lucifer meet in neutral space outside the gates of Heaven to discuss the fate of George III who had died Michael asks Lucifer what does he wish to do with George III. Did George III increase the problems of mankind? Why has Lucifer come to claim the soul of George III. Did George III fail in his duties as a king and as a human being? If so then Lucifer can take him, if not than George III should be allowed to enter Heaven.

### XXXIX

‘Michael!’ replied the Prince of Airl, ‘even here  
 Before the Gate<sup>2</sup> of him<sup>3</sup> thou servest, must  
 I claim my subject<sup>4</sup>: and will make appear  
 That as he was my worshipper in dust<sup>5</sup>,  
 So shall he be in spirit, although dear  
 To thee and thine, because nor wine nor lust  
 Were of his weaknesses<sup>6</sup>; yet on the throne  
 He reigned over millions to serve me alone.

1. Lucifer (Satan)
2. Gates of Heaven
3. God
4. George the Third
5. body. The Bible says that man’s body is made of dust and man will return to dust i.e. he will be buried in the earth.
6. George III did not have the weaknesses for wine, women and wealth.
7. ruled.

Lucifer replied to Michael by saying that right from the beginning George III was a subject of Lucifer. Michael may be serving God, but George III served Satan. Now that George III is dead and his spirit has appeared, Lucifer has come to claim him. It is true that George III did not indulge in wine and lust. But when he was ruling over millions, his mind and heart were dedicated to the service of Lucifer.

### XLVI

‘I know he<sup>2</sup> was a constant consort<sup>3</sup>; own He was a decent sire<sup>4</sup>, and middling<sup>5</sup> lord. All this is much, and most upon a throne; As temperance<sup>6</sup>, if at Apicius<sup>7</sup> board, Is more than at an anchorite<sup>8</sup>’s supper shown. I grant him all the kindest can accord; And this was well for him, but not for those Millions who found him what oppression<sup>9</sup> chose.’

1. Lucifer
2. George III
3. husband
4. father

5. average, neither very good nor very bad
6. refraining from alcoholic drinks
7. Roman epicure - a person who takes pleasure in fine food and drink.
8. a religious recluse
9. prolonged cruel or unjust treatment.

Lucifer tells the good angel Michael that it was true that George III was a good and loyal husband, a decent father and an average person in his dealings. These qualities are good for the throne. Just as a person restrains himself and eats like a religious recluse when he goes to the house of a person who is fond of good food and drinks, similarly the above mentioned qualities of George III befitted a monarch. This was well for him, it was one aspect of his nature. Millions of people found his prolonged cruelty and authoritative behaviour too much to bear.

## L

‘Sooner will I with Cerberus<sup>2</sup> exchange  
 My office (and his no sinecure<sup>3</sup>)  
 Than see this royal Bedlam<sup>4</sup> bigot<sup>5</sup> range  
 The azure<sup>6</sup> fields of heaven, of that be sure!’  
 ‘Saint!’ replied Satan, ‘you do well to avenge<sup>7</sup>  
 The wrongs he made your satellites<sup>8</sup> endure;  
 And if to this exchange you should be given  
 I’ll try to coax our Cerberus up to heaven!’

1. Saint Peter
2. a huge watchdog with three heads which guarded the entrance to Hades, the underworld
3. a position requiring little or no work but giving the holder status or financial benefit.
4. mad
5. a person who is convinced of the superiority or correctness of his own opinions and prejudiced against those who hold different opinions.
6. blue
7. take revenge
8. earth

Saint Peter gets angry when he hears accounts of George III’s cruelty from Lucifer. Saint Peter exclaims that he would exchange with Cerberus his (saint Peter’s) office rather than allow this mad, bigoted ruler (George III) to enter the gates of heaven. (Remember that Saint Peter guarded the gates of Heaven). Saint Peter’s anger is justified according to Satan and Satan tells him that he would do well to take revenge on George III who was cruel to a number of people on the earth. Satan says that he would try and coax Cerberus up to Heaven in case Saint Peter wants to exchange places.

## LXIV

Satan replied, ‘To me the matter is

Indifferentl, in a personal point of view:  
 I can have fifty better souls than this  
 With far less trouble than we have gone through  
 Already; and I merely argued his  
 Late2 majesty3 of Britain's case with you  
 Upon a point of form4: you may dispose5  
 Of him; I've kings enough below, God knows!'

1. of no great importance
2. refers to a person who has died
3. king, monarch
4. as a matter of principle, the customary or correct method or procedure
5. get rid of

In order to stake his claim to George III's soul, Satan brought forth a number of witnesses. Michael told him that there was no need of so many witnesses. To which Satan replied in the following manner: Satan said whether George III resided in Heaven or Hell, was a matter of no importance because Satan could have had fifty better souls than this soul of George III. Those fifty souls would have been got with far less trouble. But Satan said that he argued George III's case with Michael because it was customary, it was usually done as a matter of form. But Satan said that Michael was free to dispose of George III.

Satan said that he had a number of kings residing in hell and they were insufficient number. He did not need, nor was he very anxious to have George III's soul.

#### LXXXV

At length with jostling, 1 elbowing2 and the aid3  
 Of cherubim4 appointed to that post  
 The devil Asmodeus to the circle made  
 His way, and looked as if his journey cost  
 Some trouble. When his burden5 down he laid,  
 'What's this? cried Michael' 'Why' tis not a ghost ?'  
 'I know it,' quoth the incubus6' but he Shall be one, if you leave the affair to me.'

1. pushing
2. making way in a crowd
3. help
4. a winged angelic being described in biblical tradition as attending on God
5. load (reference here is to Robert Southey) (Robert Southey wrote A Vision of Judgement)
6. male demon.

The devil Asmodeus makes his way with great difficulty to the place where Michael and Lucifer

are standing. With the help of cherubims he appears before Michael and carrying. Asmodeus replies that this person whom he has been carrying would soon turn into a ghost if matters were left to be settled by Asmodeus.

### XC

Now the bardl, glad to get an audience which  
By no means oft was his case below,<sup>2</sup>  
Began to cough, and hawk<sup>3</sup> and hem<sup>4</sup>, and pitch  
His voice into that awful note of woe<sup>5</sup>  
To all unhappy hearers within reach of poets when the tide of rhyme's in flow;  
But stuck fast with his first hexameter<sup>6</sup>,  
Not one of all whose gouty<sup>7</sup> feet would stir.

1. poet
2. earth
3. clear the throat noisily
4. exclamation. Used in writing to indicate a sound made when coughing or clearing the throat to attract someone's attention or express hesitation.
5. distress
6. a line of verse consisting of six metrical feet.
7. a disease in which defective metabolism of uric acid causes arthritis (Here the reference is to the hexameter composition of Robert Southey: not one feet in the poetic composition could stir the audience)

The poet Robert Southey was glad to find an audience in this neutral space between heaven and hell. He did not find a ready audience on the earth. He began to cough and clear his throat and began reciting his poem in a voice that was distressful to hear. His hearers were extremely unhappy. He got stuck on the first hexameter. Not one feet in the poetic composition could stir the audience, it seemed the feet (metrical composition) was struck with arthritis.

### XCIX

He had written Wesley'sl life: here turning round  
To Satan, 'Sir, I'm ready to write yours,  
In two Octav<sup>02</sup> volume, nicely bound,  
With notes and preface, all that most allures<sup>3</sup>  
The pious<sup>4</sup> purchaser, and there's no ground  
For fear, for I can choose my own reviews:  
So let me have the proper documents,  
That I may add you it my other saints ..

1. John Wesley (1703-1791) English preacher and co-founder of Methodism
2. a size of book page that results from folding each printed sheet into eight leaves (sixteen pages).

3. attracts
4. religious (here it refers to a hypocritical display of virtues)

Robert Southey had written the life of John Wesley. Sothey tells Satan that he is willing to write an account of Satan's life. He tells Satan that it would be written in two Octavo volumes and it would be nicely bound. The cover would be so attractive that it would deceive people into buying. He tells Satan that the book would get proper reviews. He tells Satan to give him all the documents. Thus Satan's name would be added to the names of other Saints.

#### CIV

Saint Peter, who has hitherto been known  
 For an impetuous 1 saint, upraised his keys,  
 And at the fifth line knocked the poet down,  
 Who fell like Phaeton<sup>2</sup>, but more at ease,  
 Into his lake, for there he did not drown;  
 A different web<sup>3</sup> being by the Destinies<sup>4</sup>  
 Woven for the Laureate's<sup>5</sup> final wreath<sup>6</sup>, whenever  
 Reform shall happen either here or there.

1. headstrong
2. a light open four wheeled horse drawn carriage (reference here is to the sun's chariot which the son of the Sun God had asked to drive. The son could not control the horses, the chariot was plunging into the earth when Zeus killed the phaeton with a thunderbolt in order to save the earth from destruction)
3. a network of fine threads constructed by a spider to catch its prey
4. Fate
5. Robert Southey was poet laureate of England
6. an arrangement of flowers and leaves used for laying on a grave.

Robert Southey after clearing his throat began reciting his poem; at the fourth line, the devils, angels and ghosts fled from the scene. When Robert Southey began reciting the fifth line, Saint Peter raised his keys and struck Southey down. Southey fell like the phaeton, but he fell into his own lake of writings. He did not get drowned. Destiny had woven a different web for the poet laureate and that would be his final wreath when the moment came, that web would cover the poet's body like a wreath.

#### CVI

As far the rest, to come to the conclusion of this true dream, the telescope 1 is gone Which kept my optics<sup>2</sup> free from all delusion<sup>3</sup>,

And showed me what I in my turn have shown,  
 All I saw farther, in the last confusion,  
 Was, that King George slipped into heaven for one;  
 And when the tumult<sup>4</sup> dwindled<sup>5</sup> into a 'calm<sup>6</sup>,  
 I left him practicing the hundredth psalm<sup>7</sup>.

1. an optical instrument designed to make distant objects appear nearer.
2. relating to the eye or vision.
3. a belief or impression maintained despite being contradicted by what is generally accepted as reality or rational argument.
4. chaos
5. lessened
6. peace
7. a sacred song or hymn contained in the biblical Book of Psalms and used in Christian and Jewish worship.

Robert Southey is knocked down by Saint Peter. Byron concludes his poem by saying that his optical vision is now cleared. But before concluding his poem he sees George III slipping into the gates of Heaven which have been left open by Saint Peter who was busy punishing Southey. So George III has slipped into Heaven and there he was busy reciting the hundredth psalm.

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## 9.5 Critical Comments on Byron

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Very soon after the publication of **Childe Harold's** Pilgrimage Byron had become famous as an author. The Byronic hero had some typical characteristics: he was a proud, moody, cynical man, “ ‘with defiance on his brow, and misery in his heart, a scorner of his kind, implacable in revenge, yet capable of deep and strong affection’ “ These comments are by Lord Macaulay when he was asked to review Thoms Moore's Life of Byron. Prof. J.B. Jump feels that the spontaneity of Byron's expressions can be gaged from the letter that Byron wrote to his friends.

Prof. Jump says “ .....Byron's humour can take the form of fanciful and nonsensical inventions appended to reported facts, and then we have delighted deservation, exuberant fancy, and cheerful volubility ... But he was not always jocose. There was certainly a darker side to his nature. Throughout his life he was subject to feelings of profound gloom . . . No doubt a hope of escaping from his low spirits partly motivated his persistent search for excitement.” In his Journal dated 22nd November, 1813, Byron wrote that” ‘a little tumult, now and then, is an agreeable quickener of sensation; such as a revolution, a battle, or an adventure of any lively description’ ... The great object of life is sensation –to feel that we exist, even though in pain. It is this ‘craving void’ which drives us to gaining - to battle - to travel - to intemperate, but keenly felt pursuits of any description, whose principal attraction is the agitation inseparable from their accomplishment” (6 September 1813 : Letters, III, 400). Prof Jump remarks “Living in accordance with these doctrines, he (Byron) spoke scornfully of those who could achieve a placid contentment”.

Byron was a man of action. This can be determined from the fact that he was very supportive of the Greeks battle for independence from the Turks. Byron loathed tyrants and was a great believer in the concept of freedom. He had even offered practical suggestions in the liberation of Italy from foreign rule.

**The Vision of Judgment** was written in 1821, during an interval in the composition of **Bon Juan**. “George III had died early in the previous year, old, blind, and insane. In the spring of 1821, the Poet Laureate, Robert Southey, published A Vision of Judgement, describing the dead king's admission to celestial bliss. The poem simply asked for ridicule; and Byron so disliked Southey, both as a convert to Toryism and as a suspected slanderer of himself, that he was more than ready to supply it.

But ferocious ridicule of Southey's poem is only a part of his achievement in **The Vision of**

**Judgement**, within ten stanzas of its opening, he is imagining the royal funeral and telling what he believes to be the unqualified truth about it. In his view, George III had been a political calamity to his country and to mankind; and the funeral had been insincere and theatrical.” As the main plot develops, the reader sees the “Archangel Michael and his antagonist Satan claiming George III for heaven and hell respectively. Wilkes and Junius give their testimony. Then Southey arrives. He delivers a speech of absurd self-advertisement, concluding with the offer to ‘save the Deity some worlds of trouble’ by reading aloud his own **Vision of Judgement**. All present, celestial and infernal, fly in consternation; and, says Byron,

‘All I saw farther, in the last confusion,  
Was, that King George slipped into Heaven for One;  
And when the tumult dwindled to a calm,  
I left him practicing the hundredth psalm’

This plot enables Byron severely to castigate an official Tory bard and a royal instrument of political oppression.” In his works, Byron displays an exuberant, voluble, ironical yet informal temper.

[Prof. J.D. Jump’s comment on Byron have been taken from Boris Ford edited volumes of The Pelican Guide to English Literature - **From Blake to Byron**, rpt. 1983]

Byron was famous all over Europe because of his poetic works. He was a champion of liberty and his works were “the first to influence Europe”. Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian in A History of English Literature (1971 rpt) commenting about Byron writes, “A deep analogy thus affiliates Byron with the spiritual posterity of Rousseau - (and) with the Goethe of Werther ... making him in his turn one of the most active generators of a mental contagion that is freely spreading beyond the frontiers of nations”. In Byron’s works critics have noted an “element of morbidity”. Legouis and Cazamian observe “It would be hard to find a character of more energy than that of Byron; but he was never completely master of himself; his life and work offer us the picture of an essential duality.” Byron’s divided nature is seen in his creative activities. Art, artistic creations were for him of supreme importance. Despite his artistic creations Byron’s moral life continued to shock his contemporaries who wondered whether he actually loved his half sister. Legouis and Cazamian observes, “all the moral unrest of his stormy career cannot dim the splendour of a personality so admirably vigorous and richly endowed.” His work “will resist the wear of time.”

[Emile Legouis & Louis Cazamian - A History of English Literature rpt 1971 Mac Millan: New Delhi]

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## 9.6 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit you have read some of the extracts taken from Byron’s poem The Vision of Judgement. This is a satiric poem and Byron criticizes Southey in this poem. There are 15 extracts given and these give you an idea of Byron’s style. Explanations have been given: these will enable you to understand the poem thoroughly. After going through this unit, you are familiar with the age of Byron, finer aspects of Byron’s poetry, and the references he makes to the bible.

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## 9.7 Review Questions

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1. Why did Byron write The Vision of Judgement?
2. Who is Saint Peter and what duty is assigned to him ?
3. Who is Michael and what is his role in the poem.
4. Who is Lucifer and what is his role in the poem.

5. Whom is Byron addressing as the poet laureate?

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## **9.8 Bibliography**

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  - (c) E.L. Woodward, *The Age of Reform Delhi*: OUP.
  - (d) J.J.McGann.*FieryDust:Byron’s Poetic Development*, Chicago, Illinois, 1968)
  - (e) <http://www.literatureclassics.com>
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## UNIT-10

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### CHARLES LAMB : ESSAYS

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#### Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Study Guide
- 10.2. About the Age: Romantic Period
- 10.3 Essay as a Genre and its Development
- 10.4 About the Author Charles Lamb
- 10.5 About the Essays:
- 10.6 The Essays:
  - a) Dream Children: A Reverie
  - b) Imperfect Sympathies
- 10.6.1 Glossary
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#### 10.0 Objectives

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In this Unit we have given your two essays by Charles Lamb. We aim at teaching you how understand an essayist in the context of his period, in this case the Romantic period. After completing this Unit you will be able to

- have an idea about the art of essay writing and how it is different from other genres.
- understand and have details about the Romantic period in English literature, and how it was a reaction against its preceding era i.e. neoclassical age.
- know Charles Lamb as an essayist on the basis of his essay.
- explain certain lines with reference to context by adding critical notes on matter and style.

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#### 10.1 Study Guide

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In this Unit we aim at giving you two essays by Charles Lamb. You have been given some details about the age i.e. The Romantic era to which the essayist belongs. You will find meanings of the difficult words of the essay in the section Glossary.

You should study read about the author so that you may have an idea about his dates, his personal and social life, and the important works written by him.

You should study the Section about the Age. This section will provide you details about the

Romantic era to which Lamb and Hazlitt belong as essayists. This will help you to study the writers i.e. their essays included in Unit No. 8 and Unit No. 9 for you. You should try to locate the general trends of the era in these writes prescribed for you. You will find that they share many elements of Romanticism namely contrast with neoclassicism, role of imagination, autobiographical details and a feeling of recluse or rebel in society.

The Section About the Essay provides you the critical summary of the essays of the Unit so that you may understand the essays in line with the summary given. You should notice how certain lines are explained with reference to the context. You have been given model.

You should try to answer the self assessment questions. You can rephrase the answers given or write in your own words but the gist or the information should be correct as given in the essays by the writer.

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## **10.2 About the Age: Romantic Period**

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The Romantic period in English literature is usually considered from 1798 (The beginning of the French Revolution) or 1798 (The Publication of the Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth & Coleridge) up to the beginning of the Victorian era. This is considered a great literary period with a strong contrast with Neoclassical period (From Restoration 1660 to the beginning of the Romanticism) in the theme and style. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, Byron, Shelley, Keats as poets; Lamb, Hazlitt De Quincey and Leigh Hunt as essayists; Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott as novelists are well-known writers of this age.

Dryden, Poe, Addison, Swift, Johnson, Goldsmith and Edmund Burke are important writers of neoclassicism who imitated the classical writers in form & style; and specially they had high respect for the Roman writers who acted as their models.

The Romantic writers of the first three decades of 19<sup>th</sup> Century differ from the neoclassical writers in their approach of ideas and writings. Their materials, forms and style of literature are different from their predecessors. The Romantic manifesto or statement of revolutionary aims begin with the use of artificiality in theme and style. Common man from the countryside in common man's language became the subject matter and the style of Wordsworth. This was no contrast with the urban ideas and artificial diction of the neoclassical writers. Thus, the Romantics violated the norms of decorum according to which poetry should be with serious subjects in appropriately elevated style. Use of supernatural element became one of the other innovations in the poetry of Coleridge and Keats. Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley acted as the poet-prophets of the era.

In his Preface to the Lyrical Ballads Wordsworth defines poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling recollected in tranquility. Thus, it is free from artificial rules and traditions of a tree, it had better not come at all". Thus, the Romantics were against artificiality in theme and style. Imagination played an important role in the poetic process of the Romantics.

Nature, the landscape along with its flora and fauna became the subject matter of the Romantic poetry. Wordsworth is considered the high priest of nature. Accurate description and sensuousness became the integral part of the poetry of Keats. Nature became an important medium for human problems. Nature became an important against the fever and the fret of this world, against the evils of industrialization which deserted the solitude of the countryside, the evils of urban life & the satanic mills.

Much of the Romantic works are full of autobiographical details representing the poet himself. While the works of the neoclassicists were mainly about other men. Most of the Romantic poems reflect the life and mood of the poet for example Wordsworth's Prelude or odes of Shelley or Keats or Byron's Child Harold. In a similar manner, we find autobiographical details in the personal essays of Lamb and Hazlitt. In all these works, the writer appears as a solitary. Many a time the chief character of a Romantic work is a rebel, whether for good or evil.

While the new classical writers rejoiced in perfect accomplishment in form and style in the manner of their Greco-Roman models the Romantics preferred the glory of the imperfect. The Romantics rejoiced the notion of unachievable ideas. The poet's faculty of imagination leads into limitless aspirations. The French Revolution and its ideas of fraternity, liberty, equality and humanity affected the Romantics to various limits and thus the Romantic era became an age of new beginnings and great possibilities in subject matter as well as in style.

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### 10.3 Essays as a Genre and its Development

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An essay is the author's response to any given subject. It has the appearance of casual and unpremeditated ease. It is an expression by the writer of what he feels as a man. It is free and spontaneous approach of the writer to any subject. As a subject, any topic is sufficient. It comes directly from his mood and reflects his personality. It is not fiction, not drama, not history, not story but it has the elements of all these in some way. The essay provides pleasure to the reader. According to Dr. Johnson an essay is "a loose sally of the mind, an irregular, undigested piece, not a regular and orderly composition." According to Murray's Dictionary it is a "composition of moderate length on any particular subject or branch of a subject... originally implying want of finish, but now said of a composition more or less elaborate in style, though limited in range". It is not exhaustive. This is a trial of a subject, or an attempt towards it, and not in the least a complete or thorough analysis of it. Thus, the author's mind and character play an important role because any theme or subject matter under the sun can be the matter of discourse. This unlimited freedom in the choice of subject matter leads to a wide range of topics—from personal, autobiographical to philosophical treatise. Style is the matter of author's personality i.e. how he deals with the material available to his sensitive mind. The essayist is a minute and sensitive spectator of life. A.C. Benson says, "An essay is a thing which someone does himself, and the point of the essay is not the subject, for any subject will suffice, but the charm of personality". According to him "the essayist, then, is in his particular fashion an interpreter of life, a critic of life. He does not see life as the historian or as the philosopher or as the poet or as the novelist; yet he has a touch of all these."

A.C. Benson in his essay *The Art of the Essayist* says that Plato's dialogues have a dramatic colouring and therefore cannot be called essays because the essential condition for the essay is soliloquy. Montaigne (333-392) is considered the first important essayist. Bacon took this form from Montaigne and developed it into terse, proverbial, aphoristic style. He is famous for providing worldly wisdom through his essays by arguing on both sides of the given topic and giving examples from the Bible, Greco-Roman history and contemporary British History. Charles Lamb (1775-1834) also wrote in the style of Bacon in compact, concise, epigrammatic and proverbial style. His essays are full of autobiographical details, which provide humour & pathos. His contemporary William Hazlitt (1778-1830) wrote on various topics but his essays are full of verbosity, digressions and rambling. Most of his essays are unlike that of Lamb in style and subject matter.

Richard Steele (472-1729) and Joseph Addison (422-1719) wrote in a new literary form, which is known as the periodical essays. Their main aim was to instruct as well as please the readers. Their essays primarily appeared in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* and represent the contemporary society well. Wit, humour and satire are the important elements of their prose style. John Dryden (431-1700) wrote literary critical essays, for example, *Of Dramatic Poesy*.

Dr. Johnson (1709-1784) contributed essays to periodicals namely the *Rambler*, *The Guardian* and *The Idler*. He wrote literary critical essays also. Oliver Goldsmith (1730-1774) is popular for his periodical essays collected in the *Citizen of the World*. R.L. Stevenson, A.C. Benson, E.V. Lucas, G.K. Chesterton, Robert Lynd, J.B. Prestley, Aldous Huxley and George Orwell are some of the other famous essayists.

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## 10.4 About the Author : Charles Lamb

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Charles Lamb (1775-1834) is a famous essayist who wrote under his pseudonym of Elia. The pseudonym Elia was borrowed from the surname of a fellow clerk in the South Sea House where Lamb worked for quite a long time. He was then transferred to East India House. This is reflected in autobiographical details in his essays. For a short time in 1795-96 he was mentally deranged, and the threat of madness became a shadow on his life. His sister, Mary, under the severe attack of insanity killed her own mother in 1795-96 he was mentally deranged, and the threat of madness became a shadow on his life. His sister, Mary, under the severe attack of insanity killed her own mother in 1796. His love affair with Ann Simmons of Hertfordshire was unsuccessful and unfortunate.

Lamb's literary criticism is scattered and small in volume, though A.C. Bradley regarded him as the greatest critic of his century. Lamb has the habit of brief and accurate characterization. His comments are generalized but perceptive. This has made his works original and illuminating. He was a well-known letter writer of great charm and quality.

Lamb tried to write poetry and dramas also but he is chiefly known for his essays. Lamb's Essays of Elia appeared in 1823, his most remarkable work, which made him "The Prince of the Essayist". In this book he has presented his criticism of life in his characteristic style having wit and humour. In these essays Lamb presents himself as Elia, and his sister Mary as "Cousin Bridget". Some of his famous essays are:

1. Dream Children: A Reverie
2. The Praise of Chimney Sweepers.
3. Imperfect Sympathies.
4. All Fools' Day
5. The Old Familiar Faces.
6. A Bachelor's Complaint Against the Behaviour of Married People.
7. The Old and the New School Master.
8. Poor Relations.
9. Witches, and Other Night Fears.

As has already been mentioned, Lamb got the pseudonym Elia from the name of an Italian who worked as his colleague at the South Sea House.

Most of Lamb's essays are deeply personal & autobiographical. These essays are a good vehicle for self-revelation. The first person singular pronoun in the essays stands for the writer and is not a persona.

Lamb's essays are full of wit & humour. He makes fun of himself as well as of others. His wit and humour are usually not full of hatred or personal revenge.

Pathos are closely related with Lamb's humour. Lamb was unmarried & therefore the questions of having children does not arise. Pathos is some kind of Catharsis and brings happiness to the writer. At the back of pathos there is Lamb's own tragic life.

His essays are full of brief character-sketches. Lamb has the art of characterization and thus makes his character memorable. Some of them are master pieces of humorous depiction. Lamb has keen observation and masterly power of representing contemporary manners and moods.

The structure of Lamb's essays is loose and he indulges in digressions too much. His essays

are not so compact and precise as those of Bacon.

As fathers of modern essay, Lamb and Hazlitt are linked together. But Lamb is more popular. There is a big difference between the dreamy quietness of Lamb and the sledge-hammer style of Hazlitt. For Lamb, his literary work is a leisure time amusement. He is not, like Hazlitt, animated by a desire to get his ideas published and read. His aim is to amuse his readers. This is the main reason why Lamb's essays are personal, humorous and light-hearted by at the same time his essays are full of tenderness and sympathy. His style is artificial but his humour is genuine. His humanity is the basis of his popularity.

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## 10.5 About the Essays

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### a) Dream Children

Lamb was unmarried but imagines that his two children- young Alice and John-request him to narrate the story of their great grandmother Field. He tells his children the details about the great grandmother Field. The house where she lived, her religious faith, the decoration of the house and the gardens and the fish-pond around it. He tells about uncle John Lamb and Lamb's affair with his wife the elder Alice. Throughout the essay the children behave and act according to the narrative scenes-making faces or other activities. In the end they disappear gradually and leave the writer with his sister Mary named here Cousin Bridget. We see that the essay is full of personal details, pathos and humour as is the usual case with Lamb.

### b) Imperfect Sympathies

"Imperfect sympathies" is one of Lamb's most delightful essays. Much in accordance to Lamb's practice of writing autobiographical essays, this essay reveals Lamb's personal prejudices and aversions. Contradictory to Sir Thomas Browne who has indiscriminate sympathy for all men, Lamb dislikes the Scots for their obsession with truth and clarity which make them follow a fixed morality. Lamb further does not like the Jews also because they are too rigid & hypocritical. His attitude towards the Negroes is that of sympathy though he cannot make intimate relations with them. Regarding the Quakers, he dislikes their evasive & ambiguous answers. One does not feel like complaining about Lamb's prejudice as he makes the essay delightful with humour anecdotes. There is a felicity of word and phrase and the style is clear & lucid.

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## 10.6 The Essays

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### a) Dream Children

CHILDREN love to listen to stories about their elders, when they were children: to stretch their imagination to the conception of a traditionally great. Uncle, or grandame, whom they never saw. It was in this spirit that my little once crept about me the other evening to hear about their great grandmother Field, who lived in a great house in Norfolk (a hundred times bigger than that in which they and papa lived) which had been the scene—so at least it was generally believed in that part of the country—of the tragic incidents which they had lately become familiar with from the ballad of the Children in the Wood. Certain it is that the whole story of the children and their cruel uncle was to be seen fairly carved out in wood upon the chimney-piece of the great hall, the whole story down to the Robin Redbreast till a foolish rich person pulled it down to set up a marble one of modern invention in its stead, with no story upon it. Here Alice put out one of her dear mother looks, too tender to be called upbraiding. Then I went on to say, how religious and how good their 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 in a sort while she lived, which afterwards came to decay, and

was nearly pulled down, and all its old ornaments stripped and carried away to the owner's other home, where they were set up, and looked as awkward as if some one were to carry away the old tombs they had seen lately at the Abbey, and slick them up in Lady C.'s tawdry gilt drawing-room. Here John smiled, as much as to say, "that would be foolish indeed." And then I told how, when she came to die, her funeral was attended by a concourse of all the poor, and some of the gentry too, of the neighborhood for many mile round, to show their respect for of her memory, because she had been such a good and religious woman; so good indeed that she knew all the Psalter by heart, ay, and a great part of the Testament besides. Here little Alice spread her hands. Then I told what a tall, right 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 country, 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 stand, but they were still upright, because she was so good and religious. Then I told how she was used to sleep by herself in a lone chamber of the great Jane house; and how she believed that all apparition of two infants was to be seen at midnight gliding up and down the great staircase near where she slept—but she said—'those innocents would do her harm; "and how frightened I used to be, though in those days I had my maid to sleep with me, because I was never half so good or religious as she—and yet I never saw the infants Here John expanded all his eyebrows and tried to look courageous. Then I told how good she was to all her grand-children, having us to the great house in the holyday, where I in particular used to spend many hours. by myself, in gazing upon the old busts of the twelve Caesars, that had been Emperors of Rome, till the old-marble heads would seem to live again, or I to be turned into marble with them; how I never could be tired with roaming about that huge mansion, with its vast empty rooms, with the gilding almost rubbed out—sometimes in the spacious old fashioned gardens, which I had almost—to myself, unless when now and, then a solitary gardening man would cross me—and because I had more pleasure strolling about among the old melancholy looking yew trees, or the firs, and picking up the red berries, and the fir. apples, which were good for nothing but to look at—or in lying about upon the fresh grass with all the fine garden smells around me—or basking in the orangey, till I could almost fancy myself ripening too along with the oranges and the limes in that grateful warmth—or in watching the dace that darted towards the fish in the fish-pond. ; It the bottom of the garden, with here and there a great sulky pike hanging midway down the water in silent state, as if it mocked at their impertinent friskings,—If had more pleasure in these busy-idle diversions than in all the sweet flavours of peaches, nectarines, oranges, and such like common baits of children. Here John slyly deposited back upon the plate a bunch of grapes, which, not unobserved by Alice, he had meditated dividing with her, and both seemed willing to relinquish them for the present as irrelevant. Then, in somewhat a more heightened tone, I told how, though their great-grandmother Field loved all her grand children, yet in an especial manner she might be said to love their uncle, John L—, because he was so handsome and spirited a youth and a king to the rest of us; and, instead of moping about in solitary corners, like some of us, he would mount the most mettled horse he could get, when but an imp no bigger than themselves, and make it carry him half over the county in a morning, and join the hunter when there any out—and yet he loved the old great house and gardens too, but had too much spirit to be always pent up within their boundaries and how their uncle grew up to man's estate as brave as he was handsome, to the admiration of everybody, but of their great. grandmother Field most especially; and how he used to carry me upon his back when I was a lame-footed boy—for he was a good bit older than me—many a mile when I could not walk for pain;—and how in after life he became lame footed too, and I did not always (I fear) make allowances enough for him when he was impatient. and in pain, nor remember sufficiently how considerate he had been to me when I was lame footed; and uncle when he died, though he had not been dead an hour, it seemed as if he had died a great while ago, such a distance there is betwixt

life and death; and how I bore his death as I thought pretty well at first, but afterwards it haunted and haunted me; and though I did not cry or take it to heart as some do, and as I think he would have done if I had died, yet I missed him all day long, and knew not till then how much I had loved him. I missed his kindness, and missed his crossness, and wished him to be alive again, to be quarrelling with him (for we quarreled sometimes), rather than not have him again, and was as uneasy without him, as he, their poor uncle, must have been when the doctor took off his limb—Here the children fell a crying, and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for uncle John, and they looked up and prayed me not to go on about their uncle, but to tell them some stories about their pretty dead mother. Then I told 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 grew gradually 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 Alice, nor of the nor are we children at all. The children of Alice call Bartrun 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 arm-chair, where I had fallen asleep with the faithful Bridget unchanged by my side—but John L. (or James Elia) was gone for ever.

**b) Imperfect Sympathies**

I am of a constitution so general, that it consorts and sympathizeth with all things; I have no antipathy, or rather idiosyncrasy in any thing. Those natural repugnancies do not touch me, nor do I behold with prejudice the French, Italian, Spaniard, or Dutch - Religio Medici

THAT the author of the Religio Medici mounted upon the airy stilts of abstraction, conversant about national and conjectural essences; in whose categories of Being the possible took the upper hand of the actual; should have overlooked the impertinent individualities of such poor concretions as mankind, is not much to be admired. It is rather to be wondered at, that in the genus of animals he should have condescended to distinguish that species at all. For myself—earth-bound and fettered to the scene of my activities—

Standing on earth, not rapt above the sky,

I confess that do feel differences of mankind national or individual, to an unhealthy excess. I can look with no different eye upon things or persons. Whatever is, is to me a matter of taste or distaste; or when once it becomes indifferent it begins to be disrelishing. I am, in plainer words, a bundle of prejudices—made up of likings and dislikings—the veriest thrall to sympathies, apathies, antipathies. In a certain sense, I hope it may be said of me that I am a lover of my species. I can feel for all indifferently, but—I cannot feel toward all equally. The more purely-English word that expresses sympathy, will better explain my meaning. I can be a friend to a worthy man, who upon another account cannot be my mate or fellow. I cannot like all people alike.

I have been trying all my life to like Scotchmen, and am obliged to desist from the experiment in despair. They cannot like me—and in truth, I never knew one of that nation who attempted to do it. There is something more plain and ingenuous in their mode of proceeding. We know one another at first sight. There is an order of imperfect intellects (under which mine must be content to rant) which in its constitution is essentially anti-Caledonian. The owners of the sort of faculties I allude to, have minds rather suggestive than comprehensive. They have no pretences

to much clearness or precision in their ideas, or in their manner of expressing them. Their intellectual wardrobe (to confess fairly) has few hole pieces in it. They are content with fragments and scattered pieces of Truth. She presents no full front to them—a feature or side face at the most. Hints and glimpses, germs and crude essays at a system, is the utmost they pretend to. They beat up a little game peradventure and leave it to note steady and polar, but mutable and shifting: waxing, and, again waning. Their conversation is accordingly. They will throw out a random word iron out of season, and be content to let it pass for what it is worth. They cannot speak all if they were upon their oath—but must be understood, speaking or writing, with some abatement. They seldom wait to mature a proposition, but e'en bring it to market in the green ear. They delight to impart their defective discovering as they arise, without waiting for their full development. They are no systematizers, and would but err more by attempting it. Their minds, as I said before, are suggestive merely. The brain of a true Caledonian (if I am no mistaken) is constituted upon quite different plan. His Minerva is born in panoply. You are never admitted to see his ideas in their growth—if indeed they do grow, and are not rather put together upon principles of clock work. You never catch his mind in an undress. He never hints or suggest anything, but unloads his stock of ideas in perfect order and completeness. He brings his total wealth into company, and gravely unpacks it. His riches are I always about him. He never stops to catch a glittering something in your prescience to share it with you, before he quite knows whether it be true touch or not. You cannot cry halves to anything that he finds. He does not find, but bring. You never witness his first apprehension of a thing. His understanding is always at its meridian—you never see the first dawn, the early streaks. He has no falterings of self-suspicion. Surmises, guesses, misgivings, half-intuitions, semi-consciousnesses, partial illuminations, dim instincts, embryo conceptions, have no place in his brain or vocabulary. The twilight of never falls upon him. He is orthodox—he has no negative there is no border-land with him—you cannot hover with him upon the confines of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument. He always keeps the path. You cannot make excursions with him—for he sects you right. His taste never fluctuates. His morality never abates. He cannot compromise, or understand middle actions. There can be but a right and a wrong. His conversation is as a book. His affirmations have the sanctity of an oath. You must speak upon the square with him. He stops a metaphor like suspected person in an enemy's country. "A healthy book!"—said one of his countrymen to me. Who had ventured to give that appellation to John Bunce,—"Did I catch rightly what you said? I have heard of a man in health, and of a healthy state of body, but I don not see how that epithet can be properly applied to a book." Above all, you must beware of indirect expressions before a Caledonian. Clap an extinguisher upon your irony, if you are unhappily blest with a vein of it. Remember you are upon your oath. I have a print of a graceful female after Leonardo da Vinci, which I was showing off to Mr. \* \* \* After he had examined it minutely, I ventured to ask him how he like MY BEAUTY (a foolish name it goes by among my friends)—when he very gravely assured me, that "he had considerable respect for my character and talents" (so he was pleased to say), "but had not given himself much thought about the degree of my personal pretensions." The misconception staggered me, but did not seem much to disconcert him.—Persons of this nation are particularly fond of affirming a truth—which nobody doubts. They do not so properly affirm, as annunciate it. They do indeed appear to have such a love of truth (as if, like virtue, it were valuable for itself) that all truth becomes a subject of disputation. I was present not long since at a party of North Britons, where a son of Burns was expected; and happened to drop a silly expressions (in my South British way), that I wished it were the father instead of the son—when four of them started up at once to inform me, that that was impossible, because he was dead.' An impracticable wish, it seems, was more than they could conceive. Swift has hit off this part of their character, namely their love of truth, in his biting way, but with an illiberality that necessarily confines the passage to the margin. The tediousness of these people is certainly provoking. I wonder if they ever tire one another!—In my early life I had a passionate fondness for the poetry of countrymen by expressing it. But I

have always found that a true Scot resents you admiration of his compatriot even more than he would you contempt of words which he uses” ; and the same objection makes it a presumption in you to suppose that you can admire him.- Thomson they seem to have forgotten. Smollett they have neither forgotten nor forgiven, for his delineation of Rory and his companion, upon their first introduction to our metropolis.—Speak of Smollett as a great genius, and they will report upon you Hume’s History compared with his Continuation of it. What if the historian had continued Humphrey Clinker?

I have, in the abstract, no disrespect for Jews. They are a piece of stubborn antiquity, compared with which Stonehenge is in its nonage. They date beyond the pyramids. But I should not care to be in habits of familiar intercourse with any of that nation. I confess that I have not the nerves to enter their synagogues. Old prejudices cling about me. I cannot shake off the story of Hugh of Lincoln. Centuries of injury, contempt, and hate, on the one side,— of clocked revenge, dissimulation, and hate, on the other, between our and their fathers, must and ought to affect the blood of the children. Cannot believe it can clear and kindly yet; or that a few fine words, such as candour, liberty, the light of a nineteenth century, can close up the breaches of so deadly a disunion. A Hebrew is nowhere congenial to me. He is least distasteful on ‘Change—for the mercantile spirit levels all distinctions, as all are beauties in the dark. I boldly confess that I do not relish the approximation of Jew and Christian, which has become so fashionable. The reciprocal endearments have, to me, something hypocritical and unnatural in them. I do not like to see the Church and Synagogue kissing and congeeing in awkward postures of an affected Civility. If they are converted, why do they not come over to us altogether? Why keep up at table, why do they keck at our cookery? I don not understand these half convert ties. Jews Christianizing—Christians Judaizing—puzzle me. I like fish or flesh. A moderate Jew is a more confounding piece of anomaly than a wet Quaker. The spirit of the synagogue is essentially separative. B—would have been more keeping if he had abided by the faith of his forefathers. There is a fine scorn in him, in spite of his proselytism. He cannot conquer the Shibboleth. How it breaks out, when he sings “The children of Israel passed through the Red Sea!” The auditors, for the moment, are as Egyptians to him and he rides over our necks in triumph. There is no mistaking him. B - has a strong expression of sense in his countenance, and it is confirmed by his singing. The foundation of his vocal excellence is sense. He sings with understanding, as Kembel delivered dialogue. He would sing the Commandments and given an appropriate character to each prohibition. His nation, in general have not over sensible countenances. How should they ?—but you seldom see a silly expression among them. Gain, and the pursuit of gain, sharpen a man’s visage. I never heard of an idiot being born among them. Some admire the Jewish female physiognomy. I admire it—but with trembling. Jael had those full dark inscrutable eyes.

In the negro countenance you will often meet with strong traits of benignity. I have felt yearnings of tenderness towards some of these faces—or rather masks—that have looked out kindly upon one in casual encounters in the streets and high ways. I love what Fuller beautifully calls - these “images of God cut in ebony.” But I should not like to associate with them, to share my meals and my good nights with them - because they are black.

I love Quaker ways, and Quaker worship. I venerate the Quaker principles. It does me good for the rest of the day when I meet any of their people in my path. When I am ruffled or disturbed by any occurrence, the sight, or quite voice of a Quaker, acts upon me as a ventilator, lightening the air, and taking off a load from the bosom. But I cannot like the Quakers (as Desdemona would say) “to live with them.” I am all over sophisticated—with humours, fancies, craving hourly sympathy. I must have books, pictures, theaters, chit. hat, scandal, jokes, ambiguities, and a thousand whim-whams, which their simpler taste can do without. I should starve at heir primitive banquet. My appetites are too high for the salads which (according to Evelyn) Eve dressed for the angel ; my gusto too excited.

To sit a guest with Daniel at him pulse.

The indirect answers which Quakers are often found to return to a question put to them may be explained, I think, without the vulgar assumption, that they are more given to evasion and evasion and equivocating than other people. They naturally look to their words more carefully more cautions of committing themselves. They have a peculiar character to keep up on this head. They stand in a manner upon their veracity. A Quaker is by law exempted from taking an oath. The custom of resorting to an oath in extreme cases sanctified as it is by all religious antiquity, is apt (it must be confessed) to introduce into the laxer set of minds the notion of two kind of truth - the one applicable to the solemn affairs of justice, and the other to the common proceed truth bound upon the conscience by an oath can be but truth, so it the common affirmations of the ship and the marketplace a latitude is expected and conceded upon questions wanting this solemn covenant. Something less than truth satisfies. It is common to hear a person say, "You do not expect me to speak as if I were upon my oath." Hence a great deal of incorrectness and inadvertency, short of falsehood, creeps into ordinary conversation; and a kind of secondary or laic truth is tolerated, where clergy truth - oath-truth by the nature of the circumstances, is not required. A Quaker knows none of this distinction. His simple affirmation being received upon the most sacred occasions, without any further test, stamps a value upon the words which he is to use upon the most indifferent topics of life. He looks to them, naturally, with more severity. You can have of him no more than his word. He knows, if he is caught tripping in a casual expression, he forfeits, for himself at least, his claim to the invidious exemption. He knows that his syllables are weighed—and how far a consciousness of this particular watchfulness, exerted against a person, has a tendency to produce indirect answers, and a diverting of the question by honest means, might be illustrated, and the practice justified-by a more sacred example than is proper to be adduced upon this occasion. The admirable presence of mind, which is notorious in Quakers upon all contingencies, might be traced to this imposed self. Watchfulness—if it did not seem rather an humble and secular scion of that old stock of religious constancy, which never bent or faltered, in the Primitive Friends, or gave way to the winds of persecution, to the violence of judge or accuser, under trials and racking examinations. "You will never be the wiser, if I sit ere answering your questions till midnight," said one of those upright Justicers to Penn, who had been putting law-cases with a puzzling subtlety. "Thereafter as the answers may be," retorted the Quaker. The astonishing composure of this people is sometimes ludicrously displayed in lighter instances. I was traveling in a stage coach with three male Quakers, buttoned up in the straightest nonconformity of their sect. We stopped to bait an Andover, where a meal partly tea apparatus, partly supper, was set before us. My friends confined themselves to the tea-table. I in my took supper. When the landlady brought in the bill, the eldest of my companions discovered that she had charged for both meals. This was resisted. Mine hostess was very clamorous and positive. Some mild arguments were used on the part of the Quakers, for which the heated mind of the good lady seemed by no means a fit recipient. The guard came in with his usual peremptory notice. The Quakers pulled out their money and formally tendered it—so much for tea—I, in humble imitation, tendering mine—for the supper which I had taken. She would not relax in her demand. So they all three quietly put up their silver, and did myself, and marched out of the room, the eldest and gravest going first, myself closing up the rear, who thought I could not do better than follow the example of such grave and warrantable personages. We got in. The steps up. The coach drove off. The murmurs of mine hostess, not very indistinctly or ambiguously pronounced, because after a time inaudible - and no my conscience, which the whimsical scene for a while suspended, beginning to give some twitches, I waited, in the hope that some justification would be offered by these serious persons for the seeming injustice of their conduct. To my great surprise not a syllable was dropped on the subject. They sat as mute as at a meeting. At length the eldest of them broke silence, by inquiring of his next neighbour, "Hast thee heard how-indigos go at the India House?" and the

question operated as a soporific on my morale feeling as far as Exeter.

### 10.6.1 Glossary

a)

Religio Medic : a great philosophical work irose by Sir Thomas Browne, a prose writer of the seventeenth century. The phrase means “Religion of a physician”.

mounted upon the airy stilts of abstraction: raised by philosophical thinking to a height where one loses touch practical considerations.

conversant about : “national” existing in idea; “conjectural” means something uncertain ‘as, being based on guess-work.

standing on earth, etc. : a quotation from Milton’s Paradise Lost.

disrelishing : unpleasant; disagreeable.

the veriest thrall : the most definite slave.

anti-Caledonian : anti-Scottish; hostile to Scotchmen.

rather suggestive than comprehensive : conveying or apprehending ideas vaguely rather than understanding them thoroughly and in every detail.

intellectual wardrobe : mental equipment.

To run it down : The idea is here conveyed by the use of a meta. To beat up game means to beat the forest so to rouse wild birds or wild birds for hunters to shoot at. Beating up game is inaction of attendants, while the hunters performs the main business of shooting at animals or birds. Here the idea is that anti-Caledonian minds merely make some slight suggestion which others, more complex minds, may expand or develop into a discussion

with some abatement : with some reservation: the plainest manner.

in the green ear : undeveloped like unripe corn.

Minerva is born in panoply : Minerva the goddess of wisdom, was believed to have emerged, fully from the head of Jupiter. The idea here is that a Scotchman’s conclusions come out of his head fully developed and matured.

You never catch his mind in an undress : Scotchman’s mind is nvever to be found in an easy, information. (in an undress-inlooe, comfortable dress).

You cannot cry halves : you cannot claim an share. at its meridian: at its height at its brightest.’

embryo conceptions : undeveloped ideas; ‘half formed or vaguely

	formed notions.
Clap an extinguisher upon your irony	: press immediately your tendency to make an ironical or sarcastic remark.
Leonardo da Vinci	: an Italian painter (1452-1519), His masterpiece is a painting called the "Last Supper". I reference here is to a painting called "Maiden on the Rocks".
My Beauty	: Lamb uses this expression for the painting. But his Scotch listener thinks that Lamb is referring to his personal appearance. Obviously the Scotchman has no imagination and takes Lamb's words literally.
North Britons	: Scotchman
Burns	: Robert Burns (1759-1796), a well known poet who wrote excellent lyrics, most of them in the Scottish tongue.
Thomson	: James Thomson (1700-1748), a poet, famous for his The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence.
Smollett	: Tobias Smollett (1721-1771), a Scottish novelist, famous for writing Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphry Clinker. He also completed Hume's History of England.
the story of Hugh of Lincoln	: the story of boy stole, tortured and killed by Jews.
Church and Synagogue	: A Church place of Christian worship, while a synagogue is a place of Jewish worship. So the two words here stand for Christians and respectively.
keck at our cookery	: fell disgust on seeing Christian dishes on the dinner table.
the Commandments	: the ten Commandments: given by Moses from Mt. Sinai. ("Thou shalt not steal," etc.)
Quaker ways	: the ways of Quakers. The Quakers believe that every man has some direct experience of God in his soul. In religious worship they discard the services of priests, etc. They in silent fellowship and wait on God, giving freedom to any man or woman to preach or lead the company in vocal prayer. They do not practice the outward ceremonies of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, believing that the whole emphasis of Jesus Christ was upon inward experience and rightness of life. They have a unique form of marriage, in which priests find no

place, the man and woman simply taking one another in the presence of God and the congregation. I refuse to his best to speak the truth. One of their characteristics, as pointed out by Lamb, is that remain unperturbed in the face of vocations.

- Desdemona : the heroine in Shakespeare's play Othello.
- to sit a guest with Daniel at his pulse : a quotation from Milton's Paradise Regained.
- laic-truth : approximate correctness; truth that lay be expected from a layman who has not taken, an oath.
- Mine hostess : the landlady at the inn.
- how indigos go at the India house : What is the prevailing rate at which different qualities of indigo are being offered for sale.
- as a soporific on my moral feeling : as having a lulling effect on the writers conscience; having the effect of sending writer's conscience to sleep.

**b)**

- my little ones : the imaginary children who are the subject of this essay. The reference is to Blakeware, in Hertfordshire, where Lamb's grandmother, Mary Field, was a housekeeper the ballad of the Children in the Wood: There an ancient ballad telling the story of the children in the wood, n story tells of the murder of two children in a wood by some ruffians with the consent of the children's uncle.
- Robin Redbreast : According to the story, it was the birds (Robin Redbreasts) which covered the graves of the two children with leaves.
- Her, Alice put ...out upbraiding : The sentence, like several others that follow, provides an example of the reactions of the children to the various incidents that Lamb has to tell them.
- Psaltery : the Psalms, as printed in the Book of Common Prayer.
- Testament : the Bible.
- Here little Alice spread her hands' : The spreading of hand's show the. child's surprise on hearing that her great grandmother knew much of the Bible by heart.
- the olds busts of the twelve Caesar : the old statues of the twelve emperors of Rome from Julius Caesar to Dalmatian Caesar.
- busy-idle diversions : games that are meant as a recreation and that

	keep the children occupied.
common baits of children	: common thing that are a temptation to children.
John L.	: John Lamb, the brother of Charles Lam. John Lamb had already die when this essay was written. There is a good deal of pathos in the sketch of John Lamb that follows.
Then I told how for seven long years...	: Alice W-N : There is deep pathos in this recollection of hopeless love. Alice Winterton. is the fictitious name which Lamb gives to Ann Simmons whom he used to love in his youth but who did not respond to his love. In these lines, recalls that experience.
Bartrum of Bartram	: The girl, whom Lamb use to love, married Mr. Bartrum, a pawnbroker in London. The children of Alice (or Ann Simmons) would naturally be the children of Mr. Bertram and not of Charles Lamb. In the reverie which forms the subject of this essay, Lamb for a while imagines that the two children sitting before him were born of his union with Ann Simmons. But the reverie comes to an end and the children fade away.
Lethe	: the river of forgetfulness. It is the river of Hades or the underworld. Whosoever drank of its waters, completely forgot all his past. The meaning here is that the imaginary children cannot become a reality for million of years.
the faithful Bridget	: Lamb's faithful sister to whom, in his essays, he gives the name Bridget.

## 10.6.2 Model Explanations

### a) We are not Alice...existence and a name.

This extract has been taken from Dream Children: A Reverie written by Charles Lamb. Lamb was unmarried, therefore the questions of having children does not arise. In this essay he dreams that he has two children young Alice and John. As the essay is about to end, the children disappear slowly and slowly by saying that they do not exist.

Dream children Alice and John say to Charles Lamb that they are imaginary only. They do not exist in this world. They are nothing, less than nothing, as they have not taken any kind of birth as yet. They are what they might have been if they had taken birth. It will take ages & ages before they come into existence.

The lines are autobiographical and are full of pathos and humour. This extract is a fine example of Lamb's Style. Lethe is the name of the mythological liver of forgetfulness.

### b) The brain of a true Caledonian..... their growth

This is an extract from the essay Imperfect sympathies written by Charles Lamb. Lamb's essays are autobiographical. In this essay he had described his prejudice against the Scots, the Jews,

the Negroes and the Quakers. In these lines he is describing his dislike for the Scots.

In the opinion of Lamb the mental structure of a Scot and that of an English man is quite different. Ideas come out of a Scot's head in a fully developed form just as Minerva, the Roman goddess of Wisdom was born fully armed from Jupiter's head. No other person can guess a development of ideas into the head of a Scot.

This extract is a good example of Lamb's prose style which is full of wit & humour. His essays provide full details about Lamb's personality and knowledge. Here he had depicted his prejudice against the Scots. The reference to Roman myth is terse, proverbial, compact and aphoristic.

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### 10.7 Self-assessment Questions

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1. Why did the children of Lamb come to him the other evening?

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2. Describe the great grandmother as mentioned by Lamb.

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3. Why did Lamb get frightened as a child?

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4. How did Lamb pass his holidays?

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5. Describe the dream uncle of the children.

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6. Why does Lamb dislike the Scots?

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7. Why does Lamb dislike the Jews?

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8. What are Lamb's views about the Negroes?

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9. What is Lamb's attitude towards the Questions?

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### **10.8 Answers To Saqs**

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1. Actually Charles Lamb was unmarried. The dream children came to Lamb to hear stories about their great grandmother as children of every age are in the habit of listening to stories about their elder generation.
2. Lamb narrates the story of their great grandmother to his dream children. He tells that the great grandmother was religious and good. She was a good dancer and parts of the Bible were learnt by heart by her. She was loved & respected by all. She Kept the dignity of the house where she lived. All the poor and some gentry of the neighborhood attended her funeral to show respect for her memory.
3. Lamb's grandmother believed that a ghost of two infants was to be seen at midnight by her. The ghost glided up and down the great staircase where she slept. She was not afraid of the spirit because she was religious enough. But the writer was not much religious and her was afraid of the ghost, though he never sight.
4. As his grandmother opened the whole house for grand children, he would gaze at the busts of the 12 Caesars, empty rooms, hangings, tapestry, oaken pane, spacious old-fashioned gardens of the big house. He would enjoy fishpond in the company of nature.
5. John Lamb, the young brother of Charles Lamb was much loved by his mother Field. He was a handsome and spirited youth. He preferred to ride and hunt instead of living at home like other children. He would carry lame-footed Charles Lamb on his back. He was much missed after

his death.

6. Lamb dislikes the Scots because of their excessive obsession with clarity precision and complete truths. They do not believe in borderline statements, half truth, or surmises. Further, a Scot is too absurd to appreciate a non-Scot's admiration for a Scottish writer.
7. Lamb dislikes the Jews, as he cannot overcome the age-old prejudices of a Christian towards a Jew. He calls them a piece of "stubborn antiquity". He does not like their rigidity and their superiority complex about their antiquity. Further, he says that though the Jewish women are beautiful but they too can be dangerous.
8. Lamb, though sympathetic toward the Negroes, yet cannot make deep and friendly relations with them. He is open for casual contracts with them but not intimate associations, because, he says, they are black.
9. Though Lamb admires some of the Quakers and their manners of worship yet he cannot live them because of his liking for entertainment e.g. books & theatre. Further, since the Quakers are expected to speak truth, therefore, they do not commit to anyone. They give ambiguous answers. Lamb praises their presence of mind, which helps them to remain composed.

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## 10.9 Let Us Sum Up

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In this Unit you have learnt how the study of a particular period is important to understand a writer because the main trends of the period affect the works of the writer. This Unit has provided you material about the Romantic period as against the neoclassic period in matter and style.

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## 10.10 Review Questions

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1. Comment upon the prose style of Lamb.
2. Most Lamb's essays are full of autobiographical details. Discuss citing examples from the essays you have read.
3. Pathos and humour are integral part of Lamb's essays. Discuss.
4. Discuss Lamb as a Romantic essayist.
5. Lamb's essays "Imperfect Sympathies" is full of prejudices. Discuss.

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## 10.11 Bibliography

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1. A glossary of Literary Terms by M.H. Abrams.
2. The Art of the Essayist by A.C. Benson.
3. Essays of the History of Ideas by A.O. Lovejoy.
4. A Study of English Romanticism by Northrop Frye.
5. The English Essay and Essayists by Hugh Walker.
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## UNIT-11

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### WILLIAM HAZLITT: ESSAYS

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#### Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Study Guide
- 11.2 About the Author: William Hazlitt
- 11.3 About the Essays:
- 11.4 The Essays:
  - a) *On Going a Journey*
  - b) *The Indian Jugglers*
- 11.4.1 Glossary
- 11.4.2 Model Explanations
- 11.5 Self-Assessment Questions
- 11.6 Answers to SAQs
- 11.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.8 Review Questions
- 11.9 Bibliography

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### 11.0 Objectives

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In this Unit we aim at giving you details about what an essay is and how it is different from other literary forms. You have been given a short history of the development of the essay as a literary form. By the end of this Unit you will be able to

- tell what the important elements of an essay are.
- know about important essayists from Greco-Roman times to the modern era.
- know about William Hazlitt as an essayist of the Romantic period.
- explain certain lines with reference to context adding critical notes about subject matter, theme & style.

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### 11.1 Study Guide

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In this Unit you have been given details about what makes an essay. You will find development of essay from Plato to the Modern period with emphasis on important writers and their main characteristics. Two essays by William Hazlitt, by taking large extracts, have been discussed. But you should study both the essays not in extracted form but completely. You should try to know how to study a literary essay. Glossary for the complete essays, model explanations and answers to questions are given to help you develop your own vocabulary and composition skills. Exercise has been given for you in the form of

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## 11.2 About the Author: *William Hazlitt*

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William Hazlitt (1778-1830) was born at Maidstone. He was the son of a Unitarian minister. His father had strong liberal views which were inherited by the son. Most of his youth was spent near Shrewsbury. He came under the powerful influence of S.T. Coleridge and chose writing as his career. He was introduced to other literary persons by Charles Lamb who became his friend in London. Hazlitt started his career as a prolific journalist, parliamentary reporter, dramatic and literary critic, essayist and lecturer. He showed his concern for his country and was supporter of the French Revolution. He was married to Sarah Stoddard in 1808. Later on in 1819 he fell in love with Sarah Walker which resulted into some kind of insanity. In 1822 he got a divorce from his wife. In 1823 he was arrested for debt. In 1824 he was married to Isabella Bridgewater. After 1812 he wrote profusely for various periodicals including *Edinburgh Review*. His writings turned from political journalism to literary criticism and essay. Some of his works are enlisted below:

<i>A View of the English Stage</i>	1818
<i>Lectures on the English poets</i>	1818
<i>Lectures on the English comic writers-</i>	1819
<i>Table Talk</i>	1821-22
<i>The Spirit of the Age</i>	1825
<i>Life of Napoleon</i>	1828-30

Hazlitt's great achievement is that he made his livelihood from criticism. He disliked formulas of criticism. He was badly criticized and was called a 'mere quack' or member of cockney school of poetry. But during his age no history of English Literature existed and his critics agree about the great range of his reading and his achievements as a critical historian. Hazlitt has certain defects namely - prejudices, over-indulgence in quotation and long-windedness. He writes about many things, is rambling in his subject matter because he is interested in so many things. But still he is famous for his essays and influences his readers by the force of his utterance.

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## 11.3 About the Essays

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### a) *On Going a Journey*

William Hazlitt considers that going on a journey is one of the pleasantest things if one is alone. The author may like company at home but outside, while on a journey, he would like to enjoy nature. For a contemplative man nature becomes a subject for study. Walking and talking cannot go with each other. The author expresses his opinion that he goes out of the town to forget it and enjoy solitude.

During journey one must be at liberty to think and feel so that one can muse on indifferent matters. One can forget the same stale topics which are discussed within the company. During journey one can enjoy the clear blue sky, green turf, a winding road, heaths, rolling clouds & other beautiful scenes provided by nature. In the lap of nature, one begins to feel, think & be oneself again. The author thinks that he can enjoy undisturbed silence of the heart. He would

like to enjoy the daisy, the mountain-points & other natural landscapes. In the opinion of the author going on a journey & friends or company are incompatible.

The author feels that one should read the book of nature without being continuously put to the trouble of translating it for the benefit of others. He can stock the ideas while on a journey & analyze them later on.

One cannot have vague notion floating unless one is alone. One can like the smell of a bean-field while his fellow might not like. The ideas about the air, the cloud etc. may differ from person to person. One cannot quarrel with oneself till one finds it necessary to do so. One can give an understanding to one's ideas & may not express them while on a journey. Many writers convert the visible landscapes into beautiful poetry but proper use of words or images need fancy or imagination.

A good discussion will definitely spoil out of door prospects. The writer thinks that the dinner or the supper may be discussed while on a journey because that will increase the appetite. But the writer does not like company because the others may have some objections to his point of view. The enjoyment to be driven out of the natural setting is curtailed or diminished by the discussion in a company because people discuss their professions & pursuits. If one wants to enjoy the natural atmosphere, one can no longer remain a citizen of the world but one must be lost & be one with the natural landscape visible at that time. Personal identity must be lost in order to enjoy the natural scenes. The prospect affects one in two ways it affect the outward senses & it affects the inward sight, a heavenly vision.

William Hazlitt has no objection to go to see ruins, aqueducts, deserts in company with a friend or a party because these things are intelligible matters. They can bear talking about. The sentiments is not tacit but communicable & overt. For example, Stonehenge needs discussion & company is allowed to visit it. Moreover going on a journey in a foreign country without a companion is risky. One can need the homely atmosphere created by company or a friend or some kind of assistance of social sympathy. With the increase of distance the need of a company also increases. For example, the deserts of Arabia & Athens or old Rome may be visited in a company. Fashions & manners in a foreign country make one homesick. Foreign visits sometime add to the facilities to the conversation & in some sense are instructive. Foreign visits can be a means to forget painful thoughts.

Thus, William Hazlitt in his essay, "On Going a Journey" describes the uses & abuses, advantages and disadvantages of company while on a journey. He takes into account both internal & external, domestic as well as foreign visits. But sometimes he is rambling in his subject matter.

- b) ***The Indian Jugglers*** is an important essay by Hazlitt in which he compares and contrasts the nature and quality of the skill achieved in a manual art as that of the juggler and the intellectual skill as that of an author. Mechanical perfection is acquired by slow degrees and it is visible. When a mechanical artist reaches perfection, he is unchallengeable. But in the intellectual field perfection cannot be achieved. The juggler's art is breath-holding and astonishing. An ordinary person feels himself worthless when he sees a juggler swallowing a sword. A juggler's skill involves not only criticism but also risk of life on a very small mistake in his feats like tight rope walking or swallowing a sword. An author may not endanger his life even by writing an essay full of mistakes. A juggler acquires such a mastery in his skill by devoting a large amount of time.

The essay ends with illustrations of John Cavanagh and John Davies.

It is to be noticed that Hazlitt passes from the description of juggling to intellectual imperfection, and then to the anatomy of habit. Similarly, his paying a tribute to sir Joshua Reynolds as an artist leads on to a consideration of elements of the finest art — the differences between cleverness, talent, and genius and what makes great art. He comes back to his original topic of manual dexterity and he ends the essay with a fine description of fives-player. Hazlitt talks of so many things, because he is interested in so many things.

Thus, Hazlitt portrays a wide canvas but he is always interesting. In the words of William Wordsworth, his language is not the “dress of his thoughts but the incarnation of them”

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## 11.4 The Essays

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### a) *On Going a Journey*

One of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey: but 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 alone than when alone.

—The fields his study, nature was his book.

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 am not for criticising hedge-rows and black cattle. I go out of town in order to forget the town and all that is in it. There are those who for this purpose go to watering-places, and carry the metropolis with them. I like more elbowroom, and fewer encumbrances. I like solitude, when I give myself up to it, for the sake of solitude; nor do I ask for

-a friend in my retreat,

Whom I may whisper solitude is sweet.

The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others. It is because I want a little breathing-space to muse on indifferent matters, where Contemplation

May plume her feathers and let grow her wings.

That in the various bustle of resort

Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd,

that I absent myself from the town for a while. without feeling at a loss the moment I am left by myself. Instead of a friend in a post-chaise or in a Tilbury, to exchange good things with, and vary the same stale topics over again, for once let me have a truce with impertinence. Give me the clear blue sky over my head, and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hour's march to dinner-and then to thinking! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy. From the point of yonder rolling cloud, I plunge into my past being, and revel there, as the sun-burnt Indian plunges headlong into the wave that wafts him to his native shore. Then long-forgotten things, like 'sunken wrack

and sunless treasuries, burst upon my eager sight, and I begin to feel, think, and be : myself again. Instead of an awkward silence, broken by attempts at wit or dull common-places, mine is that undisturbed silence of the heart which alone is perfect eloquence. No one likes puns, alliterations, antitheses, argument, and analysis better than I do; but I sometimes had rather be without them. 'Leave, oh, leave me to my repose!' I have just now other business in hand, which would seem idle to you, but is with me 'very stuff of the conscience'. Is not this wild rose sweet without a comment? Does not this daisy leap to my heart set in its coat of emerald? Yet if I were to explain to you the circumstance that has so endeared it to me, you would only smile. Had I not better than keep it to myself, and let it serve me to brood over, from here to yonder craggy point and from thence onward to the fardistant horizon? I should be but bad company all that way, and therefore prefer being alone. I have heard it said that you may, when the moody fit comes on, walk or ride on by yourself, and indulge your reveries. But this looks like a breach of manners, neglect of others, and you are thinking all the time that you ought to rejoin your party. 'Out upon such half-faced fellowship'; say I. I like to be either entirely to myself, or entirely at the disposal of others; to talk or be silent, to walk or sit still, to be sociable or solitary. I was pleased with an observation of Mr. Cobbett's that he thought it a bad French custom to drink our wine with our meals, and that an Englishman ought to do only one thing at a time'. So I cannot talk and think, or indulge in melancholy musing and lively conversation by fits and starts. 'Let me have a companion of my way, says Sterne, 'were it but to remark how the shadows lengthen as the sun declines'. It is beautifully said: but in my opinion, this continual comparing of notes interferes with the involuntary impression of things upon the mind, and hurts the sentiment. If you only hint what you feel in a kind of dumb show, it is insipid: if you have to explain it, it is making a toil of a pleasure. You cannot read the book of nature, without being perpetually put to the trouble of translating it for the benefits of others. I am for the synthetically method on a journey, in preference to the analytical. I am content to lay in a stock of ideas then, and to examine and anatomise them afterwards. I want to see my vague notions float like the down of the thistle before the breeze, and not to have them entangled in the briars and thorns of controversy. For once, I like to have it all my own way; and this is impossible unless you are alone, or in such company as I do not covet. I have no objection to argue a point with anyone for twenty miles of measured. road, but not for pleasure. If your remark the scent of a beanfield crossing the road, perhaps your fellow- traveller has no smell. If you point to a distant object, perhaps he is short-sighted, and has to take out his glass to look at it. There is a feeling in the air, a tone in the colour of a cloud which hits your fancy, but the effect of which you are unable to account for. There is then no sympathy, but an uneasy craving after it, and a dissatisfaction which pursues you on the way, and in the end probably produces ill humour. Now I never quarrel with myself, and take all my own conclusions for granted till I find it necessary to defend them against objections. It is not merely that you may not be of accord on the objects and circumstances that present themselves before you—these may recall a number of objects and lead to associations too delicate and refined to be possibly communicated to others. Yet these I love to cherish, and sometimes still fondly clutch them, when I can escape from the throng to do so. To give way to our feelings before company, seems extravagance or affectation; and on the other hand, to have to unravel this mystery of our being at every turn, 'and to make others take an equal interest in it (otherwise the end is not answered) is a task to which few are competent. We must 'give it all understanding, but no tongue'. My old friend C—, however, could do both. He could go on in the most delightful explanatory way over hill

and dale, a summer's day, and convert a landscape into a didactic poem or a Pindaric ode. 'He talked far above singing'. If I could so clothe my ideas in sounding and flowing words, I might perhaps wish to have some one with me to admire the swelling theme; or I could be more content, were it possible for me still to hear his echoing voice, in the woods of All-Foxden. They had 'that fine madness in them which our first poets had'; and if they could have been caught by some rare instrument, would have breathed such strains as the following.

—Here be woods as green  
As any, air likewise as fresh and sweet  
As when smooth Zephyrus plays on the fleet  
Face of the curled stream, with flow'rs as many  
As the young spring gives, and as choice as any;  
Here be all new delights, cool streams and wells,  
Arbours o'ergrown with woodwine, caves and dells;  
Choose where thou wilt, while I sit by and sing,  
Or gather rushes to make many a ring  
For thy long fingers; tell thee tales of love,  
How the pale Phoebe, hunting in a grove,  
First saw the boy Endymion, from whose eyes  
She took eternal fire that never dies;  
Hot she convey'd him softly in a sleep,  
His temples bound with poppy, to the steep  
Head of old Latmos, where she stoops each night,  
Gilding the mountain with her brother's light;  
To kiss her sweetest.  
— Faithful Shepherdess

There is hardly any thing that shows the short-sightedness or capriciousness of the imagination more than travelling does. With change of place we change our ideas; nay, our opinions and feelings. We can by an effort indeed transport ourselves to old and long-forgotten scenes, and then the picture of the mind revives again; but we forget those that we have just left. It seems that we can think but of one place at a time. The canvas of the fancy is but of a certain extent, and if we paint one set of objects upon it, they immediately efface every other. We cannot enlarge our conceptions, we only shift our point of view. The landscape bares its bosom to the enraptured eye, we take our fill of it, and seem as if we could form no other image of beauty or grandeur. We pass on, and think no more of it: the horizon that shuts it from our sight, also blots it from our memory like a dream. In travelling through a wild barren country, I can form no idea of a woody and cultivated one. It appears to me that all the world must be barren, like

what I see of it. In the country we forget the town, and in town we despise the country. 'Beyond Hyde Park', says Sir Fopling Flutter, 'all is a desert'. All that part of the map that we do not see before us is a blank. The world in our conceit of it is not much bigger than a nutshell. It is not one prospect expanded into another, county joined to county, kingdom to kingdom, lands to seas, making an image voluminous and vast;-the mind can form no larger idea of space than the eye can take in at a single glance. The rest is a name written in a map, a calculation of arithmetic. For instance, what is the true signification of that immense mass of territory and population, known by the name of China to us? An inch of paste-board on a wooden globe, of no more account than a China orange! Things near us are seen of the size of life: things at a distance are diminished to the size of the understanding. We measure the universe by ourselves, and even comprehend the texture of our own being only piece-meal. In this way, however, we remember an infinity of things and places. The mind is like a mechanical instrument that plays a great variety of tunes, but it must play them in succession. One idea recalls another, but it at the same time excludes all others. In trying to renew old recollections, we cannot as it were unfold the whole web of our existence; we must pick out the single threads. So in coming to a place where we have formerly lived and with which we have intimate associations, every one must have found that the feeling grows more vivid the nearer we approach the spot, from the mere anticipation of the actual impression: we remember circumstances, feelings, persons, faces, names, that we had not thought of for years; but for the time all the rest of the world is forgotten!- To return to the question I have quitted above.

I have no objection to go to see ruins, aqueducts, pictures, in company with a friend or a party, but rather the contrary, for the former reason reversed. They are intelligible matters, and will bear talking about. The sentiment 'here is not tacit, but communicable and overt. Salisbury Plain is barren of criticism, but Stonehenge will bear a discussion antiquarian, picturesque, and philosophical. In setting out on a party of pleasure, the first consideration always is where we shall go to : in taking a solitary ramble, the question is what we shall meet with by the way. The mind is its own place; nor are we anxious to arrive at the end of our journey. I can myself do the honours indifferently well to works of art and curiosity. I once took a party to Oxford with no mean *eclat*—*shewed them* that seat of the Muses at a distance,

With glistening spires and pinnacles adorn'd

descanted on the learned air that breathes from the grassy quadrangles and stone walls of halls and colleges—was at home in the Bodleian; and at Blenheim quite superseded the powdered Cicerone that attended us, and that pointed in vain with his wand to common place beauties in matchless pictures. As another exception to the above reasoning, I should not feel confident in venturing on a journey in a foreign country without a companion. I should want at intervals to hear the sound of my own language. There is an involuntary antipathy in the mind of an Englishman to foreign manners and notions that requires the assistance of social sympathy to carry it off. As the distance from home increases, this relief, which was at first a luxury, becomes a passion and an appetite. A person would almost feel stifled to find himself in the deserts of Arabia without friends and countrymen: there must be allowed to be something in the view of Athens or old Rome that claims the utterance of speech; and I own that the Pyramid are too mighty for any single contemplation. In such situations, so opposite to all one's ordinary train of ideas, one seems a species by one's-self, a limb torn off from society, unless one can meet

with instant fellowship and support.— Yet I did not feel this want or craving very pressing once, when I first set my foot on the laughing shores of France. Calais was peopled with novelty and delight. The confused, busy murmur of the place was like oil, and wine poured into my ears; nor did the mariners' hymn, which was sung from the top of an old crazy vessel in the harbour, as the sun went down, send an alien sound into my soul. I only breathed the air of general humanity. I walked over 'the vine-covered hills and gay regions of France', erect and satisfied; for the image of man was not cast down and chained to the foot of arbitrary thrones: I was at no loss for language, for that of all the great schools of painting was open to me. The whole is vanished like a shade. Pictures, heroes, glory, freedom, all are fled: nothing remains but the Bourbons and the French people !- There is undoubtedly a sensation in travelling into foreign parts that is to be had nowhere else: but it is more pleasing at the time than lasting. It is too remote from our habitual associations to be a common topic of discourse or reference, and, like a dream or another state of existence, does not piece into our daily modes of life. It is an animated but a momentary hallucination. It demands an effort to exchange our actual for our ideal identity; and to feel the pulse of our old transports revive very keenly, 'We must Jump' all our present comforts and connexions. Our romantic and itinerant character is not to be domesticated. Dr. Johnson remarked how little foreign travel added to the facilities of conversation in those who had been abroad. In fact, the time we have spent there is both delightful and in one sense instructive; but it appears to be cut out of our substantial, downright existence, and never to join kindly on to it. We are not the same, but another, and perhaps more enviable individual, all the time we are out of our own country. We are lost to ourselves, as well as our friends. So the poet somewhat quaintly sings,

Out of my country and myself! go.

Those who wish to forget painful thoughts, do well to absent themselves for a while from the ties and objects that recall them: but we can be said only to fulfill our destiny in the place that gave us birth, I should on this account like well enough to spend the whole of my life in travelling abroad, if I could any where borrow another life to spend afterwards at home

**b) *The Indian Jugglers***

Coming forward and seating himself on the ground in his white dress and tightened turban, the chief of the Indian Jugglers begins with tossing up two brass balls, which is what any of us could do, and concludes with keeping up four at the same time, which is what none of us could do to save our lives, nor if we were to take our whole lives to do it in. Is it then a trifling power we see at work, or is it not something next to miraculous? It is the utmost stretch of human ingenuity which nothing but the bending the faculties of body and mind to it from the tenderest infancy with incessant, ever-anxious application up to manhood, can accomplish or make even a light approach to. Man, thou art a wonderful animal, and thy ways past finding out! Thou canst do strange things, but thou turnest them to little account!- To conceive of this effort of extraordinary dexterity distracts the imagination and makes admiration breathless. Yet it costs nothing to the performer, any more than if it were a mere mechanical deception with which he had nothing to do but to watch and laugh at the astonishment of the spectators. A single error of a hair's-breadth, of the smallest conceivable portion of time, would be fatal: the precision of the movements must be like a mathematical truth, their rapidity is like lightning. To catch four balls in succession in less than a second of time, and deliver them back so as to return with seeming consciousness

to the hand again, to make them revolve round him at certain intervals, like the planets in their spheres, to make them chase one another like sparkles of fire, or shoot up like flowers or meteors to throw them behind his back and twine them round his neck like ribbons or like serpents, to do what appears an impossibility, and to do it with all the ease, the grace, carelessness imaginable, to laugh at, to play with the glittering mockeries, to follow them with his eye as if he could fascinate them with its lambent fire, or as if he had only to see that they kept time with the music on the stage-there is something in all this which he who does not admire may be quite sure he never really admired any thing in the whole course of his life. It is skill surmounting difficulty, and beauty! triumphing over skill. It seems as if the difficulty once mastered naturally resolved itself into ease and grace, and as if to be overcome at all, it must be overcome without an effort. The smallest awkwardness or want of pliancy or self-possession would stop the whole process. It is the work of witchcraft, and yet sport for children. Some of the other feats are quite as curious and wonderful, such as the balancing the artificial tree and shooting a bird from each branch through a quill; though none of them have the elegance or facility of the keeping up of the brass balls. You are in pain for the result, and glad when the experiment is over; they are not accompanied with the same unmixed, unchecked delight as the former; and I would not give much to be merely astonished without being pleased at the same time. As to the swallowing of the sword, the police ought to interfere to prevent it. When I saw the Indian Juggler do the same things before, his feet were bare, and he had large rings on the toes, which kept turning round all the time of the performance, as if they moved of themselves.-The hearing a speech in Parliament, drawled or stammered out by the Honourable Member or the Noble Lord, the ringing the changes on their commonplaces, which anyone could repeat after them as well as they, stirs me not a jot, shakes not my good opinion of myself: but the seeing the Indian Jugglers does. It makes me ashamed of myself. I ask what there is that I can do as well as this? Nothing. What have I been doing all my life? Have I been idle, or have I nothing to shew for all my labour and pains? Or have I passed my time in pouring words like water into empty sieves, rolling a stone up a hill and then down again, trying to prove an argument in the teeth of facts, and looking for causes in the dark, and not finding them? Is there no one thing in which I can challenge competition, that I can bring as an instance of exact perfection, in which others cannot find a flaw? The utmost I can pretend to is to write a description of what this fellow can do. I can write a book: so can many others who have not even learned to spell. What abortions are these Essays! What errors, what ill pieced transitions, what crooked reasons, what lame conclusions! How little is made out, and that little how ill! Yet they are the best I can do. I endeavour to recollect all I have ever observed or thought upon a subject, and to express it as nearly as I can. Instead of writing on four subjects at a time, it is as much as I can manage to keep the thread of one discourse clear and unentangled. I have also time on my hands to correct my opinions, and polish my periods. but the one I cannot, and the other I will not do. I am fond of arguing: yet with a good deal of pains and practice it is often as much as I can do to beat my man; though he may be a very in different hand. A common fencer would disarm his adversary in the twinkling of an eye, unless he were a professor like himself. A stroke of wit will sometimes produce this effect, but there is no such power or superiority in sense or reasoning. There is no complete mastery of execution to be shewn there: and you hardly know the professor from the impudent pretender or the mere clown.

Danger is a good teacher, and makes apt scholars. So are disgrace, defeat, exposure to

immediate scorn and laughter. There is no opportunity in such cases for self-delusion, no idling time away, no being off your guard (or you must take the consequences)-neither is there any room for humour or caprice or prejudice. If the Indian Juggler were to play tricks in throwing up the three case knives, which keep their positions like the leaves of a crocus in the air, he would cut his fingers. I can make a very bad antithesis without cutting my fingers. The tact of style is more ambiguous than that of double-edged instruments. If the juggler were told that by flinging himself under the wheels of the Juggernaut when the idol issues forth on a gaudy day, he would immediately be transported into Paradise, he might believe it, and nobody could disprove it. So the Brahmins may say what they please on that subject, may build up dogmas and mysteries without end, and not be detected: but their ingenious countryman cannot persuade the frequenters of the Olympic Theatre that he performs a number of astonishing feats without actually giving proofs of what he says. There is then in this sort of manual dexterity, first a gradual aptitude acquired to a given exertion of muscular power, from constant repetition, and in the next place, an exact knowledge how much is still wanting and necessary to be supplied. The obvious test is to increase the effort or nicety of the operation, and still to find it come true. The muscles ply instinctively to the dictates of habit. Certain movements and impressions of the hand and eye, having been repeated together an infinite number of times, are unconsciously but unavoidably cemented into closer and closer union; the limbs require little more than to be put in motion for them to follow a regular track with ease and certainty; so that the mere intention of the will acts mathematically, like touching the spring of a machine, and you come with Locksley in *Ivanhoe*, in shooting at a mark, 'to allow for the wind'.

Further, what is meant by perfection in mechanical exercises is the performing certain feats to a uniform nicety, that is, in fact, undertaking no more than you can perform. You task yourself, the limit you fix is optional, and no more than human industry and skill can attain to: but you have no abstract, independent standard of difficulty or excellence (other than the extent of your own powers). Thus he who can keep up four brass balls does this *to perfection*; but he cannot keep up five at the same instant, and would fail every time he attempted i.e. the mechanical performer undertakes to emulate himself, not to equal another!. But the artist undertakes to imitate another, or to do what nature has done, and this it appears is more difficult, *viz.* to copy what she has set before us in the face of nature or 'human face divine', entire and without a blemish, than to keep up four brass balls at the same instant; for the one is done by the power of human skill and industry, and the other never was nor will be.

Nature is also a language. Objects, like words, have a meaning and the true artist is the interpreter of this language. which he can only do by knowing its application to a thousand other objects in a thousand other situations. Thus the eye is too blind a guide of itself to distinguish between the warm or cold tone, of a deep blue sky, but another sense acts as a monitor to it, and does not err. The colour of the leaves in autumn would be nothing without the feeling that accompanies it; but it is that feeling that stamps them on the canvas, faded, seared, blighted, shrinking from, the winter's flaw, and makes the sight as true as touch—

And visions, as poetic eyes avow,

Cling to each leaf and hang on every bough.

The more ethereal, evanescent, more refined and sublime part of art is the seeing nature through

the medium of sentiment and passion, as each object is a symbol of the affections and a link in the chain of our endless being. But the unravelling this mysterious web of thought and feeling is alone in the Muse's gift, namely, in the power of that trembling sensibility which is awake to every change and every modification of its ever-varying impressions, that

Thrills in each nerve, and lives along the line.

This power is indifferently called genius, imagination, feeling, taste; but the manner in which it acts upon the mind can neither be defined by abstract rules, as is the case in science, nor verified by continual unvarying experiments, as is the case in mechanical performances. The mechanical excellence of the Dutch painters in colouring and handling is that which comes the nearest in fine art! to the perfection of certain manual exhibitions of skill. The truth of the effect and the facility with which it is produced are equally admirable. Up to a certain point, every thing is faultless. The hand and eye have done their part. There is only a want of taste and genius. It is after we enter upon that enchanted ground that the human mind begins to droop and flag as in a strange road or in, a thick mist, benighted and making little way with many attempts, and many failures, and that the best of us only escape with half a triumph. The undefined and the imaginary are the regions that we must pass like Satan, difficult and doubtful, 'half flying, half on foot'. The object in sense is a positive thing, and execution comes with practice.

Cleverness is a certain *knack* or aptitude at doing certain things, which depend more on a particular adroitness and off-hand readiness than on force or perseverance, such as making puns, making epigrams, making extempore verses, mimicking the company, mimicking a style, etc. Cleverness is either liveliness and smartness, or something answering to *sleight of hand*, like letting a glass fall sideways off a table, or else a trick, like knowing the secret spring of a Watch. Accomplishments are certain external graces, which are to be learnt from others, and which are easily displayed to the admiration of the beholder, *viz.* dancing, riding, fencing, music, and so on. These ornamental acquirements are only proper to those who are at ease in mind and fortune. I know an individual who if he had been born to an estate of five thousand a year, would have been the most accomplished gentleman of the age. He would have been the delight and envy of the circle in which he moved—would have graced by his manners the liberality flowing from the openness of his heart, would have laughed with the women, have argued with the men, have said good things and written agreeable ones, have taken a hand at piquet or the lead at the harpsichord, and have set and sung his own verses *nugae canorae*—with tenderness and spirit; a Rochester without the vice, a modern Surrey! As it is, all these capabilities of excellence stand in his way. He is too versatile for a professional man, not dull enough for a political drudge, too gay to be happy, too thoughtless to be rich. He wants the enthusiasm of the poet, the severity of the prose-writer and the application of the man of business.—Talent is the capacity of doing any thing that depends on application and industry, such as writing a criticism, making a speech, studying the law. Talent differs from genius, as voluntary differs from involuntary power. Ingenuity, is genius in trifles, greatness is genius in undertaking of much pith and moment. A clever or ingenious man is one who can do any thing well, whether it is worth doing or not: a great man is one who can do that which when done is of the highest importance. Themistocles said he could not play on the flute, but that he could make of a small city a great one. This gives one a pretty good idea of the distinction in question.

Greatness is great power, producing great effects. It is not enough that a man has great power in himself, he must shew it to the world, in a way that cannot be hid or gainsaid. He must fill up a certain idea in the public mind. I have no other notion of greatness than this two-fold definition, great results springing from great inherent energy. The great in visible objects has relation to that which extends over space: the great in mental ones has to do with space and time. No man is truly great, who is great only in his life-time. The test of greatness is the page of history. Nothing can be said to be great that has a distinct limit, or that borders on something evidently greater than itself. Besides, what is short-lived and pampered into mere notoriety, is of a gross and vulgar quality in itself. A Lord Mayor is hardly a great man. A city orator or patriot of the day only shew, by reaching the height of their wishes, the distance they are at from any true ambition. Popularity is neither fame nor greatness. A king (as such) is not a great man. He has great power, but it is not his own. He merely wields the lever of the state, which a child, an idiot, or a madman can do. It is the office, not the man we gaze at. Anyone else in the same situation would be just as much an object of abject curiosity. We laugh at the country girl who having seen a king expressed her disappointment by saying, 'Why, he is only a man !' Yet, knowing this, we run to see a king as if he was something more than a man. To display the greatest powers, unless they are applied to great purposes, makes nothing for the character of greatness. To throw a barley-corn through the eye of a needle, to multiply nine figures by nine in the memory, argues infinite dexterity of body and capacity of mind, but nothing comes of either. There is a surprising power at work, but the effects are not proportionate, or such as take hold of the imagination. To impress the idea of power on others, they must be made in some way to feel it. It must be communicated to their understandings in the shape of an increase of knowledge, or it must subdue and overawe them by subjecting their wills. Admiration, to be solid and lasting, must be founded on proofs from which we have no means of escaping; it is neither a slight nor a voluntary gift. A mathematician who solves a profound problem, a poet who creates an image of beauty in the mind that was not there before imparts knowledge and power to others, in which his greatness and his fame consists, and on which it reposes. Jedediah Buxton will be forgotten; but Napier's bones will live. Lawgivers, philosophers, founders of religion, conquerors and heroes, inventors and great geniuses in arts and sciences, are great men; for they are great public benefactors, or formidable scourges to mankind. Among ourselves, Shakespeare, Newton, Bacon, Milton, Cromwell, were great men; for they shewed great power by acts and thoughts, which have not yet been consigned to oblivion. They must needs be men of lofty stature, whose shadows lengthen out to remote posterity. A great farce-writer may be a great man; for Moliere was but a great farce-writer. In my mind, the author of Don Quixote was a great man. So have there been many others. A great chess-player is not a great man, for he leaves the world as he found it. No act terminating in itself constitutes greatness. This will apply to all displays of power or trials of skill, which are confined to the momentary, individual effort, and construct no permanent image or trophy of themselves without them. Is not an actor then a great man, because he dies and leaves the world no copy? I must make an exception for Mrs. Siddons, or else give up my definition of greatness for her sake. A man at the top of his profession is not therefore a great man. He is great in his way, but that is all, unless he shews the marks of a great moving intellect, so that we trace the master-mind, and can sympathise with the springs that urge him on. The rest is but a craft or *mystery*. John Hunter was a great *man-that* anyone might see without the smallest skill in surgery. His style and manner shewed the man. He would set about cutting up the carcass of a whale with the same

greatness of *gusto* that Michael Angelo would have hewn a block of marble. Lord Nelson was a great naval commander; but for myself, I have not much opinion of a sea-faring life. Sir Humphry Davy is a great chemist, but I am not sure that he is a great man. I am not a bit the wiser for any of his discoveries, nor I never met with anyone that was. But it is in the nature of greatness to propagate an idea of itself, as wave impels wave, circle without circle. It is a contradiction in terms for a coxcomb to be a great man. A really great man has always an idea of something greater than himself. I have observed that certain sectaries and polemical writers have no higher compliment to pay their most shining lights than to say that ‘Such one was a considerable man in his day’. Some new elucidation of a text sets aside the authority of the old interpretation, and a ‘great scholar’s memory outlives him half a century’, at the utmost a rich man is not a great man, except to his dependants and his steward. A lord is a great man in the idea we have of his ancestry, and probably of himself, if we know nothing of him but his title. I have heard a story of two bishops, one of whom said (speaking of St. Peter’s at Rome) that when he first entered it, he was rather awestruck, but that as he walked up it, his mind seemed to swell and dilate with it, and at last to fill the whole building—, the other said that as he saw more of it, he appeared to himself to grow less and less every step he took, and in the end to dwindle into nothing. This was in some respects a striking picture of a great and little mind—for greatness sympathises with greatness, and littleness shrinks into itself. The one might have become a Wolsey; the other was only fit to become a Mendicant Friar—or there might have been court-reasons for making him a bishop. The French have to me a character of littleness in all about them; but they have produced three great men that belong to every country, Moliere, Rabelais, and Montaigne.

#### 11.4.1 Glossary

##### a) *On Going a Journey*

- Never less alone : Sampson adds the following note:-
- “Quoted in *Cicero* ”*De Officiis*, Book, **III**, i, a saying attributed to Scipio Africanus It is related by Cato that P. Scipio—he who was first distinguished by the title of Africanus—was accustomed to say that he was never less at leisure than. in his leisure and never less .alone than when alone”. He adds: “Swift in his Essay on the Faculties of the Mind, writes, ‘A wise man is never less alone than when alone’”. Compare too, Byron, *Childe Harold*, Canto **III**, At. XC:
- Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt  
In solitude when we are least alone.
- The field his study : Sampson identifies this as a quotation from Bloomfield (1766-1843), *The Farmer’s Boys*, *Spring*, 1.31:-
- Strange to the world he wore a bashful look  
The field his study, nature was his book.
- Vegetate : remain passive.

Watering places	:	places to which one resorts for the sake of health or recreation, like hill and sea resorts.
Metropolis	:	Chief city, i.e. London.
Elbow room	:	space for free movement, freedom. burdens.
Encumbrances	:	This is a quotation from Cowper's <i>Retirement</i> : I praise a Frenchman—his remark was shrewd How sweet, how passing sweet, is solitude! But grant me still a friend in my retreat Whom I may whisper solitude is sweet.  The Frenchman referred to by Cowper is La Bruyere (1645-96), author of the well known <i>Characters</i> .
May plume her feathers:	:	This is a quotation from Milton's <i>Camus</i> , 11.378-80: And wisdom's self Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude; Where, with her best nurse Contemplation, She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
Tilbury	:	A kind of carriage holding two persons. The name is that of the designer of this type of carriage.
Truce	:	Peace
Wafts	:	Carries  Sunken wrack and sunless treasuries: From <i>Henry V</i> , Act I Sc. ii I. 165 And make her chronicle as rich with praise As is the ooze and bottom of the sea With sunken wrack and sunless treasuries.
Leave me to my repose:	:	This is the last line of Gray's <i>Descent. of Odin</i> .
Very stuff of the conscience:	:	From <i>Othello</i> , Act I Sec. II, I 2:
Reveries	:	dry dreams
Half-Faced fellowship	:	A reference to I Henry IV, I m, 1.208  Haxlitt denounces half-hearted friendship as worse than useless.
Mr. Cobbett	:	William Cobbett (1766-1835) author of the Rural Rides
Give it an understanding:	:	From <i>Hamlet</i> , I, ii, 250: And whatsoever else shall hap tonight,

		Give it an understanding, but no tongue.
My old friend	:	S.T. Coleridge
Far above singing	:	The allusion is to Beaumont and Fletcher's <i>Phi/aster</i> You left a kiss Upon these lips then, which I mean to keep From you for ever. I did hear you talk, Far above singing!
All – foxden	:	in Dorset, about three miles from Nether Stowey
That fine madness	:	This may be a recollection, of Drayton's Elegy entitled 'To my dearly loved friend Henry Reynolds Esq'.
Zephyrus	:	the west wind
The pale phoebe	:	Diana, the goddess of the moon and also of chastity
Eternal Fire	:	the fire of undying love
Poppy	:	The poppy is associated with sleep, as it is the flower of the plant which yields opium
Latinos	:	Mountain in Lycia
Her brother	:	Phoebus, the sun-god, Apollo
The faithful Shepherdess	:	A pastoral play by Fletcher. The quotation is from Act I, sc. iii
Table Talk	:	A collection sense of leisurely conversation.
Altercation	:	dispute
Viands	:	eatables
Stragglng	:	outlying
take one's ease at one's inn:		From I Henry IV, III, iii, 92 :
The cups that cheer	:	quoted from Cowper's <i>The Task</i> Bk. IV: Throws up a steamy column, and the cups, That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each, So let us welcome peaceful evening in
Sancho.... cow-heel	:	This is an allusion to <i>Don Quixote</i> by Cervantes, Part II, Chapter 49. Sancho did so out of desperation and not out of choice
Disparaged	:	depreciated, attached less value to
Shandean contemplation:		A reference to : Lawrence Sterne's <i>Tristram Shandy</i>

- Unhoused free condition: A quotation from Othello. I, ii, 26 :
- Procul.... profani : Latin, “Far off, far off lettthe vulgar be”  
This was an exhortation to lay men, spoken by the Roman priests
- Witham Common : in Somerset
- Gribelin’s engraving of the Cartoons: Simon Gribeling (1611-1733), was a French engraver who lived in England for many years.
- Westall’s drawings : Richard Westall R. A. (1765-1836), was an artist of the English School. He was much admired for his illustrations of the works of several poets. There are many references to this artist in the works of Hazlitt.
- Bridgewater : This is in contradiction to the statement in the essay ‘My first Acquaintance with Poets’ where the place is identified as Tewkesbury.
- Madame D’ Arblay’s Camilla: A novel of Frances Burney, Madame D’ Arblay.
- The New Eloise : The famous novel by Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). The writings of Rousseau represent a revolt from the artificialities of civilisation in the direction of a simple, natural way of life and social relations.
- Bonne boueche : tasty morsel. Hazlitt’s spelling of the first word is incorrect. It should be bonne and not bon.
- St. Preux : a character in the novel named above
- Jura— Vaud : one of the peaks of the Swiss Alps.
- Llangolen : in Wales.
- Paul and Virginia : A pastoral novel by a French writer, translated into English by H. M. Williams in 1796.
- Green upland swells : Adapted from Coleridge’s *Ode to the Departing year*:  
The grassy upland’s gentle swell  
Echo to the bleat of flocks.
- Glittered... showers : from the same poem of Coleridge’s  
Faded into the light of common day: From Wordsworth’s famous *Immortality Ode*:
- The beautiful is vanished and returns not : Quoted from Coleridge’s play *Death of Wallenstein*.
- Where is he now : The reference is to Coleridge, who was still alive then, but had fallen on evil days.

- Sylvan Dee : Wordsworth's poem Tintern Abbey has sylvan Wye
- The picture of the mind revives agains: Another echo of Wordsworth
- The landscape bares its bosom: From Wordsworth's sonnet beginning *The World is Too Much With Us* : The line is an adaptation.
- Beyond Hyde Park : The reference is to the Restoration comedy *The Man of Mode* by Etherege. The remark is wrongly ascribed by Hazlitt to Sir Fopling Flutter. It is Harriet who says this of Dorimant.
- The mind is its own place: Famous lines spoken by Satan to his followers in Milton's *Paradise Lost*: I, 254
- The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heaven of Hell a Hell of Heaven.
- I once took a party to Oxford: The party consisted of Charles and Mary Lamb. The incident is mentioned in the essay *On the Conversation of Authors*.
- Glistering spires : Another allusion to *Paradise. Lost*, II, 550 :
- Or some renowned metropolis,  
With glistering spires and pinnacles adorned
- Eclat : French, great impression
- Bodleian : The famous library at Oxford
- Blenheim : Family seat of the Duke of Malborough, in appreciation of his famous victory at Blendeim in Austria, 1704
- Cicerone : Guide, who accompanies travellers to show them the beauties or antiquities of a place
- when I first set my foot: Hazlitt at first visited France in 1802. Napoleon, Hazlitt's lifelong idol, was then First Consul. **In** 1822, when this essay was written, Napoleon had already died in exile. His nation had acquiesced to the rule of the Bourbons whom Napoleon had overthrown.
- Dr. Johnson remarked : Boswell mentions the remark against a date in 1778: "How little does travelling supply to the conversation of any man who has traveled".
- Pyramids : The famous large monuments of ancient Egyptian kings ..
- The vine-covered hills : Adapted from a song by William Roscoe
- Jump : in the sense of 'risk' or possibly 'ignore'
- Kindly : Naturally

**b) The Indian Jugglers**

Ingenuity	:	Cleverness
Faculties	:	Abilities
Incessant	:	Unceasing, continuous
Dexterity	:	Skill
Distracts	:	Puzzles
Past finding out	:	Sampson traces this as an echo of Romans xi, 33. It can be seen that new significance is given to this by Hazlitt by using it to describe the ingenuity of <i>man</i> , giving the impression of something divine in man.
Makes admiration breathless:		Impresses much
Deception	:	Trickery
Precision	:	Exactness
Seeming conscious	:	As if the ball had the power of thinking
Sparkles	:	Sparks
Twine	:	Bind
Meteors	:	Shooting stars
Fascinate	:	Charm
Lambent Fire	:	Soft light
Surmounting	:	Overcoming
Resolve	:	Reduce
Pliancy	:	Flexibility
Witchcraft	:	Magic
Facility	:	Ease
Not a jot	:	Not in the least
Abortions	:	digested efforts
III-pieced transitions	:	Thoughts that have not been made to cohere
Unentangled	:	Clear, not confused
Lame	:	Not forceful
Thread	:	Main argument
Periods	:	Balanced sentences
Fencer	:	Skilled swordsman

Disarm	:	Deprive of his weapon
Professor	:	Expert
Inefficacy	:	Lack of effectiveness
Sadler's Wells	:	A once famous theatre in North London
Reynolds	:	A famous painter of the period
Out of conceit	:	Annoyed
Botches	:	imperfections
Slovenly	:	Careless
Human face divine	:	An allusion to Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> , Book III, line 44.
Pedagogue : Teacher	:	The reference is to Goldsmith's famous poem <i>The Deserted Village</i> . The school-master was in the habit of refusing to concede defeat in argument even when he was clearly having the worst of any argument.
H-s and H-s	:	According to Sampson one of these is probably Benjamin Haydon, and the other possibly John Hoppner (1758-1810).
In tones and gestures hit:		An allusion to <i>Paradise Regained</i> ; IV, 255
To snatch this grace	:	A reference to Pope's <i>Essay on Criticism</i> : Thus Pegasus, a nearer way to take; May boldly deviate from the common track From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part, And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art.
Commencing with the skies:		An allusion to Milton's <i>II Penseroso</i> where Milton personifies Melancholy:
Jaggernaut	:	From the Sanskrit word Jagannath, or 'Lord of the world'. The image of this god is worshipped specially at Puri in Orissa. Sometimes devout orshippers used to throw themselves in front of the chariot in which the image of the god was taken in procession, in the belief that this holy death would assure salvation to them.
Ivanhoe	:	A famous novel by Sir Walter Scott
Gusto	:	Enthusiasm
Monitor	:	Adviser
And visions bought	:	Taken from a letter of Gray to Walpole
Ethereal	:	Insubstantial
Evanescent	:	Short-lived

Enchanted ground	:	An allusion to Bunyan's <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> . This ground produced in the pilgrims an intense desire for sleep.
Like Satan	:	In his fall from paradise to the lower world
Half-flying, half on foot:		From Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> , II, Night-foundered, on he fares, Traeding the rude consistence, half on foot, Half trying
Droop and flag	:	Grow tired or sleepy
Knack	:	ability
Adroitness	:	Skill
Liveliness	:	Energy, briskness
Sleight of hand	:	Illusion produced by a mechanical trick
Mimicking	:	Copying
Accomplishments	:	Airs and graces, sophisticated activities
I know an individual	:	The reference is to Leigh Hunt
Piquet	:	A game of cards
Nugae canorea	:	Tuneful trifles. The words are quoted from Haroce's <i>Art of Poetry</i>
Rochester	:	John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (1647-1680), a courtier of the time of Charles II.
Surrey	:	Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517-1527), writer of first blank verse poetry in England. He was executed by Henry VIII.
Themistocles	:	Themistocles (525-549 B.C.) was a famous statesman and general of Athens. The incident is recorded by Plutarch in his <i>Lives</i> :
Jedediah Buxton	:	Buxton (1707-1772), was the son of a schoolmaster. He possessed a miraculous power of mental calculation, though otherwise he was illiterate.
Napier's bones	:	John Napier (1550-1617), the famous inventor of the system of logarithms. 'Napier's bones' is the name of a calculating instrument somewhat like the modern slide rule.
A great chess player	:	Hazlitt seems to be thinking of Sarrat.
He dies....	:	From <i>Twelfth Night</i> , I, v : Lady you are the cruelest she alive

If you will lead these graces to the grave  
And leave the world  
no copy.

famous surgeon (1728-1793).

- John Hunter : famous surgeon (1728-1793)
- Sir Humphrey Davy : (1778-1829), famous for his researches in Chemistry and Electricity. Davy was actually one of the pioneers of modern science and Hazlitt's disparagement is unjustified.
- Cervantes : Author of Don Quixote
- Mrs. Siddons : Mrs. Sarah Siddons (1755-1831), one of the most famous British actresses.
- Michael Angelo : Famous Italian painter, sculptor, architect and scientist.
- Lord Nelson : Horatio Nelson (1758-1805), Admiral of the British fleet which defeated the French in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Nelson lost his life in the battle
- Coxcomb : Dandy
- Polemical : Connected with controversy
- Sectaries : Violent propagators of their own sects
- St. Peter's : the great cathedral in Rome
- Dwindle : Decrease
- Wolsey : Cardinal Wolsey (1475-1530)
- Moliere : Great French writer of satirical comedies
- Rebelias : author of Gargantua and Pantagruel, a word of rollicking humour
- Montaigne : the father of the essay form
- Article in the Examiner : The article in question was written by Hazlitt himself
- Pat : Exact
- Fives : A game played with the hand by two or four players
- Peer : Equal
- Care... Skirts : From the odes of Horace. It means that we cannot escape care.
- Domestic treason : From Shakespeare's Macbeth III, ii. 25-26 :  
Duncan is in his grave;  
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well  
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,  
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing  
Can touch him further

Line	:	A ledge on the wall
A great orator	:	Pitt the younger
Mrs. Brougham's Speeches:		Henry Brougham (1778-1868), a famous Whig statesman, orator and writer. He made himself interested in an impossibly large number of affairs.
Mr. Canning's wit	:	George Canning (1770-1827), a brilliant scholar and Parliamentarian.
Foul like the Quarterly :		<i>The Quarterly Review</i> was a Tory periodical founded in 1809 to oppose the Whig <i>Examiner</i> . During the editorship of William Gifford this paper achieved much notoriety by the scurrilous attacks which it made on so many of the writers of the day, including Hazlitt himself.
The Rosemary Branch :		Once a well-known pleasure resort and music hall in Southampton Street, Camber well.
Goldsmith	:	The reference is to Goldsmith's extreme sensitivity about his personal appearance, since he was pock-marked. It is said that Goldsmith was jealous even of beauty in the other sex.
Lord Castlereigh's face:		Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereigh {1769-1822) the Tory Foreign Minister during part of the Napoleonic Wars. He was associated with harsh and repressive government and was therefore greatly hated. He was a man of a very handsome appearance, which extracted compliments from even his opponents like Hazlitt.
Mr. Croker	:	John Wilson Croker (1780-1857), Tory Secretary to the Admiralty for many years. He was a frequent contributor to the <i>Quarterly Review</i>
Mr. Murray	:	(1778-1843) head of a famous publishing house, which was connected with the <i>Quarterly</i> .
Hungerford stairs	:	Where Charing Cross railway bridge exists.
The Fleet or King's Bench:		Two famous debtors' prisons. They have been immortalised by Dickens in his various novels especially <i>David Copperfield</i> and the <i>Pickwick Papers</i> . Games like Fives Were permitted to be played by the prisoners.
Let no rude hand etc. :		Adapted from Wordsworth's <i>ellen Urwin</i> . 'Hie Jacet' is a Latin phrase meaning 'Here lies'.

### 11.4.2 Model Explanations

a) *The soul of a journey ... “ to get rid of others*

These lines have been taken from the essays “On Going a Journey” written by William Hazlitt,

one of the most interesting, prolific and delightful writers of the early nineteenth century. The writer has discussed the advantages, in general, of going on a journey alone.

In these lines, the writer wants to say that the most important element of going on a journey all alone is to have liberty, complete freedom to think, feel & do as one likes. Company is hurdle and big disturbance in free-thoughts. Others distract your attention according to their liking & pleasure. The best way to enjoy nature & feel free & away from local attachments is to go on a journey all alone. Going on a Journey with company is a burden upon your thinking process.

One can see that the writer has a happy gift of words which never fails him. His wise reading helps him to quote phrases, sentences and limes from other writers very readily. His prose is full of gems of phrases, sentences of illuminating wisdom and passages of deep insight. To read him is to have a rich intellectual and emotional experience.

b) *Danger is a good teacher .... scorn and laughter.*

This extract has been taken from the essay “The Indian Jugglers” written by William Hazlitt. The writer has described the mechanical art of the juggler in detail. He has compared the mechanical art of a juggler with intellectual art of a literary writer.

The mechanical art like swallowing a sword or tight rope walking demands perfection, otherwise the artist’s life can be in danger. So danger teaches the artist to be perfect in his art. The other compelling element towards perfection in art is the immediate criticism. If a mechanical artist like a juggler fails in his art, he loses not only his life but also his reputation, grace and fame. Defeat, disgrace, scorn and laughter are the net result of imperfection in the art of a juggler. Such is not the case in intellectual art of an author. He does not face any danger of life or reputation even if he commits many mistakes.

Hazlitt’s ideas facing disgrace even if an author commits mistakes are not acceptable. An author also loses his reputation, and sometimes life, ifhe commits serious mistakes. But it does not happen immediately as in the case of a juggler. Hazlitt’s style is proverbial, compact, terse and aphoristic as is evident from this extract.

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## 11.5 Self-assessment Questions

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1. Why does the writer want to go on journey alone?

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2. What are disadvantages of conversation while going on a journey?

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3. Why does Hazlitt allow company for visiting certain places?

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4. Why does Hazlitt allow company while on a journey to a foreign country?

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5. Describe the Indian Juggler.

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6. What is the difference between mechanical art of a juggler and intellectual art of an author?

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7. Describe the difference between fine art and mechanical art.

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8. Write a note on Hazlitt's views on greatness .

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## 11.6 Answers To SAQs

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1. Because company detracts his attention and he cannot enjoy nature and other thoughts in the company of others. Company mars his solitude and pleasure of thinking alone. He wants to enjoy liberty to feel, think and do as he likes.
2. Conversation and journey cannot go simultaneously. Even the most interesting topics of conversation should be reserved for discussion at the dining table. One cannot read the book of nature out of doors if one listens to the conversation of the company. The mood during journey is synthetic and not analytic.
3. Hazlitt allows company to visiting ruins, aqueducts, deserts and such other places because they are intelligible things and can be discussed. The feelings inspired by them are communicable.
4. In foreign country, one needs company or a friend. At least one can hear one's own native language. An English man is by nature antipathetic to foreign notions & ideas. As one travels away from home, the need for a countryman grows in the same proportion.
5. The chief of Indian jugglers is dressed in white and wears a tight turban on his head.  
He begins by tossing two bras balls. Everyone among the spectators thinks that he can compete with the juggler. But after some time the juggler continues his same skill with four balls also. This is not an ordinary task. It seems like witchcraft. This needs great effort, precaution and dexterity.
6. The mechanical art of a juggler is full of danger to life and invites immediate disgrace, scorn and laughter if it not perfectly performed as is the case of swallowing a sword or tight rope walking. Intellectual art of an author does not involve danger to life and immediate disgrace, scorn or laughter even he commits many mistakes. Moreover a juggler can manage four balls at a time while an author cannot write four essays at a time.
7. In mechanical art, perfection can be achieved by practice and progress depends upon dexterity. In fine art, there is no such thing as perfection. In fine art, excellence is inexplicable.
8. According to Hazlitt, greatness is not a matter of mere power but includes the effect power produces. Greatness is not bound by time. Popularity is not the same as greatness. Greatness is communication to others in the shape of an increase in knowledge or it must subdue or overawe others.

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## 11.7 Let Us Sum Up

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In this Unit you have studied the definition of an essay and its various elements. You have known the development of this form of literature in short. You have studied Hazlitt has an essayist putting him in his historical context. You have learnt model explanations which will help you in future to interpret any line or passage given from any piece of literary work.

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## 11.8 Review Questions

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1. Describe the things William Hazlitt likes to avoid while going on a journey.
2. Write a note on Hazlitt's views about mechanical art and fine art, talent and genius, greatness and popularity as explained by him in his essay *The Indian Jugglers*.

3. Hazlitt's personal life is revealed in his essays. Discuss.
4. Discuss the salient features of Hazlitt as an essayist.
5. Write a note on the prose style of Hazlitt.

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## **11.9 Bibliography**

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## UNIT-12

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### SCOTT : IVANHOE

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#### Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Ivanhoe
  - 12.2.1 Introduction to the Novel
  - 12.2.2 Life of Scott
  - 12.2.3 Brief Synopsis of the Novel
  - 12.2.4 The Summary of the Novel in Short
  - 12.2.5 Characters
  - 12.2.6 Narrative Style of the Novel
  - 12.2.7 History, Romanticism and Religion
  - 12.2.8 Key Words
- 12.3 Self Assessment Questions
- 12.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.5 Review Questions
- 12.6 Bibliography

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### **12.0 Objectives**

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In this unit you are going to study about the Novel. Ivanhoe by Sir Walter Scott. After going through this unit, you will be able to

- Understand the background of the Novel
- Understand about the life, background and ideas of the Novelist
- Understand the story, structure and characters of the Novel
- Write in your own words about any aspect of the Novel.

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### **12.1 Introduction**

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The title of Sir Walter Scott's most popular and-best-known novel is derived from an old rhyme which records the names of three manors forfeited by a nobleman for striking the Black Prince with his tennis racket. "Tring, Wing, and Ivanhoe" were the three estates. Scott chose "Ivanhoe" for two reasons: it has an ancient English sound and it gives no indication of the subject matter of the story.

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## 12.2 Ivanhoe

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### 12.2.1 Introduction of the Novel

The first paragraph of *Ivanhoe* sets the stage for the whole.

In that pleasant district of merry England which is watered by the river Don, there extended in ancient times a large forest, covering the greater part of the beautiful hills and valleys which lie between Sheffield and the pleasant town of Doncaster .... Here haunted of yore the fabulous Dragon of Wantley; here were fought many of the most desperate battles of the Civil Wars of the Roses; and here also flourished in ancient times those bands of gallant outlaws, whose deeds have been rendered so popular in English song.

The action all takes place in the environs of York, Lincoln, and Sheffield, mostly in the rural areas surrounding these ancient towns. Scott in vivid terms paints the natural beauty of England much as it is today, although there were no hedgerows in the twelfth century and although many Norman castles, gaping ruins now, were then in the splendor of their prime. The forests were there, however, and the glades and streams. These had changed little with the centuries.

### 12.2.2 Life of Scott

Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, August 15, 1771. His father was a farmer and his mother, Anne Rutherford, was the daughter of Dr. John Rutherford, who was one of the founders of the medical school of Edinburgh. Mrs. Scott was fond of poetry and anecdotes and it was from her that Walter received inspiration.

Walter was one of seven children. The other children's only claim to fame was that they had, "good health and untameable spirits." In contrast, Walter was afflicted at twentyone months with something which a biographer describes as, "a paralytic affection, superinduced, or at least aggravated by scrofulous habit of body." It is sufficient to say that it made him lame and doubtless pushed him into more academic pursuits.

He spent much time with his grandparents, but it was "Aunt Jenny" who took a special interest in him and influenced him to write. His visits to an uncle, Dr. Rutherford, professor of botany at the University of Edinburgh, brought him into contact with scholarly people.

His parents were very religious and imposed strict piety upon all their children. Walter was never very deeply affected religiously, however. His works, which contain much about the church, seek neither to elevate nor to censure it, but rather to depict it, for it was history and not philosophy that interested him most.

His first novel, *Waverly*, was published anonymously. Although Scott probably never intended that "Laurence Templeton" should be taken as a real person, he was attempting to remain in anonymity by the use of the name. His publishers persuaded him to allow further novels to be designated as "by the author of *Waverly*," and for this reason some of his novels were called the "Waverly Novels." Although he published biographies of Swift and Dryden and some history, as well as poems and novels, his chief claim to distinction is his contribution to Romanticism and the historical novel.

He suffered from many physical ailments, one particularly serious in adolescence, which made him, in his own words, "a glutton of books." Scott became seriously ill before *Ivanhoe* was finished and dictated much of it from his sickbed.

His popularity; both socially and as a writer, was almost unparalleled. He was married in 1797 to Margaret Charlotte Carpenter, who bore him three sons and two daughters. Scott received his title

and baronetcy from King-George IV in the spring of 1820. He died, Sir Walter Scott, in 1832.

Chivalry was the code of conduct that governed the knights and noblemen of the Middle Ages. Tennyson in *Gareth and Lynette* expressed its ideals in the words: "Follow the deer? Follow the Christ, the King, Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King-Else, wherefore born?" Respect for women, truth, honor, and courage were also expected. Chaucer's knight loved "chivalrye, trouthe and honour, fredom and courteisye."

The Crusades were organized to drive the Turkish invaders out of the Holy Land, particularly Bethlehem, birthplace of Christ, and Jerusalem, where he was crucified. Churchmen, princes, knights, and noblemen united in this attempt, some going because of religious zeal and others because of the opportunity to travel. There were seven Crusades in all, lasting from 1096 to 1291. All were eventually unsuccessful, and the Moslem conquerors were at last left in possession of the holy shrines.

The feudal system embraced all strata of society in the Middle Ages. Each nobleman, or overlord, divided his land among lesser nobles, or gentlemen, who became his vassals. These grants of land were called fiefs. In return for his lord's protection, the vassal paid certain rents and pledged himself to fight for his liege. Serfs, who were bound to the land, constituted the lowest class. A few franklins, or freeholders, held their lands independently.

Knighthood was the aspiration of every highborn youth, and most of his education was pointed in that direction, unless he was preparing to enter the church. At seven he became a page in the household of a knight or a nobleman. At fourteen he was a squire, helping his lord with horse and armor and caring for his protector if wounded or killed. Training for knighthood included practice in the use of lance, sword, battleaxe, and the wearing of armor, but most knights could neither read nor write. Such learning was reserved for churchmen.

At twenty-one the young squire took the vows of knighthood and received armor, spurs, and sword in a solemn ceremony. Last of all he received his war horse. Now he was ready for adventure in the jousts or in battle.

Knights Templars were a special order of knights whose duty was to guard the Holy Sepulchre. In addition to the vows of knight-hood, they were bound not to marry. They also were taught to read and write. Their chief establishment in England was in the area of London still called the Temple.

The Norman Conquest occurred in 1066 when William of Normandy invaded southern England and won a decisive victory over the Saxon Harold at Battle, a few miles from Hastings. William vowed that if he were successful he would build an abbey on the spot where Harold fell. Battle Abbey, not the original one, but a superb medieval structure of stone, is a tourist attraction today. William the Conqueror and his successors found it hard, however, to enforce Norman rule on the conquered Saxons, and not until the fourteenth century did the intermixture of the two peoples become complete. The time of *Ivanhoe* is approximately a century after the Norman Conquest.

The Plantagenet kings, who ruled England from 1216 to 1399, were so-called because the father of Henry II, a Frenchman, wore a sprig of yellow broom flower in his helmet. This bright-hued flower still grows wild along the roadside in southern France. Richard I was the second of the Plantagenet kings (*plante genet*).

Robin Hood, the popular hero of song and story, probably lived in the twelfth century and with his band of outlaws and furnished excitement in Sherwood Forest. As Locksley in *Ivanhoe*, he demonstrates his unmatched skill with bow and arrow. Traditionally he robbed the rich to give to the poor. With his name were associated those of his chief followers: Little John, Friar Tuck, Allan-a-Dale, and Maid Marian, fair "as ivory bone."

The tournaments were to the Middle Ages what baseball and football games and other athletic

events are to modern spectators. Usually called by invitation of a prince or a nobleman, they were practice sessions for war. Knights showed their prowess and developed their skill. The tournament at Ashby-de-la-Zouche actually occurred, Scott used it as part of his historic background.

### **12.2.3 Brief Synopsis of the Novel**

Four generations and approximately one hundred years had passed since the decisive Battle of Hastings in 1066. Richard the Lion-Hearted (1157-1199), now King of England, on returning from the Crusades, was made prisoner of the Duke of Austria, abetted by the machinations of Richard's brother, Prince John. Prince John hoped, by the help of his Norman confederates, to seize the throne.

Wilfred of Ivanhoe, son of Cedric, had been disinherited by his father for two reasons: because of his allegiance to Richard, the exiled king of England, and because of his romantic interest in Rowena, ward of Cedric, whom Cedric intended as bride to Athelstane, a descendant of Saxon royalty.

In the guise of the Disinherited Knight, Ivanhoe wins the tournament at Ashby-de-la-Zouche with the aid of the Black Knight and crowns Rowena his Queen of Beauty and Love. He suffers severe wounds in the contest and is ministered to by Rebecca, daughter of the Jewish moneylender, Isaac of York.

On the way home from the tournament the Saxon party, together with the Jews and the wounded Ivanhoe, are captured by De Bracy, who fancies Rowena as his wife. They are taken to the castle of Front-de-Boeuf and imprisoned there. The Black Knight, Locksley and his band, Cedric, and others attack the castle and, with the help of Ulrica, an old Saxon hag, succeed in freeing the prisoners. Brian de Bois-Guilbert, Knight Templar, escapes to Templestowe, taking Rebecca with him.

Rebecca, accused of sorcery, is sentenced to die as a witch. Ivanhoe champions her in a trial by combat against the unwilling Bois-Guilbert. Rebecca is set free when the Templar falls dead from his horse.

The Black Knight reveals himself as King Richard, Ivanhoe and Rowena are married, and Rebecca and her father leave England for Granada.

### **12.2.4 Summary of the Novel**

In the opening chapter, Scott describes the setting and gives a historical account of England during the reign of Richard I.

With the captivity of King Richard, the nobles had resumed the practice of making vassals and serfs of their less powerful neighbors. The hostility of the Saxons, which began with the victory of Duke William of Normandy at the Battle of Hastings, was kept smoldering by the Norman French, who reduced many of the Saxons to servitude, and seized, or threatened to seize, their lands.

French became the official language and, although a common dialect emerged, each faction spoke the other's language as little as possible.

As Gurth, with the aid of his dog, gathers the swine, he and Wamba discuss the Norman-Saxon community. Just as they are leaving to avoid the approaching storm, they hear a party of horse-men approaching.

The horsemen prove to be Brian de Bois-Guilbert, the Knight Templar, and his companion Prior Aymer, worldly minded Abbot of Jorvaulx, and their attendants. Wamba misdirects them as they seek to find the home of Cedric the Saxon. Before they reach a sunken cross where the paths meet, they have a lively discussion which ends in a wager concerning the beauty and desirability of Rowena, Cedric's ward. At the foot of the cross they find a Palmer, who accompanies them to Cedric's home.

Rotherwood, Cedric's home, its furnishings, the clothing, and rank of the occupants, are described in great detail. When the Templar and the Prior arrive, they are treated with hospitality. The Palmer, inconspicuous by his dress, is scarcely noticed. Just as Cedric and his guests prepare to eat, Wamba and Gurth arrive, and a few minutes later Lady Rowena joins the group.

The Jew, Isaac of York, is introduced in these chapters. His dealings with the Palmer herald further meetings of the two. In conversation, Cedric learns of Ivanhoe's prowess in the Crusades and the. Palmer pledges a meeting between Ivanhoe and Brian de Bois-Guilbert.

By his knowledge of the language of the Saracen slaves the Palmer uncovers a plot by the Templar to rob Isaac. When the Palmer helps the Jew escape, Isaac rewards him with a loan of horse and armor for the coming tournament at Ashby-de-la-Zouche.

The tournament with its colorful pavilions and the excited and varied crowds of spectators are described in vivid detail. Rebecca, beautiful daughter of Isaac, is introduced for the first time. A Norman-Saxon quarrel over the seating of Isaac and Rebecca is solved in an unexpected manner by Wamba, the Jester. Other characters introduced are Athelstane, of Saxon royalty and suitor of Rowena, and Waldemar Fitzurse, counselor to Prince John.

On the first day the Disinherited Knight overthrows four stalwart opponents, unhorses Brian de Bois-Guilbert, whom he has challenged to mortal combat, and presents the coronet to Rowena, designating her as the Queen of Beauty and Love for the second day. The victor and his queen decline the invitation to attend the banquet given by Prince John.

The Disinherited Knight, as custom dictates, is presented with the choice of the horses and armor or equivalent ransom from each of the five knights whom he has vanquished. He accepts ransom money from four of them but refuses to take anything from the squire of Bois-Guilbert on the grounds of the "mortal defiance" between them.

Gurth is sent to pay the eighty zecchins to Isaac for the use of horse and armor in the recent combat. Rebecca secretly restores the money, adding twenty zecchins for Gurth.

On the return trip, Gurth thinks of the time when he will have money to purchase his freedom. He is set upon by robbers, who surprisingly restore his money and give him safe conduct to the place of the lists.

The excitement on the second day of the tournament reaches a climax as the Disinherited Knight is assaulted at the same time by Athelstane, Front-de-Boeuf, and Brian de Bois-Guilbert. With the aid of the Black Sluggard he succeeds in overthrowing Athelstane and Front-de-Boeuf. The Templar's horse goes down under the charge of the Disinherited Knight and "Desdichado" becomes the victor for the second time. The Black Sluggard retires when the odds are evened, and he disappears when the Disinherited Knight is victorious.

When Rowena crowns the victor, his head is bared and his identity as Ivanhoe is revealed. His wound is so severe, however, that he faints at Rowena's feet.

With the identity of Ivanhoe revealed, there is much speculation as to whether Front-de-Boeuf will be forced to relinquish the castle he now occupies, previously assigned by Richard to Ivanhoe. Prince John, whose plan for wedding Rowena to De Bracy is in the making, is quite agitated when he receives a billet saying, "Take heed to yourself, for the Devil is unchained."

Even though the main event of the day is over, lesser contests are still to come, among them the archery contest in which Locksley easily defeats Hubert.

At the royal banquet that evening, Cedric offends Prince John by drinking to the health of Richard the Lion-Hearted.

De Bracy, fascinated with the idea of wedding Rowena, dons yeoman's clothes and plans to abduct the Saxon party as they return home from the tournament. Fitzurse, who has been busy recouping the loyalty of Prince John's wavering subjects, looks upon De Bracy's folly with disfavor.

The Black Knight, who had disappeared before his identity was questioned too much, reappears in these chapters wandering in the forest. He comes upon the hermitage of the Clerk of Copmanhurst, whom the reader will recognize as the curial friar of Fountain's Abbey, Friar Tuck of Robin Hood's band. When a mutual trust is established, the Friar and the Black Knight drink and sing together in lusty conviviality.

When Cedric is satisfied that Ivanhoe is in good hands, he and his party start home. Gurth is recognized by Oswald and bound as a captive for having attended Ivanhoe. During the ride he slips his bonds and escapes, renouncing his service to Cedric. The superstitious Saxons are frightened by the howling of Fangs, sure that it is a sign of impending evil.

As they journey through the wood, they encounter Isaac and Rebecca with a sick man on a horse-drawn litter. Rebecca implores Rowena for protection and the request is granted.

In the assumed character of yeoman outlaws, De Bracy and his band swoop down upon the travelers and take them all prisoners except Wamba, who escapes. Wamba meets Locksley, who offers to help them. Locksley gathers his band and sends them on various errands. He, Wamba, and Gurth, whom Wamba finds in the woods, go to the chapel, where they find the Friar and the Black Knight in hilarious camaraderie. Both pledge assistance to the prisoners, who have been taken to Torquilstone, the castle of Front-de-Boeuf, and have been confined in different rooms in the building.

Isaac of York is thrown into the dungeon-vault of the castle and threatened with slow torture by fire unless he delivers to Front-de-Boeuf a thousand pounds of silver. The Jew asks that his daughter be sent to York under safe conduct to procure the money, only to learn that she has been made the special property of Brian de Bois-Guilbert. The sound of the bugle breaks off the preparations for the torture.

In another part of the castle, Lady Rowena is approached by De Bracy with a proposal of marriage. She learns for the first time that the wounded Ivanhoe is also a prisoner in the castle and that if she refuses De Bracy, Wilfred and Cedric will be the price of her refusal. She uses her only weapon, tears, and both she and De Bracy are relieved by the bugle summons.

Rebecca, like Rowena, is being wooed by a man she dislikes, Brian de Bois-Guilbert. Unlike De Bracy, however he does not propose marriage. When she repulses his advances, threatening to jump from the tower, he is moved to admiration. When the trumpet sounds, he, too, is forced to heed its summons.

A letter from the Black Knight and Locksley, bearing the signatures of Gurth and Wamba, demands the release of the imprisoned party. In reply to the missive Front-de-Boeuf asks that a man of religion be sent to hear the confessions of the doomed captives. Wamba, in the Friar's robes, enters the castle and finds his way to Cedric. The two exchange outer garments.

In these chapters a new character, the ancient Saxon crone, Urfried (Ulrica), is introduced. Cedric, in the guise of a priest, converses with her and learns of her sordid past.

Front-de-Boeuf gives Cedric a message to be carried to Philip Malvoisin and a gold byzant in payment. Cedric throws the money toward the donor and joins the besiegers.

Wamba's disguise and Cedric's escape are discovered by Front-de-Boeuf and De Bracy. When the terms of the ransom are rejected by the prisoners, the storming of Torquilstone becomes imminent.

Scott uses a flashback to supply missing information about the wounded Ivanhoe from the time

of the tournament until the battle of Torquilstone. When Rebecca gave up her litter to the in-valid and exposed herself on horseback, Brian de Bois-Guilbert noted her beauty and desired her. Regaining consciousness, Ivan-hoe was surprised to find himself in the company of the Jewess. She told him of her healing knowledge and promised to make him well in eight days. On the journey toward York, Cedric's party overtook that of Isaac, and when all were captured by De Bracy, Ivanhoe was also taken to Torquilstone.

Ivanhoe is left in the care of Rebecca and when the fighting begins she, although in peril from the flying arrows and stones, stands at a window and describes the struggle to the wounded knight. As the besiegers appear to have won, Ivanhoe, exhausted from the excitement, falls asleep and Rebecca muses over her feeling for him.

Front-de-Boeuf, mortally wounded in the fighting, is reviled by Ulrica as he is dying. She rightfully accuses him of blasphemy and parricide, for she has witnessed the murder of his father. In a last desperate effort at revenge, Ulrica has set fire to the castle. Both she and Front-de-Boeuf perish in the flames.

Meanwhile the leadership of the besiegers has been divided between the Black Knight and Locksley. In the fighting, the Black Knight captures De Bracy and saves Ivanhoe from the burning castle. All of the prisoners escape except Rebecca, who is carried off by the amorous Brian de Bois-Guilbert. In an attempt to stop the Templar, Athelstane receives a blow on the head and falls down as if dead.

The liberated party assemble at Locksley's trysting place in the forest, where Cedric makes Gurth a free man. Cedric refuses a share of the plunder from the castle, but both he and Rowena express gratitude for Locksley's help.

Friar Tuck arrives leading Isaac by a rope around his neck. The Friar and the Black Knight engage in friendly fisticuffs to decide the fate of the Jew. The Jew and the Prior set each other's ransom and Isaac learns of Rebecca's abduction. For a price, the Prior offers to use his influence with Brian de Bois-Guilbert and furnishes a letter to this effect. The Saxon party leaves with the body of Athelstane to prepare the funeral rites at Coningsburgh Castle, Athelstane's home.

De Bracy, set free by the Black Knight, announces to Prince John that Richard is in England, that Bois-Guilbert has fled, and that Front-de-Boeuf is dead. When he recovers from the shock, Prince John conceives a plot to make his brother prisoner and Fitzurse sets out to do his bidding.

Isaac, bearing the letter from the Prior to Brian de Bois-Guilbert, arrives at Templestowe and is brought to the Grand Master, Lucas Beaumanoir. The letter discloses Rebecca's presence at Templestowe and thus casts reflection on Brian de Bois-Guilbert. At the same time its contents (by insinuation) condemn Rebecca as a sorceress, "a second witch of Endor."

Albert Malvoisin, Preceptor of Templestowe, makes excuses for the Templar, claiming he has been enticed against his will. Meanwhile Bois-Guilbert, finding himself in love with her, has been pressing his suit with Rebecca, only to be repulsed. When Malvoisin reminds him of his ambitions' in the order and how his concern with a Jewess is endangering his future, Brian de Bois-Guilbert is torn between two desires.

Beaumanoir orders an immediate trial to convict Rebecca as a witch. The Templar seeks a way to help her escape.

At Rebecca's trial the charges against Brian de Bois-Guilbert are read and tempered by the intimation that he was made devoid of reason by a supernatural power.

Witnesses against Rebecca testify to her occult powers of healing and curious happenings concerning her appearance on the parapet at the storming of Torquilstone. Her beauty and innocent

defense affect the crowd, but have little bearing on the outcome of the trial. At Brian de Bois-Guilbert's prompting she demands a champion to represent her in trial by combat and gains a reprieve. A peasant is sent at once to Isaac so that he may seek a champion. Bois-Gulbert, sensing that a champion may not be found, urges her to elope with him.

On their way to Athelstane's castle of Coningsburgh, the Black Knight and Wamba are attacked by Waldemar Fitzurse and his men. With the help of Robin Hood and his band, called up by the horn, Richard slays all of his enemies except Fitzurse, whom he banishes from England. Richard's magnanimity toward his brother John is shown in his command that Prince John's name not be mentioned in connection with the attack just made on his life.

In Chapter 40 the Black Knight reveals himself as Richard to those present. When Ivanhoe and Gurthjoin the group they are all invited to be the guests of the outlaws.

King Richard and Ivanhoe and their party travel on to Coningsburgh, where the funeral feast for Athelstane is in progress. Athelstane, who has only been knocked unconscious, appears, but before he can finish the story of his bizarre escape from the coffin, Ivanhoe is summoned to defend Rebecca.

Many people assemble at Templestowe for the combat which is to decide the fate of Rebecca. Among them are Allan-a-Dale and Friar Tuck, who discuss the legend which is rapidly arising around Athelstane.

Brian de Bois-Guilbert, the unwilling champion of the order against Rebecca, appeals once more to her to ride away with him. With her customary disdain, she refuses. Just as it appears that no champion will appear to defend Rebecca, Ivanhoe rides into the lists. He and his horse are exhausted from the hard ride and, at the first skirmish, Ivanhoe is unseated. However, the Templar also falls to the ground, having died, "a victim to the violence of his own contending passions."

Rowena and Wilfred of Ivanhoe are married and it is to Rowena that Rebecca pays a final visit to tender her thanks for deliverance. She and her father leave England to live in Granada.

### **12.2.5 Characters in the Novel**

The characters in Ivanhoe are static. Except for minor changes in attitude, there is very little character development. They are mainly interesting as types having certain distinguishing characteristics. Wilfred of Ivanhoe represents the all-good personality and Front-de-Boeuf typifies the all-evil character. Somewhere between these onedimensional figures is Brian de Bois-Guilbert.

#### **WILFRED OF IVANHOE**

Wilfred, often referred to simply as Ivanhoe, is the strong-willed son of a strongwilled father. He attaches himself to the lion-hearted king and follows him courageously into battle in the Crusades in Palestine. He enjoys a good fight. His love for his lady is constant. Although Scott raises a question regarding his feeling for Rebecca, his love for Rowena is never seriously in question. He is brave, loyal to God and country, and has respect for his father, although he has been disowned.

#### **LADY ROWENA**

She is the female counterpart of Wilfred. She bears herself in a queenly fashion and has a will to match that of her guardian, Cedric the Saxon. Her love for Ivanhoe and her fear for his safety stir her emotionally more than is customary to her normal placidity.

She is beautiful, chaste, and always discreet. She forgives Maurice de Bracy because it is her duty "as a Christian," which Wamba says slyly, "means she doesn't forgive him at all." She is as magnanimous toward Rebecca as she is adamant toward Cedric's attempts to coerce her into marriage with Athelstane.

## **CEDRIC THE SAXON**

The Saxon patriarch has more interest in re-establishing Saxon rule than in perpetuating his own house. When Wilfred disappoints him by falling in love with his ward, Rowena, and in swearing allegiance to King Richard Plantagenet, Cedric disinherits him.

Cedric has fierce pride in his nationality and chafes under Norman rule. Although he presents a rough exterior, he often betrays a kind heart. He observes the rules of hospitality even toward those he considers his enemies, but relents only momentarily toward reconciliation with his son, until his hope of Saxon rule is gone. He is slow to think and this, together with his crude speech, often puts him at disadvantage with the more polished Normans.

## **ATHELSTANE THE UNREADY**

Slow to think and act, but brave and steady when aroused, with an insatiable appetite for food—this characterizes the “noble” Saxon. He accepts the arrangement of the marriage to Rowena more because of pride and expediency than from any involvement of the heart, so that when he gives her up it is a matter of no great concern. He is often a comic figure and never more so than when he is describing his escape from the coffin.

## **REBECCA**

Rebecca is beautiful and chaste, but her affection for Ivanhoe is unruly and unwise. She is so hard on Brian de Bois-Guilbert that one is constrained to feel sorry for the villain. She has strong religious faith, but it does not reduce her to stoicism. She “shudders” at her impending fate. Her innate kindness causes her to use her healing knowledge indiscriminately, but she suffers from the disclosure of the source. It is precisely these “human” qualities that cause some readers to prefer her to Rowena.

Rebecca was drawn from a real Jewess, Rebecca Gratz, who lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Washington Irving told Scott about her beauty and nobility of character.

## **ISAAC THE JEW**

Isaac is a typical Jew, or more correctly, he is representative of a literary type. The “typical Jew” was portrayed as avaricious and obsequious unless he gained power over others; then he could be demanding and imperious. Isaac shares these tendencies but he can be kind; as to Ivanhoe when Ivanhoe is disguised as the Palmer and in need of equipage for the tournament.

Isaac loves two things, his daughter and his money. There always seems to be a struggle when the two are involved in the same transaction. The loss of money is the terrible price he pays for the greater love he bears his daughter.

## **PRINCE JOHN**

Prince John is an injudicious, arrogant, petulant, suspicious, and conniving man whose bravery is always in question. He trusts no one, as the spy-upon-spy episode toward the end of the narrative indicates. He lives in fear of his brother’s return, although more from fear of loss of power than from any danger to his person. When he tells De Bracy, “I seek no safety for myself, that I could secure by a word spoken to my brother,” it is not all bravado. It proved to be true. King Richard took no action against his brother at all. In turn, John only seeks imprisonment for Richard. It is Fitzurse who threatens the king’s life.

Those closest to him have no respect for him and maintain loyalty only for their own ambitious ends. He revels in the acclaim of the crowds and in a display of power. He appears to delight in setting one faction upon another.

## **KING RICHARD COEUR DE LION**

Richard commands the allegiance of many kinds of people. Ivanhoe follows him to Palestine,

Friar Tuck fraternizes with him, Wamba travels and sings with him, and the outlaw band entertain him at a meal. His brother fears his return, for the rumor that he may have returned is enough to turn his former subjects away from Prince John.

He sometimes shows a bad temper and a lack of good judgment, as at the revel in the forest, and traces of the arrogance of his brother are also apparent in King Richard.

However, he is never lacking in courage and is forceful, as well as popular, with those whom he rules. He deals with his enemies without fear and, except for his brother, without favor.

### **WALDEMAR FITZURSE**

Fitzurse, “wily politician” and adviser to Prince John, serves as conciliator for the arrogant and unwise leader. He mollifies the people whom Prince John insults and wins back those whose loyal-ties stray. He has a driving ambition to become chancellor to Prince John if the prince can usurp the throne. Although his advice is for the prince’s good, it is his own welfare about which he is most concerned.

### **MAURICE DE BRACY**

The dashing young Norman has more valor and love of life than good judgment. He is ambitious for a place in Prince John’s court, unscrupulous in achieving these ends, and brave in battle, as shown by his part in defending Torquilstone. He accepts defeat without debasing himself. He is realistic about the effect of Richard’s return and escapes hastily to France and a place in the court of Philip.

### **FRONT.DE-BOEUF**

The “ox-faced” lord is as repellent as his name implies. His brutality is apparent as he torments Isaac in the basement of the palace and in the taunts of Ulrica as he is dying. His closest associates calmly discuss his death only in terms of the loss to Prince John’s cause.

### **BRIAN DE BOIS-GUILBERT**

The haughty Templar is a striking figure and a bold, though unprincipled, knight. His Saracen slaves attest to his subjugation of one people while seeking to advance the cause of another. He meets his match in Ivanhoe and the disgrace is damaging to his pride.

That Bois-Guilbert is not all evil is evidenced by Rebecca’s judgment of him: “There are noble things which cross over thy powerful mind; but it is the garden of the sluggard, and the weeds have rushed up, and conspired to choke the fair and wholesome blossom.” He is caught in the web of his own licentious making as his desire for Rebecca wars with his ambitions in the order of Knights Templar. His death is the result of his unresolved passions.

### **PRIOR AYMER OF JORVAULX**

The Prior uses the office of the church to line his own pockets and as a shield for practicing vice. He caters to the Normans, but can trace some Saxon blood in his lineage if it is necessary to keep in the good graces of Cedric. The impious priest is a part of the corrupt picture of the medieval church that Scott was painting.

### **LUCAS BEAUMANOIR**

The Grand Master of the Templars is an “ascetic bigot,” a “formidable warrior,” and yet has something “striking and noble” about him. He is stripped of his piety by the quick and heartless condemnation of Rebecca. He is affected by her demeanor and protestations of innocence, but this is dispelled by the fact that she is a member of a hated race and that her presence casts reflection upon one of the knights of his order.

Scott adopts an ironic succession of attitudes when he has Beau-manoir condemn the knights

and priests for their lack of attention to their holy vows and then impose such inhumane treatment on the helpless girl.

### **LOCKSLEY (ROBIN HOOD)**

Robin Hood, alias Locksley, rollicking king of the forest out-laws, is a legendary figure who allegedly robbed the rich to give to the poor. He represents defiance against law and order and helps the “good” or “better” against the wicked. He is skilled in archery and lives by being quick-witted and daring.

### **THE CLERK OF COPMANHURST (FRIAR TUCK)**

Friar Tuck, the outlaw priest, is more outlaw than priest. He is more adept at fighting than in speaking Latin. He is, however one of a type of “holy” men, called Hedge Priests, who performed perverted religious rites for men of doubtful character. The Hedge Priests had morals to match those of the men they served. The Friar in *Ivanhoe*, however, is more comic than evil.

### **WAMBA**

Wamba is a delightful character whose wit is his stock-in-trade. It is a tribute to Scott’s genius that Wamba has just the right amount of loyalty to Cedric and his friends, as well as a sense of pithy good humor. He is able to insert a pointed remark at the right time by the audacity allowed a jester.

### **GURTH**

The swineherd may resemble the rustic of Scott’s own day, but he is a believable person with real fears, a homely disposition, and mixed loyalties. His presence makes possible the rite of raising a bondsman to the status of freedman.

### **ULRICA (URFRIED)**

In spite of the wrongs which have been done to Ulrica, she appears more as a witch than a woman. Her guilt in consorting with the Norman lords allows sympathy to rise for her only momentarily. She provides a dramatic climax to the destruction of the palace of Torquilstone as she chants her death song from the turret.

## **12.2.6 Narrative Style**

Sir Walter Scott is a Storytelling author. The story is in third person, but when he wishes to explain something to the reader he breaks in and resorts to first person. His point of view is of one watching an exciting drama and relaying what he sees with suitable explanation so that none of the excitement is lost.

He uses a disjointed flashback. He carries the action of one group to a certain point and then goes back to pick up another group to bring it into logical position. It is as though he were weaving together varied colored threads into one exquisite pattern. It is his task to put the threads together so that the finished piece of cloth is one carefully wrought, panoramic scene. Foremost are the figures, often in violent action, against a background of vivid natural beauty. To miss the description is to rob the piece of its wholeness and to be impatient with the archaic and distinctive words is to destroy the medieval setting.

He gives structural clues to move the story along, such as Rebecca’s warning of robbers to Gurth, which prepares the reader for the swineherd’s encounter with the thieves; Fang’s howling precipitates the capture by De Bracy; the phrase which the Prior drops, “the witch of Endor,” signifies Rebecca’s trial.

## 12.2.7 History, Romanticism, Religion

### History

Scott's formula for the historical novel was an unmistakable innovation which became a pattern for those who followed him. His story is pure fiction, his hero is imaginary. For example, it is Ivanhoe who is the hero, not Richard Coeur de Lion; the setting is as authentic as possible, and the events of history are quite accurate. As Henry Beers says, "He possessed the true enchanter's wand, the historic imagination. With this in his hand he raised the dead past to life, made it once more conceivable, made it even actual.

Furthermore, he made history romantic, and to those who feel history to be dull, he makes it exciting. Many authors have written histories more accurate in detail and with more attention to chronology; some have written romances more tender and ethereal, but no one combines history and romance and makes them both more lovely and believable.

Scott read history with an avidity probably unequalled by any novelist so that, although he was sometimes careless, his work is authentic in spite of it. He loved scenery only when it had a castle or a battle site which related it to history. Where this happy combination resulted he fashioned a story. His friend Mr. Morritt of Rokesbury said of him, "He was but half-satisfied with the most beautiful scenery when he could not connect it with some local legend."

In his historical romances in general, and in *Ivanhoe* in particular, Scott captured the spirit of the age; he imitated the speech, the rude humor, the customs, and reconstructed a past age until it became a living present. He did not go deep into the cause of a historical event, just as he did not go deep into spiritualities, or men's thoughts, but he described in vivid detail and told a whopping good story. More particularly in *Ivanhoe* he was not always accurate, but he did more for the medieval era historically than almost anyone else to make it a part of the body of knowledge.

It is with the description of battles and the external aspects of knighthood, the outlaw bands, and the Norman-Saxon conflict that Scott is especially interesting. He is never satirical and only mildly ironic, but he has a verve for color and action that is his specialty. Only at times, when he interrupts his story to add extraneous material, is the reader led away from the action.

One writer sees historical value in the treatment of the smoldering hatred by the Saxon for the Normans which was brought into harmony and finally dissolved under King Richard. He also believes that the account of the brothers Richard and John is quite accurate, except that King Richard was probably less gallant than he appears here. He allows the bigotry of the Grand Master of the Templars and discredits the love of BoisGuilbert for the Jewess as highly improbable.

Another point of historical interest is the resemblance of Shakespeare's King John to the Prince John of *Ivanhoe*. That Scott was indeed a student of Shakespeare is evident from the many quotes from Shakespeare's plays.

Scott drew heavily on Shakespeare as well as Chaucer. Isaac and Rebecca hark back to Shylock and Jessica of the *Merchant of Venice*. Wamba resembles the fools of *King Lear*; *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*. Richard I has the qualities of a national leader found in *Henry V*. Even the device of a funeral for one not dead can be traced to *Cymbeline* and *Romeo and Juliet*; Athelstane echoes Cloten.

*Ivanhoe* marks a departure from the Scottish themes employed by Scott prior to the year 1819. He felt that he was exhausting his material and that he needed a change of scene. As a result he produced a masterpiece that has influenced most tales of derring-do written since.

## ROMANTICISM

Since Scott's writings are historical romances, romanticism and history are hardly separable. His passion for places made it easy for him to romanticize the events that took place there. With regard to his poem, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, in which romanticism is said to have arrived, Henry Beers expresses the wish that "Collins and Tom Wharton might have lived to hail it as the light at last, towards which they had struggled through the cold obstruction of the eighteenth century. One fancies Dr. Johnson's disgust over this new monstrosity which had every quality he disliked except blank verse; or Gray's delight in it, tempered by a critical disapproval of its loose construction and irregularity."

Scott was interested in superstition, which was in vogue in romantic literature, but only as a curiosity. Someone once said something to the effect that he saw too much daylight through the dark mysticism to be much affected by it. His use of superstition is certainly more romantic than with any intent to make it credulous.

## RELIGION

Although knights are important in *Ivanhoe*, the Crusades are merely referred to. In one instance, however, the Grand Master seems to blame priests such as Prior Aymer and some of the Templars for the loss of the Holy Land by Christians, "place by place, foot by foot, before the infidels."

The Catholic church suffers indignity by the character of Prior Aymer. The Dutch writer Bos says he is a "character revolting to true Catholics." Friar Tuck on the other hand, is not a true priest, or is considered an "unfrocked one" by most Catholics and therefore not a reflection upon the church.

Although Scott came in for some abuse for his treatment of the Catholic church lost Catholics have long since written off his characters as caricatures having little to do with the faith, and his scenes such as the funeral rites of Athelstane as burlesque.

Scott's Jew as depicted in Isaac is typical of the stereotyped member of a race hated for his usury and more particularly for his religion, since the Christian Crusaders were incensed against anyone who was an unbeliever in Christ as the messiah. They laid at the door of any Jew the responsibility for Christ's crucifixion. Anti-semitism today, although stemming from the same root, has lost most of the religious context.

The Jew as shown by Rebecca, her comments, and religious fervor, is certainly more sympathetic. Wamba also makes pithy observations; for example in a saucy retort to the haughty Templar, he says, "By my faith, it would seem the Templars love the Jews' inheritance better than they do their company," which raises the estimation of Jews and warrants a second look by Christian readers.

The love interest of Rebecca and Wilfred is unlikely, as is the kindly attitude of Rowena toward the Jewess. The close, contact would probably never have taken place, and as one author puts it, "is probably true only in the kindness of Scott's ownheart."

Hauberk	a coat of mail developed into a long tunic of chain mail; part of medieval armor
St. Dunstan	saxon saint and archbishop of canterbury in the tenth century
Murrain	a pestilence or plague
Eumaeus	swineherd in Homer's Odyssey
el jerrid	a javelin used in Oriental games, especially in mock-fights on horseback
Benedicite mes filz	bless you my children
morat	drink made of honey flavored with the juice of mulberries

chain	wine of chios, an island of Asia minor
lac dulce	sweet milk
lac acidum	sour milk
recheat	a signal to the hounds to return from following a false scent
mort	a bugle call at the death of a stag
cride guerre	war cry
shekel	an ancient weight and money unit, or coin. Hebrew shekel for gold about 252 2/3 grains (about \$ 10.88)
Halfing	the half of a silver penny
benison	blessing, benefaction
lazarus	biblical beggar
La Royne Beaulte et des Amours	the Queen of Beauty and of Love
byzants	a Byzantine gold coin
halidom	holiness, sanctity; sanctuary, holy relics
Gare le corbeau	Beware, I am here
Zecchins	a Venetian coin, about 9s 4d.
Talents	a unit of money, worth about 50 Hebrew shekels
fleurs-de-lis	heraldic lilies
nidering	infamous, base, cowardly
anchorite	one who renounces the world to live in seclusion
Abednego	from the heathen King's meat and drink
baldric	a belt worn over the shoulder to support a sword or bugle
vizard	mask of visor
peccadillo	slight offenses; petty faults
loadstar (lodestar)	a star that leads, especially the polestar
sibyl	prophetess; fortune-teller
Odin	norse god of war; of those slain in battle; and of wisdom and of poetry
Thor	Norse god of thunder, god of strength, and helper in war
Zernebock	the black god or Devil of the wends and Prussian slavs
gibbets	a kind of gallows where malefactors were left hanging as a warning
Sir Guy	the hero of the medieval romance
Tracy, Morville, Brito	slayers of Thomas-a-Becket
exorcism	the act of driving off evil spirits

Woden, or Odin

the chief god of ancient Teutonic mythology

flints

men of the right sort

Flat voluntas tua

Thy will be done

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### 12.3 Self Assessment Questions

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1. Write briefly about the life of Scott.

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2. Give a brief background to Ivanhoe

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3. Write briefly on Wilfred of Ivanhoe

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4. Write briefly on Cedric the Saxon

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5. Write briefly on Locksley (Robin hood)

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6. Write about the narrative style of the Novel.

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7. Write a note on history and romanticism in the novel.

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## 12.4 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit, we have studied

- about the novelist
- about the novel, its background and the characters.
- about the critical interpretations of the text

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## 12.5 Review Questions

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1. Draw a character sketch of Ivanhoe.
2. Write an essay of the narrative technique of novel Ivanhoe.
3. Discuss Ivanhoe as a historical novel.

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## 12.6 Bibliography

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### Works by Scott

#### *Poetry*

1802-03 Minstrelsy of the Scottish border

1805 Lay of the Last Mistrel

1810 The Lady of the Lake

#### *Novels*

1804 Waverly

1818 Rob Roy

The black Dwarf

Old Mortality

1819 The Bride of Lammermoor

The Legend of Montrose

1820 Ivanhoe

The Monastery

The Abbot

1821 Kenilworth

### **Works On Scott**

Allan, George. Life of Sir Walter Scott. Philadelphia : Crissy, Wall die & Co., 1835.

Beers, Henry A.A. History of English romanticism in the Nineteen Century. New York : Henry Holt & Co. 1901.

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Canning, S.G. History in Scott's Novels. New York and Brooklyn : Ed. for America by A. Wessels Company; London T. Fisher Unwin, 1907.

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## UNIT-13

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### JANE AUSTEN PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

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#### Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2. Life of Jane Austen
- 13.3 The Story of the Novel in Brief
- 13.4 Character sketch of Elizabeth
- 13.5 Title of the Novel
- 13.6 Theme and Structure of the Novel
- 13.7 Irony in the Novel
- 13.8 The Novel as a Comedy of Manners
- 13.9 Key Words
- 13.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.11 Review Questions
- 13.12 Bibliography

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#### **13.0 Objectives**

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In this unit you are going to study about the novel. After going through this unit, you will be able to

- Understand the background of the novel
- Understand about the life, background and ideas of the novelist
- Understand the story, structure and characters of the novel
- Write in your own words about any aspect of the novel.

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#### **13.1 Introduction**

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In this unit you will study about the novelist, the novel, the background and context of the novel. Through key words and exercises given, you will reinforce your understanding of the unit.

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#### **13.2 The Life of Jane Austen (1775-1817)**

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Jane Austen was the younger daughter of a Hampshire clergyman, rector of Steventon. She was born on December 16, 1775. Her father, George Austen, was a scholarly type of man; and her mother, Cassandra Austen, was a keen gardener. Jane Austen had six brothers, and one sister whose name was also Cassandra. Two of her brothers became naval officers and attained the rank of admiral. Her sister,

Cassandra, was her close companion and friend. The immediate social circle of Jane Austen included the kind of men whom we meet in her novels—a landowner, a militia officer, two clergymen, and two sailors. The circle was later enlarged by the addition of her brothers' wives and their children.

Her father's house at Steventon remained Jane Austen's above for a quarter of a century. The Austen family was at that time reasonably well off, mixed in the best society of the neighbourhood, and owned a carriage and a pair of horses. For their education, Jane and Cassandra depended largely on their father and brothers, the cultured atmosphere of their home, and their contacts with relatives. Reading occupied much of Jane's time; and it was not only reading to herself but reading aloud as a family entertainment. Jane Austen could sing, dance, and play the piano. She also had some knowledge of French and Italian.

Jane Austen began to write stories early. Some of her early works survive in three note-books entitled *Volume the First*, *Volume the Second* and *Volume the Third*, containing short novels, plays, etc., all written before she was sixteen. By 1796, she had written a novel called *Elinor and Marianne*, in the form of a series of letters modelled on Richardson. This was afterwards re-cast and re-written in 1797, and became *Sense and Sensibility*. *Pride and Prejudice*, which shows her at the height of her powers, was written in 1796-97. In 1798, she wrote *Northanger Abbey*, which was bought by a publisher in 1803, but not published by him.

There is a family tradition that, during a visit to Devonshire, Jane Austen met a young man who attracted her greatly but who died soon afterwards. In 1795, Cassandra, got engaged to a young man who died in 1797.

In 1801, the Austen family moved to Bath which Jane Austen had previously been visiting on occasions. George Austen had retired, and he had decided to settle in Bath. It is believed that Jane was at first unhappy about living there. Perhaps there is a bit of autobiography in *Persuasion*, where Jane Austen writes of Anne Eliot: "She disliked Bath, and did not think it agreed with her and Bath was to be her home. (Chapter II). From Bath the family went on expeditions to various places, one of them being Lyme Regis, which is the setting for part of the story of *Persuasion*. It was on one of these expeditions to Lyme that Jane rashly accepted a proposal of marriage and then changed her mind the very next day, because she realized that she should not marry simply from worldly' motives and without love. During this period at Bath, George Austen died (1804). In 1809, the family shifted to Chawton, near Winchester.

It may be noted that Jane Austen wrote hardly anything during the period the family lived in Bath. Her interest in writing seems to have revived after the family moved to Chawton. It was at Chawton that she began to publish her writings, though her life as a publishing author lasted only six years. *Sense and Sensibility* was the first of her novels to be published, appearing in 1811. *Pride and Prejudice* appeared in 1813. *Mansfield Park*, which had been begun in 1811, was published in 1814. *Emma*, begun in 1814, appeared in 1815. All these novels were published anonymously. *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* were the only novels that were published under her own name. *Persuasion* was written in failing health.

Until 1816, there had been no sign of Jane Austen being ill, but early in that year her health was somewhat impaired. She still wrote cheerful letters to her relatives, but she became less and less active. In May 1817, she and Cassandra went to Winchester to get medical aid but there was no hope of a cure. She became seriously ill and died on July 18, 1817, in the arms of her sister. She was buried on

the 24th July 1817, in the cathedral church of Winchester.

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### 13.3 The Story of the Novel in Brief

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Mr. and Mrs. Bennet live in the village of Longbourn which is situated in the County of Hertfordshire. They have five daughters - Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Catherine (or Kitty), and Lydia. The youngest is fifteen years old. Mrs. Bennet's chief desire in life is to see all her daughters suitably married and happily settled. In fact, the marriages of her daughters have become an obsession with her.

A rich young man by the name of Mr. Charles Bingley takes a palatial house called Netherfield Park on rent. This country house is situated at a distance of about three miles from the village of Longbourn. Mr. Bingley begins to live in this house with his sister, Caroline Bingley, as his housekeeper. He has a friend by the name of Mr. Darcy who joins him at Netherfield Park for a short stay, but continues to stay there for a couple of months. Mrs. Hurst, a married sister of Mr. Bingley, also comes with her husband to stay at Netherfield Park. Mrs. Bennet feels very glad to know that the new occupant of Netherfield Park is a rich bachelor. She tells her husband that there is every possibility that Mr. Bingley would choose one of their daughter as his would-be wife. Mr. Bennet does not share his wife's enthusiasm though he too would like Mr. Bingley to choose one of his daughters as his future wife. As Mrs. Bennet is a woman of a mean intelligence, and as her talk is very often foolish, Mr. Bennet has got into the habit of making sarcastic remarks to her and about her. In other words, he often pokes fun at her.

An assembly is held periodically in the town of Meryton which is situated at a distance of about one mile from Longbourn. This assembly is a kind of social gathering which is attended by all the respectable families of the town and the neighbouring villages. At the first assembly, which is attended by Mr. Bingley and the other inmates of Netherfield Park, Mr. Bingley feels greatly attracted by Jane Bennet who is the prettiest of the Bennet sisters. He asks Jane for a dance, and she gladly accepts his request. In fact, he dances with her a second time also. Mr. Bingley suggests to his friend Mr. Darcy that the latter should not stand idle but should dance. He suggests that Mr. Darcy should dance with Elizabeth Bennet who is sitting nearby. Mr. Darcy, however, replies that this girl is not attractive enough to tempt him to dance with her. Elizabeth overhears this remark and conceives a dislike for the man who has made such a disparaging remark about her in her hearing. In fact, from this time onwards, she becomes prejudiced against him. Mr. Darcy, on his part, is a very proud man. Like Mr. Bingley, Mr. Darcy is also a very rich and handsome bachelor. Any girl in this neighbourhood would be glad to marry him, but his pride is a most disagreeable trait of his character. Mrs. Bennet describes him to her husband as a haughty and horrid man. In fact, everybody at the assembly finds him to be too proud.

Mr. Bingley's preference for Jane Bennet is noticed by everybody at the assembly. In fact, both Mr. Bingley and Jane have felt mutually attracted by each other. Mr. Bingley's two sisters, Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst, also develop a liking for Jane. In fact, Miss Bingley invites Jane to dinner at Netherfield Park; and the Bennet family considers this invitation to be a great honour and also a golden opportunity for Jane. Jane goes to Netherfield Park but catches cold on the way because it has been raining. The consequence of her indisposition is that she has to stay on at Netherfield Park for about a week during which Elizabeth also joins her in order to attend upon her. The intimacy between Jane and Mr. Bingley's sisters now increases; and both Jane and Elizabeth begin to think that Mr. Bingley would surely propose marriage to Jane soon. However, Miss Bingley does not feel any liking for Elizabeth. In fact, Miss Bingley begins to feel jealous of Elizabeth.

In the meantime, Mr. Darcy's attitude towards Elizabeth changes. On a closer acquaintance with her, he finds that there is, after all, a good deal of charm about this girl. She has a very intelligent face; and she has dark eyes which add to the charm of her countenance. She also has a pleasing figure and a lively temperament. Mr. Darcy begins actually to like this girl of whom he had originally disapproved even for the purpose of dancing. Miss Bingley begins to dislike Elizabeth all the more because she finds Mr. Darcy feeling inclined towards her (Elizabeth). Miss Bingley wants Mr. Darcy for herself. In other words, she hopes that Mr. Darcy might marry her; and therefore Miss Bingley would not like any other girl to catch Mr. Darcy's fancy and thus to come in her way. It is during Elizabeth's enforced stay with her sister Jane at Netherfield Park that Mr. Darcy gets the opportunity to know Elizabeth better. Elizabeth takes an active part in the conversations which takes place between Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley, with Miss Bingley participating in those conversations.

Within a walking distance of Long bourn, there lives a family which is on visiting terms with the Bennet family. The head of that family is Sir William Lucas, and he lives in a house, which he has named "Lucas Lodge", with his wife and several children, the eldest of whom is Charlotte Lucas, aged twenty-seven years. Charlotte is a real friend of Elizabeth; and they always talk to each other frankly. Charlotte expresses to Elizabeth her view that Mr. Bingley has felt greatly attracted by Jane and might marry her, if Jane encourages him and reciprocates his interest in her. Elizabeth agrees with this view.

Elizabeth finds herself no closer to Mr. Darcy. If anything, the rift between them has become wider. Mr. Darcy would certainly like to marry Elizabeth but he finds that she belongs to a much lower status than he does, and he, therefore, finds it most improper on his part to marry a girl of that status. Elizabeth continues to harbour her original prejudice against Mr. Darcy, and therefore, does not show any special attention to him. In fact, in the course of a conversation, Elizabeth says to him that he has a strong tendency to hate everybody, while he says in reply that she has a strong tendency deliberately to misunderstand everybody.

Mr. Collins now appears on the scene at Longbourn. He is a cousin of Mr. Bennet; and he is the man to whom Mr. Bennet's whole property is entailed. On Mr. Bennet's death, Mr. Collins would inherit all Mr. Bennet's property because Mr. Bennet has no male issue. On Mr. Bennet's death, therefore, Mrs. Bennet and her daughters would find themselves impoverished. Mr. Collins comes on a visit to the Bennet family, his intention being to choose one of the Bennet sisters and propose marriage to her. As Jane is expected by everybody to marry Mr. Bingley, Mr. Collins makes a proposal of marriage to Elizabeth. Elizabeth, however, has found Mr. Collins to be an oddity, that is, a queer kind of man. Mr. Collins speaks a good deal about his patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh who has been kind enough to him to confer a living upon him and to appoint him the rector at Hunsford. The manner in which he talks about Lady Catherine shows him to be an accomplished flatterer. At the same time, he has too high an opinion of himself. Elizabeth, therefore, rejects Mr. Collins's proposal without the least hesitation. Mr. Collins makes his proposal of marriage a second time, but Elizabeth refuses again, this time even more firmly. Elizabeth is privately supported in her decision by her father though she is scolded by her mother for her failure to avail this opportunity of getting a husband. Mr. Collins now leaves Longbourn and returns to his parsonage at Hunsford.

Another character now enters the story. He is Mr. George Wickham, an officer in the militia regiment which is stationed near the town of Meryton. Mr. Wickham and Mr. Darcy had known each other in their boyhood because Mr. Wickham's father was the steward to Mr. Darcy's father. Mr. Wickham has certain grievances against Mr. Darcy, though these grievances are baseless and show only

Mr. Wickham's ill-will towards Mr. Darcy. In the course of a social gathering, Mr. Wickham gets acquainted with Elizabeth and tells her his grievances against Mr. Darcy, emphasizing the fact that Mr. Darcy is a very proud man. Elizabeth develops a liking for Mr. Wickham who is a very handsome man and whose talk is very interesting. In fact, she fancies herself as being in love with Mr. Wickham. If Mr. Wickham were to propose marriage to her, she would probably have accepted the proposal. In any case, she now feels further prejudiced against Mr. Darcy because of Mr. Wickham's tale of injustices and wrongs which, according to his account, he has suffered at Mr. Darcy's hands. At a ball which Mr. Bingley has arranged at Netherfield Park, Elizabeth is told both by Mr. Bingley and Miss Bingley that Mr. Wickham is an undesirable man, and that he seems to have told many lies to her about Mr. Darcy; but Elizabeth is not convinced by what she is told by these persons. She cannot believe that Mr. Wickham could have told any lies. In this, of course, she is badly deceived because later she will discover the reality of this man.

Mr. Collins visits Longbourn again. Having come into contact with Miss Charlotte Lucas, he decides to propose marriage to her. He is very anxious to get married because Lady Catherine has been pressing him to get married, and also because he thinks that a clergyman should set an example of marriage to his parishioners. So he proposes marriage to Miss Charlotte Lucas who is only too pleased by this proposal because, having already attained the age of twenty-seven, she is very keen to get married at the earliest opportunity. And thus Mr. Collins and Miss Charlotte Lucas get married. Mr. Collins takes his newly wedded wife to the parsonage at Hunsford where Lady Catherine is quite pleased to meet the rector's wife.

Instead of receiving a proposal of marriage from Mr. Bingley, Jane now receives a letter from Miss Bingley informing her that all the inmates of Netherfield Park are leaving for London. This piece of information comes as a great blow to Jane's hopes. Then Miss Bingley writes another letter to Jane, this time from London. Miss Bingley, through this letter, informs Jane that Miss Bingley and the others might not return to Netherfield Park during the whole of the coming winter. Furthermore, Miss Bingley informs Jane that Mr. Bingley is thinking of marrying Mr. Darcy's sister, Georgiana, who is a very beautiful and highly accomplished girl. Thus, Jane finds that her hopes of marrying Mr. Bingley have been dashed to the ground. Elizabeth, on learning from Jane the contents of Miss Bingley's second letter, feels as disappointed and distressed as Jane herself. Elizabeth is deeply attached to Jane; and therefore, she fully shares all Jane's anxieties and Jane's joys.

Elizabeth now pays a visit to Charlotte at Hunsford. She goes there in the company of Charlotte's father, Sir William Lucas, and Charlotte's younger sister, Maria. Charlotte introduces her friend and her relatives to Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Lady Catherine is a very proud woman who takes every opportunity to impress upon others the fact that, she is socially superior to them. Lady Catherine invites them all to dinner at her house which has the name of "Rosings Park" and which is a splendid mansion, splendidly furnished. Sir William and Maria are deeply impressed and awed by the splendour around them; but Elizabeth remains calm and composed.

A new development now takes place. Mr. Darcy, accompanied by a cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam, comes on a brief visit to Lady Catherine who is Mr. Darcy's and Colonel Fitzwilliam's aunt. And now the stage is set for another meeting between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth. At a party which is held by Lady Catherine at her house, Elizabeth plays on the piano and also has much conversation, with Colonel Fitzwilliam who impresses her as a very nice kind of man. Mr. Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam now begin to call at the parsonage daily to meet the inmates. However, Mr. Darcy's chief interest in paying these

visits is to meet Elizabeth. Actually, Mr. Darcy is now more in love with Elizabeth than he had been before. And so one day he makes a proposal of marriage to her. However, in the course of making this proposal, he emphasizes her social inferiority to him, and he makes her conscious of the fact that he is doing her a favour by proposing marriage to her. As a self-respecting girl, Elizabeth does not like the condescending and patronizing tone in which Mr. Darcy proposes marriage to her. She, therefore, declines his proposal. But she gives two other reasons also for her refusal. One is that Mr. Darcy had been unjust and cruel to Mr. Wickham; and the other is that Mr. Darcy had advised Mr. Bingley not to marry Jane. The information about Mr. Darcy's having obstructed Mr. Bingley's proposal of marriage to Jane has been given to Elizabeth by Colonel Fitzwilliam who, however, is not himself aware of the exact particulars regarding Mr. Darcy's intervention in Mr. Bingley's plans of marriage. Elizabeth has been able to infer the correct situation from Colonel Fitzwilliam's talk.

On the following day Mr. Darcy hands over a letter to Elizabeth. On going through the letter, Elizabeth is filled with astonishment. This letter contains Mr. Darcy's defence of himself against the charges which Elizabeth had levelled against him on the previous day. In this letter Mr. Darcy states the true facts about Mr. Wickham, exposing that man as a most unreliable fellow and a rogue. In this letter he also admits that he had prevented Mr. Bingley from proposing marriage to Jane but he defends himself by saying that he had done so under a genuine belief that Jane was not really in love with Mr. Bingley. This letter produces a deep effect on Elizabeth. In fact, her reading through this letter marks a turning-point in her attitude towards Mr. Darcy. She begins to think that she had been totally wrong in her judgment of Mr. Darcy's character and also that she had been grossly mistaken in having relied upon Mr. Wickham's account of his relations with Mr. Darcy. At the same time, Elizabeth finds that Mr. Darcy's letter; though containing a defence of himself, is written in a tone which is insolent and haughty. Thus, Mr. Darcy's pride still remains intact, though Elizabeth's prejudice has begun to crumble.

Mr. Darcy leaves Rosings Park for London before Elizabeth can take any action on the letter which he had handed over to her. After a few days she herself leaves Hunsford for Longbourn. On her way home, she stops in London for a day with her uncle and aunt Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner with whom Jane has already been staying for the past three months. Although Jane had been staying in London for such a long period, she had not been able to meet Mr. Bingley who also lives there. Jane had during this period called on Miss Bingley but even she had shown some indifference to Jane. This creates an impression in Jane's mind that perhaps she is now permanently alienated from Mr. Bingley whom, at one time, she had hoped to marry. Both sisters now return home. Elizabeth informs Jane of what had passed between Mr. Darcy and herself. She also tells Jane of Mr. Wickham's real character as revealed in Mr. Darcy's letter to her. Jane feels shocked to know that such a handsome and smart man as Mr. Wickham possesses a wicked heart.

The militia regiment stationed near the town of Meryton is now shifted from there to a site near the city of Brighton. Lydia feels very depressed because she would no longer be able to mingle with the officers of that regiment and would therefore not be able to lead a gay life. However, Mrs. Forster, the wife of the colonel of that regiment invites Lydia to accompany her to Brighton. Lydia feels delighted by Mrs. Forster's invitation because, by going to Brighton, she can continue her contacts with the officers. Elizabeth privately urges her father not to allow Lydia to go to Brighton because she is already a spoilt girl and might go astray if she gets too much freedom. Her father, however, does not wish to stop Lydia from going thither.

Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner come to Longbourn on their way to Derbyshire whither they intend to

go on a pleasure trip. They would leave their two children with the Bennet family, and themselves proceed to Derbyshire. They had previously arranged with Elizabeth that she would also accompany them on their trip. Originally, they had wanted to go to the Lake district, but subsequently they had changed their minds. In any case, Elizabeth now goes with them. On the way they visit Pemberley House which is a tourist attraction. Pemberley House is a splendid mansion and belongs to Mr. Darcy. When going round this great country house, they happen to meet Mr. Darcy himself. Mr. Darcy was not expected at the house till the following day when he was to arrive here from London; but he has come a day earlier because of a change in his schedule. Mr. Darcy greets Elizabeth most cordially and shows a lot of courtesy to her uncle and aunt. There is not the least touch of arrogance in Mr. Darcy's attitude at this time. Both Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner get the feeling that Mr. Darcy is in love with Elizabeth. On the next day, Mr. Darcy calls on Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner and Elizabeth at the inn where they are staying in the nearby town of Lambton. He brings his sister Georgiana with him. This visit further strengthens Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner's belief that Mr. Darcy is in love with Elizabeth. Elizabeth too gets the same impression. In response to Mr. Darcy's visit, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, accompanied by Elizabeth, call at Pemberley House where Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst are also present, having come from London.

Now Elizabeth has also begun to feel attracted towards Mr. Darcy. This attraction had begun at Hunsford after Elizabeth had gone through Mr. Darcy's letter. It is now quite likely that Mr. Darcy would renew his proposal of marriage to Elizabeth. But an unexpected event occurs to disturb the peace of the Bennet family. Colonel Forster informs Mr. Bennet by an express letter that Lydia, who was staying with Mrs. Forster in Brighton, had eloped with Mr. Wickham whom she had been meeting frequently. When Elizabeth learns this sad news from a letter written to her by Jane, she tells her uncle and aunt that she must get back home to provide whatever comfort she can to her parents in this crisis. She also tells Mr. Darcy of what has happened.

Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner now cut short their holiday and return with Elizabeth to Longbourn. Mrs. Bennet is almost crazy with grief at Lydia's misconduct and at the disgrace which Lydia has brought to the family. Mr. Bennet has gone to London in order to trace the runaway lovers. Mr. Gardiner now also proceeds to London in order to help Mr. Bennet in his efforts to trace Lydia. After a few days Mr. Bennet returns to Longbourn, having failed in his efforts to trace Lydia or Mr. Wickham. Mrs. Gardiner now leaves Longbourn with her children, and joins her husband in London where they have their home. Mr. Bennet feels most repentant of his having always indulged Lydia's desires and whims.

After a few days, a letter is received by Mr. Bennet from Mr. Gardiner. According to the information contained in this letter, Mr. Wickham and Lydia have been traced and are staying in London without having got married. Mr. Wickham has said that he would marry Lydia only on certain conditions. These conditions include the payment of a certain amount of money to him. At the same time, Mr. Gardiner has informed Mr. Bennet that everything is being settled with Mr. Wickham and that Mr. Bennet should not worry about the welfare of Lydia. A marriage duly takes place after Mr. Wickham's demand for money has been met. The Bennet family gets the impression that the money has been paid by Mr. Gardiner. But Elizabeth soon learns from her aunt, Mrs. Gardiner, that the whole settlement had been arrived at by the intervention of Mr. Darcy, and that the entire money had been paid by Mr. Darcy himself. This information produces a profound effect upon Elizabeth regarding the character of Mr. Darcy who has done a great service and a great favour to the Bennet family by saving the good name of the family. But for Mr. Darcy's intervention, Mr. Wickham would never have married Lydia but would

have forsaken her. Lydia would in that case have been a deserted girl with a shameful past.

A change now takes place in Mr. Bingley. This change is as sudden as the change which had been responsible for his having given up his intention to marry Jane. Accompanied by Mr. Darcy, he now goes to Netherfield Park and gets into touch with the Bennet family. He makes a proposal of marriage to Jane which she most gladly accepts.

Lady Catherine de Bourgh now pays a visit to Longbourn and has a private interview with Elizabeth. She warns Elizabeth not to agree to marry Mr. Darcy in case he makes a proposal of marriage to her. Lady Catherine says that Mr. Darcy has to marry her own daughter, Miss Ann de Bourgh, and that Elizabeth should, therefore, not come in the way. Elizabeth, however, refuses to give Lady Catherine any promise in this connection. After a few days, Mr. Darcy comes to Longbourn and proposes marriage to Elizabeth. By this time Elizabeth's attitude towards Mr. Darcy has undergone a complete change. All her prejudices against him have disappeared. She now feels that he would be the right kind of husband for her. She, therefore, accepts his proposal without the least demur or hesitation. Thus, Mr. Darcy whose pride has by now completely melted away, and Elizabeth whose prejudices have completely disappeared, are united in wedlock. In fact, the marriage of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth takes place on the same day as the marriage of Mr. Bingley and Jane.

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#### **13.4 Character Sketch of Elizabeth**

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Elizabeth one of the best-loved heroines in English fiction. She possesses several traits which appeal to us greatly. These traits are her liveliness of temper, her sense of humour and her wit, her mature thinking, the ripeness of her judgment, her attachment to her family and especially to her elder sister Jane, her self-confidence and boldness, her realization of her mistakes and her feeling of repentance about them. However, she is not a perfect woman. She has her weaknesses and her faults.

Elizabeth has a healthy outlook on life. She is a lively girl with a keen sense of humour and with a capacity to make 'witty remarks. She has a strong tendency to laugh at the absurdities to people, and she is capable of making sarcastic remarks. She is quite a sprightly girl though she certainly has her serious moods and moods of reflection and even gloom. She is very good at conversation, and is not at all the type of the demure and dumb girl who has nothing to say at a party or a social meet. To take only two examples of her wit, she makes fun of Mr. Darcy early in the novel by saying that he suffers from no defects at all; and, much later in the novel, when her mother complains that the departure of Lydia from the house has made her sad, Elizabeth says that her mother should be happy at the thought that she still has four unmarried daughters at home with her. At the same time, it is to be noted that Elizabeth does not indulge in frivolous or flippant talk. She strongly disapproves of the kind of talk in which her two youngest sisters often indulge, and also of the kind of trivial and vulgar talk in which her mother indulges. She often feels embarrassed by the kind of remarks which her mother makes at social gatherings.

Elizabeth shows the maturity of her mind when she urges her father not to allow Lydia 'to go to Brighton with Mrs. Forster. She tries to impress upon her father the unpleasant consequences which are likely to result from Lydia's stay in Brighton where she would be absolutely free to behave just as she likes. She describes Lydia as a vain, ignorant, and idle girl who is likely to go astray because of her exuberant spirits and the absence of any parental control. It is another matter that Mr. Bennet pays no heed to Elizabeth's advice. Subsequently, the news of Lydia's elopement with Mr. Wickham justifies

Elizabeth's prediction about Lydia's conduct at Brighton.' Elizabeth once again shows the maturity of her mind by telling her aunt Mrs. Gardiner that there is little possibility of Mr. Wickham actually marrying Lydia. In this context she says that Mr. Wickham has every charm of person and conversation to captivate a woman, and that he is likely to take undue advantage of Lydia who does not yet have enough experience of life to understand the workings of the mind of a man like Mr. Wickham. Elizabeth says that Lydia can fall an easy prey to Mr. Wickham's lust. This analysis by Elizabeth of the minds of Mr. Wickham and Lydia is perfectly sound.

Elizabeth is deeply attached to her family. She is aware of the faults of her mother and even more keenly aware of the faults of her two youngest sisters, Kitty and Lydia. In spite of that, she feels a deep concern for the welfare of the family. On receiving the news of Lydia's elopement, when Elizabeth is staying at Lambton in the company of Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, she feels most upset to think of the disgrace which the Bennet family would now have to face. She has now no peace of mind and, therefore, she rushes back home in order to give what comfort she can to her parents and to Jane who is also feeling deeply disturbed by Lydia's shameful behaviour.

Elizabeth's attachment to Jane is one of the most striking traits of her character. Sisters always love each other; but, in Elizabeth's love and affection for Jane, there is something exceptional and something extraordinary. Elizabeth feels constantly worried about Jane after Mr. Bingley has left Netherfield Park, probably never to return. From this point onwards, Elizabeth is constantly thinking of how to comfort and console Jane. While Jane keeps saying that she would get over her disappointment, Elizabeth knows that inwardly Jane is feeling most dejected. Elizabeth's chief anxiety now is to bring good cheer into Jane's life. Such affection for a sister is really touching; and this is certainly one of Elizabeth's most attractive traits.

Her self-confidence and her boldness are some other attractive traits of Elizabeth's character. She never feels nervous or awed in the company of person who are socially above her. For instance, when she has to stay at Netherfield Park for a few days in order to attend upon Jane who has fallen ill there, she takes an active part in the conversations which take place there between Mr. Darcy, Mr. Bingley, and Miss Bingley. She has the courage to differ with them when her view of a matter is different from theirs. When Mr. Bingley says that there are many girls who possess all the accomplishments, Elizabeth boldly says that she has never come across any girl who possesses all the accomplishments. On a later occasion, she tells Mr. Darcy that he has a tendency to hate everybody; and she tells him her view without flinching. She remains perfectly cool and composed when she pays a visit to Rosings Park in the company of Sir William and Maria both of whom feel awed by the splendours of Lady Catherine's mansion. Nor does she feel unnerved by the insolent questions which Lady Catherine asks her. However, Elizabeth's self-confidence and self-assertion are exhibited in a most striking manner in the scene of her confrontation with Lady Catherine when the latter pays a visit to her at Longbourn. On this occasion Elizabeth is not in the least cowed by Lady Catherine's threats, and refuses firmly to give her the promise which Lady Catherine has demanded from her in an authoritative and bullying manner. Here Elizabeth surely rises to the stature of a true heroine.

Elizabeth is an honest woman. She is honest with herself and with others. She is a woman of integrity. She does not believe in cunning or trickery. She is filled with self-reproach when she discovers the mistake she had made in judging Mr. Wickham's character. She had been deeply impressed by that man's outward charm and had almost fallen in love with him. She had taken his account of Mr. Darcy's past dealings with him on its face value, without having tried to seek any evidence to support his

allegations against Mr. Darcy. But when the truth becomes known to her, she is filled with the deepest regret. She now admits to herself that, in believing Mr. Wickham, she had been “blind, partial, prejudiced, and absurd”. She says to herself: “How despicably have I acted! I, who have prided myself on my discernment” Such a confession shows that Elizabeth has the courage to face the realities.

Even Elizabeth’s occasional moods of cynicism lend her a certain charm. On one occasion, she tells her sister Jane that there are very few people whom she really loves and still fewer of whom she has a high opinion. She says that the more she observes the world, the more dissatisfied she feels with it. She then complains of the inconsistency of all human beings. This is a realistic appraisal of the world and of human nature, even though the example which she gives to illustrate her view is not quite convincing. (The example which she here gives is Charlotte’s decision to marry Mr. Collins). Luckily she is not a confirmed cynic at all. Her admiration for Jane’s goodness, and also the admiration which she begins to feel for Mr. Darcy in course of time, amply shows that.

However, Elizabeth does suffer from certain shortcomings and faults. She is easily prejudiced, and her prejudices sometimes take deep roots in her mind. Such is the prejudice she harbours against Mr. Darcy, especially after Mr. Wickham has spoken to her about that man. In this particular case, Elizabeth betrays a strange lack of the power to judge human character. She is completely taken in by Mr. Wickham’s deceptive looks and his plausible manner of talking. Even more glaring is her prejudice against Mr. Collins. There is no doubt that Mr. Collins is a fool and a clown; but Elizabeth goes so far in her criticism of his character as to become almost hostile to him. She uses very strong language to condemn and censure him; and she feels deeply offended with Charlotte for agreeing to marry him. She does not realize Charlotte’s compulsions in taking this decision. Even after she has observed with her own eyes Charlotte’s happiness in her married life, she does not undergo any change in her bitterness against Mr. Collins, and her opinion of him does not undergo any change.

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### 13.5 Title of the Novel

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The novel *Pride and Prejudice* tells the story of the gradual union of two people, one held back by unconquerable pride, and the other blinded by prejudice. The novel’s heroine is undoubtedly Elizabeth in whose mental constitution prejudice occupies a large part; and the novel’s hero is surely Mr. Darcy who personifies pride. These two persons come into contact with each other at a social gathering. Initially, they dislike each other. But, in course of time, Mr. Darcy’s pride diminishes and then gives way to a balanced outlook on his part; and similarly, in course of time Elizabeth’s prejudice against Mr. Darcy gives way to a reasoned attitude on her part. Eventually, they discover that they are best suited to each other for a marital relationship. *Pride and Prejudice* is, therefore, an apt, and also attractive, title for the novel.

Elizabeth conceives a dislike for Mr. Darcy when she overhears him telling his friend Mr. Bingley that she is not handsome enough to tempt him to dance with her. She also overhears his further remark that he is in no mood to dance with a girl (namely Elizabeth), whom no other man has chosen as a dance-partner. Now, this dislike on Elizabeth’s side is not exactly a prejudice because there is a solid basis for it. Any girl would feel hurt on overhearing such uncomplimentary remarks about her. However, without being too precise in the use of words, we may describe Elizabeth’s attitude towards Mr. Darcy at this first meeting as a prejudice. Soon afterwards, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy meet at Netherfield Park where Jane is lying ill. This time Mr. Darcy, whose opinion about Elizabeth has by now changed for the better, asks her for a dance, but she firmly refuses him. This refusal by her shows that her prejudice

against Mr. Darcy is continuing. In the course of a conversation which takes place between them, they exchange their ideas and find that there is a lot of difference between their ways of thinking. She tells him that he has a tendency to hate everybody, and he replies that she has a tendency deliberately to misunderstand everybody.

Then Mr. Wickham appears on the scene. He tells Elizabeth a long tale of his grievances against Mr. Darcy. Without seeking any evidence to support Mr. Wickham's version of the story, and without probing the matter to know the real facts, Elizabeth believes every word of what Mr. Wickham has said. She now forms an even more unfavourable opinion about Mr. Darcy than she had formed before; and she begins to think Mr. Darcy to be a very callous and unjust man. Her dislike of Mr. Darcy now hardens into hatred. She attributes Mr. Darcy's alleged ill-treatment of Mr. Wickham to Mr. Darcy's "abominable pride". This hardening of her attitude towards Mr. Darcy is surely due to a prejudice which Mr. Wickham's account has created in her mind, because later we learn that Mr. Wickham's account of Mr. Darcy's dealings with him is totally false. Mr. Wickham has also told Elizabeth that Mr. Darcy is expected to marry Lady Catherine de Bourgh's daughter. However, in saying this, Mr. Wickham has not told a lie because Lady Catherine does want Mr. Darcy to marry her daughter.

At the ball which has been arranged at Netherfield Park, Mr. Darcy requests Elizabeth to dance with him, and she agrees, though much against her will. On this occasion Elizabeth tells her friend Charlotte that she can never find Mr. Darcy to be an agreeable man because she is determined to hate him. In the course of the conversation which now takes place, she reminds him of what he had said on a previous occasion. He had said he never forgave anyone who had offended him once. She now asks if he never stops to consider that he might be mistaken in thinking that someone has offended him deliberately. The conversation goes on, but Elizabeth does not change her opinion about Mr. Darcy. She does perceive that Mr. Darcy has now begun to like her; but she is not at all inclined to respond to his feelings for her. In fact, she is at this time inwardly thinking of marrying Mr. Wickham in case Mr. Wickham proposes marriage to her. She even indulges in a bit of flirtation with Mr. Wickham who, however, has other ideas about marriage and who does not any proposal of marriage to her.

Elizabeth next meets Mr. Darcy at Hunsford where she has come on a brief visit to her friend Charlotte who has got married to Mr. Collins, the rector of the parish. This meeting is purely accidental. Mr. Darcy has come to Hunsford on a visit to his aunt, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who lives here. Mr. Darcy has come with a cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam. Elizabeth begins to like Colonel Fitzwilliam who too shows a lot of interest in her. But one day Mr. Darcy tells Elizabeth that he can no longer exercise control over his feelings of love for her, and that he would like to marry her. Elizabeth rejects his proposal of marriage without the least hesitation, and she gives him her reasons for her refusal. She points out that he has made his proposal of marriage in a most patronizing and condescending manner because of his sense of his social superiority over her. She mentions his past ill-treatment of Mr. Wickham, and she tells him that he was responsible for having prevented his friend Mr. Bingley from marrying her sister Jane. At this point, Elizabeth's prejudice against Mr. Darcy is at its height cause several reasons have combined to aggravate her dislike.

On the very next day, Mr. Darcy hands over to Elizabeth a letter which contains a defence of himself against the charges which she had leveled against him. There is much substance in this defence, and Elizabeth is deeply affected by it. In fact, her reading of this letter marks the turning-point in her whole attitude towards Mr. Darcy. Wickham's allegations against Mr. Darcy have been described in this letter as totally false. Mr. Darcy gives strong reasons for his having prevented Mr. Bingley's marriage

with Jane. And Mr. Darcy has also referred to the uncultured talk of Elizabeth's mother and her two youngest sisters as reasons for his hesitation in proposing marriage to Elizabeth earlier. Elizabeth now blames herself greatly for, having continued to harbour a grudge against Mr. Darcy. In fact, she now begins to feel ashamed of herself for having been "blind, partial, prejudice, and absurd". She, who had always thought her judgment to be infallible, has proved guilty of outrageous misjudgment! Mr. Darcy now begins to appear to her in a most favourable light. She holds herself responsible for having been misled by wrong assumptions and impressions. However, before she can come to any definite conclusion regarding her future course of action, Mr. Darcy leaves Hunsford.

The next meeting between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy is again an accidental one. This time they meet at Pemberley House of which Mr. Darcy is the owner and which Elizabeth has come to see in the company of her uncle and aunt because this house is a tourist attraction. On this occasion Mr. Darcy's whole attitude towards Elizabeth has undergone a complete change. Gone is his pride; gone is his insolence; and gone is his condescending manner of talking to her. He speaks to her most warmly, and behaves towards her relations with the utmost cordiality and hospitality. When Elizabeth looks at Pemberley House, she says to herself that she could have been the mistress of it if she had accepted Mr. Darcy's proposal of marriage.

By now all Elizabeth's prejudice against Mr. Darcy has melted away. Now she becomes strongly inclined towards him; and this inclination becomes even stronger when she learns the role which he has played in bringing about the marriage of Lydia with Mr. Wickham who would not have married the girl if Mr. Darcy had not intervened in the matter. Then comes Lady Catherine de Bourgh from whose arrogant talk Elizabeth infers that Mr. Darcy might still propose marriage to her. Her guess proves to be right because Mr. Darcy arrives at Netherfield Park soon afterwards, and proposes marriage to her. In the changed circumstances, Elizabeth gladly accepts the proposal because she has now begun to think that Mr. Darcy would suit her most as her husband. Much has happened since their first meeting; and the ultimate consequence of all the happenings is the union of two persons who discover that they have more in common with each other than they had realized.

In this connection we might also take note of Elizabeth's prejudice against Mr. Collins. She is, of course, fully justified in her rejection of Mr. Collins's proposal of marriage because Mr. Collins is surely an absurd and ridiculous fellow. But Elizabeth begins to use very strong language about this man. She describes him as the most disagreeable man she has ever met. She refers to him as a man who does not have one single good quality. In fact, she rebukes even Charlotte for having agreed to marry Mr. Collins. Not only that; even after seeing with her own eyes that Charlotte is quite happy as Mr. Collins's wife, she continues to express an adverse opinion about Mr. Collins in terms which are almost abusive. It is not easy for us to forgive Elizabeth for her continuing prejudice, bordering upon hostility, against Mr. Collins.

As for Mr. Darcy, he certainly personifies pride which is noted by everybody at the first assembly attended by him. Everybody complains of his being a very proud and, therefore, disagreeable and horrid man. Elizabeth too feels offended by his pride which he manifests by his disparaging remarks about her. However, Mr. Darcy soon afterwards changes his mind about Elizabeth because he discovers certain attractions in her. After a time we find him saying that he has been "bewitched" by Elizabeth. But, although he is now in love with Elizabeth, he has not shed any part of his pride. He thinks that it would be degrading for him to marry Elizabeth who belongs to a much lower class of society than he himself. Even when he does make a proposal of marriage to her, the proposal is couched in insolent

and insulting words in which he explicitly mentions her social inferiority to him. Not only that. Even his letter, in which he has tried to defend himself, is written in a tone of insolence and haughtiness. And, although this letter does produce a deep effect on Elizabeth, she does not fail to perceive the haughtiness and the pride of the writer.

The real change in Mr. Darcy occurs at about this time, after his proposal of marriage has been rejected by Elizabeth. When he meets Elizabeth by chance at Pemberley House, there is no trace of haughtiness or pride in the manner in which he now talks to her and to her relatives. He has evidently got rid of his pride. And it is because he is no longer proud even of his high social status, that he plays a leading role in the Lydia Wickham affair and exerts his influence, as well as spends a lot of money, to bring about Lydia's marriage with Mr. Wickham. And finally he feels encouraged by what he learns about Elizabeth's present feelings from Lady Catherine's complaint against Elizabeth to him. In this frame of mind he goes to Longbourn and makes another proposal of marriage to Elizabeth who gladly accepts it. And it is now that Mr. Darcy acknowledges his debt to Elizabeth. He says that he had always been a proud and selfish man all his life, and that it was she who had humbled his pride and cured him of it. He says that Elizabeth had taught him a lesson which was certainly a bitter lesson but which had proved most advantageous; and the lesson was that it was utterly wrong to be proud of one's wealth and social position. Eventually, it is by shedding his pride-completely that Mr. Darcy is able to win Elizabeth as his bride, just as it is by shedding her prejudice completely that Elizabeth is able to win him as her husband. And just, as Mr. Darcy admits to her that he has been cured of his pride, so she also admits to him that gradually all her former prejudices against him had been removed.

In the case of the Bingley-Jane affair, there is no pride on either side. Jane does not even know what pride is; and, as for Mr. Bingley, one striking point of contrast between him and Mr. Darcy is that, while Mr. Darcy is very, very proud, Mr. Bingley is completely free from this fault. Thus, pride here plays no part, positive or negative. But it is prejudice which has kept Mr. Bingley away from Jane for several months. Mr. Darcy had persistently told Mr. Bingley that Jane did not love him (Mr. Bingley) as deeply as he (Mr. Bingley) loved her. In other words, Mr. Darcy had prejudiced Mr. Bingley against Jane and had thus prevented Mr. Bingley from proposing marriage to Jane when everybody had been thinking that Mr. Bingley was going to make such a proposal to her. However, Mr. Bingley's prejudice melts away afterwards, and he marries Jane.

Pride is represented not only by Mr. Darcy but also by his aunt, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Lady Catherine shows herself in her true colours on almost all occasions when she appears before us. In her dealings with Mrs. Charlotte Collins, and also with Elizabeth who is staying with Charlotte at the time, she shows herself to be a woman who is acutely conscious of her social superiority over the other two women. Later, when she visits Longbourn and has a long conversation with Elizabeth, she shows herself to be an arrogant and bullying woman whose head is swollen by the pride of her wealth and her social position. But her pride leads her nowhere. She suffers a shameful defeat in her contest with Elizabeth.

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### **13.7 Theme and Structure of the Novel**

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*Pride and Prejudice* is certainly an appropriate title for this novel, because pride and prejudice do play a dominant role in it. However, it is not a title which covers every aspect of the novel. The two sub-plots involving Mr. Collins and Charlotte, and Mr. Wickham and Lydia do not fall within the scope of this title. The real theme of this novel is not pride and prejudice but love and marriage. The novel

has a main plot and three sub-plots; and all these deal with love and marriage. Love manifests itself in several ways, and marriage therefore takes several forms. Love is important in life, and marriage is perhaps even more important though in most cases marriage is based upon love. In the case of Mr. Collins and Charlotte, we have the example of a marriage in which neither of the partners is prompted by love. It is a marriage purely of convenience. The marriage of Mr. Wickham and Lydia too does not show love on both sides. Lydia is certainly in love with Mr. Wickham; but Mr. Wickham has always been after money. Even Colonel Fitzwilliam does not propose marriage to Elizabeth because she would not bring any dowry with her. It is only in the case of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth, and in the case of Mr. Bingley and Jane, that love plays the determining role.

Another theme which falls outside the scope of the present title of the novel is the theme of parenthood. We have an interesting portrayal of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet as careless parents who have paid no attention at all to the upbringing of their children. Mr. Darcy's parents too had been negligent in their upbringing of their son. What happens to a family whose children have not received much attention from their parents is one of the themes of the novel; and this theme is also not covered by the title of the novel. However, we cannot expect, and we should not expect, a novel to have a title which covers every aspect of it and every theme, important or less important, with which it deals.

Structurally, the novel *Pride and Prejudice* shows the highest degree of craftsmanship. The novel has a compact, close-knit, and tight structure, in spite of there being several stories in it. There is the main plot, and as many as three sub-plots in it. The main plot deals with Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth is undoubtedly the most impressive female character, and therefore, the heroine of the novel; while Mr. Darcy is surely the most impressive male character, and therefore, the novel's hero. The major sub-plot deals with Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley. Then there are two other sub-plots, one dealing with Mr. Collins and Charlotte Lucas, and the other dealing with Lydia Bennet and Mr. Wickham. The novel has a compact structure largely because of its thematic unity. All the stories have a common theme, which is love and marriage. The novel presents the variety of forms in which love manifests itself, and the variety of ways in which men and women come together and get married. The common theme of all the stories unifies them all, so that a single structural pattern is produced.

In spite of the common theme, there is neither repetition nor monotony in the novel. There is a diversity in the unity. Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy begin with a mutual dislike but, in course of time, this dislike changes into a mutual attraction which then leads, through several stages of development, to their union in marriage. Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley fall in love with each other in the very beginning, and there seems to be an immediate prospect of their getting married. However, their love-affair receives a setback on account of the manipulations by Mr. Darcy and Miss Bingley. Ultimately these two also come together, and get married. The case of Mr. Collins and Charlotte Lucas is entirely different. Here we have a marriage of convenience. There is no love on either side. Mr. Collins simply wants to get married, and does so with Charlotte. The Lydia-Wickham affair is different from all the above cases. Lydia falls in love with Mr. Wickham, but there is no sincerity in the love which he has been professing for her. Mr. Wickham is a seducer who would have forsaken Lydia after taking undue advantage of her. Lydia, in eloping with Mr. Wickham, feels no doubt at all that he would marry her. However, this marriage is brought about only by the intervention of Mr. Darcy. The diversity of love-affairs and marriages thus becomes evident to us as we go through the novel.

The different stories in the novel are not just inter-linked by a common theme. The stories are interwoven. Each sub-plot is brought into a close relationship with the main plot. The Elizabeth-Darcy

affair and the Jane-Bingley affair begin almost simultaneously, the first with a mutual dislike, and the second with a mutual attraction. Now, Elizabeth and Jane are sisters, while Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley are close friends. Mr. Darcy is at first not at all attracted by Elizabeth's physical appearance, though soon afterwards he begins to perceive a certain charm in her face and in her figure. Elizabeth, having overheard Mr. Darcy criticizing her physical appearance, begins to dislike him. Mr. Darcy is a very proud man who is, in fact, disliked by everybody with whom he comes into contact. Mr. Darcy begins to feel more and more attracted by Elizabeth but she becomes more and more prejudiced against him. Elizabeth's prejudice against Mr. Darcy deepens into a hatred for him on account of the account which Mr. Wickham gives to her of Mr. Darcy's past ill-treatment of him. Mr. Bingley and Jane would have got married by now if Mr. Darcy had not obstructed his friend's wish and if he had not been assisted in this endeavour by Miss Bingley. On account of the obstruction caused by Mr. Darcy and Miss Bingley, the Jane-Bingley sub-plot comes to a stand-still for a time, but the Elizabeth-Darcy plot continues to develop. Mr. Darcy proposes marriage to Elizabeth whose prejudices against him prevent her from accepting the proposal. Mr. Darcy's obstruction in the way of the marriage of Mr. Bingley and Jane becomes one of the several grounds for Elizabeth's rejection of Mr. Darcy's proposal. However, when Elizabeth learns all the true facts, her prejudice against Mr. Darcy begins to crumble, and she then feels drawn closer and closer towards Mr. Darcy. After Mr. Darcy's quiet withdrawal from the Jane Bingley affair, the way becomes clear for that pair of lovers to get married. Eventually, Mr. Darcy's pride having been humbled, and Elizabeth's prejudices having melted away, they too get married. As for the Collins-Charlotte affair, Charlotte promptly accepts Mr. Collins's proposal of marriage which Mr. Collins makes after having been rejected twice by Elizabeth. This marriage provides the reason for Elizabeth to visit Hunsford where she meets Mr. Darcy after having separated from him at Netherfield Park. It is at Hunsford that Mr. Darcy gets an opportunity to make his proposal of marriage to Elizabeth who, however, rejects it, giving him detailed reasons for her rejection. This, then, is the connection of the Collins-Charlotte marriage with the main plot. As for the Lydia-Wickham affair, Mr. Wickham is first the means of unknowingly aggravating Elizabeth's prejudice against Mr. Darcy, and then the means of unknowingly bringing Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth once step closer to each other. Mr. Wickham is not aware of the fact that Elizabeth already has a prejudice against Mr. Darcy; nor is he aware that Mr. Darcy's efforts to induce him to marry Lydia are being motivated by Mr. Darcy's desire to do a favour and a service to the Bennet family. But Mr. Wickham certainly plays a vital role by first widening the rift between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, and later by providing Mr. Darcy with an opportunity to render a valuable service to the Bennet family. This is how the various sub-plots in the novel are interrelated, inter-connected, and inter-woven, with the main plot.

It is noteworthy that Mr. Wickham is not entirely new to the social circle at Meryton or Netherfield Park. He had known Mr. Darcy intimately long ago. In *fact*, they had known each other from their boyhood and had been brought up in the same environment. Similarly, Mr. Collins is not an alien at Longbourn. He is the relative to whom Mr. Bennet's entire estate had been entailed; and he is the man who will inherit all this estate at Mr. Bennet's death. Mr. Collins's arrival at Longbourn has thus a strong basis because Mr. Collins wishes to make amends to the Bennet family for ultimately depriving them of their property. He wishes to make amends to them by choosing one of the daughters of the family as his would-be wife, so that one of the daughters may ultimately become the mistress of her father's estate.

All the characters mentioned so far are essential to the novel. Each of these characters is indispensable from the point of view of either the main plot or one of the sub-plots. But none of the

other characters too is unnecessary or unwanted. Each of the minor characters has a certain role in the drama of events. Mr. Denny, a very minor character, plays an important role by the information which he supplies about Mr. Wickham's motives and deeds, though he does so by oblique hints and in an evasive manner. Colonel Fitzwilliam provides, though unknowingly, an important clue to Elizabeth regarding Mr. Bingley's having given up his intention to marry Jane. Mrs. Reynolds, the housekeeper at Pemberley House, furnishes such information to Elizabeth about Mr. *Darcy* that Mr. *Darcy* further rises in Elizabeth's estimation. Lady Catherine unknowingly plays a vital role in bringing Mr. *Darcy* and Elizabeth closer still to each other.

There are no digressions in the novel, and no deviations from the main plot or the sub-plots in the novel. We are either reading the development in the *Darcy-Elizabeth* plot, or watching the lack of progress in the *Bingley Jane* sub-plot or observing the appearance of Mr. Collins and of Mr. Wickham on the social scene and seeing them pursue their respective plans. We are either being taken into the working of the mind of Elizabeth, or being acquainted with the distress which Jane is experiencing on account of the setback to her hope of marrying Mr. Bingley. We are either being shown the way of life of Mr. Collins and Charlotte at Hunsford, and their relations with Lady Catherine, or we are being told of Lydia's going to Brighton with Mrs. Forster and then suddenly eloping one day with Mr. Wickham who too is there. When we are taken to Hunsford, we are also shown the magnificence of Lady Catherine's mansion and the manner in which Lady Catherine and her daughter Miss de Bourgh are leading their lives. There is a comic touch about the scenes in which Lady Catherine and her daughter appear. Besides; Lady Catherine contributes to the theme of pride in this novel. The portrayal of Lady Catherine contributes also to the picture of the social scene which is an important ingredient of the novel. The scene in which we meet Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner or Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are equally relevant to the stories of the novel. Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner play a vital role by taking Elizabeth to Derbyshire and to Pemberley House where Elizabeth again meets Mr. *Darcy* whose changed manner raises him in her estimation. Besides, Mr. Gardiner plays a very useful role by joining Mr. Bennet in the latter's search for Lydia who has run away with Mr. Wickham. Mr. Gardiner also acts as a cover for Mr. *Darcy* who does not want the Bennet family to know that it is he who, by bribing Mr. Wickham and putting pressure on him, has persuaded him to marry Lydia. But for Mr. *Darcy*'s intervention, Mr. Wickham would not have married Lydia, and Mr. *Darcy* would not have further risen in Elizabeth's esteem. Thus, there is nothing superfluous in the whole novel just as none of the characters is superfluous. The structure of the novel is well-integrated; and the construction of the plot could not have been more skillfully handled. In the words of a critic, everything is in its proper place and in proper proportion; there is nothing too much, nor anything too little; no excess, nor any deficiency.

The symmetry of *Pride and Prejudice* has been commented upon by several critics. A number of events occur in the novel at various stages to balance each other. Mr. Bingley and Mr. *Darcy* arrive at Netherfield Park in the very beginning of the novel; then they both leave and remain absent for a certain period of time; and once again they both arrive there. Their first arrival creates hope and good cheer in most feminine hearts, but ends in gloom. Their subsequent arrival comes amid gloom but leads to the fulfillment of several hopes. Of the quartet of marriages in the novel, one takes place soon after the beginning, and one takes place just before the end. Similarly, in the beginning, Mr. *Darcy* intervenes in the *Jane-Bingley* affair only to bring about a separation between the lovers who were expected to get married soon; but the same Mr. *Darcy* intervenes towards the end in the *Lydia-Wickham* affair, this time bringing about a marriage which would not otherwise have taken place.

The main plot and the sub-plots all proceed from the inter-action of characters between one another. The events and happenings in the novel directly result from the nature and disposition of the persons concerned. There are few accidents and coincidences in the novel to mar the logic of cause and effect. There is no bolt from the blue. Whether it is a case of good fortune or a case of misfortune, it is the result of the characters' own deeds or misdeeds. Coincidences there certainly are, but they are few such as Mr. Darcy and Mr. Wickham arriving in Hertfordshire at about the same time; Mr. Darcy visiting his aunt Lady Catherine when Elizabeth is staying with Mr. and Mrs. Collins; and Mr. Darcy returning to Pemberley House a day earlier than his schedule and meeting Elizabeth. Similarly, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner's change of plan in visiting Derbyshire rather than the Lake district is also a matter of chance, though this chance is of vital importance because the visit to Derbyshire leads to Elizabeth's meeting with Mr. Darcy and thus advancing her prospects of marriage with him. But, by and large, the important events proceed from the nature and behaviour of the characters themselves.

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### 13.7 Irony in the Novel

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*Pride and Prejudice* is pervaded by irony which is one of the most striking features of all Jane Austen's novels. The all-pervasive irony has its own role in unifying the structure of *Pride and Prejudice*. To take only two examples, the very man, Mr. Wickham, who unknowingly aggravates Elizabeth's prejudice against Mr. Darcy, ultimately proves instrumental, again unknowingly, in bringing them one step closer to each other; and Lady Catherine, who sets out to obstruct the marriage of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, unknowingly brings them still closer to each other and, in fact, clinches the issue. Apart from such ironic reversals, there are several ironical remarks made by certain characters, more especially by Mr. Bennet and Elizabeth. For instance, Mr. Bennet makes an ironical remark when he says that Mr. Wickham is the best of his sons-in-law. Similarly, Elizabeth makes an ironical remark when she says, that Mr. Darcy has no defects at all.

Irony arises from some kind of contrast. It is generally a contrast between appearance and reality. It may be a contrast between what a character thinks himself to be, and what he really is; between what he believes, and what the reader knows to be actually the case; between what a character says, and what he really means to convey; between what a character thinks he will do or achieve, and what he really in the long run does or achieves; between what the reader thinks is going to happen, and what actually happens between the reader's or a character's anticipation and the actual event; and so on. Irony may produce a comic effect or a tragic effect, depending upon the circumstances of the case. Thus, we find abundant examples of irony in both the comic and the tragic plays of Shakespeare. This means that the use of irony by an author may amuse the reader or may sadden him all the more.

Jane Austen is a comic writer and, therefore, the use of irony in her novels adds to the comic effect at which she aims. In other words, in the novels of Jane Austen we have comic irony; and, indeed, she gives us plenty of it. It may also be pointed out that irony may exist in a situation or in a piece of dialogue or in a "remark or in a belief which a character has or expresses, and so on. Furthermore, irony may be conscious on the part of a character, or it may be unconscious. On the part of the author, however, irony is always conscious.

Irony is all-pervasive in *Pride and Prejudice*. It penetrates the whole structure of this novel. We find the use of irony in this novel from its beginning to its end. There are a large number of situations which are characterized by irony; and there are a large number of ironical remarks. In several cases

what eventually happens is the reverse of what we had anticipated. Indeed, comic reversals in the novel show how extensive the use of irony here is. There is irony in the very manner in which the main plot of the novel develops and ends. The main plot pertains to Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. This plot begins with a mutual dislike between these two persons. Mr. Darcy does not feel like dancing with Elizabeth because he does not find her attractive or handsome enough. Elizabeth, who overhears Mr. Darcy expressing unfavourable opinion about her, conceives a dislike for him. Elizabeth's dislike goes on increasing because she finds Mr. Darcy to be a very proud and haughty kind of man. Mr. Darcy's initial opinion of Elizabeth begins to undergo a change and he feels more and more attracted by her as days pass by. Although Mr. Darcy has begun to like Elizabeth, yet the idea of marrying her is far from his thoughts because she is far below him in social status. Such is the situation in the beginning and up to the middle. We may even describe the initial relationship between these two persons as a sort of mutual antagonism. And yet eventually these two antagonists are united in wedlock. In fact, both have now begun to feel that they are best suited to each other as life-partners. Here we have a striking case of an ironic reversal.

Then there is irony in Mr. Darcy's urging his friend Mr. Bingley to give up his intention to marry Jane, and his succeeding in this endeavour. Of course, the irony here is unconscious as it is in the case cited before. Mr. Darcy tells Mr. Bingley that Jane is not so much in love with him (Mr. Bingley) as, he (Mr. Bingley) is in love with her. Accordingly, Mr. Bingley gives up his idea of proposing marriage to Jane. But afterwards Mr. Darcy has to change his view and has then to withdraw the pressure which he had been exerting upon Mr. Bingley. Eventually, Mr. Bingley does propose marriage to Jane, and she accepts him. This too is a case of an ironic reversal so far as Mr. Darcy's original opposition to Mr. Bingley's wish is concerned.

Elizabeth finds Mr. Collins to be an oddity not worth her attention. She finds him to be a pompous, conceited, and silly man whom no decent girl would agree to marry. Elizabeth thus begins to hold Mr. Collins in contempt. Even Charlotte falls in Elizabeth's esteem because Charlotte agrees to marry that man. And yet the same Mr. Collins provides a basis for Elizabeth's visit to Hunsford where Mr. Collins lives and where Charlotte has settled down as Mr. Collins's wife. It is at Hunsford that Elizabeth again happens to meet Mr. Darcy who now makes a proposal of marriage to her, though she rejects this proposal. And at Hunsford it is that Elizabeth receives from Mr. Darcy a letter in which Mr. Darcy has defended himself against the charges which she had brought against him on the preceding day when he proposed marriage to her. Her reading this letter is the turning point in her attitude to him. Thus Mr. Collins, who was odious and obnoxious in Elizabeth's eyes, becomes unconsciously and unknowingly instrumental in bringing Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy a little close to each other. Some of Elizabeth's prejudice against Mr. Darcy is removed by her reading of Mr. Darcy's letter. Irony in this case resides in Mr. Collins's serving a purpose which could never be expected from him, though he serves the purpose unconsciously.

The shifting of the militia regiment from a site near the town of Meryton to a site near Brighton is expected to put an end to Lydia's meeting its officers frequently and flirting with them. Lydia was getting spoilt by her mixing with the officers indiscriminately; and the transfer of the regiment means that she would now be cut off from the officers with whom she was becoming more and more intimate and thus exposing herself to scandal and even of exploitation by some of them. But the reverse of what had been expected happens. In Brighton she becomes even more intimate with one of the officers of that very regiment and elopes with him, thus bringing disgrace to her family. (That officer is Mr. Wickham).

The irony here results from the contrast between what was expected and what actually happens.

Mr. Wickham is the man who has made a determined attempt to defame Mr. Darcy and to discredit him in the eyes of Elizabeth. He is the man whom Mr. Darcy held in great contempt; and he is the man who has been trying to avoid meeting Mr. Darcy just as Mr. Darcy has been trying to avoid him. He is the man who had almost won Elizabeth's trust and who might even have won her heart. Mr. Darcy's letter, however, reveals to Elizabeth the reality of the man; and she also now begins to hate him. And yet this man, whom Mr. Darcy had been hating and whom Elizabeth has now begun to hate, ultimately proves instrumental in bringing Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy one step closer to each other. Mr. Darcy's intervention in the Lydia- Wickham affair, and his bringing about the marriage of the two runaways, creates a profound effect on Elizabeth who therefore moves emotionally much closer to Mr. Darcy as a consequence of the service which Mr. Darcy has done to the Bennet family. The irony here resides in the fact that Mr. Wickham, who had aggravated Elizabeth's prejudice against Mr. Darcy, ultimately proves the means by which Elizabeth feels further attracted towards Mr. Darcy. This is a case of an ironic reversal of the-situation. There is similar irony in Lady Catherine's warnings to Elizabeth not to marry Mr. Darcy. Lady Catherine tries her utmost to prevent a marriage between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy but in the event she proves instrumental in bringing them closer to each other and hastening their marriage.

At the very outset Mr. Darcy says that Elizabeth is not handsome enough to tempt him to dance with her. Now, there is a hidden irony in this remark, and even Mr. Darcy himself is not conscious of this irony. Subsequently, Mr. Darcy not only finds Elizabeth handsome enough to dance with but handsome enough to propose marriage to. Not many days after making that remark, Mr. Darcy feels bewitched by Elizabeth's charms. There is unconscious irony also in Elizabeth's telling Mr. Collins that she would never refuse a first proposal of marriage and then accept a second proposal from the same man. But Elizabeth does exactly what she here says she would never do. She rejects Mr. Darcy's first proposal of marriage, but later accepts his second proposal. Finally, the very opening sentence of the novel has been regarded as a striking example of irony on the part of the author.

As already pointed out at the outset, the irony in Jane Austen's novels is comic irony. And so the irony in *Pride and Prejudice* amuses us and makes us smile, if not laugh. Each of the examples of irony given above add to our mirth and merriment. We feel tickled by ironical reversals of situation and by ironical remarks, and so we enjoy reading the novel even more than we would otherwise have done.

Jane Austen proved herself to be the supreme writer of the novel of manners. She limited her view to the world which she knew intimately and to the influences at work in that world. She was the daughter of a clergyman, and except for an occasional visit to the city, she spent her youth in a country parish. Her acquaintances included country families and clergymen. The chief business of these people was attention to social and domestic duties, and their chief interest was matrimony. This is the world with which Jane Austen deals in her novels, and she never steps outside of this world. The great events of her time did not enter into her experience, and she did not have imagination enough to carry her beyond her own observation. Life, with its mighty interests, its passions, ambitions, and tragic struggles remained almost shut to her. We can, therefore, easily understand the limitations of Jane Austen; but within her own field she is unequalled. She herself claimed that she worked on a little bit (two inches wide) of ivory. She was conscious of her limitations, worked strictly within them, and turned them to her advantage.

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## 13.8 Novel as a Comedy of Manners

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Thus it is that *Pride and Prejudice* contains vivid and realistic pictures of the social life of the author's time. The conventions, the manners, and the mode of living of the time are depicted in the novel in a most graphic manner. However, she does not take the entire social life of her time in her sweep. She confines her attention mainly to the middle class and the upper middle class; and even in depicting the life of these classes she limits her attention to country life as distinguished from town life. So far as the lower classes are concerned, she leaves them almost out of account. In *Pride and Prejudice*, she acquaints us with a number of outstanding characters who belong to the upper middle class. There is Mr. Darcy, who is an extremely rich man owning a large mansion called Pemberley House, and a large estate. His income is nearly ten thousand pounds a year. This man is very proud of his high status; and he looks upon middle class families as being beneath his notice. When he attends an assembly in the town of Meryton, he finds most of the girls and women belonging to the middle class; and he hardly pays any attention to any of them. He dances only with Mr. Bingley's two sisters who belong to his own class of society. Even when he begins to feel interested in Elizabeth Bennet, he tries to resist her charm and her appeal chiefly because she belongs to a middle class family which is beneath him in social status. Even when he has begun to feel bewitched by her, he tries to keep away from her lest he should be tempted to propose marriage to her. And subsequently, when he does propose marriage to her, he has still not been able to shed his caste prejudices. He tells her bluntly that, in proposing marriage to her, he is lowering himself because he belongs to a much higher family in a social and economic sense than the family to which she belongs. Such, then, was the attitude of the people of the upper middle class to the people below them. This pride is seen in an even greater degree in Lady Catherine de Bourgh. This lady also owns a large house, called Rosings Park, and she too is the mistress of a large estate. Her attitude towards those below her socially and economically is almost arrogant. Even when she is entertaining Mr. and Mrs. Collins's guests at her house, she speaks to them from a higher level. She puts all sorts of insolent questions to Elizabeth, and she expresses her surprise that the Bennet girls never had a governess to look after them she invites Elizabeth to come and practise on the piano in her house provided Elizabeth does so in the housekeeper's quarters. She considers it a matter of disgrace if her nephew, who belongs to the upper middle class, were to marry a girl like Elizabeth. Miss Bingley too has the same attitude towards her social inferiors. She feels contemptuous of Elizabeth and makes all sorts of adverse comments on her. The only exception to this arrogant attitude on the part of the upper middle class is Mr. Bingley. He too is a wealthy man; but he does not have the pride of his friend, Mr. Darcy, or of his sister, Miss Bingley. However, he has no independence of mind and is greatly under the influence of Mr. Darcy.

Then there are the Bennet family and the Lucas family, both of whom belong to the middle class. Here we find that the mothers in these families were always on the look-out for eligible bachelors to marry their daughters. When Mrs. Bennet comes to know that a rich bachelor is coming to occupy Netherfield Park, her first thought is whether that rich bachelor would choose one of her five daughters as his would-be wife. For Mrs. Bennet, the search for suitable sons-in-law is the chief preoccupation and the chief interest of her life. Indeed, she greatly amuses us by this preoccupation. Nor is Lady Lucas free from this preoccupation, though she does not go to those absurd lengths to which Mrs. Bennet goes. Thus marriage was the main concern of the mothers of that time; and it was the main concern of the daughters also. Lydia is always asking whether her elder sisters are going to get husbands soon. As for herself, she says that she would consider it a matter of shame if she were to remain unmarried

till the age of twenty-one or twenty-two. Charlotte Lucas, who has remained unmarried till the age of twentyseven, seizes the opportunity of getting married as soon as one offers itself. Although Mr. Collins is a preposterous figure of a man, yet Charlotte Lucas accepts him because she knows that, if she does not avail this opportunity, she would live only to be an old maid or a spinster.

Another point to note in this connection is that assemblies and balls were the order of the day in these social circles. These assemblies and balls were attended even by the members of the upper class families because they were, fewer in numbers and could not hold exclusive social functions. Gossip was the staple of life of women-folk; and the gossip centred chiefly around eligible bachelors and possible marriages. Listening to news, collecting news, and communicating news to others were the chief interests of young girls as well as of elderly women. An excellent example of this sort of thing is provided by Mrs. Philips who gathers news and then imparts it to her nieces, Lydia and Kitty, who then carry it home. Mrs. Bennet collect news at assemblies, and then carries it home to her husband who, however, is not much interested in it. However, there was little of scandal-mongering. It was a conservative society in which an elopement created a big sensation and a shock. It was a society conscious of its respectability and very keen to adhere to the norms of respectability. Decorum was a high priority, even though women like Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. Philips were extremely trivial, and even vulgar, in their talk.

The life of a clergyman is also depicted in *Pride and Prejudice*, as in a couple of other novel is too by Jane Austen. The clergyman here is Mr. William Collins. Although Jane Austen herself was the daughter of a clergyman, she does not give us a complimentary picture of Mr. Collins. Indeed, Mr. Collins is made to appear before us as a buffoon. He has hardly any self-respect. The manner in which he cringes to Lady Catherine makes him a ridiculous figure in our eyes. He is a born sycophant. And he makes himself even more absurd by his own high opinion of himself. He is a pompous and conceited man who thinks that a girl like Elizabeth can never refuse his proposal of marriage. He amuses us still more by his flexibility so far as the choice of a wife is concerned. After being rejected firmly by Elizabeth, he quickly transfers his affections to Charlotte Lucas. And he is always seeking the patronage of people above him. When he learns that Mr. Darcy, the nephew of Lady Catherine, is present at the ball at Netherfield Park, he goes out of his way to introduce himself to Mr. Darcy who, however, treats him with his characteristic arrogance.

Then there are a couple of characters belonging to the lower class in which, ordinarily, Jane Austen is not much interested. Mrs. Reynolds is the housekeeper at Pemberley House. She is all praise for her master, Mr. Darcy. She tells Elizabeth that Mr. Darcy is a very kind-hearted master to his tenants and to his servants. This shows that, while Mr. Darcy is proud and even rude in his social intercourse with people of the middle class, he is very kind and generous to persons of the lower classes. Mrs. Reynolds strikes us as a very good woman who can be relied upon by her master. Then there is Mrs. Jenkinson who is the governess to Miss de Bourgh. This woman is always at pains to keep the girl in her charge pleased and happy. She is rather servile; and that is what a grand lady like Lady Catherine expected from a governess working in her pay.

As Cazamian says, the novels of Jane Austen deal almost wholly with the restricted circle of home life, and round it all social interests are gathered. Thus, in *Pride and Prejudice*, we find ourselves in a small world of country gentry, clergymen, and middle class people where social intercourse is smooth and simple. There is an extraordinary degree of fidelity and truth in the social pictures here. Like Jane Austen's other novels, *Pride and Prejudice* depicts a group of human beings, their relations with one another, their clashes and affinities, their mutual influences, and their conversations. As David

Daiches says, Jane Austen was the greatest of all the novelists of manners. Indeed, she raised this class of novels to a new level of art. Her own life had provided her with the opportunity of learning by heart the world of social pretension and ambition, of balls and visits, of speculations about marrying and giving in marriage, of the hopes and fears of genteel people of moderate means. This was the world which Jane Austen turned into a microcosm of life in its social aspect. And *Pride and Prejudice* is an excellent example of Jane Austen's achievement in this respect.

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### 13.9 Keywords

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- Irony** - is the contrast between what is and what appears to be. There can be ironies of situation, as well as verbal irony. It is used to achieve rhetorical or artistic effects.
- Comedy of Manners** - where the society is described along with its follies and foibles, and one gets an idea of the various strata of contemporary society. It dealt with the vicissitudes of young lovers and included stock characters like the clever servant and the wealthy rival.

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### 13.10 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit, we have studied

- About the novelist
- About the novelist, its background and the characters.
- About the critical interpretations of the text

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### 13.11 Review Questions

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1. Briefly give the life of Jane Austen.
2. Give a brief charactersketch of Elizabeth.
3. Comment on the title of the novel
4. Comment on the theme and structure of the Novel
5. Write about irony in the Novel
6. Discuss the Novel as a Comedy of Manners

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### 13.12 Bibliography

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## UNIT-14

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### MARY SHELLEY FRANKENSTEIN

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#### Structure

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 The Story and the Narration
- 14.3 Irony in the Novel
- 14.4 Myth in the Novel
- 14.5 Science, Empiricism, and the Scientific Method
- 14.6 Frankenstein, the Mad Scientist
- 14.7 Female Gothic Novel
- 14.8 Creation of the Monster
- 14.9 Key words
- 14.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.11 Review Questions
- 14.12 Bibliography

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#### **14.0 Objectives**

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In this unit you are going to study about the Novel. After going through this unit, you will be able to

- understand the background of the novel
- understand about the life, background and ideas of the novelist
- understand the story, structure and characters of the novel
- write in your own words about any aspect of the novel.

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#### **14.1 Introduction**

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In this unit you will study about the novelist, the novel, the background and context of the novel. Through key words and exercises given, you will reinforce your understanding of the unit.

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#### **14.2 The Story and the Narration**

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For a novel which began its life as a ghost story literally dreamed up for a story-telling competition between a group of friends, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* has endured to become the archetypal horror story. It is an exciting tale of scientific experimentation, obsession, the creation of an artificial man (an android or homunculus), and the sublime possibilities of human creativity and intellect. It is also a

cautionary tale about the fate of the overreacher, and the responsibilities of the egotistical adventurer in knowledge. What is so intriguing and compelling about the novel is that these oppositions and ambivalences are held within the novel and not fully resolved, as its ideas and narratives are as roughly sewn together as Frankenstein's Monster. In its daring intellectual adventure, *Frankenstein* enters territory previously untouched by fiction. Mary Shelley draws ideas from the widely disparate sources of myth, alchemy, literature, natural philosophy and the new science, combining these into a Gothic horror story. However, it is a Gothic novel which, unlike most of its predecessors, does not rely on the supernatural, but is rigorously rational.

Frankenstein is not just one story, but three, arranged in concentric circles within the bounds of a single text. Robert Walton's journal-letter his sister envelopes, both literally and metaphorically, Frankenstein's story of the creation of his Monster, and Frankenstein's story includes the Monster's account of his life after 'birth' as its central element. Indeed, Frankenstein is a maze of story telling, as embedded within each of these main narratives are secondary stories: the tale of Walton's ship's master; Frankenstein's accounts of his parent's courtship and Elizabeth Lavenza's past; and the Monster's account of Safie's and the De Lacey's history.

These 'frame narratives' have some interesting consequences for the story-telling of the novel. Each narrative has a different narrator, and each narrator tells his story to a listener whose presence is marked in the tale, so that the listeners also become participants in the stories. Each story and its narrator is connected with the others through the realistic logic of chronology and of cause and effect established in the text as a whole. The narratives are also connected in emotional and spiritual ways, through the shared beliefs, ambitions and life patterns of the narrators. This combination of the realist point of view, expressed through science and natural philosophy in the novel, with elements of the Gothic and Romantic sensibilities, structures and gives voice to the deep ambivalences of both form and content in *Frankenstein*.

The novel's frames dramatise the difficulties of beginning a story such as *Frankenstein*. Although Mary Shelley claims that the original inspiration for *Frankenstein* was her vision of 'the pale student of, unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together' (p. 9), we don't begin to read this part of the story until some fifty pages later in the novel. What we encounter first is a series of letters, apparently unrelated to Mary Shelley's nightmare of the artificial creation of life. The novel appears to have a series of false starts, as though to delay the horror of the creation and existence of the Monster. But rather than being clumsy, or revealing Mary Shelley as an inadequate writer, these several 'beginnings' stress the importance of understanding the events of each of the protagonists lives which lead to their meeting in the Arctic ice, and create an authentic reason for the telling of such stories.

In telling her story, Mary Shelley faces the dilemma of the 'classic realist' novelist: how to persuade her readers into a 'suspension of disbelief about an event which is literally incredible? The horror of the novel rests on the reader's belief in its most fictional creation, the Monster. The moral and ideological arguments of the novel also depend on the reader's acceptance of the Monster's reality, not only in Frankenstein's tale, but also in the Monster's own narrative. Indeed, Shelley provides the Monster with the most persuasive and credible voice of the three narrators, and in so doing, must navigate between the conflicting elements of monstrosity and humanity in the Monster's characterisation. Mary Shelley solves this problem by creating the frame of Captain Walton's story as an epistolary novel—that is, a novel made up of letters. The epistolary novel provides a reason for its existence other than that of pure fictionality and the delight in telling stories; it assumes a 'real' or literal act of

communication in the writing, sending, receiving and reading of letters. And more generally, the framing of each narrative as a tale told to a potentially sceptical or unwilling listener is a strategy to prove the authenticity of the stories of Frankenstein and the Monster, and their veracity as narrators is proven by their ability to persuade others of the truth.

When a story is told through a series of ‘framed narratives’, we presume that the frames will lead us to a central kernel of truth, which is revealed as we peel back the layers ‘of narrative. We expect to find, in the innermost frame, the point of the story—its punch line — which will explain the significance of what has gone before. However, the framed narratives of *Frankenstein* deny such a revelation of fixed meaning. The concentric circles of narrative lead us in towards the Monster’s story, but then quickly move out again, without a judgment of the events narrated. The pressure of events in the realist setting of the outer frame of the novel—the situation of Walton’s ship and crew caught in the Arctic ice—breaks in on the confessional narratives of Frankenstein and the Monster with the necessity for action in the novel’s ‘present’. This action truncates any reflection on the stories that have been told, and the narrative is once more implicated in its protagonists’ obsessive search for knowledge and conquest of nature.

One consequence of Mary Shelley’s use of frame narratives is that the reader must combine and connect these interwoven stories into a unified narrative, because she does not provide an omniscient and omnipotent narrator to give an authoritative interpretation of the events within the novel. Indeed, in her Introduction to the 1831 edition, Mary Shelley distances herself from her creation, almost denying the story as a product of deliberate artistry, when she writes that ‘My imagination, unbidden, possessed and guided me’ (p. 9). Thus, reading *Frankenstein* involves us in a quest for knowledge, a search for the truth about the ultimate meaning of the story itself, which parallels those quests for knowledge of Walton, Frankenstein and the Monster.

All three fictional narrators tell autobiographical tales, expressing themselves through letters, oral narratives and journals. Each of these is in the confessional mode, using an essentially private means of communication. *Frankenstein* is a patchwork of confessions, which are all told, retold, edited and interpreted by their narrators and hearers. These stories utilise the conventional assumption of a narrative contract of truth made between teller and listener. Readers of autobiography assume that the narrator is giving them an account which is privileged in its candour and ingenuousness. Although the narrative may be subjective, it is felt to give the reader a special insight into the narrator’s experience. However, in *Frankenstein*, the persuasive purpose of each narrator is so strong that it compromises moral as well as narrative truth in the novel. Walton feels the need to explain and justify his desire to escape the bounds of the known world, and Frankenstein is eager to explain and justify his actions to Walton. In retelling the Monster’s story, Frankenstein is not an impartial narrator as he is concerned to reveal the monstrousness of his creation. The Monster’s narrative is perhaps the most appealing and ‘human’ of the three; however, it may well be so appealing because the Monster must dramatise the extremity of his mental and emotional suffering, in order to persuade Frankenstein to create a female companion for him.

The attitude of each listener is also implicated in these confessional stories. Walton, as the narrator of the outer frame, has a dangerously uncritical view of Frankenstein’s narrative. His response to the story is one of blood-curdled horror, but this is qualified by his admiration for Frankenstein’s achievement and his excitement at the possibilities of the discoveries made. Walton, in his dedication to the glory of discovery, fails to acknowledge the destructive nature of Frankenstein’s quest, and the

potentially fatal nature of his own adventure. Walton's retelling of the other narratives is coloured by his kindred feeling for Frankenstein and his readiness to find sympathy with Frankenstein's dreams of glory. The Monster, more human than his creator, on the other hand warns Walton of this influence and forces Walton to hear his version of his story:

You, who call Frankenstein your friend, seem to have a knowledge of my crimes and his misfortunes. But, in the detail which he gave you of them, he could not sum up the hours and months of misery which I endured, wasting in impotent passions (p.221).

Significantly, this direct questioning of Frankenstein's ability to realise and communicate the Monster's experience adequately is part of the Monster's first and only speech independent of Frankenstein's narrative.

The Monster's speech of justification to Walton—which includes a second version of his life story—finishes the novel, almost completely drowning out Walton's narrative voice. The Monster's speech demonstrates his eloquence, which is so at odds with his appearance, and stresses the uncertainty about equating appearance with truth in the novel. In a converse situation, Justine's testimony at her trial for the murder of William also relies on the transparency of her character and words to represent her innocence, but the power of her words to convince her hearers is not sufficient. Mary Shelley suggests that testimony based solely on the appearance of character is dangerous, because appearance and moral truth can be radically mismatched. Walton is too involved in his own emotional response to Frankenstein's story to understand the Monster's argument, but the reader, distanced by the framing technique, is able to appreciate Mary Shelley's ironic view.

Although there is no single authorial voice in *Frankenstein*, the framed narratives make clear connections between the three narrators and principal actors in the novel. The chronological narrative structure of the novel connects the three stories in a logical sequence, of causality, so that each narrative fits into a rational chain of events, in a sequence which, once we have embarked upon it, has the marks of credibility. While we should never discuss any novel in the simplistic terms of its accurate (or otherwise) correspondence with the world outside the novel as it is empirically experienced by its readers, it is important to recognise the realist and rationalist impulses of Mary Shelley's text. In Victor Frankenstein's telling of his fabulous and monstrous tale the logical, explicable sequence of events is emphasised. His autobiographical explanations and digressions are introduced to establish the logic and fundamental reality of his actions. Frankenstein's lengthy explanations of his intellectual development and his work in scientific experimentation, and the Monster's description of his education into culture and civilisation, are attempts at persuading the reader of the rational actuality of the events of the story.

However, there are stronger connections between narratives and narrators than the logic of plot and place. The narratives and narrators are linked by commonly held ambitions, patterns of events, experiences, beliefs and feelings. All three protagonists (for the novel persuades us to consider even the Monster in this sympathetic light) are isolated and exiled, and each seeks a companion. They are all overreachers, embarked on the quest for knowledge and experience which is beyond ordinary human achievement. This search is represented as fatal: Walton survives to preserve Frankenstein's and the Monster's stories only because he turns back from his exploration of the Arctic. All three men are divided characters, torn between their heroic, epic ambitions, and the ties of 'domestic affection' (p. 14). This division is experienced as both personal anguish and social alienation, as the pursuit of heroic ideals, represented as the zenith of achievement in society, actually separates the protagonists from their families

and wider social connections. Mary Shelley's vision of the satisfied ego is a solipsistic one: that is, in the search for release from exile and isolation, each man realises that his only sure companion is himself, or his distorted reflection—a hideous *doppelgänger*: the double of oneself whose presence foretells death.

All three characters are impelled by ambitions which are ultimately fatal. Like Faust, they desire to know more than their individual bodies and human society can endure. However, we are told by its sub-title that *Frankenstein* is a modern story. Mary Shelley's reworking of the Faust story is a resolutely modern one, and becomes more so with every advance in biological technology in the late twentieth century. Instead of being tempted by Mephistopheles with knowledge gained from the realm of the supernatural, as Dr Faustus was, Victor Frankenstein's temptation comes entirely from the realm of natural philosophy, from the body of knowledge amassed by mortal human beings. There is no recourse to the supernatural either to ask for assistance or to blame: part of the horror of *Frankenstein* is that it is an entirely human story, presented as natural, and rational, not supernatural and fantastical.

As the central truth of *Frankenstein* is distanced and displaced by the framed narratives, so the novel avoids the neat tying up of loose ends which is conventional in fiction. At the end of *Frankenstein* a sense of failure and lack of fulfilment abounds. In trying to cheat death through the discovery of the principle of life, Victor Frankenstein dies and provides the last death in the chain of destruction which fuels his narrative of pursuit of the Monster. Frankenstein is adamant that he will not return to civilisation, displaying the overreacher's arrogance even as he dies:

'Do so [turn back], if you will; but I will not. You may give up your purpose, but mine is assigned to me by Heaven, and I dare not. I am weak; but the spirits who assist my vengeance will endow me with sufficient strength.' Saying this, he endeavoured to spring from the bed, but the exertion was too great for him; he fell back, and fainted (p.216).

Frankenstein's last attempt to dominate Nature—this time his own body—fails through lack of self-knowledge. The Monster, arguably the most human protagonist in the novel, is also left to self-destruction. In a final articulation of the mutual dependence of the Monster and Frankenstein, the Monster anticipates the consummation of his life in a funeral pyre on the ice, looking to find happiness in the passing away of 'light, feeling, and sense'

Walton's decision to return to civilisation is represented by him as a failure of will. He is clearly reluctant to return to the domesticity and feminine comfort of his sister's society, as his letter-journal entries of September 7th and 12th, with their clipped phrases and bitter words, articulate:

The die is cast; I have consented to return, if we are not destroyed. Thus are my hopes blasted by cowardice and indecision; I come back ignorant and disappointed. . . It is past; I am returning to England. I have lost my hopes of utility and glory; — I have lost my friend(p.215).

However, the uncertainty of Walton's return to England is repeatedly mentioned in his letters, and Mary Shelley does not provide us with any actual or metaphorical vision of this reunion. The only evidence of Walton's survival is in his letters to Margaret, whose initials—Margaret Walton Saville—interestingly correspond with Mary Shelley's favoured signature-Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. Through the use of the realist fictional frame of Walton's letters to his sister, Frankenstein's and the Monster's stories are recorded and survive the lives of their tellers, and we may assume that as the letters reach Margaret safely, so does her brother. However, we are offered no other proof of Walton's survival, and

the imagery of the novel, which connects ice and snow with the chaos and vengeance of Nature disrupted, suggests that Walton's quest is also doomed.

Thus, for the three narrators, the resolution of the novel is hardly triumphant: both Walton's and Frankenstein's adventures into new worlds of knowledge are unsuccessful, and neither man appears to have learnt from his experience. The narrative itself ends in the obscurement or disappearance of its central characters. The final image of the novel is literally of 'darkness and distance', as the Monster floats haphazardly into uncharted waters. Walton's letters, containing the other stories, signify the survival of the narrative, but not necessarily that of the narrators. In the very acts of telling stories and writing them down, both story-tellers and listeners have removed the need for their physical existence. The frame narratives serve to separate and safeguard both the fictional reader Margaret Walton Saville and Mary Shelley's actual readers from the horrific experiences of the protagonists. Such a separation may seem at odds with a series of stories in which the narrators speak so passionately about the glories of action, but this contradiction between form and content reflects Mary Shelley's ambivalence about heroic action.

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### **14.3 Irony in the Novel**

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Mary Shelley's authorial view emerges out of the irony of the novel, and especially the way in which the three principal narratives are placed against each other, interpreted, edited and translated. However, her irony is neither comfortable nor comic: the vision of chaos at the end of the novel does not provide any image of a social or psychological order to return to—a status quo purged of folly, as in Jane Austen's fiction, for example. Instead, Frankenstein and the Monster die in the 'trackless wastes' of ice and snow, beyond the civilised world, and Walton returns, railing at the ignorance and cowardice of his companions, unreconciled to his familiar world. It is doubtful even that his story will be believed, and so any achievement by any of the three protagonists is lost to the world: their quests are fruitless and unsuccessful. Mary Shelley is ambivalent about this: although there is a critique of egotism and overreaching heroism, their stories are told with the investment of so much passion that we cannot remain dispassionate or disinterested observers of the characters. Perhaps, in spite of the horror, we want to celebrate some kind of success at the end of the novel.

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### **14.4 Myth in the Novel**

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Myth has a special place in our culture: myths are stories we tell ourselves to explain the otherwise inexplicable, and their substance forms a set of basic narratives through which we order experience. Myth is a way of conceptualising the world beyond our single skins, our individual senses and feelings, and a means of integrating individual experience and memory with collective cultural experience and history. Myths also tell stories from the past to connect it to the present. Through their linking of the individual with the collective, and the past with the present, myths deal with the basic questions of human existence and relationships. In their approach to the big questions about life and death, myths tend to be metaphysical, even spiritual. Most religions draw on a body of myth to explain their world views and spiritual beliefs. The Aboriginal 'dreaming', for example, is a continuous story-telling which is a combination of memory of individuals and clans, and uses myth as a way of integrating present experience with the long distant past, so that both are meaningful and immediate.

Myths are constantly reinterpreted and adapted as they are translated from oral to written story, from pictures to writing, from past history to contemporary popular culture. The details of a myth are

not important in the way details of a novel might be, because it is the *structure* of the myth, and particularly the pattern of its basic story, which is important. The structure of a myth should be understood as its simple pattern of actions: the transactions and interactions between humans and gods, humans and the natural world, and humans themselves, which are recorded by myth. These stories are often told obliquely, through the use of symbols, parables or allegories.

In the Western cultural tradition, the most important myths are myths of origin or creation. Myths of origin deal with grand questions of cosmology—about the origins and existence of the universe, and philosophical questions about the origins and purpose of the human life. *Frankenstein* is concerned with myths of creation, both in the novel's reference to the legend of Prometheus, and, most strikingly, in Mary Shelley's invention of a new creation myth. *Frankenstein* was written at a time when the traditional Judeo-Christian doctrine of human origins (coloured and combined with Greek and Roman myth) was challenged by the new sciences of biology and chemistry, and Mary Shelley's account of a man replacing God and the human mother as the creator of life is a radical reworking of existing Western birth myths.

Mary Shelley drew strongly on the tradition of Greco-Roman myth in the formulation of her novel. *Frankenstein* is sub-titled 'The Modern Prometheus', and Mary Shelley's use of the Promethean myth combines the two versions of that myth as they were understood in the early nineteenth century. The Prometheus myth is a double-edged tale of creation and destruction: of Prometheus the fire-stealer, and Prometheus the giver of life. Prometheus the fire-stealer, in rebellion against Zeus (or Jupiter in the Roman version) brought down the fire of the sun to the earth to warm human beings, and was punished for this by Zeus, who chained Prometheus to a rock to be eaten alive by vultures. As the Monster learns in the mountains and in the De Lacey's hut, fire is both a necessity for survival and a means of destruction and revenge. So, the legend of Prometheus the fire—stealer represents in *Frankenstein* both the constructive power of science—as the 'fire' of knowledge—and its potentially destructive abilities. In the Promethean myth of origins, as told by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* (which Mary Shelley read in 1815), Prometheus was the Creator who made man from clay and breathed life into him.

Prometheus, son of Iapetus, took the new-made earth which, only recently separated from the lofty aether, still retained some elements related to those of heaven and, mixing it with rainwater, fashioned it into the image of the all-governing gods ... he made man stand erect, bidding him look up to heaven, and lift his head to the stars. So the earth, which had been rough and formless, was moulded into the shape of a man.

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, (trans!. Mary Innes, Penguin, 1955), Book I, p. 31.

Here, Prometheus is creator of the human race and its civilisation 'he made man stand erect'—but as the fire-stealer Prometheus is also the bringer of the means of human destruction. This double nature is reproduced in Victor Frankenstein, who sees himself first as the benign creator of a new species (p. 54), and then as the bringer of destruction on his own species (p. 166).

Any attempt to give a short and definitive account of the Romantic movement in early nineteenth-century Britain is probably doomed to failure, because of the complicated nature of its philosophical basis and the many contradictions which pervade it. However, some account of its main aims and ideas is necessary here in order to understand the extraordinary achievement of *Frankenstein*. We need to

recognise the way in which Mary Shelley participates in the major concerns of Romanticism, while simultaneously making a profound criticism of its fundamental beliefs, particularly the dangers of the unbounded and uncontrolled artistic ego.

Stimulated by the radical democratic politics of the French Revolution, and in reaction against the emphasis on reason in eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophy, the Romantic movement in Britain proposed a new way of thinking about the individual and his or her relationship to society. Principally expressed in the poetry of William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron, the Romantic view of human nature valued individual strong feeling over collective and formal behavior, and put imagination before reason. It was the Romantic movement that first extolled the idea of the 'alienated' individual, and particularly the alienated poet, separated from the mass of his society because of his special gift. Romanticism glorified the individual ego and that desire for self-expression and achievement of artistic greatness which Friedrich Nietzsche was later to call the 'will to power'. In literature, the Romantics valued Spontaneity and imagination over reason and decorum ('decorum' meaning the attention paid to matching content with its appropriate form and observing specific rules for the propriety of subject matter and its mode of expression), so that poetry was seen not as an art of imitation, but as the expression of the individual poet's sense of an ideal existence beyond the surface reality. Although none of them is a poet, Walton, Frankenstein and the Monster are all characterised by Romantic egotism in desiring to construct the world according to their own dreams and imaginations. In telling their stories, like Romantic poets, they remake the facts of their lives into stories which emphasise the power of the individual desire, as manifested *in* their dreams and ambitions of control over their world.

This belief in the importance of the individual, strong feeling, and self-expression is connected with a new way of seeing the natural world and representing nature *in* art. From Jean-Jacques Rousseau's revolutionary declaration of Romantic individualism in *The Social Contract* that 'Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains', to Wordsworth's famous vision of daffodils, the civilised world of human society *is* compared with the natural world, and found wanting. The English Romantic poets viewed the natural world as a reflection of the transcendent imagination, and found *in* Nature their metaphors for the liberation of the human spirit. Thus Frankenstein escapes from his home to the Alpine valley of Chamounix to seek 'the magnificence, the eternity of such scenes, to forget myself and my ephemeral (p.94). Frankenstein's account of his wanderings in the Alps is filled with his appreciation of the power of his surroundings:

These sublime and magnificent scenes afforded me the greatest consolation that I was capable of receiving. They elevated me from all littleness of feeling; and although they did not remove my grief, they subdued and tranquilised it (p.96).

This appreciation of the natural world and acknowledgement of its power, both aesthetic and psychological, is fundamental to the Romantic world view, and like the Romantic belief in the primacy of the imagination, it is also a radical departure from earlier aesthetic and philosophical movements.

The Prometheus myth was an important myth for the English Romantics, and of particular interest to Mary Shelley's husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, who pursued the theme in his dramatic poem *Prometheus Unbound*, written after Mary published *Frankenstein*. The Prometheus myth represented for the Romantics the twin roles of the poet as creator and rebel, whose creative art both transgressed the social order, and brought enlightenment and liberation to his people. However, it was Mary Shelley

who first recognised the importance of the Promethean myth, and significantly, her use of the Promethean creation myth in *Frankenstein* is different from that of the male Romantic poets of her acquaintance. For Mary Shelley, the idea of artificially creating life focuses attention on the experience which defines the difference between the sexes in a way no other distinction can: the female experience of pregnancy and childbirth. Mary Shelley's 'Modern Prometheus' is a man whose actions are compromised and corrupted by his egotism and lack of self knowledge. In *Frankenstein*, the heroic Prometheus becomes the pathetic Victor Frankenstein, goaded by his creature into the infertile wastes of the Arctic.

*Frankenstein* can be seen as Mary Shelley's challenge to the Romantic belief in the unquestioned value of the human imagination. 'In autobiographical terms, the novel can be read as Mary Shelley's challenge to her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and their circle at the Villa Diodati where *Frankenstein* had its genesis, about the dangers of the unchecked egotism of the artist. In broader terms (which ultimately are more important), *Frankenstein* raises questions about the unrestricted pursuit of knowledge, at a time when human ambition and achievement appeared to be boundless. Like most writing which endures, *Frankenstein* is as much a novel about the possibilities of reaching the truth-in writing, speech or science as it is about the horror of Frankenstein's creation of a Monster.

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## 14.5 Science, Empiricism and the Scientific Method

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One man's life or death were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge which I sought; for the dominion I should acquire and transmit over the elemental foes of our, race. (Letter IV).

In the last years of the twentieth century, science and the humanities are represented in opposite terms: the study of literature is seen to be subjective and interpretative, while scientific studies are apparently rational and objective. As readers of literature, apart from appreciating the conveniences of advanced technology, we tend to be distanced from the philosophy and practice of science, and the study of literature and the study of science are generally seen as separate pursuits. Many people even reject the fundamental tenets of modern science with its emphasis on reason, logic and empirical experimentation. Perhaps this current reaction against science and technology is because of the frightening powers of destruction which we feel science has given us since 1945, and our fears about the damage done to our natural environment by advanced technology.

However, when reading *Frankenstein* we need to be aware of the contemporary excitement about the discoveries of science, and remember that at the time of writing *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley took a lively interest in science. She and her circle, like many others of their class and education in England in the early nineteenth century, practised as amateur scientists in home experiments, read about the latest discoveries in chemistry and biology, and attended public lectures given by eminent scientists of the day. What we now distinguish as the fields of biology, chemistry and physics, were then known collectively as 'natural philosophy' or 'natural science', and investigations into the mechanics of life at the beginning of the nineteenth century were intimately connected with the philosophical discussions of the meaning and ends of life. Perhaps this was because then the technology of science was not so complicated and awesome in its possibilities for discovery. Such an interweaving between experimental science and philosophy is nowhere more apparent than in the way that Victor Frankenstein returns to alchemy even after realising it is of no practical use: it is the ideas and aspirations (to make life) of the alchemists which spur him on, although he uses the empirical techniques of modern science in his work.

As argued in chapter 3, Mary Shelley makes use of the conventional images and metaphors of

the Gothic novel in *Frankenstein*. This is what we might expect, as her novel deals with the horrific and unnatural creation of a living being from disparate pieces of dead bodies. What is less expected, and so perhaps more important to mention first, is Mary Shelley's interest in science and her reflection of an increasingly scientific way of thinking—even in imaginative literature—evident throughout *Frankenstein*. The quests of Captain Walton and Victor Frankenstein are quests for knowledge, to be achieved through the scientific method: that is, through the proposal and investigation of a question or hypothesis about the unknown, and the answering of that question through practical experimentation or exploration. This is the tradition of English empiricism in which Mary Shelley places her protagonists. Both Walton and Frankenstein are empiricists: that is, they attempt to discover new knowledge or information through practical experimentation and the evidence of their senses, and they then fit this information into a logical pattern of connected and reasoned facts. They both have grand visions of their quests for knowledge, but they attempt to achieve their aims by detailed practical experiment or discovery, rather than theoretical philosophising.

The narratives of Shelley's protagonists are carefully constructed to show the results of the logic of cause and effect, an important scientific principle of, empirical or experimental science. In the physical explorations of Walton, the physiological experiments of Frankenstein, and the psychological development of the Monster, the protagonists' processes of reasoning are made clear. All three protagonists emphasise the importance of cause and effect in the development of their characters, and by stressing the significance of their early experiences, all three use this logic of cause and effect to give rational explanations for their current actions. The most striking example of this use of logic is the Monster's explanation to Frankenstein of his own monstrosity, where Mary Shelley incorporates her parents' radical views of the formation of personality.

Even the point at which Shelley's tale diverges from known experience—the horror story of Frankenstein's creation of the Monster—is related in some detail, and does not rely on mystifying references to occult or magical practices. Although Frankenstein twice retreats from telling Walton the principle of life, which would provide final proof of his story, Walton writes to his sister in verification of Frankenstein's narrative, 'His tale is—connected, and told with the appearance of simple truth' (p. 209). He adds that even more convincing are the proofs given by the letters of Felix de Lacey and Safie which Frankenstein carries, and Walton's own sighting of the Monster himself. This is evidence of the senses, of empirical experience, and as such is proof of Frankenstein's veracity which is in keeping with the broad influence of the 'new science' in the novel. Frankenstein's own training as a scientist in the accurate observation and recording of facts is obvious when he discovers that Walton has been making notes of his story:

he asked to see them and then himself corrected and augmented them in many places; ... 'Since you have preserved my narration,' said he, 'I would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity.' (210).

Even when he is close to death, Frankenstein has the empirical scientist's regard for accuracy and the egotist's concern for his reputation.

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## 14.6 Frankenstein, the 'Mad Scientist'

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However powerful the language and thought processes of science (the 'discourse' of science) are in *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley is ambivalent about the lengths to which scientific experimentation

and knowledge should go. In the character of Frankenstein, Mary Shelley creates the original 'mad scientist' whose devotion to his task shuts out all other contact with the world. Both Walton's and Frankenstein's desire to add to humanity's knowledge of the natural world, leads to an unbalanced view of nature. In Frankenstein's case, Mary Shelley stresses that his is a masculine view of nature, which regards the natural world as feminine territory to be conquered:

The untaught peasant beheld the elements around him, and was acquainted with their practical uses. The most learned philosopher knew little more. He had partially unveiled the face of Nature, but her immortal lineaments were still a wonder and a mystery. He might dissect, anatomise, and give names; but, not to speak of a final cause, causes in their tertiary and secondary grades were utterly unknown to him. I had gazed upon the fortifications and impediments that seemed to keep human beings from entering the citadel of nature, and rashly and ignorantly I had repined. (p. 40)

Here, Frankenstein attributes to the natural world the human qualities of gender and sexuality. In Frankenstein's expression, the conventional courtly love metaphor of the fortified citadel is used as an image of Nature, personifying 'her' as a mysterious and unattainable woman, whom Frankenstein desires to conquer and claim as his own. He can only do this by penetrating her 'fortifications and impediments'. In his view of science and his role as a scientist, Frankenstein also reveals his views of the relationship between the sexes, seeing them as necessarily combative: the (male) scientist must storm the (female) stronghold or nature and subdue her by the exercise of knowledge. These are metaphors for the patriarchal invasion of nature. It is a disturbing image of scientific discovery, which, unchecked, becomes equated with rape. The most shocking manifestation of Frankenstein's arrogant view of Nature is in his attempt to circumvent and reverse her immutable laws of life and death. Mary Shelley's anxieties about scientific and Romantic egotism, and her absorption of the radical philosophies of her circle, are focussed in her story of Victor Frankenstein's 'workshop of filthy creation' (p. 55) and his horrific 'pregnancy' and 'birth'.

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## 14.7 Female Gothic Novel

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*Frankenstein* has been described as 'distinctly a woman's mythmaking on the subject of birth' because of its concentration of horror in the traumatic reactions to the aftermath of birth—the taboo emotions of 'fear and guilt, depression and anxiety' which a woman might feel after the birth of her child (Moers, p. 93). These secret fears about the child growing Within the woman's body, and her resentment of *its* control over her hitherto in dependent physical existence, are acted out in the unbalanced and neurotic behaviour of Frankenstein in the creation and abandonment of his 'child'. Mary Shelley's own experience of pregnancy, birth and child-rearing before and during her writing of *Frankenstein* may have made her particularly sensitive to the traumatic and emotionally fraught aspects of human reproduction.

Mary Godwin was first pregnant at the age of sixteen, when she and Percy Shelley eloped together, Percy leaving his wife Harriet, and Mary her uncongenial family home. Her daughter, hastily named Clara, was born prematurely and died eleven days after her birth; Mary's grief expressed itself in disturbing dreams, such as the one which she recorded in her *Journal* (19th March, 1815):

Dream that my little baby came to life again—that it had only 'been cold & that we rubbed it by the fire & it lived—I awake & find no baby—I think about the little thing all day.

Her second child, William, was born in January, 1816, and named after Mary's father, William Godwin, although he had refused all contact with her after her elopement with Percy, despite constantly

‘borrowing money from Percy. It was only after the suicide of Percy’s first wife pregnant by another man—that Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin actually became Mary Shelley (or Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, as she preferred to sign herself). While writing *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley was pregnant with her third child, also to be called Clara, who was born three months after the manuscript of *Frankenstein* was completed. However, Clara too was to die, in Italy in 1818, as was William in 1819, leaving Mary at twenty-two and after four pregnancies with only one live child, Percy Florence, born in 1819.

Such a number of pregnancies for a young woman in the early nineteenth century was not so unusual, but Mary Shelley’s family experience was a concentrated course of anxiety and failure. Mary felt herself to be a failure at motherhood and was surrounded by inadequate and irresponsible fathers. She suffered doubly from Percy’s troubles as a father: while Percy Shelley fought a lawsuit against his first wife’s family over his fitness as a parent for his children from that marriage, Mary was threatened with the removal of her children, on the same grounds of her and Percy’s unfitness as parents. Percy was an unreliable partner for Mary during her pregnancies, maintaining his philosophy of free love (in sympathies, if not in deed), and encouraging Mary to do the same, without realising Mary’s altered physical and mental states when pregnant. With an attitude to his children that Mary’s biographers have called narcissistic, Percy did not share her deep depression over the loss of their daughters, but mourned deeply over the loss of his son, William. Furthermore, Mary’s father, William Godwin, although a champion of philosophic radicalism, disapproved strongly of her practical application of such principles in living with Percy without the sanction of marriage, and Lord Byron, an intimate friend of Percy’s, showed himself to be unscrupulous and selfish towards Claire Clairmont (Mary’s step-sister who lived with the Shelleys for most of their married life) and a tyrannical father to the child Claire bore him.

As the years from 1816 to 1818, when Mary Shelley was writing and revising *Frankenstein*, were crowded with these dramatic events, it is not surprising that her novel is vitally concerned with questions about responsibilities for the creation of life. Her private dreams and anxieties about her role as a mother (and her guilty perception that she was the cause of her own mother’s death), coincide suggestively with the ‘waking dream’ which was the genesis of *Frankenstein*, her public creation. As the novel is one of the few in the English language to deal so directly with such intimate and difficult issues, an autobiographical interpretation of its genesis and meaning is unavoidable and interesting. But such a reading of the novel focuses only on one aspect of Shelley’s complex work. Implicit also in Mary Shelley’s novel is the feminist’s vision of a ‘male pregnancy’, and the horror which comes from this distortion and perversion of female pregnancy, when reproduction is removed from the female sphere. While *Frankenstein* does enact female fears about childbirth, it is also a profound criticism of masculine ambition and belief in the possibility of complete control over nature.

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## 14.8 Creation of the Monster

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The central event of Victor Frankenstein’s story is his creation of the Monster, who is the result of his experimentations with the principle of life itself. Victor presents the creation of a human as the turning point in his life, and the action which precipitates all that follows. However, Victor narrates the story of the ‘birth’ of his ‘child’ in terms which are far removed from those used for women’s experience of childbearing. Mary Shelley shows us the horror of a birth without women, and the terrible consequences of creating life without taking responsibility for it.

For Frankenstein, the pursuit of the principle of life is an exciting quest for knowledge for its own sake:

Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. (p.54).

He does not think of the consequences of the creation of a human being, other than in terms of self-aggrandisement:

A new species would bless me as its source; many happy and (excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. (p.54).

Here, Frankenstein's thoughts are a blasphemous version of the Christian myth of Creation, and a parody of the Old Testament's praise of the virtuous woman, 'Her children arise up, and call her blessed' (*Proverbs*, 31: 28). In his vision of self-congratulation, Frankenstein reveals the fatal *hubris* of his intellectual overreaching of Nature. As a creator rather than a father, Frankenstein will claim his 'child's' gratitude completely, but there is no mention at all of a mother for this 'new species'. Frankenstein's creation is a grotesque autogenesis, a parody of the natural reproduction of human life.

Paradoxically, Frankenstein is concerned not so much with the creation of life as the cheating of death. His childhood reading of the alchemists Paracelsus and Cornelius Agrippa excited his desire to find the 'elixir of life', imagining

what glory would attend the discovery, if I could banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death! (P.40).

The perversion of this intervention in Nature is expressed through the contradiction of seeking life in the environments and materials of death. As he creates his living being, Frankenstein is surrounded by death and associations of death. In his investigation of the 'principle of life', he 'studies the effects of death on the human body. His descriptions of the death and decay of the human body in 'vaults and charnel-houses' (p. 52) express his disgust at the depredations of death on the human form:

My attention was fixed upon every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human feelings. I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted; I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. (P. 52).

And his scientific logic leads him to believe that, in time, he will be able to renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption' (p. 54), again changing the natural course of life with the machinery of science.

Mary Shelley emphasises the danger of Frankenstein's desire to alter irrevocably the cycles of life and death by placing Frankenstein's scientific experiments within the literary conventions of the Gothic mode using the language of the Satanic occult and images of darkness and repression. At first, Frankenstein emphasises that:

In my education my father had taken the greatest precautions that my mind should be impressed with no supernatural horrors. I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale of superstition, or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. Darkness had no effect upon my fancy; and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life. (p 51).

However, his language soon changes as he describes his activities using the familiar Gothic

figures of speech (or ‘tropes’) of secrecy, darkness, subterranean spaces and forbidden activities, all tinged with obsession and extremity. Once he has discovered the principle of life, Frankenstein works feverishly and obsessively, entering the taboo spaces of ‘the damp of the grave’, collecting ‘bones from charnel-houses’, torturing ‘the living animal to animate the lifeless clay’, and disturbing ‘with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame’ (p.54). Frankenstein works at night, alone:

In a solitary chamber, or rather a cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and staircase, I kept my workshop of filthy creation: my eye-balls were starting from their sockets in attending to the details of my employment. The dissecting-room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials; and often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation, whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion. (p.55).

These words, heavily-loaded with associations of horror and the unhallowed, undercut Frankenstein’s protestations of the scientific and rational motives of his work, suggesting an unbalanced and dangerous obsession with achieving his goal. Here is the genesis of the ‘mad scientist’, one of the most enduring popular archetypes of Frankenstein. Perhaps what is most horrific here, however, is that Frankenstein exhibits a determination in his work which is apparently rational although the task upon which he is engaged is ghastly and unnatural. Despite his manic obsession, Frankenstein is able to maintain his logical thought processes and methodical work practices. What is so horrific about this ‘mad scientist’ is the use of reason to serve the purposes of an unnatural and unbalanced ambition.

Mary Shelley emphasises the horror of birth without women by drawing parallels between the process of Frankenstein’s creation and normal human reproduction. She does this through the language Frankenstein uses to describe his actions, and through the details of the narrative sequence of Frankenstein’s story. As attentive readers, we can recognise the ironies and shocking puns of Frankenstein’s speech, and see the significance of his actions in a way that Frankenstein cannot, because of his egotistical self-delusion. Frankenstein ‘conceives’ the idea of creation in a passion of lust not sexual desire for a woman’s body, but the craving for intellectual glory. After hearing Professor Waldman’s ‘panegyric upon modern chemistry’, Frankenstein’s mind is ‘filled with one thought, one conception, one purpose’ (PA8). He describes himself in terms of a tortured romantic lover, unable to sleep after the first sight of his beloved:

I closed not my eyes that night. My internal being was in a state of insurrection and turmoil; I felt that order would thence arise, but I had no power to produce it. By degrees, after the morning’s dawn, sleep came. (p. 48).

Professor Waldman describes the researches of scientists as a ‘chase’ of the coy object of desire: ‘They penetrate into the recesses of nature, and show how she works in her hiding places’ (p. 47). Victor Frankenstein takes up this ‘love chase’, and in a moment of metaphorical climax, he realises his goal, and conceives the idea of creating life:

Until from the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me—a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple, that . . . I became dizzy with the immensity of the prospect which it illustrated . . . (p.32)

After Frankenstein makes the decision to use his triumph over nature to create life, he becomes an horrific double of a pregnant woman. He is not in control of the process of creation, but is driven

by its demands, executing his task with 'unremitting ardour'. He is physically changed and decreases in size, in a nightmarish reversal of the effects of pregnancy in a woman's body:

My cheek had grown pale with study, and my person had become emaciated with confinement (p.54).

His activity dominates Frankenstein's feelings and imagination, and the being Frankenstein 'carries' with him already exercises a monstrous hold over his character and actions:

I could not tear my thoughts from my employment, loathsome in itself, but which had taken an irresistible hold of my imagination. I wished, as it were, to procrastinate all that related to my feelings of affection until the great object, which swallowed up every habit of my nature, should be completed.(p.55).

Frankenstein labours over his creation for 'Winter, spring, and summer' (p. 56), a period of nine months, but instead of the child being born as a symbol of hope at the end of winter (as is Christ's nativity, for example) or the beginning of spring, the traditional time for the celebration of birth and rebirth—the Monster is brought to life in autumn, 'death' of the year, as 'The leaves of that year had withered' (p.56).

Frankenstein's account of the moment of 'birth' of his creation is the most intense moment of horror in the novel. However, it is not the emergence of Frankenstein's creation as a gigantic 'wretch' with watery eyes, yellow skin, lustrous black hair and pearly white teeth, nor the creature's subsequent demonstration of its monstrosity in murder and revenge, that is the most horrific material of the novel. What is disturbing and unsettling to the extreme is Frankenstein's unequivocal and immediate rejection of his creation, and his subsequent denial of any responsibility for its existence or destiny. Perhaps this should not be so surprising to us, as Frankenstein has not hitherto thought about his creation as an autonomous being, but as a manifestation of his own power, knowledge and skill. While he acknowledges the 'astonishing ... power placed within my hands', the main responsibility he feels is for the delicacy and difficulty of the task he sets himself:

Although I possessed the capacity of bestowing animation, yet to prepare a frame for the reception of it, with all its intricacies of fibre, muscles, and veins, still remained a work of inconceivable difficulty and labour .. (p.53).

In looking forward to his creation, Frankenstein imagines that his achievement will be in proportion with the difficulty of his task. However, at the moment of the creature's awakening, he loses even this sense of triumph and power over nature. The first moment of the creature's life becomes the first moment of Frankenstein's revulsion:

by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs. (p.57).

Frankenstein's instant loathing is enacted in the actual language, sentence construction and thought patterns of the text, and this is what is so unsettling for the reader. The narration of this episode is riven with disjunctions and disruptions.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!— Great God! ... Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had

created, I rushed out of the room (p.57).

Until this point in his narrative, Frankenstein has explained fully and rationally the chain of events of his life, making clear the causes and effects of each incident in his life. Here, however, the narration is full of gaps in Frankenstein's logic, and his responses are not fully explained—as readers we feel that we have not been given important and crucial information about the narrator's feelings. Through this narrative technique of elision, we see that Frankenstein, the man of science who attempts to control and direct nature, is at the mercy of his instincts which he cannot explain even in hindsight to a Sympathetic listener, such as Walton.

With the introduction of the Monster's narrative into Frankenstein's story, Mary Shelley reverses the usual power structure of patriarchal literature. She inserts the created being's consciousness into the narrative of his creator, thus giving the Monster the voice Frankenstein has hitherto denied and suppressed. Instead of following the pattern of Milton's grand and weighty plan for *Paradise Lost*:

That to the highth of this great argument, I may assert Eternal Providence,  
And Justify the ways of God to men.

Shelley justifies the ways of the created to his creator

(Book i, ii, 24-6)

Shelley justifies the ways of created to his creator.

The Monster forces Frankenstein to hear his story, and in her creation of it Mary Shelley introduces an even more startlingly original topic for narrative fiction than that of Frankenstein's experimentation with the creation of life, as the voice of the monstrous and oppressed has rarely been given such attention in English literature. In common with both Walton and Frankenstein, the Monster begins his tale with his memories of early life as the logical explanation of his present actions. However, the Monster starts his story with the very moment of his coming to life, and we are able to match the Monster's consciousness of these events with that of Frankenstein's. To match Frankenstein's description that, 'I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs' (p.57), the Monster remembers 'A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt, at the same time;' (p.102).

For the Monster, this coming to life is strange, but wonderful; for Frankenstein it is the moment of horror which causes him to rush from his laboratory, 'the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust' filling his heart (p. 57). The Monster, with childlike simplicity, experiences a series of basic sense perceptions, which he is gradually able to distinguish one from the other, and then to name, and finally to act upon. While the Monster gradually comes to appreciate the beauty and wonder of the world, Frankenstein sees only ugliness and corruption in his creation. When we are attuned to the Monster's voice in the telling of his story, we begin to see that Frankenstein's frenzied interpretation of the Monster's behaviour is a grave misunderstanding of the Monster's intentions. Thus, while Frankenstein tells Walton of his view of the threatening Monster,

I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed down the stairs (p.58).

The Monster wants to persuade Frankenstein, Walton and the reader, that When I first sought [sympathy], it was the love of virtue, the feelings of happiness and affection with which my whole being overflowed .... (p.221).

So we are invited to read Frankenstein's abhorrence and fear of the Monster as a radical misinterpretation of the Monster's nature; from the Monster's point of view, he is as a vulnerable newborn child reaching out for his parent. Furthermore, the Monster presents Frankenstein's behaviour as the main reason for the Monster's evil nature.

Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the resemblance. (p.130).

Mary Shelley provides the means for the education of the Monster, thus showing him to be potentially 'human' and made monstrous by Frankenstein's neglect. Significantly the monster learns to speak from the caring De Lacey family, and learns to read and forms his view of the world from three of the works which are central to the Romantic mythology of the feeling individual—a translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 'Goethe's *Sorrows of Werther*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*—which Mary Shelley had been reading since 1815 before beginning work on Frankenstein. These works give the Monster a framework within which he tries to fit his own experience, and the ideas of these works, particularly Milton's dramatisation of human history in *Paradise Lost*, provide powerful weapons of rhetoric for the Monster in his battle with Frankenstein.

You taught me language; and my profit on't  
Is, I know how to curse; the red plague on you,  
For learning me your language!

(*The Tempest*, I, ii)

So, Like Caliban in *The Tempest*, the Monster throws back at Frankenstein the tools of civilisation" and confronts Frankenstein with the physical and emotional results of carelessness and self indulgence.

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## 14.9 Key Words

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**Gothic** - Where the mood is dark and sombre and terror is evoked at something out of the natural. It also opens up the realm of perverse impulses and nightmarish terrors that lie beneath the orderly surface of the civilized mind. As this Novel is written by a woman, it is referred to as 'female gothic'.

**Doppelganger** - The double or the other Self. 'Some critics have mentioned that the Monster is the doppelganger of Victor Frankenstein.

**Science Fiction** - Some critics have pointed out that there are some elements of science fiction, where a scientist is able to produce something wondrous through known or imagined scientific principles.

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## 14.10 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit, we have studied

- About the novelist
- About the novel, its background and the characters
- About the critical interpretations of the text.

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## 14.11 Review Questions

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1. Write a brief note on the narrative style of the Novel.
2. Give a brief description of the Irony in the Novel
3. Write a note on the use of Myths in the novel
4. Write briefly about the element of Science in the Novel
5. Write some lines on the female gothic
6. Write some lines on the creation of the Monster

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## UNIT-15

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### SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF ROMANTIC AGE

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#### Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Romanticism
- 15.3 Historical Background
- 15.4 Literary Characteristics of the age
- 15.5 The Main Poets of the Age
- 15.6 Prose
- 15.7 Novel
- 15.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 15.9 Review Questions
- 15.10 Bibliography

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#### 15.0 Objectives

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In this Unit you will

- understand the term Romanticism
- read the social and cultural history of the age
- know about the main writers of the age

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#### 15.1 Introduction

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In this unit you will study the history of Romantic Age. You will also read about the prominent writers of this age and the characteristics of their works

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#### 15.2 Romanticism (1798-1832)

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It is not easy to define romanticism. Like many other literary terms, this word has been used in different ages in widely different senses. Goethe placed it against classicism. Romanticism is disease. Classicism is health. Stendhal described “Romanticism as art of the day (modern) and Classicism the art of the day before (Past)”. In fact all good art is first Romantic, and then it becomes classical. Heine and Beers describe it to be the re-awakening of the Middle ages. To some Romanticism is an expression of emotion against reason. Surrealists and some modern scholars regard Romanticism as “a literature of the less conscious levels of the mind.” According to F.L. Lucas, “Romanticism results from a dominance of impulses from the Id (the primitive impulse), Classicism from our impulse of super-ego (the impulse which says that it is pleasant but wrong) and realism from the impulse of Ego (it looks

pleasant but it is a snare and delusion)”).

Phrases such as “revindication of imagination”, “rehabilitation of emotion” ‘revindication of senses” “accentuated predominance of emotional life provoked or directed by the exercise of imaginative vision” are also used to express Romanticism. Lascelles Abercrombie says that “Romanticism is a withdrawal from outer experience to concentrate upon inner experience”. Victor Hugo calls it. “Liberalism (democratic spirit) in literature”. Watts Dunton observes, “Romanticism is Renaissance of wonder”.

Walter Pater regards” Romanticism as strangeness added to beauty. The essential elements of romantic spirit, according to Walter Pater, “as curiosity and the love of beauty”, the beauty which is to be won by strong imagination out of things likely or remote. But Pater’s definition is incomplete in the sense that all poetry is addition of strangeness to beauty. In the words of Prof. Cazamian, “The romantic spirit can be defined as an accentuated predominance of emotional life, provoked or directed by the exercise of imaginative vision and in its turn, stimulating or directing such exercise. Intense emotion coupled with an intense display of imagery, such is the frame of mind which supports and feeds the romantic literature”. According to Compton Rickett “Romanticism generally speaking is the expression in terms of art of sharpened sensibilities heightened imaginative feeling and although we are concerned only with its expression in literature, Romanticism is an imaginative point of view that has influenced many art forms and has left its mark also on philosophy and history”. In the words of W.J. Long, “the poetry of Romanticism is characterized by the protest against the bondage of rules, the return to nature and the human heart, the interest in old sagas and medieval romances as suggestive of a heroic age, the sympathy with the toilers of the world, the emphasis upon individual genius and the return to Milton and the Elizabethans, instead of the Pope and Dryden for literary models.”

Romanticism was also a return to nature. It was glory of lakes and mountains grace of childhood dignity of the untaught peasant, wonder of faery, mystery of the Gothic aisle, radiance of attic marble. All these springs of the poet’s inspiration and the artist’s joy began to flow not at once but in prolonged unordered succession and not within a limited area but throughout the Western Europe and pre eminently in Germany, England and France. To quote G.H. Mair one notes in the (romantic)authors an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility the mind at its countless points of contact and sensuous world, and the world of thought seems to become more alive and alert. It is more sensitive of fine impressions, to finely graded shades of difference. Outward objects and philosophical ideas a new power to enrich the intensest life of the human spirit. Mountains and lakes the dignity of the peasant the terror of the supernatural scenes of history medieval architecture and armour mediaeval thought and poetry the arts and mythology of Greece all become springs of poetic inspiration and poetic joy.”

#### **Four Major Meanings of Romanticism**

The term Romanticism stands for several things together. It has been associated with the word romances of the medieval period which had a certain feeling of remoteness and a far away atmosphere particularly regarding the landscape : feats of daring and bravery: chivalry, belief in supernatural charms and magic woman worship etc. Hence originally the word romantic signified the qualities in these semi-historical cycles such as far fetched and opposed to fact. In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the term connoted wild extravagant and improbable”. The diarists, Evelyn and Pepys, use it in this sense. Later in the eighteenth century the term romantic was used in the sense of Gothic i.e irregular, wild and fantastic.

It is strange that the poets now known as romantic poets such as Wordsworth Coleridge,

Byron, Shelley and Keats did not call themselves romantic. This term was attached to them later in the nineteenth century itself. Wordsworth considered romantic as something “extravagant and even undesirable.”

In modern English usage generally four distinct meanings of the term are found – (1) As opposed to commonplace: Imaginative, remote from experience and everyday life, visionary, expressing vague longings away from the ordinary (2) As opposed to probable : fanciful, fantastic, pertaining to a dreamy fairyland (3) As opposed to the literal: mystic, symbolic, unseen and (4) As opposed to formal : grand, picturesque, passionate, irregularly beautiful.

### **Characteristic of Romanticism (Romanticism vs. Classicism)**

The term Romanticism has generally been understood and interpreted in terms of characteristics it has or in contrast to classicism. If classicism suggests objectivity, outer experience, universal values, feeling of inadequacy excessive egoism (including perssivism) impulse to adventure spirit of revolt, thirst for freedom etc.

**The Romantic Revival:** The history of Romanticism is quite old. Aristotle and Plato were romantic. Rousseau and Victor Hugo were also romantic. The Medieval romances were also romantic. The Elizabethan Literature was truly romantic. All the major qualities enumerated in the proceeding paragraph were present in the literature of the Elizabethans.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, there was a new dawn. The teachings of Rousseau, Voltaire and Montesquieu and the French Revolution heralded a new age. Once more a new vista opened out before imagination. A new territory of human life was discovered. Liberty Fraternity and Equality sounded like the tolling of a bell ushering a golden age. Mother Earth was discovered a new. Under these new impulses was revived in literature something of that hopefulness that sense of wonder and mystery that restlessness and curiosity etc. that characterized the Elizabethan literature. Not only the spirit but also the forms and subjects of the Elizabethan literature were revived again between 1798 and 1824 –the Sonnet the lyric, the pastoral the black verse drama the Spenserian stanza, the ballad. The same fullness of imagination richness of languages, vastness of conception lyricism and picturesqueness which pervaded the great Elizabethan works is to be found in romantic poetry. Hence the period between 1798 and 1824 is known as the period of the Romantic Revival of Poetry.”

**Romantic Revolt:** Historically, the Romantic Revival of poetry was a revival of the Elizabethan traditions and a revolt against the non classical traditions of the eighteenth century. The classicism of the age of Anne was of a special type. It was more Latin than Greek and more French than Latin. The literary taste of Europe was fashioned by France. Malhebe and Boileau the French critics insisted upon cultivating simplicity, clarity, propriety decorum moderation and above all, good sense. They applied the percepts of Aristotle as codified by Hoarce and Longinus to modern conditions. German and English literature was under the influence of Moliere, Racine and Boileau for over a century. English authors like Waller, Cowley and Etherege had come under their influence during Charles II’s exile in France.

The eighteenth century literature was classical in its, self restraint its objectivity and its lack of curiosity. It was not simply a literature of the world but of this world of high life, fashionable society, the court and the town the saloons and clubs coffee houses and ombre parties.

But the Romantics revolted against all these. The poetic diction was the first casualty at the hands of Romantics. Wordsworth exposed the hollowness of the classical manner and made a plea for

a return to simple, unaffected and direct speech. He and Coleridge removed the sphere of poetry from social to philosophical reflection. For moral generalizations they substituted introspective analysis of the impressions of the individual mind. Literature became personal instead of being social. Shelley and Byron were great revolutionaries. Literary characters are frequently solitaires : haunted like the Ancient Mariner who must tell his tale : self exiled like Childe Harold : woe be gone like the Knight in La Belle Danme sans Merci steering strangely to death like Alastor. The classical poet lived in the present : the Romantics looked before and after and pined for what was not. Passion and emotion was reinfused into poetry. The poet of the early nineteenth century revolted against the narrow civic sense and parochialism of the classical school. For Pope the proper study of mankind was man in London. The Romantics love of man embraced the whole human race. Liberty equality fraternity was their slogan. In theory as well as in practice, they were firm believers in cosmopolitanism. Byron died for a country to which he had no national attachment : Shelley was more at home in Italy, and Keats was of no nation whatever.

Hence, Romantic poetry is known as the poetry of Romantic Revolt too. All the characteristics of Romantic poetry mentioned above predominate in the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron Shelley and Keats. They were contemporaries or near contemporaries.

Romanticism was a revival of the spirit of the medieval romances. It was a reaction against the Aristotelian traditions which has laid paramount stress on the reign of reason and the importance of form. Simultaneously it was a reaction against the pseudo classicism or formalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Romantic then could mean emotional fervor appetite for experience escapism of one or another kind and freedom from the shackles of tradition (in the choice of themes in the use of words in rhyme in metre) – a revolution in poetics parallel to the social and political revolution in France. According to Schiller subjectivity was the keynote of Romantic poetry. Romanticism was the renaissance of wonder or to use Pater’s phrase it was the addition of strangeness to beauty.

Romantic suggests subjectivity inner experience personal values feeling of inadequacy excessive egoism (including pessimisms) impulse to adventure spirit of revolt thirst for freedom and Classicism likewise could suggest objectivity outer experience, universal values, feeling of broad acceptance of the existing order sense of detachment, preference for quiet, poise and conformity.

The Romantic Revival accentuated Predominance of emotional life, promoted or directed by the exercise of imaginative vision. Romantic Revival took place because a minor Renaissance was touching almost whole of the Europe in the later stages of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the spirit of reformation in England was going deeper.

The following were the noteworthy revivals during this period- The Spenserian revival Miltonic revival, mediaeval revival and the Ballad revival.

Burns, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott Byron, Shelley and Keats were the important writers of the age of the Romantic revival. Wordsworth and Coleridge are of paramount importance as they are supposed to have led the movement.

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### 15.3 Historical Background

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**Historical Summary:** The period we are considering begins in the latter half of the reign of George III and ends with the accession of Victoria in 1837. When on foggy morning in November 1783 King George entered the house of Lords and in trembling voice recognized the independence of the

United States of America, he unconsciously proclaimed the triumph of that free government by free men which had been the ideal of English Literature for more than a thousand years; though it was not till 1832 when the Reform Bill became the law of the land, that England herself learned the lesson taught her by America and became the democracy of which her writers had always dreamed.

The half century between these two events in one of great turmoil yet of steady advance in every department of English life. The storm center of the political unrest was the French Revolution that frightful uprising which proclaimed the natural rights of man and the abolition of class distinction. Its effect on the whole civilized world is beyond computation. Patriotic clubs and societies multiplied in England all asserting the doctrine of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, the watchwords of the Revolution.

The causes of this threatened revolution were not political but economic. By her inventions in steel and machinery and by her monopoly of the carrying trade England had become “the workshop of the world. Her wealth had increased beyond her wildest dreams but the unequal distribution of that wealth was a spectacle to make angels weep. The invention of machinery at first threw thousands of skilled hand workers out of employment in order to protect a few agriculturists heavy duties were imposed on corn and wheat and bread rose to famine prices just when laboring men had the least money to pay for it. There followed a curious spectacle. While England increased in wealth, and spent vast sums to support her army and subsidize her allies in Europe, and while nobles, landowners, manufacturers and merchants lived in it creating luxury a multitude of skilled laborers were clamoring for the work. Fathers sent their wives and little children into the mines and factories where sixteen hours labor would hardly pay for the daily bread; and in every large city were riotous mobs made up chiefly of hungry men and women. It was this unbearable economic conditions and not any political theory, as Burke supposed, which occasioned the danger of another English revolution.

Smith was a Scottish thinker who wrote to uphold the doctrine that labor is the only source of a nation’s wealth and that any attempt to force labor into unnatural channels, or to prevent it by protective duties from freely obtaining the raw materials for its industry is unjust and destructive. Paine was a curious combination of Jekyll and Hyde, shallow and untrustworthy personally but with a passionate devotion to popular liberty. His Rights of Man, published in London in 1791, was like one of Burn’s lyric outcries against institutions which oppressed humanity.

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## **15.4 Literary Characteristics of the Age**

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It is intensely interesting to note how literature at first reflected the political turmoil of the age and then when the turmoil was over and England began her mighty work of reform, how literature suddenly developed a new creative spirit which shown itself in the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats and in the prose of Scott, Jane Austen, Lamb and De Quincey – a wonderful group of writers whose patriotic enthusiasm suggests the Elizabethan days and whose genius has caused their age to be known as the second creative period of our literature.

The essence of Romanticism was, it must be remembered that literature must reflect all that is spontaneous and unaffected in nature and in man, and be free to follow its own fancy in its own way.

In Coleridge we see this independence expressed in “Kubla Khan” and “The Ancient Mariner,” two dream pictures one of the populous Orient, the other of the lonely sea. In Wordsworth this literary independence led him inward to the heart of common things. Following his own distinct as Shakespeare does, he too

Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks

Sermons in stones and good in everything.

And so, more than any other writer of the age, he invests the common life of nature and the souls of common men and women with glorious significance. These two poets Coleridge and Wordsworth, best represent the romantic genius of the age in which they lived, though Scott had a greater literary reputation and Byron and Shelley had larger audiences.

The second characteristic of this age is that it is emphatically an age of poetry. The previous century with its practical outlook on life, was largely one of prose but now as in the Elizabethan Age, the young enthusiasts turned as naturally to poetry as a happy man to singing. The glory of the age is in the poetry of Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Moore and Southey. Of its prose works, those of Scott alone have attained a very wide reading, though the essays of Charles Lamb and the novels of Jane Austen have slowly won for their authors a secure place in the history of our literature. Coleridge and Southey (Who with Wordsworth form the trio of so-called Lake Poets) wrote far more prose than poetry and Southey's prose is much better than this verse. It was characteristic of the spirit of this age, so different from our own, that Southey could say that in order to earn money he wrote in verse what would otherwise have been better written in prose."

#### **Characteristics of Romanticism:**

An analysis of the definitions of Romanticism reveals the following characteristics:

- I. **Mystery:** The subtle sense of mystery, "says Ricketts" is found on analysis to be a complex emotion compounded of awe in the presence of the unknown wonder in the presence of the known and an exquisite response to manifestations of beauty wherever they may be found that we may call for want of a better word – Rapture. "The romantic spirit seeks the strange and the mysterious and reveals the wonder of things removed from real life. According to the romantics, there are more things in heaven and earth than are perceived in the ordinary course of life, and it is this feeling that arouses their curiosity in the unearthly and the supernatural Coleridge described the feeling of wonder and mystery in the supernatural and Wordsworth revealed the inherent mystery in the common objects of nature and human life. Shelley spiritualized nature.
- II. **Interest in the Past:** The romantics sought to get away from the pressure of present reality and to find modes of deliverance from the dead weight of routine. So they looked to the past for the past was remote from present reality and it is remoteness and distance that lends a wonder and enchantment to the panorama of life. The Romantics went back especially to the middle ages, for according to Pater it is in the Middle Ages that there are unworked sources of romantic effect of a strange beauty to be won by strong imagination out of things unlike or remote. Rickett says it was the element of mysticism in medieval life that appealed heightened by the passage of time and the unlikeness of life then to life under modern conditions.
- III **Love of Nature:** The Romantics discovered a new beauty and wonder in the world of nature. The Romantic poets were all lovers of nature; they minutely observed nature in all her aspects and expressed in poetry their emotional reactions to her beauty and magic. Wordsworth was the first of the Romantics to discover a new wonder in nature. Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats – all loved nature and represented her beauty and grandeur from different points of view.

“Wordsworth found brooding and tranquillizing thought that at the hear of Nature; Shelley an ardent and persuasive love. In other words, they spiritualized nature.” Keats was content to paint the sensuous beauty of nature.

- IV. **Interest in Inhumanity:** The Romantics took great interest in humanity and dealt with the lives of common men and women. It was the essential character of man as man that interested them. Their hearts overflow with sympathy for the poor and the downtrodden. They glorify the innocence and simplicity of the common man. They find the divine in man, plead for his emancipation from all bondage and claim equal rights and liberties of for the humblest. The humanitarian philosophy of Rousseau and the ideal of French Revolution spearheaded the democratic movement. The doctrines of freedom equality and brotherhood inspired the poets of this age. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Byron were humanists.
- V. **Love for the Elemental Simplicities of Life:** Romanticism is characterized by an instinct for the elemental simplicities of life. Rousseau’s call return to nature was part of a larger naturalism that sought to bring people back to the bosom of nature and reclaim us from superfluous conventions. As a result of this we got the idealizing of childhood by Blake and Wordsworth and of simple unsophisticated natures by Burns Wordsworth and Coleridge.
- VI. **Freedom of Imagination:** Imagination is the cardinal characteristic of romanticism. It is the freeing of unfettering of passions or emotions in art and letters. The artist is not bound down by any law apart from the law prescribed by the law of his own artistic genus. It is a revolt against the stereotyped conventions of art and gives a free play to imagination. According to Ricketts Romanticism generally speaking are the expressions in terms of art of sharpened sensibilities and heightened imaginative feeling.
- VII. **Subjectivity and Spontaneity:** The Romantics were concerned not so much with the external facts of life as with their own feelings and emotions. Poetry to them was the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. It is the poet’s own emotions that funds expression in his poetry.
- VIII. **Speculative and Inquisitive Tendency:** According to Ricketts, Romanticism induces a speculative and inquisitive turn of mind. Besides the expression of the heightened sensibility of the imagination a strong undercurrent of the speculative intellectual power underlies the best works of Wordsworth, Coleridge Shelley and Keats. Wordsworth’s theory of poetry and poetic diction. Shelley’s transcendentalism and Coleridge’s critical theories are permeated with inquisitiveness and sharp intellectual quality. Even the charge of vagueness against Shelley’s poetry is not acceptable. Shelley’s philosophy of nature is perfectly clear and consistent and in his fines lyrics such as *The Cloud* and *The West Wind* there is a logical power of development and when the poet is so disposed a scientific accuracy that is so often overlooked by the slovenly reader.
- IX. **Regeneration of Poetic Style:** Poetic style acquired a rich variety in the hands of the Romantics. Ricketts writes: Nowhere is the intellectual curiosity of Romantics better shown than in the regeneration of English Poetic style. Their interest in the past led them to experiment with old meters and poetic forms. The heroic couplet of the eighteenth century gave place to various stanza forms. The Spenserian stanza the ballad the blank verse, the lyric, the ode and the sonnet were all revived. The metrical peculiarities of the old ballad gave fresh inspiration to great poets like Coleridge and Keats. A richness in language and a variety in metrical forms created a new

melody in English Poetry. Wordsworth with his simple and natural style, Coleridge with his wonderful music. Byron with his vigorous and oratorical style, Shelley with his rich harmonies, and Keats with his picturesque word painting – gave to English poetry a style, which is unique in its range and sweep as well as in its grace and movement.

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## 15.5 Main Poets of the Age

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**Wordsworth** is rightly considered one of the greatest poets of the world. He along with Coleridge gave a new direction to English Poetry in the early part of the nineteenth Century. He was one of the leaders of the Romantic Movement in English Poetry. He was primarily a poet of nature. Nature for Wordsworth was like God and it is through nature that man could come near him. Nature exercised on him from his very birth a very happy influence. She saved him from misanthropy in the dark days that followed the French Revolution. He has sung nature's praises. He delighted not only in the external forms of nature. She had a spiritual meaning for him. He thought that nature had several lessons to teach humanity. His understanding of nature was so great that Arnold has remarked that nature herself seems to snatch the pen from his hand and write for him with her own sheer penetrating power.

The greatest merit of Wordsworth's poetry consists in its absolute purity of expression. At his best he has few superiors. He is not so musical a poet but the crystal clearness of his words and the absolute purity of his sentiment are impressive. He liberated English poetry from the artificiality of language. He held that the language of poetry must not be different from the language of daily speech. Some of his poems are very effective for the simplicity of their language.

Wordsworth's poetry is characterized by high seriousness, wide sympathy and meditative calm. He had always a message for humanity. He is distressed at the gross materialism of his age. His noblest teaching is that man finds true joy and peace if we expose ourselves to the elevating influence of nature. Wordsworth was a poet of sympathy. He found beauty and grandeur even in the lives of humble people. The smallest bird or the meanest flower could give him great thoughts. Many of his most moving poems are about the poor and down trodden people. Wordsworth was also a meditative poet. His view that poetry is emotion recollected in tranquility as too well known. He tells us of the primary affections and instincts and the power of soul which can attain philosophic calm by seeing through the life of things. It has already been said that his poetic was marked by simplicity and naturalness. This simplicity is great strength of his poetry and it is a simplicity of expression not a simplicity of thought. He could utter difficult things in the simplest of words. He shook the influence of the classical school and deliberately attained simplicity and purity of style. Wordsworth was in a way a complete innovator. He looked at things in a new way.

There are certain limitations of Wordsworth as a poet. The most notable is the inconsistency of style. He wrote a great deal but all of it is not of the same quality. He rises to great poetic heights at times. But at other times he is very dull and prosaic. There are sudden transitions from lines of peculiar felicity to a style that is mediocre. Secondly Wordsworth is obsessed with himself. He is self-conscious and always carries the burden of his message about him. He lacks in the spirit of detachment. He attaches too much importance to details in which he is interested. This leads him to indulge in trivialities. His range as a poet was narrow. He cared for rustic people. There is an absence of passionate love in his poems. He had not dramatic power. Moreover Wordsworth knew only peaceful aspects of nature. He had no idea of the fierce struggle for existence going on in nature. Moreover his

poetry is often stiff and formal and lacks humor. His want of humor is mainly responsible for the long dull and flat passages in his poetry.

In spite of all these deficiencies, Wordsworth remains one of the major figures in the history of English poetry. In our own time we have seen a revival of interest in Wordsworth. It has been realized that this poetry can act as a healing balm for the various ills of human life. He taught men to be reconciled to their fates and seek solace in nature. Nature was the great teacher. Wordsworth never tries of repeating that in nature is the panacea for all the ills of human life.

### **S.T. Coleridge (1772-1834)**

His most outstanding contribution to romantic poetry is his treatment of the supernatural. When Coleridge Wordsworth wrote the *Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge took the supernatural as his field and undertook to naturalize it. In other words his aim was to make the supernatural appear natural. His *The Ancient Mariner* fulfills this aim. Coleridge has achieved his object by skillfully blending the real and the fantastic by giving us a detailed description of the voyage so as to give the whole a diary like air by interspersing the poem with pictures of Nature, by giving a convincing picture of the mariner's mind and its torture and by introducing a moral. He has written two other poems of magic (***Christabel and Kubla Khan***). He is considered the greatest poet of the supernatural in English literature. His supernaturalism is suggestive, psychological and refined not crude and sensational like that of Scott. He excels in writing dream-poetry (*Kubla Khan*). It is this quality in his poetry by virtue of which it fulfills the definition of romanticism as "the renaissance" of wonder.

**His love of Nature:** Coleridge is also romantic because of his deep love of Nature. His love for Nature makes him give us beautiful pictures of it in *The Ancient Mariner* and in the opening lines of *The Aeolian Harp*. His attitude to nature in his early poems (like *Frost at Midnight* and *The Aeolian Harp*) is much the same as Wordsworth's. In other words he too thinks Nature to be a living being sees a Divine Spirit pervading the objects of nature and believes in the moral and educative influence of Nature upon man. Later on he modified his attitude to nature and believed that we interpret the moods of nature according to our own moods.

**His Sensuousness:** Many passages in Coleridge's poetry appeal to our senses. Sensuousness is a romantic quality as it shows a love of beauty. Coleridge shows this quality in *The Ancient Mariner* chiefly in his love of color-the ice is green as emerald; the water snakes move in tracks of shining white and they are blue glossy green and velvet black.

### **His Medievalism**

His medievalism too makes him romantic. *The Ancient Mariner* is wrought with the glamour of the Middle Ages.

Coleridge is romantic by virtue of his humanitarianism too. Like Wordsworth, he dreams of the political regeneration of mankind and had a great enthusiasm for the French Revolution though its cruelty later repelled him.

Coleridge's poetry is the most finished, supreme embodiment of all that is purest and most ethereal in the romantic spirit.

### **John Keats (1795-1827)**

Of all the great poets of the early nineteenth century, John Keats was the last born and the first

to die. He was the son of Thomas Keats a west country head ostler in a livery stable and was born prematurely on the 29<sup>th</sup> or 31<sup>st</sup> October 1795 at Finsbury, London. He was the eldest of the five children of his father- four boys one of whom died in infancy and a girl, the youngest of all. His father Thomas was a shrewd, careful man of business his mother's lively young woman fond of enjoyment, he was brought up amid surroundings by no means calculated to awaken poetic genius.

At first, John and his brothers George Keats and Tom Keats were educated at a less expensive private school run by Rev. John Clarke at Enfield near London, where he remained for six years, without showing any signs of special interest in intellectual things. But being high spirited affectionate and skilled in outdoor exercises he was distinguished more for fighting than for study and his bright brave generous nature his fits of vehement passions rapid changes of mood and extreme sensibility made him popular with masters and boys.

During his last two years at school, Keats had developed a great enthusiasm and love for literature, which remained unabated during his four years of apprenticeship and he spent all his leisure during this period in reading books of literature and translating Virgil's Aeneid into English prose.

His reading of Homer's poems revealed to him a vast unexplored treasure of mythology and wonder. In 1817, Keats published the first little volume of poems, including *Sleep and Poetry* and it was dedicated to Leigh Hunt. The sonnet of dedication was hurriedly dashed off and not a word of the first draft was altered. There is much in this volume, which strikes the key note of the typical in Keat's later work. There are many memorable lines and touches of his unique insight into nature. Yet the volume showed considerable immaturity and was anything but a success. It was criticized, but far from being undiscouraged. Keats knew his faults better than the critics and felt his power to outgrow them. In 1818, he finished his *Endymion* which was violently attacked by critics, although in its preface he had explained its imperfection.

Keats knew very little of Latin and no Greek, and all his knowledge of classical stories, which he loved and constantly used came to him from his reading of Chapman's translations of Homer's *Iliad* etc.

On his return to London, he and his brother Tom took lodgings at Hampstead. Here he stayed for sometime worried by the illness of Tom. The departure of his brother George to seek his fortune in America depressed Keats spirit all the more. Moreover immediately after his undue strain in completing his *Endymion* he completed *Isabella*. The first few months of 1819 were the most fruitful of his life. Besides working of *Hyperion* which he had begun during Tom's illness, he wrote *The Eve of St. Agnes*, *The Eve of St. Mark*, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, and almost all his famous odes.

In February 1820, before the completion of *Hyperion* and *The Cap and Bells* a satire he had an attack of illness which gave the first definite sign of consumption. On the evening of Thursday February 3, he came home in high fever caused by his careless exposure while driving on a very chilly day. As soon as he lay in bed he coughed and spat blood. His medical knowledge was sufficient to diagnose his disease. Brown quotes Keat's own words on that occasion: "It is arterial blood. I cannot be deceived in that colour that drop of blood is my death warrant: I must die." He lived for another year but he himself called it his posthumous life. He was already the victim of consumption.

His first volume of poetry published in the first month of his illness was highly admired by reviewers and the public.

According to Keat's own will, the words to be inscribed on his tomb stone were to be "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." But Keat's works are sufficient to belie these words. He left a deep mark on English poetry. His name was certainly not writ in water. Keats has enjoyed immense popularity ever to since his death. His first memorial was in the parish church of Hampstead on July 16, 1894. In 1909 the house where he died was declared as Keats Shelley memorial. Keats Museum was opened in 1931.

### **Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)**

Sir Walter Scott, the father of the historical novel in English literature, represents the romantic love for the revival of the past especially that of the middle ages, in English poetry. In his early life he developed a passion for the ballad poetry of his land and he spent many days of his youth roaming over the country gathering ballads and scraps of ballads from the lips of peasants. He became interested in German Romantic literature and translated some of the German ballads. He was also influenced by Percys Reliques. His first collection was published as *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* in 1802-03.

In the layoff the last *Minstrel* (1805) there is much more originality. In it a thread of Gothic supernaturalism is woven into a tale of Scottish Border life in the middle Ages. It was a great and instant success and was quickly followed up with *Marmion* (1808). Next came *The Lady of the Lake* (1810) which is remarkable for picturesque ness and the effective use of the wild scenery of the Trossachs.

### **George Gordon Lord Byron(1788-1824)**

Born in 1788, Lord Byron inherits from his parents that irritable and volcanic character which repeatedly brought him into conflict with men and things. He succeeded to the family title at the age of ten. He was educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge where he obtained M.A. degree. He published his first collection of poems *Hours of Idleness* in 1807, which was ferociously attacked by the Edinburgh Review. The poems in this volume contained nothing important. Byron replied to this attack in a vigorous satire, *English Bards and Scottish Poets*. It is modeled upon Pope but it lacks the polish and refinement of Pope's satires. He widely toured the continent in 1809-11 and visited Portugal Spain Gibraltar, Malta, Greece and Asia Minor. This tour inspired the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* which were published in 1812. In it he combines vivid descriptions of the places he had visited with historic memories and much melancholy meditation on the instability and transience of human grandeur and power. These two cantos were immensely popular. Byron said "I woke up one morning and found myself famous. He now began to write romances which were inspired by Scott's poems with great rapidity. These poems are *Minerva* (1812) *The Waltz* (1813) *The Giaour* (1813) *The Bride of Abydos* (1813) *The Corsair* (1814) *Lara* (1814) *Hebrew Melodies* (1814) and *Parisina*.

In Venice he completed the third canto of *Childe Harold* in 1816. He spent the remainder of his life on the continent and it was during these years of exile that he produced his greatest work – *Manfred*, *Cain* and the unfinished *Dan Juan*.

In the end Byron was weary of everything – of fame, of poetry and even of himself. He dedicated himself to the cause of Greece then struggling for freedom against the Turks, took the field and died in 1824 of a fever at Missolonghi before he had completed his thirty seventh year.

- i. **His strong Individuality:** Of all the great poets of England Byron is the most subjective. In everything that he writes it is his own self that he tries to express itself and the different

personages of his poems are but the various aspects of the poet's own personality.

- ii. **His Wit and Satire:** Edward Albert Writes: His satirical power is gigantic. In the expressions of his scorn, a kind of sublime and reckless arrogance he has the touch of the master. *Don Juan* is Byron's comprehensive satire upon modern society.
- iii. **His love of Nature:** Rickett writes: Lacking the intensity of Wordsworth the subtlety of Coleridge the receptivity of Keats the aerial fire of Shelley, Byron possessed a breadth and vigour of imagination beyond that of any contemporary. Nowhere is this more agreeably illustrated than in his love of nature. In his love he is at one with the Romantic poets, and he expresses it quite in his own particular way there is no meditative musing little sense of mystery but a very live sense of wonder and delight in the energizing glories of nature.
- iv. **His interest in the Present:** Byron is a romantic poet with a difference. Like Scott, Coleridge and Keats he is not a poet of the past but of the present. His poetry is characterized by a strong practicality and a vivid sense of the present.
- v. **Passion for Liberty and Rebellious Spirit:** Byron is a superb poet of liberty and revolution. As a revolutionary poet he represents the destructive side of the revolutionary movement only. Of its Utopianism and social aspirations he knows nothing. He had no faith in the older order and in many places he forces merciless ridicule as in the brilliant vision of judgment he pours merciless ridicule upon the spent forces of the ancient feudalism and monarchy. But he had no new faith to offer the world in place of the old, and his philosophy ends in blank negation."
- vi. **His Lyricism:** Byron's lyrical gift is disappointingly meager. Some of his lyrics are merely sentimental. Of his lyrics it may be said that while lacking the elusive delicacy of Shelley, and the noble distinction of Wordsworth they have nonetheless a tilting charm and gracious music of their own.
- vii. **His Style Poetic style:** Byron has a unique distinction of its own. An ardent admirer of Pope he was greatly influenced by the poetic diction, personification and conventional epithets of the eighteenth century.
- viii. **Byron's Place in Literature:** Byron was one of the greatest romantic poets. He was indisputably one of the chief forces who made a breach for romanticism in the fortress walls of custom and prejudice.

### **P.B. Shelley (1792-1822)**

His Life and Works, P.B. Shelley, the eldest son of Sir Timothy Shelley, was born at Field Place in Sussex on August 4, 1792. In 1804, at the age of twelve, he was sent to Eton Public School. He was an uncommon boy violent in his likes and dislikes. He was gentle and courteous. He was physically fragile but he could flare up with fury at the sight of tyranny. He frequented graveyards studied alchemy and read books of dreadful import. From Eton he went up to Oxford in 1810. He was now revolutionary in spirit and was bitterly opposed to the existing state of society. He wrote a pamphlet, entitled *The Necessity of Atheism* which caused considerable friction with the authorities of the University. It caused him to be expelled from the University. He left Oxford for London with the impression that the world was against him and a determination from henceforth to be against the world.

During these years last he wrote *Queen Mab* (1813) and *Alastor* (1815). Shelley spent the last

four years (1818-1822) mostly in Italy and this period was most prolific in his career. In 1819 he composed the great lyric drama, *Prometheus Unbound* and some of his finest lyrics including the *Ode to the West Wind*, *To The Skylark* and *The Cloud*. The noble elegy, *Adonais* and *Empipsychidion*, appeared in 1821. On July 8, 1822 he was drowned in the sea.

- i. Revolutionary Idealism: Symons writes As a poet Shelley contributed a new quality to English literature – a quality of ideality freedom and spiritual audacity. The French Revolution which was a spent up force in Shelley’s boyhood influenced him by its great ideas. He was attracted by the abstract creed of Revolution- viz. the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity, and he completely ignored the concrete aspects – (viz. the horrors) of the Revolution.
- ii. Transcendentalism : Shelley was a transcendlist who was deeply influenced by Plato. Platonic ideal of love and beauty is beautifully expressed in his finest poetry. To Shelley Beauty and Love are identical. The essential basis of Shelley’s creed is that the universe is penetrated vitalized and made real by a spirit, which he conceived as Love or Beauty.
- iii. Shelley the Poet of the Future or Shelley the Poet of Visions or the Prophetic note in Shelley’s Poetry. Shelley’s Poetry has been called the fabric of visions – the vision of ideal beauty and love, or the vision of a regenerated world free from cruelty and hatred and oppression or the transcendental vision of the universal spirit of the one that remains.
- iv. Shelley, the Poet of Nature: Shelley like all great romantic poets, was an ardent lover of nature. The external beauty of nature appealed to him.
- v. Shelley, the Poet of Love: Shelley is great poet of love. Love according to him is the bond and sanction which connects not only man with man but with everything which exists. Love is an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action or person not our own.
- vi. Shelley’s Lyricism: As a lyric poet, Shelley is unsurpassable Swinburne writes: “He was alone the perfect singing god; his thoughts, words and deeds all sang together.... The master singer of our modern race and age, the poet beloved above all other poets-in one word and the only proper word divine.
- ix. Shelley’s poetic style and music: Shelley’s poetic style is romantic throughout. It is reflective of his nature and is full of uncontrollable passion and energy. He is never unpoetic as most poetic sometimes are. His style glows with passion and music soars up as soon as his imagination catches fire and image after image comes forth to clothes his ideas in poetry.

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## 15.6 Prose

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**General Characteristics-** The most important feature of the history of prose literature during the age of Wordsworth was the rise of modern review and magazine. The *Edinburgh Review* established in 1802 by Jeffrey, Sydney Smith and other prominent men of letters of the Whig Party was concerned with literature and politics. The *Quarterly* was started as the mouthpiece of Tory Party. William Gifford and Lockhart edited it with distinction. Blackwood’s *Edinburgh Magazine* was launched in 1817 by Wilson, Lockhart and Hoggy. It was followed by the distinguished *London Magazine* to which Lamb, Hazlitt, De Quincey, Allan Cunningham and Carlyle contributed. Another famous periodical of the same type *Fraser’s* was founded in 1830.

## **The Essayists**

We have seen, writes Rickett, that *The Spectator* and *The Tatler* fostered the essay and inaugurated its more intimate and familiar appeal and while the essay was reared under the protecting wing of journalism, it still retained its connection with the periodical during the next couple of decades. All great essayists of this period were contributors to magazines.

### **Charles Lamb (1775-1834)**

His *Life of all our English essayists*, says W.J. Long He (Lamb) is the most lovable partly because of his delicate old fashioned style and humor but more because of that cheery and heroic struggle against misfortune which shines like a subdued light in all his writings. Lamb was born in 1775 in London. He was educated at Christ's Hospital where he was a fellow pupil of S.T. Coleridge Lamb the son of a barrister's clerk became a clerk in the south sea house then in the India house where the remainder of his working life was spent. In 1796 occurred the terrible family tragedy which molded the whole of his life. There was a strain of madness in the family which did not leave him untouched is case of his sister Mary Lamb the curse was a deadly one. In September 1796 she murdered her mother in a sudden fit of madness and thereafter she had intermittent attacks of madness. Lamb devoted his while life to the welfare of his sister who often appears in his essays as Bridget Elia. After thirty years service he retired in 1825. He passed away in 1834.

**His Works:** Lamb wrote some poems of a charming nature. In 1807 he and his sister co authorized *Tales from Shakespeare*. His reputation as a critic rests on *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets, Who lived About the Time of Shakespeare* (1808). *Rosamund Gray* is Lamb's mild excursion into fiction. Lamb's *Adventures of Ulysses* is an Elizabethan version of the Homeric story. *Mrs. Leicester's school* was written conjointly with his sister. Lamb's dramatic experiments include *John Woodvil* (1802). On it he skillfully reproduces the Elizabethan diction. Lamb's dramatic verse has power and beauty but there is little dramatic imagination in telling the story. Lamb's first essay appeared in the *London Magazine* in 1820 under the name of Elia. The first volume of essays was published as *Essays of Elia* in 1823, and the second under the title *The Last Essays of Elia* in 1833. Lamb's essays are the finest in English prose.

**William Hazlitt (1778-1830)** Hazlitt was the son of a Unitarian minister and he spent most of his time in Shropshire. His meeting with Coleridge in 1798 was very significant. Under Coleridge's influence he became a great literary critic. He abandoned his ambition to become a painter in favor of a literary career. From 1814 until his death he contributed to the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Examiner* the *Times*, and *The London Magazine*.

Hazlitt's earliest writings consisted of miscellaneous philosophical and political works, which are of little interest today. His reputation rests on lectures and essays on literary and general subjects, all published between 1817 and 1825. Between 1828 and 1830 Hazlitt published an unsuccessful biography of Napoleon.

**Hazlitt's Critical Prose.** As a literary critic Hazlitt is remembered for his lectures on *Characters in Shakespeare's plays* (1817). *The English Poets* (1818), *The English Comic Writers* (1819), and *The Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*.

### **Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859)**

De Quincey is a voluminous writer of great versatility. He was capable of turning out an article

on almost any subject. His literary career started in 1821, with the first version of *The Confessions of an Opium Eater*. In this work he utilizes his early experiences and exhibits his fantastic imagination. In the *Dialogue of Three Templars* he displays that passion for logical analysis which is a distinctive of his genius as his fantasy. His descriptive and visualizing power finds expression in *Suspiria de Produnclis*.

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## 15.7 Novel

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**Scott** wrote historical novels with great haste and rapidity. His novels known as the *Waverley Novels* consist of twenty seven novels and five tales. Arranged in historical order they are as follows: Eleventh Century, *Count Robert of Paris*; Twelfth Century, *The Betrothed*, *The Talisman*, *Ivanhoe*, Fourteenth century, *Castle Dangerous*; fifteenth century, *The Fair Maid of Penrith*, *Quentin Durward*, *Annie of Geierstein*, sixteenth century, *The Monastery*, *The Abbot*, *Kenilworth*, *Death of the Laird's Jock*; Seventeenth century, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, *A Legend of Montrose*, *Woodstock*, *Peveril of the Peak*, *Old Mortality*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, *The Pirate*; the eighteenth century, *My Aunt Margaret's Mirror*, *The Black Dwarf*, *Rob Roy*, *The Heart of Midlothian*, *Waverley*, *Redgauntlet*, *Guy Mannering*, *The Highland Widow*, *The Surgeon's Daughter*, *The Tapscroft Chamber*, *The Two Drovers*, the nineteenth century *St. Ronan's Well*. Most of Scott's novels are historical in the sense that they include historical events and characters, though some like *Guy Mannering*. *The Antiquary* and *The Bride of Lammermoor* are private stories with historical background.

**Scott and the Historical Novel:** Sir Walter Scott, "the prophesier of things past", brought to the contemporary age interest in the past and with his own splendid gift of imagination he developed an almost a new genre, the historical novel. To the historical novel writes Edward Albee, he brought a knowledge that was not pedantically exact, but manageable, wide and bountiful. To the sum of this knowledge he added a life giving force, a vitalizing energy as insight and a general dexterity that made the historical novel an entirely new species.... It should also be noted that he did much to develop the domestic novel, which had several representatives in the *Waverley* series, such as *Guy Mannering* and *The Antiquary*.

**Gothic Element:** Despite his love for historical realism, Scott never freed himself from the influence of the marvelous. From *Waverley*, *Guy Mannering* and *The Antiquary* to *Castle Dangerous* there is not a single novel which is free from some ghost or hallucination, legend, omen, some vision prophesying disaster, some mystic sign, wonder, dream or obscure allusion to future events.

Jane Austen, the daughter of a Hampshire clergyman, was born in 1775 at Steventon. She was educated on sound lines at home./

Jane Austen's first novel, *Pride and Prejudice* (Written in 1796-97 and published in 1813) deals with men and manners and it is a fine example of domestic comedy. *Sense and Sensibility* (1797-98, published in 1811) is another fine example of domestic comedy. *Northanger Abbey* (1798, published in 1818) is a burlesque of the Radcliffian horror novel. Her three novels *Mansfield Park* (1811-13, published in 1814), *Emma* (1815, published in 1816) and *Persuasion* (1815-16 published in 1818) appeared in quick succession. Her novels are all much the same, yet subtly and artistically different.

Austen died in 1817 in middle age.

### Characteristics of Jane Austen's Novels

Jane Austen's has been called "the pure novelist" who presents an authentic criticism of the

country society she knew so well within the limits of art. She did for the English novel what the Lake Poets did for the English Poetry – she simplified and refined it making it a true reflection of English life.

**Her limited Range:** Jane Austen represents in her novels the world that she knew and the influences that she saw at work. Her acquaintances included country families, clergymen and naval officers. The chief business of these people, as Austen saw them was attention to social duties. Their chief interest was matrimony. She represents this world in her novels.

**Her Sense of Comedy:** Jane Austen's novels are domestic comedies of a high order.

**Humour and Satire:** Jane Austen is a gentle humorist. She had a keen sense of the absurdities of men and women but she was never harsh or unkind.

**Love and Marriage in Jane Austen's Novels:** Love and marriage form an important element in Jane Austen's novels. Hers was a practical idealism. She was preoccupied with the subject of love and marriage. But her conception of a genuine union was higher than that of her fellow romantic novelists or sentimental enthusiasts.

**Characterization:** Jane Austen's art of characterization has not been excelled by any writer. Her special charm as a novelist lies, not in any greater insight into character but in the impracticality with which she individualizes and differentiates them. Her minute observation of men and women she knew imparted life likeness to her characters. She deftly reproduced those men and women whom she found crowding about her tea parties, her church gatherings her balls and she reproduced them for us with an unemotional fidelity sometimes a little cruel, but never unfair. All her characters are living breathing realities.

Jane Austen's writes, as we have seen, from the feminine point of view. She thus, feminized the English novel. We admire Jane Austen for her influence in bringing our novels back to their true place as an expression of human life. Jane Austen has won her way to a foremost place, and she will surely keep it.

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## 15.8 Let Us Sum Up

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- In this Unit We have discussed
- about the main characteristics of the Romantic Age
- prominent poets, essayists and novelist of the age.

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## 15.9 Review Questions

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1. What do you understand by the term 'Romanticism'?
2. What do you mean by 'Romantic Revival'?
3. What were the characteristic features of the Romantic Revival?
4. Name the important writers of the period?
5. What is Wordsworth's theory of poetry?
6. What is the fundamental difference between Classical and the Romantic poetry?
7. How did the French Revolution affect the romantic poetry?

8. Compare Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt?
9. What do you know about Lamb as an Essayist?
10. What do you know about Thomas De Quincey?

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### **15.10 Bibliography**

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1. Paul A. Cantor, *Creature and Creator: Myth-Making and English Romanticism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984.
2. George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981.
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## UNIT-16

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### GEOFF WARD:OVERVIEW OF THE ROMANTIC AGE -I

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#### Structure

- 16.0 Objective
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Geoff Ward: Preface to Romantic Literature from 1790-1830
- 16.3 About the Author
- 16.4 Overview of the Romantic Age
  - 16.4.1 Introduction
  - 16.4.2 Paradises Lost and Found
  - 16.4.3 The Second Generation
  - 16.4.4 William Blake
- 16.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.6 Review Questions
- 16.7 Bibliography

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#### 16.0 Objective

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After going through this unit you will be able to :

- Understand the main features of the writers /poets of romantic age.
- Know the characteristic of the poets' poetry
- The metaphysic of the imagination
- Important movement: Romanticism

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#### 16.1 Introduction

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As you have read in the earlier unit, the Romantic Movement has been the most prominent driving force behind the creativity of this age. In the earlier unit the tenets of romantic hypothesis as visualised by William Wordsworth has been explained to you. In this unit we are going to bring you very seminal essays by Geoff Ward that will give you not only the overview of the writers of this age but also their bent of mind and creative works. With the help of these two essays, you can attempt a critical understanding of the age.

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#### 16.2 Geoff Ward : Preface to Romantic Literature 1790-1830

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Most of the Bloomsbury Guides to English Literature covers period of at least a century. The bulk of the material covered by this guide was written between the late 1790s, when English Romanticism

may fairly be said to have begun, in the early poems of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and the early 1820s, when the deaths of Keats, Shelley and Byron brought the activities of the 'second generation' of Romantic Poets to an abrupt and premature end. The brief span of both these writers' lives and of the period itself take away nothing from the achievements of English Romanticism.

This multiplicity of approaches in the three essays, each of which was commissioned for this book, and each of which takes on a distinct topic within the period: drama, on the page and in performance; literature as, and as interpreted through, philosophy; women and the Gothic: and an Introduction that seeks to provide a possible overview of the period.

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### 16.3 About The Author

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Geoff Ward is a senior lecturer in English Literature at the University of Liverpool. He is the author of *Statues of Liberty: The New York School Of Poets, Language, Poetry and the American Avant-Garde* and many articles on romantic and modern poetry, most recently *House Breaking Apart in Slow Motion*.

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### 16.4 Overview of the Romantic Age

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#### 16.4.1 Introduction

'With what eyes these poets see nature!' William Hazlitt's exclamatory and admiring verdict on meeting William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, (and, as importantly, hearing them read their poetry aloud), encapsulates in precise and immediate terms the categories of pleasure and instruction through which 'these poets' entered and remain within the canon of English verse. The 'chant', the note of bardic exaltation which Hazlitt heard in Coleridge's voice in particular, sounded the liberation of poetry from the shackles of eighteenth-century convention. Henceforth, the tight couplets of Alexander Pope's verse, and his focus on 'What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed', would seem complacent and narrowly technical. The age of Pope and Samuel Johnson had been characterized by a self-doubting and frequently pessimistic retraction of artistic ambition, leaving satire as the only poetic channel for a relatively unfettered expression of energy. But now the ambition of poetry seemed limitless. The next thirty years would see the revival of blank verse, the epic, the ode, borrowed forms such as the Italianate *terza rima* and *ottava rima*, as well as more or less freshly invented forms such as Coleridge's conversation poem. Indeed, a poem such as *Frost at Midnight*, with its blend of philosophical complexity and everyday vocabulary, is emblematic of the confidence and range of English poetry in the period from 1798 to the deaths of Shelley and Byron in the early 1820s.

In his pathbreaking poem *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, the closing meditation of the collection written in collaboration with Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), Wordsworth wrote about landscape, and of its powers of healing and secular redemption through memory, in ways that paid more homage to both the workings of subjectivity and the features of Nature than the 'official', London-based poetry of the Augustan age would have thought either sane or desirable. Recreating a visit to the banks of the River Wye after a lapse of 'five summers', the poem's questing voice moves from description of 'mountain springs', 'lofty cliffs' and 'plots of cottage-ground' to more conceptualized sensations of being able to 'connect. The landscape with the quiet of the sky', and hence connect it with the mind. This is done with what may strike readers of today as a perfectly musical and smooth modulation. (In a not dissimilar way, the landscape paintings of John Constable, once so radical and

startling, now form a suburban cliché as mass-market prints.) But Wordsworth's poetry - at least in this early stage of his career - is above an a poetry of exploration and experiment, and even his most apparently premeditated disquisitions on the nature of identity are rarely without moments of surprised self-discovery and encounter:

These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and ,mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensational sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;

Gaining in both poignancy and potency from the lapse of years, the 'beauteous' forms' of cliffs, woods and water become not so much ambiguous as multi- directional, existing not only in the outer world but 'in the blood', and 'along the heart', as if that organ had its own mysterious coastline. The novelty of these lines (and of many key poems by Wordsworth) lies in their proposition & that the inner, personal world of bodily experience and subjective recollection matches the outer world in its complexity, beauty and depths. With this in mind, the statement by Hazlitt with which this essay begins can now be seen to be a formulation as much about 'eyes' as about 'Nature', as much about perception as landscape. This double focus animates Wordsworth's lines, and may indeed be a feature common to all Romantic poetry.

The shock of the new in Wordsworth's poetry may be hard to register in the 1990, when nostalgia for an unspoiled rural England, and the commercialization of that sentiment by the heritage industry, have co-opted the poet, as Constable's painting has been co-opted. The nostalgic and conservative reading of a painting such as *The Haywain* (1821) views it as the faithful representation of a real and beautiful scene from England's rural past, of a kind which has had to be sacrificed to the advances of industrialization and urbanization, but which can still be visited by car at weekends, and which proposes certain values (moderation, calm, respect for continuity and ritual) which serve the interests of our political masters, particularly at a time of economic instability and underlying disquiet. This kind of interpretation of English landscape painting brings its own agenda to bear on the work, but it is not conjured out of thin air; any viewer of Constable's paintings, like all readers of Wordsworth, must respond to a rendering of Nature so vibrant as to be empathetic, deciding in consequence whether that empathy has materialist, metaphysical or social implications.

Sometimes what we see or read here are examples of what John Ruskin would term in *Modern Painters* (1834) the 'pathetic fallacy', the attribution of human feelings or aspects to non-human subjects. A painting of an English elm by Constable, done around 1821, is structured as if it were a portrait. An even more dramatic humanization of Nature can be found in. the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich, or Johan Christian Claussen Dahl, about whose evocation of a birch tree in a storm the art critic Robert Rosenblum observed that 'branches almost appear to be the exposed nerves of a suffering creature'. Equally ecstatic and empathetic conjurations abound in Wordsworth's poetry, as in these famous lines from Book VI of. *The Prelude*:

The rocks that mutter'd close upon our ears,  
     Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside  
         As if a voice were in them, the sick sight  
         And giddy prospect of the raving stream,  
 The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,  
     Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light  
 Were all like workings of one mind, the features  
     Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;  
         Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
         The types and symbols of Eternity,

**Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.**

The first wave of English Romantic poetry, and the northern European landscape painters, share a tendency to return or even relegate human figures to the sphere of Nature, whose wild storms, immeasurable vistas of sky and sea, ceaselessly changing effects of light and cloud, down to the most delicately microscopic intricacies of leaves or the colours of flowers, announce cosmic and possibly God-given mysteries beyond the constrictions - the lack of vision - permitted by religious orthodoxy. Yet notice how in the case of these lines from *The Prelude*, the pathetic fallacy" the attribution of human speech to the non-human 'rocks' and 'crags', undoes and reverses its own ambition of harmonization and the reintegration of humanity into Nature. It is, after all, only by the imposition of the utterly human and linguistic notion of signifying meaning through 'Characters', 'types' and 'symbols' that the wild and incoherent landscape seen by Wordsworth in the Alps can be made to cohere. The strong biblical echoes of the climactic 'first, and last, and midst, and without end' speak of what is infinitely larger than human comprehension, but do so using terms that are perfectly humanly recognizable, and so supply a satisfactory and resonant 'end' to what was alleged to be endless.

Similarly, Friedrich's Romantic evocations of the beauty or endlessness of Nature, *Monk by the Sea* (1809) for example, or *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (1819), depict distinct consciousnesses, at least as firmly as they stage the re-entry of the human into the maternal embrace of Nature. To return John Constable's *Haywain* to this context is to divest it of late twentieth-century nostalgia, to turn it from commodified culture back into art, but then to see in it a contradiction, or at least a doubleness, that links it to both Friedrich and to Wordsworth. Constable's brushwork - exploratory, conspicuous, and variously textured - appeared shockingly modern - unfinished, as it were - in its time. It is precisely that quality that is most lost by mass reproduction, and that acts to separate both the painter and the viewer from any premature reinsertion of solitary human consciousness into the wider frame of Nature. Wordsworth had written in Tintern Abbey 'of all the mighty world / Of eye, and ear, - both what they half create / and what perceive;' and Constable's brushwork reminds us likewise of the primacy of perception, and the degree to which reality is given significance by human creativity and attention, an attention that may, finally, be solitary. The larger and more idealistic projects of Romanticism co-exist with the risk that any form of search for a larger frame than the single consciousness may undo itself, unmasked as a consolatory strategy in a world that ultimately begs questions but does not supply

answers.

And so there is much in the poetry of the English Romantic movement that is new, and that has to be granted its unconventionality and even its built-in contradictions, if it is to be read with clarity after the lapse of almost two hundred years. Yet, if the poetry is shockingly new, it is important to note in passing certain ways in which Romanticism draws for its intellectual resources on a partial return to previous models and procedures. These are frequently not only non-Augustan, but anti-Augustan in spirit. For example, by combining the hypnotic and driving rhythms of the ballad with luridly colourful imagery drawn from Gothic tales and his own more feverish imaginings, Coleridge took English poetry forward by taking it back. His early poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1788), like *Kubla Khan* and *Christabel* (both 1816), gained its novelty partly from a revivification of neglected and popular (that is, culturally low-grade) materials. Likewise, the rhetorical grandeur of Wordsworth's writing drew to some extent on the blank verse of Milton's *Paradise Lost* for its scope and intensity, leavening it with what Coleridge termed the 'divine chit-chat' of a less prophetic and more conversational poet, William Cowper.

In order to fashion itself, each age tends to denigrate the previous period; this is as true of Renaissance impatience with the benighted Middle Ages, or modernist disdain for Victorian pieties, as of the Romantic reaction against the supposed limitations of the eighteenth century. However, there has never been a major period of English literature in which the availability of literary forms drawn partly from the past coincided with the furious energies of a revolutionary present to produce a poetry so suddenly bold in scope, and wide-ranging in style. Hazlitt's reaction to the new poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge is therefore one of the Edenic moments in English poetry and criticism. Wordsworth's lines from Book X of *The Prelude*, 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive! But to be young was very heaven', may likewise stand both for his recollection of reactions to the French Revolution in its early, inspiring phase, and as a motto for the Romantic moment.

The term 'Romanticism' has a clear etymological proximity to the word 'romance', and, although there will be much in this Introduction and in the book as a whole to complicate and darken any too simple understanding of romanticism as the literary expression of idealism, it is worth beginning by paying heed to one of this period's dominant tones, the revolutionary hope for better world, articulated in a visionary poetry that asks us to look at the old world through new eyes.

#### **16.4.2 Paradises Lost and Found**

(An the major poems of the Romantic period, from William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (c 1790-1793) to Lord Byron's picaresque epic *Don Juan* (1818-24), are concerned with the accessibility or otherwise of a paradise. However, the Romantic paradise is only rarely identifiable as the Christian heaven. To Wordsworth, the paradisaical perception which poetry strives to investigate and hopefully revive is closely tied to an understanding of childhood as Edenic, but blurred and progressively less available to consciousness as time and decreasing energy take their toll. His ? *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* asks 'Whither is fled the visionary gleam? / Where is it now, the glory and the dream?' Such a privileging of the state of childhood runs quite contrary to eighteenth-century perceptions. It also diverges from, while using, Christian allegories and symbolism.

Wordsworth's relationship to Christianity appears to have been easy, in his own mind at least.

Although his poetry constantly utilizes the vocabulary of redemption and the healing of the soul through submission to a higher force, it does so through a secular version of the Protestant tradition of introspection, with its plain but confessional rhetoric of self-transformation; the poet wrote cheerfully to a clergyman who had questioned his devotion to Christ that he felt no particular need for a redeemer.

It is clear that, Coleridge, by contrast, strove in both his writing and his work as a lay preacher for an accommodation of his experience and his philosophical learning to orthodox Christianity, an accommodation severely, .. undermined by the intellectual discoveries of his poetry, no less than by his opium addiction. The introduction of the deity into the phenomenology of poems such as *Frost at Midnight* (1798) and *The Eolian Harp* (1796) seems dutiful and superfluous; Coleridge's most vital perceptions are coloured by fear, guilt and nightmare. Poems such as *The Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan* are so rich in symbolism as to repudiate any attempt to tie their meaning down to a single set of symbols. Coleridge's poetry is less successful when the poet is, paradoxically, mo able to formulate his beliefs clearly. This was certainly noticed by P.B. Shelley, whose poem *Mont Blanc* is (among its other activities) a critique of the belief-system underpinning an earlier poem by Coleridge, *Hymn Before Sun-Rise, in the Vale of Chamouni*.

Both poems are set in the vicinity of Mont Blanc, and take as their subject' the relationship between the awe-inspiring turbulence of the landscape, and the human mind, searching for clues to the organization and purpose of existence in a scene that seems to promise revelation while dwarfing the individual observer. In the case of Coleridge, exclamatory and strained rhetoric becomes the platform for a hierarchical and conventional, almost Sunday School, understanding of the mountainous earth reaching upward towards a deity in the sky:

Thou too again, stupendous mountain! thou  
That as I raise my head, awhile bowed low  
In adoration, upward from thy base  
Slow travelling with dim eyes suffused with tears. . .  
Great Hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,  
And tell the stars,. and tell yon rising sun  
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises GOD.

By contrast, Shelley visits the same scene to produce, in *Mont Blanc*, a text as complex, volatile and dense with activity as the landscape itself. Shelley has I none of the guilt and anxiety that pushed Coleridge into acquiescent piety. I Instead, his poem is a subtle but extraordinarily self-possessed disquisition on I the nature of the relationship between human perception and the 'universe of things around', which in a sense masters the landscape by using it to illustrate what are in effect a series of philosophical positions:

The everlasting universe of things  
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,  
Now dark - now glittering - now reflecting gloom-  
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs

The source of human thought its tribute brings  
Of waters, - with a sound but half its Own  
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume  
In the wild woods, among the mountains love,  
Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,  
Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river  
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

Mind and landscape mirror and echo each other, bring each other significance, as in Wordsworth's phenomenology. But if Wordsworth was led to muse reflectively on what is felt in the blood and felt along the heart, Shelley presents perception as a maelstrom. The individual mind may be 'a feeble brook', but the collective unconscious, the 'One Mind' as it would be conjured in *Prometheus Unbound*, is not only the equal of the external landscape, but what finally gives it significance. There is no God to Shelley, and the poem is atheist. (A more protracted analysis might show that even Shelley's most vehemently materialist writing is never without a mystical inflection; but it is never one that conforms to religious orthodoxy, *a' la* Coleridge.)

Yet Coleridge's strongest poetry is very far from reaching definite conclusions about the nature of existence, let alone firm religious belief. Doubly sub-titled 'A Vision in a Dream' and 'A Fragment', *Kubla Khan* is best read as a collage of delightful and unfathomable mysteries, in which the reader-interpreter can wander at will without ever reaching a conclusion. As with much of the engaging literary work from this period, open-endedness or multiple, even undecidable meaning, becomes an attraction and a virtue - perhaps even a form of realism, as the world after the French Revolution seemed less fathomable and more malleable than before.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.  
So twice five miles of fertile ground...  
With walls and towers were girdled round:  
And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills,  
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;  
And here were forests ancient as the hills,  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

The Orient in English literature (see Orientalism) tends to have been viewed ambiguously as despotic and barbarous, and therefore simpler than the West, and yet intricate, appealing to the senses,

a canvas on which desires repressed by occidental culture and morals could be luridly brought to life. Do the Khan's decrees issue therefore from an absolute power, used on this occasion for benign purposes related to art and the imagination? Is it significant that X stands at the end of the alphabet, A at the beginning, and K in the middle, when the poem appears to be concerned with the origins, ending and centre of life? Does the Khan's miniature world of walls and towers and gardens symbolize the compartments of the mind? (And if so, why 'twice five miles of fertile ground'? Does 'five have occult significance?')

Although the poem is only fifty-four lines long, what follows this - already exceedingly complex - opening takes the text in too many labyrinthine directions to be susceptible of neat analysis, in an essay of this length at least. Coleridge did nothing to solve the poem's mysteries by adding an account of its composition in an opium-reverie, in 'a lonely farmhouse between Porlock and Linton' in the West Country, after reading a seventeenth-century travel volume, *Purchases Pilgrimage*, and in particular these phrases: 'Here the *Kubla Khan* commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were enclosed with a wall.' So, that might account for the twice five miles. Coleridge stated that he composed (mentally) a poem between 'two to three hundred lines' in length, of which the fragment we have is all that he could commit to paper before some nameless 'person from Porlock' distracted the poet with mundane business, driving the delicate imagining of gardens of oriental delight clean out of his head. Unfortunately for Coleridge, modern scholarship has uncovered more than one draft of the poem, and the narrative has been proved untrue in other respects.

The poem, however, is in itself concerned with the fugitive and slippery nature of truth and knowledge, the disappearance of hard fact in fiction and dream, the inability of the wandering mind to envision a paradise other than in glimpses. All that Coleridge's explanatory narrative proves, finally, is that he did not know what he had got hold of. His poem had (whether through opium or not hardly matters) written itself; and no recourse to church and scripture could possibly accommodate its sinuous, oneiric puzzles, walled gardens and blind alleys. Just as Wordsworth's project to reintegrate human life into the larger world of Nature foundered on the very agent of reintegration, perception, stressing the reality of a solitary consciousness, so in Coleridge's poem the dreams dissolve into the pathos and vulnerable isolation of the single mind, haunted by dissolving palaces. 'A damsel with a dulcimer / In a vision once I saw': could the poet hear her song once more, he would construct the Khan's dream-dome and get back to the Garden, the oriental Eden of imagination released from moral stricture:

Could I revive within me  
Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,  
That with music loud and long,  
I would build that dome in air,  
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.

The final images convey great beauty in their figure of the Poet as the incarnation of capable imagination, a construction lent considerable pathos and in a sense undone by the tenses of these magnificent final lines: “twould”, ‘would’, ‘should’. They signify wistfulness, incapability, impotence. The vitality and effectiveness of the poem are complicated but far from diminished by the tragic shadow cast over its visions of paradise. This time it was Shelley’s turn to tread the same ground, but produce a weaker poem than Coleridge. His ‘West Wind’ ode uses key Coleridgean terms such as ‘dome’, ‘vaulted’, ‘burst’ and ‘towers’, and seeks to elevate the prophetic figure of the Poet to an unprecedented degree, but lacks the emotional dimension which is brought to *Kubla Khan* precisely through its failure to complete the projects it initiated. It might be concluded that while the paradise motif is, in some form or other, a feature of all key Romantic poems, the shadows cast over its attainability are as much the poetry’s final subject as its more positive, visionary and revolutionary elements. The explosion of creativity in English poetry at this period involves the articulation of dream, ‘. doubt and vertigo, at least as much as it does the expression of optimism and achievement.

It was Coleridge’s mixed gift and curse to be able to best illuminate the workings of human psychology through the drama of his own self estrangement and baulked creativity. If the most affecting moments in Coleridge’s poetry are to do with glimpsing visionary paradises and psychological hells (see Christabel in particular) his experience of writing was frequently purgatorial, a career of procrastination, unworkable projects and a reliance on the verbatim incorporation of the work of others that amounts to plagiarism. (The fullest treatment of these matters is still Norman Froman’s *Coleridge: The Damaged Archangel*, 1972. For an authoritative examination of Romantic poetry in relation to religious frames of thought, see M.H. Abrams’s *Natural Supernaturalism*, (1971.)

Thomas De Quincey’s conjurations of a visionary paradise are similarly unorthodox, and similarly conditioned by an unshakeable addiction to opium. As the author of *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821; revised 1856), De Quincey has become the most celebrated drug-user in the canon of English literature. In fact he drank the drug in the form of laudanum, a solution of opium in wine or brandy. It was hard to judge the dosage; editors who complained of the illegibility or absence of certain words in De Quincey’s manuscripts were not alluding to his mental state, directly; laudanum spilled from the wine glass he would have by him while writing was sufficiently acidic to burn through the ink. The author of the *Confessions* knew Coleridge well, though their relationship soured as De Quincey’s fortunes declined. Discussion of their shared addiction was circumspect, and coloured by self-delusion as well as incomplete knowledge; opium was commonly available in the nineteenth century as a panacea for a wide range of conditions, but its addictive properties were not properly understood. Curiously, and again like Coleridge, De Quincey defines his sense of self through the textuality of hallucination to a degree that suggests the author would have been a hypersensitive dreamer, had he never touched drugs. Texts and the life outside them chase each other at speed in the Romantic period, and it is impossible to establish whether De Quincey wrote a drug-induced literature, now called Romantic, or whether the literary influences he followed (being a devoted and early admirer of Wordsworth and Coleridge) would have pushed his writing in certain directions with or without the drug.

Either way, his conjurations of paradisaal flights of imagination in *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* are apt to turn hellish in an instant. The book is indebted to religious structures of thought, but the debt is complex and ironic. The daily ritual of opium-taking may have opened the doors to memory and imagination, but it was also a sinful and debilitating indulgence. The Confessions, as the title immediately suggests, both echo, parody and exceed in intellectual complexity those narratives of conversion such as those produced by sects like the Clapham Saints, of which the writer's mother was a member: 'Thou hast the keys of Paradise,' intones De Quincey, 'ob, just, subtle, and mighty opium!' Darkly witty, pedantically scholarly, suddenly acute in its proto-Freudian intuition of the importance of dreams, as labyrinthine and sonorous as a seventeenth-century sermon, revised and yet interminable, De Quincey's most important book is as orchidaceously peculiar as it is vital. In its way a spiritual autobiography, it resembles *The Prelude*, and in the mixture of drug-related orientalia, the terrors of the night and the pathos of the dreamer, it may be read as a prose sibling to Coleridge's more adventurous poems. The quotation that follows is long, of necessity:

*Many years ago, when I was looking over Piranesi's Antiquities of Rome, Mr Coleridge, who was standing by, described to me a set of plates by that artist, called his Dreams, and which record the scenery of his own visions during the delirium of a fever. Some of them (I describe only from memory of Mr Coleridge's account) represented vast Gothic halls: on the floor of which stood all sorts of engines and machinery, wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, catapult etc. etc. expressive of enormous power put forth and resistance overcome. Creeping along the sides of the walls, you perceived a staircase; and upon it, groping his way upwards, was Piranesi himself: follow the stairs a little further, and you perceive it come to a sudden abrupt termination, without any balustrade, and allowing no step onwards to him who had reached the extremity, except into the depths below. Whatever is to become of poor Piranesi, you suppose, at least, that his labours must in some way terminate here. But raise your eyes, and behold a second flight of stairs still higher: on which again Piranesi is perceived, by this time standing on the very brink of the abyss. Again elevate your eye, and a still more aerial flight of stairs is beheld: and again is poor Piranesi busy, on his aspiring labours: and so on, until the unfinished stairs and Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall - With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in dreams. In the early stage of my malady, the splendours of my dreams were chiefly architectural: and I beheld such pomp of cities and palaces as was never yet beheld by the waking eye, unless in the clouds.*

The central allusion is to the eighteenth-century engraver, Giovanni Battista Piranesi. The plates referred to as the 'Dreams' were in truth entitled 'Imaginary Prisons', and they show classical dungeons, rather than the distinctly Gothic architecture described by De Quincey. This is in the literary sense a heavily Gothic passage, however: it resembles the currently fashionable puzzle-drawings and *trompe l'oeil* labyrinths of M.C. Escher, as the figure of poor Piranesi appears and reappears in constant aspiring labour, but it has none of the cool interest in mathematics and draughtsmanship that underpins Escher's eye-catching conundrums. The passage is full of self-directed pathos, and the figure of Piranesi is clearly intended to reflect on the figure of Coleridge, both standing finally as versions of De Quincey, trapped in his own mind between paradisaal flights of aspiring imagination, and the Gothic 'malady' of his addiction to drugs and the fleeting dreams they bring. The mixture of orotundity, pathos, a sense of claustrophobic imprisonment coupled with sudden and dizzying release into the fantastic, is typical of his writing. But so is the psychological and analytical acuity: the Confessions is in many ways a theoretical work on the nature and importance of dreams. De Quincey is a 'second generation' Romantic

writer, who as a teenager had written an admiring letter to his hero, Wordsworth, and who in sense would always write within the parameters that the first generation had laid down. The next section will be concerned with the poets of the second generation, who variously prolonged, modified and questioned the tenets of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

### 16.4.3 The second generation

The importance of paradises lost and found runs through the major poetry of the three chief figures in what might be termed the second generation of Romantic poets, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and George Gordon, Lord Byron. Racking up phenomenal scores as a fornicator with both sexes in that earthly paradise, Venice, 'mad, bad, and dangerous to know' in the words of his equally wild ex-lover Lady Caroline Lamb, and the partial source for literary vampires from Polidori's Lord Ruthven to Stoker's Count Dracula, it was Byron whose conduct most publicly and flagrantly departed from Christian norms and ideals. Yet it is Byron whose poetic questionings of the beginnings and ends of human life are most apt to leave the door open to religious answers, though not to a religious faith. The rhetorical mode of *Don Juan* is of a predominantly comic scepticism, tinged with moments of sober doubt. His paradises tend to be exotic and geographical, such as the island in the poem of that name (a reworking of the story of Fletcher Christian's mutiny on 'The Bounty') or the far-flung locations of parts of *Don Juan*. (For a rereading of Byron's poetry that lays more stress on the proto-religious nature of his thinking, see Bernard Beatty's *Don Juan*, 1984.)

Byron was made famous by *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-18), a long and often sprawling poem in four Cantos, whose exotic locations and Hamlet-like musings on passion and mutability appealed by virtue of a turbulent self-centredness, characteristic of the time. As an image of alarm and fascination to the English imagination, the collective upheaval of the French Revolution had been replaced by the egotism and expansionist aims of Napoleon Bonaparte. Byron, the only Romantic poet to have a first-hand knowledge of armed conflict, was half-drawn to a figure he saw as fated, as tragic, yet as mastering a world of hard political actualities and the struggle for power. The more floridly rhetorical and dandyish passages in Byron have served to conceal a more sober and historically analytical intelligence with a distinctively British (and rather eighteenth-century) respect for hard fact. The ideological conflicts of his age are expressed through Byron's writing and his conduct; a libertine who had his daughter educated in a convent, a Regency fop with a liking for physically dangerous escapades, an aristocrat who backed popular uprisings. Most paradoxical of all, although the persona of the writing is the most bluff and British of the Romantic poets, it is Byron who immersed himself in European politics and culture and who has had perhaps more influence on the course of European writing than any other English poet since Shakespeare to the present day.

Byron's writing is inseparable from the figure of the man himself - or, rather, the man he invented as the Lord Byron he wished people to see. Darkly glamorous (if club-footed), exuding sexual magnetism (including an incestuous relationship with his half-sister Augusta), he was a product as well as a producer of literary genres: part Gothic, part neo-Augustan wit. Nothing in the world of *Don Juan* is safe from bathetic deflation, yet the hectic pace and love of the incongruous are tied to a sense of life's limitations and frailty:

I would to heaven that I were so much clay,  
As I am blood, bone, marrow, passion, feeling

Because at least the past were pass'd away  
And for the future - (but I write this reeling,  
Having got drunk exceedingly today,  
So that I seem to stand upon the ceiling)  
I say - the future is a serious matter  
And so - for Gods sake - hock and soda-water !

Byron was the most doubtful of the Romantic poets as to the value of what the first generation had done. Canto Three of *Childe Harold* does (as Wordsworth indignantly complained) rely in part on a Wordsworthian view of Nature; but this was due to Shelley's (temporary) influence. Byron was sceptical about revolution, and about any kind of ecstasy beyond the momentary loss of self in sex. More heartfelt than *Childe Harold's* verdict on Wordsworthian landscape are these cutting lines from *Don Juan*:

And Wordsworth, in a rather long 'Excursion'  
(I think the quarto holds five hundred pages)  
Has given a sample from the vastly version  
Of his new system to perplex the sages;  
'Tis poetry - at least by his assertion,  
And may appear so when the dog-star rages  
And he who understands it would be able  
To add a story to the tower of Babel.

This is wonderfully accomplished satire, however (deliberately) flip and callow; but it is also instructive, in a cautionary way. If we could go back in time, to interrogate Byron or Wordsworth, neither would understand the label 'Romantic'; the term stands for a historical-cum-critical mapping operation, that has more to do with the twentieth century than the highly individualistic standpoints from which these authors felt themselves to be writing at the time. then individualism is the cardinal tenet of Romanticism.

Not so much famous as infamous, (P.B. Shelley was Byron's friend but in many respects his antitype. Shelley prided himself on the observational accuracy of his poetry, be it in the meteorological aspect of his paean to revolution, Ode to the West Wind (1819), the domestic bric-a-brac of the urbane Letter to Maria Gisborne (1820), or the stormy landscape of Mont Blanc (1816). However, Shelley's preferred things are things on the move: wave-effects, clouds, dawn, things captured just as they are about to turn into something else:

Maidens and youths fling their wild arms in air  
As their feet twinkle; they recede, and now  
Bending within each others atmosphere,  
Kindle invisibly, and as they glow  
Like moths by light attracted and repelled,

Off to their bright destruction come and go,  
 Till like who clouds into one vale impelled,  
 That shake the mountains when their lightnings mingle  
 And die in rain - the fiery band which held  
 Their natures, snaps - while the shock still may tingle;  
 One falls and then another in the path  
 Senseless - nor is the desolation single,  
 Yet ere I can say where - the chariot hath  
 Passed over them - nor other trace I find  
 But as of foam after the ocean's wrath  
 Is spent upon the desert shore. . .

(The Triumph of Life)

In one sense this is a delicate but mordant evocation of the basic human narrative of attraction, courtship, sexual union, down to the last sad stains of exchanged bodily fluids ('foam after the ocean's wrath / Is spent') in the miniature death that follows sex. . . before the whole cycle starts up again. Shelley's is a world-weary yet compassionate summary of the most pleasant aspect of humanity's animal side; and, as always, the writing reflects on language itself and the capacities and limitations of poetry, which also allows a wild dance and copulation of verbal energies- leaving little more than spent foam behind. *The Triumph of life* was Shelley's last, unfinished poem, and although its last line - "Then, what is life?" I said' - would stand as a motto for all his work, the earlier work is frequently more sanguine, and convinced of the rightness of political struggle along proto-socialist lines.

The genial *Letter to Maria Gisborne* attempts, as the poetry of Wordsworth often does, to offer an Edenic perception, of things seen as if for the first time. However, his brilliant quirkiness and rapidity of movement in the verse are as distant from Wordsworth's meditative steadiness as they are from Byron's tolling rhetoric. Where Byron, typically, works from things out to a larger world-view, and Wordsworth sets self and landscape in a rolling phenomenological circularity, Shelley's world-view is more radically intellectualized and conceptual; things, in Shelley, are there to illustrate ideas. That may make him sound curiously eighteenth century, and a poem such as the Letter does put a quasi-Augustan urbanity and tact back into poetic circulation. In crucial respects, however, the relationship of image to idea in Shelley breaks new ground in English poetry, while utilizing in altered form the innovations of the first generation Romantic. Specifically, it is important to see that neither the 'things', the poetic images, nor the ideas they illustrate, are static. Language misses its mark, that of static representation, but in so doing generates new ideas: indeed, this is the theme of *Epipsychidion* (1821), consequently one of Shelley's most frantic yet intensely reasoned poems.

The poem is concerned with a beautiful teenage girl of the Shelleys' acquaintance, one Emilia Viviani, locked up in a convent by her parents while they sought out a suitable husband-to-be. Whatever the depths or shallows of the poet's affection for her, Emilia certainly made the ideal subject for a Shelley poem, bearing in her incarceration the related scars inflicted by church, class, gender, parents

and marriage. Shelley loved to scandalize, and *Epipsychidion* contains some of his most acrid satire on the condition of wedlock. A reader might have expected it to contain a portrait of Emilia, but - and here the poem's central and more theoretical concerns come into view - the poem is partly about the failure of words to do their author's bidding. Words can describe, sketch, characterize, depict; do anything but actually be what they refer to. And yet the act of writing or speaking lets words develop their own life, on the page or in the mouth. Within the space of fifty lines, Emilia is called 'Seraph of Heaven', 'Sweet Benediction', a 'Moon', a 'Star', a 'Wonder', a 'Mirror', a 'Lute' and many other things, until the speaker concludes, 'I measure the world of fancies, seeking one like thee / And find - alas! mine own infirmity.' Emilia's humanity dissolves under the impact of 'failed' language, until she becomes a part of it, and is resurrected as achieved metaphor:

A Metaphor of Spring and. Youth and Morning;

A Vision like incarnate April, warning

With smiles and tears, Frost the Anatomy

Into his summer grave.

The mutability and uncontrollable fluidity of language has become a virtue. Nothing in Shelley comes nearer the concept of paradise than this, the condition of metaphor itself.

Shelley's is a deceptive and difficult poetry. Early editions of this poem were small - 100 copies or so - and he had few admirers outside the immediate circle of Byron, Mary Shelley, and the other members of the 'Pisan Circle'. With the honourable exception of Swinburne, poets of the next generation would fail to rise to the challenge of his work. His Victorian successors disliked Shelley's morals, ignored his politics, and wilfully misread his fiery lyricism as ardent but insubstantial. To Matthew Arnold, famously, Shelley was 'a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain'. That unfortunate and prejudiced assessment was effectively perpetuated by T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis in the earlier part of this century. The poet's reputation would only rise again in the 1930s, when Shelley's atheism, pacifism, call for universal suffrage and free love found sympathetic ears in the Auden generation. The proto-socialist Shelley, with whom Paul Foot's book *Red Shelley* (1984) is concerned, shows through clearly in a poem such as *The Mask of Anarchy* (1819), with its unique mixture of political allegory and the aggressive simplicity of cartoon.

A more comprehensive assessment of Shelley's achievements that takes account of his subtlety and range begins with the post-1945 generation of American critics - Earl Wasserman, M.H. Abrams - and reaches a kind of apotheosis in Shelley's adoption by the Yale Deconstructionists (Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, Harold Bloom, J. Hillis Miller and Geoffrey Hartman) who took Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*, unfinished at the time of his death, as the catalyst for a collection of essays on the (by these critical lights) interconnected topics of absence, death and writing (Harold Bloom, ed., *Deconstruction and Criticism*, 1979). This book contains remarkable essay by the late Paul de Man, whose writings on Romanticism, collected in *Blindness and Insight* (1983) and *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (1984), are among the most incisive pieces of criticism on the subject to have appeared in recent years.

De Man's model of Romantic literary practice is set down in a crucial essay of 1969, 'The Rhetoric of Temporality' (collected in *Blindness and Insight*). All of his subsequent writing on poetry would make a modified return to the postulates of this essay. The argument, too subtle and full to be

susceptible to paraphrase on this occasion, identifies symbolism with the Romantic urge towards idealism, and towards an organicist world-view. Wordsworth's drive to reintegrate the human self into Nature, or Coleridge's divinizing of poetic utterance, would be examples of this. Allegory, the expression in rhetoric of temporality, undercuts the symbol and undoes Romantic ambition. As death, loss, change, meaninglessness - summarized by the word 'temporality' - are unavoidable forces in human existence, so even the most idealist literary text will disclose them on the page in spite of its intentions. In Wordsworth's case, for example, it is precisely a form of idealism that deconstructs his leanings towards pantheism, the attempted immersion of the self into a wider, cosmic Self. A basic contradiction runs through Wordsworth's presentation of the self, and other selves. The urge to lose discrete identity in something larger is countered by a radical prioritization of the ego, and so, to return to the admiring exclamation of Hazlitt's with which this essay began, we can see that what appeared to be a statement about Nature and then seemed to be as much a statement about perception, may finally be an egotistical statement about one man's perceptions. The lines from the *Tintern Abbey* poem quoted earlier may similarly be seen to deconstruct their own phenomenology of integrated subject - object relations by a stress on the self-centredness of experience. As de Man notes, 'Since the assertion of a radical priority of the subject over objective nature is not easily compatible with the poetic praxis of the Romantic poets, who all gave a great deal of importance to the presence of nature, a certain degree of confusion ensue;

It will be clear that my own readings of Romantic texts are far from unfriendly to the kind of literary deconstruction that Paul de Man theorized and practised; the essay by Philip Shaw in this volume offers a more committed enquiry along de Manian lines. However, it may be worth taking issue with de Man's term 'confusion', perhaps suggesting that contradiction of meaning in Romantic texts may be a part of their conscious rather than unconscious activity. Deconstruction, like many schools of literary theory, produces its most startling results on texts which can be shown to be innocent of its approach; the nineteenth-century novel, for example. Problems arise with texts from two periods - the Romantic, and the contemporary. Contemporary literature may be written by the university-educated individual below a certain age, who may have studied literary theory, and be capable of meeting its approach forewarned and forearmed. Without, suggesting that the English Romantic poets anticipated recent literary theory and braced themselves to meet it a couple of hundred years *avant le lettre*, it could still be argued that a strongly self-reflexive element in the poetry indicates that deconstruction might be viewed as a modern development of Romanticism, rather than as its anatomist.

The linguistic self-consciousness shown by Keats for example, is hardly less than that shown by Yale Deconstructionists (and some of his puns are as bad as Derrida's) Of all the poets from the period covered by this guide, John Keats is the writer who registers with the most lyrical poignancy the any between a paradise glimpsed, and a paradise attained. The idealistic urge to break through the confining fabric of the everyday to reach a higher or an eternal realm recurs in his poetry at all levels. It operates in .. miniature in Keats's use of synaesthesia - that is, the expression of experience by one of the senses in the language of one or more of the others. Examples abound, and include such lines from *Hyperion* as 'Let the rose glow intense and warm in the air', a relatively gender conflation of the visual and the tactile. Conflation turns to deliberate confusion in these lines from *Isabella*, a poem: that skirts the ludicrous in other respects: 'O turn thee to the very tale and ; taste the music of that vision pale'; here taste, sound and sight are pushed into a weird overlap. Keats is not above a feverish and discordant levity, as in the redundant puns that are scattered throughout the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (Odes, Keats's), or the mixture of an arch tone and rabidly Gothic material that we see elsewhere?

Readers searching for a rationale behind the oddities in Keats's poetry should consult Christopher Ricks, *Keats and Embarrassment*, (1984.) But something more purposeful seems to underpin even the strangest of his synaesthetic conjunctions; for, after all, if the reader is able to stretch and bend habitual ways of seeing in order to accommodate an intensified or novel sensation at the level of metaphor, he or she may be prepared to do so in other spheres of life. Unlike Shelley or Byron, Keats had no real interest in political theory beyond the general openness to radical and liberation thought that was current among intellectuals of his time. His idealism is centred on not the external world but the world of the senses, and the degree to which experience may or may not empathize or give itself over to what is outside itself, and with what consequences. Some theoretical reflections on this propensity for extreme and creative self-abandon that marks out the 'chameleon poet' were set down in a letter by Keats, from which the phrase 'negative capability' has come to summarize this vital aspect of his practice as a poet:

*. . . several things dovetailed 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 man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason. . .*

The poet should be prepared at all times to surrender to the instant of experience, without allowing the limitations of rationality or morality to get in the way of imaginative immersion in the instant. Here can be seen Keats's utter rejection of the precepts of Augustanism, and his leaning towards an art for art's sake, promoted after his death by Pre-Raphaelite and related spirits Dante Gabriel Rossetti, or A.C. Swinburne. The association of Shakespeare with Negative Capability is very much in tune with a series of lectures on the English poets given by Hazlitt, at the Surrey Institution, at which Keats was a keen attendee. He would certainly have heard Hazlitt say of Shakespeare that 'He was nothing in himself. . . He had only to think of anything in order to become that thing... Empathy is then a crucial factor in Keats's attempts to construct or find a paradise, as is clear from a brief survey of certain of the Odes. In the Ode on a Grecian Urn, the speaker is held by the propensity of art to keep in a frozen eternity what would otherwise die:

Fair youth beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
 Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
 Though winning near the goal - yet do not grieve:  
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

The melancholy paradox on which the poem turns is that while positive experiences held for eternity constitute paradise, negative experience held for eternity spells death: for example, the garlanded heifer about to be slaughtered, later in the poem, may spend eternity in that odd condition, and the 'little town', emptied of its inhabitants, will be silent 'for evermore'.

The urn is not the subject so much as the catalyst of the poem; it could not be 'shifted round', turned in the hand like the marble urn of the *Ode on Indolence*. Rather it is the trigger for a flight into Negative Capability, into which (to return to Keats's original definition) an 'irritable reaching after fact and reason' necessarily intrudes, puncturing the ideal with logic. Keats, regretfully, leaves the world of

the urn to its 'Cold pastoral'. A 'friend to man?', it is still non-human despite being a product of human creativity in an idealist mode: in the urn's frieze, nothing can die, whereas in the larger world over which mortality holds sway, death is everywhere; and yet paradoxically it is our knowledge of death that quickens a more intense appreciation of life. The poem's closing motto 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty', has been the recipient of an untoward amount of competitive excavation by critics, but we should remember that this is the urn talking. A poem from the mid-1970s, John Ashbery's *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, exists in a Romantic tradition descending partly from Keats, and also concerns a work of art whose lessons for the living present are both profound and partial:

This is what the portrait says.

But there is in that gaze a combination  
Of tenderness, amusement and regret, so powerful  
In its restraint that one cannot look for long.  
The secret is too plain. The pity of it smarts,  
Makes hot tears spurt: that the soul is not a soul,  
Has no secret, is small and it fits

Its hollow perfectly: its room, our moment of attention.

As with Wordsworth and John Keats, the questing gaze that seeks in artwork or anything else outside the self an empathetic negation of the ego that might be the key to some larger understanding finds itself returned to itself. The Renaissance self-portrait by Parmigianino which triggers Ashbery's meditation has no reality outside 'our moment of attention', and art, it is conceded, proposes only consolatory strategies for dealing with the fight against time and mortality. Much has changed in the history of poetry between Keats's time and Ashbery's, but a certain transhistorical continuity, a persistence of Romanticism, suggests that the break between modernist and Romantic poetry is still not as great as the historical and epistemological rupture between Augustan verse and the activities of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Where a negation of the ego in life may be fraught with problems, death may provide the ultimate abandonment of self to what is other. In Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*, what might be termed death's analogue, death as a seductive narcotic causing loss of consciousness, is imaged in the speaker hearing the nightingale's song:

Darkling, I listen; and, for many a time  
I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath;  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy.

Here the very attention to natural detail which had characterized Wordsworth's poetry or the

paintings of Friedrich and Constable is wilfully abandoned in preference for a condition of not-seeing, again a Negative Capability, a resting in uncertainties. Eventually the dream is broken and the poetic voice returned to earth, as if from a drug-experience: 'Was it a vision, or a waking, dream? / Fled is that music. . . Do I wake or sleep?'

The speaker of the 'Nightingale' ode is left at last in a twilight zone, neither the realm of the everyday, nor quite the realm of the nightingale's song. Rather this is a borderline state of consciousness, arrived at by accident, but resembling what a later generation of writers, in the 1890s, would aim for on purpose; a state where, to excerpt from Arthur Symonds's manifesto for a Decadent Movement in Literature (see ? Nineties Poets), 'the unseen world is no longer a dream, and the visible world no longer a reality'. Suppose however that consciousness were to be trapped in a twilight zone which was as repetitively circular as that of the urn, as close to death as the world of the 'Nightingale' ode, and yet without any of the consolations of either poem? To depict a world where the unseen is no longer a dream and the visible no longer a reality, is exactly the world of one of Keats's most important poems, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. The speaker of most of the poem's stanzas, the knight-at-arms, may be read not as a proponent but as a victim of Negative Capability:

### I

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,  
Alone and palely loitering?  
The sedge has withered from the lake,  
And no birds sing.

### II

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,  
So haggard and so woe-begone?  
The squirrel's granary is full,  
And the harvest's done.

### III

I see a lily on thy brow,  
With anguish moist and fever-dew,  
And on thy cheeks a fading rose  
Fast, withereth too.

### IV

I met a lady in the meads,  
Full beautiful- a faery's child,  
Her hair was long, her foot was light,  
And her eyes were wild.

**V**

I made a garland for her head,  
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;  
She looked at me as she did love,  
And made sweet moan.

**VI**

I set her on my pacing steed,  
And nothing else saw all day long,  
For sidelong would she bend, and sing  
A faery's song.

**VII**

She found me roots of relish sweet,  
And honey wild, and manna-dew,  
And sure in language strange she said  
'I love thee true'.

**VIII**

She took me to her elfin grot,  
And there she wept and sighed full sore,  
And there I shut her wild wild eyes  
With kisses four.

**IX**

And there she lulled me asleep  
And there I dreamed - Ah! woe betide!  
The latest dream I ever dreamt  
On the cold hill side.

**X**

I saw pale kings and princes too,  
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;  
They cried - 'La Belle Dame sans Merci  
Thee hath in thrall'

**XI**

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,  
With horrid warning gaped wide,  
And I awoke and found me here,  
On the cold hill's side.

## XII

And this is why I sojourn here  
Alone and palely loitering,  
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,  
And no birds sing.

(La Belle Dame sans Merci. A Ballad)

Like a number of poems of this time - Shelley's *Ozymandias* and Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, for example - *La Belle Dame* begins with a feint, the inclusion of a speaker who will not be the poem's real subject. The shared rationale for this might lie in stressing the depth of the gulf that can stretch between one human consciousness and another, with only language as the tightrope between; that, certainly, is the miserable lesson the knight has learned, or perhaps refuses to learn, but is still condemned to reiterate. He has been struck a devastating psychic blow, by the being drawn up from the real world and, as it were, shot into paradise by an erotic obsession with a woman who may be a lamia, a vampire, a femme fatale, and therefore false. He is now trapped in a typically Keatsian twilight rone, alone and palely loitering, the onset of winter in the external world in effect an attribute of his wintry consciousness. Still half in love, he cannot go forward and resume his place in the real world; but he cannot go back, as paradise has turned into brutal awakening on the cold hill's side. Of all Keats's protagonists and voices, the knight in this poem is most a victim.

In a horrible and ironic sense, he is a victim of Negative Capability; he is compelled to rest in mysteries and uncertainties, and has no fact or reason for which to reach, irritably or otherwise. No reasons are given for *La Belle Dame*'s conduct, and nothing we are told helps either the knight or the reader. Unlike Coleridge's *Mariner*, Keats's knight may leave the reader sadder, but no wiser. The view of the world implied by this text is darkly ironic, to say the least: we have freedom to act as individuals, but that may signify the chance to become ensnared. The experience of falling into the paradise of love is common - the hillside is littered with courtly predecessors to the knight - but each must travel through peril alone, and none may truly help another. Peril lies in unexpected places. Perhaps the image of a knight is a fanciful externalization of exactly that state of consciousness; armed to the teeth, except against the one weapon that can penetrate armour, loss of self possession. That abandonment of the self to empathy with the other, be it the lover or Nature, that began with Wordsworth and Coleridge, is here brought to its most vertiginous and ironic potential for danger, in the poetry of Keats.

### 16.4.4 William Blake

That these matters did not entirely originate with Wordsworth and Coleridge, to be passed on to the second generation, is clear from an examination of the poems of William Blake, barely known in his own lifetime. To be sure, Blake's poetry is thoroughly perfused with Christian narrative and

symbolism, but his revision of orthodox morality is as rigorously corrosive as the acid that he would apply to metal plates to fashion his engravings, while his liking for subversive epigrams and dialectical play runs as contrary to conventional reasoning as the skill in writing backward that Blake had to develop in order to incorporate his poetry onto the plates.

The early twentieth-century tendency to view Blake as an artist working in different media, literary and pictorial, undermines his intention to produce one multiform, prophetic art which would operate in the verbal and visual fields simultaneously. For example, the interplay of signification between the poems and the engravings in his ? Songs of Innocence and of Experience (1789, 1794) is often complex and ironic. The lyric beginning ‘Tyger, tyger, burning bright,! In the forests of the night’ is a common anthology piece, resonating for most readers with a sense of Romantic lyricism as celebrating the more frightening and beautiful forms of life and Nature; yet the accompanying picture of the Tyger shows a sheepish and oddly diffident little beast. A similar restlessness and deployment of reversed logic inhabits all of Blake’s thought, from the shocking ‘Proverbs of Hell’ in ? The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, such as ‘Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires’, to his snarling attacks on church and clergy, as in *The Garden of Love* from the Songs of Innocence and of Experience:

I went to The Garden of Love,  
And saw what I never had seen:  
A Chapel was built in the midst,  
Where I used to play on the green.  
And the gates of this Chapel were shut, And  
‘Thou shalt not’ writ over the door;  
So I turn ‘d to The Garden of Love  
That so many sweet flowers bore,  
And I saw it was filled with graves,  
And tomb-stones where flowers should be;  
And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,  
And binding with briars my joys & desires.

In this case, the thrust of Blake’s argument is, by his standards, relatively direct. The lost paradise of *The Garden of Love* is an Edenic vision of happily promiscuous sexuality (‘so many sweet flowers’), and the agents of repression are identified as the uniformed priesthood, ‘walking their rounds’ to police human desire. It is possible to argue not so much against this reading of the poem, as against the attitudes held by its speaker. Blake is a provocative poet, who wants the reader to argue back. It could be pointed out that no flowers last forever, and that the whole world is ‘filled with graves’: not even the most resolute libertarian can stave off mortality; and isn’t it death that most forcefully binds our ‘joys & desires’, rather than the church, which does at least address itself to life-and-death matters? But in that case it might be pardonable to gather rosebuds, or ‘sweet flowers’, while ye may, and the case. for a Romantic insurrection that pits natural desire against institutionalized repression asserts its paradisaical energy once more. Such a revolving spectrum of argument is characteristic of Blake’s restless

engagement with ideology.

The generation of meaning in texts by Blake is generally less straight-forward, however, and his investment in contrariety on principle results in lines as multidirectional as Wordsworth's, but so supercharged with possible significations as to become gnomic and opaque. The final lines of *London* are superbly resonant, but hard to pin down:

But most thro' midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful Harlot's curse  
Blasts the new-born Infant's tear,  
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

Are the effects of the prostitute's curse good or bad? Perhaps infected herself with a sexually transmitted 'plague', does she 'blast' her own child's chances of a future

by passing on the disease; or is the blasting away of a tear a cleansing, symbolically bracing, even a revolutionary rousing of the underclass to political action? This last reading seems 'to be confirmed by the attitude to the priesthood shown in *The Garden of Love*. Here can be seen a paradox central to the operations of Romantic poetry from Blake to Shelley: the greater the scope of the poetry in terms of topic, the more distant its language from customary usage. (This was something that troubled Byron: the drift linguistic experiment into solipsism was something he debated on the page and in person with Shelley, patronized in Keats, and diagnosed in Wordsworth and Coleridge, the butts of satire in *Don Juan*.) In the twentieth century, such tendentious obscurity and a multiplication of meaning as we find in Blake has alternately been thought pleasurable and intrinsic to poetic practice, and a sign of alienation or bad writing. T.S. Eliot undervalued Romantic poetry, preferring the allegedly more unified expressiveness of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. F.R. Leavis followed him in undervaluing Shelley, and indicted Blake for manifesting the estrangement of an auto-didact, cut off from the nurturing influence of a literary community. This echoes Eliot's nostalgia for an age, when writing counted. However, Eliot's diagnosis of 'dissociation of sensibility', a Fall from this organic community around the time of Milton, is ironically itself a Romanticization of a historical change in the relationship between writer, audience, patronage and the means of production, which might be more accurately understood through materialist analysis of the period concerned, rather than idealized as an expression of being.

One revaluation of the Romantics begins in the 1940s, itself a period in which a form of Romanticism -dubbed the school of the 'New Apocalypse' - flourished briefly in the work of such British poets as David Gascoyne and George Barker. Critically, revaluation reached its apogee with the work of literary theorists such as Harold Bloom, Geoffrey Hartman and Paul de Man, whose writing from roughly 1960 to 1980 moves from New Criticism to deconstruction. This move mediated by the impact of psychoanalytical, Marxist and structuralist theory on American teaching of English literature, involved a shift from viewing the generation, in a poem of multiple or undecidable meaning as intentional, to seeing it as an inevitable side-effect of linguistic expression. It may be that in the Fall from various versions of paradise conjured in Romantic poetry can be seen the imagistic expression of what is at root a linguistic Fall, the slippage of expression from intention, of signifier from signified. It may be that literary criticism has now caught up with Romantic poetry, by showing how language, like all human dream-forms, is condemned to make and break itself.

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## 16.5 Let Us Sum Up

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The unit has given you an overview of the Romantic Age. Going through the characteristics of the poetry of the age you must have realised how significant this age has been in the history of English literature.

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## 16.6 Review Questions

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1. Write a note on the revolutionary spirit of the Romantic poets.
2. Comment on Shelley's myth making power.
3. Trace the common characteristics of the Romantic poets of the second generation.

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## 16.7 Bibliography

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1. Paul A. Cantor, *Creature and Creator: Myth-Making and English Romanticism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984.
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## UNIT-17

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### OVERVIEW OF THE ROMANTIC AGE BY GEOFF WARD-II

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Structure

- 17.0 Objectives
- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 About the Age
- 17.3 Romantic Poetry And Literary Theory by Philip Shaw
- 17.4 Women, Romanticism and the Gothic: Alison Milbank
- 17.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 17.6 Review Questions
- 17.7 Bibliography

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#### 17.0 Objectives

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In this unit we are going to study The Romantic Poetry and literary theory by Philip Shaw. Besides we shall also have the views of Alison Milbank on women Romanticism and the Gothic.

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#### 17.1 Introduction

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An historically limited view of Romanticism would declare it to be a bounded movement, that began (with influences as diverse as the French Revolution and the German tale of terror) with the early poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and concluded with the death of Sir Walter Scott in 1832. By these lights, Victorian literature, with the burgeoning primacy of the novel, would be thought to move into a new era of ethical rather than egotistical writing, the question as to how we should live replacing the Romantic agony of who we are. The novels of Jane Austen, with which this Introduction has not dealt, might therefore be seen as important precursors of what was to come, given their emphasis on marriage and social positioning, actualities rather than dreams and desires. And yet the Victorian period, from the frequently luscious and oneiric poetry of Tennyson, Swinburne and the Pre-Raphaelites through to the Decadent poets of the 1890s, is replete with the kind of concerns that exercised Keats. The professions of artistic impersonality that accompany the seminal modernist works by T.S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis and others by no means account for texts such as *The Waste Land* in their entirety; and the high modernist period was succeeded by literature of the 1930s, where dreams of a socialist utopia, as well as an interest in Freud, maintain a line of descent from the writing of Shelley and his generation. The bardic lyricism of the 1940s, the bulk of modern American poetry, and the 1960s cult of the self all confirm the persistence of Romanticism. The literature of Romanticism was persistent in conjuring ways through which the articulate self could empathize with something or someone outside, and was as persistently driven back into ironies and paradoxes that questioned that intention, while providing some of the most recurrently engaging and vital writings of the last two hundred years. Readers and writers of the 21st century, we are still situated in important ways within the questions that body of writing has posed.

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## 17.1 About the Age

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Philip Shaw is lecturer in the English Department at the University of Leicester. Co-editor with P.J. Stockwell of *Subjectivity and Literature from the Romantics to the Present day* (1991), he is currently writing a book on Byron and Wordsworth.

Alison Milbank lives and teaches in Cambridge. She is the author of *Daughters of the House* (1991).

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## 17.2 Romantic Poetry and Literary Theory: Philip Shaw

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### I

*But where has art led us? To a time before the world, before the beginning. It has cast us out of our power to begin and to end; it has turned us towards the outside where there is no intimacy, no place to rest. It has led us into the infinite migration of error. For we seek art's essence, and it lies where the nontrue admits of nothing essential. It ruins the origin by returning to it the errant immensity of directionless eternity.*

(Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 1955)

What does it mean to speak 'before the beginning'; to be out of power; to be placed in exile; to have no truth beyond the sorrow of straying?

I will answer with a further question. Do we approach the 'essence' of art from the direction of literature or of philosophy? In this essay I will assume the necessity of both, not because the paths of literature and philosophy are indistinguishable they are not, and we would be wrong to remove the distinctions that separate them - but because in the poetry of the Romantic period the two are often dangerously intertwined. The dream of Romanticism is a discourse that will encapsulate both. On the one hand, as S.T. Coleridge puts it, we see the technical process of 'just distinction' belonging to philosophical method; on the other the 'spirit of unity' characteristic of the creative Imagination (*Biographia Literaria*, 1817). What the 'synthetic' power of Imagination effects, however, is far removed from this dream. The clash of unity with distinction, 'of sameness, with difference; of the general with the concrete, the idea with the image', is not resolved in the Romantic enterprise. And Coleridge is painfully aware of this fault. His imagination reveals itself in the flawed words and stubborn sounds of the philosophically imperfect.

To think through literature, therefore, we run the risk of repealing a great Romantic error. But that, I would argue, is our fate; for in a sense we are still Romantics, still subjects of an epoch whose 'essence lies where the nontrue admits of nothing essential'. In this sense to repeat is to err; but it is also to remind ourselves that our authenticity has its origin in what is useless, indefinite and nontrue. The Romantic epoch is 'born', to adapt Byron, 'from the knowledge of its own desert' (*Manfred*, 1817). Here the key terms are wandering, anarchy and exile. In Romanticism, we encounter the world not as our home but as a nomadic labyrinth; a space that is truly infinite, without arche or telos, beginning or end. If truth depends on limits, on the assumption of foundations and of regulated and well-defined boundaries, then to think in this space is to commit thought to the inevitability of error. No wonder that Byron, in common with many Romantic poets, is derided for his lack of clarity, since to support this view one must cease to think in terms of the rational and the real. One must commit oneself to an

event over which critical thought no longer has any control.

But from whence do we derive this rhetoric of ambiguity? In a highly influential essay, 'Literature and the Right to Death' (1949) (collected in *The Gaze of Orpheus*, 1981), Maurice Blanchot presents an analogy between literature and revolutionary action. What literature and revolution share, he argues, is a desire for the absolute: the absolute of history, the absolute of knowledge, the absolute of subjective experience - the ultimate expression of which is the absolute purity of annihilation. Literature and revolution therefore accomplish themselves in the 'freedom' of death. For Blanchot, this is the meaning of the French Revolution. The subject is liberated from external bonds (the law of tutelage); critical thought is urged on by the giddiness of the event. The modern age begins.

Two impulses are born here: on the one hand the Kantian ideals of human progress and subjective autonomy (freedom from external control through the exercise of reason); on the other hand the eruption of systematic violence allied to the bloodlust of the emergent collective (freedom from reason itself, an act of pure will). The theatre of modern consciousness begins, so to speak, with the affirmation of a convulsive duality. It stages this dualism in the tensional relation between literature and philosophy. As reason finds its justification in the progressive impulse of revolution, artistic activity is confirmed in the liberation of terror. The task in this essay, therefore, will be to unleash the latent violence of the Romantic poem so that reason may be forced to a confrontation with a range of excluded others: the random, the aberrant, the mystical and the absurd.

If philosophy attempts to explain the world in terms of unity, cohesion and universals, Romantic poetry helps us to think the unthinkable. To do so, however, requires an act as irrational as the fall of a blade; a revolt that commits thought to the infinite migration of (t)error.

## II

*Whence that completed form of all completeness?*

*Whence came that high perfection of all sweetness?*

*(Keats, Endymion, I, 606-7, 1818)*

Why a theory of Romanticism? On the back cover of *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism* (1988), the authors Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy make the following statement:

*Romanticism is first of all a theory. And the invention of literature. More precisely, it constitutes the inaugural moment of literature as production of its own theory and of theory that thinks itself as literature. With this gesture, it opens the critical age to which we still belong.*

With the epoch of Romanticism we reach the stage where literature becomes the perpetual positing of its own question. Henceforth literature, ceaselessly deferred and dissembling, can never be perfected or closed in on itself. 'This is why Romanticism, which is actually a moment (the moment of its question) will always have been more than a mere "epoch", or else will never cease, right up to the present, to incomplete the epoch it inaugurated.' We are, as I have suggested, Romantics. Or rather we are not yet Romantic. For if the Romantic epoch is interminable and incomplete it can never reach the status of a 'thing'. It is more true to say that it is 'nothing'. Thus, in answer to the question what is the essence of art we might do better to reply that Romanticism, or literature, 'is that which has no essence, not even its own inessentiality'.

Because the answer to the question 'what is Romanticism' is endlessly deferred, Romantic texts through their very dispersion demonstrate the impossibility of essence - and thus of being itself. For, as the writers of *The Literary Absolute* would claim, an epoch that begins with theory is an epoch that founds itself on the loss of being: on the supplement or the perfection of the work of art rather than with the completed work of art.

In an important sense, therefore, the question of Romanticism continues to haunt criticism. Who, for example, would deny that a correlation exists between Romanticism and deconstruction? One has only to consult the enormous variety of works on Romantic topics published in the United States in the last twenty years to find confirmation of this. A canonical book such as *Deconstruction and Criticism* (1979), with contributions by some of the most eminent theorists of deconstruction - Harold Bloom, Jacques Derrida, Geoffrey Hartman, Paul de Man and J. Hillis Miller - makes the connection between Romantic loss and postmodern absence explicit by adopting Shelley's *Triumph of Life* (1822) as a common reading text. Not the least of their concerns in treating Shelley is the problematic relation between language, literature and thought. In Derrida's essay, 'Living on: Borderlines', the problem focuses on the concept of genre. Why does the poem overflow its limits? What is it that prevents the text from maintaining the rigorous determinations of authorship, historical specificity and generic type?

The 'answer', common to Hillis Miller and de Man, is that language is a radically unstable construct. It cannot help but 'deconstruct' the imposition of borders, whether these are conceived in terms of the identity of the author, the priority of voice over writing, or the specificity of genre. If deconstruction derives this notion from the study of Romantic texts it is because Romanticism tends to demonstrate its own apparent contradictions clearly. How, for example, does one classify a 'theoretical' text such as Wordsworth's *Essay Upon Epitaphs* (1810) As speculative meditation, prose poem; text book, autobiography or elegy? The list is potentially endless. If, on the one hand, we seek its essence in a literary genre we are led to the place where the law of genre, to recall Blanchot, 'admits of nothing essential': the text is what it is only on the condition that it excludes all of the others. Unfortunately Wordsworth's essay is incapable of such exclusion. Like all Romantic writing - here let us include the unfinished epics of Byron, Keats and Shelley; the encyclopaedic 'projects': Schlegel's *Fragments* (1798-1800), Wordsworth's *The Recluse*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817) - the *Essay Upon Epitaphs* struggles between comprehension and fragmentation. It wants to say everything - to reflect on the 'truth', including the truth of its own production - but it remains a fragment and 'as yet', Schlegel argues, 'no genre exists that is fragmentary both in form and in content' (*Athenaeum Fragments*).

The key phrase here is 'as yet' for the sense of the unfulfilled present strikes at the very heart of the Romantic concept of genre. Rather than the idea of an assemblage or union the work of Romanticism points to the undefined and the illimitable: 'something evermore about to be', as Wordsworth writes in *The Prelude* (1805, 6, 542). To comprehend this fecundity, however, the energy of Romanticism must be directed toward the production of a 'literature. . . that would be a great, thoroughly connected and organized Whole, comprehending many worlds of art in its unity, and being at the same time a unitary work of art' (Schlegel, 'On the Combinatory Spirit', 1804). The Romantic work must be 'capable of containing its own reflection and of comprehending the theory of its "genre"' (*The Literary Absolute*). Literature and criticism, in other words, must become one. This prescriptiveness and conditionality, however, ultimately disfigure this aim, for if the 'essence' of Romanticism is 'that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected' (*Athenaeum Fragments*) then the process of infinite self-generation is one that is perpetually in excess of the ability of the genre to reflect and unify. The essence

of the Romantic genre is therefore radically unstable. On the one hand it is fragmentary and limitless: 'No theory can exhaust it, and only a divinatory criticism would dare to characterize its ideal'; on the other encyclopaedic and holistic: 'It embraces everything' (Athenaeum Fragments).

But how can the essence of something not comprise a particular manifestation in space and time, with the coincidence of form and content necessary for any self-relation? Moreover, if Romantic poetry is, in some sense, the genre of genres (see again Fragments) what does this tell us about the relationship between literature and identity? To understand the background to this thought it is necessary to re-examine the conceptual antinomies of Enlightenment philosophy, particularly within the work of Immanuel Kant.

### III

*I feel I am; - I only know I am*

*(John Clare, I am, c 1845)*

From Descartes to Hegel philosophers have created systems of thought predicated on the autonomous existence of the thinking subject: *res cogitans*. According to this view the only thing of which we can be certain is our own capacity to doubt; *res cogitans* is that which remains when all else has been dismissed: the body, the external world and God. But the consequence of this is isolation. Like the narrator in Clare's sonnet *I am*, or the spectre of Coleridge's *This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison* (1797) the subject is deprived of its connection with 'otherness'. It has lost

Beauties and feelings, such as would have been  
Most sweet to my remembrance even when age  
Had dimmed mine eyes to blindness!

The Cartesian solution to this 'problem' is to insist that the subject's relationship with *res extensa* - with material space, or 'nature' - is constructed by and issues from the subject's relationship to itself. Henceforth, to quote Mark C. Taylor, 'modern 'philosophy becomes a philosophy of the subject. The locus of certainty and truth, subjectivity is the first principle from which everything arises and to which all must be reduced or returned' (*Deconstruction in Context*, 1986).

In the history of ideas, Descartes marks the shift from a theocentric world view to a humanist one. Humanism, however, does not imply the negation of God. For even as the conceptual significance of the divine suffers a displacement, its structural function is preserved, and possibly reinforced, by its relocation in consciousness. The subject, in other words, is God. And like God it possesses the ability to produce itself, to create a world and to exist alone. For Taylor, this last point is crucial. Since the subject 'relates only to what it constructs. . . What seems to be a relationship with otherness - be that other God, nature, objects, or subjects-always turns out to be an aspect of mediate self-relation that is necessary for self-consciousness'. There is, in other words, no 'other' that is not already an aspect of subjectivity. Nothing can appear to consciousness that does not confirm the subject's self-relation, constructive power and sovereign solitude.

The Cartesian subject therefore transforms the other into a mirror for itself. Like the figure of Dorothy in Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* (1798), the other is present in the poem as the basis of the poet's capacity to sustain her as a mirror figure. Through catching in the sister's voice 'the language of my former heart', by reading 'my former pleasures in the shooting lights / Of thy wild eyes' (117-20),

the identity of the creating subject is maintained over time. That of the sister, however, has been reduced to a creative foil; her difference has been incorporated within the circle of subjectivity's full knowledge of itself.

Discussions of Cartesian subjectivity lead, inevitably, towards a consideration of the status of knowledge. Given that in the distinguishing of the cogito a rift is driven between subject and object how are we to gain knowledge of anything that exists beyond the 'fact' of consciousness? If the other-which may be experienced in sensory phenomena, or felt as pleasure and pain - can never be present except as an aspect of mediated self-reflection how can we be said to have knowledge of the other? The problem is addressed by Kant in the Critique of Pure Reason (1781) (readers should again consult Taylor's excellent summary of the Kantian position in *Deconstruction in Context*). In brief, Kant argues that knowledge is the product of a marriage between reason and experience. The human subject makes sense of the raw data of sense experience by imposing a priori forms of intuition (eg the concepts of space and time) and categories of understanding (eg relations of cause and effect, unity and diversity and so on). In Kant's synthesizing of Cartesian and empiricist theories, to know is to exercise reason so that difference may be reduced to identity, the manifold to the one.

This still leaves unanswered the question of how the subject relates to otherness. If reason, as Kant claims, imposes form upon matter, does this not mean that subject and object, reason and nature, are ineluctably separate? That there was not, at some time, an original unity of theoretical and practical reason? A solution, of sorts, is offered in Kant's third Critique, the Critique of Judgment (1790). Here it is suggested that the unity of subjectivity and objectivity can be recovered in the practice and fond of 'fine art'. The argument is based on the identification of two concepts of constructive activity: the work 'of natural organic engendering (standing for the object or other) and the work of artistic production (standing for the subject or consciousness). Kant therefore grants the artwork a privileged status. If ordinary experience is random and chaotic, marked by fragmentation and loss, artistic experience is self-determining and unified, unaffected by external forces or governed by anything other than itself. Through the work of art or *poiesis* - art that is considered as 'pure' production, without use or purpose - the creating subject realizes its freedom from outside determination. Its 'finality', Kant writes, 'appears just as free from the constraint of arbitrary rules as if it were a product of mere nature'. In this way, subjectivity and objectivity - artistic activity and natural production - are related and come to completion within and through each other. Nature can only be realized through art; and art can only be realized through nature.

At this point it may be helpful to draw a further connection with Romantic verse. To take a previously cited example: in Coleridge's lime-tree bower 'the friends' who enable the poet to break out of his Cartesian isolation are both constructs of the mind and products of nature. The act of imaginative projection into the gaze of the other - 'to contemplate. . . the joys we cannot share' (67) thus creates a reciprocal relation between subject and object, a reciprocity figured in the image of 'the solitary humble-bee' singing in the bean-flower (58—9). The solitary bee signifies the self-autonomy and constitutive labour of authentic subjectivity as well as the idealized union of natural and artistic fons of making.

This, at least, is how Coleridge (and Kant) might wish us to read the poem. And many critics have been willing to follow this tack. M.H. Abrams, for example, writes of the poetic strategy in which 'nature is made thought and thought nature both by their sustained interaction and seamless metaphorical continuity' ('Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric' in *From Sensibility to Romanticism*, 1965). Similarly, Earl Wasserman has cited Coleridge as the reconciler of 'the phenomenal world of

understanding with the noumenal world of reason' ('The English Romantics, The Grounds of Knowledge' in *Studies in Romanticism*, 4). It is, however, equally arguable that in the act of synthesizing subject and object through the structures of art the poet has merely confined the 'natural' priority of the one over the other. As Paul de Man argues, commenting on Abrams and Wasseman in 'The Rhetoric of Temporality' (1969, collected in *Blindness and Insight*, 1983), the claim for a reconciliation of self and other in Coleridge is based on the, . assertion of 'affinity' or 'sympathy', tends which only make sense in the context of a relationship between subjects, not in the relationship between a subject and an object. An example of this effect occurs in the opening of *Frost at Midnight* (1798):

the thin blue flame  
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;  
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,  
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.  
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature  
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,  
Making it a companionable form,  
[With which I can hold commune.] (13-19)

To escape the solitude and silence that 'vexes meditation' the poet must find an object in nature analogous to the movements of his own mind. The fluttering film provides this function. But the assertion of unity between mind and nature is not entirely convincing, as Coleridge's manuscript revisions make abundantly clear. From a reading of these revisions it could very well be argued that the concept of organic inter-communion is meaningless without the translation of objectivity into subjectivity. Coleridge himself seems uneasily aware of the sort of paradoxes that emerge from this process:

Idle thought!  
But still the living spirit in our frame,  
That loves not to behold a lifeless thing,  
Tranfuses into all its own delights,  
Its own volition, sometimes with deep faith  
And sometimes with fantastic playfulness. (20-25; added in 1828)

Does the living spirit proceed from the self or from nature? If consciousness predominates then the relationship with otherness will turn out to be 'an inter subjective, interpersonal relationship that, in the last analysis, is a relationship of the subject toward itself'. Should, however, the subject fail to convert lifeless nature into an echo of infinity then consciousness is placed in bondage to the supremacy of the finite. The mind is a slave to external forms and thus to time. Whichever course is chosen, the supposed inter-communion of subject and object turns out to be a deceitful Construct, a will-o'-the-wisp confirming consciousness in its mortal isolation.

If the link between subject and object is placed in jeopardy the fault can be traced to the dependence of speculative idealism on the structures of art. Despite Coleridge's insistence on the

identity of art and nature - 'such as the life is, such the form' - the resemblance between them remains purely formal. It is possible for the work of art and the work of nature to coincide only because they have been made to partake of the same set of categories - and here the relationship is not one of subject and object, it is a relationship of signs. To put this again in Kantian terms: since, as Lacoue - Labarthe and Nancy argue, the work of auto-formation can only occur through art, the individual can only come to itself as anifax or, worse still, ars. Paradoxically then it is the very dependency on artistic form that effectuates the break between the *bildende Kraft* (creative force) of the artist and the archetype of natural organic production.

The fundamental insight of Romanticism, therefore, against Kant, is that artistic creativity predominates over the organic and the natural. Here, the subject is not transcendental, but becomes instead an effect of the art work. And in the work-of-art (to recall Blanchot) the process of auto-formation is one whereby consciousness both creates and becomes self-consciously aware of itself in creation. This, however, is a process of unfolding rather than control. Here we lose the notion of identity, of a Cartesian substratum underlying meaning. To exist in the act of writing is to commit thought to 'a non-transitive language whose task is not to speak of things . . . but to speak (itself) in letting (itself) speak, without however making itself the-new object of this language without an object'. In terms, therefore, that directly anticipate the contemporary discourse of post-structuralism, the 'I' of Romanticism is one that effectively reveals and confronts its status as a linguistic 'effect'. In writing is no longer the subject but language that speaks. The text ceaselessly unworks 'itself'.

Woe is me!

The winged words on which my soul would pierce

Into the heights of Love's rare Universe,

Are chains of lead around its flight of fire-

I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!

(Shelley, Epipsychidion, 587-91, 1821)

If the deconstruction of the subject seems alien to the official message of Romanticism - Paul de Man, for example, has been accused of the most formalistic 'misreading' of Romantic poetry - we have only to read the pronouncements of the Romantics themselves to correct this view. Schlegel, for instance, points out 'that words often understand themselves better than do those who use them' and that a certain ghost within writing will 'bring everything into confusion' ('On Incomprehensibility', 1800). Even Wordsworth, quite often miscast as the self-assured father figure of English Romanticism, seems distrustful of the claim for organicity:

*Words are too awful an instrument for good and evil, to be trifled with; they hold above all other external powers a dominion over thoughts. If words be not . . . an incarnation of the thought, but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift; such a one as those possessed vestments, read of in the stories of superstitious times which had the power to consume and to alienate from his right mind the victim who put them on. Language, if it do not uphold, and fled, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe, is a counter-spirit, unremittingly and noiselessly at work, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve.(Essays Upon Epitaphs. 3)*

Wordsworthian ontology unfolds into an ethical imperative to maintain a rigorous defence against corruption. There is in this impassioned rhetoric a feeling that language will not incarnate thought, that the transparency of the word will turn into ghostly matter, revenging itself on the passive spirit of mind.

Romantic theory, then, in a prefiguring of modern thought, encounters language as a force from elsewhere. It becomes a 'counter-spirit' to the mastery of the self. In this connection, Wordsworth's thought is very close to that of Heidegger: 'Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man. When this relation of dominance gets inverted, man hits upon strange manoeuvres. (. . . Poetically Man Dwells. . .)', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, (1971). In response to this inversion, Romanticism marshals a number of strategies, the most significant of which is the 'valorization of symbol.

For Coleridge, the symbol 'always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative' (*The Statesman's Manual*, 1830). With the emphasis on the relationship between part and whole, the structure of symbol resembles that of synecdoche. The symbol, in other words, is always 'a living part' of the totality that it stands for. The vengeful revenant is returned to the silence of the tomb. But not even the organic coherence of synecdoche can escape the effects of the inversion that Heidegger relates. As Coleridge's *The Eolian Harp* (1796) illustrates, within the alien realm of poetry, the displacement of symbolic language occurs at precisely those moments where the unity of consciousness and community, part and whole, is most needed. Throughout the poem, language draws attention to its own status as an artificial construct. In lines 3-5, for example, the symbolic significance of the 'white-flower'd Jasmin' and 'broad-leav'd Myrtle' - natural objects that would unite reason and experience - is undercut by the following parenthesis: '(Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!)' (lines 4-5; my emphasis). As Tilottama Rajan suggests ('Displacing Post-Structuralism: Romantic Studies After Paul de Man', *Studies in Romanticism* 24), by bracketing the moral qualities that are meant to subsist in the landscape, reminding us that the flowers are only 'emblems', the poem discredits the claims of the symbolic style to be the 'living educt of the imagination'. It becomes, like any other trope, a supplement to the actualization of the real. By foregrounding artificiality - the synaesthesia of lines 26-7; the formal, neo-classical conceit of 32-3 - *The Eolian Harp* suggests that the work of inter-communion has more to do with aesthetic tinkering than with natural engendering.

Strangely, however, it is through the work of the aesthetic that the poem is returned to what de Man refers to as 'an authentically temporal destiny' - though time, in this case, has nothing to do with what is normally associated with authenticity, the ability to coincide, to unify and to reflect on one's self; rather, time is that which leads the subject away from itself, putting it in a relation to pure anteriority, the outside of selfhood. A poem such as *The Eolian Harp*, therefore, works on two levels: first to concern the violence of time into the passivity of literary or mental space; secondly, to disrupt this space through the return of time.

In the first movement the temporality of nature is reduced to metaphors of stillness and silence. These metaphors reinforce the tendency of symbol to postulate states of organic inter-fusion:

and the world so hush'd!

The stilly murmur of the distant Sea

Tells us of silence. (10-12)

The suspension of movement and duration at this point dissolves the '!, into a state of oneiric repose. Consciousness slows down. The subject is spaced out. With the return to the meditation on the subject lute, however, the flaunting of artificiality translates the poem back onto the plain of time. The temporality that the second movement of poetry restates, therefore, is the temporality of tropes, a difference signified, in this case, in the shift from a symbolic to an allegorical mode of discourse.

According to Paul de Man, language is an allegory of its own deconstruction. He bases this claim on the structuralist distinction between the synchronic and diachronic poles of language. According to this view, formulated by Roman Jakobson, tropes such as symbol belong to the synchronic axis. Their structure is spatial in kind. Tropes such as allegory, on the other hand, partake of the diachronic axis. Their structure is durational and thus, in a sense, 'authentically temporal'. Before going further, it is worth quoting de Man's definition of these forms:

*Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference.*

(‘The Rhetoric of Temporality’)

Allegory in *The Eolian Harp*, whilst not explicitly presented as a theme of the poem, is nevertheless present in the necessarily temporal relationship that exists between signs. The symbol is no exception. Despite the appeal to organicity, the symbol, like any other sign, is able to recapture or reflect upon itself. To echo the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, this turn of the symbol ‘recuperates everything [art, nature and so on] except itself as an effort of recuperation, it clarifies everything except its own role’ (from *The Visible and the Invisible*, 1968). Something, in other words, always escapes, translating the symbol back onto the plain of the diachronic, opening a gap in the text that no act of existential faith can close.

Therefore, by formulating the symbol in terms of synecdoche (part for whole), Coleridge has attempted to spatialize an essentially temporal experience. But more than this, he has attempted to exclude the time of the other. The other returns, however, in the final movement of the poem through the dialogical interference of Sara Coleridge, the wife to whom the poem has been addressed. Like Dorothy in *Tintern Abbey*, Sara can be seen a .. a rhetorical ‘excess’, an unrecoverable isotope that emerges from the failure of poetic language to realize itself. Her look of ‘mild reproof’ (49) subverts the poem’s founding trope: the idea that the antimonies of art and nature, consciousness and the world, can be overcome through an appeal to visionary correspondence. Against the ‘half-closed eye-lids’ (36) of mental seeing, Sara’s more serious eye’ (49) is a timely reminder of corporeal limits. The darting look pierces the infinite gaze, and Coleridge is returned to the body, the mortal body in which we find our home or not at all.

Following from this, the closing address to God ‘The Incomprehensible’ (59) is perhaps the most moving and most pathetic statement of the entire Romantic movement. Having eschewed the symbol as a medium for self-determination, God is accepted, beyond signs, beyond temporality, as the unrepresentable horizon of a lost totality. God is what remains when all else has been closed. Faced with this knowledge, the poet’s subjective freedom reverts to the pre Enlightenment condition of tutelage, defined by Kant as ‘man’s inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another’.

From start to finish, therefore, the conversation poem is an allegorical disruption of the pursuit

of knowledge. But Coleridge, like Kant, cannot escape his Cartesian inheritance: trapped within the *cogito*, the desired reciprocity of man and nature, self and other, turns out to be a chimera, an escape that confirms the fact of its own imprisonment. And it is one that must be repeated, like the ‘rime’ of the Ancient Mariner, over and over again.

## V

*‘violence from within’*

(Wallace Stevens, ‘The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words’)

Within Western thought temporality is habitually excluded from the creation of systems. Time cannot be rationalized. Time is absolutely other. Given, then, that the subject through his or her relation to mortality is locked in time, how can we conceive of subjectivity as part of a system? Once again, to think the unthinkable we must look beyond philosophy toward the impure thought of poetry. Here, we may even ‘see as a god sees’ (Keats, *The Fall of Hyperion*, I, 304, 1819), exchanging our mortal bodies for the immortality of mind.

But god-like vision comes at a price. To take the depth of things the self must not only pass beyond the bonds of temporality, it must also withstand the effects of human memory:

Without stay or prop

But my own weak mortality, I bore

The load of this eternal quietude

(*The Fall of Hyperion*, 1,388—90)

In Keats’s unfinished epic, the self undertakes a journey into the realm of the divine. One would therefore expect a rhetoric of self-empowerment. But Keats booby-traps the poem with pockets of irony. In the example of the lines quoted above, by juxtaposing the ‘I’ of ‘mortality’ against the ‘eternal quietude’ of a god, we are forced to confront what is really at stake in the dream of transcendence. Since time escapes knowledge, and since the human subject is in a perpetual process of becoming, our knowledge of the world remains partial and incomplete. This is something that the Kantian thesis, with its spatializing of human thought, cannot accept. But it is also the source of its subversive potential. For if the art work is free and indeterminate, unbounded by conceptual certainty, how can we presuppose the integrity of self-consciousness? Evermore about to be, the temporality of artistic activity denies the stability of a transcendent ‘I’.

To see as a god sees, therefore, the subject must renounce its connection with process and change; it must, as Keats writes in the earlier *Hyperion* (1819) ‘Die into life’ (3, 130). Only in this way can the subject attain the closure necessary for complete self-consciousness and total knowledge.

But if death closes, it does so on the condition that it closes all. For to live beyond death is a scandal that no philosophical system can bear. Philosophy, however, endeavours to preserve this fantasy by converting the absolute negativity of death into the positive reserve of a temporal dialectic. This idea is presented by Hegel in a famous passage from *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). ‘The life of the Spirit’, he writes, ‘is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It wins its truth, only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself.’ For Hegel, self-realization entails absolute knowledge. But this can

only occur if the subject incorporates the knowledge of its own dissolution. Death, in other words, must be included as a structural element within the progressive unfolding of a temporal dialectic. To do this, however, requires an act of repression - for Hegelian thought cannot tolerate a negative that fails to preserve a kernel of positivity. Through the process of *Aufhebung* (literally a raising and suspending), therefore, death is itself negated and turned into profit. In a direct allusion to the Christian myth of death and resurrection, the subject 'dies' only to be reconstituted as historically transcendent, omnipotent and omniscient. Nothing escapes : his process. The random, the senseless, the stubbornly material - in Hegel's philosophy everything is assimilated into the economics of self-realization.

This includes the Kantian concept of art. What Hegel cannot accept in the Kantian thesis is an unforeseen reliance on the irrational and the incoherent. For Hegel, art is an insufficient ground for the realization of self-consciousness. Art can never be transparent in the way that pure thought requires. What occurs in the Romantic work is a form of death that cannot be converted into profit. It retains, so to speak, the—force of an ,absolute negativity; a pure otherness that escapes the systematic totality of dialectical reason. To maintain its integrity, therefore, Hegel's philosophy must sublimate the radical imperfection of Romantic art. It must move beyond the instability of poetic representation to the pure reflection of conceptual thought. Hegelianism must, in short, pronounce the end of Romanticism.

## VI

### *Death Strolls Between Letters*

Oacques, Derrida, 'Edmund Jabes and the Question of the Book', in *Writing and Difference*, 1978)

What happens, then, when Romantic poetry experiments with the radical negativity of death; with death considered as a literary absolute? The link between the work of the creative artist and the 'power of the negative may be more intimate than we might at first suppose. Take' the example of *The Prelude*. For a vast majority of readers the key note of the poem is a heartfelt belief in:

the life

Of all things and the mighty unity

in all which we behold, and feel, and are (13, 253-5)

Unity, blending, interchange; the 'filial bond' between man and nature - such is the dream of Romantic perfection. But against the grain of this assumption, Romantic writing inscribes a transgressive language: a rhetoric of failure, non-sense and irreducible absence. As Geoffrey Hartman comments, within this language 'the Imagination [which] usually vitalizes and animates. . . stands closer to death than life' (Wordsworth's *Poetry*, 1965). Hence the Romantic interest in disaster; its thirst for annihilation - as in Cowper's *Castaway* (1799), Shelley's *Alastor* (1817) and Byron's *Cain* (1821), poems of despair, enervation and paradoxical pride which tease the borderline between self-affirmation and self-abnegation. The otherness of death, when it appears in these poems, is an event that cannot be accounted for, still less converted into profit. And not even Wordsworth can escape this force. When the imagination, rising 'like an unfather'd vapour' in Book 6 of *The Prelude*, releases the self from subjection to mortality, the assertion of a-temporality is made dependent on the dangerous equation of death as denial and death as possibility. At this moment, literature opens itself up 'to a time before the world, before the beginning'; to an 'outside where there is no intimacy, no place to rest' (Blanchot).

This irreducible and unrepresentable 'past' opens a fissure in the text that makes presence - the assertion of the god-like, transcendent 'I' - impossible. Not even the restoration of time, through the punctual 'now' ('Halted, without a struggle to break through. /And now recovering', 530-1) can restore the integrity of self. 'Now' belongs to the space-time of literature, not of the world; it is an interruption that does not unify. Literary time announces the recommencement of the exodus away from self.

Perhaps this last point explains why Romantic writing continues to elicit our interest. The more philosophy struggles to attain a comprehensive view of the world, the greater the faithfulness of Romanticism to the call of the irrational and the absurd. Whether that call is heard in the cold pastoral of Keats's Ode to a Grecian Urn (1819), the warped lament of Thomas Hood's Silence (1823), or in the sorrows of Frankenstein's monster (1818), it speaks of what cannot be grasped except in fragmentary or unfinished form. But to cross the void, to forsake perfected truth for the sake of broken authenticity is a perilous, even impossible, task. In Keats, like Wordsworth, it leads to a space of pure difference; without beginning or end; without any purpose except the ceaseless affirmation of error:

No stir of life  
 Was in this shrouded vale, not so much air  
 As in the zoning of a summers' day  
 Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,  
 But where the dead leaf fell there did it rest:  
 A stream went voiceless by, still deaden'd more  
 By reason of the fallen divinity  
 Spreading more shade  
 (The Fall of Hyperion, I, 309-16)

The difference between Keats and Wordsworth lies in their response to this void. With Keats's work, unlike The Prelude, the death of nature is welcomed as a source of negative inspiration. The poet draws a perverse energy from self-destroying enthrallments. In the realm of Saturn, in a grotesque parody of Hegelian self-consciousness, everything comes to a productive halt. 'But where the dead leaf fell there did it rest'. A sense of immobility threatens to paralyse the poem. The subject dissolves into silence and shade. When, at last, time is restored, one would expect the syntheses of the *Aufhebung*: the subject 'dies' in order to be reborn on the altar of rational knowledge. But time in Keats's poem

. . . works a constant change, which happy death  
 Can put no end to; deathwards progressing  
 To no death  
 (I,259-61)

Thus, rather than 'a-mortizing' death, Keats has made death immortal; a process to which there is no end and from which it is impossible to derive sense. Death has become useless, unworkable within any system of dialectical reason.

It is for this reason that the incompleteness of the poem is so piquant and attractive. The shade

of the fallen divinity is darkness in extremis. Thus, at the 'end', it is not the enlightenment of Apollo but the 'blank splendour' of Saturn's gaze that has most force. We are no longer faced with the desire for presence but the passivity of absence. The black hole of these eyes ('Half-closed, and visionless entire they seemed/ Of all external things') drains the enkindled gaze of the poet so that the dawning of the ephebe ('Knowledge enormous makes a God of me', *Hyperion*, 3, 113) is stymied, halted without a power to break through.

In the place of the dream of absolute knowledge, therefore, Keats has offered the birth of a more terrible beauty: the affirmation of death, not as mastery arid endurance, but as 'Life's high meed' (*Why did I laugh to-night*, 14). In making this claim, Keats perhaps more so than any other Romantic poet points the way to a space purged of self-consciousness. As he writes in a famous letter: 'As to the poetical Character itself. . . it is not itself - it has no self - it is everything and nothing - it has no character. . . A poet is the most unpoetical of any thing inexistence: because he has no Identity'. To achieve this destiny-the will to give up self - Keats utilizes the substitutions and displacements inherent in poetic language. With Keats, unlike say Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley or Coleridge, words are embraced as forces of dispersal. Here language coincides with that which does not coincide; it leads, in advance, to the *detournement* of all unity. The result is an achieved dearth of meaning; the opening of a positive void. The provocation of a time before history.

What these fragments unwittingly celebrate, therefore, is the 'power' of uselessness and failure: 'I have left/ My strong identity, my real self (*Hyperion*, I, 114). And in leaving the 'real self', the poet has escaped the utilitarian world of subject-making and self-mastery. Art, to paraphrase Blanchot, has deprived the writer of the power to say 'I' - the birth of Apollo will not take place - but it has enabled him to pronounce on the nature of the other. It has allowed him to accept his death.

## VII

*Nothing, whether deed, word, thought, or text, ever happens in relation, positive or negative, to anything that precedes, follows, or exists elsewhere, but only as a random event whose power, like the power of death, is due to the randomness of its occurrence. (paul de Man, 'Shelley Disfigured', in Deconstruction and Criticism) only nomadic affirmation remains*

(Maurice Blanchot, *Le Pas au-dela*, 1973).

How does Romanticism manifest itself in the present age? I have argued in this essay that Romanticism continues because of the Romantic fragment's affirmation of incompleteness. We must understand, however, that the fragment does not affirm its lack of perfection in relation to a lost totality. Despite the perceived official message of Romantic poems, Romanticism is not, in essence, nostalgic. As Timothy Clark notes, whilst for Schlegel 'every part can be a whole' and conversely 'every whole can be a part', the truth of Romanticism does not reside in the recovery of an original unity or lost totality but in the moment of its interruption; the moment, that is, where the fragment 'maintains a singularity that both exceeds and resists subsumption, yet by this same token this singularity falls short of a determined identity and constitutes a lack in any putative totality.' What Romanticism affirms, therefore, is its ceaseless failure to present itself in a completed form. This is why Romanticism continues, right up to the present, to unwork the possibility that human knowledge may be articulated as a unified or total 'system'.

Where do we measure this effect in our time? One could trace it in any of the major avant-

garde movements of this century: in Dada, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, postmodernism and so on - wherever the random or the aleatory speaks of a lack beyond the insistence of being. For the purpose of this essay I will focus on a prose fragment by the poet Paul Celan (1920-70) entitled 'Conversation in the Mountains' (1959). At the start of this text an unnamed Jew steps out of his hut to take an evening walk. The Jew, it emerges, is blind. As he shuffles along, tapping his stick on the stone, a first person stutters into life. The voice comes to us unannounced, babbling, as if from nowhere: 'Do you hear . . . here I am I, I am, I am here'. It could be the voice of the Jew, of the author, or of something entirely 'other', something at odds with the confidence and supreme virility of the eloquent 'I' - the authentic, integrated self of much Romantic literature. But whoever owns this voice and wherever it comes from, the ontological certainty of 'Here I am', the phrase with which Abraham responds to the call of God, is put into a position of extreme jeopardy. No one replies, night falls, and the voice stutters: 'I, I, I', broken and alone. Presently, another person approaches; it is the Jew's cousin, equally blind, equally uncertain. For a long time there is silence but 'it's just a pause, just a hiatus, an empty space'. At last the dialogue begins:

*'You came from far away, came here. . . ,*

*'So I did. I came. I came like you'.*

*'I know that'.*

*You do know. You know what you see: The earth has folded up here, folded over once, then twice, then three times, and split open in the middle, and in the middle there is water, the water is green, the Green is white and the White comes from still further on high, comes from the glaciers, one amid sky, but shouldn't, that this is a language for the here and now, the Green with the White within, a language for neither you nor me- for I ask, for whom is it meant, this earth, for I say it is not meant for you or forms a language to be sure, without I or Thou, merely He, merely It, do you understand, merely She and nothing more'.*

In general terms, what this obscure and beautiful text acknowledges is the condition of its own belatedness. Without nostalgia and without pathos Celan draws attention to the persistence of a certain way of thinking, the presence/absence of an epistemology that might, for want of a better word, be called 'Romantic'. This is manifested in several ways. To begin with the mountainous landscape is haunted by the ghosts of Romantic agony: with Shelley's Mont Blanc (1816); Wordsworth's *Simplon Pass*; Buchner's Lenz and Byron's Manfred. But where, for example, in Lenz, the failure of the idealized unity of unity and difference, self and other, propels the 'I' into suffering and madness, here Celan manages to find a way of affirming that very failure in such a way that it is the voice of the overwhelming 'other' rather than of the isolated ego that has priority. By emphasizing 'babble' over eloquence, 'borrowed' language over original speech, the Green language of the 'here and now' over the White language of the timeless and transcendent, a 'Conversation in the Mountains' presents an ethical challenge to the ontological drama of Romanticism. Where Byron's *Childe Harold* expresses a hopeless desire for ownership of the 'one word' (3, 97), the unnamed Jew speaks of a language 'without I or Thou'; in so doing he enables us to welcome difference: a difference between ascent and descent, origin and anarchy, activity and passivity, mastery and subjection.

For Celan, drawing on the unacknowledged insights of Romanticism, language cannot be owned, or grasped; it comes from elsewhere, like the power of death. And like death, adapt the words of Emmanuel Levinas, the 'He', 'She' or 'It' of language 'announces an event over which the subject is

not. master, an event in relation to which the subject is no longer a subject' ('Time and the Other', 1987); yet only in relation to this can the subject come into being. To signify, therefore, one must begin with annihilation, with death. I say 'a flower'; and magically the concept flower appears - separated or split from the material flower. In many ways Romantic poetry 'begins' by recording this original violence - the way in which language creates meaning by negating the internal essence of things, When Celan writes, however, we are moved by silence rather than by words, by what is not there rather than by what is. The breaks and pauses in his writing gesture towards a region saturated with non-sense - a non-sense which turns out, paradoxically, to be the radical sense of poetry. Here we cannot help but supply the relations that the random event of language would deny. Death inhabits language; it is we who signify.

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### 17.3 Women, Romanticism and the Gothic: Alison Milbank

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Until recently the prose fiction of the Romantic period -least of all the Gothic genre - would have scarcely merited a mention in a volume such as this. Poetry at the end of the eighteenth century was considered a higher form than prose, while the novel still had many years of struggle ahead before gaining equal intellectual respectability. In a letter to Wordsworth concerning Walter Scott's narrative poem *Marmion*, Coleridge centres his criticism precisely in a perceived similarity to prose romances: it is a 'novel versified'. *Marmion* reminds him particularly of the Gothic, and he proceeds to classify the qualities of the latter form:

*I amused myself a day or two ago in reading a Romance in Mrs Radcliffe's style with making out a scheme which was to serve for all Romances a priori; only varying the proportions. A baron or baroness, ignorant of their birth and in some dependent situation; castle on a Rock; a sepulchre - at some distance from the Rock - Deserted Rooms - underground passages - Pictures - a Ghost, so believed - or a written record - blood in it - a wonderful Cutthroat, etc. etc.*

Coleridge's reductive account of Gothic tropes makes them seem like a cumbersome set of stage machinery, and has the effect of distancing himself and his correspondent from the sort of literature described, even though many of the same motifs would find their way into mainstream Romantic verse, not least Coleridge's own productions. *Christabel* (1816) is in essence a medieval romance, complete with baron, ancient castle, haunted dog, and a mysterious lady who claims to have been captured by strange warriors, and exerts seemingly magical powers, while the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) would itself have an influence on later Gothic writing.

However, Coleridge's scheme does fit many a Gothic tale in which the same elements are continually re-articulated, and the pleasure of repetition is itself a quality of Gothic fiction. The form was already well-established by the turn of the century, the first 'modern' Gothic fable, *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole, having been published thirty-six years before. For, in contrast to the ordered neo-classicism of the earlier eighteenth century ran an equally strong strain of interest in the 'Gothic' feudal past, in graveyard melancholy, and in human passions and extreme emotional states. At first, Walpole's tale was indeed presented as an authentic medieval account, so that its supernatural machinery of a giant helmet and the rapacious lusts of the tyrannical owner of the Castle were seen as of a part with a less enlightened, though fascinating, age. When its contemporary authorship was revealed, Walpole still sought to cast an aura of distance and privilege about his tale by locating its origin in a dream. Mary Shelley was to do the same in relation to *Frankenstein*, as Coleridge too with *Kubla Khan*, which remains unfinished because of the interruption to his opium-induced dreams by the

importunate 'person from Porlock'. Whereas Walpole-and later ? William Beckford, author (in French) of the exotic *Vathek: An Arabian Tale* (1786) - were aristocrats with archeological interests and the money to realize their architectural and historical fantasies in Strawberry Hill's Gothic turrets and the excesses of Fonthill respectively, soon women writers began to essay 'Gothic' fables.

Clara Reeve's *The Champion of Virtue* (1777), which was later revised as *The Old English Baron*, and went through many editions, was described by its author as 'the literary offspring of *The Castle of Otranto*. However, quite deliberately, this novel eschews the spectacular supernatural effects of its fictional parent. Edmund, the true heir to the Baron Fitz-Owen's castle, does indeed evoke ghostly presences when he spends the night in a haunted room, but the visitants are his own parents, and, as in the case of Hamlet, the reader is at some liberty to interpret the haunting as an inner vision rather than an external apparition. An early specimen of the historical novel, Sophia Lee's *The Recess: A Tale of Other Times* (1783-5), charts the tragic adventures of two daughters of Mary Queen of Scots, to escape the jealous ire of Elizabeth I. The novel's historical setting and the subterranean dwelling of its sister heroines, who live immured in the underground chambers of a Tudor great house which had formerly been a convent, makes it as engendered, as it were, Gothically. As Chris Baldick's introduction to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* indicates, it is the centrality of an ancient, ruinous house - imprisoning the protagonist and mediating the baleful presence of the past over all its inhabitants - which makes a novel or short story Gothic. The house in a tale like Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher' is itself a protagonist.

So before the arrival of Ann Radcliffe's first novel *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* in 1789, all the Gothic tropes that Coleridge lampooned were current and operating with different degrees of effectiveness. Radcliffe's novel already seems implicitly parodic of the genre it presents with its warring barons, plethora of captives, ambushes and secret passages, and a low-born young man who saves the life of a chief and marries the latter's sister after his nobility and heroism is finally established. Yet in the four novels which succeeded this first attempt, Radcliffe took the Gothic novel to new heights, and helped establish it as the most popular form of fiction until the 1820.

Women writers of Gothic tended to turn away from interest in the guilty (male) tyrant and usurper towards his victims: in *The Recess* women become, as they were to remain, the central focus, so that Ellen Moers can describe the whole Gothic phenomenon as 'a device to send maidens on journeys'. At a time when the picaresque novel was becoming virtually extinct, the errant heroines of Sophia Lee - whose travels take them all over England, to the Continent and even to the Americas - seemed evidence of a new form, the episodic journey tale. The glamorous foreign locations were, however, merely changes of background to enable ever grosser treacheries and extreme dangers to assault the heroine. There is no attempt in *The Recess* to bring the settings to imaginative life as elements themselves in the story.

It was Ann Radcliffe who, in a series of novels published between 1789 (the year of the French Revolution) and 1797 (the year before Coleridge and Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*), brought together these various elements of the Gothic, combining Lee's historicism and interest in enclosed spaces with Walpole's *Otranto*, with its castle and the central feud, and blending with these a strong emphasis on the natural landscape. Up to that time, in England, only the poet and novelist ? Charlotte Smith had employed extended natural description as a part of her fiction, though in her *Emmeline, The Orphan of the Castle* (1788) the sea-shore reveries of the eponymous heroine are but a small part of a conventional romance plot. In Radcliffe's tales, however, the landscape itself increasingly takes the part of an actor

in the plot; indeed, Keats (who likened titles of two of his own poems to ‘Mother Radcliffe’s’ style) commented on this feature in a letter recording an 1819 visit to a friend in Devon ‘whence I intend to tip you the Damsel Radcliffe - I’ll concern you, and grotto you, and Waterfall you, and wood you, and water you, and immense rock you, and tremendous sound you, and solitude you’. The nouns here become verbal in the same manner that the Radcliffe landscape precipitates human action. One typical example of this phenomenon occurs in *A Sicilian Romance*, when Madame de Menon, governess to the lost heroine, enjoys an evening stroll:

*The evening was remarkably fine, and the romantic beauty of the surrounding scenery invited her to walk. She followed the windings of a stream, which was lost at some distance amongst luxuriant groves of chestnut. The rich colouring of evening glowed through the dark foliage, which spread a pensive gloom around, offered a scene congenial to the present temper of her mind, and she entered the shades. Her thoughts, affected by the surrounding objects, gradually sunk into a pleasing and complacent melancholy, and she was insensibly led on.*

Giving herself up to the rhythms and impulses of the scene, Madame de Menon seems to sleep-walk as she is ‘moved’ in her emotions and the windings of the stream to find a solitary figure, who proves to be her lost pupil. Others who see the girl and violate the intentions and shapes of the landscape are continually misled. They fail to notice the beauty of nature, so are unable to be helped by her benign presence or ‘read’ her secrets.

The locations of Radcliffe’s novels are (with the exception of her first, which is set in Scotland) in continental Europe, principally France, Switzerland and Italy. It is usual to argue that the reason for the foreign nature of her locations was the more exotic terrain, the prevalence of Catholicism and the likelihood of violence and political instability. All this may be true, but it is also clear that Radcliffe had read and absorbed Rousseau’s novels *Emile, ou L’ Education* (1756) and *Julie, ou la nouvelle Heloise* (1760) with their depictions of the Alps and lakes, woodlands and pastoral retreats. Several of Radcliffe’s novels describe the upbringing of her heroines away from the corruptions of urban upper-class life, where parents devote themselves to the education of their children in the arts and in the appreciation of nature. Rousseau’s privileging of the ‘natural’ over the civilized, and his theories of childhood innocence were enormously influential all over Europe in the development of Romanticism. Wordsworth is often credited with bringing these ideas into the main term of English poetry, but Radcliffe before him, especially in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), explored the educational ideas, as well as the social vision of little quasi-familial groups in rural retreat that are found in Rousseau’s two novels. *The Romance of the Forest* includes a Swiss pastor, La Luc, whose family dispense charity, nurse the sick of their village, and teach its children, taking their pleasure in rambling among the scenic wonders of their Alpine home. The landscape provides simultaneously secure protection from outside influences and imaginative and religious expansion through the aesthetic power of mountain scenery. Similarly, *Udolpho* opens with a description of Emily St Aubert’s childhood home, La Vallee:

*on the nearest banks of the Garonne, in the province of Gascony, stood, in the year 1584, the chateau of Monsieur St Aubert. From its windows were seen the pastoral landscapes of Guienne and Gascony, stretching along the river, gay with luxuriant woods and vines and plantations of olives. To the south, the view was bounded by the majestic Pyrenees, whose summits veiled in clouds, or exhibiting awful forms, seen, and lost again, as the partial vapours rolled along were sometimes barren, and gleamed through the blue tinge of air, and sometimes*

*frowned with forests of gloomy pine, that swept downward to their base. These tremendous precipices were contrasted by the soft green of the pastures and woods that hung upon their skirts; among whose flocks, and herds, and simple cottages, the eye, after having scaled the cliffs above, delight to repose. To the north, and to the east, the plains of Guienne and Languedoc were lost in the midst of distance; on the west Gascony was bounded by the waters of Biscay.*

This protective environment of the heroine is as safely enclosed as the Garden of Eden itself, with its 'luxuriant' vegetation 'bounded' on the south by mountains, and on the west by 'the waters of Biscay'. Conversely, 'the eye' - which is the prime mover of the scene rather than the ambulant human - has its gaze extended into a seeming infinity to the north and east, in which direction the plains are 'lost in the mist of distance'. The Edenic motif continues in the precise historical dating of that narrative in 1584, the year of the renewal of the Catholic League, which aimed to defeat French Protestants under Henry of Navarre, the next heir to the throne, and also the time when Philip of Spain's 'Catholic Enterprise' to depose Elizabeth was becoming known in Britain. Navarre is within the Pyrenees, so that all the force of Protestant religious 'purity' is enclosed in this region of natural sublimity, while the River Garonne on which the Aubert chateau is built had been the site of an earlier battle in the same Wars of Religion. Moreover, Aubert, the heroine's surname, recalls that of Navarre's mother, Jeanne d'Albre whose lands were in Gascony. So La Vallée holds its 'repose' precariously on the Huguenot frontier, at risk from Catholic invasion, as Adam and Eve were from the serpent's grateful incursion. This admixture of the historical religio-political with the stately procession of aesthetic contrasts of an ideal landscape gives a new intensity to picturesque landscape, and energizes its portrayal. Emily St Aubert, the novel's young heroine, is soon to leave this pastoral retreat for a journey among the Pyrenees to restore the health of her bereaved father, and then for further travel, after his death among the mountains, for the gaieties of Venice, a setting which Radcliffe uses as a lovely but mystifying place of absence and false sentiment, in contrast to the stark, awful heights of the Pyrenees. Venice causes the visitor to look down, not up, as to 'the lower world', to see narcissistic reflections in the waters, rather than a presence in nature that takes one beyond the self: 'a new heaven and trembling stars below the waves, with shadowy outlines of towers' and porticos'.

The Venetian scenes of Udolpho, with their plangent music that so moved Byron in *Childe Harold* are, in the context of the novel's aesthetic and moral scheme, ominous. Venice's physical lowness, as well as its fairy-tale illusionism, makes it a place dangerous to the imagination. For although Radcliffe anticipates the place of the mental landscape and the concept of the sublime in Romantic poetry, she is far from sharing the latter's boundless trust in the imagination. The sublime in the poetry of Wordsworth becomes a moment of direct imaginative and moral expansion; indeed, it is the imagination itself which is sublime, as it acts to break down categories, and to unite disparate elements. But in the eighteenth-century tradition which culminates in Radcliffe and finds its most cogent expression in Edmund Burke's *Essay on the Origin of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), it is objects extraneous to the self that are sublime, such as great natural phenomena, mountains or cataracts, great poetry and art, architectural size and longevity, powerful heroes and, most of all, the Divine. The awful greatness of such as these overwhelms the viewer; first, the viewer is made aware of her own littleness, her subjection to forces beyond her own control, and only then, through this very negation, is a sense of imaginative access possible. So Ellena, the heroine of *The Italian*, who has been imprisoned in an Apennine convent by her aristocratic lover's powerful mother, has her prison both confirmed and yet transcended by the power of the view from her turret window:

*Here, gazing upon the stupendous imagery around her, looking, as it were, beyond the awful veil which obscures the features of the Deity, and conceals him from the eyes of his creatures, dwelling as with a present God in the midst of his sublime works; with a mind thus elevated, how insignificant would appear to her the transactions, and the sufferings of this world.*

She concludes that her enemy was therefore ‘unable to chain her soul, or compel her to fear him, while he was destitute of virtue’.

The result of this aesthetic communion is not a quietist acceptance of destiny - all Radcliffe heroines show considerable fortitude, dignity and resourcefulness under hosts of murderous attacks. But the communion is the means by which the heroine is able to maintain a sense of her value as a person by, as it were, a mental dramatization of her actual life threatening situation, which is projected into an imaginative agar or conflict, where the spectator’s self-hood is almost annihilated, only to be re-established on a re-ordered footing as holding its place in God’s providential order. ‘Thus man, the giant who now held her in captivity, would shrink to the diminutiveness of a fairy,’ thinks Ellena.

This trope of the entrapped woman fleeing the sexual or murderous attentions -of a male attacker is one of the most potent devices of the Gothic genre, and survives right up to literature and film of the present day. Walpole uses it in *Otranto*, but the woman writers of the 1790S and after gave it a central focus. In one sense it is a universal story, and one, in the more realist setting of contemporary seduction that formed the matter of Samuel Richardson’s novels *Pamela* (1740-1) and *Clarissa* (1747-8) as well as many novels of sensibility. Despite feeding from that tradition, the Gothic novel generally gives the predatory attacks an exotic architectural setting, so the’ the woman is pursued through the labyrinthine passages of the tyrant’s castle, monastery, or actual prison. But just as Richardson is making a mainly bourgeois critique of aristocratic ethical codes of honour and shame, Radcliffe and her host of imitators filling the lists of the Minerva Press inevitably place their villains among the relics of a decayed aristocracy. *Udolpho*’s Montom is further and further confined to his own estates and castles as his only field of force (the Byronic hero owes his pride and sense of damnation to such figures, as they owe theirs to Milton’s portrayal of Satan in *Paradise Lost*). In charting the escape of women from confinement, the Gothic aligns itself to the Enlightenment project itself, though its potential political radicalism is ‘tempered by the fact that the heroine and her associates generally go on to live a retired Emile-like existence in *private* life only; the public realm is eschewed for a pastoral retreat consisting of the polite arts and the social joys of the sublime.

This kind of ‘female’ Gothic is not necessarily to do with the gender of the author.? William Godwin writes an interesting version of ‘female’ Gothic in *Caleb Williams, or Things as they Are* (1794), in which the hero, having found evidence of his aristocratic master’s crime, is pursued by agents of that noble but flawed Falkland the length and breadth of Britain. Finally brought to account for a supposed crime against Falkland, Caleb abandons attempts to assert his innocence in favour of a version of sublime discourse dramatizing his own destitution and the impossibility of escape; the hero finally triumphs. ‘Male’ Gothic writers include the Marquis de Sade, M.G. Lewis (‘Monk’ Lewis), Charles Maturin, Francis Latham and the youthful Shelley. Their works are characterized by a doomed and guilt-ridden hero, such as Ambrosio in Lewis’s *The Monk*, who breaks endless taboos by committing murder, incest and fratricide (amongst other sensational things), in a careless desire for mastery and forbidden knowledge. Ambrosio is in some ways the archetypal ‘male’ Gothic hero, who assaults barriers to penetrate inwards, whether into bodies, locked chambers or castles, in contrast to the female protagonists of the Radcliffean mode who seek to move beyond the ‘bounds’, whether of room, castle,

or limited subjection as women.

In Mary Wollstonecraft's tale *Maria: or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) feminism and the 'female' Gothic form come together overtly in a contemporary setting, with the following opening:

*Abodes of horror have frequently been described and castles, filled with spectres and chimeras Conjured up by the magic spell of genius to harrow the soul, and absorb the wondering mind. But, formed of such stuff as dreams are made of, what are they to the mansion of despair, in one corner of which Maria sat, endeavouring to recall her scattered wits.*

The 'mansion of despair' referred to is a lunatic asylum, where Maria has been incarcerated by her husband for pecuniary gain, separating her from her young children. The story quickly develops beyond the usual confinement-escape plot: Maria falls in love with a fellow inmate, with whom she elopes, and although the loves remained unfinished at Wollstonecraft's death, her notes indicate a subsequent disillusioned parting, regret and sad decline. This is far removed /Tom the Radcliffean 'female' Gothic, and indeed none of the three women writers most closely associated with the Romantic poets - Wollstonecraft herself, Dorothy Wordsworth and Mary Shelley - embraces the 'female' Gothic plot described above (Dorothy Wordsworth was in fact the recipient of the Coleridge letter mocking Radcliffe). Mary Shelley's powerful *Frankenstein* in particular declares its status as 'male' Gothic in its subtitle 'The Modern Prometheus', this mythological figure being the stealer of fire from the gods, and tied to a rock in eternal agonies, the archetypal damned hero of dark Romanticism. *Frankenstein* also transgresses the divine order in trying to create in his own image, and is explicitly associated with Milton's Satan. The story is, of course, a powerful critique of the creation of a being without mothering, without any associates, no Eve for his Garden of Eden, nor friendly angels to advise.

The prevalence of Miltonic elements in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is often attributed to the influence of her husband's reading of *Paradise Lost* while she was writing her novel. There is, I believe, quite another reason why Milton's epic of the destruction of perfect human relations and the fall of nature provides a common source for Mary Shelley and for the hundreds of Gothic tales imitating Ann Radcliffe. In the late twentieth century, we may miss the radical elements in Milton's portrayal of sexual relations, being aware only of the hierarchy that makes Eve for Adam, while he is made for God - 'He, for God only, she for God in him'. However, eighteenth-century feminists, reading Milton in the context of a history of extreme misogyny, latched onto the dignity and intelligence of Milton's Eve; there were even editions of *Paradise Lost* that changed the line quoted above to 'He for God only, she for God and him' (my emphasis). In the context of this positive reading of Milton, the 'female' Gothic plot of entrapment of the heroine by a villain whose 'grandeur, pride and superhuman qualities mark him as a descendant of Milton's heroic Satan takes on a new resonance. It is a re-narrating of the scene of Eve's temptation by Satan in such a way that she is freed from guilt (because it is through no fault of her own that she is in his power), and also triumphs, she escaping her persecutor's clutches and he bringing him to justice. The scene in Radcliffe's *Romance of the Forest* in which Adeline is taken by the ruffians of a Marquis to his luxurious villa, where attempts on her virtue take the form of delicious fruits and ices, sweet music, delightful smells, the arts of poetry, oratory and the vanity of mirrors, parallels the wiles of the serpent tempting Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Several references to the tempter of Milton's *Comus* point the moral.

The many references to the works of Milton, Shakespeare - which indeed exceed those of the later poet in frequency - and Collins, Thomson and other eighteenth-century poets suggest the literary

ambitions of the Gothic novel. At a time when Romantic poetry, notably the Lyrical Ballads, seeks to represent the rhythms of ordinary speech and the concerns of the countryman and peasant, the Gothic novel seeks a different, and elevated, poetic expression. Novels such as Radcliffe's and Charlotte Smith's contain many verses by their authors, put into the mouths of their characters, by which their heroines reach towards literary expression of their feelings of awe and delight. Tags from the English poets furthermore seek to situate Gothic writing in a specifically native tradition, which was only beginning to enjoy the status of 'classic' awarded primarily to Greek and Latin literature. Classical learning in this sense is denied most female Gothic writers, so they reach out to an alternative genealogy. Many Gothic tales were published in *The Lady's Magazine*, and despite its subtitle - *Or, Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex Appropriated Solely to their use and Enjoyment* - which stressed entertainment, the frontispiece engraving showed a serious intent. It shows the Goddess of Wisdom, Minerva, pointing, with a lady in a well-stocked library reading *The Lady's Magazine*, towards a Pantheon, or 'Temple of Wisdom'. The publishing house that poured out most Gothic tales was also called The Minerva Press.

The quotation in the title of this chapter is from Act I, Scene v of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and sounds a note of self-confidence in authorship when it heads Ann Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance*. Its context in the original play, however, gives it a darker meaning. The speaker is the ghost of Hamlet's father:

But that I am forbid  
To tell the secrets of my prison-house  
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word  
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,  
Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres,  
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,  
And each particular hair to stand on end  
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine.

The most obvious effect of the Gothic novel is its ability to arouse fear and terror in its readers. Indeed, Joanna Baillie's play on the passion of fear, *Orra* (1815), concerns a girl who goes mad through giving herself up to superstitious terror, which has been fed by reading Gothic romances. In these tales, episodes of country rambling and delightful exploration of ruined abbeys which arouse elevated meditations are followed by terrifying discoveries of murdered corpses, or attacks by murderous monks. Although ghosts haunt the pages of the Gothic tale they are quite often explained away as natural phenomena. The view of critics like Coleridge (who renders the supernatural real in his own work) is that such a move to demystify shows a lack of confidence on behalf of Gothic authors, so that the whole plot collapses like a fairy palace into the air. This is, however, to miss the point of the terrific fears of the Gothic heroine, which are a form of testing. In *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Jane Austen's credulous heroine expects all the horrors of Udolpho to come true when she stays with the Tilneys in their ancient house; and she casts the General as a Montoni in wickedness, believing him to have murdered his former wife. Of course, he is nothing of the sort, and a great deal of comedy is extracted from Catherine's mistake. Yet, although her more exotic accusations are wrong, she is proved right in that

Tilneys is a tyrant - if a petty one - who unceremoniously throws her out of the house when he learns that she is not an heiress.

*Northanger Abbey* is a parody of a Gothic story, but in many ways it also possesses a true Gothic plot, in which the supernatural fear is removed only in order to reveal an actual bodily threat or deception. The castle around which ghostly sighs are expended in *A Sicilian Romance*, terrifying its inhabitants, is indeed haunted, but not by a spectre. Instead, its vaults contain the living person of the Marquis's first wife, who was immured there years before, so that he could remarry. The supernatural is demystified in order to reveal the unjust and demonic character of the Marquis, and of his order. There is an inherent feminism in the Gothic of the entrapped heroine, which is not to be found in the 'male' Gothic of Lewis and Maturin, in which the supernatural is an unquestioned reality. The heroines of 'female' Gothic learn to eschew the thrills of terror over dark passages and ghostly knocks in favour of religious awe and fear in the power of God's creation, to forego their fears of the seemingly sublime tyrant for the transposed power of the sublime. It is perhaps here that the form shows most clearly its critique of Romanticism. The heroines who become the true heirs of the tyrant's castle do not go on to inhabit their possession, but leave it to become even more ruined. There are moves today in post-structuralist literary criticism to deconstruct the claims of the Romantic poet to universality and harmony of vision and to elucidate instead an awareness of loss and the indeterminacy of meaning. This process is akin to the demystification of the sublime villain and his supernatural castle by the Gothic novel which acts to 'ruinate' his image. Perhaps we may even come to see the Gothic now not as some clumsy articulation of tropes that merely anticipates a glorious Romanticism, but rather see Romantic poetry itself, with its omnivorous claims and egotistical sublime, as merely a variation on the 'male' Gothic.

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## 17.5 Let Us Sum Up

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This unit has given you an overview on Romantic Poetry and literary theory of Philip Shaw and Alison Milbank's views on women, Romanticism and the Gothik.

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## 17.6 Review Questions

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1. Romanticism did not spring out of nowhere, but expresses a climatic intensification of, as well as a series of arguments with, eighteenth century forms of thought. Explain the above statement.
2. What is the Romantic Theory?
3. What is the importance of 'allegory'?
4. Name the Romantic poets who 'immortalized' death and how?
5. What is the difference between Romantic poetry and Gothic novel?

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## 17.7 Bibliography

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