

## Lecture Twelve: Romantic Poetry

### \*Lesson Plan

- 1-Introduction
- 2-Two Generations of Great Poets
- 3-Characteristics of the movement
- 4-Evaluation

### \*Lesson Objectives: by the end of the lesson, students will be able to

- To recognize and match major Romantic poets with one of their key works
- To identify the defining characteristics of Romantic poetry.
- To distinguish Romantic poetry from other types of poetry
- To analyze a short Romantic poem and explain how Romantic themes are developed.

### \*Keywords

Romantic Poetry, Nature, Individualism, Sublime, Feelings, First & second generations

### 1.Introduction

Romanticism (**1789-1830**) is the revolt of the senses or passions against the intellect and of the individual against the consensus. Its first stirrings may be seen in the work of William Blake (1757-1827), and in continental writers such as the Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the German playwrights Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The publication, in 1798, by the poets William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772- 1834) of a volume entitled **Lyrical Ballads** is a significant event in English literary history.

The work of the later romanticists John Keats (1795-1821) and his friend Percy Bysshe Shelley and his wife Mary Shelley) is marked by an attempt to make language beautiful, and by an interest in remote history and exotic places. George Gordon and Lord Byron use romantic themes, sometimes comically, to explain contemporary events. Wordsworth becomes a kind of national monument.

In America, this period developed into the **Transcendental Period** (Transcendentalism). Additionally, **Gothic writings** (Writings that invoke horror, suspense and fear inside the reader) overlap with the Romantic and Victorian periods. Romanticism is an intellectual and artistic movement that emerged in Europe by the end of the 18th century. Many features of the movement are shared with the previous or following movements but the essential characteristics of Romanticism are specific and crucial.

Romanticism can be seen as a rejection of the precepts of order, calm, harmony, balance, idealization, and rationality that typified Classicism in general and late 18th-century Neoclassicism in particular. It was also to some extent a reaction against the Enlightenment and against 18th-century rationalism and physical materialism in general. Romanticism emphasized the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental. In England, the movement writers are divided into two generations:

**First Generation Romanticist writers:** William Blake, William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge.

**Second Generation Romanticist writers:** Lord Byron, John Keats and Percy B. Shelley.

## 2. Two Generations of Great Poets

The first great Romantic poets were Wordsworth and Coleridge: in Wordsworth's emphasis on poetry as "The spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings", in his attribution of importance to "common life" and to the "language really used by men" along with the role ascribed by Coleridge to the 'imagination', the basis of English Romantic poetry.

They were followed by a second generation represented by Byron, Shelley and Keats. They all travelled a lot, died young outside their motherland, and all three lived and wrote as if they had some premonition of the tragic shortness of their lives.

They were desperately aware of the need to cram a lifetime's experience into the years of youth.

### -Minor Poets

Between the minor poets we find Robert Southey (1774-1843), Thomas Campbell (1777-1844), Thomas Moore (1779-1852), Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864) and Leigh Hunt (1784-1859), Southey is often associated with Wordsworth and Coleridge as a member of the Lake Poets, but he is a minor figure in comparison with his friends: Southey's poetry is much less original. He expressed his ardent sympathy for the French Revolution in the long poem Joan of Arc (1796), and wrote long narrative poems in exotic settings (Thalaba the Destroyer, 1801; The Curse of Kehama, 1810). Except for a few lyrics (Devil's Thoughts, 1799), ballads (The Old Woman of Berkeley and St. Michael's Chair) and comic-grotesque poems (My Days Among the

Dead Are Past, After Blenheim and The Inchcape Rock), Southey's poetry is little read today. In 1813 he was appointed Poet Laureate and kept the office all his life.

### **3.Characteristics of the Movement**

-Respect and love of nature considering it as a refuge, a source of inspiration, creativity and imagination. It is seen by Romanticist poets as a catalyst for thinking, deep reflection and harmony.

-Romanticism also believed in individuality as the absolute power that human beings need, it recreates a new wave of nationalist pride led by emotions in which reason and intellectual are totally neglected. Individualism is prioritized for the sake of unfolding of the Self, with the individual's freedom of expression and feelings

-Rejecting the rigid strict poetic language and style and considering imagination as a key to spontaneity and creativity.

-Focus on one's freedom of expressing deep feelings and emotions as sadness, joy, despair, hope, ... rejecting all types of domination and oppression (religious, political, social, ...). Romanticism emerged against the growing suspicion about the religious strict norms and the church hegemony over society and the arts .

- Poetry is prioritized by English Romanticists rather than the other literary forms as W.

Wordsworth states: "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings".

-Romanticist writers were known for using supernatural elements in their works as a result of the spreading gothic traditions and conventions of the genre. Elements of horror were combined with romance within gloomy settings and frightening atmospheres and mysterious characters and events.

### **4.Evaluation**

#### **Task One: Choose the correct answer**

##### **1. The Romantic Movement in English literature is generally dated between:**

- A) 1600–1660
- B) 1660–1700
- C) 1789–1832
- D) 1850–1900

##### **2. Romantic poetry emerged partly as a reaction against:**

- A) Medieval scholasticism
- B) Enlightenment rationalism and Neoclassicism

- C) Victorian realism
- D) Modernist fragmentation

**3. Which historical event significantly influenced the Romantic poets?**

- A) The American Civil War
- B) The Industrial Revolution
- C) The Renaissance
- D) World War I

**4. Romantic poetry emphasizes:**

- A) Urban sophistication and satire
- B) Reason and logic above emotion
- C) Imagination, emotion, and individualism
- D) Strict adherence to classical rules

**5. Who co-authored *Lyrical Ballads*, a foundational Romantic text?**

- A) John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley
- B) William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- C) Lord Byron and William Blake
- D) Robert Southey and William Blake

**6. “Ode to a Nightingale” was written by:**

- A) William Wordsworth
- B) John Keats
- C) Percy Bysshe Shelley
- D) Lord Byron

**7. Which poem begins with “Tyger Tyger, burning bright”?**

- A) “The Chimney Sweeper”
- B) “The Lamb”
- C) “The Tyger”
- D) “London”

**8. The Byronic hero is best associated with:**

- A) William Wordsworth
- B) Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- C) Lord Byron
- D) John Keats

**9. Nature in Romantic poetry is often portrayed as:**

- A) A mechanical system
- B) A spiritual and healing force
- C) A hostile urban space
- D) An illusion of the mind

**10. The concept of the “sublime” in Romantic poetry refers to:**

- A) Perfect symmetry in art
- B) Comic exaggeration
- C) Awe mixed with fear in response to vastness or power
- D) Satirical criticism

**11. Romantic poets valued which of the following most highly?**

- A) Social conformity
- B) Aristocratic traditions
- C) Individual experience
- D) Scientific experimentation

**12. Which Romantic poet is known for visionary and mystical poetry, such as *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*?**

- A) William Blake
- B) John Keats
- C) Lord Byron
- D) Percy Bysshe Shelley

**13. Wordsworth defined poetry as:**

- A) “An imitation of classical models”
- B) “The spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”
- C) “A mirror of urban life”
- D) “A rhetorical performance”

**14. Which poetic form did many Romantic poets revive and perfect?**

- A) The Epic
- B) The Ballad
- C) The Sonnet
- D) The Dramatic Monologue

**15. Romantic poetry often employs:**

- A) Formal diction and artificial language
- B) Everyday language and common speech
- C) Strict classical structure only
- D) Political propaganda exclusively

**2-Global Task: Choose one question and write a paragraph about it**

- A- Examine the representation of **nature** in Romantic poetry. Is nature merely descriptive, or does it function as a philosophical and spiritual force? Support your argument with close reference to poems by **William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, or John Keats.**
- B- “The Romantic poet is both a dreamer and a social critic.”  
Discuss this statement with reference to selected poems, showing how Romantic poetry combines imagination with political or social engagement.
- C- Discuss Romantic poetry as a reaction against Enlightenment rationalism and Neoclassicism. In your answer, analyze how Romantic poets redefine the role of imagination, emotion, and nature. Refer to at least two poets in your discussion.