
UNIT 31 THE POET OF VOLCANIC HOPE : P. B. SHELLEY

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31.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this unit are to enable you,

- a) to appreciate the main events in Shelley's life, his ideas and character;
- b) to acquire a background for his major works;
- c) to appreciate the influence of certain persons and historical events on Shelley's life; and
- d) to prepare yourself for a study of Shelley's poetry in the next unit.

31.1 INTRODUCTION

'I believe' wrote Herbert Read in his essay 'In Defence of Shelley', 'that the knowledge which comes from a complete understanding of a poet's personality is the best basis for the appreciation of his poetry.' This view may not be universally true. Many people appreciate Homer, Valmiki, Vyasa, Tulsi and Aurobindo without a knowledge of their lives. The same can perhaps be said even about the poetries of William Blake and T.S. Eliot but can we be sure that a knowledge of their lives would not enrich our appreciation not only of the poetries of Blake and Eliot but also of the epic poets of the East and West. So much for the relevance of biography to the study of poetry in general.

The case of Wordsworth and even more Shelley is different. Shelley's poetry is, as C.S. Lewis pointed out, 'to an unusual degree, entangled in political thought, and on a political thought now generally unpopular.' Lewis went on :

His belief in the natural perfectibility of man justly strikes the Christian reader as foolishness; while, on the other hand, the sort of perfection he has in view is too ideal for dialectical materialists. His writings are too generous for our cynics; his life is too loose for our 'humanist' censors.

This unit will help you discover Shelley's unorthodox ideas and still more his so called 'loose' life. It will still more than that, force you to answer certain fundamental

questions about a good life which may not have puzzled you before. For, you cannot differ from I.A. Richards who wrote :

... the fact that a critic, however eminent, does not understand something, if a point at all, is a point against the critic, not against the poet.

And Richards continues,

As with his peers, when we judge **Shelley**, it is not Shelley who is judged.

So in **reading** Shelley you have to be **watchful**, as much of the poet as yourself, for your judgment on Shelley would at the same time be an observation on yourself, your beliefs, your attitudes.

Some of you may not read the whole of 31.2 at one go. You may read it sub-section by sub-section but read them consecutively. Some of you may like to read 31.2 a couple of times. Do as you consider proper. **Answer** the questions at the end of 31.2 **after** you have given yourself some time to consider the whole story in your mind once **again**.

In case you want to read the next unit on ***The Triumph of Life*** first you could do so but after having read it you may like to come back to this unit on Shelley's life. Hope you would enjoy reading about Shelley now and later his **poem** prescribed for you, in the next unit.

31.2 SHELLEY : A BRIEF SKETCH OF HIS LIFE

Shelley has remained a poet of contradictions of gargantuan proportions in so far as his influence on the intelligentsia is concerned. To Eliot, Shelley was humourless and pedantic. However, his friends found him 'full of life and fire'. Some **considered** Shelley a softie, others, thought of him as a villain. While D.H. Lawrence (1888-1935) took him to be 'transcendently male', to Charles **Kingsley** (1819-75) he was 'utterly womanish'. While some early twentieth century critics thought that there was 'no brain work' in Shelley's poetry and that it was 'antipathetic to the play of the critical mind' others found him to have been 'the solitary intellectual'. 'His ideas' wrote Graham Hough in the fifties, 'come from his own mental processes, from study, from visions of the future or dreams of the past, not from the world around him...' While the Victorians looked upon him as 'the Divine' poet and found his lyrics 'absolutely perfect' his contemporary reviewers had called his work a 'dish of **carrion**', 'drivelling prose run mad' and 'the production of a fiend, ... calculated for the entertainment of devils in hell'. In fact a lot of the sympathy for or antipathy towards Shelley the poet is shaped by one's prejudice in favour of or against Shelley the man. For Shelley, although married twice, disapproved of matrimony, as well as royalty, non-vegetarian diet and religion. Although, like Byron, he came from a conservative background, like him Shelley was a republican, if not an anarchist.

31.2.1 Birth and childhood

Shelley shares with Byron the distinctness of having been born in an old aristocratic family. Shelley's ancestors had been **Sussex** aristocrats since early in the seventeenth century. His grandfather Sir Bysshe Shelley **made** himself the richest man in Horsham, **Sussex**. However, his father Timothy Shelley was a conventional Whig M.P. (later baronet) who took his views from the Duke of Norfolk. The poet, born on 4 August, 1792, was his and Elizabeth (Pilford) Shelley's eldest child and thus in line for the baronetcy.



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Percy had four younger sisters and a baby brother. He loved to play with them and take them on his knees and tell stories out of books on which his own imagination had been fed. He took them to romp around in the fields, often dropping them across inconvenient fences. 'Once when he dropped his brother on a strawberry bed he called him a 'bad Bit'. On the northeast of Shelley's house was St. Bernard's Wood inhabited by an old dragon and a headless spectre and in the Warnham Fond lived a great tortoise. These and a snake that lived in the garden which was somehow killed by the gardener's scythe and an alchemist that lived in the garret were his constant subjects for childhood preoccupations. Young Shelley once dressed his sisters as fiends and led them in the garden at night with a fire stove flaming with chemicals. This interest grew as he learnt more about chemistry and electricity.

31.2.2 Education at Sion House Academy, Eton and Oxford

From the age of six until ten he learned Latin and Greek from Rev, Evan Edwards, a Welsh parson. In 1802 he went to Syon House Academy at Isleworth, near London. It was here that the scenes of the prison house began to close upon the growing boy. Medwin, his cousin and schoolfellow described Syon House 'a perfect hell' to Shelley where he developed the habit of sleepwalking for which he was punished.

The two years at Syon House, however, was only a foretaste of Eton, surrounded and persecuted as he was by adolescent boys and unsympathetic, hidebound masters. Shelley was sensitive, and deeply imaginative. He disliked sports and thus became, in the eyes of his fellows, 'Mad Shelley' and his existence at Eton was a little hell.

However, Eton and Syon House were visited by an amateur travelling lecturer called Adam Walker. We can gain an idea of his lectures from his *A System of Familiar Philosophy* (1799), a book with more than 500 quarto pages and hundreds of illustrations. Walker exhibited his Orrery (a clockwork model of the planetary system, named thus after Charles Boyle, 4th Earl of Orrery) to the children. The objects, however, that fascinated Shelley the most were chemistry and electricity, perhaps owing to the possibility of noisy and spectacular experiments that revealed before him the secrets of nature.

Shelley went up to University College, Oxford in the autumn of 1810. However, by that time he had had *Zastrozzi* (1810); and *Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire* (with his beloved sister Elizabeth) published. *St. Irvyne or The Rosicrucian* a Gothic romance like *Zastrozzi* was published in 1811. Meanwhile the Oxford printers published his collection of posms 'The Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson'. The poem, *The Wandering Jew*, after it was returned by Campbell with discouragement was sent to Ballantyne and Co. of Edinburgh. However, the events moved too swiftly to admit of the Edinburgh company issuing the poem.

On the very first evening at Oxford in October 1810 Shelley met another beginner called Thomas Jefferson Hogg (1792-1862) from Norton, Yorkshire. The two of them instantly took such liking for one another that they spent their days and evenings together almost to the complete exclusion of all others. They were inevitably seen as oddities. The two friends, however, were quite unlike one another. Hogg was self-centered and worldly, self-confident and gross in nature. Shelley was one spark of the ideal in his life. Yet Hogg was devoted to him and they collaborated in writing *The Necessity of Atheism* (1811).

Having published the pamphlet they sent copies of it to the masters of the colleges and the bishops. When Shelley was called by the master and two/three of the Fellows of University College to answer queries regarding it he refused to reply and was 'contumacious'. So, Shelley was expelled from the university. When Hogg heard about it he too claimed a hand in the work and was expelled likewise.

The two friends left Oxford for London on March 26, 1811. Hogg, persuaded by his father, left Shelley. But the Medwins and Groves helped Shelley during the six weeks he had to spend in London. As Timothy Shelley would have nothing to do with a wayward and obdurate son Percy's sisters sent him their pocket-money through a friend called Harriet Westbrook. Harriet was the daughter of a retired tavern-keeper in London. Shelley, though interested in his 'little friend', as he called her, was not touched by her. However, in the meantime Harriet was reproached at school for being friendly with a youth of Shelley's principles and suffered minor annoyances.

By the middle of May 1811 a settlement was reached between Shelley and his father in which his maternal uncle Captain Pilford, who lived near Field Place and was always helpful to Shelley, played an important part. By that arrangement Shelley was to get an allowance of £ 200 a year and his entire freedom. Shelley was shocked that his father cared more for social conventions and had no real personal convictions. In July Shelley went to Wales, to visit his cousins, the Groves, where he briefly though violently fell ill. He recovered and was delighted with the mountain scenery, then new to him. During his walks here he once met a beggar whom he gave something and followed him a mile in order to enter into a conversation with him. Finally the beggar told him, 'I see by your dress that you are a rich man. They have injured me and mine a million times. You appear to me well intentioned, but I have no security of it while you live in such a house as that, or wear such clothes as those. It would be charity to quit me.' The incident evidently created a lasting impression on Shelley's mind.

On his last visit to Field Place he had met one Miss Hitchner, school-teacher of 29, who held a high place in his esteem and he began his long correspondence with her on metaphysics and education. The Westbrooks were also in Wales and Harriet continued to write to Shelley about her despondence, unhappiness at home, even contemplated suicide and capped it all with an expression of a desire for Shelley's protection. 'Her letters' Shelley wrote to Miss Hitchner, 'became more and more gloomy. At length one assumed a tone of such despair as induced me to leave Wales precipitately, I arrived in London. I was shocked at observing the alteration in her looks. Little did I divine its cause. She had become violently attached to me, and feared that I should not return her attachment. Prejudice made the confession painful.

It was impossible to avoid being much affected; I promised to unite my fate to hers.' It was obvious that there was no love on Shelley's side and he confessed as much to Hogg whose advice he sought regarding their marriage. The two friends had learned from Godwin that the institution of marriage was irrational. In these circumstances Shelley married Harriet on the 28th or 29th of August 1811 in Edinburgh. Harriet was 16 and Shelley 18 years of age. Hogg joined them on their holiday and with him the Shelleys came to York where he was studying law. Here Hogg tried to seduce Harriet who told this to Shelley and the newly wedded couple immediately fled the city.

31.2.3 Life with Harriet Westbrook

For long Shelley had cherished a wish to meet and be with the Lake Poets - Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey. So he took a cottage at Keswick and was invited by the Duke of Norfolk to Greystoke. The duke had earlier interceded on his behalf with Timothy Shelley. Now Shelley was penniless and 'in danger of every day being deprived of the necessities of life.' The condition became less precarious when in December Mr Westbrook allowed Harriet £ 200 a year and a month later Shelley's father made an equal allowance to him to prevent 'his cheating strangers.' At Greystoke Shelley had met Calvert who introduced him to Robert Southey (1774-1843). Shelley had always admired Southey and his *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) had long been his favourite. Shelley was to model his *Queen Mab* (1813) after Milton and *Thalaba*. 'Here is a man at Keswick', wrote Southey, 'who acts upon me as my own ghost would do; he is just what I was in 1794.' Southey also contributed to Shelley's domestic comfort in material ways. However, Shelley was somewhat disappointed with Southey's platitudes upon morality, faith and the impracticality of the youth.

It was at Keswick that occurred one of the first of personal assaults on Shelley. On 19 January 1812, at around seven in the evening there was some noise at Shelley's door. When he went to see what was happening he was struck to the ground and was stunned by a blow. It was understood that his chemical experiments had created suspicion among the people against him.

Earlier on on the third of the same month he had written to William Godwin whose *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* Shelley had read with the highest regard and veneration for the intellectual powers of the author. On the 16th he sent him a sketch of his own life.

While at Keswick Shelley's thoughts turned to Ireland and he contemplated going there for the sake of catholic emancipation. He wrote his, 'Address to the Irish People' and early in February set off for Dublin in spite of the dissuasion of Calvert and Godwin.

Fifteen hundred copies of Shelley's 'Address' were printed which he distributed freely in Dublin. He also wrote 'Proposals for an Association' which was published on March 2, 1812. Shelley had been introduced to Curran and through him he made himself known to the leaders. On the 28th of February he joined O'Connell in addressing the people and spoke for an hour. Shelley was greeted both with hisses and applause - applause for bringing out the wrongs of Ireland, hisses for his plea for religious toleration. In Dublin Shelley also involved himself in acts of practical philanthropy. However, Godwin dissuaded him from his activities. 'Shelley' Godwin wrote him, 'you are preparing a scene of blood.'

Shelley left Ireland on 4 April 1812 and settled ten days later at Nantgwilt near Cwm Elen, the seat of his cousins, the Groves. Here he met T.L. Peacock (1785-1866) for the first time. Peacock introduced him to his London publisher Hookham and inculcated in Shelley a love for the Greek and Latin classics.

In June Shelley migrated to Lymouth in Devon. Eaton, who had published Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* in a periodical had been sentenced for doing so and Shelley wrote his 'Letter to Lord Ellenborough' in the publisher's defence. Shelley went a little further. He wrote a new satirical poem 'The Devil's Walk' and put it and the 'Letter' in bottles and balloons and set them adrift by sea and air. This hurt his servant Dan Healy who had followed him from Ireland. He was imprisoned, as he failed to pay two hundred pounds, the fine imposed on him for posting Shelley's 'Declarations' on the walls of Barnstable. Shelley could not pay the fine but provided the prisoner with fifteen shillings a week to make his confinement comfortable. Another result of the publication of the 'Declaration of Rights' was that the government put Shelley under surveillance and his activities began to be watched by a spy called Leeson.

It is at Lymouth that *Queen Mab* is first heard of. Shelley's first major poem to be published, *Queen Mab* was conceived in December 1811 and composed between June 1812 and February 19, 1813, when Shelley wrote to his publisher friend that it was 'finished & transcribed.' However, the notes were then still in progress. They are seventeen remarkable pieces - often considered better than the poem - 'against Jesus Christ, & the Bishops, & Marriage, & the Devil Knows What', as he himself later put it. The work was extremely popular not only among the working class radicals, and was called the Chartists' Bible, but later also with Bernard Shaw (1856-1950). Shelley had asked Hookham in March 1813 to publish his poem 'on fine paper & so as to catch the aristocrats: They will not read it but their daughters may.'

In September 1812 Shelley moved to Tanyralt, near Tremadoc, in Wales. Here once again he associated himself with one Mr. Maddock who was trying to reclaim some waste land by raising an embankment. Shelley contributed hundred pounds to the project and in October went to London in an effort to gain more subscribers for the undertaking. Here he met Godwin frequently and through him the Newtons, of vegetarian fame, as he had adopted vegetarianism while in Dublin.

Back in London Shelly renewed his friendship with his Oxford friend Hogg who has left an unforgettable picture of the poet's life in these years. Perhaps the most humorous in his account is his portrait of the Field Place school teacher Miss Hitchner who owing to his long expressed wish joined Shelley's household in Wales and the ever present Eliza whom Hogg nicknamed 'Brown Demon' and 'Black Demon' respectively. Miss Hitchner was finally got rid of and an allowance paid to set off the loss due to her giving up her school teaching.

Shelley briefly visited Wales (November 13, 1812 Tanyralt) and Dublin (March 21, 1813) but was back in London where Harriet gave birth to their daughter Ianthe (June 1813). Shelley was extremely fond of her and would walk up and down the room with it in his arms for a long time. Peacock further tells us that Shelley sang a 'monotonous melody of his own making, which ran on the repetition of a word of his own making'. This word was *Yáhmāni*, *Yáhmāni*. However, Peacock, goes on :

The child has a wet nurse, whom he did not like, and was much looked after by his wife's sister, whom he intensely disliked.

Peacock thought that if Harriet had nursed her own child, and if this sister had not lived with them, the link of their married love would not have been so readily broken.'

On March 26, Shelley remarried Harriet at St. George's Church, London in order to ensure the validity of the Scottish marriage and the rights of his children. Next month Harriet left him. She was unhappy about Shelley's wandering life, friends and activities. Shelley's 'Stanza April 1814' and 'To Harriet, May 1814' show how much he missed her. In July she was discovered to have been living with Eliza, her sister, at

Bath. It is possible that this protracted absence of Harriet became the immediate cause of the break in their marriage.

Shelley

31.2.4 Early friendship and later marriage with Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

Shelley met Mary (1797-1851), daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97) and William Godwin (1756-1836), on May 5 or 6, 1814. She had just returned to London after a long stay in Scotland. The two instantly fell in love. Peacock, who was a witness to Shelley's life at this time describes the state of agitation he found him in:

Between his old feeling toward Harriet, from whom he was not then separated, and his new passion for Mary, he showed in his looks, in his gestures, in his speech, the state of mind suffering like a little kingdom the nature of an insurrection'.



Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

Peacock further described his looks and state of mind,

His eyes were bloodshot, his hair and dress disordered. He caught up a bottle of laudanum and said, 'I never part from this.' He added, 'I am always repeating to myself your lines from Sophocles :

*Man's happiest lot is not to he
And when we tread life's thorny steep
Most blest are they who earliest free
Descend to death's eternal sleep.*

It is probable that Mary persuaded Shelley to undertake a trip to the continent in order to save his life and they left England on 28 July 1814. Jane 'Claire' Clairmont (1798-1879), daughter of William Godwin and his second wife Mary Clairmont joined them on the trip. From Troyes, France, Shelley wrote a letter to Harriet inviting her to join them but she did not do so. However, the party returned, for lack of funds, to London only after six weeks.

Life was not easy for Shelley in London, harried as he was by creditors. In order to avoid them he had to go into hiding and frequently shift lodgings. However, he was

happy, buoyed by his love for **Mary**. In November (on the 30th) Harriet gave birth to his son Charles Bysshe. His financial problems also soon came to an end with the death of his grandfather Sir Bysshe on 6 January, 1815. Most of Shelley's ruinous debts got paid and an annuity of £ 1000 (£200 paid directly to Harriet) was settled upon him.

Shelley and Mary took a pleasant cottage at Bishopsgate near the entrance to Windsor Park. From there they made a boating trip upstream on the Thames and after coming back Shelley wrote his first great poem *Alastor, or, The Spirit of Solitude* (1816). It is a non-political poem of haunting beauty written under the influence of Wordsworth's *The Excursion* (1814) published recently. Mary gave birth (January, 24, 1816) to their son William at Bishopsgate. (Her first child, however, was born the previous year (i.e. February 22, 1815) but had survived only for two weeks.)

In May 1816 Shelley left for Switzerland in the company of Mary and Claire Clairmont. They lived in a cottage on the bank of Lake Geneva. Lord Byron lived close by in Villa Diodati where Milton had lived in 1639. The two poets undertook a 10-day trip round the lake and the two families became very intimate. It was thus that Claire became the mother of Byron's daughter Allegra (born, 12 January, 1817). Meanwhile soon after they returned to England (in September 1816) Shelley was first shocked by the suicide of Fanny Imlay (1794-1816; daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft from the American writer Gilbert Imlay whom she met in Paris) and a month later, that is on 9 November, by Harriet's drowning herself in the Serpentine river in all probability because she was soon to become the mother of a child that was not Shelley's.

On the 30th December (1816) Shelley married Mary at St. Mildred's Church in the presence of her father. After his marriage he tried to recover Ianthe and Charles, his children from Harriet, to his custody but his claim was contested by the Westbrooks. The affair was brought into the Chancery Court and it was stated that Shelley was a man of atheistical and immoral principles. *Queen Mab* was offered as a proof. Lord Eldon gave his judgement on 27th March, 1817, who placed the children with Dr. and Mrs. Hume, nominated by Shelley. However, Shelley could see his children no more than 12 times a year and only in the presence of the guardians. The judge did not place them in the care of the Westbrooks either.

The Shelleys settled in Albion House at Marlow (February, 1817). Hogg and Peacock were their close friends and Godwin and Leigh Hunt (with his large family) frequent visitors. Through Hunt Shelley met Keats (1795-1821) and Horace Smith (1779-1849), a prolific but minor novelist and poet. Peacock introduced him to the study of Plato who thereafter became his lifelong companion along with Homer, the Greek tragedians and the Bible. Mary put together at Marlow her useful *History of Six Week's Tour* and wrote her famous *Frankenstein*. She also gave birth to Clara on September 2, 1817. While at Albion House Shelley wrote his longest poem *Laon and Cythna*, his idealized and idiosyncratic version of the French Revolution transposed to an Oriental setting. In order to avoid prosecution it was published with alterations in 1818 as *The Revolt of Islam*.

The Shelley couple were not ideally happy at Albion House. Mary felt uneasy and embarrassed in the presence of Claire who was and was not Byron's wife. She had put Shelley's reputation at stake. So they wanted to go to Venice and turn over Allegra to Byron to rear as his own (which he did). Besides, Shelley's health was deteriorating. He suffered from anxieties. He had fears that his children from Mary would also be taken away from him and that his father would have custody over him on the pretext of his madness. Shelley did not share these fears with anyone, not even Godwin. Hence he left England along with his family on the 11th or 12th March 1818, never to return. However, unhappily for both Mary and Shelley, the party included Claire.

31.2.5 Migration to Italy

Shelley

It was Italy that saw the flowering of Shelley's genius. It gave him the sudden confidence that comes from experience and maturity. The change from England was also welcome. He wrote,

no sooner had we arrived in Italy than the loveliness of the earth & the serenity of the sky made the greatest difference in my sensations - I depend on these things for in the smoke of cities & the tumult of humankind & the chilling fogs & rain of our own country I can hardly be said to live. (April 1818)

On his arrival in Italy he first sent Allegra from Milan to her father who was then living in Venice. Byron readily undertook her bringing up and education. The Shelley household moved to Leghorn which along with Pisa became his principal place of residence in Italy. He was drawn to Leghorn because the Gisbornes, old friends of Godwin, lived there.

Maria Gisborne had been brought up as a girl in the east. She was middle-aged when Southey met her. She married Reveley, the student of Athenian antiquities in Rome. Reveley was a radical and in England got associated with Godwin and his circle. When Mary Wollstonecraft died after giving birth to her daughter Mary Maria took her home. When two years later Reveley died Godwin proposed marriage to Maria but she refused. Instead she married Mr. Gisborne with whom she had been living in Italy for some years. Mrs Gisborne and Shelley read Spanish together and she introduced him into Calderon (1600-81) whom Shelley translated in 1822. Shelley got attached to Maria's son Henry Reveley, a young engineer who wanted to put a steamboat on the Mediterranean and Shelley, notwithstanding his difficult condition, invested on it. The project, however, failed and Shelley thought that he had been defrauded. The trouble was later settled amicably.

Shelley did not settle immediately at Leghorn. He stayed at the Baths of Lucca where he completed *Rosalind and Helen* which was begun at Marlow and translated Plato's *Symposium*. Claire was, however, getting anxious about Allegra as she heard more and more about Byron's life in Venice. Induced by Claire Shelley undertook an exhausting journey from the Baths of Lucca to Venice. Claire stayed at Padua as her presence was to be kept a secret. Byron offered Shelley his villa at Este in which he had himself never lived. Shelley wrote to Mary to bring their family to Este at once which she did. Baby Clara could not bear the strain of the journey and died (24 September, 1818) in Venice where she had to be taken for advice. Mary secretly blamed Claire and Shelley for this calamity. While at Este, Shelley entered the greatest creative period of his life. He wrote 'Lines on the Euganean Hills', *Julian and Maddalo* and the first act of *Prometheus Unbound*. Shelley wrote the second and third acts of *Prometheus* amid the vast ruins of the Baths of Caracalla in Rome and started writing *The Cenci* which was completed in August 1819. In Rome on 7 June, 1819 William, his son died 'after an illness of only a few days' as Shelley wrote to Peacock, 'haunted by calamity as I have been, that I should never recover any cheerfulness again.' (June 1819)

Shelley moved to Leghorn to allow Mary the company of Maria Gisborne. Here he heard about the political unrest and agitation in England and what is known in history as the Peterloo massacre (August 16). Shelley wrote 'The Mask of Anarchy' in September 1819 which was, however, not published until 1832. On 2 October they moved to Florence where his last child Percy Florence was born (12 November). He was named after the poet and the city of his birth and succeeded to the baronetcy. Shelley wrote his famous 'Ode to the West Wind' in Florence in October and the next month wrote a parody of Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* (written in 1798 but published with a dedication to Southey in 1819): It was called *Peter Bell the Third*

as Keats's friend John Hamilton Reynolds's second 'Peter Bell' had already appeared. Shelley mocked Wordsworth's defection from the radical cause and called him 'a solemn and unsexual man.' This poem also was suppressed until 1839. In December Shelley wrote the fourth act of *Prometheus* and on 27 January, 1820 the family travelled to Pisa. This was to be their last station, except for occasional trips to Leghorn and Lucca and the final summer at Casa Magni on the Bay of Spezia.

The immediate purpose of their visit to Pisa was to consult the famous Italian physician Andrea Vacca Berlinghieri. Here he found a friend in one Mrs. Mason, a daughter of the Earl of Kingston of Ireland where Mary Wollstonecraft had served as a governess. However, at Pisa Shelley soon became the nucleus of a large group of people from Ireland, England, Italy and Greece. Life for Shelley at Pisa was made difficult by Godwin by his ever increasing demand for money. Shelley reminded him that he had paid him £4000 to 5000 and in order to do so paid the money-lenders four or five times that amount. Claire caused Shelley trouble by her anxiety for Allegra and her inability to be on good terms with Mary. The discharged servant Paolo tried first to blackmail him and then spread scandals about his personal life which were taken up in Italy and echoed in England. Finally, Claire left the Shelleys to become a governess in Florence but visited them from time to time.

The 'Pisan circle' which Shelley had formed included Professor Pacchiani, Princess Argiropoli, Sgricci, Taffe, Prince Mavrocordato - who was responsible in large measure for *Hellas* (1821), Shelley's lyrical drama on Greek revolt against the Turks - and above all Emilia Viviani, a beautiful 17-year-old heiress 'tyrannized' in a convent at Pisa who made Shelley write his breathtakingly beautiful poem 'Epipsychidion' (1821). The title of the poem remains a puzzle perhaps because it is addressed to *epi-psyche* the 'soul out of my soul' or beloved and also because of its ironic reference to the *Epithalamium* the conventional marriage song such as Spenser wrote. In this poem Shelley attacked the institution of marriage as 'the dreariest and longest journey' and praised 'Free' or 'True' love (11.148-73).

The most important addition in January 1821 to the circle was Edward Williams and his wife Jane. They remained Shelley's companions till the end. His poems on Jane - 'With a Guitar, To Jane,' 'To Jane, The Invitation', 'When the lamp is shattered', 'To Jane (The Keen stars were twinkling)', and 'Lines written in the Bay of Lerici' - were not shown to Mary and have the quality of the poems written for one alone to read.

Mention must be made of Edward John Trelawny (1792-1881) who joined the Pisan Circle on January 14, 1822 whose chief claim to memory was his record of the lives of Shelley and Byron apart from his presence at the cremation of Shelley along with Byron. Shelley had gone to Ravenna to persuade Byron to come down to Pisa to join the circle which he did on 1 November, 1821.

31.2.6 The last days

Byron's daughter Allegra had died on 20 April, 1822 and so the Shelleys began their projected summer at San Terenzo, facing Lerici, on the Gulf of Spezia a little early. They rented Casa Magni and occupied it, on April 8. The Williamses also moved to San Terenzo on 30th April. On May 12 they received Don Juan their schooner. Shelley christened it the Ariel and Williams called it 'a perfect plaything for the summer'. The two friends also made a shallop of canvas and reeds and in one or the other of these vessels Shelley incessantly boated. Shelley wrote *The Triumph of Life* going off by himself in his shallop in moonlight. Mary had never found Shelley in a happier mood. 'If' wrote Shelley, 'the past and future could be obliterated, the present could content me so well that I could say with Faust to the passing moment, "Remain thou, thou art so beautiful."'

Mary, unfortunately was **not** happy. She was not well. Shelley had been taken seriously ill. One night when with Williams he saw **naked**. Allegra rise **from** the waves and clap her hands. On another occasion he saw his own image which asked him 'How long do you mean to be content?' Mrs Williams also saw Shelley twice while he was not present. Casa Magni was a place of visions.

Two months had passed by in this retreat and Shelley's old friend Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) was to arrive in Italy to edit **The Liberal** **from** Pisa. The plan had been conceived by Shelley and was to be supported by Byron. In order to meet the Hunts Shelley, along with Edward Williams and his sailor-boy Charles Vivian set sail for Leghorn on 1 July 1822. Thornton, the eldest son of Hunt always **remembered** the cry with which Shelley rushed into his father's arms saying, 'I **am** **inexpressibly** delighted! You cannot think how inexpressibly happy it makes me.' The Hunts were settled in Byron's *Palazzo* in Pisa and Shelley, Williams and Charles set sail for San Torenzo by the same boat. On the 8th of July 1822 Ariel **sank** under a squall. The two bodies, i.e. of Shelley and Williams, were found on 18 July. In one of Shelley's pocket was a **volume** of Aeschylus and in the other, Keats's **poems** folded back to back as if the reader had been in the act of reading it **when** he hastily thrust it away with the intention of **coming back** to the line where he had left.

Trelawny arranged for the **cremation** at which Byron and **Hunt** alone were present besides a few natives of the place. Byron **and** Hunt could hardly maintain themselves. Trelawny snatched Shelley's heart **from** the flames. His ashes were deposited in the English burying ground in Rome by the side of Keats and his son William. Mary did not marry but lived to write and publish Shelley's writings posthumously.

You have read **an** account of Shelley's life. Now would you like to answer a **few** questions which are based on it ?

Exercise

Answer either a or b set of questions below:

a) When and where did Shelley write the following :

1. *Queen Mab*,
2. *Alastor*,
3. *Prometheus Unbound*,
4. 'Ode to the West Wind', and
5. *The Triumph of Life* ?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

- b) 1. Would it be fair on our part to ask whether Shelley's relationships with many women was proper ? Give reasons for your answer.

2. Shelley loved liberty and freedom. Cite instances that support or refute the observation and state if Shelley acted responsibly or otherwise.

3. If Shelley had been alive would you have tried to know him closely ? Give reasons for your answer.

31.3 LET'S SUM UP

In this unit you read about the troubled life of Shelley, his acquaintances, and his attitude towards them. You got to know about his wide reading; for Shelley, notwithstanding his death at twenty-nine, was **one of the most learned** of the English poets. You were in this unit, faced with a "morally difficult" poet because we **cannot** read Shelley without deciding upon some of the fundamental issues of life such as love and marriage, limits to our freedom and the need for restraints, etc.

31.4 'ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

- a.
 1. Shelley wrote **Queen Mab** in England and Wales during his early period of political activism in 1812-13.
 2. **Alastor** was written in Windsor Great Park in the latter part of 1815.
 3. The first **act** of **Prometheus Unbound** was written at Este in 1818. The second and third acts were written in the spring in Rome and the fourth act in December of 1819 at Leghorn and Florence.
 4. 'Ode to the West Wind' was written in the 'wood that skirts the Amo' near Florence in October 1819.
 5. **The Triumph of Life** was written in moonlight while boating in the bay of Lerici in the **Gulf** of Spezia while the Shelleys were sojourning at Casa Magni in the summer of 1822.
- b. I would not answer those questions, for you **can** guess what I would have to say from **the** text of this unit. However, you may discuss your answers with some of your friends because they are not irrelevant to a proper understanding of Shelley's poetry.

31.5 FURTHER READING

The best thing would be to read as **many** of Shelley's poems as you can : **Queen Mab**, **Alastor**, '**Hymn to Intellectual Beauty**', 'Mont Blanc', '**Prometheus Unbound** which **Yeats** called a 'sacred book', and 'Epipsychidion'. You must read the essay 'A Defence of Poetry'. You will find it **printed** in the Reader (See pp.108-141) **that** goes with **Literary Criticism and Theory** (MEG05). This essay has been discussed for you in Block III unit 4 of the course. It **would** be advisable to go through the essay **as** well as the unit right away.

If you wish to read more about Shelley's life read Newman Ivey White's **life** of **Shelley** in two volumes published in 1940. This work was condensed in one volume, as **Portrait of Shelley** (1945). Edmund Blunden's **Shelley : A Life Story** (1946) offers vivid **details** from the poet's life. Kenneth Neill Cameron's **The Young Shelley** (1950) and the sequel to it **Shelley : The Golden Years** (1974) **examine** the development of Shelley's political thought and his radicalism.

Among the shorter studies of Shelley are Matthew Arnold's 'Shelley' in **Essays in Criticism, Second Series** (1881) **in** which Arnold criticized **him** as '**an** ineffectual angel beating his luminous wings in the void' and George Santayana's 'Shelley, or the Poetic value of Revolutionary Principles' printed in **Winds of Doctrine** (1913) **in** which **he** retorted, '**An** angel **cannot** be ineffectual if the standard of efficiency is moral.' We have **anthologised** for you 'Shelley's View of Poetry' published in 1909 **in** **Oxford Lectures on Poetry** by Andrew C. Bradley **in** this block. You may read it. You may also read Herbert Read's 'In Defence of Shelley' (pp. 189-287), a

psychological study of the poet at a time when such studies became very popular in literary criticism, in ***The True Voice of Feeling: Studies in English Romantic Poetry*** (Faber and Faber : London). However, in reading Read's essay you must be **careful** not to accept his thesis without caution. 'Shelley' Read writes, 'lived in a state of heightened subjectivity due to his unconscious homosexuality'. Read quotes Dr **McCurdy's** words:

...very frequently the alleged object of love is merely a lay figure; the subject is in love with the ideal of what the loved one should be. In such a case the union is happy just in so far as the object of **attachment** is capable of identifying himself or herself with the ideal. This type of love is narcissistic because what is loved is not another person at all but an autochthonous ideal.

From studies such as **McCurdy's** Read **declares** Shelley a 'narcissistic type'

Read whatever fascinates you but don't allow yourself to **get** swamped **and** read **only** as much as you can with enjoyment.

UNIT 32 A STUDY OF *THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE*

Structure

- 32.0 Objectives
- 32.1 Introduction
- 32.2 Jean Jacques Rousseau: The leader in *The Triumph*
- 32.3 Reading *The Triumph of Life*
 - 32.3.1 Discussions on *The Triumph*

Lines	1 - 40	Part I
Lines	41 - 175	Part II
Lines	176 - 295	Part III
Lines	296 - 438	Part IV
Lines	439 - 548	Part V
- 32.4 Reading Yeats's 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry'
- 32.5 Let's sum up
- 32.6 Answers to exercises
- 32.7 Further reading

32.0 OBJECTIVES

- The main objective of this unit is to enable you to appreciate *The Triumph of Life*.

In order to help you do so we also help you discover Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) on the one hand and look at Shelley's poetry from the point of view of W.B. Yeats, one of the greatest of the admirers among the British poets of Shelley, on the other.

- After having read this unit you will also gain greater confidence in writing reference to context questions.

32.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit has mainly three major parts - 32.2, 32.3 and 32.4 - on Rousseau, *The Triumph of Life*, and W.B. Yeats's essay on Shelley. I will tell you why I have arranged the material in this fashion.

Rousseau, introduced very briefly in 32.2, is a character in *The Triumph of Life*. He is in this poem, for Shelley what Virgil was to Dante in the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*. We'll talk about Rousseau only for this reason. You must know who he was in order to appreciate *The Triumph*.

Part 32.3 is devoted entirely to explicating the text of the poem prescribed for you. Now you know that you have to look for the text of *The Triumph of Life* in the appendix of this block. It is this section (32.3) which is the longest and you must read it little by little. Our discussion on this poem has been divided into five parts. Read one part carefully and then do the exercise. Each part ends with an exercise. You may take an-hour-and-a-half to do a sub-section. If you have to do the reading of this part in five days don't blame yourself for being too slow. This part (32.3) of the unit is not to be studied in one day. It will require a lot of input from you. This is borne out by the fact that the section on 'Answers to exercises' in this unit is longer than in any

other unit on the British Poetry course. Doing the exercises will help you understand the poem better.

In this unit we have given you a model answer to a reference to context question. As you know you should expect to write **such** explanations at the term-end examination.

W.B. Yeats's 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry' can be called one of the **most** significant studies of Shelley by a British poet. If you had been in a class-room of a main-stream university your teacher would have spent a couple of lectures discussing Yeats's Shelley. Well, s/he could have also discussed A.C. Bradley's essay on Shelley provided for you in this block **but** we do not propose to do that here. You will have to read Bradley on your own. However, you can discuss Bradley's essay on **Shelley** at the Study Centre or with your friends at a privately formed study circle.

After having come so far give yourself a short **break** and then plan your study of this unit before **going further** or if the poem tempts you, read it first. Then read about Rousseau in the next section.

You may be required to **consult** a reference work for other personages such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Alexander the Great, **Dante**, Voltaire, etc., who appear in The *Triumph of Life*.

32.2 JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU : THE LEADER IN *THE TRIUMPH*



Jean Jacques Rousseau

Jean Jacques Rousseau was one of the most influential of the eighteenth century writers and thinkers. If on **the** one hand he was largely responsible for the rise of Romanticism in England and on the continent, on the other he **influenced** leading German Philosophers such as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Georg Hegel (1770-1831), and educationists such as Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), and even John Dewey (1859-1952).

Jean Jacques was born (June 28, 1712) to Isaac Rousseau a Jenevan watchmaker and Suzanne Bernard, niece of a Calvinist minister. His mother died a few days after his birth. Rousseau's education began at the age of six when he started reading books from his father's library. He first read novels and comedies but soon switched over to Plutarch and the great moralists. When Jean Jacques was ten years of age his father quarrelled with a member of an influential family of Jeneva and as a result went into exile leaving his two sons - Jean Jacques and his elder brother François - with his brother-in-law Gabriel Bernard. François was apprenticed but Jean Jacques was sent outside Geneva to live with J.-J. Lambergier, a minister, who taught him the classics.

In 1745, while at Paris, he took up with Therese Levasseur, a chambermaid at the hotel where he was staying. He had several children by her but they were all sent to a foundling home. Rousseau finally married her in a civil marriage in 1768.

While in Paris Rousseau met Diderot, d'Alembert, Helvetius and Voltaire. He wrote all the articles on music that Diderot and d'Alembert published in their *Encyclopédie* (1751-65).

In the meantime, Diderot encouraged him to compete for the prize announced by Dijon Academy in 1750 for an essay on the question whether the sciences and the arts had helped to purify morals. Rousseau's *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* won the first prize and its publication brought him recognition all over Europe. In this essay Rousseau had not used the word *Liberté*. However his opinion,

The sciences, letters, and arts ... wind garlands of flowers around the iron chains that bind them [the people], stifle in them the feeling of that original liberty for which they seemed to have been born, make them love their slavery, and turn them into what is called civilized people.

was taken unfavourably by the powers that were: Although a child of the Enlightenment (for the meaning of this word please read the introduction to block V) Rousseau was questioning not only monarchy and the church but also the sciences and the arts and indeed civilization itself. Rousseau thought that the atheism of the philosophe was a luxury of the bourgeoisie. He instead elaborated a "theism" of the heart. In 1762 Rousseau published *The Social Contract*, perhaps his most famous book after his *Confessions*, in which he observed, ' Men are born free and everywhere they are in chains.'

Rousseau sought a reordering of the society. He admired the ancient Greeks who thought that 'we begin properly to become men only after we become citizens.' The wise man according to Rousseau was one who 'no longer [regarded] himself as one, but [was] part of the whole, and [was] only conscious of the common life.' Rousseau blamed civilization for the ills of our society and thought that social and worldly life was a source of wickedness. He developed this theme in his novel *Emile*.

Rousseau was unfortunate with his friends : Diderot, Hume and even Voltaire. Rousseau received an anonymous pamphlet on the last day of 1764 *Le Sentiment des citoyens* ('The Feelings of the Citizens') in which he had been attacked for being a hypocrite, a heartless father and an ungrateful friend. The effect on Rousseau was terrible and the pamphlet had been written by Voltaire.

When Rousseau recovered from the shock he began writing his *Confessions*, his defence of his life and work. On July 2, 1778 he died quietly at Ermenonville on the estate of the marquis René de Girardin.

32.3 READING THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE

Shelley was writing *The Triumph of Life*, as you know, before he left San Torenzo for Leghorn and was drowned on his voyage back on 8 July, 1822. The poem thus

remained unfinished. Notwithstanding its fragmentary status T.S.Eliot called *The Triumph* Shelley's finest work. In it Shelley achieved the detachment that we don't find in any of his earlier works of the same or greater length. *The Triumph* is written in *terza rima*, the verse form which Dante had used in his *Divina Commedia* and Petrarch in his *Trionfi*. Shelley tried this verse form for the first time in *Prince Athanase* (written at Marlow in 1817) and kept his hand in with *The Woodman and the Nightingale*, the *Ode* to the West Wind and some translation of Dante. You may recall (from our discussion in 2.5.1) that the *terza rima* is a special case of a triplet with the interlocking rhymescheme aba-bcb-cdc-ded-efe-... Examine the text of the poem and find out the rhymescheme for yourself.

The 'triumph' in the title of Shelley's poem stands also for triumphal procession as in Petrarch's *Trionfi* or *Triumphs* which is a sequence of seven poems celebrating the victory of Love over Man, Chastity over Love, Death over Chastity, Fame over Death, Time over Fame and God over Time. Shelley could also have been influenced by the Roman relief sculptures of ceremonial processions, which he must have seen in Italy, of victorious Generals' entry into Rome in ancient times. These processions included their prisoners of wars. Shelley's poem portrays the victory procession of Life which has people like Plato, Aristotle and Alexander, Dante and Petrarch, on the one hand and Napoleon Bonaparte, King Frederick II (1712-1786) of Prussia, Czarina Catherine II (1729-1796) of Russia and Leopold II (1747-1792) the Holy Roman Emperor, on the other. Voltaire, Kant, Milton and Wordsworth also figure in the procession but not the 'sacred few' of Athens and Jerusalem, i.e. Socrates and Jesus Christ who refused to make any compromise with Life and thus did not become its slave. The 'leader' of the poem, of course, is Rousseau who makes sense of the chaotic procession for the narrator. When Shelley was

Struck to the heart by this sad pageantry,
Half to myself I said - 'And what is life?
Whose shape is that within the car? And why' -
I would have added - 'is all here amiss? -
But a voice answered - 'Life! '

The voice is that of Rousseau :

What I thought was an old root which grew
To strange distortion out of the hill side.

The distorted root-like form is what remains 'of what was once Rousseau' and he comments upon some of the interesting figures in the procession for the narrator just as Virgil took Dante through *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. The difference is that while Shelley and Rousseau look on and the procession moves Virgil and Dante had travelled through the nine circles of Hell and the seven cornices of Mount Purgatory.

Now first read the poem on your own and then read the next section of this unit. You may have to read the poem again in order to be able to do the exercises. Do not lose patience. At the end of the discussion exercises you will feel satisfied with your work.

32.3.1 Discussions on *The Triumph* :

For the sake of convenience we have divided the poem into five parts. Shelley himself, however, did not do so. Hence the text provided in the appendix is continuous.

I Lines 1 to 40 of *The Triumph of Life*:

You may need some help and like to write the meanings of the following words in the margin of the text.

line 7 - **Orison** = a prayer

8 - A *Matin* is a service in the Church of England

9 - A censer is a vessel in which incense is burned.

25 - athwart = sloping position

26 ▪ Locate the Appenine mountain range south of the Po valley on the map of the Italian peninsula.

Exercise I

Now **answer** the following questions :

1. What does the expression 'cone of night' in line 23 **mean** ?

[illegible]

2. **What is the** time of day that is described? Point out the two images that you find most effective.

54

3. Describe the narrator. What does he tell us about himself?

Having answered the questions above compare them with **my** responses given later, in **32.6**, in this unit. Allow yourself some interval **before** going on to the next sub-section i.e. II.

II. Lines 41 to 175 :

Now read lines 41 to 175 of the poem. You may **need** some help in reading it which may be **had** from the glossary below :

- line 51 - A bier is a table-like movable **frame**, **sometimes** with wheels, for taking a dead body to the graveside.
- line 78 - Mary Shelley had filled the gap left in ~~the~~ text of the poem by her husband with 'blinding'.
- line 85 - The crescent new moon is seen as a **snarlot** in which is seated the shadow of the moon.
- line 91 - Mourners wear black **material** or **crape** on their clothes,
- line 92 - **dun** = dark
- line 94 - **Janus** was a Roman god of beginnings and endings. ~~He~~ is represented sometimes with two faces and sometimes four, one on each side of his head.
- line 111-116 - According to the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 15) the Year of Jubilee was the 'year of release' in which the slaves were freed. The irony in Shelley's use of the word **jubilee** can be seen in his using it to describe a Roman triumphal procession in which the victorious army displayed the people they had conquered. The conquered people, in order to display their

subservience, were sometimes made to carry a yoke on their neck.

Shelley, in these **lines**, recalls that these 'triumphs' **began** about **the** end of the Republic when the Romans themselves were enslaved by their **emperors**.

line 121 - Age refers to a historical period, an era.

line 128-136 - The 'sacred few ... of Athens and Jerusalem' are obviously **Socrates** and Jesus Christ.

Now if **you** first answer the following questions and then read my responses to them given later in this unit you will be **able** to understand the second part of the poem better.

Exercise II

1. Comment briefly, in your own words, on the procession that the narrator describes in lines 41-73.

Blank lined paper with horizontal ruling lines.

2. **Please** read lines 74 to 111. Shelley describes Life, the **Conqueror**, in those **lines**. **State** some of the significant observations of the narrator on Life and his procession.

[illegible]

In lines 111 to 175 Shelley describes the crowd that is accompanying the car of Life. Tell us in brief about the persons described.

III Lines 176 to 295 :

You may consult the following notes which will help you understand this part of the poem better.

- line 180 - The 'voice' in this line refers to Rousseau just as in line 190 the 'grim Feature' refers to him. Milton described **Death** in *Paradise Lost* (Book X, line 279) as a 'grim Feature'.
- line 210 - **A mitre** is a tall pointed hat **worn** by priests of high rank such as **bishops** and archbishops on ceremonial occasions.
- **A helm** is an old use of helmet. In the old phrase 'at the helm' (or the person at the top) refers to the man at the tiller - a long handle fastened to the top end of a small boat's rudder so that it **can** be turned easily.
- line 270 - Francis Bacon (1561-1626) discussed in his *The Wisdom of the Ancients*, the myth of Proteus as an allegory of physical matter and its transformation.
- line 274 - In the place of 'bards of old' Shelley had **written**, in a **cancelled** draft of the poem, 'Homer & his brethren.'
- line 288 - While John was the name most commonly adopted by the popes, Gregory VII (Hildebrand) is singled out by Shelley because he established the temporal powers of the papacy, apart from its spiritual.

Now answer **the** following questions in the space provided. You may then read my responses recorded in section **32.6** of this unit.

Exercise III

1. Why does Rousseau tell the narrator
" **Before** thy memory
"I feared, loved, hated, suffered, did, and died'..."

1. Introduction
 2. Background
 3. Methodology
 4. Results
 5. Conclusion
 6. References
 7. Appendix
 8. Index
 9. Glossary
 10. Summary
 11. Abstract
 12. Keywords
 13. Subject
 14. Topic
 15. Field
 16. Area
 17. Discipline
 18. Branch
 19. Division
 20. Department
 21. Faculty
 22. School
 23. College
 24. University
 25. Institution
 26. Organization
 27. Association
 28. Society
 29. Community
 30. Group
 31. Team
 32. Unit
 33. Section
 34. Division
 35. Department
 36. Faculty
 37. School
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 251. Organization
 252. Association
 253. Society
 254. Community
 255. Group
 256. Team
 257. Unit
 258. Section
 259. Division
 260. Department
 261. Faculty
 262. School
 263

2. The leader tells the narrator about the acts of the men of letters for which they stood chained to the chariot of Life (in lines 210-215). What was the fault of the men of letters?

[illegible]

3. What fault does Rousseau **find** with himself which forced **him** to become a captive in Life's victory procession? Please read lines 278-281 before answering this question.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

4. What was Constantine's crime according to Shelley?

IV, Lines 296 to 438 :

In order to comprehend **this** portion of the poem better you may read the text along with the notes below :

- line 331 - To be oblivious of something **is** to be unmindful or forgetful of it: In poetry, however, the word is used in the sense of, 'of or inducing oblivion'. Rousseau's account of **his** life in this poem is modelled partly on his *Confessions* and partly on Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality*.
- line 345-46 - The sun, here, is symbol **of the** deity. It is reflected **from** water which is symbol of mortality. Shelley shows us the play of life and death, **immortality and** mortality,
- line 352 - Critics agree that 'A shape all light' in this line represents human creativity. It is like the sun in glory because we see things as much in the light of our imagination **as** in the light of common day.
- line 357 - In Greek mythology Iris is the goddess who acts like the messenger of the gods. She displays the rainbow as her sign.
- line 359 - Nepenthe, mentioned in Homer's *The Odyssey*, is **an Egyptian** drug which has the power to banish pain, anger and sorrow. Helen of Troy gives it to **Telemachus** (in *The Odyssey*, IV), Shelley's immediate source could be Milton's *Comus*, in which the character of that name, who is son of Circe, the daughter of the **Sun**, offers an 'orient liquor in a Crystal **glasse**' which is greater than 'Nepenthes', in order to seduce **them**.
- line 361 - Shelley's **use** of the word **palm** here, as in *Adonais* and *Prometheus Unbound*, for **the** 'sole' of the foot is quite without precedent, In *Adonais* Shelley has,

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through **camp**s **and** cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her airy tread
Yielding not, wounded **the** invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell :

And in *Prometheus Unbound* Shelley wrote,

Our feet now, every Palm,
Are sandalled with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm;

Triumph

Shelley, however, consistently used 'palm' as the 'sole of the foot'.

- line 414 - **Lucifer** is light-bringer. In Shelley's poetry it refers always to the planet Venus, the evening and morning star.

Chrysolite is a name given to precious olivine, a pale yellowish-green silicate of magnesia and iron.

- line 419 - The star refers to Venus, the morning and evening star.

- line 420 The **Jonquil** is a type of sweet smelling flower of the Narcissus family.

This section of the poem, as you must have noticed, is allegorical in nature. It also invites us to participate in an experience, more than describing a scene or narrating a story. Hence, you must read it and discuss it with your friends privately or at the Study Centre, under the guidance of your counsellor.

The **exercise** below will help you understand how this section can be discussed. It will **also** help you more immediately to prepare for the examination.

Exercise IV

Explain the following lines with reference to the context, supplying brief critical comments where necessary :

'... Shew whence I came, and where I **am**, and why -
Pass not away upon the passing stream.'
'Arise and quench thy thirst' **was** her reply,

Note : You may like to read the points under 52.3.2 **i.e.** on Page 75 in block X of this course, before writing your explanation,

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Lined writing area with horizontal lines.

Read the notes below for help in understanding the last section of the poem :

- Lines 439 - 41: A pavilion, as you know, is a large, light **ornamental** building used for exhibitions or public amusement. Shelley describes a 'wind-winged pavilion' built by Iris whom we met earlier in this poem. This pavilion, formed like an arch of victory is particoloured in vermillion, green and azure. Besides, the pavilion is progressing ahead of the procession. This arch is the arch of Life. Iris represents Life, its richness, its **colourfulness**, its joyous variety. In *Adonais* (L II) Shelley had portrayed Life as a 'dome of **many-coloured glass**' :
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white **radiance** of Eternity,
Until death tramples it to **fragments**.
- The triplet reminds us of the lines in *Adonais*.
- line 446 - Atomies are motes or grains or particles of dust.
- line 463 - Lethe in Greek **mythology** is the underworld river in Hades. When one drinks its water one forgets the past.
- line 472 - Dante was led through Paradise by his beloved Beatrice. In lines 472-74 the **subject** is Love which led, Dante - 'of him' - from the 'lowest depths of Hell / **Through** every Paradise and through all glory' **and who** returned **from** there to tell us 'How all things are **transfigured**, except love'.
- lines 481 - 83 Shelley scholars agree that the 'phantoms' in this passage are like the **simulacra or masks** described by Lucretius in *De Rerum Natura* (Book IV). Lucretius describes ideas, beliefs, superstitions **and** passions of men peeling off **from** them and forming **simulacra or masks** and floating around **in** the air.
- line 495 - Ermine is the name given to stoat in winter when its fur turns white. **Formely, important** people such as kings and judges wore the white fur of this animal. Hence, **metonymically**, **ermine stands** for the 'important people in the **society**.'
- line 496 - The Pope wears the tiara (or **tiar**) or triple crown which **symbolises** his **dignity and** sovereignty.
- line 500 - Skeletons are also called anatomies.
- line 505 - The bones of **the** dead are kept in a charnel house.
- line 530 - The shadows a person gave off were each in some aspect like the person **from** whom they derived **and** like one another in some respects,

Exercise V :

Explain **one** of the following passages **with** reference to the context and provide brief **critical** comments of your own :

(a)

... Who returned to tell
In words of hate and awe the wondrous story
How all things are transfigured, **except** love
For deaf as is a sea which wrath **makes** hoary

Triumph

(b)

... as when there hovers
A flock of vampire bats before the glare
Of the tropic sun, bringing ere **evening**
Strange night upon some Indian isle, -

Lined area for writing or drawing.

Lined writing area with horizontal lines and a faint watermark.

32.4 READING YEATS'S 'THE PHILOSOPHY OF SHELLEY'S POETRY'

Please first read the essay by Yeats printed later in this block and then come back to this unit and do the exercise given below :

Exercise VI :

Below you have six short passages from Shelley's 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry'. A word or two has been left out in each passage. Let's see if you can fill in the blanks.

- a) He bids the reformers in the Philosophical *Review of Reform* receive 'the onset of the cavalry', if it be sent to **disperse** their meetings, _____, and 'not because active resistance is not justifiable, but because temperance and courage would produce greater advantages than the most decisive victory' ...
- b) [Shelley] does not believe that **the** reformation of society can bring this beauty-this divine order among men without the regeneration of the _____ of men.

UNIT 32 A STUDY OF *THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE*

Structure

- 32.0 Objectives
- 32.1 Introduction
- 32.2 Jean Jacques Rousseau: The leader in *The Triumph*
- 32.3 Reading *The Triumph of Life*
 - 32.3.1 Discussions on *The Triumph*

Lines	1 - 40	Part I
Lines	41 - 175	Part II
Lines	176 - 295	Part III
Lines	296 - 438	Part IV
Lines	439 - 548	Part V
- 32.4 Reading Yeats's 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry'
- 32.5 Let's sum up
- 32.6 Answers to exercises
- 32.7 Further reading

32.0 OBJECTIVES

- The main objective of this unit is to enable you to appreciate *The Triumph of Life*.

In order to help you do so we also help you discover Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) on the one hand and look at Shelley's poetry from the point of view of W.B. Yeats, one of the greatest of the admirers among the British poets of Shelley, on the other.

- After having read this unit you will also gain greater confidence in writing reference to context questions.

32.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit has mainly three major parts - 32.2, 32.3 and 32.4 - on Rousseau, *The Triumph of Life*, and W.B. Yeats's essay on Shelley. I will tell you why I have arranged the material in this fashion.

Rousseau, introduced very briefly in 32.2, is a character in *The Triumph of Life*. He is in this poem, for Shelley what Virgil was to Dante in the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*. We'll talk about Rousseau only for this reason. You must know who he was in order to appreciate *The Triumph*.

Part 32.3 is devoted entirely to explicating the text of the poem prescribed for you. Now you know that you have to look for the text of *The Triumph of Life* in the appendix of this block. It is this section (32.3) which is the longest and you must read it little by little. Our discussion on this poem has been divided into five parts. Read one part carefully and then do the exercise. Each part ends with an exercise. You may take an-hour-and-a-half to do a sub-section. If you have to do the reading of this part in five days don't blame yourself for being too slow. This part (32.3) of the unit is not to be studied in one day. It will require a lot of input from you. This is borne out by the fact that the section on 'Answers to exercises' in this unit is longer than in any

other unit on the British Poetry course. Doing the exercises will help you understand the poem better.

In this unit we have given you a model answer to a reference to context question. As you know you should expect to write **such** explanations at the term-end examination.

W.B. Yeats's 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry' can be called one of the **most** significant studies of Shelley by a British poet. If you had been in a class-room of a main-stream university your teacher would have spent a couple of lectures discussing Yeats's Shelley. Well, s/he could have also discussed A.C. Bradley's essay on Shelley provided for you in this block **but** we do not propose to do that here. You will have to read Bradley on your own. However, you can discuss Bradley's essay on **Shelley** at the Study Centre or with your friends at a privately formed study circle.

After having come so far give yourself a short **break** and then plan your study of this unit before **going further** or if the poem tempts you, read it first. Then read about Rousseau in the next section.

You may be required to **consult** a reference work for other personages such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Alexander the Great, **Dante**, Voltaire, etc., who appear in The *Triumph of Life*.

32.2 JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU : THE LEADER IN *THE TRIUMPH*



Jean Jacques Rousseau

Jean Jacques Rousseau was one of the most influential of the eighteenth century writers and thinkers. If on **the** one hand he was largely responsible for the rise of Romanticism in England and on the continent, on the other he **influenced** leading German Philosophers such as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Georg Hegel (1770-1831), and educationists such as Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), and even John Dewey (1859-1952).

- c. Intellectual Beauty has not only the happy dead to do her will, but ministering spirits who correspond to the _____ of the East, and the Elemental Spirits of medieval Europe, and the _____ of ancient Ireland, and whose too constant presence, ... give some of [Shelley's] poetry an air of rootless fantasy.
- d. I have re-read *Prometheus Unbound*, which I had hoped my fellow students would have studied as a _____ book, and it seems to me to have an even more certain place than I had thought among the _____ books of the world.
- e. ... our little memories are but a part of some great Memory that renews the world and men's thought's age after age, and that our thoughts are not, as we suppose, the deep, but a little _____ upon the deep.
- f. The ancients [Shelley] says, called souls not only Naiads but _____, 'as the efficient cause of sweetness'; but not all souls 'proceeding into generation are called. _____' but those who will live in it justly and who after having performed such things as are acceptable to the gods will again return (to their kindred stars). For this insect loves to return, to the place _____, from whence it came and is eminently just and sober.'

As you ~~mut have~~ noticed Yeats's essay on Shelley's poetry is divided into two parts : the first one is on Shelley's ideas, and the second one on the symbolism in his poetry. We ~~may say that~~ in the first part of his essay Yeats deals with Shelley's philosophy and in ~~the~~ second with his language, although in a restricted sense.

Yeats begins the first part of his essay on the ' Ruling Ideas' with a reminiscence of his student days. Yeats and some of his friends had rented a room in a 'mean street' in Dublin. This was used to discuss philosophy. Yeats goes on to admit that his friends found his opinion -that that philosophy only was going to survive the ravages of time and was useful to us which could be embodied in poetry - rather idiosyncratic. Yeats further goes on to point out that if we wish to discover the Will of the Maker it can be found in our poetry rather than our history or philosophy wherein, according to him, the 'heart withers.'

You may have been reminded of Gandhi ji's *Hind Swaraj* in which he speaks against history, technology and the legal and medical professions. (You may read this work prescribed for you and discussed in the third unit of Block I of *Indian English Literature*, MEG07.) In fact the resemblance between Shelley's views, as expressed by him, in his *Philosophical Review of Reform* and *The Masque of Anarchy* and Gandhi ji's ideas on passive resistance appears quite striking to us. W.B. Yeats in 1900 and Shelley in the first quarter of the 19th century anti-dated Gandhi ji in their appeal for non-violent struggle against tyranny.

Yeats reacts against the view held, as he says, by three generations that Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* was nothing but William Godwin's (1756-1836) *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) put into rhyme. Yeats points out that Shelley's ideas of liberty, which he termed Intellectual Beauty was so much more than political justice because,

the regeneration [Shelley] foresaw was so much
more than the regeneration many political dreamers have
foreseen,

So far so good. But Yeats goes on to point out that that regeneration 'could not come in its perfection 'till the Hours bore, Time to his tomb in eternity.' Perhaps this poetic stance though abstruse is common both to Yeats and Shelley that we, their readers,

must be able to comprehend in all its lineaments, with the help of 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry.'

Yeats's examination of Shelley's **symbols** carries **him** to the conclusion :

[Shelley] was born in a day when the old wisdom had vanished and was content merely to write verses, and often with little thought of more **than** verses.

Yeats seems to complain that the unity of life of the middle ages cannot be found in Shelley.

However, if you replace Shelley with Browning in the above passage you could appreciate the organic unity of life in Shelley's time and the loss of it in Browning's. Perhaps you could say that while Shelley was a poet of **Goddard's complex** Browning was that of **Anjali** complex. What we **imply** is that there is more conscious artistry in Browning **than** in Shelley or to look at it **as if** Yeats, there was less of the unity of life in Browning's time than in Shelley's.

However, let's first look at Shelley's symbolism **through** Yeats's eyes. We would examine Browning's art in the next block.

Yeats points out that although Shelley had not studied magic and **magical** philosophy he used certain images repeatedly in his poetry and as the **years** passed by they concretized into symbols. Yeats's theory is that Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft **Godwin** sailed in open boats on many rivers on the continent in 1814. The ecstatic experience that he had gave him a lifelong system of symbols of the river, the cave and the **tower**.

Besides the river, or rivulet, the cave and the tower, Shelley also made use of the Porphyrian symbol of the bee. The bee returns to the place **from** where it comes and it's 'eminently just and sober.' The good soul does likewise. It returns to its 'kindred' star.

As you have read the essay yourself I would not try to detail all the symbols here once again but only point out how Yeats notices these **symbols** working out **their** effects in the poetry of ***The Triumph of Life***.

'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry', is an essay by a poet who is not known for the clarity of his thought as for instance **Dryden** and Pope, or for **that matter** even Wordsworth and Keats are. Shelley is Yeats's poet, a poet's poet **and** the former contributed to the latter's growth as a poet of a highly idiosyncratic nature. Hence you may be required to read Yeats's essay a few times. Do so **and** memorize a few passages, **from** it, if you can.

32.5 LET'S SUM UP

In this unit you read ***The Triumph of Life*** and in order to do so you also read **an** introductory note on Jean Jacques Rousseau who is the leader in the poem.

In order to help you gain easy access to some of the best critical pieces on the poets and poems discussed on this course we have provided material on **them** in these blocks. However, we have not discussed each one in detail for obvious reasons. The brief discussion on Yeats's essay on Shelley is **an** exception. However, we hope you found it useful and you would read other essays on your own and discuss **them** with your friends in a study group. In this unit you wrote a couple of reference to **context**

32.6 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Exercise 1 :

1. Shelley is definitely thinking about the gigantic cone-shaped shadow (umbra) of the earth made in space due to the light of the sun. The image speaks of Shelley's interest in science.
2. It is morning time. The opening lines describe the Sun 'Rejoicing in his splendour' and 'the mask of darkness' falling from the Earth. The S and E in the upper case further help us personify the two entities. The image also sets the tone, for the poem, of the conflict between hope and despair - life in life and death in life.

The other dominant image is that of prayer made by the birds, forests and flowers, oceans and continents and islands. We can see in our mind's eye the vapour rising from the waters which the poet portrays as the prayer of the ocean rising heaven-ward. The first twenty lines are rich in visual images of astronomical dimensions. However, the censers and incense, olfactory images, offer a rich experience to our sense of smell. These are also suitable for the time of day, i.e. morning, the time of prayer, that is described in the introductory lines of the poem.

3. The narrator had remained awake all night because of certain thoughts that disturbed him. These thoughts, he says, 'must remain untold'.

Was Shelley thinking about the Byron and Allegra affair or was the possible conflict between him and Mary - owing to Jane Williams towards whom he felt a certain amount of warmth at this point of time - on his mind ? Or, were the deaths of Allegra and his own children that disturbed him? We cannot answer these with certainty.

However, the narrator tells us that he was now about to fall asleep with his head towards the mountain on the east and his feet towards the 'Deep' or 'ocean' - more realistically the bay of Lerici in the Gulf of Spazia. The poets are insular about the real world.

However, the poet is one with nature. The dew that fell on his hair and brow was the same as that which fell on the grass on the slope of the Appennine over which the chestnut tree was growing under which he was lying.

It was against such a background that the narrator had the epiphany which is the subject of this poem.

Now give yourself a break for a few hours or resume your work on this unit tomorrow.

Exercise II

1. Shelley describes the men, women and children as leaves and gnats blown aimlessly one way or the other, While some people are obsessed with fear of death all their life there are others who actively work to avoid it. What is, however, common about all human beings is their proneness to overlook the

real life - 'The fountains whose melodious dew / Out of their mossy cells forever burst.' People pursue **their** 'serious folly' without ever thinking about this life that is lost in the act of living.

Triumph

Shelley's description of the Chariot of Life begins and ends with the **mad revelry of the** people in the procession. We read in lines 75 - 76 :

The throng grew wilder, as the woods of June
When the South wind shakes the extinguished day.

The libeccio, the southwest wind in Italy is the wind of hot storms on the Western coast. Shelley was actually there in June.

In the two lines above Shelley also makes use of the **familiar** epic device of comparing the dead **with** fallen leaves. In lines 50 - 52 you read how Shelley focussed his attention on one who,

Was borne amid the crowd as **through** the sky
One of the million Leaves of summer's bier. -
Old age **and** youth, manhood and infancy,

As Shelley was familiar with such comparisons in Homer, Virgil, **Dante**, and Milton, it appears that Shelley wishes to place himself **in** their **great tradition**. He is **here** making use of an epic device in **order** to give dignity to his poem.

Just as this section begins with a brief description of the conquered so does it end with a similar description. The crowd gives way to the narrator who seems to rise up from it. He witnesses **the** noise that the **crowd** is making ;

'... like clouds upon **the** thunder blast'

The million with fierce song and maniac dance
Raging **around** ;

You may notice **that** Shelley repeats **in order** to clinch the impression. However, he does so not without some **variation**. **While** earlier **the image** had only visual and tactile appeal now it is richly aural also.

The vision of the car of Life is thus **properly** placed **in the middle** of the conquered, The **splendour** of the chariot is described with **the** help of a simile. It was brighter than the **sun** in the same measure as the mid-day **sun** is brighter **than** the stars. However Life's carriage is **like** the young moon **which** holds the old moon in its lap. The **epic simile** in lines 79-85 suggests **the movement** of the chariot which is **like** the **advent** of a **storm**. While the light of the car is **blindingly** dazzling its **movement** is overpowering like a **storm**.

Paradoxically enough Life is 'Crouching within the shadow of a tomb' and is dressed in black. Quite appropriately the four faced **Janus - Janus** *Quadrifrons* - is the charioteer, However, **paradoxically again**,

All the four faces of **that** charioteer
Had their eyes banded ...

The narrator wonders upon the utility of the four pairs of **eyes** of the charioteer of Life and its (**i.e. Life's**) beams **that** are meant to **see**,

... all that is, has been, or will be done. -

Life is all paradox piled upon paradox, mirror on mirror, mirrored is all the show and yet the movement of the ill-guided car is solemn and majestic.

3. Shelley briefly tells us that all those who were either famous or infamous in life could be seen in the procession of the **conquered** people. However, he does not find the 'sacred few'

... who could not tame
Their spirits to **the** Conqueror ...

i.e. **Life**. **Socrates** and Jesus Christ were among those who could not be seen. **The** narrator, however, **as** you **must** have noticed, does not name them. He makes use of the ancient literary device of periphrasis, which shows Shelley's piety, the "faith" of an "atheist".

A large portion of this section of the **poem** is devoted to the description of the ribald crowd, the revellers, who are in **front** of the chariot of Life. They are joyous but 'Kindle invisibly ... Like **moths** by light attracted and repelled.'

As against these are the old and the **impotent** who are **left** far behind **the** chariot of Life and 'frost,' performs the job - i.e. of destruction - that fire did in the case of the passionate lovers.

Exercise III

1. This part of the poem helps us identify Shelley with the narrator. When the narrator asks him, 'First who art thou?' the leader replies with the words quoted in the question. Shelley was born in 1792 and Rousseau had lived **from** 1712 to 1778. Thus he had lived his life - loved and hated, feared **and** suffered - and died before Shelley began to live. Rousseau tells Shelley about himself and his achievements **upto** line 207.
2. The leader shows **the** wise men as those wearing 'wreathes of **light**' while the Bishops and Archbishops wear mitres and monarchs crown and generals their helms or distinguishing headgears. The 'wreath of **light**' of the **men of letters** is a sign of 'thought's empire' over other people's **thought**. Rousseau tells Shelley that their crime was that they were so preoccupied with establishing their suzerainty over other peoples' minds that they **had** no time to look inwards and try to know themselves which is the chief end of wisdom.

In lines 260 - 270 Rousseau exemplifies by pointing out at **Alexander** and his teacher, i.e. Aristotle. Aristotle's thoughts 'long outlived' both 'woes and wars' of Alexander, throned as **he** was in 'new thoughts of men'. This suzerainty of the ancients was challenged by Francis Bacon (1561-1626) who had pointed out that 'the truth of nature **lieth** hid in **certain** deep mines and caves' - and thus rescued knowledge from the stranglehold, during the medieval period in Europe, of Plato and Aristotle.

3. The difference between Rousseau on the one hand and Homer, Virgil and **Dante** on the other was that while the latter 'inly quelled / The passions which they sung' the former wrote what they had suffered. So a poet like Rousseau, or for that matter Shelley also, sowed 'seeds of misery' for **the** people just like the 'deeds' of the tyrants **and** 'Anarchs'.

The 'living melody' of the great poets of the past suppressed the revolt in their readers which they in the first place incited, thus containing the bad social effect of their poetry. They exercised a salutary effect on their readers. These **lines** give us a peep into Shelley's - the author of the 'Mask of Anarchy' and Queen **Mab** - mind in the last phase of his poetic career.

4. Constantine the Great (274-337 A.D.) was Roman emperor from 306 to 37. He was the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity and make it the state religion. By doing so he combined the authority of religion to that of the state and thus allowed the corruptions in political places to permeate religious authority.

Triumph

Shelley names Constantine along with Julius Caesar (C. 101 - 44 B.C.), a Roman general and statesman, who formed the first **triumvirate** with Pompey and Crassus in 59 B.C. After the death of Crassus, in defiance of the Senate he crossed the **Rubicon** in 49 B.C. and defeated Pompey in a civil war and thus became dictator.

It is significant that Shelley calls them Anarchs, the word that Milton used for chaos in *Paradise Lost* (II, 988) and Pope after him also used it for chaos in *The Dunciad*. Shelley's use of the word 'Anarch' gives us the impression that he thought that if Caesar brought chaos into the society by assuming the crown Constantine further aggravated the same by making Christianity a state religion. In line 287 while blood symbolises war gold represents insatiable greed.

Exercise IV

Below is how the reference to context question could be attempted :

The given lines have been taken from P.B. Shelley's (1792-1822) *The Triumph of Life* (1822 , published 1824).

In his last work, left unfinished when he died on 8 July 1822, Shelley is trying to understand 'Life'. He describes a 'Vision' in which he encounters Life victorious over all of us. Among those we witness - monarchs and men of letters - is Jean Jacques Rousseau, the Swiss-French thinker who tells him about some of the various personages in the procession of Life. Shelley asks Rousseau,

"Whence **camest** thou and whither goest thou?
How did thy course begin" ...

Rousseau tells him some of the bare facts, but his mind cannot 'compass' the cause of Life - 'Why this should be ...' However, Rousseau asks Shelley to participate in life instead of looking at it from a distance:

... from spectator turn
Actor or victim in this wretchedness,
And what thou wouldn't be taught I then may learn
From thee.

We find the **same** situation being repeated in the given lines. Earlier on Rousseau had asked a similar question to some evanescent deity - 'A shape all light.' He had wanted to know where he had come from? Where he was ? and Why he was where he was ? The supernatural visitant had asked him to 'arise' and 'quench' his thirst.

This section, i.e. the fourth, is highly allegorical. Shelley describes the lady holding a cup for Rousseau which as soon as he touches with his lips he forgets everything. He goes on to describe 'a new Vision never seen before.' And yet he can tell us little more than that 'the fair shape waned in the coming light.' In brief the question What is Life? remains unanswered. In the fifth section Shelley for the third time witnesses the chariot of Life.

The three lines given for explanation are a specimen of the economy of Shelley's style in this poem. He is attempting to answer a philosophical question and befitting

his subject he is simple and austere. The poem would have universal appeal. In India, in the ninth century Shankar had asked similar questions in his *Moh Mudgar* or what is popularly known as *Bhaj Govindam* :

कस्तवं कोऽहं कुत आयातः
का मे जननी को मे तातः
इति परिभावय सर्वमसारं
विश्वं व्यक्त्वा स्वप्नविचारम्॥

[Who are you ? Who am I ? Where have we arrived here from ? Who is my mother ? and who my father ? Reflect on the essence of existence and you will scoff at it as you laugh at the events of a dream.]

You should compare your explanation with some friend's, and /or ask a knowledgeable person to comment on it.

Exercise V

Passage (a) is about Dante. It has been discussed in the fifth part of our discussion,

Passage (b) is an example of epic simile. You may recall what an epic simile is from the discussion on *Paradise Lost* in Block IV. The epic simile here describes the *simulacra* or phantom and gives grandeur to the tone and atmosphere of the poem,

Although the theme of the poem is, as Mary Shelley thought, depressing the vitality and timber of the poetic voice of Shelley is quite assuredly felt in lines such as those given.

Exercise VI

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|--------|
| a. | 'with folded arms' | |
| b. | hearts | |
| c. | Devas, | Sidhe |
| d. | sacred | sacred |
| e. | foam | |
| f. | bees , | bees |

32.7 FURTHER READING

Yeats's remarks on *The Triumph of Life* in his essay 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry' are: perceptive and should be carefully and critically considered in the light of your own reading of the poem,

You may read F.M. Stawall's 'Shelley's "Triumph of Life" ' published in *Essays and Studies* V (1914), 104-31; G. M Matthews, ' "The Triumph of Life": A New Text', *Studia Neophilologica*, vol. XXXII, no. 2 (1960), 271-309; 'The "Triumph of Life" Apocrypha', *TLS*, 5 August 1960, 503; 'On Shelley's "The Triumph of Life" ' *Studia Neophilologica*, vol XXXIV, no.1 (1962), 104-30; and Donald H. Reiman. *Shelley's 'The Triumph of Life' : A Critical Study*, Illinois Studies in Language and Literature 55 (1965), if you can come by them easily.

Desmond King-Hele's *Shelley : His Thought and Work* (London : Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1960) is more easily available in old libraries. Part four of Chapter XVI, i.e. pages 349-60 offers a simple discussion on the poem and can be studied with profit, 'In *The Triumph of Life*' writes King-Hele, 'Shelley seems to be more exacting in his definition of the individual good life, which he implies should be spent pursuing the

summum bonum, that 'shape all light' which lures artists, scientists, mystics, thinkers and youthful idealists to toil in its service.' Read King-Hele if you can find the book.

Triumph

Miriam Allott's 'The Reworking of a Literary Genre : Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*' (239-278) in *Essays on Shelley* edited by her and published in 1982 by Liverpool University Press (Liverpool), is a comprehensive study of the poem.

Paul de Man's 'Shelley Disfigured' in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (Columbia University Press : New York, 1984), Balchandra Rajan's 'The *Triumph of Life* : The unfinished and the question mark' (184-210) in *The Form of the Unfinished : English poetics from Spenser to Pound* (Princeton U. Press, Princeton, 1985) and Tilottama Rajan's 'The Broken Mirror : The Identity of the Text in Shelley's *Triumph of Life*' (323-349) in *The Supplement of Reading : Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice* (Cornell U.P. : Ithaca, London, 1990) are some of the influential readings of the poem which you may read if you can find them. I have seen *Deconstruction and Criticism* edited by Harold Bloom *et. al.* (Continuum : New York, 1994) in many libraries. It has three essays which throw light on *The Triumph* : Paul de Man's 'Shelley Disfigured' (39-73), Jacques Derrida's 'Living on. BorderLines', (75- 176) and J. Hillis-Miller's 'The Critic as Host' (217-253).

However, in view of the fact that we lay more emphasis on your reading and understanding the poem and not on accumulating critical opinions you should read only as many articles as you can read conveniently and profitably.

UNIT 33 KEATS: *HYPERION: A FRAGMENT-I*

Structure

- 33.0 Objectives
- 33.1 Introduction
- 33.2 John Keats
 - 33.2.1 Life of Keats
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- 33.3 *Hyperion: A Fragment*
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- 33.4 Glossary
- 33.5 Exercises
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- 33.7 Bibliography
- 33.8 Answers to Exercises

33.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will introduce you to *Hyperion: A Fragment*, a long poem by John Keats, the youngest British Romantic poet of the second generation. The poem is usually referred to as *Hyperion*.

After reading the unit, you will be able to appreciate

- The factors in Keats's life that help us understand his poetry,
- The social and political context which shaped Keats' ambitions as well as *Hyperion: A Fragment*
- We have given a list of books at the end which you may want to consult to enhance your knowledge of Keats and his *Hyperion*.

33.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section we will 1) explain some critical terms, and 2) introduce the critical method we have used in these units on Keats.

- 1) The way a poet arranges his material is as important as the content of his life and the history of his times.

The arrangement of material is called the *structure* of the poem. A reading of the poem that takes the poet's life into account is called biographical *criticism*. A reading that takes the history of the time into account is called historical or *cultural* materialist criticism. Together, biographical and historical readings *contextualise* the poem.

A reading that does not consider the context is usually called *textual* criticism. This can be useful because a poet is a technician who uses the tools of poetry, such as *length* of lines and verse form, to enhance the *meaning* and pleasure of reading. Some guidelines have been given in the glossary (1.4). M.R. Ridley's *Keats's*

Craftsmanship, mentioned in the **bibliography**, is an excellent aid to a textual reading of Keats's poetry.

Some of the more recent essays offer another kind of textual criticism in which etymology or history of a word is analysed. Examples of these have been included in the bibliography. This kind of reading combines textual and historical criticism.

It is best to use textual criticism as an additional tool to **contextualised criticism** to ensure a balanced and reasonably accurate understanding of it.

- 2) We have concentrated on historical and biographical readings of the **poem** because Romantic poetry is more consciously autobiographical than any poetry in England before this time.

Keats was a qualified doctor but only wanted to be a poet. How this affected *Hyperion*, what it is about, when did Keats write it, why he **left** it unfinished, and why he recast it as *The Fall of Hyperion* a few months later **are** issues that help us to understand the poem. How Keats's *Hyperion* compares with other Romantic long poems also deepens our **understanding** of the poem.

To follow the discussion, you must first become familiar with the poem. Read 2.2.1 in Unit 2 where the poem has been **summed up**. Then read *Hyperion: A Fragment* which is appended to these units. Use **the** glossary as you read. After that, read **the** rest of Unit 1 and then read the poem again. Once you have followed the poem and the discussion, answer the questions and then check your answers with the answers given at **the** end of the unit.

33.2 JOHN KEATS

John Keats was born on 31 October 1795 into a lower middle-class family. His father managed a livery stables in Moorfields, London. His **maternal** grandmother owned the inn where Keats was born. He was the eldest of four children. **When** they were orphaned after the death of their mother, Keats, at fourteen, became **the** head of his family. He was never rich **and** made little **money** from his poetry.

Keats attended Clarke's school in **Enfield**. In 1810, he was apprenticed to **Dr. Thomas Hammond**, quarrelled with him in 1813, joined **St. Guy's** hospital in 1815, **and** became a Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries, **i.e.**, a doctor, in July 1816. In December 1816, Keats abandoned medicine for poetry.

There was little difference between butchers and many surgeons at the **time**. Keats's **own** superior was a more like a **butcher** who left Keats to take care of his bleeding and tattered patients. Keats **became** familiar with suffering, disease, and death which he wrote of **sympathetically and** knowledgeably in his poems.

Keats began taking mercury for a sore throat, the start of consumption (tuberculosis) in October 1817. **Then** his youngest brother, Tom, got consumption and Keats nursed him until **Tom** died on 1 December 1817. After Tom's death, Keats **realised** that he, too, was probably in the last stages of consumption for which there was no cure at that time.

In **February** 1820, Keats vomited blood, a sign **that** tuberculosis had destroyed his lungs. In August, he wrote that "**A** winter in England would I have no doubt, kill me, so I have resolved to go to **Italy**" (Gittings 387). The next day he wrote to **Shelley**, who had invited **him** to Pisa, saying that "There is no doubt that an english **[sic]** winter will put an end to me, and do so in a lingering and hateful manner, therefore I must voyage or journey **to Italy**" (Gittings 387-88). He "**went to Italy in pursuance of**



John Keats

Keats's letters will help you to understand him and his poetry better. There are several collections of Keats's letters, one of which is mentioned in the bibliography.

33.2.1 Friendships

Keats may have been unfortunate in money, but he was lucky in his friends. Apart from affection and admiration, they gave him money or a home to stay in when he needed it. One of them, Joseph Severn, nursed him as he lay dying in Italy. Many of them shaped his ideas. Among these were:

- 1) **Charles Cowden Clarke:** Cowden Clarke, the son of Keats's headmaster, introduced him to classical mythology which fascinated him. Keats experimented with Greek mythology in several poems, basing long narrative poems, such as *Endymion* and *Lamia*, on its stories. In the shorter lyrics, such as the odes, he used Greek gods, goddesses, and artefacts as symbols or poetic shorthand. The Ode "On a Grecian Urn," for example, is a meditation on a Greek vase. Apollo, the Greek god of poetry and the sun, is probably the most important deity in Keats's work. He stands for poetic perfection and became a personal symbol for Keats who wrote hymns and odes in praise of him. Apollo is one of the protagonists or chief actors of *Hyperion*.
- 2) **Leigh Hunt:** Keats's adult friendships show us that he was consistently on the "liberal side," i.e., his friends were Radical rather than conservative. Of these, Leigh Hunt and William Hazlitt, were "two of the most embattled liberal journalists of the day" (Dickstein 176). Hazlitt's continuing influence enriched Keats's understanding of poetry and politics. His association with Hunt varied much more but was decisive in his poetic career. We have therefore discussed it at some length.

Hunt was a Radical publisher and poet. Radicals favoured a democratic rather than a monarchic form of government. After the French Revolution, English politics were

more or less simplified into those for revolution and those against it. Revolutionaries, reformers, and all who wanted structural and institutional change were called Radicals. The opposition was referred to as conservative, legitimist, monarchist, or—most often—Church and State. The conservative, monarchist English government believed that Radicals threatened the stability of the state,

Hunt was jailed because he had written critically of the Prince Regent, then the head of State. Visiting Hunt in jail or showing sympathy for him in other ways was a way of making one's Radicalism public. Byron, for example, visited Hunt in prison even though they did not know each other. Keats had praised Hunt's poetry and politics in three poems, "On Leigh Hunt's poem 'The Story of Rimini'," the sonnet "On Receiving a Laurel Crown from Leigh Hunt," and "Written on the Day that Mr. Leigh Hunt Left Prison," all published in the 1817 volume of his poems. In December 1817, Hunt named Keats in his article, "Young Poets." This ensured that Keats was known as a Radical from the start of his career as a poet. It affected the reception of his poetry.

For many decades after the French Revolution, reviewers judged a poet by his politics, not his ability. Conservative reviewers mocked Keats's social position, saying he was of the "Cockney School of Poetry," a surgeon's apprentice, and a "suburbanising" versifier because he lived for some time in unfashionable Hampstead Heath. They assumed that poets must be educated in universities and that a man of Keats's class could not be a poet. All these were political condemnations as is made quite clear in Lockhart's jibing comment that Keats belonged to the "Cockney School of Politics, as well as the Cockney School of Poetry" (Briggs 484. It is not very certain whether the critic was Lockhart or some other person but Lockhart is assumed to be the author of the anonymous *Endymion* review).

Lockhart also levelled the most serious political charge against Keats, one that could have endangered Keats's life. He said that Leigh Hunt's "bantling," Keats, was guilty of "sedition" (Dickstein 177). Any criticism of Church and State was considered sedition. It was punishable, often by death. The political oppression of the period was terrifying, and the working class and non-aristocrats like Keats were especially vulnerable to the anti-sedition laws. Just as Blake began to write in a mythology of his own invention to obscure his strong Radical views, Keats tried to avoid trouble by writing in indirect forms like the allegory, 1819, the year Keats wrote *Hyperion*, was the worst year for political repression till then. Its worst event from the Radical point of view was the Peterloo Massacre in August 1819. All the younger Romantics marked this event by writing poetry about the issues involved. Between August and October, Keats wrote the second *Hyperion*.

We have discussed *Hyperion* as a political allegory in 2.2.4.

3.2.2 Keats's poetic ambition

Keats's views on poetry are in his letters and some of his poems. Most readers agree that he had mature and sensitive opinions on poetry and poets. Some of his phrases have become usual critical descriptions. For instance, the phrase "egotistical sublime" used for Wordsworth is from Keats, as are "the true voice of feeling" and "the finer tone," both titles of well-known books on Romantic poetry. We have included here some of his views relevant to *Hyperion*.

- 1) Keats did not think that poetry should be merely pleasant. The poet should understand and participate in others' sorrow. In one of his earliest poems, he said that the subject of poetry should be "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts" (Sleep and Poetry 125-126). By 1819, he had begun to equate sorrow and wisdom. You will learn about the relevance of this to *Hyperion* in 2.2.4.

- 2) The style of his poetry should be peculiar to him and not influenced by his literary heroes, especially Milton. Easily adopting another's identity was a problem for Keats. He had to struggle to find his own style.
- 3) Keats wanted to be a great poet, remembered among the "mighty dead."
- 4) For this, he would have to write a long poem which, he said, was "a test of Invention" (Gittings 27). All great poets had written long poems, it was a step to fame, and lovers of poetry would like a poem with "images so numerous that many are . . . found new in a second reading" (Gittings 27).

But a long poem, Keats believed, required great knowledge. In 1817, he planned to read for about five or six years before writing a major poem. Then early in 1819, when he realised that he did not have even a year of working life left, instead of reading copiously, he began to write copiously. He produced so much good and varied poetry in 1819 that it is often called his *annus mirabilis* or year of miracles. *Hyperion: A Fragment* was written towards the start of this turbulent year, *The Fall of Hyperion* towards the end. Both are incomplete.

The difference between the two poems has been discussed in 2.2.8.

33.3 *HYPERION: A FRAGMENT*

33.3.1 The dates, structure of and models for *Hyperion*: Now we would discuss the poem step-by-step

Keats began to write *Hyperion* shortly before Tom died. He divided it into books, as Milton had divided *Paradise Lost*. After writing two and a half books of 357, 391, and 136 lines respectively, he abandoned it in March or April 1819. *Hyperion* is in blank verse, that is, it is in unrhyming iambic pentameter lines, the same verse as Milton had used in *Paradise Lost*.

We need to consider two questions. 1) Why did Keats begin on an epic poem? 2) Why did he stop work on it?

- 1) Why did Keats begin on an epic poem? Keats's ambition to write a long poem is closely linked with the events of the time. Periods of radical, rapid, and violent change seem to demand epics. Poets record and analyse the events of their time and frequently invented new styles for this, as Milton had done in the seventeenth century which was the last period of violent and radical change in England. Like the other Romantic poets, Keats admired Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and wished to mark his age in a similar way.

But in some ways Wordsworth, author of *The Excursion*, was a more relevant model for Keats. Milton was a poet of reason and did not "think into the human heart" like Wordsworth, said Keats. Wordsworth had lived through the French Revolution and its aftermath and had written a long poem on the problems it had raised for poets, in particular. His was a more useful example for the early nineteenth century than Milton's. (For Keats's other views of Milton, see 2.2.4 and 2.2.5.)

Epics are long narrative poems, most often about war. *Hyperion* narrates the result of the war between two orders of gods, the Titans and the Olympians. According to Greek mythology, a set of gods does not remain in power forever. The giant Titans replaced their parents (see *Hyperion* 2.206-210). The Titans have now been overthrown by the Olympians. This is Keats's focus. He is interested in the radical difference between the past and present immortals.

- 2) Why did Keats stop writing *Hyperion*? Keats was the most stringent and honest critic of his own work. As early as May 1818, he said that he had "run away from both Milton and Wordsworth." He admired the two poets but he did not want to imitate them. Later in 1818, he began *Hyperion*. By May 1819, he was very critical of its "Miltonic intonations" (Gittings 292).

He knew that *Hyperion*'s "false beauty" came from its "many Miltonic inversions" but that it also had the "true voice of feeling" (Gittings 292). Yet he couldn't see the difference clearly enough to separate the true from the false. This is partly why he abandoned it altogether.

Between August and October 1819, Keats began and dropped *The Fall of Hyperion* which is also called the second *Hyperion*. Keats's decision to rewrite the story of *Hyperion* shows that it still interested him. What he had failed at was the narrative design or how he should tell the story and in what vocabulary and rhythm. Why he did not finish the second *Hyperion* is beyond the plan of this syllabus, but the bibliography guides you to those who have written about this.

For the difference between the *Hyperions*, see 2.2.8.

33.3.2 Why did Keats use Greek myth?

We have already seen that Apollo was Keats's personal symbol of perfect poetry. It seems appropriate that he should be the hero of his epic. Some reasons why Keats used Greek myth are given below.

- 1) Keats admired Wordsworth's *Excursion* in which he praised pagan mythology. We have already seen that Keats thought Wordsworth was a better model for him than Milton. One reason why *Paradise-Lost* could not be a model for Keats's long poem was that Milton was a staunch Christian. Keats, however, was an atheist like many Radicals of the time. The *Excursion* probably helped him to decide that a non-Christian, pagan mythology was acceptable in a modern epic.
- 2) Lord Elgin, a British diplomat, had just deposited the statuary he had stolen from Greece in the British Museum where it lay about chaotically but open to the public. Keats was among those who saw the Elgin Marbles. His descriptions of the fallen Titans as motionless and disordered is said to be an accurate description of how the Elgin Marbles appeared at the time (see e.g. *Hyperion* 2.33-35).
- 3) Keats did not have an "aristocratic" education which would have acquainted him with Greek and Latin literature or the classics. Some critics feel that Keats tried to compensate for the lack of an "aristocratic" education by showing his familiarity with books in general and Greek mythology in particular in his poetry. *Hyperion* is an instance.
- 4) The most important reason was the idea of change inherent in Greek mythology. Even the gods were subject to change. An order of gods could be replaced by another. It was the perfect metaphor for the political and cultural changes sweeping through institutions and people's thinking at the time. Keats has Oceanus tell Saturn, ". . . as thou wast not the first of powers, / So thou art not the last . . . / Thou art not the beginning nor the end" (*Hyperion* 2.188-190).

33.3.3 *Hyperion* compared with other Romantic long poems

Keats's *Hyperion*, Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam* and Byron's *Don Juan*, long poems by the second generation of English Romantic poets, are often compared with each

other. **We** will see whether this is **useful** for reading *Hyperion*, or whether some other comparison, such as with Blake's **later** long poems, is more fruitful.

Like *Hyperion*, *The Revolt of Islam* is based on a story from Greek mythology while *Don Juan* is based on a **European legend** of more recent times. All three poems are from a personal or **subjective** perspective. All three are unfinished. All three can be read as political poems,

The *Revolt of Islam* and *Don Juan* are largely commentaries on contemporary politics from liberal, Radical view points. *Hyperion* is less openly political. Shelley and Byron were aristocrats while Keats was closer to the working class. Keats's use of Greek mythology to evade censorship almost obscures his politics, much as Blake's personal mythology did, but that does not mean it is absent. Blake and Keats belonged to more or less the **same** social class. We have seen that it was dangerous for people of their class to be openly Radical.

It is usually the case that works from the **same** social class will have more in common than those grouped according to the writers' ages.

33.4 GLOSSARY

This section has an explanation of some words and terms in *Hyperion*.

After the first four items, phrases and names are listed as they appear in the poem. After the first four entries, the Book number is given at the head of that section of the list. The line number is given in brackets.

Hyperion (title):	Titan. God of the sun
Immortals:	The usual term for Greek gods and goddesses.
Olympians:	The new order of gods
Titans:	The defeated gods

Book I

Saturn (4):	Chief Titan
Naiad (13):	Water nymph
"infant world" (26):	The events of this story are supposed to have taken place when the world had been newly created
Amazon (27):	Belonging to a race of giant women
Achilles (29):	Greek hero of the Trojan war and Homer's <i>Iliad</i>
Memphian sphinx (32):	Egyptian sphinx, a mythical creature with the body of a lion, wings, and the face of a woman
"unpractised hands" (62):	Jove is new to the job of hurling thunderbolts, hence the reference to his "unpractised hands"
Thea (96):	Hyperion's consort
Olympus (146):	Mountain home of the Olympians
"the rebel three" (146):	Jove, Poseidon, Hades. The Titans call them rebels because they have defied the authority of their parent gods. Jove's Greek name is actually Zeus. Keats has used the Roman name for him. Jove is god of the sky. Poseidon is the god of the sea, and Hades is the god of underworld. They are the chief Olympians with authority over sky, sea, and earth. The three are brothers
"Not heard. . ." (187):	Keats emphasises that the violent dethronement of the ruling gods is unprecedented. Most writers of the period spoke of the French Revolution in similar terms

Zephyrs (307):
Tellus (246):

Spring breeze. Usually singular
Titan. Goddess of the earth. "Briny robes" in this
line refers to the oceans which seem like the earth's
skirts

Hyperion

nadir (276):

The point of the heavens diametrically opposite to
the zenith. The heavens were said to have two poles
The highest point of the sky which was perceived as
an inverted bowl by the ancient Greeks

zenith (277):

"hieroglyphics . . . fled"
(277, 281-283):

A reference to the Rosetta Stone covered with
Egyptian pictorial language discovered by
Europeans in the early nineteenth century. The
hieroglyphics had not been deciphered in Keats's
time

Cœlus (307):

Father of Hyperion and Saturn, now only a voice. He
belongs to an earlier order of gods than the Titans

"earth-born / And sky-
engendered" (309-310):

The Titans were the children of Tellus, the earth
goddess, and Cœlus, the sky god

"Now I behold. . .
In men who die" (332-335):

See 2.92-97 for a similar description of Saturn. Keats
shows that the Titans' fall is more than a fall from
power. With their fall, they have become subject to
human emotions. They have lost the virtues that
made them superior to mortals

Book II

clenched, clench'd:

Keats has split the word with all its letters the first
time but dropped the last "e" the second time. Like
Milton, Keats shortened sounds for enhancing the
meaning. The shorter "clench'd" here creates the
onomatopoeic effect of teeth snapped shut

"Heaving in pain . . .
convuls'd" (27-28):

Keats's descriptions of pain and disease are powerful
and immediate. He probably relied on his medical
experience for them

Mnemosyne (29):

Pronounced Nc-mass-in-nee. Goddess of memory
and mother of the muses who were patrons of the
arts and learning. She is the only important Titan
who is not at the Titan conference. She tells Apollo
later that she is an "ancient Power" who has left her
peers for the sake of the new beauty Apollo
represents. In fact, as she also tells him, she has
nurtured his gifts of music etc.

"Scarce images of life. . ."
(33-34):

Descriptions like this remind one that Keats had seen
the Elgin Marbles lying in disorder in the British
Museum

"Of Druid stones . . ." (35):

Probably a comparison with Stonehenge on the
Salisbury Plain

Iäpetus:
"enormous Caf . . ."
(53-55):

Father of Atlas, Prometheus, and Epimetheus

The assumption here is that a woman's labour pains
are more severe when a son is born than when a
daughter is born. Biological information of this kind
dates the poem. It also tells us about its notion of
manliness, namely, that men were physically

"Ganges sacred isles" (60):

powerful and manifested this power from the time they were babies in the womb
References to Egypt and India point to Europe's conquest and colonisation of Africa and Asia which began to gain momentum in the early nineteenth century

Enceladus (66):

Titan. Close to Saturn. According to Apollodorus, in the war with the Olympians, "Athene threw a vast missile at Enceladus, which crushed him flat and became the island of Sicily" (quoted in Graves 1.132)

Oceanus (75):

Titan. God of the sea

Thetis (75):

Consort of Oceanus

Clymene (2.76):

A confusing figure in Greek mythology who sometimes appears among the Titans and sometimes among the Olympians. According to one story, she and the Titan, Iapetus, were the parents of Prometheus, the first man. According to another, she became pregnant by the Olympian, Zeus. If Keats knew these conflicting stories, he simply ignored them. His Clymene is a nymph, that is, a minor immortal

Themis (76):

Mother of the Fates

"disanointing" (98):

In ancient times, when a king came to power, he was anointed with a sacred oil. "Disanointing" describes Saturn's loss of kingship

"utterless thought" (120):

Keats has used this phrase to show that the gods did not communicate in the language of mortals but in other ways. It is a device to show the difference between immortals and mortals

"untremendous might" (155):

Saturn refers to the power of the Olympians as "untremendous might" to infuse some courage into the Titans. Though he says that the Olympians' power is small compared with that of the Titans, the fact is that they have been defeated by the Olympians. We get the impression that Saturn is full of empty bluster

"What can I then?" (157):

Saturn cannot control the Titans any longer. This is another sign of his loss of power

"unseen parent" (158):

Cælus

"locks not oozy" (170):

Oceanus' hair ("locks") is not wet ("oozy") as it would have been had he come straight from the ocean. The defeated Titans have fled from the areas they controlled.

"complain'd" (249):

Spoke

"hectic" (250):

Feverish

"an island of the sea"

(275):

Possibly Delos where Apollo created music

"A living death . . . sounds" (281):

"Living death" is an oxymoron. Like Oceanus, Clymene acknowledges that the Olympians are superior in their skills and beauty. The Titans must be displaced. The loss of their power is like death, but since they are immortals they cannot actually die

"the over-wise" (309):

Oceanus

"the over-foolish" (310):

Clymene. Enceladus is being sarcastic about Oceanus and Clymene

Memnon (374):

Warrior who fought Achilles and is mentioned in Homer's Iliad. A statue, supposedly of Memnon, in Egyptian Thebes used to utter a sound like the note of a lyre every sunrise—Keats speaks of sunset__until it was repaired with modern materials

Hyperion

Book III

Delphic harp (10):

Apollo's temple was in Delphi. As the god of poetry, he carried a lyre. Keats calls it a harp

"Father of all verse" (13)

Apollo

Delos (24):

Island home of Apollo

"Apollo is once more the golden theme" (28):

once more is in reference to the many poems on Apollo Keats had written before this. Self-reference is common in Romantic poetry and is the basis of Romantic irony: *golden* is probably a reference to Apollo's being god of the sun, It could also refer to the fact that in Keats's poems, Apollo has golden sandals, bow, and lyre. Traditionally, they arc of silver

"the Giant of the Sun" (29):

Hyperion

"his mother fair" (31):

Apollo's mother, Leto

"twin-sister" (32):

Apollo's twin-sister, Artemis. Goddess of the moon and chastity

33.5 EXERCISES

These exercise are to help you assess how well you have mastered the contest of Hyperion. Try and answer them on your own and then check your answers against those given at the end.

Q.1 *Some dates*

i. When was Keats born? When did he die?

ii. In which year did he write his greatest poetry. What is it called?

iii. When did Keats commit himself to poetry?

iv. When was his first collection of poems published?

Q.2. *Some biographical information*

i. What profession did Keats train for?

ii. What did he die of?

iii. Which social class did he belong to?

iv. What was Keats by political conviction?

v. Which of his friends introduced him to Greek mythology?

Q.3. *Keats and poetry*

i. What sort of poet did Keats wish to be?

ii. What, according to him, should be the subject of poetry?

iii. Why did he wish to write a long poem'?

iv. Which earlier poem did Keats **take** as his standard?

v. What were the relative merits of Milton and Wordsworth as models for Keats's poetry?

Q.4. i. How many versions of the **Hyperion** story did Keats write? What titles did he give them? What did he call them? What are they **usually** called by readers?

ii. When did he stop work on them?

iii. What is their verse form?

Q.5. What is an epic?

Q.6. What is the most important reason for Keats's **using** Greek mythology to express contemporary issues?

Q.7. Which Romantic poet is Keats best compared with and why?

33.6 LET'S SUM UP

Romantic poetry was consciously autobiographical. Keats's poetry is no different. That is why we have considered how his poverty, illness, Radicalism, friends and poetic ambition influenced the emphases of his poetry. Keats was also a very literary poet, that is, he deliberately drew attention by reference or imitation to ideas and styles that he had picked up from books. We have tried to show how important his letters and other poems are for understanding *Hyperion*.

33.7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

This list of books is in three parts:

- 1) The works referred to in Units 1 and 2
- 2) Other articles and books that you may wish to read
- 3) Journals that specialise in articles on Keats, Shelley and the Romantics. You may wish to discover what critics have said about Keats on your own. These journals carry recent criticism.

We have given a short explanation of what each book or articles in this list is about.

Biographies of Keats have not been listed but there are several lives by, e.g., Douglas Bush, Aileen Ward, and Walter Jackson Bate. Robert Gittings has written an illustrated life of Keats which is quite moving.

Works cited:

Briggs, Harold F. The *Complete* Poetry and Selected Prose of *John Keats*. New York: Modern Library, 1951

[This is the edition of Keats's poetry we have used for these units. It includes some letters by Keats and reviews of his works]

Dickstein, Morris. "Keats and Politics" in *Studies in Romanticism* 25 (Summer 1986): 75-181

[Dickstein's article is the basis of the forum on "Keats and Politics" in this issue of *Studies in Romanticism*]

Gittings, Robert. Ed. Letters of *John Keats: A Selection*. 1970; rpt. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1970

[The standard collection of letters by Keats and his correspondents is edited by Hyder Rollins. Gittings' selection has only Keats's letters but all the important ones are here]

Graves, Robert. *Greek Myths*. 2 vols. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955. Rpt. 1960

[A lively, scholarly guide to Greek myths. You may, however, find some other dictionary of classical allusions or companion to English literature more useful. Make sure that you use a reliable one from, say, the Oxford or Cambridge University Presses]

Additional bibliography

Bewell, Alan. "Keats's 'Realm of Flora.'" *Studies in Romanticism* 31 (Spring 1992): 71-98

[Bewell is good on the social implication of Keats's imagery. For instance, he relates the kinds of gardens Keats liked writing about to "suburban" as a term of class abuse for Keats]

Bradley, A.C. "The Long Poem in the Age of Wordsworth" in *The Oxford Lectures on Poetry*. Oxford UP,
[An old but sound essay on why the Romantics attempted long poems]

Bromwich, David. "Keats's Radicalism" in *Studies in Romanticism* 25 (Summer 1986): 197-210
[More specifically about Keats's Radicalism than a general study like Everest's. Useful]

Bush, Douglas. "Keats and His Ideas." In *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism* ed. M.H.Abrams (New York, 1960) 326-329.
[A reliable account of Keats's concern with poetry and the role of the poet]

Butler, Marilyn. "Myth and Mythmaking in the Shelley Circle." *ELH* 49 (1982): 50-75
[A study of how and why the younger Romantics used mythology. Butler argues that they created their own myths from the ancient ones. She relates their mythmaking to the political events of the time, especially censorship, Radicalism, and atheism]

Devine, Philip. "Ode to the Nightingale Among Poets." *Asian Age* 31 October 1995
[An American "working class" view of Keats. The writer identifies with Keats's social and educational background as well with the times Keats lived in. Devine makes poetry and Keats come alive by showing how contemporary he is]

Everest, Kelvin. *English Romantic Poetry: An Introduction to the Historical Context and the Literary Scene*. Milton Keynes: Open UP, 1990
[A crisp account of the age. Everest does not deal with Keats very much but gives a very good idea of the period and its poetry. Highly recommended]

Homans, Margaret. "Keats Reading Women, Women reading Keats." *Studies in Romanticism* 29 (Fall 1990): 341-370
[A gendered analysis of Keats's readership and who he thought should read his poetry. Homans argues that Keats did not want women to read his poetry]

James, D.G. "The Two Hyperions." In *Keats: A Collection of Essays*. Ed. Walter Jackson Bate. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964
[A standard and sound essay of 1948]

Jones, Elizabeth. "The Suburban School: Snobbery and Fear in the Attacks on Keats." *Times Literary Supplement* October 27, 1995 (no.4830): 14-15. Full version in *Keats-Shelley Journal* 45 (1996)
[An analysis of the language used in adverse criticism of Keats to show the political and social biases against him. This is a good example of contextualised criticism.]

Keach, William. "Cockney Couplets: Keats and the Politics of Style." *Studies in Romanticism* 25 (Summer 1986): 182-196
[Not directly about *Hyperion* but gives you a good idea of how the style that a poet adopted became the reason for class-based attacks on him]

Levinson, Marjorie. *The Romantic Fragment Poem*; Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1986
[An study of the Romantics' iconoclastic approach to poetry and poetic forms. May be read along with MacFarland.]

McFarland, Thomas, *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981

[Much painting and writing of the early Romantic period focused on architectural and other ruins. **McFarland's** study is about this phenomenon. It is relevant to *Hyperion* because Keats's description of the fallen Titans was based on the partially ruined statues of ancient Greece known as the **Elgin Marbles**. **McFarland** may be read along with **Levinson**.]

Matthews, G.M. *Keats: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 1971

[A collection of reviews and opinions on Keats, primarily in the nineteenth century. The late **G.M. Matthews'** introduction is probably the finest survey of Keats criticism up to 1971 and for many years after]

Muir, Kenneth. "The Meaning of 'Hyperion'." *Essays in Criticism* II (1952): 54-75. Rpt. in *John Keats: A Reassessment*. Ed. Kenneth Muir (Liverpool 1958) 102-122

[Muir has a good analysis of Keats's politics and verse]

Ridley, M.R. *Keats's Craftsmanship*

[Still among the best analyses of Keats's technique]

Shelley, P.B. "Adonais"

[Shelley's elegy or lament for Keats, along with his Preface, is the start of the quite untrue story that Keats got consumption because he was miserable at the reviews of *Endymion*. But it also shows the sympathy Keats got from his fellow poets and Radicals]

Stillinger, Jack. *The Poems of John Keats*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1978)

[A standard edition of Keats's poems]

Useful journals:

Keats-Shelley Journal

Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin

Studies in Romanticism

33.8 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Q.1. i. a. 31. 10. 1795

b. 23.2. 1820

ii. a. 1819

b. *annus mirabilis*

iii. 1816

iv. 1817

Q.2. i. The medical profession. He was a trained doctor.

ii, Consumption or tuberculosis

iii. Lower middle class

iv. A Radical

v. Cowden Clarke

Q. 3. i. A great poet, one who would be remembered among the "mighty dead."

ii. The suffering of the world, or what lie called "the agonies. the strife / Of human hearts."

iii a. It was "a test of invention"

b. All great poets had written long poems

c. It was a step to fame

d. Readers liked poems with numerous images so that at a second reading, they discovered new things.

- iv. Milton's *Paradise Lost*
 - v.
 - a. Milton and Wordsworth had both written long poems about the rapid and major changes during their times, but Wordsworth's was more relevant to Keats since they were near contemporaries
 - b. Wordsworth had thought into the **human** heart, said Keats. while Milton was a man of reason
 - c. Keats's admiration for Milton had resulted in "Miltonic inversions" and "Miltonic intonations" which Keats described as "false beauty"
 - d. *Paradise Lost* was a Christian epic, while the pagan **mythology** Wordsworth praised in *The Excursion* was more suited to Keats's atheism.
- Q.4.
- i.
 - a. Two
 - b. *Hyperion: A Fragment* and *The Fall of Hyperion*
 - c. Keats called them his two "Hyperions"
 - d. Readers usually refer to them as the first and second *Hyperion*. The first is mostly called just *Hyperion*.
 - ii. He stopped *Hyperion* between April and May 1819. He began and stopped *The Fall of Hyperion* between August and October 1819.
 - iii. Both poems are in blank verse, i.e., in unrhymed lines in the iambic pentametre. Milton had used this verse for *Paradise Lost*.
- Q.5.
- i.
 - a. An epic is a long narrative poem
 - b. It has several simultaneous stories
 - c. It is centred on war
 - d. Epics usually appear at times of quick, violent, and drastic social change.
- Q.6. Keats's poem is about how one order of gods is replaced by another. The idea of change was inherent in the ancient Greek conception of the world and even the gods were subject to it. This made it a good vehicle for his ideas which were about the pains and knowledge caused by change.
- Q.7. Blake. Blake was a Christian and Keats an atheist but there are many similarities in their work. Both were from the lower middle class: both were inclined to Radicalism; both were vulnerable to the anti-sedition **laws**: both therefore obscured their political biases in mythological machinery.

UNIT 34 KEATS: *HYPERION*: A FRAGMENT-II

Structure

- 34.0 Objectives
- 34.1 Introduction
- 34.2. *Hyperion: A Fragment*__a discussion
 - 34.2.1 A critical summary of *Hyperion: A Fragment*
 - 34.2.2 Critical views on *Hyperion*
 - 34.2.3 *Hyperion* as political allegory
 - 34.2.4 *Hyperion* as a poem about poets and poetry
 - 34.2.5 Uncertainties and "Negative Capability"
 - 34.2.6 Is *Hyperion* incomplete?
 - 34.2.7 The difference between the two *Hyperions*
- 34.3 Exercises
- 34.4 Summing up
- 34.5 Answers to exercises

34.0 OBJECTIVES

In the first unit we saw *Hyperion: A Fragment* in relation to Keats's life and times. In this unit we will focus on the poem itself. You will notice that the meaning of the poem becomes clearer because we can relate it to Keats's life.

- After reading this unit you will know about
- The content of the poem,
- *Hyperion* as a political allegory and as a poem about poetry. These are the two chief ways of reading the poem
- Why Keats stopped writing it and whether it is really incomplete
- The difference in structure and meaning of the two *Hyperions*

34.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will learn about the structure of *Hyperion*, why its meaning seems unclear, what did Keats mean by "Negative Capability," and the two major ways of reading it, as a political allegory and as a poem about poetry. You will learn about what is meant by calling *Hyperion* a "fragment." Finally, we will look at Keats's criticism of his poem and the difference between the two *Hyperions*.

Once again, you should read the poem before and after you read the discussion. After you have understood the poem and the discussion, answer the questions on the unit and then check them with the answers at the end of the unit.

34.2 *HYPERION*: A FRAGMENT

The structure of this section is given at the start of the Unit 2. First reread the discussion on why Keats wanted to write an epic (33.3.1), then read the following.

34.2.1 A Critical Summary of *Hyperion*

Books I and I . Following the opening of *Paradise Lost*, Keats starts *Hyperion* in *medias res*, or in the middle of things. The war between the Titans and Olympians is over. The defeated, bewildered Titan chief, Saturn, is sitting alone. Thea, consort of

the sun god, Hyperion, leads **Saturn** to the other Titans. They discuss reasons for their defeat and what they should do next. Most of the Titans hope to recover "the old allegiance once more," to recover happiness by returning to power (*Hyperion* 1.162). **Oceanus** and Clymene are the exceptions.

Three important points are made in the conference. **Oceanus**, god of the sea, says that change is natural and that is why they have been replaced by the more beautiful Olympians.

much comfort will I give,
If ye will take that comfort in its truth.
We fall by course of Nature's law, not force
Of thunder, or of Jove. . . . (*Hyperion* 2.179-182)

He represents the Enlightenment belief that the world progresses naturally in a straight **line** towards perfection. Warlike Enceladus disagrees. He says that an era of war has begun, **that** they must fight to regain their **power**, and that **Hyperion** who is yet undefeated is their hope. He represents those aristocrats of the *ancien regime* who instigated the Revolutionary wars because they did **not** accept that monarchies were obsolete. **Clymene** tells of her experience when she tried to make **music** to soothe her grief at defeat. A new, unfamiliar, more **beautiful** music **overpowered** her with grief and joy. Through that "new blissful golden melody," she heard Apollo's **name** being called out (*Hyperion* 2.280). She cannot explain **what** this means. We are to assume that the hero of the new order is to be Apollo, **Olympian** god of music, poetry and the sun, and that knowledge will be **more** complex in the new world. Clymene represents intuitive, non-rational knowledge as well as the idea that a new era gives rise to new art **forms**. Her report is **Keats's** clue to the reader that the poem must be judged on its own terms and not by the standard of older epics.

Epics have several simultaneous stories. So, while the Titans talk, **Hyperion** is uneasy in the heavens. At his disembodied father's suggestion, he visits the Titans and is shocked by their despair.

Book *III*: We are taken to the sacred island of Delos, the **birth** place and home of Apollo and his **twin** sister, **Artemis**. Apollo has never been outside Delos and is therefore ignorant. But he has an intuitive perception of what he does not know. He **knows** that he is ignorant about natural laws and the suffering of the world and questions Mnemosyne, mother of the muses and goddess of memory, about them. Through mystic or intuitive communion with Apollo, **Mnemosyne** gives him "knowledge enormous," chiefly of others' sorrow, which **makes** a god of him. We have seen that **Keats believed** a great poem had to be based upon great knowledge that would come from reading. By 1819, when he did **not** have the time to read because of his rapidly developing consumption, he had begun to think of sorrow **and** wisdom as **synonymous**. The ideal was to shoulder others' sorrow as Apollo does (Muir).

As Apollo's ignorance dies **and** great knowledge is born within him, he goes through a physical convulsion like labour pains. In fact, **Keats** uses the metaphor of birth when he says that Apollo dies into life, deliberately linking wisdom **and** female activity. Poetry works at many levels, *i.e.*, there can be several simultaneous meanings indicated by details of the poem. **Thus**, the recurring association of Apollo with female deities and qualities is significant. He lives with his mother and sister and then is **made** a god by another **female** deity. Among the many new, liberating values of the period expressed by **some** of the Romantics is the importance they **gave** to female deities and forces as the sources of wisdom. (But see the entry for **Margaret Homans** in the bibliography.)

Apollo's knowledge makes him superior to the Titans. They have questions but no answers. They try out several possible explanations but do not have the certainty of Apollo's knowledge. They lose their divinity because they are ignorant.

The poem breaks off in the middle of a sentence. We are not sure how Keats would have continued the story. Whether it is complete at this point or not will be discussed in 2.2.6.

34.2.2 Critical views on *Hyperion*

This section is in two parts. 1) An overview of critics' responses to Keats from his time to the present. 2) Two usual ways of reading *Hyperion*

- 1) **An overview of critical responses to Keats from his time to the present:**
Nineteenth century views of Keats:
 - a. The early nineteenth century:

In his own time, Keats was condemned by conservative critics and admired by some, though not all, Radicals. Byron, for example, was savagely funny about his poetry but later, possibly influenced by Shelley, became more sympathetic to him. *Hyperion* was almost universally admired in Radical sections. Shelley is said to have had a copy of it in his pocket when he drowned, and even Byron thought it was a magnificent fragment.

- b. The mid-nineteenth century:

Keats remained among minor poets of the nineteenth century until about 1848 when the influential middle-class intellectuals known as the Cambridge Apostles projected him as a poet of "sensuousness." Arthur Hallam was the first to use the word for Keats in an admiring essay which, along with Monckton Milne's biography of Keats did much to create a readership that Keats did not find in his own lifetime.

- c. The end of the nineteenth century:

By this time, Keats was established as a poet who understood personal joys and sorrows. Keats, who often wrote of his interest in contemporary affairs, would have been surprised at this description of himself. But we must remember that the middle classes were playing down radicalism because stability was needed to continue the remarkable economic prosperity their class was then enjoying,

Twentieth century views of Keats:

- a. Up to the 1940s and beyond:

T.S.Eliot's and F.R.Leavis's disdain for the Romantics dominated criticism for decades. Eliot, however, is often very perceptive about them while Leavis's student, D.G.James, included a good analysis of the two *Hyperions* in his book, *The Romantic Comedy* (1948).

In the 1940s, Keats became a favourite subject for the American New Critics who tended to discuss poetry without reference to the poet's life and times. They helped us to appreciate Keats's craftsmanship and his aesthetics, i.e., his concern with poets and poetry.

- b. 1989 onwards:

After the bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989, there has been a lot rethinking about the Romantic poets and what we mean by Romanticism

Several articles published to coincide with Keats's bicentennial year, 1995-96, show the new trends in Keats criticism. Most critics have tried to restore Keats's poetry to a material context. That is, they have used biographical, cultural and political material to illuminate Keats's poems.

Particularly interesting are those who have analysed certain recurrent **imagery** in Keats's poetry, such as gardens or flowers, or recurrent terms of abuse used for him, such as "suburban." They have used contemporary literature and social hierarchies to reveal that these images **and** terms are politically and socially biased, and that what seem to be pretty and harmless images are often **statements** of rebellion. Keats's readership has been analysed according to gender and it has been found that more **women** read him than men. Was this Keats's intention? These and other questions have been asked and answered with documentary evidence to prove the arguments.

2) Two usual ways of reading Hyperion:

In spite of this apparent variety of readings, critics take two opposed stands on the meaning of *Hyperion*. One view is that *Hyperion* is a political allegory. The second is that the poem is about the nature and **function** of the poet, i.e., about aesthetics.

These have been discussed in 2.2.3 and 2.3.4 respectively.

34.2.3 Hyperion as political allegory

An allegory is a story whose meaning is something different to what one reads. The animal stories of the *Panchtantara*, for instance, are allegories about human behaviour. During times of political repression, writers often use allegory to evade censorship. They may wish to criticise the **government** but cannot do so openly. They might, therefore, write about Greek gods and goddesses as Keats did, but so transparently that readers would know it was an account of contemporary politics.

In the political reading of *Hyperion*, the Titans represent the ancien regime or the **political** system before the Revolution in France. They **embody** its notion of power and its values.

Like a king of the ancien regime, Saturn has ruled alone. When he is overthrown, he sits apart from the other Titans. Unused to sharing, he stays apart even in defeat. Keats wrote much against the **danger** of being separate from others. He **thought** of it as lethal and wrote of "The deadly feel of **solitude**" (*Endymion* 2.284). Apollo, by contrast, wants the share the experience of others.

Saturn represents absolute, solitary power and is nothing without power. Once it is taken away, he reacts with despair, unable to think or act. He has been so blinded by power that he has not even suspected the possibility of revolt. Even **Oceanus** tells him that he has been "blind from sheer supremacy" and therefore unable to learn that they must submit to change (*Hyperion* 2.185). Naturally, then, he cannot understand why he has been defeated nor what he should do next. He is sporadically **full** of boastful words but has no ideas to offer at the Titans' conference. **He cannot** lead but has to be led. Another deity suggests that he should join the other Titans and she has to lead the way.

Saturn's being led **by** a **female** deity symbolises the end of values that **are** important to the Titan's reign. Like the *ancien* regime, the Titan reign is patriarchal. It **is the** reign of older, **male** deities. Goddesses are relatively unimportant until **Thea** comes to Saturn. You **will** see how Enceladus encapsulates the patriarchalism of the Titans.

Enceladus **stands** for war. The **Radical** view of war was that kings indulged in it for their own gain and did **not** care that ordinary people **were** destroyed by it. The post-

Revolution world was to be without kings and therefore peaceful, something like Delos.

Enceladus also asserts the patriarchal values of the *ancien regime*. For him, the opinion of a male, especially a senior male; is valuable, nothing else is. Clymene is younger and a female which is why he contemptuously dismisses her views. In contrast, Apollo gains wisdom from another female deity, Mnemosyne,

Hyperion is the decisive figure in this political allegory. Worried that he will suffer the fate of the other Titans, he says

Saturn is fallen, **am** I too to fall?
Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,
This calm luxuriance of blissful light,
These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,
Of all my lucent empire? (*Hyperion* 1. 234-239)

Hyperion is motivated by self-interest. He is distant from those who worship him and he is not concerned about the grief of the other Titans. His solitariness is a lot like Saturn's. He represents an aristocrat of the *ancien regime* surrounded by comfort. He wants to help Saturn regain his throne only because he can then continue to be the god of the sun and retain his luxury. In contrast, Apollo leaves his home to learn about the world's sorrows.

It is interesting to see how often Keats gives importance to deities who are in some way marginal to the mythology. For example, he celebrates Apollo as the god of music, harmony, beauty, knowledge and everything he held dear. Apollo was deified very late in Greek history, the earlier Olympian sun god being Phoebus. Clymene is only a nymph and nymphs came low in the hierarchy of immortals but she alone among the Titans is open to the new world and its knowledge. These marginal figures are the sources of knowledge and vision in Keats's poetry. Oceanus says something like this to Saturn who claims that nothing in his existing sources of knowledge can explain their condition:

But for this reason, that thou art the King,
And only blind from sheer supremacy,
One avenue was shaded from thine eyes
Through which I wandered to eternal truth.

Constructing knowledge from what had been the marginal groups in society was a prominent part of Radical activity in the early nineteenth century, E.P. Thompson has an interesting account of this phenomenon (see bibliography. See also the entry for Keach).

Knowledge of the period will help you to work out several other political parallels.

34.2.4 Hyperion as a poem about poets and poetry

In this section, we will interpret the three issues raised by Oceanus, Enceladus, and Clymene, and Apollo's dying into life in the context of Keats's views on poetry. At the time of writing his last poems, Keats had not settled the debate about poetry that he had with himself. To know how his ideas changed, if they changed at all, we need to look at poems other than *Hyperion*. We will briefly discuss *Hyperion* in the context of *Endymion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*.

The Romantics, including Keats, were conscious that older forms of poetry had become irrelevant. They thought deeply on what the subject, style, and social

function of the poet should be and created a variety of new forms. Periods of radical change give rise to new art forms but experimental literature is not well received by readers. Knowing this, the Romantics felt it necessary to educate readers on the how to read their poetry.

Keats's explanations of his poetry are to be found in his letters, mostly.

His statements about poetry rose out of two issues: 1) What should poetry be about? 2) What kind of poetry would ensure his place among the "mighty dead?"

We have discussed the issues in relation to *Hyperion*.

1) Everything that is beautiful __love, youth, seasons __deteriorates with time and makes one very unhappy. Should poetry be escapist and create unreal worlds where nothing changes and is therefore always beautiful? Or should it be about "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts" ?

Keats felt he was too inexperienced to have answers. Yet by 1819 he seems to have settled the first issue by replacing "beauty" with "truth." The subject of poetry should be truth, and if it was true, it was beautiful. The truth was that time causes change and often change creates sorrow but it had to be accepted. This is what Oceanus says. It seems close to Keats's own view that "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts" is the truth a poet should write about,

From Enceladus' speech, we know that Titans are not willing to accept change. Enceladus wants to fight against it and restore the past as it was. Hyperion, too, wants Saturn to regain his throne and thus return to the past. Since the Titans refuse to accept change, they lose their divine power. By contrast, Apollo becomes a god because he makes the sorrows of the world his own. The change in him from ignorance to knowledge is accompanied by pain. Unlike the Titans, he does not shrink from change, knowledge, or pain,

Clemene reacts to the new music she hears with simultaneous pain and sorrow. It is an uncomfortable experience. She wishes to shut her ears to it, to run away from it, but she cannot. She is not like Enceladus and Hyperion who reject the new order as unimportant. But she cannot be among the new gods because unlike Apollo, she does not understand that this is true knowledge.

A related issue here is of how one gains knowledge. Is it through reason and the conscious mind? Or is it through the emotions and intuition? Keats had not settled this either, but we have seen that he preferred Wordsworth's understanding of the human heart to Milton's reason. Both Clemene and Apollo have intuitive, emotional experiences. We can assume, then, that Keats felt that emotions and intuition were more important ways of gaining knowledge than reason.

2) What kind of poetry would ensure posthumous fame for Keats?

The answer follows from the possibility that knowledge is personal, intuitive, and emotional. If it is indeed personal, then a poet's dreams are a valid subject for poetry.

But poems are written for readers. Would readers accept poetry that was about one man's dreams? Keats's experience was that they would not, *Endymion*, Keats's long poem about one man's dreams, was badly received. It was in his review of *Endymion* that Lockhart had belittled Keats for being of the Cockney School of Poetry. Lockhart's was only the most vicious review. Most reviewers had not liked the poem,

This brings us to the issue of fame. We know that Keats wanted to be among the "mighty dead." What sort of poetry would ensure this? Clearly not the luxuriant, almost self-indulgent poetry of *Endymion*. Milton was among the "mighty dead," so

were the ancient Greeks. Why not write an epic about contemporary events as Milton did but in the "naked, Grecian" style? This is what Keats attempted in *Hyperion* and he disapproved of the result. .

In The Fall of *Hyperion*, Keats seems a different poet. The doubtful and uncertain meaning of the first *Hyperion* is replaced with confidence about the subject and style of poetry. We will isolate salient points about The *Fall of Hyperion* that have been further elaborated in 2.2.8.

- i) First and most important, Keats is not worried about posthumous fame because he cannot control readers' responses. This leaves him free to write about what he believes in strongly regardless of fame.
- ii) The subject is the personal dream of the poet.
- iii) The poet internalises "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts." In this he is like Apollo but because knowledge of sorrow comes to him before it comes to Apollo, he is superior to the god who is only a creature of the poet's imagination. The idea that human beings are superior to gods, if there are any gods, is in keeping with the humanism and atheism of the time that Keats shared with the Radicals and many of the other Romantics poets.

34.2.5 Uncertainties and "Negative Capability"

The title of the poem is from the name of the fallen Titan god of the sun. not of the new Olympian god, Apollo. Keats was inspired by Milton's *Paradise Lost* which also begins with the loser of the war in heaven, Satan. Milton, however, is very clear that Satan had sinned against God and was justly punished with defeat. Keats seems less sure about the wrongness of the Titans. His apparent uncertainty could be because unlike in *Paradise Lost*, there is no "argument" to tell the reader what to think about the poem.

There are many reasons why the Romantic writers left readers to form their own opinions. Readers and writers no longer shared common values so writers could not assert opinions and be certain that they would be understood. Then, writers were genuinely uncertain about their evaluation of events, and their writing embodies this uncertainty. Finally, reacting against the authoritarian style of the eighteenth century. Romantic poets wrote as if they were sharing an experience or idea in such a way that the reader could make up his own mind about the meaning of the poem.

The uncertainty was often only a pose because they provided plenty of clues on how to read their work. Wordsworth's description of his own writing as a cathedral is a useful guideline. What he meant was that any one poem must be read along with everything else the poet had written in prose and verse. This has become the usual way of reading the Romantics. *Hyperion*, for example, gains in meaning when we read it along with Keats's letter on "Negative Capability" (Gittings 43).

We have seen that *Hyperion* is like a selfish aristocrat of the ancien regime. Why Keats did not draw him in strong outlines as a villain is explained by his ideal of poetry which he called "Negative Capability" in a letter of 21, 27 December, 1818:

. . .it struck me, what quality went'to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare possessed [sic] so enormously—I mean Negative *Capability*, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason—

(Gittings 43)

Keats's ideal seems to have been a style of writing in which the writer does not bully the reader towards his point of view. "We hate poetry ~~that~~ has a palpable design upon us," he said. In his own best poetry, the reader is allowed to decide the meaning of the poem for himself **only** after being gently pushed towards the right interpretation by the poet. For example, Hyperion's concern for his comfort contrasts with Apollo's concern for the sorrows of the world. **Hyperion** forfeits divinity, Apollo gains it. This is how we know that Apollo and not **Hyperion** is the hero of the poem.

34.2.6 Is *Hyperion* incomplete?

Some critics say that the fragment is a regular Romantic poetic **form**, therefore the poem is complete. But Keats's contemporaries referred to it as a fragment, i.e., as incomplete.

Critics have tried to explain why Keats did not finish it. Some say that Keats did not continue the poem because the main difference between the Titans and Olympians is established in two-and-a-half books and anything **further** would have been repetitious (Muir). Another view is that the poem is about knowledge and **that** Keats was too young and inexperienced to write any more about knowledge.

Keats himself said he did not finish it because he did not like its echoes of Milton. He was also quite ill. He waited for the spring to improve his health when he wrote several poems. But he did not continue *Hyperion*. Yet he prepared it for publication, using the second *Hyperion* to do so (see Muir). It was published in the volume *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*, 1820.

Although we cannot be sure why Keats published *Hyperion*, it could have been because of the twin pulls of writing sincerely and fame. Keats had said that though *Endymion* was not a good poem, it was an accurate record of his development until that time. Possibly he saw *Hyperion* as another accurate autobiographical record. Secondly, *Hyperion* was complimented by the critics. Possibly Keats knew it would bring him some fame even if he thought it a flawed poem.

34.2.7 The difference between the two *Hyperions*

Keats spoke of his two *Hyperions* as if they were one **poem**. He probably thought of the **second** poem as a revised version of the first.

He had said that the first *Hyperion* would be in the "naked, **Grecian** manner," without the digressions and luxuriant imagery of *Endymion*. Critics feel that he succeeded well in this aim. He does not deviate from the story of the Titans and the rise of Apollo. There is little of *Endymion's* chief weakness, namely, the development of images simply because he wants to develop them even if they add nothing to the story. He is completely impersonal, as if he had mastered the technique of "Negative Capability." And yet he was dissatisfied with the poem and rewrote it as *The Fall of Hyperion*. He retained the blank verse but divided it into cantos instead of books. The second *Hyperion* has one complete canto and the small part of a second one. **The** poem starts with an induction.

The chief difference between the two poems is that **the** opening of *The Fall of Hyperion* is uncompromisingly personal. In the induction, Keats speaks for poets. Though everyone has dreams, he says, the poet has the power of words by which he can prevent his dreams **from** being lost. He asserts very strongly that a poet's **materials** are his personal dreams **and** knowledge. As for the problem of fame, he says that **future** generations will settle the question. He seems to accept that he has no control over whether he will be among the "mighty dead." Keats changed the structure of the second *Hyperion* to accommodate the idea that the poet makes poetry out of his own dreams. He recast the narrative as a dream in which **the** poet is the most **important** character, as he is of the entire poem.

In style, the difference is that Meats abandons the austere impersonality of *Hyperion* and returns to the sensuous, **intensely** personal voice of his early poetry. The verse is more **rhythmic** and focused. The two poems together are an accurate autobiography than either by itself.

Some critics maintain that Keats's development into maturity was reflected in his writing more impersonal, "objective" verse. A **comparison** of the two *Hyperions* shows that Keats had not yet settled whether personal poetry was necessarily inferior.

These exercises are to help you to see how much you have learnt. Try to answer them in your own words then check them against the answers in 2.5.

1. The first part of the document is a header section containing the title "THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES" and the author "BY J. W. FULTON".

2. The second part of the document is a table of contents listing the chapters and their corresponding page numbers.

3. The third part of the document is the main body of text, which is divided into chapters. The first chapter is titled "THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA" and the second chapter is titled "THE FIRST SETTLEMENTS".

4. The fourth part of the document is a list of names and dates, which appears to be a chronological list of events.

5. The fifth part of the document is a list of names and dates, which appears to be a chronological list of events.

6. The sixth part of the document is a list of names and dates, which appears to be a chronological list of events.

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10. The tenth part of the document is a list of names and dates, which appears to be a chronological list of events.

1. The first step in the process of the investigation is to identify the problem. This involves gathering information about the situation and determining what needs to be solved.

2. The second step is to develop a plan. This involves deciding on the best way to solve the problem and setting out the steps that need to be taken.

3. The third step is to carry out the plan. This involves putting the plan into action and following the steps that have been decided on.

4. The fourth step is to evaluate the results. This involves checking to see if the problem has been solved and if the solution is the best one.

5. The fifth step is to reflect on the process. This involves thinking about what was learned from the investigation and how it can be used in the future.

ii. Who are the Titan and Olympian gods of the sun, sea, and sky?

Hyperion

iii. Who is the unfallen Titan in the poem?

iv. Who is Hyperion's consort?

v. Which females does Apollo live with on Delos?

vi. Whom does Apollo gain knowledge from?

vii. Why is Apollo associated with a harp?

Q 3. *The Titan conference*

i. How many significant issues are raised and by whom?

ii. Which of these views represents the Enlightenment and why?

iii. Who supports the war? What does Keats feel about this?

iv. Sum up Clymene's experience.

v. What is Saturn's contribution to the discussion? What does it tell you about him as a leader?

Q.4. What makes Apollo divine?

Hyperion

4.7. Sum up Hyperion as a political allegory in about 75 words.

Q.8. What were the two kinds of poetry that Keats considered writing? Which did he seem to prefer?

Q.9. What did **Lockhart** say about Keats in his review of *Endymion*?

Q.10. What is the similarity between the poet and Apollo in *The Fall of Hyperion*?

1 1 How did Keats describe the style of *Hyperion*?

Q.12. What does Keats feel about posthumous fame in *The Fall of Hyperion*?

Q.13. Compare the attitudes of Enceladus and Apollo towards female deities.

Q.14. What are the three ways of considering *Hyperion* as a fragment?

Q.15. The Fall of *Hyperion*

i. Who is the protagonist of the second *Hyperion*?

ii. Who gives him knowledge?

iii. What compliment does she pay him?

iv. How did Keats **rearrange** the material of the poem, or what is its **structure**?

Q.16. What do you understand by 'Negative Capability?' Which of the two *Hyperions* seems to follow the ideal of 'Negative **Capability**?'

34.4 LET'S SUM UP

Hyperion as a political allegory or as about aesthetics continue to be the two chief ways of reading it. Newer criticism usually fits into these categories but the balance seems to be shifting towards seeing *Hyperion* within its cultural context. Though we have discussed political and aesthetic interpretations of *Hyperion* in separate sections, it was because of social and political change that Keats, like his contemporaries, rethought the nature of poetry and the social role of poets. In addition, his views were influenced by personal circumstances such as poverty and illness.

In short, *Hyperion* was created out of Keats's life and times.

34.5 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Q.1. A summary should include the major events in the narrative. Some critical comments are permitted. Check your summary against the poem and the synopsis in 2.2.1.

- Q.2.**
- i. a. **Cœlus** is the father of Saturn and **Hyperion** and of most of the major Titans.
 - b. We do not know what he looks like since he is only a voice,
 - ii. The Titan **gods** of the sun, sea, and sky are Hyperion, **Oceanus**, and **Saturn**.
The Olympian **gods** of the sun, sea, and sky are Apollo, Poseidon, and Jove.
 - iii. **Hyperion** is the **unfallen** Titan.
 - iv. **Hyperion's** consort is **Thea**.
 - v. Apollo lives with his mother, Leto, and twin sister, **Artemis**, on Delos.
 - vi. He gains knowledge from Mnemosyne, goddess of memory and mother of the muses.
 - vii. Because he is the god of poetry. Traditionally he is associated with the lyre. Keats calls it a harp in this poem.

Q.3. *The Titan conference*

- i. Three significant issues are raised by **Oceanus**, Enceladus, and Clymene respectively.
- ii. **Oceanus'** view is closest to the Enlightenment view of progress. He says that their **downfall** is natural because at their "heels a fresh **perfection** treads," i.e., the world progresses naturally towards greater perfection. Change is therefore always a change for the better. Since the Olympians are more **beautiful** than the Titans, they must inevitably replace the Titans.
- iii. Enceladus. **Keats's** view is not expressed in the poem but he had Radical sympathies and Radicals were against war. He therefore probably disliked Enceladus' support of war.
- iv. **Clymene** says that she **was** trying to forget her grief by making music when a new music overwhelmed her. It filled her with joy and sorrow but was uncomfortable. It did not make her happy yet she could not shut her ears to it. She also heard Apollo's name called out.

What this means is probably the Titans cannot escape sorrow; that Apollo is the deity of the future; that knowledge will be more complex after the fall of the **Titans** because it will embrace joy as well sorrow.

- v. Saturn initiates the discussion by asking the Titans why they are so filled with despair and that there is nothing in all he knows to explain their gloom. He has searched in stories of the past ("legends of the first of days" *Hyperion* 2.132) for an explanation but found nothing. He has not understood that since their fall has never occurred before, past knowledge is not likely to help them. A new stage in history demands fresh thinking which Saturn cannot provide. He is therefore not worthy of leading the Titans any more.

Q.4. "Knowledge enormous" makes Apollo divine.

- Q.5.
- a. An allegory is a story whose real meaning is quite different from its surface meaning.
 - b. Repression, especially political repression usually includes censorship and harsh punishment for those who criticise the state. To avoid such punishment, writers partially hide their criticism in allegorical writing.

Q.6. The two chief ways of reading *Hyperion* are

- a. As a political allegory
- b. As a poem about **poets and** poetry, or aesthetics.

Q.7. Check your **summary** against 2.2.3. If you use your own language, you will be sure that you have understood the ideas.

Q.8. The two kinds of poetry were

- a. Escapist poetry in which time does not pass and everything is **permanently beautiful**
- b. Poetry about change and sorrow, about "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts." He seemed to prefer this kind of poetry.

Q.9. **Lockhart** called Keats Leigh Hunt's "**bantling**" and said that he belonged to the "Cockney School of Poetry" as well as to the "Cockney School of **Politics**."

Q.10. **Both** participate in the world's sorrow. This is "knowledge **enormous**" from which poetry is made and which makes Apollo a god.

Q.11. He said it was in the 'baked, **Grecian** manner.'

Q.12. Keats's view about posthumous fame is in the induction to *The Fall of Hyperion*. He felt that it was beyond his control **and** that all that he could do was to write sincerely.

Q.13. Female deities as sources of knowledge are unimportant for Enceladus but important for Apollo. Because of his attitude, Enceladus dismisses **Clymene's** experience of the new world. Apollo, however, has dreamed of **Mnemosyne** and when he meets her, he questions her and gains knowledge from her that **makes** a god of him.

Q.14. a. When Keats called it a fragment, he meant that it was **an** unfinished poem. **This** is how most of his contemporaries saw it.

- b. Some twentieth century critics think that Keats could not have written **any** more of the poem because the main conflict has been stated and because he was too inexperienced to write any **further on** a poem about knowledge. Kenneth Muir's essay has a good discussion on this.
- c. More recently, Marjorie **Levinson** has said that the fragment is a regular poetic form in Romantic poetry. She argues that the Romantics deliberately left their poems unfinished, and that these fragmentary poems are actually complete.

- Q.15.
- i. The poet.
 - ii. **Moneta**
 - iii. That he is among those to whom the misery of the world is **misery**, i.e., that he does not try and escape sorrow by transforming it into something else.
 - iv. He structured it as a dream within a dream. The poet dreams that he is near an altar in a forest when he meets **Moneta**. He then **has** another dream while he is already dreaming. In this second dream, he sees the Titans. Thus, he **starts** by telling us about himself and **then** includes the Hyperion's story. The effect is to emphasise that the story is the poet's invention, i.e., entirely subjective.
- Q.16.
- a. By 'Negative Capability,' Keats meant **that** a poet should negate his personality **and** opinions, leaving the reader free to make up **his** own mind about the meaning of the poem. The writer should not force his views on the reader.
 - b. The first **Hyperion**.

UNIT 35 THE ROMANTIC AGE : A REVIEW

Structure

35.0	Objectives
35.1	Introduction
35.2	Romanticism and the real world
35.3	Romanticism, emotion and imagery
35.4	Political discontent and humanitarian aspirations
35.5	Wonder of the romantics
35.6	Awe and wonder in things familiar
35.7	Let's sum up

35.1 OBJECTIVES

You would be able to achieve three objectives by reading this unit. They are as below:

- Review your study of blocks six and seven ;
- Look at the Romantic movement as a whole ; and
- Gain insights into the writing of critical questions.

35.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the last unit on the Romantic period. What would we have done if we had been in a face to face situation ? After **having** completed a period such as the Romantic Revival we would have thrown the discussion open for your participation. Perhaps we who had taught this period to you over a period of two or three months would have taken our seat in the audience and asked you to present your papers. Alternatively we would have given you a set of questions and asked you to write your answers. We would have then evaluated your answers and may be asked some of you to **read** your essays aloud for the benefit of your friends. As I am aware that quite a few of you would not visit the study center due **to** your personal problems so this unit should help you partially **overcome** the handicap.

In this unit you **are** going to **read** five short essays such as you might be asked to write at the final **exam**. On the one hand they will help **you** review what you have read in the present **and** the previous blocks and on the other offer you models for your own answers to critical questions.

You should not have to spend too long on this block because new ideas are not being presented here; new facts will not be discussed. What you are going to learn is the **manner** of presentation, Each section in this unit has a question written in the italics and the answers to those questions follow in the remaining part of **that** section.

35.2 ROMANTICISM AND THE REAL WORLD

'The peculiar quality of Romanticism lies in this that in apparently detaching us from the real world, it restores us to reality at a higher point.' Discuss, illustrating from the poetry of the nineteenth century.

The statement presumes that Romanticism detaches us from the real world in some sense. This deserves examination.

The Augustan poets took the urban society as their milieu. The British poets of the early nineteenth century found this society not a society in perfection but being made bad and unhygienic by the Industrial Revolution. Its polite character was being spoiled by the increasing number of the uneducated, homeless workers in the towns. This society became a symbol of greed and trickery, deceit and hypocrisy and the Romantic poets, emerged from this old centre and base of culture and politeness. This may be more true of Blake than of Keats but there would have been some agreement among the Romantic poets on this issue.

This social change affected the thoughts of the people. The range of experience of the previous age was found to be narrow and limited and the permissible interests and sentiments few and limits of good sense and decency soon-reached. The new themes thus were the child's experiences, or interests of peoples remote from the cities or even national life or the unexplored human passions, sentiments and feelings that were more a part of human existence than just reason.

Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, and *Kubla Khan* demonstrate the effectiveness of the non-rational and discursive in literature as vehicle for communicating states of mind and feeling that cannot be readily justified in explicit statements. *The Ancient Mariner* is set in the solitariness of the gruesome sea. It is a tale of adventure and more than that, a tale of adventure into the unexplored areas of the psyche. The Mariner is afflicted by a strange urge to tell his tale to someone who is fit for it. Still the morality is a mundane one, but something that was not considered worthy of notice by the predecessors of the Romantics:

He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

Christabel has the setting of a medieval castle, where an innocent girl like the kin of the bridegroom in *The Ancient Mariner* is introduced into the complexity of a world of love, witchery, supernatural elements and senility. All these poems express man's willingness to pay serious attention to facts of mind untainted by reason.

Coleridge however was not alone in this matter. Blake had gone farther than Coleridge and imagined a whole world of beings. *America*, *The Four Zoas*, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and *The Book of Urizen* are all inhabited by mythical beings of Blake's creation. But analysed on the level of symbols like *Urizen* for reason they all explain their validity and meaning,

Wordsworth took for the subject of his poetry the common people, uncorrupted by civilization or the Child who has not allowed his innocence to get corrupted by understanding. 'Michael', 'The Cumberland Beggar' and the girl in 'We are Seven' are symbols of innocence. Michael gets corrupted by the new society which he joins. Civilization has not reached others (in the two poems mentioned above), to corrupt them.

In poems like 'The Daffodils' or 'The Sky Lark' or 'The Solitary Reaper' artefacts of nature are seen as a personal, not a public object.

Whatever the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work
And o'er the sickle bending ; -
I listen'd, motionless and still ;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore
Long after it was heard no more.

As the anarchism of **Godwin** professed man's complete independence from external control the Romantics emphasized the autonomy of a poet's world.

Byron was not an escapist. He remained highly sociable. But while in the society, he wished to fight with the despotism of his time. He set himself against all the monarchies of his day. On the question of Greek independence he recalled Homer, the battles of the Greeks against the Trojans; and nearer in time the memory of the Crusades came surging over his mind. The poetry of The **Vision of Judgment** in theme and treatment is of the previous age. *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* are earthly and even profane. But they are at a great remove from the setting of the poetry of **Dryden**, Pope and Dr. Johnson.

Shelley was a **revolutionary** and joined Byron in his philhellenism. He declared - 'we are all Greeks'. But his poetry is more airy and more than any other romantic poet, worthy of Arnold's sneer.

It asserts the romantic heresy which the poetry of the age had committed in proclaiming the self-sufficiency of the individual. 'To a Skylark' is **perhaps** the most perfect example of airiness converted into the chams of poetry :

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from, thy presence showers a rain of melody,

In sublimating the concrete Shelley licenses our imagination to the extremes of flight and offers a portrait of the purest of **human** aspirations, not of concrete objects.

Keats loved the vernal bloom, the taste of wine, the fragrance of flowers, the gentle breeze and above all to be lulled to sleep by the one sweet call of a **nightingale** :

With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into **the** forest dim:

Keats later repudiated his cult of beauty. In his later poetry such as 'Epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds' he laments,

"... Oh, never with the prize,
High reason, and the love of good and ill,
Be my award."

Or again,

Or is it that imagination brought
Beyond its proper bound, yet still **confin'd**
Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
Cannot refer to any standard law
Of either earth or heaven ?

Still the standard law which Keats and his contemporary poets adhered to, and recognized the short-comings of, did restore the honour and mystery that surrounded human beings. It is in this sense that they portrayed reality but again it was a **part** of the reality. In the change of focus if new areas had been discovered old ones had gone into the shade, if not completely eclipsed.

35.3 ROMANTICISM, EMOTION AND IMAGERY

'Intense emotion coupled with an intense display of imagery, such is the frame of mind which supports and feeds the new literature.' Discuss the Romantic Revival in the light of this statement.

Intense emotions of love, beauty and patriotism are generally accompanied with an intense display of images. But when a poet meditates upon an object or an idea his intellect provides him with philosophy or a sublime strain of poetry rather than the glimmer of images.

Shelley's skylark is a product of quivering imagination. The bird has been compared with a 'Cloud of fire', an 'un-bodied joy', a 'star of heaven', 'the arrows of that silver sphere', 'a poet hidden in the light of thought', 'a high-born maiden', 'a glow-worm golden' and 'rose embower'd in its own green leaves', and with these images go intense emotions. To quote a few stanzas

Like a poet hidden
 In the light of thought,
 Singing hymns unbidden
 Till the world is wrought
 To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not,

Or

With thy clear keen joyance
 Languor cannot be
 Shadow of annoyance
 Never came near thee;
 Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Or

Teach me half the gladness
 That thy brain must know
 Such harmonious madness
 From my lips would flow
 The world should listen **then**, as I am listening now !

For Shelley, the bird becomes a symbol and then it grows until it becomes an agent which participates with him in his flights of fancy, his passions of life, his yearnings for freedom.

Keats is another poet whose emotional experience is conveyed through images. The nightingale is called 'light-winged Dryad of the trees' and Keats thinks of the emperors and clowns of the past:

Thou wast not Lorn for **death**, immortal Bird !
 No hungry generations **tread thee down** ;
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown :

But Wordsworth's emotional response is for meditation. Much of his imagery is replaced by a 'visionary gleam'. Still his Skylark is 'Ethereal minstrel | pilgrim of the sky !' And Wordsworth requests humanity to,

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood ;
A privacy of glorious light is thine,
 Whence thou **dost** pour upon the world a flood
 Of harmony, with instinct more divine
 Type of **the** wise, who soar, but never roam –
 True to the kindred point of Heaven and Home.

This coupling of emotion and imagery is true in other contexts as well. Byron's portrait of the ocean is majestic and conveyed through bold images:

Roll on thou deep and dark and blue Ocean – roll !
 Ten thousand fleets sweep over there in vain ;
 Man marks **the** earth with ruin - his control
 Stops with the shore ; upon the watery plain
 The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth **remain**
A shadow of man's ravage save his own,
When for a moment, like a drop of rain
 He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
 Without a grave unknell'd, **uncoffin'd**, and **unknown**.

The majesty and grandeur of the ocean is put in contrast **with** the littleness of man through appropriate images.

Byron used such images for other purposes like the expression of love of the beauty of women :

She Walks in beauty, like the night
 Of cloudless climes and **starry** skies
 And all that's best of dark and **bright**
 Meet in her aspect and her eyes ;

The lady is as beautiful **and** majestic as a **cloudless** night, full of stars,

Wordsworth finds the image of an 'apparition' in his 'phantom of delight':

A lovely apparition, sent
 To be a moment's ornament ;
 Her eyes as stars of twilight fair,
 Like twilight's too, her dusky hair
But all things **else** about her drawn
 From May–time and the **cheerful** dawn.
A dancing shape, an image gay
 To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

When he sees her **from** a nearer view she remains 'a spirit, yet a woman too !' and in the last **stanza** when Wordsworth sees her with his 'serene' eyes she appears to be

The very pulse of the machine
A being breathing thoughtful breath
A traveller between life and death.

Shelley's call to his beloved is the most intense in this series :

The fountains **mingle** with the river
 And the rivers with the ocean,
 The winds of heaven **mix** for ever
 With a sweet emotion ;
 Nothing in the world is single,
All things by a law divine

In one another's being mingle –
Why not I with thine ?

Here once again intense emotion has been mixed with intense imagery with a telling effect. The elements of nature wake us to the elements of our own sweet being.

Keats in the 'Ode on the Grecian Urn' talks of the '...still unravished bride of quietness thou foster-child of silence and slow time', The coming together of 'still unravished bride' with a product of 'silence and slow time' make the portrait on the urn a permanent source of inspiration.

This intensity of emotion when coupled with an intense display of imagery produces the sweeping, pervasive and permanent effect of Romantic poetry.

Gyan Ratna

35.4 POLITICAL DISCONTENT AND HUMANITARIAN ASPIRATIONS

'The Romantic movement at the end of the eighteenth century expressed the aesthetic and emotional sensibilities of the age, the political discontents, and the humanitarian aspiration. Discuss.'

George I and George II had been interested more in their province of Hanover from where they had come than their new kingdom of Great Britain. George III ascended the throne in 1760 and remained on it until his death in 1820. He wanted to get back for himself what his two predecessors had lost, i. e. the power to reign as well as rule. This involved a great deal of shady dealings and false play, unfair elections and bribery of parliamentarians and voters. The society had become corrupt and the elite wished a change. The days of despotic rule were over and democracy had dawned across the Atlantic on their (The English men's) own kins in 1776 in the United States of America. The poet of *The Traveller* recorded this passing away of reliance on the king and the waning of the adoration of authority :

How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure,

The narrowness of the urban society and 'good sense' in philosophy and in poetry. the 'ancient rules' and the crippling medium of the 'heroic couplet', were felt to be a burden which the new age wished to discard. Writing about the metre of the previous age, Blake wrote in his *Poetical Sketches*:

The languid strings do scarcely move !
The sound is forc'd, the notes are few !

But more than the disenchantment with the old medium was the asperity towards the old subjects which desiccated the hearts of men, and narrowed the range of the experience of the educated. These new romantic poets lived in remote places, away from the control-room of the state. The poets of the previous age – Swift and Prior. Milton, Marvell Addison and Donne – were close to the powers that were.

Blake took for his subject the chimney sweeper or the village green and innocent children. Wordsworth directed his interest towards the poor people like the Cumberland beggar or Michael's father and mother. An innocent girl like Lucy or the one in 'We are Seven' drew his attention as much as his own childhood, the 'fair seed time' in which he was 'fostered alike by beauty and by fear.' In this novel realization of man as an autonomous being, his self-sufficient status, lay the secret of Wordsworth's poetic gleams, his aesthetic expressions :

An auxiliary light
 Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
 Bestowed new splendour ; the melodious birds,
 The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
 Murmuring so sweetly in themselves obeyed
 A like dominion, and the midnight storm
 Grew darker in the presence of my **eye** :
 Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,
 And hence my transport.

Scott, similarly took Young Lockinvar or an innocent Maisie for his theme :

Proud Maisie is in the wood,
 Walking so early
 Sweet Robin sits on the bush
 Singing so rarely.
 'Tell, me thou bonny bird,
 When shall I marry me?'
 When six braw gentlemen
 Kirkward shall carry me.

Coleridge's imagination, however, did not turn to things so simple. His imagination was conditioned by his addiction to laudanum. **Poetry** depicts man's response to uncommon situations. 'Kubla Khan', said to be written in a dream is in its very perfection in this class of poetry :

In **Xanadu** did **Kubla** Khan
 A stately pleasure-dome decree
 Where Alph, the sacred river ran
 Through caverns measureless to man
 Down to a sunless sea.

The 'measureless caverns' that Coleridge envisioned was a great fact of his humanitarian aspiration and in accepting the remote and the far fetched as a theme for his poetry, he countenanced the immense possibilities that **man** was capable of. This conditioned the music of his poetry and ensured its charm :

Weave a circle round me thrice
 And close your eyes with holy dread
 For he on honey **due** hath fed
 And drunk the milk of paradise,

The music of 'The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner' is gruesome:

Alone, alone, all all alone,
 Alone, on a wide wide sea,
 And never a saint took pity on,
 My soul in agony.

Or

Day after day, day after day :
 We stuck nor breath nor motion ;
 As idle as a painted ship
 Upon a painted ocean.

Coleridge's gruesome music occupies its place in the full bloom of the joy of marriage :

What loud uproar **burst** 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.

The poetry of Coleridge re-enacts the medieval motif of *Est in Arcadia ego* – death in **Arcady**, right in the heart **of** joy of life. It responds in this way to **a** deep seated **psychological** aspect of the human mind.

But the romanticism of the early **generation** of the romantic poets did not go farther. Wordsworth had **written** of the Fall of Bastille:

Bliss was it in that **down** to be **alive**
But to be young was very heaven

But when the **dawn** turned into a gory afternoon, repressive and **conservative** attitudes took hold of **the** minds of men. **Pitt**, who was in favour of reforms set all his **energy** against any liberal measure till the Battle of Waterloo relieved the British people of the liberal sympathies upsetting the pattern of the society. The second generation came to express views against oppression and in favour of liberalism, in support of reforms and the utopian creed of anarchism of **Godwin and Bakunin** and of the socialistic creed of Robert Owen of New **Lanark**.

Ajay Kumar

35.5 WONDER OF THE ROMANTICS

'The 'wonder' of the Romantics is the enthralling discovery, the progressive lightning-up of an inner horizon, which extends beyond the limits of clear consciousness.' How far is this **an** adequate assessment of the Romantic Movement in English literature?

The great neo-classical poets from **Dryden** to Dr. Johnson wrote on themes of peoples, which the titles of their poems bear out – '**An** Essay on **Man**', '**An** Essay on criticism', 'London', 'The Vanity of Human Wishes' or 'The Village School-Master'. The Romantic poets took private themes and glorified the individual. In the absence of public themes they looked for private matters as the proper stuff for **poetry**.

Children, birds, beauty of nature, flowers, remote lands, mysterious and **even** fear inspiring landscape or seascape became their **themes** for poetry. Hence there could not emerge an organized society and a **familiar** set of norms to which Pope claimed to **conform** :

That not in fancy's **maze** he wander'd long
But stoop'd to Truth, **and** moralized his song

Keats's and in some ways the dilemma of all romantics was whether they were 'fanatics', i.e. of the dreamer tribe or poets.

Fanatics **have** their dreams,
Wherewith they weave
A paradise for a sect;
The savage too
From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
Guesses at Heaven ;

The poet, Keats resolved
.... **is a sage** ;
A humanist physician to all men.

Review

As 'physicians' that the Romantic poets were, they reclaimed imagination for the polite society. A child was **born** with the 'glories of the imperial palace' whence he had come. Wordsworth beholds

... the child among his newborn blisses
A six year's darling of a pigmy size !
See, where 'mid work of his **own** hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses
With light upon **him** from his father's eyes !

But this was common. What others could not see was

... at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life
Shaped by himself with newly learned art ;

Whether **Wordsworth** succeeded in persuading his contemporaries of the 'Mighty prophet ! Seer Blest' we do not know but he did incite curiosity into a new field or rather a dormant field of **human** interest.

'The **Daffodils**' records another aspect, towards which the romantic poets looked with wonder :

For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude ;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

The beauty of flowers extended to all things of nature. Shelley heard in the West Wind the "**trumpet** of a prophecy" ;

O wild West wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, **from** whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an **enchanter** fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale and hectic red,

This mighty force gradually goes far away, beyond the range of clear-sight of **the** poet somewhat like the two children, in 'Dream Children' who from realities slip to the spectral unrealities **on** the shores of **Lethe** or like the Sky **lark** which floats and runs 'like an unbodied joy whose race has just begun' -

Higher still and higher .
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire ;
The blue deep thou **wingest**
And singing still **dost** soar **and soaring** ever **singest**.

Keats's nightingale does not soar in the sky. **It has** its

Melodious plot
Of beechen green and **shadows** numberless

from where it invites Keats and he is ready to 'fade far away, dissolve and quite forget.'

Coleridge's imagination hardly woke up from the forgetfulness imposed upon him by opium. He heard mysterious voices in the air, in the ghostly moonlit nights, in the **striking**s of the clocks, and in the howls of an old toothless **maistiff**:

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock ;
Tu-whit ! – Tu – whoo !
And hark, again ! The crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.

What wonder enwrapped the inland objects with the medieval **bit motif** was given a ghostly tinge when the scene was the sea or the 'ancestral voices prophesying war' when the same was Kublai Khan's palace in China.

All the concrete objects in major Romantic poetry except perhaps those of Byron and Southey have a tendency to 'dissolve' into the liquid state and in vapours. Here is **Hyperion**:

His flaming robes steamed out beyond his heels
And gave a roar as if of earthly fire,
That **scar'd** away the meek ethereal hours
And made their dove wings tremble. On he flared
From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light,
And diamond-paved lustrous long arcades
Until he reached the great main Cupola ;
There standing fierce beneath, he **stamped** his foot,
And **from** basements deep to the high towers
Jarr'd his own golden region.

It was in this ability of the romantic poets to turn a massive character like Hyperion into liquid fire and only sound that the unique achievements of the romantic poets lie.
Devraj Kumar

35.6 AWE AND WONDER IN THINGS FAMILIAR

'By associating single sensible experiences with some undefinable superior order of things the Romantics have enriched our appreciation of the familiar world and awakened a new awe and wonder at it.' Discuss.

It is often assumed that there is no human emotion that cannot be found in Shakespeare. **Dryden** said, '... he had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of Nature were still present to him ...' Nature, to **Dryden** and his contemporaries meant far more than it means to us and included human nature as well, but the treatment of nature that we find in the poetry of the Romantic poets was a revolution in literature.

The case of 'the daffodils' of Wordsworth may be taken for example. Wordsworth reports,

Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Tossing their heads in sprightly **dance**.

But these 'ten thousand' flowers are immediately seen Against the background of the milky way, the dance of the waves and the dance of the flowers themselves. As it were, the entire creation is seen in a cosmic dance. We are forced to question whether Wordsworth knew **something** about the cosmic dance of Shiv. Ultimately, he thinks of the value of this encounter with a 'never ending line' of daffodils;

For **oft** when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills
And dances with the **daffodils**

By the time we reach these lines we start questioning about the sources and aims of romantic poetry. Is Romantic Poetry about nature? Or is it about **man**. Romantic poetry is primarily about man and only secondarily about nature, but it is **nature-**poetry because nature is the **measure** of all **things** and both the **medium** and object of the search. The poets of the classical age had the urban society as **the** standard, the romantic poets replaced it **with** nature. The song of the solitary reaper reminds Wordsworth of a grand order: 'of old unhappy far off things **and** battles long ago' of the nightingale and the cuckoo, the traveller in a desert **and** the voice of the cuckoo from Hebrides in spring. Once again a **common** song is heard against the **background** of entire creation as it were. Once again we get tempted to know whether Wordsworth had any knowledge of the 'Natya **Shashtra**' of **Bharata** and our concept of **Rasas** for in one lyric Wordsworth invokes the entirety and our experience becomes universal. The same applies to fearful sights as well. Wordsworth saw his own boating experience against the background of fearful forms, of the rock **extending** toward him like a ghost and the mountains all around. All his **childish** delinquencies, he admits, were reproved by nature's 'ministries of fear'.

It is for such a **treatment** of nature that **common** experiences **became** so valuable to the people of nineteenth century Britain. Coleridge decided to keep his child in the midst of nature:

...thou my babe, shall wander like a **breeze**
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain and beneath the clouds

It was Wordsworth's influence, besides being the influence of the age that made him think that nature was the repository of grand **forms** **and** of **Eternity**.

...**So** shall thou see and hear
The lovely shapes **and** sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy god
Utters who from **eternity** doth 'teach
Himself in all and all **things** in Himself.

Hence it was a common belief among the poets of the romantic revival **that** in nature existed something more than the casual more than the eye could meet without the assistance of the **seeking** mind. Nature could be a reflection of God himself, was what Coleridge felt. The **matin** bells, or the bark of the toothless **maistiff** are agencies of some preternatural **beings**. Caverns to **him** were measureless and passed into the sunless sea. The experience of **marriage** was to be seen against the perspective of the experiences of the Ancient Mariner who felt a **pain** at certain hours and **must** tell his **experiences** to others.

Keats and **Shelley** see things and evaluate **experiences** less against the background of mysterious forces and supernatural visitations. To the former, love and immortality are the connecting principles. To the latter, human aspirations of freedom and liberty

and revolution and reform and the amelioration in the condition of mankind take the place of Wordsworth's 'ministeries of nature'. The nightingale's voice cannot be overlooked by generations to come:

Thou wast not born for death immortal bird,
No hungry generations tread thee down,
The voice I hear this passing night was heard,
In ancient days by emperors and c'lowns.

And it was heard in ancient days by the 'emperors and clowns' just like Yeats's handiwork;

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily **form** from any natural thing
But such a **form** as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold or gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy emperor awake
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past or passing or to come.

But the difference is all the more pronounced. While the 'golden bird' is a classical image – Yeats eager to live in his peculiar classical past – the **nightingale** is something that communicates with us in our real existence. The golden bird is part of a **bardic** pose. The nightingale is the passionate dream of the poet's life. The bird singing on the golden bough is avowedly unreal and elevates the familiar; the nightingale so common to our daily life becomes thing unreal and awful.

Shelley's treatment of the skylark make the romantic stance clear once again. It is raised to the highest heavens:

Hail to thee blithe spirit
Bird thou never **wert**,
That from Heaven or near it
Pourest thy **full** heart
In **profuse** strains of unpremeditated art.

Although the bird is unreal when looked through Shelley's eyes – 'bird thou never **wert**', - it **can** still give **a** message to humanity

Teach me **half** the gladness
That thy brain must **know**
Such **harmonious** madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then, as I am listening now!

However unreal the bird may become in the intensity of experience, of aspiration, dreams or desires it still communicates with humanity whereas the golden handiwork of Yeats, or any other classicist for that matter, speaks only to lords and ladies of the august company. It is for this reason that nature, before the Romantic **poets** started writing was never seen with the wonder and awe with which it came to be seen after them. Wordsworth expressed the ethos of his age in just two lines:?

To me the **meanest** flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

The meanest flower, the **Cumberland** beggar, Peter Bell, Michael, the river **Duddon** were never seen before in the same spirit nor were the **matin** bells or the marriage songs heard with the same **intensity** or the dance of lovers on a grecian urn seen with

the same passion or the west wind welcomed as 'destroyed or preserver' with the same compelling force that it was by the great Romantics.

Review

Upendra Sharma

35.7 LET'S SUM UP

In this unit you reviewed the poetry of the Romantic Revival as a **whole** and gained insights into the **craft** of writing answers of critical questions that you may be asked in the term-end (**i.e.** final) examination. Hope you found the unit **useful** for your **self-study**. Would you like to read out some of your essays before your friends at the Study Centre or a **self-organised** group as some students did in this class?