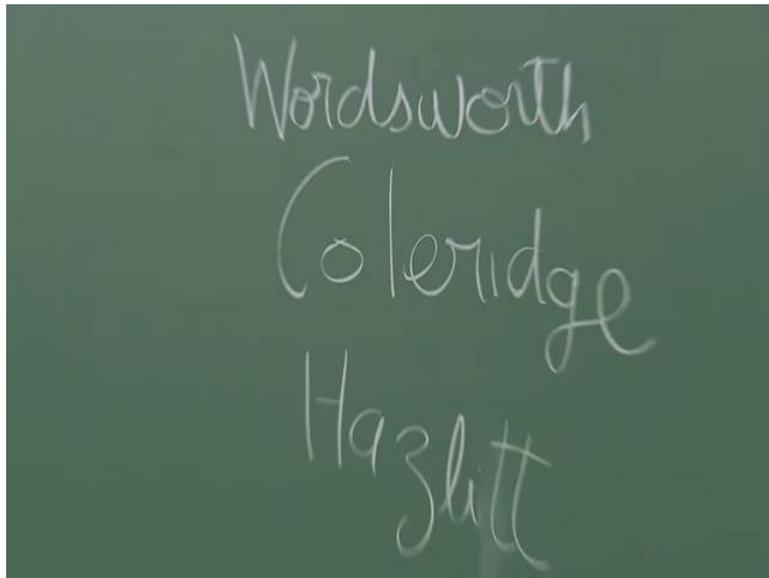


**Literary Theory and Literary Criticism**  
**Prof. Aysha Iqbal**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

**Module - 07**  
**Lecture - 12**  
**Lecture 7 Part C**  
**Romanticism**

(Refer Slide Time: 00:26)



Welcome friends to today's lecture on romanticism. Particularly we are going to do English and American romanticism. The key names are William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Hazlitt, that is an English romanticism and their representatives of American literature are that so-called transcendentalist. The key concepts are of course we will be talking about William Wordsworth's Preface to Lyrical Ballads, that is his seminal work on literary criticism and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's biography is Litreria. So, we will be talking about the concepts of poetic diction, fancy and imagination to begin with. Now, the romantic period in English literature, the most commonly regarded era in romantic period in English literature is from 1789 to 1832.

So, there are certain key dates here to remember. 1789 as we all know is the outbreak of the French revolution, 1798 is the publication of Lyrical Ballads and 1832, the year of the Sir Walter Scot's death. So, these are the years that we have to bear in mind. Now, what was the particular period called English romanticism all about. So, the idea of new

classism such as decorum and order, they were displaced by an emphasis on spontaneity and individual experience. So, there was a call for making literature more individual, more personal and something which is related to day to day life, more individual in nature.

You remember how it all started before the years preceding the French revolution, when one of the seminal names is that of Rousseau who declared that man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains. Guess the emphasis was always on individual experience. There was also an emphasis on originality and genius. Engineers were defined in various ways particularly by Coleridge and originality and genius design ideas replaced the idea of imitation of classical authors. So, the writers of this age were influenced by philosophers and thinkers, such as Lock Hume and Berg. William Wordsworth, 1770 to 1850, he is a great romantic poet and also a very influential literary critic. One of the most important influences on Wordsworth was the French revolution and its ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. As we all know this was the slogan of the French revolution. However, in time vasava group extremely disillusioned with the turn that the French revolution had taken, and he was in particular disillusion with the way the ideals and the ideas and ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity gave way to the reign of terror and the bloodshed that followed the French revolution. In Lyrical Ballads, all these thoughts come about.

In 1785, Wordsworth met Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Together this salvaged the idea and ideals of romanticism from the anarchy that followed the French revolution. So, they believed that the revolution was based on certain principles and the subsequent disillusionment, but the idea was how to sell waves, those noble principles that were at the bottom of the French revolution. Coleridge and Wordsworth collaborated on the Lyrical Ballads. The lyrical ballad is a collection of 23 intimate poems about rustic life told in simple language that is a poetic diction and appears expression of romantic ideals. The key highlight of the Lyrical Ballads is to redefine literary taste towards a new language. Wordsworth and Coleridge repudiated the gaudiness. The gaudiness an phraseology of many modern writers and aimed for austere purity of language. Consider these terms gaudiness and that is overwritten works of proprietary, overwritten pieces of text and this nay to be the idea was to replace these with something which was more simple and innocent and was saturated with a spirit of austerity and purity of language,

therefore simplicity of diction. So, the emphasis in the Lyrical Ballads is on simplicity of poetic language and it is based on the idea that humble and rustic life again these are phrases from the Lyrical Ballads. So, humble and rustic life leads to a more permanent and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets.

The key term is humble and rustic life which can lead to more philosophical poetic language. Wordsworth also deemed that there neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose and mythical composition crystallized a shift towards natural world order, grammar and sentence structure in poetry. Wordsworth defined poet and this is interesting as a man speaking to men. This signifies that the focus is not just on the poet with his superior worldview and his superior intellect, but also on the reader who the poet acknowledges is an informed reader and who is also imaginative who can appreciate poet with superior intellect.

Key principles of the Lyrical Ballads were, this was a literary world where the ordinary people and also so-called outcast had a voice. The common people had a significant role to play and women and children had a place. Think of the solitary reaper, think of the Lucy poems and you will realise that children and women who till now did not have much of a presence, much of a role to play. Now, suddenly became prominent particularly due to the efforts of Wordsworth and Coleridge in the Lyrical Ballads. Now, the idea was no less democratic, than the principles behind the French revolution giving dignity to the common people. That was the idea of the French revolution and that is what Wordsworth and Coleridge tried to bring back, and by doing this without any bloodshed, without any political revelations. They still led to a kind of radical thinking, a kind of literary revolution and thereby gave politics a human face.

Coming to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, his dates are 1772 to 1834 and in *Biographia Literaria*, the key idea was that the imagination is primary or secondary. So, he gave from predominance to the concept of imagination. The key ideas are fancy and imagination, the imagination according to Coleridge is more important. So, the distinction between fancy and imagination was a major feature in Coleridge's theory of poetry as well as in his general theory of mental processes *Biographia Literaria* published in 1817 is a key text, where Coleridge declares no man was ever yet a great poet without being at the same time a profound philosopher. With this he challenged the belief that poetry and

philosophy are natural antagonists. You may recall what Plato said about the position of the poets in democracy; there is no place for poets. That is what he said which means that poetry and philosophy according to the classical thinkers who are always at loggerheads with each other, but not so in Coleridge where he said that a poet should necessarily be a philosopher as well on fancy and imagination. So he says that fancy has no other counters to play, but with fixities and definite.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:55)



I will write this down on the board. Fancy has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definite. The fancy is, indeed no other than a mood of memory emancipated from the order of time and space. For Coleridge, then fancy is a mechanical process which receives the elementary images the fixities and definite. However, it is the imagination that produces a much higher kind of poetry and dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to recreate. Remember these terms that for Coleridge with imagination produces a higher kind of poetry. For Coleridge again fancy is nearly mechanical, but imagination is vital. Wordsworth on the other hand attaches more significance to fancy and he calls fancy a creative faculty. In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge differs from Wordsworth on this and states that what Wordsworth thinks is fancy alone is really in fact fancy and imagination blended or combined. He also felt that poetic genius and here we come to Coleridge's idea on genius, that poetic genius shared by the depth of imagination.

Imagination is extolled according to Coleridge or in Coleridge as the ultimate synthesizing faculty enabling humans to reconcile differences and opposites in the world of appearance. The imagination for Coleridge generates and produces the form of its own, while its rules are the very powers of growth and production. A key term in Coleridge is also synthetic power where he says imagination 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. So, imagination is the engine that drives the creative process. The faculty of imagination according to Coleridge assimilates and synthesizes the most disparate elements into an organic whole.

So, this reconciliation of opposites is a central idea for the romantics. To Coleridge, the archetype of all geniuses was Shakespeare as he said Shakespeare became all things yet forever remaining himself. For Coleridge the imagination goes beyond that is intransients the experience and creates and realism did not matter as much as imagination. A key example here is his Kubla Khan or a vision in a dream. Kubla Khan published in 1797 was written under the influence of opium when Coleridge fell asleep and had a dream. He dreamt that he was writing a poem and when he woke up a few hours later, he sat down and penned a few lines. While writing he was called by someone on business and when he came back, he realised that he had forgotten rest of his dream.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:38)

- 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.

So, all that remain was a couple of hundreds of lines by of a fragmented dream. Still we get an example of Coleridge's experience that is his dream and he created a poet out of the dream. So, I would like to draw your attention to these lines from Kubla Khan.

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. So, this kind of poetry emerging out of an experience that is part of a dream. So, to summarise Wordsworth and Coleridge's literary criticism as expressed in process to the Lyrical Ballads and Biographia Literaria continue to be of central importance in the history of criticism and theory.

We move on to William Hazlitt 1778 to 1831. An interesting fact about Hazlitt, he was many thing. He was an organised man; he was a poet, painter, historian and critics. He was also mentored by Coleridge. He witnessed the creative process of the Lyrical Ballads and would often visit Coleridge and Wordsworth while they were in the process of writing the Lyrical Ballads. Some of Hazlitt's key texts are an essay on the principles of human action published in 1805, the spirit of the age published in 1825 and the life of napoleon published in 1830. Hazlitt associated romantic poetry with the ideals of the French revolution. Like Coleridge, Hazlitt had a great respect for imagination which he knew change the way we see everyday things. In his essay on genius and common sense he says you decide from feeling and not from reason. So, again the supremacy of feeling and experiencing sensations along the lines of impressionist critics he emphasizes on the felt qualities of a work.

As he says the imagination is the faculty which represents objects not as they are in themselves, but as they are moulded by other thoughts and feelings into an infinite variety of shapes and combinations of power. In his work on poetry in general in 1880, he says poetry then is an imitation of nature, but the imagination and the passions are a part of man's nature. Two key ideas in Hazlitt criticism are the issues of style and the idea of sincerity. He stresses upon and the courage to say as an author what he felt as man. For the key term as in Hazlitt is its sincerity and originality of man. Man should have courage to say what he feels. So, that should not be any distinction between what a man feels and what the poet in him feels. A man should have the courage to express what he feels or a poet rather should have the courage to express what he feels as a man.

Wordsworth states that the central aim of the Lyrical Ballads would be to and I quote Wordsworth. 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 by men, and at the same time to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, where by ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them the primary laws of our nature chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement, umbel and rustic life was generally chosen because in that condition the essential passions of the heart are under less restraint and speak a plainer and more emphatic language because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity and in that condition, the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature.