

UNIT 48. ROMANTICISM IN GREAT BRITAIN: POETRY AND MAIN NOVELS.

The present unit, *Unit 48*, aims to provide a useful introduction to *Romanticism in Great Britain* and its influence on the *poetry and prose*, that is, the *main novels* of the period (namely between 1790 and 1837). We shall also deal with the main social and political changes which occurred in this period so as to understand how the most relevant literary figures reflected them in their writings. In general, the literature of the time was both shaped by and reflected the prevailing ideologies of the day which, following Speck (1998), means that this is an account of literary activity in which social, political, economic and cultural allegiances are placed very much to the fore.

In order to reach a complete understanding of the unit, we will divide our study into several chapters.

We shall start by providing a *historical background for the Romantic period* in which we shall analyse what is known as *the Pre-Romantic period* in Great Britain, in other words, the social, political and literary background *before 1790*. Then, we shall provide an overview of the *Romantic period in Great Britain*, which coincides to a great extent with the Georgian Age or the age of the Romantics (1790-1837). In this chapter, we shall also provide a political and social background to this period so as to frame the Romantic writers and their productions in an appropriate context, since their legacy reflects faithfully the winds of change of the time. So, in order to analyse the Romantic period, we shall start by reviewing the political and social background which will prepare the ground for the literary background regarding drama, poetry and prose. We shall focus on poetry and prose so as to analyse the main Romantic figures and literary productions of the time in terms of life, style and main works in next chapter.

The exposition will go on to provide an overview of the main poets of this period who make up the traditional Romantic canon. Hence we shall explore the main Romantic figures and their contributions regarding their life, style and works. Secondly, we shall approach prose production regarding the novel, where we shall analyse the life and works of Sir Walter Scott, Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, and other Gothic novelists.

This study would not be complete without the main educational implications in language teaching regarding the introduction of this issue in the classroom setting.

1. A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND FOR THE ROMANTIC PERIOD: THE PRE-ROMANTIC PERIOD (BEFORE 1790).

The main causes that led to the Romantic period are to be found not only in the political and social background, but also in the economic, technological, and literary background of the 18th century, which coincides to a great extent with the Augustan (or Georgian) Age (1714-1790), where the most outstanding events are the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (c.1750) and the French Revolution (1789). These changes, namely economic and political respectively, will serve so as to locate the starting point for our analysis of the Romantic period.

1.1. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND.

The early 18th-century political background up to 1790 is to be framed upon the Georgian succession line,

thus under the rule of Queen Anne (1701-1714); her German cousin, which became George I (1714-1727); George

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II (1727-1760), and George III (1760-1820), king of Great Britain and Ireland. The most outstanding turning points throughout the century regarding political, economic and social events were the consequences of the Industrial Revolution, the Seven Years' War and the French Revolution, among others, which were to influence the literature of the pre-Romantic period.

To start with, the effect of the industrial revolution was felt on both social and political conditions in various regions, namely in connections between industrialization, labour unions, and movements for political and social reform in England, Western Europe, and the United States.

Following George III's accession in 1760, there was a subtle change in policy. On the continent, although **the Seven Years' War** (1756-1763) was extremely costly in terms of lives and finance, Britain was seen as a world power. Yet, across the ocean the only real problem by 1770 was America and the revolution that started to take place since the British government attempted to cover its losses by several acts. As a result, colonial tensions increased and in 1776 the American colonies declared their independence as **the United States of America**.

The **French revolution** in 1789, opened an era of liberal revolution and a period of change, which slowly established the right of every citizen to move whenever and wherever he liked. As a result, religious tolerance grew. The idea of one nationality in one country started to develop and caused nationalism. Because of this and other ideologies a new group of political refugees grew and hence, government policy had a large influence on people in Europe now.

1.2. ECONOMIC BACKGROUND.

In economic terms, 1720 is a turning point since the South Sea Company is set up with the aim of challenging the financial strength of the Bank of England and the East India Company by providing loans for the government to support the national debt. This company had the monopoly on trade with all Spanish territories, South America and the West Coast of North America. The very infrastructure of Britain was changing and Britain became the world's first modern society, not only in agricultural developments which were followed by industrial innovation, but also in urbanisation and the need for better communications. In fact, the main changes are to be noticed in agriculture, industry and trade.

1.3. TECHNOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.

Moreover, the 18th-century scientific and technological background is namely represented by the scientific developments that took place under royal patronage of the Georgian succession line. During the course of the 18th century, a variety of inventions allowed for greater mechanisation to be applied to the industry and this led in turn to the industrial structure changing to a factory-based system.

These inventions were the basis for the increased productivity of the textile industry throughout Britain and this century was to witness the beginnings of an industrial revolution in Britain which was to change the world from 1750s on.

1.4. LITERARY BACKGROUND.

How do the early 18th-century literary events relate to the Romantic period? Simply because they reflect the literature of the previous years to Romanticism through the different genres, that is, drama, poetry and prose, by establishing two different literary conditions in pre-Romantic productions: on the one hand, the period of Cromwell showed a Puritan attitude against the culture and manners of the time whereas the Restoration inaugurated a new temper and a cultural style which lasted into the 18th century.

With this background in mind, we are ready now to examine the Romantic period in Great Britain.

2. THE ROMANTIC PERIOD IN GREAT BRITAIN (1790-1837).

The 18th-century political background after 1790 is still to be framed upon the Georgian succession line, thus under the rule of George III (1760-1820), king of Great Britain and Ireland; and his son, George IV (1820-1830), who was succeeded by his brother, William IV. Yet, the reign of British monarchs Charles II to George IV spanned over a century and a half (1660-1830), and that passing of the crown introduced new ideals concerning such issues as the Church, Parliament, and foreign policy.

The first relevant fact took place after the French Revolution (1789), when Napoleon I of France began a series of European wars with the only aim of conquering Europe. As England and France were engaged in open warfare since 1793, this ended with the **Napoleonic Wars** (1803-1815). Hostilities ended bringing about the extinction of the French Republic, the birth of which was greeted so joyfully by the English Liberals, the rise and destruction of the power of Napoleon, and the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty.

In 1815, after the Napoleonic Wars, the government introduced **the Corn Laws** which, first, regulated the import of cereals to secure price for the producers and, second, impeded that corn could be imported into Britain. In 1820, George IV succeeded the throne following his father's death. His reign was marked by a singular outstanding event: the passage of **the Catholic Emancipation Act**, which he opposed. When he died in 1830, he was succeeded by his brother, William IV (1830-1837), Duke of Clarence.

In 1824, workers joined together to protect themselves against powerful capitalist employers and ask for fair wages and reasonable conditions. This movement favoured the legalisation of the first **Trade Unions**.

In 1832, William IV secured the passage of the first **Reform Bill** or **Reform Act** (next Reform Acts would take place in 1867 and 1884) by agreeing to create new peers to overcome the hostile majority in the House of Lords and to make Parliament a more democratic body.

Up to 1836, there was a period of greater political confidence which led to an increasing activity in the trade-unions. The **death of William IV** in 1837 meant that the Romantic period is said to come to an end with the accession of Queen Victoria to the throne. Victoria would reign from 1837 to 1901 and would be the longest reigning British monarch. In general terms, during Victoria's reign, the revolution in industrial practices continued to change British life, bringing about urbanisation, a good communications network and wealth. In addition, Britain became a champion of Free Trade across her massive Empire, and industrialisation and trade were



glorified in the Great Exhibitions (1851).

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In general terms, these events had their effects in every corner of Europe, and in addition, these changes were also to be felt at social level since the long war brought inevitable misery, low wages, unemployment, and heavy taxation from the government which gave rise to fiery resentment and fierce demands on the part of the people (Albert, 1990).

Reactions to this social misery (massacre of Peterloo, the Reform Bill, the Corn Laws) were soon heard from literary figures and hence the relevance of reviewing the political and social background to understand the literary productions of the time, which will be analysed in the following section.

3. ROMANTICISM IN LITERATURE

3.1. A definition of 'romanticism'.

The word 'romantic' derives from Old French 'romans', which makes reference to a vernacular language descended from Latin. Following Rogers (1987:274), "although the adjective 'romantic' derives ultimately from the word that gives us the expression 'the Romance languages' it came to mean more than a language; it meant also the quality and preoccupations of literature written in those languages, especially 'romances' and stories.

By the 17th century in English the word 'romantic' had come to mean anything from imaginative or fictitious, to fabulous or downright extravagant. It was often used with overtones of disapproval; as the 18th century progressed, however, it was increasingly used with approval, especially in descriptions of pleasing qualities in landscape. The use of the term 'romantic' for the poetry of the period from 1780 to 1830 has this bunch of meanings behind it".

Yet, it is hard to see the meaning of the term 'romantic' without looking at what it was reacting against.

Following Rogers (1987:279), "the use of the term 'Romantic' obscures the many differences between the poets of this period. It is salutary to recall that though the term was used by German critics at the very end of the 18th century to describe features which they found in their own literature, it was not at the time used in Britain in that way. The term 'romantic', to describe the poets writing roughly between 1780 and 1830, did not come into currency until the second half of the 19th century.

3.2. Romanticism: a reaction against the 18th century.

Following Rogers (1987:274), "the Romantic period in Europe saw the end of the dominance of the Renaissance tradition" and "the fragmentation of consciousness away from the cultural authority of classical Rome". As a result, local cultures a flowering of vernacular literatures were rediscovered in such a way that Romantic literature became strong in many of the vernaculars of Europe, notably German and Russian.

Therefore, we may say that English Romantic period witnessed the main changes in philosophy, politics, society and religion as well as in the arts of literature, painting, and music changes which the English Romantic poets both articulated and symbolized. Thus, let us briefly analyse these changes.

First, in philosophy it reacted against the rationalism, the view of the physical world increasingly dominated by science, and of the mental world by the theories of Locke. The Romantic poets namely rebelled

against the emphasis on the material and on 'common sense' which had dominated the preceding period.

Secondly, politically speaking, the Romantic period coincided with the French Revolution which was to some extent a political enactment of ideas and a breaking out of the restrictive patterns of the past; on the other hand, the rise of Napoleon also caused disillusionment.

Thirdly, the period showed a society dominated by the repression of a series of Tory governments apprehensive that every request for freedom might open the gates of revolution. The Romantics differed from their predecessors in their attitude to society since the 18th century had regarded society as a great work of man, ideally holding all ranks together in mutually supporting harmony. Yet, for the Romantics society had become an evil force moulding its citizens and was regarded as a "dark, repressive cloud, limiting action and obscuring perception" (Rogers, 1987). As a result, the Romantic writers fled from the city and dreamt about a regenerated city.

The growing threat of industrialization, the slave trade, the treatment of the poor, press-gangs among other consequences of the industrial revolution are responsible for the Romantic writers turn to nature. They would write about the natural world and tended to appreciate different things there. They thought that nature needed the help of man and therefore, the Romantics described many different kinds of natural scene and, actually, many of the poets of this period found their deepest experiences in nature.

The Romantic period also had a shift in religious ideas since it is the first period in English literature when so many writers failed to find Christianity satisfying. In a period of pronounced rationalistic atheism and influenced by the French Enlightenment, the Romantic poets looked for a spiritual reality. In the search for the spiritual, they used two faculties: feelings and imagination.

3.3. Main literary forms: drama, poetry and prose.

Broadly speaking, the late 18th and early 19th century saw a wide variety of authors who produced a flourishing scholarly and popular works.

Drama was written as freely as ever, but did not monopolize the activities of the major poets. The comic spirit in drama was in abeyance, but in general there were a few dramatic productions and therefore, little interest on this literary form. Some examples are Shelley's *Oedipus Tyrannus, or Swellfoot the Tyrant*; Wordsworth's *The Borderers* and Coleridge's *Remorse*. Following Rogers (1987), "it is natural to ask whether the Romantic period was as distinguished in other genres of literature as it was in poetry" since drama contributions was disappointing.

Still, many of the Romantic poets tried to deal with drama, usually in verse, but none was really successful on the stage. The poet with the most success as a playwright was Byron, despite his inability to 'conceive any man of irritable feeling putting himself at the mercies of an audience'. His most popular political play was *Marino Faliero* (1821) and his other plays reached the stage after his death in the 1830s. So, in next chapter we shall not focus on drama productions, but rather on poetry and prose (novel).

Poetry, broadly speaking, is characterized by a spirit of revolt where the general tendency is towards simplicity of diction and away from the mannerisms of the 18th century, except for Keats who is too fond of

golden diction and did not avoid the temptation to be ornate. It namely developed on standard literary forms under the age of the lyric (the Spenserian stanza and the ballad), which reflected the Romantic spirit of the time in liberal and varied measure. It comprised the exalted passion of Shelley, the meditative simplicity of Wordsworth, the sumptuous descriptions of Keats, and the golden notes of Coleridge. Within descriptive and narrative poems, we find Byron's early works, Keats's tales, Coleridge's supernatural stories, and Scott's martial and historical romances.

Finally, within prose we find different types of prose productions, but in general the novel showed in this period the most marked development under the figures of Scott and Jane Austen.

With this literary background in mind in the following chapter we will focus on the main romantic poets and novelists.

4. ROMANTICISM: POETRY AND MAIN NOVELS.

Following Alexander (2000:218), this period was namely poetic and, in fact, six major poets writing in the first quarter of the 19th century transformed the literary climate. "Blake was unknown; Wordsworth and Coleridge won partial acceptance in the first decade; Scott and Byron became popular. The flowering of the younger Romantics, Byron, Shelley and Keats, came after 1817, but by 1824 all were dead. The other great literary artist of the period is Jane Austen, whose six novels appeared anonymously between 1811 and 1818. Other books appearing without an author's name were *Lyrical Ballads* (Bristol, 1798) and *Waverley* (Edinburgh, 1814). The novels of 'the author of *Waverley*', Sir Walter Scott, were widely popular. There was original fiction from Maria Edgeworth and Mary Shelley, and non-fiction from Thomas De Quincey, Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt", among others.

4.1. POETRY.

As stated above, this period is an age of unrest for all types of literature forms due to the French Revolution (1789) which affects not only France, but all Europe. In England, this uneasiness was particularly decisive for poetry since it changed gradually and gave way to the new wave of Romanticism which was, unquestionably, getting closer. So the main symptoms of the coming change were the decline of the heroic couplet in favour of a large number of other poetical forms; the revival of the ballad, which was due to renewed interest in the older kinds of literature, being more lively and often humorous; the prominence of descriptive and narrative poems, in which the heroic couplet is quickened and transformed by a real sympathy for nature and the poor; and finally, the rise of the lyric, which after struggling with its bonds, became free and successful.

As Alexander stated, poetry is namely represented by a group of major poets who transformed the literary climate in the first quarter of the 19th century. We may find these poets divided into two main groups, namely *the Older Generation* (also called early Romantics) and *the Younger Generation* (also called younger poets). William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and the Scottish poets, Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott, would represent the former group whereas Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats and two other lesser poets, would represent the latter. Let us examine these main figures in more detail.

4.1.1. The Older Generation.

The older generation of poets was namely represented by William Blake, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Yet, the official beginning of Romanticism in England was established in 1798 when Wordsworth and Coleridge published a book of poems called Lyrical *Ballads* since their preface was regarded as a kind of poetic manifesto.

4.1.1.1. William Blake (1757-1827).

William Blake is not often included in the Older Generation of Romantics since he is said to belong to the preceding period, that is, the Age of Transition. Yet, he is regarded as the pioneer of Romanticism. He was fond of wide reading, especially in the Bible and the works of Dante, Shakespeare and Milton, but he particularly highlighted the central importance of a spiritual world, and of the presence of the divine in man. He was described as a radical in politics, an intellectual and a religious dissenter.

From an early age Blake had been writing poetry and eventually in 1783 his two arts (engraving and poetry) came together triumphantly for the first time with the publication of *Poetical Sketches*, which was a series of imitative poems, in which he tried various verse forms in the style of Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton. This work was followed by *Songs of Innocence* (1789), which was written in short lyrics and was illustrated and printed by himself. Blake denounced in this work the original state of human society through a Christian pastoral world, and the symbols of joy and happiness in children, in other words, an evocation of that paradise that Milton had declared lost.

This work was followed by *The Book of Thel* (1790), a prophetic book which embodies much of the same spirit of love of his earlier books. Defined as a radical in politics, he celebrated the French Revolution and the independence of the American colonies in *The French Revolution* (1791) and in *America* (1793). On the other hand, he also denounced the restrictions of convention and established morality in *The Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), where he denounced the subordination of women.

Next year, Blake produced another sequence of poems entitled *Songs of Experience* (1794), in which he wrote the missing part in *Songs of Innocence*, that is, death, weeping, menace and desolation, in an angry tone of protest. In his later works such topical references become less frequent and he started writing a series of prophetic books for which he developed his own mythology.

Thus, *The Book of Urizen* (1794), which tackles the question of the origin of evil in his own version of Genesis; *The Book of Los* (1795), and *The Song of Los* (1795), "in which he describes the struggle of Urizen, the spirit of reaction, of restrictive convention, of cold intellect, against the spirit of the impassioned imagination, under the names, first of Orc, and then of Los" (Albert, 1990:252).

As seen, "Blake's later works are difficult for the reader since the characters are confusing, the structure perfunctory, and one can feel that the emotions are too few and too extreme". Blake had scant sympathy with such criticism in which "his obscurities must be divided between the demands of his visionary imagination and the isolation of the unrecognized artist bent over his laborious art. In even his most difficult works, however the reader is rewarded with passages of gnomic splendour and a note of prophecy not heard again until the work of

Yeats and Eliot.

4.1.1.2. William Wordsworth (1770-1850).

William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth, a town outside the Lake District. His father died when he was thirteen years old and, leaving many debts and little money, William had to depend on the generosity of his two uncles, who paid for his schooling at Hawkshead where he wrote his earliest verses on Pope's style. Later on, he went to Cambridge and graduated in 1791, with no fixed career in view. During that period he composed some poetry, which appeared as *An Evening Walk* (1793) and *Descriptive Sketches* (1793). These poems have not much originality, but they already show his well-known style always addressing nature.

After university, he lived in London and then in France (1791), particularly in Orléans and Blois, where an enthusiasm for the Revolution was aroused in him. After the massacres, he returned to Paris (1792) accompanied by the sights and stories that greeted him in France. It was well known his dominant political doctrine as a moderate Republican, which made him return to England. There he lived with his sister Dorothy and then, having met Coleridge, William moved to Somersetshire (1797) so as to live near him. Wordsworth and Coleridge are the only two poets of the Romantic period who worked, for a time, in collaboration, and their early careers show a number of parallels, since they both went to Cambridge University and shared the Republican cause. The fruit of living near each other was a collection called *Lyrical Ballads, With a Few Other Poems* (1798).

Following Rogers (1987), according to Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817) "the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads* was that he should supply poems whose subject-matter was supernatural, while Wordsworth's would deal with ordinary life. A second edition in 1800 contained more poems and a 'Preface' by Wordsworth in which he expounded his views on poetry".

He sees their poems as something revolutionary (as the revolution in the English colonies in North America, and in France) which involved a personal and emotional element, dealing with rustic subjects in simple, direct, passionate language. His contributions to the *Lyrical Ballads* explored the submerged tragedies in society, the sufferings of old age, poverty, and desertion.

During the years 1798-1799 Wordsworth composed some of his finest poems, which eventually appeared in 1800, at the same time that his contributions to the *Lyrical Ballads*. Some noteworthy poems in this collection were 'Michael', 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', 'She dwelt among the untrodden ways', 'Strange fits of passion have I known', and 'Nutting'. In 1805 he completed *The Prelude*, which is the record of his development as a poet and in which he describes his experiences with a unique anxiety. This work was intended to form part of a vast philosophical work called *The Recluse* which was never completed. Yet, his work *The Excursion*, which belonged to the same work, was published in 1814.

In 1807 he published two volumes of poems which represented the height of his poetic power. To mention just a few of the large number of poems in these two volumes, we highlight *The Solitary Reaper*, *The Green Linnet*, *I wandered lonely as a cloud*, *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, *Ode to Duty*, and the *Sonnets dedicated to National Independence and Liberty*. After that, he published *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815), *The Waggoner* (1819), *Peter Bell* (1819), *Yarrow Revisited* (1835), and *The Borderers* (1842), which was a drama. These works marked his decline.

Regarding his style, Wordsworth was namely characterized by the subject and style of his poetry. He declared his opposition to the Augustan convention of poetic diction as it made language of poetry seem artificial. Hence the majority of his poems dealt with humble and rustic life and with intense feelings that nature inspired in him, with the simple pleasures of ordinary experiences (a rainbow or a field of daffodils). He highlighted his preference for incidents and situations from common life written in a style free from banality and prosaism, gay and joyous in his lyrics. Yet, his poems were revolutionary.

4.1.1.3. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834).

As stated above, Wordsworth Coleridge was Wordsworth's partner in the Lyrical Ballads.

In 1795 Coleridge lectured and wrote poetry in Bristol, and it was at this time that he met Wordsworth. It was in the same place that they planned, and later on published, their joint production of *Lyrical Ballads*. Next year, he issued a newspaper called *The Watchman* (1796), all with the idea of converting humanity. His first book was published in the same year, *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796), which contained a volume with miscellaneous poems.

His next work, as stated above, was a collection of poems called *Lyrical Ballads, With a Few Other Poems* (1798), produced in collaboration with Wordsworth. It is worth noting that this remarkable volume contained nineteen poems by Wordsworth and four by Coleridge, from which the most noteworthy was *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. This poem was founded on a dream of his own, where the main plot deals with a voyage through the polar ice, the death of the albatross and the amazing scenes during the calm and the storm, in an attempt to highlight the supernatural and the gothic.

From the same period are the first part of *Christabel*, and the fragments of *Kubla Khan*, both unpublished until 1816. On the one hand, *Christabel* was the tale of a kind of witch, who, by taking the shape of a lovely lady, wins the confidence of the heroine Christabel, whereas *Kubla Khan* was the product of another of his dreams. In the same year (1798) Coleridge composed several other poems including the fine *Frost at Midnight*, and *France: An Ode*.

In 1800 he produced the second part of *Christabel* and his ode *Dejection* (1802), in which he already bewails the suspension of his imagination.

In 1808 he began a series of lectures on poetry and while he was living in the Lake District he started to write prose, thus *The Friend* (1809), which was published at Penrith, and between 1811 and 1813, he wrote his finest lectures on Shakespeare and other poets.

In 1816 an autobiographical preface to his *Christabel and other Poems* (1816) gave way to his next work. In 1817 he published *Biographia Literaria* and *Sybylline Leaves*. In *Biographia Literaria*, his most valuable prose work, he records his literary upbringing, but as a consecutive narrative it is quite worthless. It was an attempt to give his 'literary life and opinions' in sixteen chapters of philosophizing, where he enlarges Wordsworth's ideas of poetic diction and rhythm.

After his death his *Table Talk* (1835) was published and allowed the public to realize how brilliant and erratic his mind was. Regarding his style, it is worth mentioning that Coleridge gave voice to the Romantic fondness for mystery, the supernatural, and the Gothic (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*), apart from a great deal

of important but often unintelligible literary criticism. The most salient feature of his poems was their intense imaginative power and his witchery of language along with his simplicity of diction.

Yet, what most deeply matters to Wordsworth is the individual's encounter with nature. The world of society and business and ordinary human affairs interfered with this; in Wordsworth, as in other Romantic poets, we find the beginning of a discontent with the modern world that becomes ever more pervasive in later writers since the world had lost its innocence, and science, technology, and business are ruining nature.

4.1.2. The Younger Generation.

The younger generation of Romantic poets, namely Byron, Shelley and Keats came after 1817, but they had no chance to grow old since by 1824 all were dead. Whereas the older generation was marked by simple ideals and a reverence for nature, the poets of the younger generation came to be known for their sensuous aestheticism, their explorations of intense passions, their political radicalism, and their tragically short lives.

4.1.2.1. Lord Byron (1788-1824).

George Gordon Byron, sixth Lord Byron, was so proud of his poetry as he was of his ancestors, who traced back to the Norman Conquest. Although he was born in London, he spent his early years in Aberdeen, his mother's birthplace. He was educated at Harrow and Cambridge, where he showed himself to be dark and passionate in his writings.

His first volume was a juvenile effort called *Hours of Idleness* (1807), which showed the elegant life of a lord who condescends to be a minor poet, obviously a self-autobiography. Later on, in 1809 he wrote a satire called *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, which was an immature poem, crudely expressed, which showed some of the Byronic force.

Later he travelled for a couple of years upon the Continent (1809-1811), where he pursued adventure in Iberia, Malta and the Turkish Empire. These travels contributed to the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812), which gave the world its first taste of the 'Byronic hero' (a gloomy, self-absorbed, passionate non-conformist hero, who views ordinary people with contempt). In this poem the hero is a romantic youth, and is very clearly Byron himself, since the protagonist is grand and terrible at the same time, with the stain of a dark and awful past.

Then he wrote in 1813 *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos* (two poetic tales). After this, following Albert (1990:308), "he found himself the darling of society, in which his youth, his title, his physical beauty, his wit, and his picturesque and romantic melancholy made him a marvel and a delight".

In this interval, he wrote *The Corsair* and *Lara* (both in 1814), and *The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina* in 1815 (published in 1816), which read about the romantic scenes of the East and almost reproduced the young Byronic hero of Childe Harold. After these works and due to his personal scandal, his popularity waned, and in the face of a storm of abuse he left England for good in 1816, travelled to Lake Geneva, visited Switzerland, stayed with the Shelleys, and then moved to Italy. In addition, he sealed his European reputation as a rebel by his death while supporting the Greek revolt against the Turks.

During this year on the Continent, Byron worked the crowd with romances and dramatic poems in fluent

verse, posing as himself. Notable among his doomed self-projections are *The Prisoner of Chillon* (1816), a long poem; *Manfred* (1817), in which the superman refuses a deathbed repentance; *Mazeppa* (1819), the last of his metrical tales. He also composed various lyrics (most of them mediocre in quality), and several satirical poems, among which the most popular were *Don Juan* (1818), the longest of all; *Beppo* (1818, published 1819), *Cain* (1821), and *The Vision of Judgement* (1822). Byron's *Don Juan* (pronounced in the English way), shows Byron's distinction and originality in his anti-romantic hero, who is a legendary womanizer. This figure is often said to be a humorous self-portrait: a passive youngster who falls in with the amorous wishes of a series of beautiful women in Seville, Greece, St Petersburg and England.

Byron was viewed in his own time as a quintessentially Romantic figure, he professed contempt for Wordsworth and Coleridge and claimed that his own poetic allegiance was to 18th century satirists like Pope.

4.1.2.2. Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822).

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born in Sussex, and like Byron, he was an eccentric and rebellious aristocrat with the money to flout convention. According to Alexander (2000:230), "he believed in vegetarianism, pacifism, and free love" and he would visit graveyards, studied alchemy and, being a revolutionary thinker, read books of dreadful import. Actually, he wrote several extraordinary pamphlets of which, one of them (*The Necessity of Atheism*) caused him to be expelled from Oxford for challenging the authorities to refute atheism.

By that time, he had already developed extreme notions on religion, politics, and morality and decided to write *Queen Mab* (1813), a long immature poem written in an irregular unrhymed metre, which contained much of Shelley's cruder atheism. His opinions, as well as an early and unhappy marriage which he contracted, brought about a painful quarrel with his relatives. This was shown in *Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude* (1816) which is a kind of spiritual autobiography, in which the chief character, a projection of Shelley's own moods, travels in quest of the ideal beauty. The poem is written in blank verse and is rather obscure and formless, full of lyrical passages and striking imagery.

This work coincided with the year his first wife committed suicide. Next year he wrote *Laon and Cythna* (1817) and *The Revolt of Islam*, rich in descriptive passages. Then, having married the daughter of William Godwin, he settled in Italy in 1818, the land he loved his best. It was there that he wrote his *Prometheus Unbound* (1818-1819, published 1820), a lyric drama which contains lyric variety and fine passages, but in which the mythology is obscure. The poem is full of spirits and demigods, and its scenes are cast in the inaccessible spaces of sky, mountain, and sea.

The poems of this period are extraordinary in number and quality, for instance, *Julian and Maddalo* (1818) and *The Masque of Anarchy* (1819, published 1832). In other works such as *The Cenci* (1819), a formal drama, he seems deliberately to set upon himself the restraints that he defied in his previous poem, though the plot is a sordid family affair, which is bleak and austere in style. Other works followed, such as *The Witch of Atlas* (1820, published 1824), which is the lightest and most delicate of Shelley's fantasies in music and imagery, and *Epipsychidion* (1821), where he shows his poetical imagination.

Yet, *Adonais* (1821) is a lament for the death of Keats modelled on the classical elegy, written in the Spenserian stanza, used with a wonderful resonance and a force which increases as the poem progresses. The

only prose work that is worth mention is his short essay *Defence of Poetry* (1821, published 1840), another of the great critical manifestos of Romanticism, in which he claims that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of humanity.

Shelley expressed his poetry to impulses of feelings, and his wide-ranging imagination and his distance for all outer of authority. Shelley was a naturalist and idealist who was influential in the Romantic Movement in the 19th century, and enjoyed creative writing from his heart. As his main features, we may highlight his lyrical power, which expresses the highest emotional ecstasy; his choice of subject, which concerns with the same themes that defined Romantic poetry, especially among the younger English poets of his era: beauty, the passions, nature, political liberty, and creativity; his descriptive power, with an instantaneous effect and radiant loveliness; his style, being described as simple, flexible and passionate; and his reputation, which rose rapidly after his death and assured his position as a poet.

4.1.2.3. John Keats (1795-1821)

By the time John Keats began writing poetry, Wordsworth and Coleridge were already established figures, and Byron and Shelley were bursting on the scene. Keats had no need to be a poetic rebel like the older Romantics, and he lacked the self-dramatizing egoism of Byron or the ideological program of Shelley. Devoted to the Elizabethan poets (Spenser, and, especially, Shakespeare), he worked to develop a poetry that would not be propaganda (like much of Shelley's) or self-display (like much of Wordsworth's and Byron's), but would embody the negative capability that he found in Shakespeare.

His career as a poet began in 1816 when he met Leigh Hunt (1784-1859), the famous Radical journalist and poet, who was the editor of the liberal *Examiner*, whose collisions with the Government had caused much commotion and his own imprisonment. During this period he wrote his notable trials in the sonnet form in *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* (1816). This and some other pieces were published together in his *Poems* (1817), his first volume of verse. By that time, Keats had already met Hazlitt, Lamb and Shelley through Hunt.

In 1817 he published his first volume of verse, his 4000-line *Endymion*, which was censured in the Tory quarterlies and had little notice in spite of the championship of Hunt. This remarkable poem tells the story of a lovely youth who was kissed by the moon-goddess on the summit of Mount Latmos where Keats develops a simple myth into an intricate, flowery and obscure allegory. The work is regarded as immature, but with ornamental diction.

In 1818, his second volume of verse was published and brutally assailed by *The Quarterly Review* and by *Blackwood's Magazine* probably due to his relationship with Hunt, again. Keats bore the attack with apparent serenity, but there can be no doubt that this event affected his health to some extent.

In the same year, he wrote a version of a tale from Boccaccio, *Isabella, or The Pot of Basil* (1818) which deals with the murder of a lady's lover by her two wicked brothers. The poem is written in the octava rima and marks a decided advance in Keat's work. In *Hyperion* Keats took up the epic theme of a struggle between the older race of gods and the younger divinities. Written in blank verse, the poem has sonorous weight and dignity.

His next work, *The Eve of St Agnes* (1819), is another finest narrative poem, dealing with the elopement of two lovers. Written in the stanza form, the love scenes are dealt with in the chivalric tone, with occasional

archaisms and full of beauties of description, imagery, and colour. In the same year was written *The Eve of Saint Mark*, but it was unfinished. *Lamia* (1819) was another narrative work which tells of a beautiful enchantress. It is a rather confused allegory, written in the heroic couplet, and full of pictorial richness, sometimes rather excessive.

In 1819 Keats made a new attempt to finish an epic called *The Fall of Hyperion, a Dream*, which is written in blank verse, with a flexible, powerful and sonorous style. Together with this work, between April and September 1819 Keats wrote six Odes, which often addressed abstract entities. Thus *Odes to a Nightingale, a Grecian Urn, Autumn, Psyche, Indolence and Melancholy*. Following Alenxander (2000:234), “for the Romantics, the glory of Greece surpassed the grandeur of Rome, and Keats’s Odes turn Greek myths into new English myths”. The six Odes are superbly organized in terms of form and syntax.

Apart from some other shorter poems, like *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, Keats collaborated in 1819 in a drama, *Otho the Great*, and began another, *King Stephen*, which he did not complete. Eventually, in 1820 his health became worse and the next year, in 1821, he died in Rome at the age of 26 from tuberculosis before his poetic development was in any sense complete five. It is relevant to bear in mind that most of his works were published posthumously. The main features of his poetry were his choice of subject, which differs from other romantic poets in his love of nature, and the imagery of his poems, intense and beautiful; and his style, which is characterized because of his speed in the blank verse, and the delicacy of touch and a pure taste.

4.2. NOVEL.

Prose writers contemporary with the Romantic poets were also deeply affected by the French Revolution. Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) in response to Edmund Burke’s hostile *Reflections on the Revolution in France* and lived in France in the climactic years from 1793 to 1794. William Hazlitt saw the revolution as the source of *The Spirit of the Age* (1825), and finally, the prose of Thomas Carlyle, historian of the revolution, epitomized this turbulent spirit. All in all, Romantic prose essayists showed all their ‘fine writing’ within their contributions.

The novel showed its most marked development under the figures of Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen, as well as Mary Shelley, Horace Walpole and Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, these last three authors belonging to the literary trend of the gothic novel.

4.2.1. Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832).

Sir Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh, educated at the High School of Edinburgh and graduated at the same university, he developed a powerful memory that helped him to grasp a great store of miscellaneous considerable of them, has much of these features. In 1802 he published the first two volumes of *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802), to be followed by a third volume in the next year.

knowledge. His earliest poetical efforts were translations from the German, and *Lenore* (1796), the most

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considerable of them, has much of these features. In 1802 he published the first two volumes of *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802), to be followed by a third volume in the next year.

In *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) there is much more originality, since it is a considerable long poem written in the Christabel metre. Confused and difficult, its poetry is mediocre, but the abounding vitality of the style, the fresh and intimate local knowledge and the present love of nature made it a revelation to the anxious public and was a success.

After the success of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* he wrote the *Marmion* (1808), an intricate story on the close of a battle and the triumph of martial verse. In 1809 he started a publishing business with another brother, John Ballantine and he published *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), which was a still greater success, because of the usual picturesqueness and the effective use of the wild scenery of the Trossachs. In 1813 he wrote *Rokeby* (1813), which is a descriptive picture of the North of England. Other works followed such as *The Bridal of Triermain* (1813) and *The Lord of the Isles* (1814), which marked a decline in Scott's writing quality.

Yet, Sir Walter Scott was even more popular because of his prose than because of his poetry. Actually, about 1814, he gave up writing poetry and save for short novels. This fact gave way to the publication of *Waverley*, an anonymous and successful issue already started in 1805, which was retaken and published in 1814. This work was followed by other twenty-five Scottish historical novels, notably *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Antiquary* (1816), *The Black Dwarf* (1816), *Old Mortality* (1816), *Rob Roy* (1818), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), and *A Legend of Montrose* (1819).

He also wrote English medieval romances, beginning with *Ivanhoe* (1820), set up in Plantagenet England. Other novels were *The Monastery* (1820), again in Scotland, *The Abbot* (1820), *Kenilworth* (1821), *The Pirate* (1822), *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822), *Peveil of the Peak* (1823), *Quentin Durward* (1823), *St Ronan's Well* (1824), *Redgauntlet* (1824), *The Betrothed* (1825), and *The Talisman* (1825). In these latter works the narrative is heavier, the humour more cumbrous and the descriptions more organized and laboured.

In the following years he wrote *Woodstock* (1826), *The Fair Maid of Perth* (1828), and *Anne of Geierstein* (1829). In 1830 he had a paralytic seizure which left him with a clouded brain, but he refused to desist from novel-writing, and produced *Count Robert of Paris* (1832) and *Castle Dangerous* (1832).

His main features were his rapidity of production since his plots were frequently hurriedly improvised, developed with no care and finished anyhow; his contribution to the novel, in particular, to the historical novel, was to provide a life-giving force, a vitalizing energy, and a particular insight, which made the historical novel use a new social history to recreate the past through characters imaginary and real; his style, regarded as fluent and narrative, detailed in exposition; and his characterization, which is benign, detached, shrewd, humorous, owing much to the 18th century theatrical tradition on Shakespearian qualities (free manner, melodramatic heroes, middle and lower classes or eccentrics). All in all, his contribution to Romantic poetry and prose was great indeed.

4.2.2. Jane Austen (1775-1817).

Jane Austen was born at Steventon, in Hampshire and grew up in a quiet country parish of her father, the Rev. George Austen. For her family literature was the chief amusement so she was educated at home. Her life was unexciting, being little more than a series of pilgrimage to different places of residence, including the fashionable resort of Bath (1801). Her first published works were issued anonymously, and she died in middle age, before her

merits had received anything like adequate recognition.

She wrote for pleasure in childhood, and as an adult chose to work the world she knew. Yet, her wit, workmanship and background are not Romantic, but she depicted in her works the Augustan, 18th century Anglican ideals of the older country. Before Austen, there were Gothic tales, novels of sensibility and social entertainments, but the novel reached perfection with her, since it went on to popularity, periodical publication and bigger things.

It is worth noting that her works were not published in the order of composition, so her chronology is fairly difficult to state. Yet, we shall present it in the order of production, not publication. According to Alexander (2000:345), “her novels are written in the form of the comedy of manners: accuracy of social behaviour and dialogue, moral realism, elegance of style, and ingenuity of plot. For all her penetration and intelligence, Austen is distinctly a moral idealist”. Also, “her comedy of manners accepts the presence or absence of rank, wealth, brains, beauty and masculinity as facts, and as factors in society, while placing goodness, rationality and love above them”.

Thus her first work was *Pride and Prejudice* (1796-1797, published 1813), which showed a general overview of middle-class society, in which the heroine is a girl of spirit, but with no extraordinary qualities. In this work the moral issues of prejudice and the pride of rank and wealth are introduced in a subtle way, carefully selected. Her next work was *Sense and Sensibility* (1797-1798, published 1811), which followed the same lines as its predecessor.

Northanger Abbey (1798, published posthumously 1818) is a burlesque of the silliness of horror novel (Gothic). In it, the heroine, after a visit to Bath, is invited to an abbey, where she imagines romantic possibilities. Yet, the treatment is deft and touched with the finest observation. Later, between 1798 and 1811 there was a pause in her writing, but then was followed by a quick succession of other three great novels, thus *Mansfield Park* (1811-1813, published 1814), which is not about the education of its heroine, but about how her example might educate others.

On the other hand, *Emma* (1815, published 1816), is moral worth since the heroine admires truth, sincerity and plain-dealing, which is both Augustan and Romantic. Finally, *Persuasion* (1815-1816, published 1818), is her most interesting novel. Although short, this novel develops emotional expressiveness since it is theatrically conventional, especially on its ‘wicked’ side. Yet, the central relationship is magically managed.

4.2.3. Mary Shelley (1797-1851).

Mary Shelley was born in London and was the daughter of the philosopher-novelist William Godwin and the feminist Mary Wollstonecraft. Her parents provided her with an intellectual tradition that kept her from sentimentality and sensationalism. Actually, she is said to be a cross between the Gothic tale and the fable of ideas; neither is realistic. Also, she is said to be the founder of the so-called scientific Gothic because of her main work *Frankenstein*.

In 1818 she wrote her most notable work *Frankenstein* (1818), which was dedicated to Godwin, her father. But where and how did this work originate?

Following Alexander (2000:237), "*Frankenstein* began as a literary experiment within a social experiment - a ghost story in a game proposed by Byron at the Villa Diodati on Lac Lemman, Switzerland, in 1816, while Mary's half-sister Claire Clairmont was having an affair with Byron". The novel is "an epistolary narrative with three narrators, the English Arctic explorer Capt; Walton, the German scientist Victor Frankenstein; and the nameless 'man' which Frankenstein creates out of human body-parts by electrical experiment".

The novel reads about a man, doctor Frankenstein, who is obsessed with the desire to find the principle of life, so he creates a creature. The plot is developed out the creature intention to have a mate, which Frankenstein assembles, but destroys. Following Alexander (2000:238), the monster then "kills its creator's brother, his friend and his wife; he tries to kill it, but it escapes into the Arctic. The sensational contents and moral ideas of *Frankenstein* are conveyed in a mechanical style. Its interest is cultural, moral, philosophical and psychological: it is a nightmare of alienation; a sentimental critique of the victorious intellect to which Shelley and Godwin trusted; and a negative critique of a Faustian overconfidence in natural science."

4.2.4. Other terror novelists.

The first instances of Gothic novel indicate the beginning of the Romantic period with the mode of 'terror novel'. It is related to a fresh treatment of Romantic themes in poems and in supernatural stories, legends, and the more colourful periods of history, especially the Middle Ages. Among the main terror novelists we may mention Horace Walpole (1717-1797), William Beckford (1759-1844), Mrs Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), and Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818). In this section we will focus on the figures of Horace Walpole and Mrs. Ann Radcliffe.

4.2.4.1. Horace Walpole (1717-1797).

He was the son of Sir Robert Walpole, the famous Whig minister. He touched several kinds of literature, but his novel was namely gothic. Hence his *Castle of Otranto: a Gothic Story* (1764), which was the first of the productions of a large school, called the 'terror school'. This novel was said to be the translation of a 16th-century Italian work which described a ghostly castle, in which there were walking skeletons, pictures, and other strange incidents. His style worked on the ghostly machinery, which was interpreted as a return to the romantic elements of mystery and fear.

4.2.4.2. Mrs Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823).

Mrs Radcliffe was the most popular of the terror novelists. Her success relied on a uniform plot, which involved mysterious manuscripts, haunted castles, clanking chains, and cloaked and saturnine strangers. At the end of all the horrors she rather spoils the effect by giving away the secret. Among her novels we find *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), and the most popular of them, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). She is said to be the queen of Gothic.

5. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING.

Literature, and therefore, literary language is one of the most salient aspect of educational activity and, as

such, it is going on for most of the time in classrooms through all kinds of literary language (poetry, drama, novel, prose, periodicals), either spoken or written. Yet, handling literary productions from the past makes relevant the analysis of literature in the Romantic period. Hence it makes sense to examine the historical background of the Romantic period, that is, the Industrial Revolution within the pre-Romantic period, so as to provide an appropriate context for our study.

Currently, action research groups attempt to bring about change in classroom learning and teaching through a focus on literary production under two premises. First, because they believe learning is an integral aspect of any form of activity and second, because education at all levels must be conceived in terms of literature and history. The basis for these assumptions is to be found in an attempt, through the use of historical events, to develop understanding of students' shared but diverse social and physical environment.

Learning involves a process of transformation of participation itself which has far reaching implications on the role of the teacher in the teaching-learning relationship. This means that literary productions are an analytic tool and that teachers need to identify the potential contributions and potential limitations of students before we can make good use of the historical events which frame the literary period, that is, how to relate notable literary works with the historical period and the English language at the same time.

The answer is that literature productions may be easily approached by means of cross-curricular subjects, such as History, Language and Literature by establishing a parallelism with the Spanish one (age, literature forms, events). Since literature may be approached in linguistic terms, regarding form and function (morphology, lexis, structure, form) and also from a cross-curricular perspective (Sociology, History, English, French, Spanish Language and Literature), Spanish students are expected to know about the history of Britain and its influence in the world.

In addition, one of the objectives of teaching the English language is to provide good models of almost any kind of literary productions for future studies. Following van Ek & Trim (2001), 'the learners can perform, within the limits of the resources available to them, those writing (and oral) tasks which adult citizens in general may wish, or be called upon, to carry out in their private capacity or as members of the general public' when dealing with their future regarding personal and professional life.

Moreover, nowadays new technologies may provide a new direction to language teaching as they set more appropriate context for students to experience the target culture. Present-day approaches deal with a communicative competence model in which first, there is an emphasis on significance over form, and secondly, motivation and involvement are enhanced by means of new technologies. Hence literary productions and the history of the period may be approached in terms of reading novels, watching films and performing drama representations in class so as to find the link between Scott's *Rob Roy* (1818) and *Ivanhoe* (1820), or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), among others.

The success partly lies in the way literary works become real to the users. Some of this motivational force is brought about by intervening in authentic communicative events. Otherwise, we have to recreate as much as possible the whole cultural environment in the classroom by means of documentaries, history books, or their family's stories. This is to be achieved within the framework of the European Council (1998) and, in particular, the

Spanish Educational System which establishes a common reference framework for the teaching of foreign languages where students are intended to carry out several communication tasks with specific communicative goals, for instance, how to locate a literary work within a particular historical period.

Analytic interpretation of texts in all genres should become part of every literary student's basic competence. There are hidden influences at work beneath the textual surface: these may be sociocultural, inter and intratextual. The literary student has to discover these, and wherever necessary apply them in further examination. The main aims that our currently educational system focuses on are mostly sociocultural, to facilitate the study of cultural themes, as our students must be aware of their current social reality within the European framework.

6. CONCLUSION

I would not like to conclude without saying that the aim of this unit has been to make the reader be aware of the historical relevance of the Industrial Revolution and its relationship with the Romantic period in terms of consequences. In theory, the Romantics were very fond of simple, uneducated rural folk, whose simple pure language and simple passionate feelings were uncontaminated by the artifices of civilization, and therefore, they were against industrialization and life in the city.

So far, we shall underline again the relevance of the link between literature and history within a certain period. Following Watt (2001), "the novel is the form of literature which most fully reflects this individualist and innovating reorientation. Previous literature forms had reflected the general tendency of their cultures to make conformity to traditional practice the major test of truth: the plots of classical and Renaissance epic, for example, were based on past history or fable, and the merits of the author's treatment were judged largely according to a view of literary decorum derived from the accepted models in the genre. This literary traditionalism was first and most fully challenged by the novel, whose primary criterion was truth to individual experience."

Since literature reflects the main concerns of a nation at all levels, it is extremely important for students to be aware of the close relationship between History and Literature so as to understand the main plot of a novel, short story, or any other form of literary work. In this unit, we have particularly approached the period of the Romantic period as a time of delusion and discontent because of the historical events of the time.

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