

Literary Theory and Literary Criticism
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Lecture – 07

Part – D

Romanticism

Let us move on to talk about the American romanticism now and the key period, the designated period for the American romanticism is from 1825 to 1865.

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This period is also known as the American renaissance and more popularly the age of transcendentalism. The key names and I am sure, most of you are students of literature and you are aware of the key names Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thoreau Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe, although there are other key names also. So, interestingly both Emerson and Walt Whitman refer to America as a poem waiting to be return between call the expression of individual identity, a kin to national identity.

American romanticism like it is an English counterpart was again a revolt against the age of reason and rational and scientific spirit of the particular period. We have to remember,

that reason played an important part in the American revolution and the declaration of independence. You also have to remember Thomas Paine's Pamphlet, Common Sense which was published in 1776 a work that challenge the authority of the British Monarchy and the British government.

So, if you look at the key distinctions between the age of reason and romanticism, this is what we get, the age of reason is all about rationality, control, conformity, order and it is called mechanical. On the other hand, romanticism is all about imagination, expression of individuality, spontaneity and it is also extremely organic as opposed to the mechanical aspect of the age of reason. The key elements of the romantic literature or the period or the age of romanticism, so literature was highly subjective, as in written as in English literature it was saturated with emotional intensity.

The idea was that common man could be the hero and nature was a place of refuge. The romantics value nature as opposed to social order, the American romantics valued spiritual intuition and self reliant individualism. These are the keywords that we should remember, individualism, self-reliance and spiritual intuition. A key literary device as we remember from the English romanticism also is that of pathetic fallacy, where nature is not just the passive observer, but it is sympathetic to people.

The romantics propose certain realistic techniques, such as the use of local color. For example, the down to earth characters like the realistic characters in William Wordsworth and also the colloquial language in Walt Whitman, so the importance of the local color. Let us move onto talk about Walt Whitman 1817 to 1892, he was a poet whose major poem was Song of Myself and also the seminal work Leaves of Grass, where he declared a poets manifesto. He said that the new American poet would create new forms and subjects and new subject matter for poetry, rejecting conventional language and rhyme. So, insistence on a new kind of subject matter that has not been dealt with before and he is one of the key practitioners, let just say a pioneer in the use of free verse in poetry.

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- A child said, What is the grass? fetching it to me with full hands;
- How could I answer the child? . . . I do not know what it is any more than he.
- I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.
- Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord, A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropped,
- Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark, and say Whose?

I will read out a couple of lines from Walt Whitman, a child said what is the grass fetching it to me with full hands. How could I answer the child, I do not know what it is any more than he. I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven or I guess, it is the handkerchief of the Lord. A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropped, bearings the owners name somewhere in the corners that we may see and remark and say whose.

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- Or I guess the grass is itself a child. . . .the produced babe of the vegetation.
- Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic, And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones, Growing among black folks as among white, Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same, I receive them the same.

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation, or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic and it means, sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones, growing among black folks as among white, Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff I give them the same, I receive them the same. What does it mean? It does mean that instance on subject matter which was either to unknown or unfamiliar to the Americans.

And also again look at the similarity between English romanticism and American romanticism, spontaneous emotions, foregrounding a child that is in a sense and I am taking into account or being very inclusive, the white, the black, the congressman and all kinds of people. So, this is exactly what the romantics for doing in England as well, so other writers of the age include William Cullen Bryant, Washington Irving.

I am sure most of you remember Washington Irving and his Gothic Tale of the Sleepy Hollow and also requirmental. H. W. Longfellow, Margaret Fuller, James Fennimore Cooper remember the World Noble Savage is often associated with Fennimore and his net bumper novels and Harriet Beecher Stowe, very popularly known are remembered for her Uncle Tom's Cabin.

Now, one of the most important figures of the American romanticism is Emerson Ralph Waldo, Emerson 18 over 3 to 1882 he was the person who assured in American romanticism and a leading exponent of transcendentalism. His works in influence people such as Walt Whitman, Thoreau and also the great poet Emily Dickinson. In Europe, he had a formative influence on people like George Eliot and also nation.

Emerson's essay nature, best testimony to his romantic world view and expresses several of his ideas on individualism. As was prevalent in the works of the romantics, Emerson believed that nature is perceptible only to the eye and heart of the child and someone who has retained the spirit of infancy. So, innocent is important to return to nature is important. So, nature is part of God, by Emerson the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind, the relation between the mind and matter is not fancied by some poets, but it stands in the will of God and so it is free to be known by all men.

In his seminal, I said the American is scholar which was actually a lecture delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society in 1837, Emerson called for distinctively American writing free from European influence. It was a call for Americans to trust their individuality and act as noble representatives to the world. The major influences on this

scholar included not only nature, but also the mind of the past and you can connect an associate Emerson's thoughts to that of T. S. Eliot's in tradition and the individual talent.

Eliot suggested that the individual writer should subordinate himself to the mind of Europe to tradition, whereas for Emerson's the mind of the past being restrictive, it is exactly what contemporary writers must transcend go beyond and express the reality of their own period. Emerson's most fundamental premise is there is one man, because of all. All man can be rolled into one man.

I mean the final influence on the scholar is action, without action as Emerson says, he is not yet man without it, thought can never ripen into truth. Also let us recall Emerson's very important very influential essay, Self Reliance where he pretends who so would be a man must be a nonconformist. So, remember all these ideals return to nature for granting the child and childlike innocence and individuality, Self Reliance and nonconformity. These are the key elements of American thought and an American literature and much of it can be traced back to Ralph Waldo Emerson and his thought.

Let us move on to talk about Henry David Thoreau 1817 to 1862. He was an essay's poet philosopher and mystic, he was a keen observer of nature, a lover of solitude and an exponent of the simple life. In his very long twitterizer or essay, civil disobedience which was a direct influence on Mahatma Gandhi also and his concept of disobedience on, Thoreau works was published in 1849 and we must very famously says that government is best, which governs not at all.

In his Walden published in 1854, Thoreau shows as a template for an authentic life that can be lived if one lives, a simple life free of materialism. In Thoreau's writing, the writer becomes one with nature and the ecological and the emotional and spiritual unite. Nathaniel Hawthorne another important figure of this age 1804 to 1864 and mostly remember today for the scarlet letter. So, he draw upon Emerson's theory's enlightenment philosophy and Coleridge's views on imagination, along with Horton Melville, Horton derived it, the tuning issues of industrialisation and commercialism, the mechanism and commercialism, he was opposed to that an American society.

The two recurring themes of his works are obsession with sin and guilt and the idea of redemption. Horton was the first great writer in the American tradition of psychological and subjective fiction. We move on to the great Edgar Allan Poe 1809 to 1849 who was

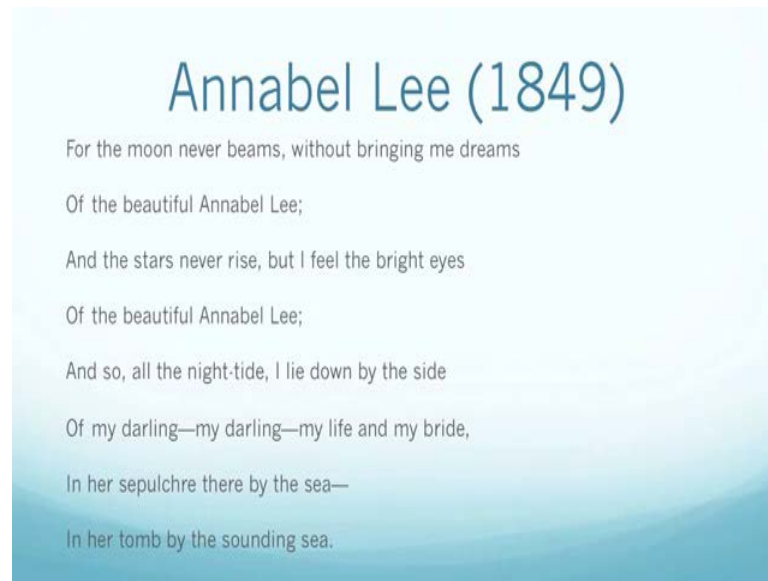
a poet, short story writer and occasional critic as well, his major works are *The Fall of the House of Usher* 1839, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* 1841, *Tale Heart* 1843 and *the Raven* 1845.

Who followed the close analysis of a work and in his seminal essay, *the philosophy of composition* a publisher 1846, he explain the process of writing *the Raven*. He explains that instead of working in a fine frenzy of ecstatic intuition, a poet chooses a consistent emotional atmosphere that takes primacy over incident, character and versification. In his *the poetic principle* published in 1850, he asserts that aesthetic appreciation rather than direct purpose was of chief literary value.

So, therefore, people like Butler, a key symbolist and writer of the aesthetic movement, he was extremely influence by Poe and also translated Poe works in the French language. So, poets states that the death of a beautiful woman is the most poetical topic in the world, his reviews of Nathaniel Hawthorne tales often his most celebrated views of the *John of close fiction*, like many romantic authors Poe also subject to allegory, the use of allegory.

Like, it should be a work of art should be as realistic as possible that what he felt and he was not in a favour of allegory and that is what Nathaniel Hawthorne was generally associated with. And coming back to Poe assertions that in death of a beautiful woman can be the key inspiration for a poem, let we read out a couple of lines from his celebrated *Annabelle Lee* 1849 and Poe himself lost his wife Virginia to ((Refer Time: 16:22)) closest she was very young and she died and of course biography tell us that he was devastated after Virginia's death.

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So, let us look at Annabelle Lee, Annabel Lee 1849 for the moon never beams, without bringing my dreams of the beautiful Annabel Lee. And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes of the beautiful Annabel Lee. And so all the night, I lie down by the side of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride in her sepulchre thereby see, in her tomb by the sounding sea. In tale writing, Nathaniel Hawthorne Poe points out Hawthorne lack of originality and his dependence and allegory.

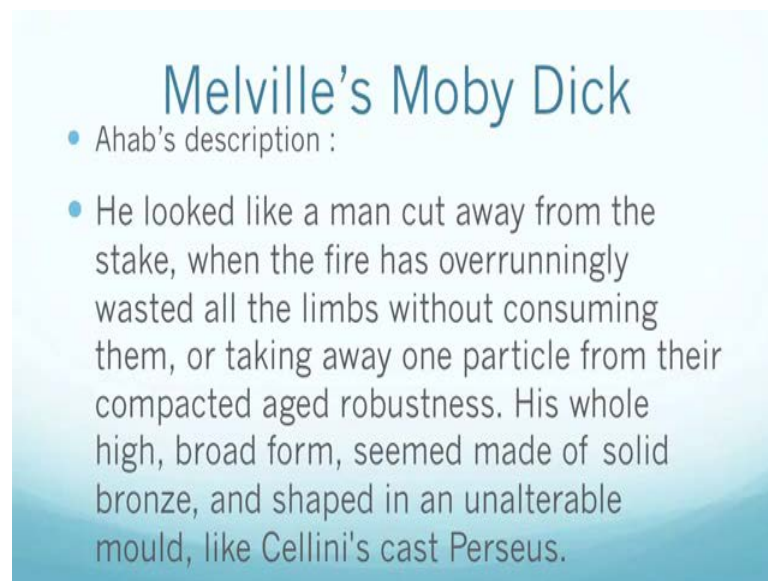
And as we have already seen that Poe was not too much in favour of allegories. So, then what is romanticism all about the primary feature of American romanticism is the celebration of individualism, spontaneity, deep emotion, subjectivity, nonconformity and celebrating the sublime. Nature is foreground and also the romantics asserted the importance of the individual, the unique, even occasionally and eccentric, consequently the opposite character typology of new classical drama.

In another way of course, romanticism created it is on literary types most predominantly the individual is. But, individualism also leads to isolation for example, let assume how Emerson write in American scholar about imitation and parroting and he looks in word to find divine essence which he claims we all share in common. Thoreau to isolated himself and purified himself at Walden pond, bow was notorious for habitually portraying, aristocratic hypersensitive mad men in gothic enclosures and Hummel will

invest a hub from his immortal Moby dick he had a captain of a fishing boat with home I like or Shakespeare grandeur like qualities.

So, let me read you a couple of lines from Melville Moby dick and the idea of extreme subjective emotions also an individual and eccentric. So, this is what this is how a hub is described.

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Melville's Moby Dick

- Ahab's description :
- He looked like a man cut away from the stake, when the fire has overrunningly wasted all the limbs without consuming them, or taking away one particle from their compacted aged robustness. His whole high, broad form, seemed made of solid bronze, and shaped in an unalterable mould, like Cellini's cast Perseus.

So, this is how will Melville describe captain Ahab Melville dick, he looked like a man cut away from the stake, when the fire has overrunningly wasted all the limbs without consuming them or taking away one particle from their compacted aged robustness. His whole high, broad form, seemed made of solid bronze and shaped in an unalterable mould, like Cellini's cast Perseus.

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- Threading its way out from among his grey hairs, and continuing right down one side of his tawny scorched face and neck, till it disappeared in his clothing, you saw a slender rod-like mark, lividly whitish.
- It resembled that perpendicular seam sometimes made in the straight, lofty trunk of a great tree, when the upper lightning tearingly darts down it, and without wrenching a single twig, peels and grooves out the bark from top to bottom ere running off into the soil, leaving the tree still greenly alive, but branded. Whether that mark was born with him, or whether it was the scar left by some desperate wound, no one could certainly say.

Threading it is way out from among his grey hairs and continuing right down one side of his tawny scorched face and neck, till it disappeared in his clothing, you saw a slender rod like mark, lividly whitish. It resembled that perpendicular seam sometimes made in the straight, lofty the trunk of a great tree, when the upper lightning tearingly darts down it in and without wrenching a single twig, peels and grooves out the bark from top to bottom ere running off into the soil, leaving the tree still greenly alive.

But, branded whether that mark was born with him or whether it was the scar left by some desperate wound, no one could certainly say. So, extremely subjective and also the idea of creating a highly unique kind of an individual or the hallmark of American romanticism, other instances of uniqueness in American romantic period, let us consider how Emily Dickinson never wanted to go public by publishing hours and also with women who embrace the democratic masses, yet he calls is major quoin, song of myself.

So, the idea of stack individualism prevails throughout the major works of American romanticism. So, to some up what was American romanticism and it is tends, there was a belief in natural goodness of man with man in a state of nature would behave well. But his often hindered by civilization, they also an emphasis on sincerity, spontaneity and within emotions. Also the belief that what is special in a man is to be valued over what is representative and there was also achieve delight in self analysis.

This is also affirmation permission of the values of democracy and the freedom of the individual I had back to Percy Bysshe Shelley, who famously state is the function of the sub line is to persuade us to end the slavery of pleasure and that is what time and thus perhaps word writers jobs is and that is what the romantics try to do. We cannot complete lecture on romanticism and not discuss Harold Bloom one of the most important and influential critic of times.

So, Harold bloom critic and scholar concluded at difference of the tradition of romantic poetry, particularly against the efforts of the new critics, yes you can three books on romantic poetry, Shelley smith making the visionary company and Blake's apocalypse. In Blake's apocalypse he conducts several readings of Blake's prophetic poetry in 1967 he wrote a visionary that is blocked rotor visionary poem, the covering sheriff or the poetic influence.

The poem is a sort of a waking dream that for ground pots quest, romance and revisits blooms interpretation of Blake's prophecies. Blooms romanticism and consciousness published in 1970 is an important collection of essays, including blooms own internalization of quest romance in his anxiety of influence publisher 1973, bloom challenge the accepted notion that literary tradition is a benign and empowering source of influence on modern poets, instead bloom argue for poet since Milton the achievements of the great preachers aside barriers to their own aspirations to originality. So, it again you can connect this to Elvis tradition and Emerson the American scholar.

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

As we conclude here is a list of reading list that you can please refer to the M. H. Abram's, *The Mirror in the Lamp*, also M. H. Abram's *Natural Supernaturalism*, Harold Bloom *The Visionary Company*.

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

Marshall Brown the *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, volume 5 *Romanticism*, Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry*, Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries, English Literature and its Background*, Paul de Man on *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*.

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And here is an important web research that you can use.

Thank you very much, see you in the next class.