

Poetry
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Lecture 33
Romantic Poetry

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Romantic Poetry



- Historical and Literary Context
- Features of Romantic Poetry
- *Lyrical Ballads* (1798)
- Theories of Poetry by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats
- Romantic Poetry as Interrogation
- Green Poetry and Green Reading
- The Romantic Mode in Poetry



Hello, in this video, we will look at Romantic Poetry. First, we will give a brief introduction to the whole of this romantic movement in this lecture and then in the subsequent lectures we will see specific poems by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and Shelly. Now, to begin with we will see the historical and literary context in which the whole movement took place. Then consider certain features of romantic poetry which maybe found in many of these poets. Most importantly, we will see the role of the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in bringing about this movement.

Then we will see some of the theories of poetry offered by Wordsworth, Coleridge in this movement, in these theories. We will see particularly one aspect of this interrogation that is questioning as a spirit of romantic poetry. Later on, we know now today Green Poetry is considered to be very important because of this Green Poetry concept we have what is known as Green Reading as well. We will see that also. Finally, we will examine the concept of Romantic Mode in Poetry specifically with reference to a critic called Josephine Miles.

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Historical Context



- Romantic Period: 1798-1830
- King George III (1760-1820)
- King George IV (1820-1830)
- The American Revolution (1775-1783)
- The French Revolution (1789-1799)
- The British reactions to the revolutions
- The Peterloo Massacre (1819) suppressing the voice of freedom of the people at St Peter's Field in Manchester
- The anarchism of William Godwin (1756-1836)
- The political activism of Thomas Paine (1737-1809)



When we come to the historical context, we can see that, romantic period begins from 1798 and ends in 1830. This periodization may vary from critic to critic, from text to text, but then, we will use this period 1798 and 1830 as the period for romantic poetry. We need to consider two rulers of England to understand romantic poetry and the poetry that came before: first King George the III from 1760 to 1820 and then King George the IV from 1820 to 1830.

We have to understand the impact of the American Revolution and the French Revolution on the romantic movement. Actually, this spirit of revolution for a democratic society was very important for various poets associated with the romantic movement. What we need to consider is how British society reacted to the revolutions. Initially, the people were happy with the revolutions that were happening in France. But subsequently the end-result was not so happy. Because the same soldiers who defeated Napoleon in Waterloo, also were used to attack the people in their own country when they were raising their own voice against the administration. They wanted to have some more freedom, they wanted to have some food for themselves. And in this context, we find that something known as Peterloo Massacre in 1819 is referred to; this happened in St. Peter's field in Manchester when industrial workers staged a protest against the government for equal rights, for reducing their burden, their suffering. Now, philosophically we have to consider the anarchic philosophy of William Godwin and also the political activism of Thomas Paine for the development of the romantic movement and romantic poetry.

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Literary Context



- Transition from the Neoclassical to Romantic period
- Blake's *Song of Innocence and Experience* (1794)
- *The Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, 1800, 1802
- First generation of Romantic poets
 - Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth
- Second generation of Romantic poets
 - Keats, Shelley, and Byron
- Novelists like Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott
- Essayists and critics like Lamb and Hazlitt



The literary context is something a kind of continuation from the neoclassical movement to the romantic movement. We also must remember that the pre-romantic period is indicated by the arrival of William Blake's *Song of Innocence and Experience*, published in 1794. It was William Blake who gave expression to the spirit of revolution, independence, self and all that in the pre-romantic period. Now, we consider William Blake as a pioneer of romantic movement.

Now, the most important document of this period is the *Lyrical Ballads* published in 1798. It was published again in 1800 in its second edition and in the third edition we have 1802 publication. So, when it was published in 1798, Coleridge and Wordsworth together published this volume of poems called 'Lyrical Ballads.' This particular *Lyrical Ballads* with its preface is very important for understanding the whole idea of romantic movement.

We have 2 kinds of poets; one is called first generation of romantic poets represented by Robert Southey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth and the second generation of romantic poets represented by John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron. We also have other writers like novelists, in Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott. We also have some essayist like, Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt. These writers contributed to the romantic movement. However, we will look into the romantic poetic movement alone.

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Features of Romantic Poetry



- Freedom of the individual, self-expression, sincerity, spontaneity, originality
- Interest in nature for exploration of the human mind
- Personal experience and individual imagination
- Poets as free spirits, geniuses or prophets (vates)
- Emotional intensity, rapture, nostalgia, childhood, past, horror, melancholy, sentimentality
- Appeal to the exotic and the primitive
- Belief in the creative power of the mind



What are the features of romantic poetry, here we have listed many of them. Freedom of the individual, self-expression, sincerity, spontaneity, originality; these are the characteristics, special characteristics of romantic poetry. All these writers particularly, poets took interest in nature for exploring their own mind, that is where we find personal experience and individual imagination of these writers are expressed in their poems.

They consider themselves as free spirits. The context of prophets, looking into the future, understanding something about the future on their own, from their own genius, from their own imagination. When they understood something about themselves in relation with nature, there was so much of emotional intensity, that we can see, exotic feeling, that is where we have this rapture. And also, they look back into their past nostalgically, they were thinking about their own childhood, past and certain incidents that might have happened in their own life which may have created a sense of horror of fear in them. Whatever was happening in the society they may have noticed, that is why some sense of horror also they may have found.

Similarly, we find a melancholic tone largely, because of this meditative reflective quality and also because of this emotional intensity they could not avoid any kind of sentimentality in their poems. So lyrical, emotional, sentimental, melancholic, these are the characteristics of poems that we find in romantic poets. And also, they were appealing to the exotic; they were also looking back to the primitive in man and finding out what man was, what man was then in early

nineteenth century connected this, early nineteenth century man with the past primitive man. They also believed in their own creative power of the mind because of this creative power of mind with reference to imagination, in interaction with nature they were able to produce a wonderful form of poetry called romantic poetry.

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Lyrical Ballads (1798)



- A joint venture of two great romantic poets:
 - William Wordsworth (1770-1850)
 - Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)
- Considered a revolutionary enterprise for the choice of subject, language, sentiment, atmosphere, etc.
- Emotion and story came together in the poems with an emphasis on the oral tradition of rustic and wandering bards
- 19 poems by Wordsworth, e.g., "Tintern Abbey"
- 4 poems by Coleridge, e.g., "The Ancient Mariner"
- "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800)
- *Lyrical Ballads* with "Poetic Diction" (1802)



Now, let us see the role of Lyrical Ballads. As its said, it is a joint venture of two great romantic poets, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. This was considered to be a revolutionary enterprise for the choice of subject, language, sentiment and atmosphere. They chose different subjects from what the previous poets were doing, they were trying to use a language of the common people and also, they were trying to give expression to the sentiments of people of their own choice and then they created a totally different kind of an atmosphere with relation to nature.

In this kind of poetry emotion and story came together, some emotion was there, some story element also was there, these two together, came together in the poems with an emphasis on the oral tradition of rustic and wandering bards, wandering people. So, what do we have in this Lyrical Ballads volume/ 19 poems by Wordsworth? One of the most important poems of this group is by Wordsworth called, "Tintern Abbey." Another group we have 4 poems by Coleridge. Again, a key text of Coleridge is, "The Ancient Mariner."

What is important for us about Lyrical Ballads, apart from the poems here is the “Preface” to Lyrical Ballads written by Wordsworth and published in 1800 in the second edition. We will spend some time on this when we come to discuss the theory of poetry by Wordsworth a little later. This preface is considered to be the manifesto of romantic poetry.

Later on, when the same volume was published again in 1802, Wordsworth added another section called “Poetic Diction,” to deal with the choice of words, the kind of language that was used in poetry at that time. He discussed it very seriously to indicate that a new kind of Poetic Diction was created by Wordsworth and Coleridge and all other poets belonging to romantic poetry.

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Wordsworth’s Concept of Poetry



- Good poetry is “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility.”
- The major element of the poem is the poet’s own feelings.
- The process of composition is spontaneous.
- Spontaneity is modified by a prior process of deep reflection and second thoughts.
- The key aspect of spontaneity is that the poem is unforced and free from artificial conventions.
- Wordsworth did not stay with his own theory.



Wordsworth enunciated his own concept of poetry in the preface to Lyrical Ballads. According to ‘Wordsworth good poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquillity.’ Feelings are more important. More than that feelings recollected from the past and meditated upon, reflected upon, put them together in one particular form, that is, good poetry for Wordsworth. The major element of the poem is the poet’s own feelings. Without the poet, without his feelings there is no poetry.

The process of composition for Wordsworth is spontaneous. But we have to understand, the process of composition is spontaneous but it is reflected upon. Spontaneity is modified by a prior

process of deep reflection and second thoughts. This reflection, second thoughts, spontaneity they may look contradictory but then this is how Wordsworth was composing his poems.

The key aspect of spontaneity is that the poem is unforced and it is free from artificial conventions. When it came to the choice of language, when it came to the subject matter, this was free from artificial conventions as represented by neoclassical poetry. Wordsworth did not stay with his own theory as we have explained here. He now and then violated his own principles to suit the subject, the language, the time that he was writing in.

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Subject Matter

- Nature with its many forms; landscape, flora and fauna
- Emphasis on accurate and sensuous description
- Nature is not presented for its own sake.
- It is used as a stimulus for the poet to engage in the typical characteristic of human beings, thinking.
- Its major concern is human experiences and problems.
- Romantic poetry as nature is a misnomer.

➤ "The Mind of Man –
My haunt, and the main region of my song."
[Wordsworth, "Prospectus," 40-41]



Let us see the subject matter that was dominant in romantic poetry. Nature was a key factor in romantic poetry. Nature with its many different forms, landscape, flora and fauna, everything was there in the poetry of romantic poets. They laid emphasis on accurate and sensuous description of their own interaction with nature, whatever was happening in their own mind. They did not consider nature for its own sake, they were considering nature for their own ability to interact their own imagination, understand life in their own way.

It is used as a stimulus that is, nature is used as a stimulus for the poet to engage in the typical characteristics of human beings, that is thinking and reflection. The major concern of this poetry is human experiences and problems. It is not just individual experiences alone, the problems faced by human beings in society and in themselves, in relation to human beings, all these are

part of romantic poetry. Romantic poetry as nature is a misnomer, a misnomer is something which does not tell us exactly what it is all about.

So, here we have from Wordsworth's prospectus what this romantic poetry is about. The main subject of romantic poetry is "The Mind of Man - My haunt, and the main region of my song." So, they explore their own mind, as we said earlier in relation to nature.

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Keats's Organic Theory

- Keats offers two axioms of poetry as a natural plant.
- "I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess, and not by singularity; It should **strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance.**
- Its touches of beauty should never be half-way, thereby making the reader breathless, instead of content. The rise, the progress, the setting of Imagery should, like the sun, seem natural to him, shine over him, and set soberly, although in magnificence, leaving him in the luxury of twilight. ... **if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all.**
- Keats' letter to John Taylor, 27th February, 1818.



Next, we move on to a very important aspect of romantic poetry, one concept called Organic Theory of poetry. Keats offered such an organic theory of poetry in one of his letters written to John Taylor on 27th February 1818. What did he write? he gave 2 axioms, 2 theorems regarding poetry as a natural plant. He says, "I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess, and not by singularity; it should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance."

The next point is, "Its touches of beauty should never be half-way, thereby making the reader breathless, instead of content. The rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should, like the sun, seem natural to him, shine over him and set soberly, although in magnificence, leaving him in the luxury of twilight." Here we come to the crux of Keats's theory of organic poetry, "if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all."

Let us imagine a seed sowed into a piece of land and the plant grows from the seed. We have to understand whatever the characteristic available within the seed will come out. So, nothing extraneous will come into the plant. So, whatever is there in the seed it will come out automatically, organically, spontaneously. The branches, the flowers, the fruit everything will come out from that seed alone. The poem should come out like a plant from a seed spontaneously, organically, that is what Keats said in one of his letters.

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Coleridge's Organic Theory



“The form is mechanic when on any given material we impress a pre-determined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material — as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form on the other hand is innate, it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward Form. Such is the Life, such is the form. Nature, the prime genial artist, inexhaustible in diverse powers, is equally inexhaustible in forms.”

Coleridge's *Essay on Shakespeare*



Similarly, Coleridge also offered a theory of poetry based on this organism. Let us see what he has said about this organic poetry in his essay on ‘Shakespeare.’ He compares organic poetry with mechanic poetry that is the new classical poetry, differentiates it from romantic poetry:

“The form is mechanic when on any given material we impress a pre-determined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material - as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form on the other hand is innate, it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. Such is the life, such is a form. Nature, the prime genial artist, inexhaustible in diverse powers, is equally inexhaustible in forms.”

The organic form inexhaustible nature genial artist, that is what romantic poets gave emphasis to and they were trying to create an organic poetry in contrast to the mechanic poetry or mechanical poetry of the neoclassical poets.

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Wordsworth on Organic Unity

"I might say, an established opinion that Shakespeare is justly praised when he is pronounced to be 'a wild irregular genius, in whom great faults are compensated by great beauties.' How long may it be before this misconception passes away, and it becomes universally acknowledged that the judgment of Shakespeare in the selection of his materials, and in the manner in which he has made them, heterogeneous as they often are, constitute a unity of their own, and contribute all to one great end, is not less admirable than his imagination, his invention, and his intuitive knowledge of human Nature!"

Wordsworth, *Poems* (1815)



We also have some understanding of this organic unity or organic theory of poetry from Wordsworth as well. He says, in his volume called 'Poems' published in 1815,

"I might say, an established opinion that Shakespeare is justly praised when he is pronounced to be 'a wild irregular genius, in whom great faults are compensated by great beauties.' How long may it be before this misconception passes away and it becomes universally acknowledged that the judgement of Shakespeare in the section of his materials, and in the manner in which he has made them, heterogeneous as they often are, constitute a unity of their own, and contribute all to one great end, is not less admirable than his imagination, his invention, and his intuitive knowledge of human Nature!" Wordsworth *Poems* (1815)

This nature is important; but we have to understand this nature is human nature, understood from imagination, from invention and intuitive knowledge. This is best represented in Shakespeare, that is what Wordsworth says, we will also notice that similar example of Shakespeare is given by Keats for the concept of negative capability that also we will see.

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Coleridge on Imagination



“This power, ... reveals ‘itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant’ qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry.”

Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter 14.



Coleridge has said that imagination is a key to poetry. Imagination and poetry are almost similar, co-terminus actually. So, we will have a small extract from ‘*Biographia Literaria*,’ chapter 14 to understand what imagination is, what poetry is,

“This power, this power of poetry reveals ‘itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant’ qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general with the concrete; the ideal with the image. It goes on like this, the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgement ever awake and steady self-possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry.”

Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter 14.

All kinds of opposite qualities, as listed by Coleridge are brought together, united that is organic unity made possible by poetry by imagination, in every great poet it happens. Many great poets have considered this to be their key to understanding poetry, imagination, the shaping spirit of imagination.

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The Poetry of Self



- Most romantic poems are about the poets themselves.
- Some are directly autobiographical.
 - Wordsworth's *The Prelude; The Growth of a Poet's Mind* (1805 /1850)
 - Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode" (1802)
 - Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" (1820)
- Some are indirectly personal.
 - Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-1819)
 - Shelley's *Alastor* (1816)



As we can see, romantic poetry is more or less all about the self of the poet. So, we call it 'The Poetry of Self.' Most romantic poems are about the poets themselves. They might have visited natural surroundings, landscapes, rivers, everything they may have seen but they write about themselves. Many of them are directly autobiographical as we can see in the case of Wordsworth in many of his poems, we can see this, especially we can see this in 'The Prelude; The Growth of a Poet's Mind' as it is called.

We can find similar kind of poetry, autobiographical poetry in Coleridge's poem "Dejection: An Ode." Further we can have one more example in Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale." Next, we have some poems which are indirectly autobiographical or indirectly personal. We have one example here from Lord Byron's poem called 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' and another poem from Shelley called 'Alastor.' So, some of the poets directly wrote about themselves, some other poets indirectly wrote about themselves. Finally, we will notice all poems of romantic writers are about themselves.

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Characters/ Subjects



- Solitary and stoic figures in quest
- Social outcasts or non-conformists
- Isolated rebels
 - Prometheus
 - Cain
 - The Wandering Jew
 - Satanic hero-villain
 - The great outlaw



When it comes to the characters or the subjects that the romantic poets discussed or dealt with, we find one specific characteristic. That is, most of these poets dealt with solitary and stoic figures in quest of something; they were searching for something; searching for their own self; searching for the meaning of life, searching for meaning in relationship with human beings with nature.

They were also discussing poems which dealt with social outcasts or non-conformist; because they were more into imagination, more into creativity, spontaneity, originality and all that they could not accept what was there in the society, so they could not join the mainstream and so they considered themselves something like outcast, the great example is Lord Byron. He could not sustain himself in the British society, he was always at odds with the society. Similarly, Shelley was also at odds with the society, he could not accept everything of British society. Most of the times he lived away from Britain. We have isolated rebels, we have some examples here, in the case of Prometheus. Prometheus is a well-known mythical figure, used by Shelley in his poem. Further we have Cain, The Wandering Jew, Satanic hero-villain, The great outlaw.

Many of these characters, they may have been outlawed or they may have become non-conformist and most of them were interestingly looking for some way to help humanity to come to grips with themselves, not get fossilized into a social structure created by the past. That is why these subjects, the subjects in the sense of characters, also we find social outcasts or rebels or

solitary people who were looking for something in different locations, mostly in natural surroundings.

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Romantic Poetry as Interrogation



- Swingle observes that romantic poetry is a poetry of questions, not answers .
- Romantic poems do not offer dogmas or doctrines.
- Blake to Byron challenged authority and received notions.
- “Romantic poetry is predominantly a literature which asks rather than tells, which exposes problems rather than solves them. The main product of romantic poetry is the **question**, and its main effect on the reader is **disturbance**”
- Keats's “Ode to a Nightingale”
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?



Yes, now we come to soul of romantic poetry. Romantic poetry always asked questions. That is why we have used the word interrogation. It asks questions, continuously asks questions. A critic called Swingle has observed that, romantic poetry is a poetry of questions not answers. Romantic poems do not offer dogmas or doctrines. In fact, they questioned dogmas or doctrines of Britain and European society at that time.

From Blake to Byron, all romantic poets challenged authority and received notions. Romantic poetry is predominantly a literature which asks rather than tells, which exposes problems rather than solves them. The main product of romantic poetry is a question, and its main effect on the reader is disturbance. That is why when we read some poems by Wordsworth or Shelley or Keats or Byron, we will find that they address some questions of society that might disturb us, even when they are writing about nature and all other things. One question we have in Keats's poem ‘Ode to a Nightingale.’ Here he asks,

“Was it a vision or a waking dream?

Fled is that music- Do I wake or sleep?”

There is no definite answer to this question. Asking question by itself intelligently, creatively, spontaneously in poetry is the prerogative of a romantic poet.

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Green Poetry and Reading (Pite 1996)



- Romantic poetry provides an ecological perspective.
- Environmental catastrophe is a product of western capitalism and its enlightenment project.
- Romantic poetry distrusted and opposed both of them.
- Thus, romantic poetry and ecology share a common ground.
- Romantic poetry can help us cultivate ecological ways of feeling and thinking.
- **Points for discussion:** Environmental ethics, deep ecology, land ethic, ecological poetry
- Wordsworth's "Nutting"



We, now focus on what is known as 'Green Poetry.' When Romantic poets were writing their poems, they did not consider themselves Green Poets as we understand today but from hindsight, we now got a great understanding of green concepts, green buildings, green chemistry everything is green today because of these problems we have in our environment. So, there is a critic called Pite, he has thought about this green poetry and green reading. Let us see what he has to say.

According to him and many others romantic poetry provides an ecological perspective on our life. On earth environmental catastrophe is a product of western capitalism and its enlightenment project. This capitalism, enlightenment reason going together to create wealth, to create products, to create a commercialized society is the root of many of the ecological problems that we face today.

Romantic poetry distrusted and opposed both capitalism and enlightenment. Romantic poetry can help us cultivate ecological ways of feeling and thinking and thus romantic poetry and ecology share a common ground, certain points of discussion that we can have or environmental ethics, deep ecology, land ethic and ecological poetry.

Whenever we read nature poetry or poems by romantic writers, whether written by Wordsworth and his company or whether written by poets today, we can discuss nature poetry or romantic poetry with reference to the question of environmental ethics and deep ecology today. Land ethic is another concept, serious concept. Today we have to consider the rights of plants, animals, land, water, river, everything.

In that context, where are we? Who are we? These are questions that we have to ask ourselves. One good example of this green poetry and green reading that we can have is from Wordsworth. It is called 'Nutting.' It is a short poem. Just when you read it, you will understand. There is a spirit in the woods. There is a teacher in the woods. We can learn a lot from nature, if we pay attention, if we learn we can take the journey into nature. Along with Wordsworth, the little boy, the nut gatherer, if we go along with him, we can learn a lot about our own interest in nature, our own life on nature, our own life on the earth.

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The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, **we are out of tune;**
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn. [Wordsworth]



Here we have one good example from Wordsworth. This is a sonnet, well-known sonnet, 'The world is too much with us.'

“The world is too much with us; late and soon,

Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—

Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
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So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

This is a poem by Wordsworth called, the world is too much with us. We are out of tune. We it would be better to be a Pagan than a Christian. Christianity is closely connected with this capitalism especially, Protestantism and enlightenment project and all that. So, Wordsworth, a Christian believes that being a Pagan would be better to understand the close relationship between human beings and nature.

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The Romantic Mode (Miles, 1953)



- A mode is an attitude and idea; a material arrangement or structure.
- Josephine Miles examines the combination of lyrical ballads and identifies several features of the romantic mode in poetry:
 - More verbs than adjectives
 - More complex than coordinate
 - More narrative and lyrical than descriptive and epic
 - More concrete and symbolic than abstract and general
 - More stanzaic than linear



We come to the last point of this romantic mode. We saw certain features of romantic poetry all about this individual, self expression, spontaneity, originality and all that. Now, we have a critic called Josephine Miles; she has written an essay on the romantic mode in poetry, where she has understood certain specific features of romantic poetry. Let us see them.

For her a mode is an attitude and an idea. It is a material arrangement or structure. She examines the combination of Lyrical Ballads and identifies several features of the romantic mode in poetry. Here are the features, we find according to her, more verbs than adjectives, more complex structures than coordinate structures, more narrative and lyrical than descriptive and epic, more concrete and symbolic than abstract and general, more stanzaic than linear; these are certain qualities. We will find more of verbs, complex structures, narrative qualities, lyrical qualities, concrete and symbolic qualities. Similarly, we will find many of these poems are arranged in stanzas rather than continuous text.

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Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner*



I **pass**, like night, from land to land;
I **have** strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I **see**,
I **know** the man that must **hear** me: 590
To him my tale I **teach**.

What loud uproar **bursts** from that door!
The wedding-guests **are** there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids **singing are**: 595
And **hark** the little vesper bell,
Which **biddeth** me to prayer!



We have some examples to exemplify the mode of Josephine Miles. Here we have an example from Coleridge for verbs. More verbs we have in this poem. So just two stanzas from the ancient mariner.

“I **pass**, like night, from land to land;

I **have** strange power of speech;

That moment that his face I **see**,

I **know** the man that must hear me:

To him my tale I **teach**.

What loud uproar **bursts** from that door!

The wedding-guests **are** there:

But in the garden-bower the bride

And bride-maids **singing are**:

And hark the little vesper bell,

Which **biddeth** me to prayer!

All those verbs have been highlighted in red for us to see quickly.

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Shelley, “The Cloud” - Last Stanza

I **am** the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky;
I **pass** through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I **change**, but I cannot **die**.
For after the rain when with never a stain
The pavilion of Heaven **is** bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently **laugh** at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I **arise** and **unbuild** it again.



The next poem is “The Cloud” by Shelley, from which we have the last stanza here. We have here again identified the verbs:

“I **am** the daughter of Earth and Water,

And the nursling of the Sky;

I **pass** through the pores of the ocean and shores;

I **change**, but I cannot **die**.

For after the rain when with never a stain,

The pavilion of Heaven **is** bare,

And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams,

Build up the blue dome of air,

I silently **laugh** at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I **arise** and **unbuild** it again.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:19)

Summary



- Historical and Literary Context
- Features of Romantic Poetry
- *Lyrical Ballads* (1798)
- Theories of Poetry by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats
- Romantic Poetry as Interrogation
- Green Poetry and Green Reading
- The Romantic Mode in Poetry



To put all together in a summary, we have seen in this lecture, the historical and literary context in which romantic poetry arose. We identified certain features of romantic poetry that we may find in Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Byron and others. We also observed that *Lyrical Ballads* as published in 1798 became the key text for understanding romantic poetry. When the same text came out with the preface and later the poetic diction then this became a romantic manifesto for all poets.

We noticed certain theories of poetry by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats, particularly about this spontaneity, recollection, about this unity of all desperate elements, that is reconciler of opposites in Coleridge and then organic theory of poetry from all the three poets, particularly Keats.

We also saw how romantic poetry is an expression of interrogation, that is questions rather than answers. We related this romantic poetry with whatever is happening in twentieth century or

twenty first century where we have become more aware of nature today. So we come up with this concept called green poetry. And in association with that we have a different kind of reading called Green Reading. And lastly, we examine the romantic mode in poetry as discussed by Josephine Miles. We have some references for you.

(Refer Slide Time: 32:57)

References



- Miles, Josephine. 1953. "The Romantic Mode in Poetry," *ELH*, 20 (1):29-38
- Pite, Ralph. 1996. "How Green Were the Romantics?" *Studies in Romanticism*, 35 (3): 357-373.
- Swingle, L. J. 1971. "On Reading Romantic Poetry," *PMLA*, 86 (5): 974-981.



These are the articles which were useful for understanding romantic poetry. Hope you can look at 1 or 2 of them. Thank you.