

**BEGC-109**  
**ASSIGNMENT: British Romantic Literature**

**Programme: BAEGH/2024-2025**  
**Course Code: BEGC-109**

Answer any five questions. All questions carry equal marks. (20 x 5 = 100)

1. Explain the basic difference between the Neoclassical and Romantic theories of poetry.
2. Define 'Romantic Literature' explaining the origin of the term 'Romantic', giving various definitions, and elucidating salient features of romanticism.
3. Comment on Blake's portrayal of children and childhood in his *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.
4. Explain Coleridge's ideas on 'Fancy' and 'Imagination'.
5. Romantic poetry is replete with mystery, aura and quaintness of phenomena. How is "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" a masterpiece of romantic poetry in this sense?
6. What are the romantic tendencies of Collins that won the appreciation of S.T. Coleridge?
7. Critically interpret the poem "Ode to the West Wind".
8. Describe Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a gothic novel.
9. Give an account of the sufferings that the mariner undergoes at various stages in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'.
10. Discuss the connection between the life sketch of Mary Shelley and her novel *Frankenstein*.

Q 1:- Explain the basic difference between the Neoclassical and Romantic theories of poetry.

Ans

The Neoclassical and Romantic theories of poetry represent two distinct literary movements, each with its own principles and view on art and creativity.

### 1. Neoclassical Theory of Poetry (17-18<sup>th</sup> century) :-

- Emphasis on Reason and Order :- Neoclassical poetry values logic, reason, and restraint. It adheres to strict forms and values, often looking back to classical Greek and Roman models.
- Imitation of Classical Traditions :- Neoclassicists believed that the best poetry imitated classical poets like Homer and Virgil. They emphasized decorum, balance, and harmony in structure and style.
- Focus on Society and Morality :- Neoclassical poetry often explored themes related to social order, human nature, and moral lessons. The poet's role was seen as instructive, with a strong moral tone.
- Objective Approach :- Neoclassicists valued objectivity, where

controlled and expressed in a dignified, restrained manner.

## 2. Romantic Theory of Poetry (late 18<sup>th</sup> - early 19<sup>th</sup> century)

- Emphasis on Emotion and Imagination:

Romantic poetry, in contrast, celebrated personal emotion, individual experience and the imagination. It favored spontaneity, passion, and a rejection of formal rules.

- Nature as a Central Theme:

Nature played a central role in Romantic poetry, symbolizing purity and a source of spiritual inspiration. Poets saw nature as a way to explore deeper truth about human existence.

- Focus on the individual and Subjectivity:

Romantic poets valued the individual's inner world, celebrating personal feelings, creativity, and self-expression over societal norms.

- Rejection of Classical Rules:

Romantics believed that poetry should not be constrained by rigid structures. They embraced free

verse and innovative forms valuing creativity over conformity.

**Q 2.** Explain Coleridge's ideas on 'Fancy' and 'Imagination'.

**A<sub>2</sub>** Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a prominent figure of the Romantic movement, made a significant distinction between Fancy and Imagination, in his work *Biographia and Literary* (1817). These concepts explain how the mind creates image and ideas, particularly in the process of poetic creation.

**I.** Fancy :-

- Lower Faculty : Coleridge regarded Fancy as the lesser of the two mental faculties. It deals with superficial associations and the rearrangement of existing images and ideas.
- Mechanical and Passive :- Fancy works by mechanically combining or reassembling images that already exist in memory. It does not create anything new but simply juxtaposes or layers existing things without deeper connection.
- Imitative & Decorative :- Fancy is mere about ornamentation and does not have the transformation power of imagination. It is often concerned with trivial or superficial elements like

decorating or embellishing ideas.

- Associated with Memory :- Fancy is closely linked to memory, as it works by recalling and recombining sensory experiences from the past without giving them new meaning.

## 2. Imagination :-

- Higher Faculty :- Coleridge considered imagination as the supreme creative power of the mind, far superior to fancy. It is the faculty responsible for deep, original, and transformative creation.
- Creative and Organic :- Unlike fancy, Imagination doesn't just recombine old ideas but generates something entirely new. It fuses disparate elements into a unified whole, often creating something that transcends mere experience.
- Divine and Spiritual :- Coleridge viewed Imagination as almost divine in nature, capable of grasping profound truths about the world and human experience. It has the power to perceive unity in diversity and to transcend the ordinary.

## key Differences:-

- Fancy is a lower, more mechanical function that rearrange existing materials in a decorative way.
- Imagination is a higher, creative force that transforms experience, synthesizing new meaning and revealing deeper truth.

**Q3** Critically interpret the poem "Ode to the West Wind"?

Ans

"Ode to the West Wind" by Percy Bysshe Shelley is a powerful Romantic poem that reflects on theme of transformation, renewal, and the role of nature in both personal and political change. The west wind is personified as a force of destruction and regeneration, symbolizing the cycle of life and death, decay and rebirth. Through its five cantos, the poem moves from an exploration of natural forces to a more personal meditation on the poet's own role as an agent of change.

### 1. The West Wind as a Symbol of Change.

The west wind central to the poem, is portrayed as a force that both brings decay and promises

General Kelly describes it as a "wild Spirit", a "Destroyer and Preserver", sweeping away dead leaves and spreading seeds that will bloom in the spring. The duality - destruction and preservation reflects the cyclical nature of existence for Kelly. The West Wind's destructive power is necessary for renewal; nothing old can stay; that which is both nature and society, old system must be destroyed to make way for new growth.

## 2. The structure of the Poem: Nature's Elements

The poem is structured into five cantos, each addressing a different aspect of the Wind's power:

- Canto I: The wind as a force over the land, blowing away dead leaves and spreading seeds.
- Canto II: The wind's power over the sky, driving clouds and stirring up storms.
- Canto III: The wind influence the sea, creating turbulence in the ocean.
- Canto IV: A more personal turn, where the speaker expresses a desire to be moved and influenced by the Wind's power.
- Canto V: A hopeful call for the wind to act

as a metaphorical force of inspiration, carrying the speaker's ideas to the world.

### 3. Personal Longing and Political Commentary

As the poem progresses, the wind becomes more than just a symbol of nature's change; it becomes a metaphor for the poet's desire for personal and societal transformation.

In Canto IV, the speaker expresses a deep longing to be lifted and carried by the wind, as a leaf or cloud, wishing to merge with its power:

"I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!"

### 4. Conclusion: A Poem of Hope and Transformation

"Ode to the West Wind" is ultimately a poem about hope. Though it acknowledges destruction and decay, it emphasizes the potential for regeneration. Shelley's use of the West Wind as a metaphor for change, both personal and societal - highlights his belief in the necessity of transformation, even if it is painful. The poem's final lines, with its promise of spring after winter, serve as a powerful reminder that new life and new ideas always

follow the darkest times.

Q4 Describe Mary Shelley's Frankenstein as a gothic novel.

A2 Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, published in 1818, is a classic example of a Gothic novel, blending supernatural elements with dark, brooding atmosphere and exploring themes of isolation, fear and the limits of human ambition.

Key Gothic elements in Frankenstein includes:

- (a) Dark Atmosphere:- The novel is set in eerie, often desolate environments like the Swiss Alps, icy Arctic landscapes, and remote laboratories. These settings contribute to the ominous mood and sense of isolation.
- (b) Supernatural Themes:- Although rooted in scientific experimentation, the creation of the creature feels supernatural, blurring the line between science and the mystical.
- (c) Psychological Horror:- The novel explores the psychological torment of both Victor Frankenstein and his Creature. Themes of madness, guilt and obsession run throughout, especially as Victor spirals into despair and paranoia over the consequences of his creation.

(d) Monstrosity and the Grotesque:- The Creature is

physically grotesque, and his existence challenges societal definition of beauty, humanity and morality. The novel questions what make someone a "monster" - is it appearance, actions, or the way they are treated?

(e) Isolation:- Both creature and Victor experience profound isolation. Victor isolates himself in his obsessive quest for knowledge, while the creature is alienated by his appearance and lack of companionship. This isolation heightens the sense of essential dread and moral ambiguity.

(f) The Sublime:- Shelley's use of nature, especially in the Alps and the Arctic, reflects the romantic fascination with the sublime - overwhelming landscapes that evoke awe and terror. These settings mirror the emotional turmoil and the profound existential question at the heart of the novel.

Q5 Discuss the connections between the life sketch of Mary Shelley and her Novel Frankenstein.

Ans Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is deeply linked to her

personal life, reflecting themes of creation, loss, and isolation. Born to intellectual parents - philosopher William Godwin and feminist Mary Wollstonecraft - Shelley was surrounded by radical ideas. Her mother's early death and her complicated relationship with her father left her with a sense of isolation mirrored in both Victor Frankenstein and his creation, who experienced profound alienation.

Her relationship with poet Percy Bysshe Shelley also influenced the novel. Their passionate but tumultuous marriage, marked by the death of three of their children, echoed in Frankenstein's exploration of life, death and the consequences of defying nature. Shelley's deep grief likely shaped Victor's obsession with overcoming mortality through science, and his subsequent regret reflects the dangers of unchecked ambition.

The Novel was born during the summer of 1816 when Mary and Percy were in Geneva with Lord Byron, whose challenge to write a ghost story inspired Frankenstein. This environment of creativity, combined with her personal experiences of loss and philosophical discussions, resulted in a tale that critiques the responsibilities of creator, whether in science or life. Shelley's own sense of abandonment and the tragedies she faced resonate through the novel's haunting exploration of the limits of human ambition and the consequence of ignoring emotional responsibility.