

ROMANTIC POETRY

- The Romantic Movement in literature is one of the most influential literary movements. It covered the first half of the nineteenth century, but its influence can still be felt everywhere in literature. The French Revolution with its ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity gave spark to the Romantic Movement.
- The main characteristics of Romantic Poetry
 - 1- Romantic poetry shows a new faith in man with all his feelings, senses and all the sides of his experiences.
 - 2- It rejected rational intellect as the only source of poetry and stressed imagination and intuition as the supreme faculties of the poet.
 - 3- The poet of the Romantics was a man speaking to men, but he was endowed with some special insight into the nature of things.
 - 4- Poetry to the Romantics is an expression of emotions inspired by the feelings of the individual poet. The Romantic poet is gifted with a strong " organic sensibility.
 - 5- All Romantic literature is subjective. It is an expression of the inner urges of the soul of the artist. It reflects the poet's own thoughts and feelings more than anything else.
 - 6- Nature to the Romantics is regarded as something divine. It is something really living, something that has a soul and purpose; it can even share with the poet his joys and sorrows.
 - 7- A common and recurrent theme in Romantic poetry is man in solitude or man with nature. They believed that the nature of man is best revealed when he is in solitude or in communion with nature.
 - 8- The Romantic poetry is anti- heroic in the sense that the subject of this poetry is common man, not heroes or men of high ranks. It also uses the language of ordinary people.
 - 9- The Romantic is extraordinarily alive to the wonder, mystery and beauty of the universe. He feels the presence of unseen powers in nature. The supernatural has a special charm for him; he is attracted by the stories of fairies, ghosts and witchcraft.
 - 10 Romantic poetry is individualistic; it stresses man's individuality. Man is usually presented alone. Every poet has his own individual personality which is rather different from the others.
 - 11 Another predominant feature of the Romantic poetry is the sense of nostalgia for the past.
 - 12 To a Romantic poet, the period of childhood was very important. The child is nearer to nature than the grown- up man and he gains wisdom from nature. Thus he loses his Natural wisdom. " The child is father of the man", wordsworth says.
 - 13 The Romantic poet sees the world through the eyes of a child. This is why Romantic poetry was described as poetry of wonder.

14 The Romantic poets were greatly affected by:

- A- The Industrial Revolution which caused changes in society that the Romantic poet could not cope with. So, he turned to nature for escape and that is why Romantic poets are sometimes described as escapists or dreamers.
 - B- The French Revolution with its principles of freedom, equality and fraternity.
- English Romanticism is thus both a revolt and a revival: it is a revolt against 18th century traditions and conventions: it is a revival of old English masters of poetry.

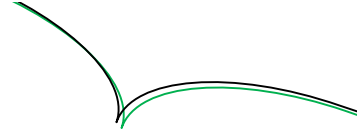
- Literary Terms

- 1- Personification is giving inanimate objects or abstract ideas human qualities or actions; making non-human things appear as human.
- 2- Metaphor: a comparison between two objects for the purpose of describing one of them; a metaphor states that the one object is the other.
- 3- Alliteration: close repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words.
- 4- Diction: an author's choice and use of words; his vocabulary.
- 5- Epic: an extended narrative poem, with heroic subject matter and theme, and exalted tone.
- 6- Rhyme: the use of words with similar sounds in poetry, usually but not always at the ends of lines.
- 7- Stanza: a group of lines in a poem divided off from the others. Each stanza is usually the same number of lines in length.

William Blake (1757-1827)

- The Little Black Boy

- 1- My mother bore me in the southern wild,
- 2- And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
- 3- White as an angel is the English child,
- 4- But I am black, as if bereav'd of light.
- 5- My mother taught me underneath a tree,
- 6- And sitting down before the heat of day,



7- She took me on her lap and kissed me,
8- And pointing to the east, began to say:
9- "Look on the rising sun: there God does live,

10 And gives his light, and gives his heat away;
11 And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
12 Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

13 And we are put on earth a little space,
14 That we may learn to bear the beams of love;
15 And these black bodies and this sunburnt face

16 Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.
17 For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear,
18 The cloud will vanish; we shall hear his voice,

19 Saying: 'Come out from the grove, my love and care,
20 And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.' "
21 Thus did my mother say, and kissed me;

22 And thus I say to little English boy,
23 When I from black and he from white cloud free,
24 And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,

25 I'll shade him from the heat, till he can bear
26 To lean in joy upon our father's knee;
27 And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
28 And be like him, and he will then love me.

Commentary

- This is one of the " Songs of Innocence". It was written by Blake as an attempt on his part to help in abolishing slave- trade. It is a plea against " racial discrimination". He believes that people are equal regardless of their color. Despite of its political subject, Blake here
- makes use of two major ideas which are intermingled:
 - A- The Idea that to be good needs an effort, and those who suffer more are thought to be religiously better.
 - B- The Neo- Platonic idea that the soul is the essential of man; the essence(soul) of mankind is the same, but what differs is their bodies in which their souls are imprisoned. Once it is set free(by the death of the body) it goes back to its divine origin which is God. The body, whether black or white, is a colored cloud that will disappear one day, while the soul goes back to its creator.

Summary

- A black child tells the story of how he came to know his own identity and to know God. The boy, who was born in "the southern wild" of Africa, first explains that though his skin is black his soul is as white as that of an English child. He relates how his loving mother taught him about God who lives in the East, who gives light and life to all creation and comfort and joy to men. "We are put on earth," his mother says, to learn to accept God's love.
- He is told that his black skin "is but a cloud" that will be dissipated when his soul meets God in heaven. The black boy passes on this lesson to an English child, explaining that his white skin is likewise a cloud. He vows that when they are both free of their bodies and delighting in the presence of God, he will shade his white friend until he, too, learns to bear the heat of God's love. Then, the black boy says, he will be like the English boy, and the English boy will love him.