***‘’And what are you reading Miss-?’’Oh, it is only a novel’, replies the young lady; while she lays down her book with affected indifference, or momentary shame.-‘It is only Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda’; or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusion of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best-chosen language.’’***

**“Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.”**

**\*SELF-THOUGHT**

***After reading Robert Browning’s poems and Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, the delaines I abridged~~~***

**“This world’s no blot for us,**

**Nor blank; it means intensely and means good.**

**To find its meaning is my meat and drink.”**

**PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY**:

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was, like Byron, an aristocratic radical with the money to flout convention. But of, Byron was a Regency buck and milord, feted by society before his exile, whereas Shelley was already an exile at Eton, a revolutionary thinker, an intellectual for whom to think was normally to do. He believed in vegetarianism, pacifism and free love- for marriage, he thought, enslaved women. The philosophical anarchist William Godwin thought so too, but found himself Shelley’s father-in-law. Both held that Man, as reasonable was perfectible. Expelled from Oxford for challenging the authorities to refute atheism, Shelley was soon known as a revolutionary who had absconded with two 16-year olds in two years. The second, the daughter of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, was later to write: ‘That man could be perfect-ionized as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system.’ When his body was washed up on the shore of Italy with a copy of Keats’s poems in his pocket, Shelley displaced Chatterton as the Romantic poet-as-victim. Most of his work was published posthumously.

Wordsworth said that ‘Shelley was one of the best artists of us all: I mean in work-man ship of style.’ He wrote in several styles-revolutionary satire, philosophical vision and urbane verse letters- but posterity preferred his lyrics to his radical philosophical and political poems-strong stuff in ‘Men of England’ and ‘England in 1819’. Scholarly recovery of the historical context of these poems has not repaired the damage done to poetry in general by the overuse of romantic nature lyrics in primary school. It is still rumoured that Wordsworth’s heart danced only with daffodils. Shelley is not only the author of ‘Hail to thee, blithe Spirit! / Bird thou never wert’ (‘To a Skylark’). His writing is intellectually abstract, and ‘Considerably uninviting/To those who, meditation slighting, / Were moulded in a different frame’. This is one of his own cracks at Wordsworth in Peter Bell the Third. Wordsworth ‘had as much imagination/ As a pin-pot: - he never could/ Fancy another situation, /…Than that wherein he stood.’ Equally unetherial are the versatile verse letters Shelley wrote to Byron, Maria Gisborne and Jane Williams. His major achievement lays in his philosophical poems such as Mont Blanc, Prometheus Unbound and The Triumph of Life, in the pastoral elegy Adonais, and in such lyrics such ‘When the lamp is shattered’ and the Choruses from Hellas.

Shelley was a Platonist, holding the world of appearances less real than the world of underlying Forms and Ideas. An omnivorous reader, he was keenly interested in empirical science, and eventually became sceptical about earlier revolutionary fantasies, such as that in The Masque of Anarchy where ‘ankle-deep in blood,/Hope, that maiden most serene,/ Was walking with a quiet mien’. The atheist constructed new myths, as in his ambitious lyric drama, Prometheus Unbound. In this completion of Aeschylus’s Prometheus Bound, the Titan who can foresee the future is given traits Shelley found admirable in Milton’s Satan. A cosmic explosion releases Prometheus from the tortures imposed by a jealous Jupiter. The play ends with prophecies of the liberation of mankind. It has lyric variety and fine passages, but the mythology is obscure. More impressive are the bleakly apocalyptic visions of The Triumph of Life, incomplete at his death. Critics who complain that Shelley’s world lacks solidity and oxygen should reckon with his serious Platonic belief that words are inadequate to express the ultimate, which is ineffable. Shelley deploys his music and rhetoric to enact a mind racing in pursuit of complex and evanescent truths. The energy, vision and music of the most exciting of English lyric poets are exemplified in this stanza from Adonais, an elegy for John Keats:

***The One remains, the many change and pass;***

***Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;***

***Life, like a dome of many-colour'd glass,***

***Stains the white radiance of Eternity,***

***Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,***

***If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!***

***Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,***

***Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak***

***The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.***

Shelley here is near to despair-as pastoral elegist should be-but self-pity obtrudes when he ‘Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow, / Which was like Cain’s or Christ’s.’ This poet-as-victim also appears in that wonderful performance, his Ode to the West Wind,

*“Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!*

*I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!”*

The Ode combines extreme formal complexity with rhymic energy and a cosmic of reference. The final stanza is a prayer to the wind of inspiration to:

*“Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:*

*What if my leaves are falling like its own!*

*The tumult of thy mighty harmonies*

*Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,*

*Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,*

*My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!*

*Drive my dead thoughts over the universe*

*Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!*

*And, by the incantation of this verse, …”*

**MARY SHELLEY**

If Peacock’s dialogues are modelled upon Plato’s, Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus by **Mary Shelley (1797-1851)** is a cross between the Gothic tale and fable of ideas; neither is realistic. Frankenstein began as a literary experiment within a social experiment- as a ‘ghost story’ in a game proposed by Byron at the Villa Diodati on Lac Leman, Switzerland, in 1816, while Mary’s half-sister Claire Clairmont was having an affair with Byron. Two years earlier Mary, aged 16, had eloped with Shelley from the home of her father, the philosopher-novelist William Godwin. Her mother, the feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, had died after her birth in 1797. Mary herself lost a daughter at 17, bore a son at 18, and after the suicides of another of her half-sisters and of Shelley’s wife, married the poet at 19. She had lost another child before she was widowed at 24. She dedicated **Frankenstein** to Godwin. Shelley wrote a preface, supposedly by Mary, and also a disingenuous pre-publication review in which he refers to the author as male and as showing the influence of Godwin. Men were the midwives of this myth-breeding text.

**Frankenstein** is an epistolary narrative with three narrators, the English Arctic explorer Capt. Walton, the German scientist Victor Frankenstein, and the nameless ‘man’ which Frankenstein ‘creates’ out of human body-parts by electrical experiment. The Creature wants a mate, which Frankenstein assembles but destroys. The monster then kills its creator’s brother, his friend and his wife; he tries to kill it, but it escapes into the Arctic. The sensational contents, pathos and moral ideas of Frankenstein are conveyed in a mechanical style. Its interest is cultural, moral, philosophical and psychological: it is a nightmare of alienation; a sentimental critique of the victorious intellect to which Shelley and Godwin trusted; and a negative critique of a Faustian overconfidence in natural science.

***Victor’s sleep was disturbed by the wildest dreams*:**

**“I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted her the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held to corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave worms; crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror, a cold dew covered my forehead; my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed; when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window-shutters, I beheld the wretch- the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear: one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed downstairs.”**

***“Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus is part of the Gothic movement in literature-a form that was only just becoming popular in England at the time of its publication. The speaker is Victor Frankenstein, for whom the book is named. He will be the narrator for the bulk of the novel. The novel carries both a moral and unleashing a warning- let us not be guilty of ‘rape’ of innocent Nature, and unwittingly create monsters and thereby be the pioneers of unleashing Satanic forces for the total annihilation of mankind; let us first eliminate the evils which are corroding the present generation root out the cancerous weeds which are spoiling the otherwise beautiful garden-earth.***

***In their explanatory urge and enthusiasm many modern Prometheus’ (Physics, astronomers, chemists and others) are endeavouring to ‘open up’ the ‘womb’ of Nature and of the entire cosmos. Some of them claim to have successfully revived the dead tissues and organs of man. Most of them have done wonderful jobs, made discoveries for which they got the awards including the prestigious Nobel Prize.***

***Exceptionally, Victor Frankenstein spends day and night in his laboratory. The scientist develops a consuming interest in the life principle. This interest develops into an unnatural obsession and Victor understands to create a human out of pieces of the dead. Finally, his work is completed. But of, the creature became too powerful. Victor Frankenstein could not control it anymore. And finally, the creature had disappeared…” (EDITED)***

***CRITICAL EVALUATION ON SELECTED POEMS OF ROBERT BROWNING***~

Robert Browning was a Victorian poet who probed the realities of human emotions and behaviour. His style is often rough, complex and obscure. But of, he is noted for reviving the use of colloquial language and for developing the dramatic monologue so that it had a striking ironic impact.

**If thou must love me...** (Sonnet 14)

**Elizabeth Barrett Browning**, 1806 - 1861

**If thou must love me, let it be for nought**

**Except for love’s sake only. Do not say,**

**“I love her for her smile—her look—her way**

**Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought**

**That falls in well with mine, and certes brought**

**A sense of pleasant ease on such a day”—**

**For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may**

**Be changed, or change for thee—and love, so wrought,**

**May be unwrought so. Neither love me for**

**Thine own dear pity’s wiping my cheeks dry:**

**A creature might forget to weep, who bore**

**Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!**

**But love me for love’s sake, that evermore**

**Thou mayst love on, through love’s eternity.**

**.……**

**And**

 ***Frankenstein’’***

**RITUPARNA RAY CHAUDHURI.**

**‘’RUINS OF EMPIRE,**

**“You must create a female for me, with whom I can live in the interchange to those sympathies necessary for my being. This you can do; and I demand it of you as a right which you must not refuse.”**

**-** ON MARY SHELLEY’S FRANKENSTEIN**:**

**“My wait is not yet over? ...you live, and my power is complete. Follow me; I seek the everlasting ices of the north, where you feel the misery of cold and frost, to which I am impassive. You will find near this place, if you follow not too hardly, a dead wrestle for our lives; but many hard and miserable hours you must endure, until that period shall arrive.”**

**~~~~~…**

**-The novel begins** **with four letters** written by Robert Walton to his sister Mrs. Margaret Saville, while he is on an expedition to explore the North Pole. Written in epistolary form, **Frankenstein employs the flashback technique which has been compared by a Chinese box- a structure of stories within stories.**

Robert Walton’s expedition to explore the Arctic regions brings him in contact with the principal narrator, Victor Frankenstein, who is found almost dead and is nursed back to life by Walton. Victor narrates his quest to find the secrets of life to Walton. Within Victor’s narrative of the monster he had created. The narrative is again taken up by Victor till he is found in the icy regions. From this point till Victor’s death, the narrative is taken up by Walton again and that brings the novel to an end. Once the outer layer is peeled off, another layer emerges; it is followed by yet another and still yet another layer. Mary Shelley skillfully manages the material she has conceived and developed and woven it into an artistic fabric.

Frankenstein (1818) thus anticipates Emily Bronte’s Wuthering Heights (1847).

**…….**

LETTER 1

To Mrs. Saville, England

St. Petersburg, Dec. 11th, 17-

‘Walton informs his sister that he has reached St. Petersburg from where he will proceed to Archangel to continue his **expedition to the North Pole**. Robert Walton, as he informs, is motivated by an ambition to discover the secret of the gravitational force or discovering shorter and easier routes to various countries not easily accessible. He also explains that his father had asked him not to undertake sea-faring though he was interested in the sea-faring life since his childhood. We are also told that he is now an orphan and that his father has died. Somehow fate helped him. He inherited a large fortune from his cousin and thus he could fulfill his ambition. He informs his sister that he is making plans of getting a vessel and recruiting his crew for his expedition to the North Pole. This letter dated 11th Dec., St. Petersburg, and he informs his sister that soon he will depart for Archangel.’

***“But, supposing all these conjectures to be false, you cannot contest the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind to the last generation, by discovering a passage near the pole to those countries, to reach which at present so many months are requisite*…”**

LETTER 2

To Mrs. Saville, England

Archangel, 28th March, 17-

‘Walton’s second letter is dated 28th March and he has reached Archangel. He informs his sister that he has hired a vessel and recruited his crew. He then praises his lieutenant for his courage and for his noble nature. He informs his sister how he loved a girl but when she told him that she loved another man, he helped her with money and gave all his wealth to her lover to enable them to marry.’

LETTER 3

To Mrs. Saville, England

July 7th, 17-

‘He informs his sister that he has started on his expedition. At the same time he mentions the likely difficulties he might have to face.’

LETTER 4

To Mrs. Saville, England

August 5th, 17-

Letter fourth is dated 5th Aug., 13th Aug., 17th Aug. and 19th Aug. which means it was written on four days and consequently it has two separate parts.

The first part describes ‘the change in weather; it is so cold that the sea water freezes and becomes ice. Naturally their vessel is a stuck. They are in full despair: with the help of their binoculars they survey the entire sea and see a gigantic figure of a man in a sledge pulled by dogs. Soon the sledge disappears. After sometime the ice starts cracking making the vessel free. Walton, however, decides to wait till the morning light so that they can sail safely.

Early morning Walton finds his sailors trying to persuade someone to come into their ship. The man was dreadfully emaciated with fatigue and suffering. He could speak English. He agrees to come into their vessel after making full enquiry about their final destination-the discovery of the North Pole. Walton and his men rub his body to fully revive him and then bring a large quantity of brandy for him to gulp. When he recovers Walton asked him why he had come so far upon the ice in a strange vehicle. The man only replied **“To seek one who fled from me”**. Walton found the man’s talk interesting. He somehow felt that he was as ambitious as he himself was. Naturally he was anxious to learn all about his quest. As the days passed Walton became more and more charmed by the man and his struggle against all odds and he began to love him as a brother. Though the stranger is pleased with Walton, he is sullen and sad. Walton is anxious to know the real cause of his grief. The stranger then says, **“You seek for knowledge and wisdom as I once did, and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you as mine has been.”** (letter4). Thereafter he decides to narrate all his adventures and misadventures to Walton. Walton informs his sister that he is faithfully recording all that the stranger has told him. He feels that the narrative as recorded in the manuscript form will afford great pleasure to his sister.’

………..

[‘AFTER a considerable lapse of time, nearly hundred years, Mary Shelley’s novel Frankenstein (almost deprived of full appreciation all through the 19th century), evoked profound interest among critics of eminence. Spate of books, reviews, research-articles and books came out in unimaginably large number, and the novel still continues to tease astute critics out of thought.’...]

**ON FRANKENSTEIN ~**

**(FOLLOWING ON WORDS OF PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY)**

‘The novel of ‘Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus’, is undoubtedly, as a mere story, one of the most original and complete productions of the day. We debate with ourselves in wonder, as we read it, what could have been the series of thoughts- what could have been the peculiar experiences that awakened them- which conduced, in the author’s mind, to the astonishing combinations of motives and incidents, and the startling catastrophe, which compose this tale. There are, perhaps, some points of subordinate importance, which prove that it is the author’s first attempt. But in this judgement, which requires a very nice discrimination, we may be mistaken; for it is conducted throughout with a firm and steady hand. The interest gradually accumulates and advances towards the conclusion with the accelerated rapidity of a rock rolled down a mountain. We are led breathless with suspense and sympathy, and the heaping up of incident on incident, and the working of passion out of passion. We cry “hold, hold! Enough!”- but there is yet something to come; and, like the victim whose history it relates, we think we can bear no more, and yet more is to be borne. Pelion is heaped on Ossa, and Ossa on Olympus. We climb Alp after Alp, until the horizon is seen blank, vacant, and limitless; and the head turns giddy, and the ground seems to fail under our feet.

This novel rests its claim on being a source of powerful and profound emotion. The elementary feelings of the human mind are exposed to view; and those who are accustomed to reason deeply on their origin and tendency will, perhaps, be the only persons who can sympathize, to the full extent, in the interest of the actions which are their result. But of, founded on nature as they are, there is perhaps no reader, who can endure anything beside a new love story, who will not feel a responsive string touched in his inmost soul. The sentiments are so affectionate and so innocent-the characters of the subordinate agents in this strange drama are clothed in the light of such a mild and gentle mind- the pictures of domestic manners are of the most simple and attaching character: the father’s is irresistible and deep. Nor are the crimes and malevolence of the single Being, though indeed withering and tremendous, the offspring of any unaccountable propensity to evil, but flow irresistibly from certain causes fully adequate to their production. They are the children, as it were, of Necessity and Human Nature.

In this the direct moral of the book consists; and it is perhaps the most important, and of the most universal application, of any moral that can be enforced by example. Treat a person ill, and he will become wicked. Requite affection with scorn; - let one being be selected, for whatever cause, as the refuse of his kind-divide him, a social being from society, and you impose upon him the irresistible obligations-malevolence and selfishness. It is thus that, too often in society, those who are best qualified to be its benefactors and its ornaments, are branded by some accident with scorn, and changed, by neglect and solitude of heart, into a scourge and a curse.

The Being in ‘Frankenstein’ is, no doubt, a tremendous creature. It was impossible that he should not have received among men that treatment which led to the consequences of his being a social nature. He was an abortion and an anomaly; and though his mind was such as its first impressions framed it, affectionate and full of moral sensibility, yet the circumstances of his existence are so monstrous and uncommon, that, when the consequences of them became developed in action, his original goodness was gradually turned into inextinguishable misanthropy and revenge. The scene between the Being and the blind De Lacy in the cottage, is one of the most profound and extraordinary instances of pathos that we ever recollect. It is impossible to read this dialogue,-and indeed many others of a somewhat similar character,-without feeling the heart suspend his pulsations with wonder, and the “tears stream down the cheeks.” The encounter and argument between Frankenstein and the Being on the sea of ice, almost approaches, in effect, to the expostulations of Caleb Williams with Falkland.it reminds us, indeed, somewhat of the style and character of the admirable writer, to whom the author has dedicated his work, and whose productions he seems to have studied.

There is only one instance, however, in which we detect the least approach to imitation; and that is the conduct of the incident of Frankenstein’s landing in Ireland. The general character of the tale, indeed, resembles nothing that ever preceded it. After the death of Elizabeth, the story, like a stream which grows at once more rapid and profound as it proceeds, assumes an irresistible solemnity, and the magnificent energy and swiftness of a tempest.

The churchyard scene in which Frankenstein visits the tombs of his family, his quitting Geneva, and his journey through Tartary to the shores of the Frozen Ocean, resemble at once the terrible reanimation of a corpse and the supernatural career of a spirit. The scene in the cabin of Walton’s ship- the more than moral enthusiasm and grandeur of the Being’s speech over the dead body of his victim- is an exhibition of intellectual and imaginative power, which we think the reader will acknowledge has seldom been surpassed.’

…..

**~**

Browning could be regarded as an inaugurator of symbolism in English poetry. The term “symbolism” suggests the drawing together of two worlds-through the concrete world it suggests another world which is invisible. Thus, a rose for a poet is not only a rose, but something more. The visible and sensible world of Browning’s poetry is full of meaningful symbols. He uses colour, sound and light to suggest and evoke things. Generally, his titles for his books suggest a symbolic approach to writing. Bells and Pomegranates, for instance, can be seen as symbolic of musical sound (bells) in combination with created things ad their relationships with each other and God (suggested by ‘pomegranates’). The monster’s narrative is an attempt to persuade the idea is that death will make their ride permanent because it is only the body that dies. The human soul is immortal. The lover hopes to achieve in the next world what he has failed to achieve in the world of reality. John T. Nettleship looks at the love of this lover as “an aspiration which was not to be realised here at all, but must have its completion in the other life.”

Related to his disregard for rules of grammar is Browning’s telegraphic style. He often leaves out prepositions, articles, and even pronouns. Words are contracted, particles are clipped and vowels are suppressed. It could well be that his thoughts outstripped the flow of his pen, but such a style certainly leads to confusion and unintelligibility in the reader.

In some poems, characters stand for certain qualities. Lucrezia is a symbol of Andrea’s art-perfect in lines but soulless. It is significant that the vigorous artist, Fra Lippo Lippi, “splashes” his frescoe with bright colours, while Andrea is satisfied with “grey”. The Bishop of St. Praxed’s Church shows his sensuousness through his constant concern with colour-black, blue, brown, rosy peach and, jade green.

Browning uses insects, birds and animals to reveal the character of human beings. The “highflying” birds symbolise man’s aspiring spirit. But of, he clearly differentiates between man and animals-for man has an immortal soul.

Browning’s portrayal of nature-its trees and plants, animals and insects-is again realistic. We get a vivid picture of the animal life on the island in Caliban Upon Setebos. In the same poem, the delicious sensuous enjoyment of Caliban lying in the slush, is communicated to the reader. Sunsets are beautifully and realistically picturised by Browning. He captures the play of light and colour on the clouds the leaves.

Browning often uses light and sunrise as symbolic of a divine agent. Lightning ‘loosened’ and the meteors and stars shining over the mountain are an appropriate setting for the noble scholar’s burial place in A Grammarian’s Funeral. The full moon is often used by Browning as a symbol of maturity of love and knowledge. Colour again suggests a mood or meaning. In Andrea Del Sarto, “silver grey” twilight is symbolic of the mediocrity and dullness of Andrea’s art and life. “Gold” suggests brilliance, which Andrea is afraid of. Day-break and night are often used as symbolic of enlightenment and ignorance respectively.

Browning’s poetry is marked more by classicism than by romanticism. It is marked by a vigorous intellect. He is a dramatic poet, and hence objective. Simple, unsophisticated natures appeal less to him than the cultured and civilized. Cities often symbolise learning and culture to Browning. He derived inspiration from the Renaissance speculative interests and imaginative creed. But for, he is not a classicist as Ben Jonson was. He certainly substitutes the critical and the analytical for the imaginative spirit. His intellectual force and zeal for facts speak of his classical tendency. However, he also concentrates on basic things and the vast themes of life, love and death. As far as style is concerned find the classical virtues of clarity, conciseness, precision and directness in Browning’s poetry. He is hardly ever simple in his style.

Browning makes use of rich imagery and similies. Startling and daring, his images are often drawn from the grotesque aspects of nature. Often the images have symbolic significance. The potter in Rabbi Ben Ezra signifies God, the potter’s wheel is the time passing over the world, and the pitcher, is the human soul. In Abt Vogler , a hall of music has been built by the musician- an architectural image; the stroke the deadly effect of Lucrezia’s charms.

Browning’s classicism manifests itself in his critical spirit and his vigorous support for liberal and humanitarian causes in his poetry. An obvious example is The Lost Leader where he deplores the leader’s desertion of principles sacred to mankind and God for the sake of material reward and fame.

Browning’s characters are all individuals as well as symbolic. The Lost Leader symbolises the deserter of principles for trivial material gain. Fra Lippo Lippi is the symbol of the victory of a healthy culture over rigid asceticism in religion.

Browning’s optimism is a well-known facet of his thought, specially as expressed in his poetry. His optimism is in striking contrast to the attitude of his contemporaries, for the general tone of nineteenth century literature is pessimistic. However, if this optimism were of a superficial ‘skin-deep’ variety, it would have been impossible to read Browning’s poetry. Poems such as The Last Ride Together, One Word More, Prospice, By the Fireside, and many others would have long become obscure, and Browning himself a forgotten poet. Browning’s optimism is not based on any discount of the sufferings of life, nor on any attempt to overlook such gross realities as sin and pain. He faces the unpleasant realities of the world, but he is confident that these are temporary phases which must be overcome. Thus we have many of his poems such as The Last Ride Together, Evelyn Hope, A Grammarian’s Funeral, dealing with frustrated love or unfulfilled aims. But of above the sins, the evils, and the human failures, lies a mantle of hope.

Browning does not show much of romanticism. But of, there is in his poetry a subtle sense of mystery which is romantic. He does not go into raptures over Nature; indeed, he is fully conscious of the ugly facts of nature and uses it is a background for man. Though initially influenced by Shelley’s poetry, Browning later carried romance into the inner world of the soul’s adventure. Robert Browning had varied aesthetic values. Perpetually on the lookout for experiments in poetic technique, he had attempted and succeeded at various aspects of poetry. Browning’s poetry has various aspects. We cannot classify it as belonging to one particular type. He relishes fresh ideas and new forms. His basic aim and interest, being the portrayal of man’s inner reality, he uses other aspects to help him in the process.

Browning has reproduced the reality of life and the natural world in his poetry. His chief means is his psychological insight. He delves into the human mind and unravels the complex strands of emotion, thought and feeling. Photographic realism does not satisfy him. He reveals the inner reality-the soul of man. Though capable of striking word-paintings, yet these convey less of fact than of associations with man. He can analyse the normal as well as the abnormal psychology of man. Nature forms an effective background to his characters. One aspect of Romanticism is lyricism. Though one cannot call Browning a Romantic one cannot underestimate his lyricism. He combines the dramatic with the lyrical. Specially lyrical are Evelyn Hope, Prospice and One Word More. Some of the images and the emotions running through the poems are truly lyrical. On the whole, however, Browning is not strongly passionate or personal. He does not care much for melody and music. However, his few lyrics are inspired by his abiding love for Elizabeth Barrett.

The chief classical virtue of Browning’s poetry is his realism. His attitude is, for most of the part, objective, natural, and sincere. He deals with various features of life as they really are. The characters he has created are true to life. He is not concerned as the Romantic poet was with the “picturesque groupings and tossing of the forest trees”. He is more interested in “their roots and fibres naked to the chalk and stone”. Realism is evident in Browning’s evocation of the Italian ruins, churches, towns and landscapes. Italian art and life are depicted realistically. The Renaissance tendency for intrigue is evident in The Laboratory; the age’s concern with the idea of damaging the soul of a hated person is evident in the Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister. We get a beautiful picture of what the artist has painted in Fra Lippo Lippi. Both Fra Lippo Lippi and Andrea Del Sarto are true representatives of the Renaissance art scene. The life in Florence-square-city- people’s crosses, gossips, the shop-signs, etc.-are realistic. Browning’s characters are realistic in psychological sense as well. A vivid psychological analysis is made of Bishop of Saint Praxad’s Church. We sense his fears, jealousy, his sensuousness and love of opulence through his words. At the same time, his mode of speech reflects the delirium of a man on the verge of death.

Browning could not get immediate popularity, because he did not confine himself to a single age, but this proved a blessing in disguise. The basic difference between him and Tennyson is that whereas Tennyson is insular, Browning is cosmopolitan. There was an excessive degree of the feeling of patriotism in Tennyson’s heart and he made poetry a medium for the expression of his feelings. He found it difficult to go beyond the range of his own country. That is why we find that whenever Tennyson speaks of war, he tries to glorify is own country. He takes incidents from the history of his own nation and gives them poetic grandeur. On the other hand, Browning takes his scenery in the poems of Tennyson is primarily English, in those of Browning it is primarily Italian. At the same timed, Browning takes his scenery from other lands also. Whereas Tennyson fails to rise above his narrow patriotic limits, Browning presents the national qualities of France, Spain and Germany, unhesitatingly. Tennyson’s interests are tropical. Browning takes up subjects of universal significance.

Never have two products of the same age been so widely diverse as Browning and Tennyson. Tennyson is one extreme and Browning, the other. Tennyson is simple and lucid. Browning is complex and obscure. Browning is not a child of his age in the broad sense of the term because he does not reflect in his poetry any remarkable influence of the happenings of his age. Tennyson, on the other hand, is a true product of the age in which he lived. Not only does he reflect the influence of his age, but at the same time he gives it a place of importance in his poetry. He represents it in its various facets. Whereas Tennyson confines himself primarily to his own country and his own age, Browning is a cosmopolitan. He moves freely between different ages and is rough and unpolished. The genius of Browning is fundamentally dramatic. Tennyson’s bent of mind is lyrical and narrative. Tennyson is a great literary artist. Browning is not as great a literary artist, but he, unquestionably is a greater thinker.

***“I am going to unexplored regions, to “the land of mist and snow”; but I shall kill no albatross, therefore do not be alarmed for my safety.”***

Victor, to assume, his responsibilities towards his creation and to construct a mate for him-What strategies does the monster use? How does he emphasise his point about the need for companionship and love? Victor similarly has specific aims in telling his tale to Walton, but by the time his narrative concludes, his real purpose has become clear. As the monster uses his eloquence to make him promise him a mate, so Victor promised to take over his quest to destroy the monster.

Browning’s contemporaries complained of obscurity in his poetry. The comments evoked by Sordello, are well-known. One cannot deny that some of Browning’s poetry is difficult to understand. This difficulty is mainly due to the following points: 1. The form of dramatic monologue which Browning handled, was difficult. 2. The subject, namely, soul dissection and character analysis, is difficult to communicate. It requires alertness on the read part. 3. The most important contribution to obscurity is Browning’s style.4. Rugged and conversational, with the rhythms of ordinary speech, his language rapidly follows the thought-processes of his characters. This can pose a difficulty for his readers.

Browning was the self-confessed poet of the human soul, “My stress” he said, “lay on the incidents in the development of the soul, little else is worthy study.” Browning’s characteristic poems act in the form of dramatic lyrics. Even his personal, subjective poems, such as One Word More, have an element of the dramatic in them. Browning’s dramatic lyrics do not have the drama of action and dialogue; instead, there are in these poems revelations of characters. The speaker’s remarks throw light on his soul, on his attitude to life. Most of Browning’s poems are psychological analyses of the characters who speak. Why do the characters reveal themselves? True, it is Browning who is putting the words in their mouths. But of, it seems most natural to us, the readers that the characters speak out telling us all about themselves, revealing their inner life, their mind, feelings, and attitudes. It seems natural because Browning picks his characters carefully and focuses our attention on them at crucial moments in their life- when the characters are involved in situations which are bound to be of significance. The character is compelled to reveal him fully under the influence of the incident. Disregard for grammatical rules, telegraphic and condensed manner of expression, use of parentheses, and inversions and colloquialism are other aspects of style which contribute to obscurity. A Grammarian’s Funeral illustrates most of these aspects.

In Fra Lippo Lippi, we have the character’s self-revelation coming as a reaction to a dramatic situation. Lippo has been seized by the night watch as he makes his way back to the palace of the Medici after an amorous escapade. The situation causes him to reflect on the problem of reconciling two clashing forces in religious art- the flesh and the spirit. Lippo is quite satisfied with his sensualise, but he is also aware of higher things. The speaker’s words reveal the crisis of the soul of a man wanting to escape the rigid restrictions of monastic life so as to indulge his natural instincts as a man, for that alone he feels can help him realise his artistic impulse.

In Abt Vogler, too, we have a reflection of a soul in crisis-the musician’s extemporisation at the orchestrion makes him reflect on success in failure, and the philosophy of the imperfect. The palace raised by music is superior to anything created by poetry or painting, feels Abt Vogler, but it does not last. The enthusiasm of the musician ebbs after reaching the heights of rapture and ecstasy. But in, the consolation lies in his instinctive feeling that anything good once created can never be lost or destroyed. The soul has successfully resolved the crisis in this poem.

Soliloquy of the Spanish Closter is a superb study of the psychology of malice. Porphyria’s Lover gives a glimpse into the working of an abnormal soul. We may say that practically all of Browning’s dramatic lyrics reflect the working of a mind in reaction to a situation. Browning takes either a characteristic incident or a critical moment in the life of a person, and through the person’s words and implied actions gives the reader an insight into the making of his soul, and sometimes into the souls of associated characters.

The Last Ride Together is spoken by a rejected lover who has been granted his request for a last ride together. In this poem we certainly have the reflection of a soul in crisis but it is an optimist’s soul. The situation sets the speaker off to reflect on love, happiness of the present moment, and his thoughts and hopes for the future.

The dramatic lyrics of Browning reveal character not through external action, but through the clash of motives in the soul of the speaker. Thus the poet chooses a moment of crisis in the speaker’s life. While the situation need not necessarily be dramatic, it is significant enough to create a crisis in the character’s soul so as to lead him on to reflect and reveal. Thus in Andrea Del Sarto, the poem opens at a moment when Andrea and his wife have been quarrelling. Andrea has reached a point when he cannot help reflecting on his work. Tired, he requests the company of his wife for the evening, and goes on to talk of his career as a painter, his hopes and failures. We get through his revelation the crisis of his soul- the conflict between his realisation of what he ought to have been and what he, unfortunately, is. He is technically perfect, but he lacks the soul and spirit of Rafael’s art. He knows that his art is dull if pleasant, and in order to be great art must have fire, passion and express elevated ideals.

How is it that Browning in an age fraught with despair and pessimism was such a robust optimist, though not a superficial one? Part of the answer lies in the fact that he had a happy personal life in his marriage and his healthy constitution. Furthermore, his general outlook on life was free of despair and gloom. He truly believed in God’s benevolence. He firmly believed in heavenly life after death, and he conceived of God as Love. If he does not sound like a ‘skin-deep’ optimist or a blind one, it is because he seems to have given some thought to the issue and become confirmed in his faith in God and in ‘philosophy’ which he reflects in his poetry. We cannot help seeing that he is sound in teaching that life must be viewed as a whole, and that success must be seen not merely in the outcome but in the very efforts and sincerity with which these efforts are made.

Touches of the grotesque illuminate his poetry. Fra Lippo Lippi begins with a startling admonition to the night watch for catching hold of a monk while returning from an amorous escapade. Evelyn Hope presents a lover revealing his love at the death bed of the girl he had so far loved in silence. Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister shows a monk’s malice and envy for a fellow monk. The grotesque element is most obvious, however, in the style and language used by Browning. Just as Browning had a fondness for strange and unusual actions and queer characters, he had also a liking for queer metres. He is the first great poet after Shakespeare to make use of the grotesque for the purposes of art. The lover of The Last Ride Together who may be expected to sulk or rage in the frustration of rejected love, instead, rejoices in the beloved’s consent to a last ride together and blessed her.

The term ‘grotesque’ means anything odd or unnatural in shape, appearance or character, something absurd or bizarre. Browning, unlike his contemporaries, was not a slave to convention; he often experimented in new areas of subject and style of poetry. There is thus admittedly an element of the grotesque in his subject and style. He was struck by the unconventional, the odd and the absurd.

And just as Browning dwells on the oddity of a fungus or a jellyfish, he also dwells on the oddity of a philosophic idea. He uses grotesque images and expressions to convey the strangeness and oddity of an idea. In Sludge he uses the image of a shapeless sea-beast to convey the noble idea that small things are as much filled with God’s are the great. In Caliban upon Setebos, we have grotesque humour. Caliban’s analogies for Setebos are not only explanatory of his nature, but they also appeal to our comic sense. Indeed, the very fact of a savage such as Caliban talking of theology is somewhat incongruous and thus amusing. The setting or scene contributes to the total effect of the poem. At times, the scene is indicate at the very outset of the poem, for instance in Fra Lippo Lippi. The Friar has escaped for a night from the restrictions of a monastery, only to be caught by the city watchmen at the end of the alley. In other poems, the scene is gradually evoked- note the Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister. In Andrea Del Sarto, the atmosphere of “common greyness”, and the dull twilight, forms an apt complement to the artist’s thoughts on his failure. All through the poem, the reference to the growing darkness outside corresponds to the speaker’s mood and his stale, insipid outlook. But on, Browning’s use of the grotesque is not always amusing or even bearable, for that matter. At times it jars on the ear as well as on the consciousness. True, for Browning the grotesque was necessary to express the subtleties of thought and emotion and oddities of character. He would not have been himself, indeed he would have lost much of his strength, energy and originality, if he had been otherwise. But it has also to be admitted that in many places the use of grotesque has no justification whatsoever. It is often overdone. He is in many of his poems perverse and childish in his eccentricities. His puns are sometimes irritating, and his grammatical constructions often capricious and willful, creating avoidable difficulties for the reader. The ‘Hoti’s business’ in A Grammarian’s Funeral has justifiably puzzled several readers. Some critics have even remarked that in the poem Browning has killed off not merely the grammarian but grammar as well. Words such as ‘beauteousest’, ‘griefful’, ‘irreligiouses’, have no justification for having been coined. Nor have atrocious lines such as “Irks care the crop full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?” from Rabbi Ben Ezra.

However, the obscurity of Browning’s poetry has been exaggerated. Not all his poems are obscure. Lucidity and clarity mark poems such as My Last Duchess, Evelyn Hope, Prospice, Porphyria’s Lover, etc. indeed, one has to get used to his style by reading some of his poems, and then there is not much of difficulty in understanding him. True, his poetry is not meant for idle reading, as he did not aim to write that kind of poetry. One has to exert one’s mind to appreciate the intellectual analysis and rapid thought-associations. But of, we cannot say all his poems are obscure. As such, though the charge of obscurity cannot be denied, it is also not to be exaggerated.

***‘Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay***

***To mould Me man? Did I solicit thee***

***From darkness to promote me?’***

 “The monster likens itself to God’s creation of the first man, Adam. Since God also created Eve to provide company to Adam, Victor must also provide companionship to the monster he has created. Victor was in a dilemma...”

***“As I looked on him, his countenance expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery. I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like to him, and trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged. The wretch saw me destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness, and, with a howl of devilish despair and revenge, withdrew.”***

Victor confronts the monster in the valley of Chamoumnix. The monster accuses Victor of having failed in his duty towards his creation: “You propose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind. If you will comply with my conditions I will leave them and you at peace; but if you refuse, will glut the man of death, until it be satiated with blood of your remaining friends.”

**‘’ “Man”, I cried, “how ignorant are thou in thy pride of wisdom! Cease; you know not what it is you say.” ‘’**

….In Victor’s abandoning his own creation, there is a double-edged critique of William Godwin’s concept of Utopia, where children would be produced by what he calls social engineering and ruled out the need of sexual intercourse between man and woman as well as Mary Shelley’s criticism of parental neglect (Godwin’s neglect of Mary is on record).

In Rabbi Ben Ezra occurs the famous symbol of the Potter, his wheel and clay. God is the Potter; time is the wheel and man is the clay. Browning’s poetry is full of symbols of hope, courage and faith. “Love is best”, he concludes in one of his poems. Love symbolises life’s special gain, triumph over time, and a means to achieve god-head. Browning uses colour, light, love, music, etc., as symbols of the human soul and character.

The theme of love is not only to be found in the various poems of love between man and woman, but also in songs of wifehood and motherhood. In The Inn Albums he says: “Womanliness means only motherhood; / All love begins and ends there-roam enough, / But, having run the circle, rest at home.” In such poems, as W.T. Young observes, Browning’s own marriage enriched both imagination and emotion.

In Porphyria’s Lover, for example, we have a strange phenomenon of a lover strangling his beloved to death, not out of ill-will or revenge, but out of love. The reader has to move very ably and carefully, keeping pace with the development of his emotion. If we take the crime at its face value, it should arouse feelings of contempt and disgust, but what happens is that we feel sympathy for the lover inspite of his crime. Even the god of this lover has not condemned his crime. “God has not said a word”, exclaims the lover with a degree of satisfaction in his heart as the silence of God means divine justification of crime. How has all this happened? How is it that a murder has failed to evoke in us, feelings of awe and terror against the murderer? Why is that a lover has murdered his beloved even when he knows that she worshipped him-and even when he loved her so well? These questions find an answer in how the reader moves with the monologue and its development. Where the reader fails to move with the monologue, the monologue fails to become understandable and it is in this manner that the poetry of browning becomes obscure (or it may better be called difficult).

The speakers of Browning’s monologues move from one idea to another, according to their own associations with the ideas concerned, but the reader may fail to move between the two ideas in the same manner, and this result in difficulty in understanding the real implications of what the speaker is saying. The shift from one idea to another affects the style of the monologue, because it is for the language of the speaker to absorb and convey the relationship between two ideas, entirely different in nature. There remain certain missing links and the reader is supposed to search them out. W.J. Long says that “Browning is led from one thing to another by his own mental associations and forgets that the reader’s associations may be of an entirely different kind.” This results in obscurity in the style of Browning, but here he has his own justification. His business is such. He cannot afford to be narrative. He has to leave a lot on the reader. The reader cannot understand his monologues and their real significance, if he does not see them with the analytical eye of a psychologist. This part of Browning’s obscurity has its justification in its inevitability. It shall be incomplete, however, to say that only the thought of his poetry is difficult, because the obscurity of thought makes its way into the language of the poem, and thus makes its very style difficult to be understood.

Difficulty of thought is inevitable in the type of poetry which Browning was writing. But of, there are certain other elements which cause obscurity and which could have been avoided to a large extent. At places, Browning is obscure in his style when he could afford to be otherwise with better efforts. Perhaps, he tries deliberately to be obscure in order to satisfy his own whims and fancies. Hugh Walker says that the very originality of Browning leads him to “irritating eccentricities”. His style and rhythm are often intolerably rough and unmusical. He is full of strained expressions, irritating and harsh inversions. He has the provoking and really meaningless habit of clipping the particles,-“as we curtail the already curtailed cur”. Worst of all, perhaps is his inability to select the essential and to reject the unimportant. He pours out the whole farrago of his thoughts and sometimes does not take the trouble to set them in order. This is the meaning of the charge of verbosity which has been brought against him. He is not verbose in the sense that he gives expression to many thoughts when a few would suffice; the total effect might be produced in less space than he takes. A conspicuous example is The Ring and the Book, one half of which says nothing that is of the slightest importance.

**“And now, with the world before me, whither should I bend my steps?”**

Victor Frankenstein, a scientist, spends day and night in his laboratory. He develops a consuming interest in the life principle. This interest develops into an unnatural obsession and Victor undertakes to create a human being out of pieces of the dead. Finally, his work is completed. When Victor is successful in animating the gigantic human frame, he is horrified to look at the monster he has created; the creature became too powerful. The result is catastrophic. Victor becomes a victim of his own creation that hounds him at every step. Victor Frankenstein could not control it anymore. Even though Victor abandons his own creation, the creation does not abandon him. ….. And finally, the creature had disappeared…..

**“The world was all before them, where to choose**

**Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:**

**They hand in hand with wand’ring steps and slow,**

**Through Eden took their solitary way.”**

The name of God occurs so frequently in the poetry of Browning that God becomes its keyword. God’s Rightness, His Holiness, in brief, His Godliness, pervades the poetry of Browning. Browning always gives hope to Man. The same theme finds expression in Browning’s personal poem, Prospice in which he expresses the belief that he will meet his wife in heaven.

**“For some have died, and some have left me;**

**And some are taken from me; all are departed;**

**All are gone, the old familiar faces.”**

…Frankenstein is part of the Gothic movement in literature-a form that was only just becoming popular in England at the time of its publication. When the creature stretches his hands towards his creator, the scene is full of pathos. Mary Shelley appears to be parodying the world - famous fresco on the Sistine Chapel executed by Michael-angels. Victor is demented and helpless. His brother William is murdered by the monster and an innocent family dependent Justine is hanged for the crime on flimsy evidence.

What these novelists did in fiction, the Romantic poets like Blake, Coleridge, Byron and Keats attempted to do the same in their poems. Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner, Kubla Khan and Christbel, Keats’ The Eve of St. Agnes and ‘La Belle Dame Sans Merci’ depicted the same sinister atmosphere and evoked the feelings of suspense and fear.

**“Slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. you are my creator, but I am your master;-obey!”**

No doubt, Mary Shelley carries us to the Arctic oceans and frozen ice, but she drops all the trappings of the supernatural. We have no haunted castles or monasteries as we find in the earlier Gothic fiction. She deftly combines science with the common supernatural and ushers in which is called science fiction. In fact, many critics do not consider it as a Gothic novel, but hail the novel as the one pioneering the new genre called science fiction. Mary Shelley refers to the conversation between Percy Shelley and Lord Byron concerning ‘principle of life’. Indeed the Romantics gave much prominence to the role of the imagination which could change the world and make it a new. Most of them took the core idea that the poet was a creator: they glorified the artist who gloated over his powers to recreate the world a new, more beautiful, more harmonious. Mary seems to be raising her eye-brows and points her accusing finger at such Romantics. In her opinion such an artist was no different from the scientist (here Victor Frankenstein) who usurps the power of God. Here, Mary depicts the disastrous consequences that follow when a scientist attempts to violate nature and encroach upon the forbidden territory. In many words she groans and cries as does the dying Victor, not to do what he foolishly tried to do. The epigraph that follows the dedication is sub-titled ‘The Modern Prometheus’ at once takes us back to the Greek mythology, the great myth of Prometheus who is said to have created man out of clay and then had stolen fire from the gods to help out his creation. What followed was eternal torture. Mary Shelley gives a new meaning to the myth: the modern Prometheus is like Faustus, an over-reacher, a rebel against the established order and suffers death and damnation as a consequence. We all know that most of the Romantics were rebels who almost eulogized Satan (Shelley considered Satan superior to God). Prometheus became a prototype of most Romantics. And in Frankenstein he is the prototype of Victor who is both a rebel and a creator.

**‘Elizabeth bade Victor a tearful farewell the next morning:**

**“Tears gushed from the eyes of Elizabeth; they processed partly from sorrow at my departure, and partly because she reflected that the same journey was to have taken three months before, when a mother’s blessing would have accompanied me.” ‘**

Yet another theme embedded into the novel is that of alienation and isolation. In his urge to discover the short routes to various countries (an ambitious project for the benefit of mankind), Walton disobeys his dying father’s injunction to his uncle not to allow him to take to sea- faring. But at, after getting a handsome fortune from his cousin, he launches himself on the expedition. He traverses through frozen lands, hires crew and a vessel and sails into the North Sea. His only link with the world is writing letters to his sister Mrs. Saville, England. He does refer to a merchant-man who would deliver his letters. Anyway, perhaps an eighteen-year old girl, highly talented as she was from both sides, could hardly keep all the threads she was weaving into her ’ghost story’. Walton’s alienation is not, however, total; he has the company of his lieutenant and sailors; he can share jokes and laughter with them; share the odds and accidents they face and jointly fight out-their togetherness may be small, but it is really human.

Of course, there are many pas***“It moved every feeling of wonder and awe, that the picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures was capable of exciting. I often referred the several situations, as their similarity struck me to my own. Like Adam, I was created apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with, and acquire knowledge from beings of a superior nature; but I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me.”***

sages which evoke the feelings of fear and terror. Victor collecting bones in the charnel houses and graves and working in this filthy workshop totally cut off from the rest of the habitation. He himself feels horror struck when he looks at his own creation- the yellow skin which scarcely covered the muscles and arteries, watery eyes almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets, shrievelled complexion and black-lips. The gigantic figure he creates horrifies the creator and he rushes out, tries to get sleep finds the monster looking at him; the very sight shocks him and he rushes out to spend the entire nightwalking about in the courtyard downbelow. There is then monster’s attempt to coax the child William to befriend him and strangle him. Though the narratives come from the mouth of the Monster to Victor and Victor to Walton, the effect is truly uncanny and eerie. The same feelings are evoked by the long chase by Victor all through wilds, hazardous terrains, then getting a sledge, exchanging it with another to pursue the monster as he follows the words carved and engraved on the bark of the trees and on stones, and finally, getting trapped in the ice. All such descriptions are suggestive of the Gothic. However, we must remember that all the narratives that come to us are three-steps removed. Since Victor has undergonea terrible experience, more like the ancient mariner, his mind must have gone hay-wire, he seems to be a victim of schizophrenia. Removing readers, far away from actual, or the supposedly actual or real, Mary Shelley clips off all trappings of the Gothic and the supernatural.

Browning does not look at love only for its earthly significance. He looks forward to it in the world beyond. The rejected lovers of Tennyson express their annoyance with the women who reject them. It does not happen thus to the rejected lovers of Browning. They, on the other hand, adore their beloveds all the more, even after they have rejected them. They cherish the idea that they must be victorious in love in one life or the other. The rejected lover in The Last Ride Together does not have any regrets. He is satisfied with the last ride that he is taking with his beloved. The idea that the world may end at the moment when he is taking the ride, gives him tremendous satisfaction and leads him to the belief that the end of the world will unify him permanently with his beloved. The lover of Evelyn Hope also puts across the faith that he will be one with Evelyn Hope in one life or the other.

***“How can I see so noble a creature destroyed by misery without feeling the most poignant grief? He is so gentle, yet so wise; his mind is so motivated; and when he speaks, although his words are culled with the choicest art, yet they flow with rapidity and unparalleled eloquence.”***

Thus, it is difficult to fix Frankenstein in any single slot or genre; it has a bit of the Gothic, large part of it being biographical, and still largest a critique of the contemporary scientists who were busy trying to animate the dead corpses as was the case with Galvani and Giovanni Adini, the latter actually tried to stimulate the dead corpses on the basis of Galvanistic theories of electricity and its function. Thus, the novel is more a science fiction than Gothic. Mary Shelley thus ushered in a new genre which became popular later.’

Tennyson is a strong representative of his age. In Idylls of the King, he deals with Victorian standards of morality. In Ulysses, he shows the spirit of enquiry of his age and its search for knowledge. Princess deals with the question of women. In Memoriam represents the conflict of doubt and faith. From Tennyson’s poetry, we get a clear understanding of his personal opinions about the social and economic changes that were taking place in his times. We hardly find anything of this sort in the poetry of Browning. He is a poet of the individuals and not of the masses of his times. He never cared to cater to the general taste of the public at large and this accounts for his delayed popularity. He was not read by his immediate contemporaries, because they failed to see their own image and that of their age in his poetry. For example, Browning remains uninfluenced by the element of doubt that ad entered the Victorian era as result of the scientific and industrial advancement of the age. The element of doubt and scepticism finds no place in the poetry of Browning. He speaks of outright faith. He gives an unconditional justification of the ways of God to men.

***“But it was a dream: no Eve soothed my sorrows, or shared my thoughts: I was alone, I remembered Adam’s supplication to his Creator; but where was mine? He had abandoned me, and, in the bitterness of my heart, I cursed him.”***

Mary returned to England the following year and never remarried. She died in London on February 1, 1851 at the age of fifty-three.

Browning differs from Tennyson in his treatment of love in still another manner. Whereas Tennyson deals primarily with the normal cases of love, Browning is bold enough to take up even the abnormal out of love, and then justifies his crime by saying that “God has not said a word”, and the middle-aged lover of Evelyn Hope who remains in silent love with a sixteen- years old girl and gives her a word about it when she is dead.

The treatment of love differs in the hands of Browning and Tennyson. Here also, as usual, Tennyson is conventional and Browning unconventional. In Browning’s poetry, one finds instances where the passion of love is glorified. He adds spiritual significance to this passion by virtue of his belief that the departed souls meet in heaven. In his personal poem Prospice, Browning gives expression to the belief that he will meet his dead wife after his own death. This faith has been put very unambiguously in the words of the lover of Evelyn Hope who says: “God above/ Is great to grant, as mighty to make, / And creates the love to reward the love.”

Browning often starts his line with ‘tail first’ and overloads his style with parentheses. He is in the habit of omitting words. Compared to him, Tennyson is a mature literary artist. He is choosy about every word that he used and puts the right word at the right place. Unlike Browning, Tennyson takes no liberties with the established stanza-forms and other rules of poetry. As a result of this, his poetry becomes more musical in tone than that of Browning. The easy flow of The Lotus Eaters remains unparalleled. Browning is always in search for new stanza-forms. It is his endeavour to become as original as possible, and “his very originality”, says Hugh Walker, leads him into “irritating eccentricities”. In the process of trying to be original, Browning makes his verse ash and rough, whereby his poetry loses the poetic charm, so essential for a first-rate piece of literary art.

There are instances of extremely ill-rhymed lines in the poetry of Browning such as the one in Rabbi Ben Ezra.

With due regard to the greatness of Browning as thinker, there cannot be any denying the fact that Tennyson has left him far behind in the field of literary and artistic perfection. Browning comes nowhere near the sweet melody and effective lucidity of the poetry of the poetry of Tennyson. Tennyson is clear and simple. Browning is obscure and complex. Saying that “Tennyson was not merely an English, but a European poet”, S.A. Brooke remarks: “Browning, in spite of his cosmopolitan interests, has peculiarities of style and outlook that make him inaccessible to the great bulk of foreigners. And the reason of this difference is easy to see. Tennyson is, perhaps, the most limit of English poets, while Browning the most difficult. Tennyson was classic in his sympathies. He was interested in the form of his utterances at least as much as in their matter, and perfected that form with innate labour and exquisite literary taste. Browning as pre-occupied with the matter of his poems; he had too much to say to trouble about perfection of form, and so long as his meaning got itself expressed somehow, he was satisfied. He had neither Tennyson’s ear for verbal music, nor the same sense for literary form. His verbal felicities seem accidental, not the result of pre-mediated art. But of, he had much the more powerful intellect of the two much the greater capacity for, and insight into passion.”

Still another reason for the greater appeal of Browning’s poetry is its concern with the soul of man. Browning will always continue to be read with fascination and interest because of his wonderful character-studies. He has created men and women who keep haunting the mind of the reader long after he has read his poetry. One fails to find equally revealing and interesting character-studies in the poetry of Tennyson. The analysis of Browning is scientific. His character-studies are complex and yet they are interesting. They have a special appeal for the readers of modern times because in them one can see a reflection of the complexities of modern life. The method of Browning is unique. He does not write a full five-act play to reveal the intricacies of human nature. The reader of today is too busy to read long dramas. So, he likes it better to turn to the shorter character –studies and one finds plenty of them in the poetry of Browning. My Last Duchess, The Last Ride Together, Evelyn Hope and Porphyria’s Lover-such are the poems on which the permanence of Browning’s fame rests.

Another aspect of his love for the grotesque is to be found in his rhymes. He rhymes “Theseus”, with “knees use”, “did it” with “Quiddit”, “cock crow” with “rock-row”, “loosened” with “dewsend”. Jugglery with rhyme could be enjoyable in humourous poetry, but when used in serious poetry, it seems ill-suited. In A Grammarian’s Funeral, there is a line, “Clods overcome it”, where the verb is used in the peculiar sense of “come over”. Browning is compelled to do violence to the meaning of certain words like “rife” and “purlieus” in the poem by the exigencies of rhyme. It is true that the grotesque element often stirs the reader into surprised attention. At the same time, however, it leads to difficulty in understanding.

Sometimes, the colloquialisms, the newly coined words and expressions, give a grotesque air to Browning’s poetry. Browning displayed a marked partiality for anything grotesque. Some of his poems, for instance, Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister and Caliban Upon Setebos, are clear exercises in the grotesque form of art. He could use such a style to great effect in a poem like Holy-Cross Day.

Taking up a subject like the human mind and a form like the dramatic monologue, it is but natural that Browning should employ the very rhythms of ordinary speech. His characters express themselves in a spontaneous manner- the flow of speech corresponds to that of thought. As the mind pauses over a thought, or connects it with another, the language undergoes suitable variations. Thus, Browning’s poetry makes use of the broken and irregular rhythms of speech, with the sense often running on from one line to another. To a great extent, it is possible to correlate disregard for grammar with the unconventional style which Browning used. The boldness, the ruggedness, even the incomplete sentences, expresses the thought process of the character who speaks in the poem. But of, when the elliptical syntax or parentheses and rhythms of natural speech are carried too far, the result is obscurity. The meaning of the stanza from Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister, needs great effort to understand. “With a fire new spoon we’re furnished, /And a goblet for ourself /Rinsed like someone sacrificial,/Ere ‘tis fit to touch our chaps-/Marked with L, for our initial!/(He-He! There his lily snaps!)

Browning’s desire to break from convention led him to use the language of ordinary speech. He goes to the extent of borrowing, not only colloquial idioms as well. When used within limits, the effect is dramatic and vigorous, for it brings out the speaker’s state of mind clearly. His most successful poems make good use of colloquial turns of speech. At the same time, his use of colloquialisms often leads to difficulty, as it does Rabbi Ben Ezra. It takes time to understand the implications of the line, “Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast? Here connectives are left out and the result is difficulty. It is also a clear illustration of the difficulty caused by needless inversions.

Browning chooses his characters from Germany, France, Italy, and Arabia, besides England. Allusions of all kinds abound in his poems, and these references are drawn from various sources, some of which are remote and little known. Andrea Del Sarto and A Grammarian’s Funerral require detailed information of Medieval and Renaissance art and culture of Europe. One Word More, though otherwise a simple poem, contains several references to Dante, Rafael, Moses, Endymion, and so on. Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister is also made difficult because of its allusions- the allusion to drinking water in three sips, for example, implies the three persons in the trinity. In the same poem, there are several Latin expressions which add to the reader’s difficulty.

Another cause for Browning‘s obscurity stems from his own vast learning. Having an encyclopaedic mind, especially in the subject of history, Browning assumed the same knowledge in his reader. Many of his poems show an extraordinary knowledge of medieval history and obscure Italia history. Names from the geography and history of other countries often pose difficulties to the reader.

Browning often presents a speaker ironically. The reader has to be mentally alert all the time in appreciating the shifts in satiric direction. The subtle shifts of sympathy in Bishop Blougram’s Apology make it an intellectual challenge, if not obscure poem. Memorabilia, again, evades easy comprehension.

Browning’s poetry is difficult to understand for a number of reasons. However, when one says that his style is obscure, one cannot hold that good for all his poems. Some of poems are lucid and simple, even if they offer a rare or unusual perspective. There is little difficulty in understanding poems such as Evelyn Hope, Prospice, My Last Duchess and The Last Ride Together. It would not do, therefore, to exaggerate the obscurity in his poetry. Most of his short poems can be appreciated; perhaps, they need a little extra attention and effort on the reader’s part than conventional poetry. It is merely a question of “accustoming oneself to new style.”

The fundamental fact remains that with all his obscurity, Browning is not only readable but also lovable. In his shorter poems, he has combined the beauty of style so well with profundity of thought that one feels like reading them over and over again. Even some of his obscure poems have a few memorable lines.

***“Grow old along with me!***

***The best is yet to be,***

***The last of life, for which the first was made:***

***Our times are in His hand***

***Who saith “A whole I planned,***

***Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be afraid***.

Equally musical are these lines:

***“I who saw power, see now love perfect too.***

***Perfect I call Thy plan:***

***Thanks that I was a man!***

***Maker, remake, complete,-I trust what Thou shalt do!”*** - In these lines Browning is rich in thought as well as in expression. Here he is simple, lucid and clear and it is on verses like these permanence of Browning rests.

In the first three lines, the speaker speaks of his ride with his beloved and of the satisfaction and joy that this ride is lending him. The third line ends with a full stop and, thereby completes the meaning but, the stanza does not end there. From an idea of the ride, the speaker immediately switches over to the idea of the destruction of the world, and there the stanza comes to a close. Looking outwardly, the change from one idea to the other seems very abrupt, but the moment we penetrate deeper into this shift of ideas, we find that the entire faith of the speaker stands embodied in the jump from one thought to the other. It involves the entire philosophy of his life. Here it is revealed to us that the speaker is not looking at his ride from the point of view of its face value. For him the ride has a meaning beyond itself.

Browning is led from one thing to another by his own mental associations and forgets that the reader’s associations may be of an entirely different kind.

By the Fireside expresses a strong, earthly, sensuous tone, even while not ignoring spiritual love. The lover is ready to give up everything- Heaven, Nature, Man, Art and Life itself, in exchange for a moment with his beloved. Browning felt that the way to develop the human soul lay in love, and the love had to be complete. It was to involve the sensuous and physical as well as the spiritual. And through human love, it is possible to achieve divine love. Love is a complete experience in which the body, the mind and the soul have their equal share.

The Duke wants to win the sympathy of his listener by covering his own weak points and at the sometime exploiting the tenderness of his wife’s nature. He tries to fabricate a false picture of his wife. Why we narrated the whole incident is to emphasis upon the extraordinary pains that the reader of Browning has to take in order to have a thorough peep into the minds and hearts of his characters. It is necessary to note here that My Last Duchess is not an obscure or difficult poem. In fact, it is one of Browning’s clear monologues. It has been used as an illustration here, merely to show how intricately Browning can analyse a character through his own words, and how the reader has to keep an alert mind.

The characters of Browning are so complex in their mental make-up that the reader has to study them after accumulating all the energies of his mind. It requires a tremendous intellectual exercise on the part of the reader to identify himself with the characters of Browning, because a real enjoyment of his poems depends upon how far the reader can place himself in the situations of Browning’s characters. Browning, therefore, inevitably tends to become quite a difficult writer to be understood and enjoyed.

In every dramatic monologue he tales up a new individual, and every individual is complex in his own manner. Every character of Browning has to be studied in the context of his own mental make-up and situational background, and this involves in itself quite a pains-taking job. W.J. long makes it clear in one of his remarks: “His (Browning’s) field was the individual soul, never exactly alike in two men, and he sought to express the hidden motives and principles which govern individual action. In this field his like a miner delving underground, sending up masses of mingled earth and ore; and the reaper must sift all this material to separate the gold from the dross.”

Obscurity is often caused by the difficulty in following the poet’s and intricate thought. “Did he not magnify the mind, show clear/ Just what it all mean?” The connotation of “it all’’ is rather vague. “Let the world mind him!” The precise force of the line is not easy to determine. “Thoughts hardly to be packed / Into a narrow act/ Fancies that broke through language and escaped,” perfectly describe Browning’s tendency to condense his thoughts. Compression leads to indistinctness; the meaning becomes confused and the reader suffers what a critic calls, “mental or even imaginative indigestion.”

Browning was one of those poets who have certain very clearly laid down and firmly-grounded views on some of the fundamental problems of life. We can name the sum-total of his views as his philosophy, if certain views, put together can at all be called a philosophy. It must be made clear here that Browning was not a philosopher in the strict sense of the term, as such, for his views did not pertain to the existence of Man in the world of material values alone. He went ahead of that and tried to study Man in relation to the entire universe, i.e., Man in relation to God. Man in relation to Nature, and above all, Browning’s chief concern was with the inner man, or the human soul. He did a close study of the human psyche in its various facets.

G.K. Chesterton has commented: ‘’He (Browning) was not unintelligible because his thoughts were vague, but because to him they were obvious.” According to Swinburne, “Browning never thinks but at full speed.” W.J. Long points out: “The chief difficulty in reading Browning is the obscurity of his style.” Hugh Walker remarks: “He (Browning) is careful of the thought, but careless of the expression. The needless harshness and obscurity of Browning will tell seriously against him.” But of, on the whole, one agrees with Hudson when he concludes: “Browning was bold, rugged, and altogether unconventional, in matter and style…Much of his work is prolix and undigested, marred by harshness and crudities of expression…The obscurity cannot be denied. But at, notwithstanding many obvious defects, his greatness as a poet is quite beyond dispute.”

Browning portrayed painters, lovers, bishops, artists, dukes, criminals, and various other human characters. There is God’s plenty in the world of Browning. It is in the process of portraying these characters that Browning gives expression to his highly cherished thoughts and feelings. On the face of it, one might wonder how to distil Browning’s philosophy from his dramatic monologues, for they are supposed to be essentially utterances of fictitious figures. Nevertheless, certain basic attitude and opinions occur in these poems so regularly that they may easily be taken as Browning’s own beliefs. We find these views scattered all over his poems. The philosophy of Browning is the philosophy of a man looking at the world with more than a glimmer of hope in his eyes. He is altogether hopeful about the fate of man; not only in this world, but also in the next world. He believes in the immortality of the human soul and in its salvation. Even for a criminal like Porphyria’s lover, he has a word of hope and consolation. The lover has strangled his beloved to death, “And yet God has not said a word,…”

It is not that Browning’s God is unjust. In fact, there is a degree of love attached to the crime of this criminal. He has killed her only because his love for her was so immense. There was no other way of making her his own, because social barriers stood in his way. He has killed her with compassion, “No pain felt she; /I am quite sure she felt no pain.” This shows that Browning’s faith in human salvation is firm and unflinching. Browning has dealt with various themes, ranging from love, region and philosophy to crime and sin. Yet there is at the back of them all, a force that unifies them. This force is Browning’s study of human soul, the common denominator to which he brought all his themes. Browning was a poet of the individual. He was interested in a theme in so far as it supplied him material for providing interesting character studies.

***“I wished sometimes to shake off all thought and feeling: but I learned that there was but one means to overcome the sensation of pain, and that was death- a state which I feared yet did not understand…”***

The monster first shows his capacity for compassion when he refuses to take food from the de Lacey’s supplies once he realises that by doing so he causes them hardship. This is the best argument for the original goodness of the monster, for in this case the two primal Rousseauean instincts collide, and the monster chooses to exercise compassion even as it conflicts with his own self-preservation.

Central to Browning’s thought his belief in the immortality of man’s soul. He puts the belief in the form of a fine metaphor- that of a potter and the clay he moulds. The potter stands for God, the clay for man, and the wheel for Time. As the Grammarian believes, “Man has forever”, i.e., Man can achieve perfection even after the life on earth is over, for, “God’s task to make the heavenly period/ Perfect the earthen,” Browning’s God is naturally benevolent.

Evil is therefore, a moral condition in man’s progress, for man’s progress, for man cannot be victorious without a foe. It is only the consciousness of evil and imperfection that will help man in his advance towards perfection. Just as evil has its place in the scheme of things, so does man’s imperfections and failures on earth.

True, the above words do not sum up Browning’s teaching, but they express his basic view of man’s relations with the universe. The hypothesis is that, in a cosmic sense, all must be right under an omnipotent and essentially benevolent God. From this fundamental principle springs Browning’s beliefs, especially about evil and imperfection. Browning does not mean that there is no suffering or evil in the world. He means that divine governance being benevolent, what appears as evil to us has its own place in the divine plan. Browning is not daunted by evil. In a sense, evil is essential for the attainment of good.

The belief that the soul is immortal led Browning to believe that what a person fails to achieve in this world, he achieves in the next, where the departed souls meet and dreams become realities. He gives a very strong expression to this belief in one of his most personal poems, Prospice. Written after death of his wife, the poem reflects Browning’s belief at its strongest. The words addressed to the dead wife are equal to the faith that they embody: “O thou soul of my soul: I shall clasp three again/ And with God be the rest.” Since the human soul is immortal, he is sure to be one with his wife after his own death.

***“We may not part until you have promised to comply with my requisition. I am alone, and miserable? Man will not associate with me but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species, and have the same defects. This being you must create.”***

I do not see, however, that Walton ever makes the decision to return to England. When the crew is deliberating on whether to continue north, Walton says, “How all this will terminate. I know not: but I had rather I die, than return shamefully,- my purpose unfulfilled. When the crew decides otherwise, Walton writes to Mrs. Saville. The die is cast: I have consented to return, if we are not destroyed. Thus are my hopes blasted by cowardice and indecision: I come back ignorant and disappointed. It requires more philosophy than I possess, to bear this injustice with patience.” Walton, it seems, remains in sympathy with Frankenstein.

The characters of Browning are living human beings with their own thoughts and feelings, beliefs, and disbeliefs, perfections and imperfections. Andrea Del Sarto is a flawless painter but the soul in him is lying dormant. The Duke in My Last Duchess is a person with an atmosphere of awe and terror about him and yet he is a lover of fine arts. The lover of Porphyria is a murderer and yet his crime does not inspire feelings of horror and disgust. Browning, and not Tennyson, is capable of handling such complex characters in as natural and effortless a manner as he has done.

The modern impressionists concern themselves with the sudden moments of human passion and with fleeting impressions on the senses. Thus, Browning anticipated impressionism much before its arrival. In this regard, Browning stands distinguished not only from Tennyson but also from his other contemporaries like Rousseau, Arnold and Morris in whom we can find no trace of modern impressionism. It also accounts for the greater popularity of Browning, once impressionism came to be recognised as an important aspect of modern literary art. Not only this, but the images used by Browning are typically modern in character. He does not fly far away into the world of imagination. The theme of romantic escapism finds no place in his poetry. Rather, he takes his images from a purely urban setting and from the day –to-day life of men and women around him. For example in Evelyn Hope, Browning does not create an artificial atmosphere to produce an effect of gloom after the death of Evelyn Hope. He talks of natural darkness and makes use of those which Keats and Wordsworth would have considered out of place.

It is Browning the thinker that emerges from his poems. From this point of view, he is much ahead of Tennyson. The reader of today attaches greater importance to the thought content of a poem than to its sheer artistic beauty. The poetry of Tennyson fails to put the reader into an intellectual exercise because it speaks of the happenings of a particular age. He is a poet of big events and episodes, primarily of historical significance. Browning, on the other hand, is a poet of individuals and of events from the life of individuals. He catches his characters at one of the most revealing moments of their lives and builds up their entire personality against the background of a single incident.

Tennyson could not free himself from the established norms, whereas Browning bothered little about them and wrote in an independent fashion. Hugh Walker remarks: “Tennyson is full of echoes from the classics, but though Browning knew all the Greek and Latin poets, there are few lies or phrases in his works which can be traced back to them. Browning could, where he pleased, interweave among his lines literary reminiscences drawn from his vast reading but of, his method of conception was essentially his own, and his work did not readily amalgamate with the work of others. The echoes of Shelley in his early poetry seem not quite in keeping with the context. He felt the incongruity and early learnt to rely upon himself alone.”

Browning said: “My stress lay on incidents in the development of the soul”. In each of his monologues, we thus have a situation which proves to be the flash-point in the course of the character’s life. The critical point sets the character off to reminisce, express his opinions, frustrations and ambitions and, in short, range over his whole of life. All the while, he reveals his true nature and “soul”.

Browning refers to Evelyn Hope’s “book-shelf”, “her bed and the “geranium –flower, beginning to die too, in the glass”. Thus, Browning is a trend-setter for modern poets who also make use of commonplace vocabulary of an urban dweller in their poetry. In The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock, T.S. Eliot draws the image of a cat to give us an impression of the fog on window panes. Prufrock compares himself primarily with crawling creatures, thus making us feel the dehumanisation of his self. In The Second Coming , W.B. Yeats gives us an image of a half-beast half-man slouching and heading toward Bethlehem, thus announcing the advent of the second coming. The modern poets take their images from the ugly and ordinary side of life, and Browning had started doing so much earlier. Thus, the poetry of Browning is more modern in appeal; than that of Tennyson in whom the reader fails that advanced poetic skill and technique, which is in abundance in the poetry of Browning.

There is a wide variety of characteristics portrayed by Browning. With each, he manages to establish such empathy that we feel it is the fictitious character speaking and not Browning. Though some of his characters are not “good” but quite corrupt or weak or wicked, he never loses sympathy with them. Each monologue is a defence of the character, not a criticism or satire. Thus we can say that Browning establishes sympathy for his characters just as Dickens did for his grotesque and often monstrous characters.

 Browning’s main aim in his poetry was to throw light upon the realms of consciousness. Hence, the poetic form of the dramatic monologue suits him to perfection. He wanted to investigate the whole province of the soul and the interplay of its reactions to the influence of environment. His monologues are all soul- studies. He chooses situations to unravel the confusion of motives- good, bad, and purblind, confession, sophistry and self-deception, every kind of complication and aberration of thought. There is a variety of choice in his dramatic soul- studies.

The death of his wife prompted Browning to write Prospice, but the sorrow is cast aside with the exuberant hope of meeting her in the next life.

Evelyn Hope presents a lover by the side of girl whom he silently loved. Here again, the sorrow is not hopeless; he will wait for the next world where surely his love would be rewarded.

Browning’s philosophy informs his love poetry, thus equating love and life. Love is not a transient emotion for him-fickle and untrustworthy. It is permanent. It will be rewarded ultimately, for life is a series of existences through many worlds. God creates love to reward it. Struggle is never in vain. Browning condemns hesitancy in making a decision to fulfil love, for example, The Statue and the Bust. Such missed opportunities negate love, and by implication life itself, for Love is Life in Browning’s view.

When one thinks of Browning, one spontaneously thinks of those famous-or notorious-lines from Pippa Passes: “God’s in this heaven-/all’s right with the world.” Of course, these lines should not be taken as a sum-total of Browning’s thought, for that would make him out to be rather facile and over simple in philosophy. But of, the optimistic tone in the lines is certainly basic to Browning’s philosophy.

The range of Browning’s subjects is wider than that of Tennyson because he has portrayed human beings who provide enough variety to a literary artist for fuller exploitation. Browning has exploited this heart and delved deep into them. The poetry of Tennyson lacks this vitality of life, and as result, Tennyson is read to-day more because of his poetic and artistic worth than because of his subject-matter. On the other hand, Browning is read more because of the rich thought-content of his poetry than because of its literary achievement. This will continue to remain the fundamental point of difference between the two Victorian poets and the yardstick for their future reputation. W.J. Long comments: “Tennyson is first the artist and then the teacher; but with Browning the message is always the important thing.” The poetry of Tennyson is rich in poetic wealth, and that of Browning in content-wealth.

Browning believed in a benevolent God, who was the epitome of Love. Human love is a stepping stone to Divine Love. It is thus that so much of Browning’s poetry deals with love in different forms. Optimistic hope governs even failure in love, for life to Browning was a series of existences in different worlds, and human efforts are bound to succeed ultimately. God creates love to reward it. This is the message we find in all his love poems, personal and dramatic. Such a view life is bound to soothe a mind which is tired of existence and dulled by routine. Thus, we can say Browning’s poetry has a tonic effect on tired of existence and dulled by routine. Thus, we can say Browning’s poetry has a tonic effect on tired minds-it stimulates and energises us to face challenges, make efforts and struggle, irrespective of the thought of failure. Poems such as The Last Ride Together, Evelyn Hope, Rabbi Ben Ezra, A Grammarian’s Funeral, Prospice, and One Word More offer the robust optimism which takes evil, doubt and hatred in its stride.

Browning followed a thought into its most minute ramifications. What is more, he took for granted his reader’s ability to follow the poet’s thought processes at lightning speed. In poems such as Andrea Del Sarto, Fra Lippo Lippi, One Word More, The Bishop Orders His Tomb, there are seemingly unrelated jumps from one thought to another. Words are missed out. The sense of a sentence often runs into many lines. All this requires mental gymnastics from the reader.

Browning is at his best in his dramatic lyrics of love. In Evelyn Hope- a lover who remains in silent love with her as long as she is alive; he and when she is dead, he talks of it to her body. He is prepared to wait for many lives in order to be one with Evelyn Hope. He is sure of it. He keeps a leaf of the geranium flower in the hand of the dead Evelyn Hope as a token of his secret love for her.

***“A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should receive theirs.”***

In the Introduction to 1831 edition of the novel, Mary Shelley informs the readers that the novel emerged from the notorious ‘ghost story’ contest in which Mary, Percy Shelley, Lord Byron and Dr. Polidori were involved. It was fine weather at the Villa Diodati in Switzerland. It was decided that each one of them should write a ghost story for their mutual amusement. However, she also tells us that it emerged from a long discussion between Percy Shelley and Lord Byron concerning ‘principle of life’ which sharpened and gave rise to the mental vision. The scientific experiments made by Darwin on the one hand and by Galvani and Giovanni Adini on the other considerably influenced Mary Shelley. Thus, she had an enormous fund of written materials including her father’s epoch-making CALEB WILLIAMS which conceives of a Utopia where the presence of women is ruled out and that children would be produced by what he calls ‘social engineering’ and not by sexual inter-course. One can observe a subtle critique of her father’s philosophy when Mary dedicates the novel to WILLIAM GODWIN. Apart from all these books Mary was deeply influenced by Milton’s Paradise Lost to which we find numerous allusions as also to Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner.

***“He was now afraid for his father and younger brother Ernest: “I was bewildered in a cloud of wonder and horror. The death of William, the execution of Justine, the murder of Clerval, and lastly my wife, even at that moment I knew not that my only remaining friends were safe from the malignity of the fiend; my father even now might be writhing under his grasp, and Ernest might be dead at his feet. This idea made me shudder, and recalled me to action, started up and resolved to return to Geneva with all possible speed.” ’’***

Mary Shelley’s criticism of rampant injustices in society can be seen as we read the novel. The treatment meted out to the monster is one glaring example. He is all alone, seeks love and friendship, finds solace even when sees Felix-Safie making love. He helps them by bringing piles of dry wood which he places at their door at night. This very family gives a very rough treatment; earlier in the village boys stoned him and villagers drove him out. He saved a small girl from drowning, but instead of any reward he got a bullet. All, just because he had deformities and ridiculous shape, ugly appearance. After all mis-shapen children are often delivered by women, some ailments cripple people, and they look as ugly as the monster. Do they drive those men, women and children?

***“Like Adam I was created apparently united by no link to any other Being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every aspect…Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me…”***

Then Mary Shelley criticizes various institutions. Justine is sent to the gallows on flimsy evidence. Earlier Safie’s father was condemned to death for no crime at all, and when Felix appears and confesses his guilt or criminal act, he is imprisoned for about five-six months, the court confiscates all their property and exiles the family. They find a miserable cottage in Germany where they spend all their days in penury depending on the forest wood and a cow which gives them some milk.

**“If I were engaged in any high undertaking or design, fraught with extensive utility to my fellow-creatures, then could I live to fulfil it. But such is not my destiny; I must pursue and destroy the being to whom I gave existence; then my lot on earth will be fulfilled, and I may die.”**

Mary Shelley’s major work Frankenstein not only baffles the readers, it also challenges them to fix any single meaning, theme or idea; multiple concerns are packed into the structure of the novel so that it has been subjected to diverse interpretations. Recent psychoanalytical studies of the novel have further added to its ambiguity and obscurity. Diverse ideas and concerns overlap and interpenetrate and even interfuse throughout the narrative which, by itself, is equally complex. Hereunder we attempt to indulge in sifting and culling out various threads or strands of thought which continue to flash as we read the book.

The true lovers of Browning are sure of attaining success in love in one life or the other. The lover of The Last Ride Together even goes to the extent of expecting the world’s doom in order to “Ride, ride together, forever ride” with his beloved. He wants to see this ride as an immortal expression of his love for the beloved.

Andrea Del Sarto presents the strength and weaknesses of a painter whose love for a soulless woman saddens his life and prevents him from becoming a great artist. In My Last Duchess, we have an acute analysis of egoitism, arrogance, jealousy and callous cruelty. At the same time, we get a picture of other personages- in Andrea Del Sarto of Lucrezia, and in My Last Duchess of the Duchess. In Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister, we have the study of a mind perverted by hatred in Fra Lippo Lippi, we have an analysis of a painter who has an appetite for the delights of the senses and is impatient of the restrictions which binds him.

In the same poem is expressed the thought that no struggle should be considered too painful. Judgement is not passed on the accomplishment, but on the impulse and the intention of the soul which prompts the effort. On earth there can merely be the “broken arcs”; only in “Heaven, a perfect round”, as Abt Vogler says.

The major theme which seems to run all through the novel centres around the idea of birth and creation. Frankenstein primarily depicts the story of a man’s (scientist’s) attempt to usurp the role of God in creating life as well as to eliminate the role of woman in creating life in the natural way (through sexual inter-course). We know (if we read the first book ‘Genesis’ of the Bible) that God created Adam and on his appeal, he created Eve and later told them to ‘go and multiply’. Victor, an ambitious scientist eliminates both God and woman. In a way Mary Shelley paradises the Biblical myth of creation and suggests that he is engaged in unnatural and unlawful sexuality whereby he eliminates the role of a woman, thereby he seems to be doing something which disrupts the normal family harmony and attendant responsibilities of a parent. Thus, there is an apparent critique of man’s attempt to violate the law of nature and also his efforts to eliminate woman from the creative act. Mary Shelley obliquely criticizes her father’s concept or theory of ‘social engineering’ as formulated or postulated in his utopian scheme in his ‘CALEB WILLIAMS’.

**“Alas! I had turned loose into the world a depraved wretch whose delight was in carnage and misery…I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind, and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror…”**

Mary’s and Percy’s happiness was not to last long. The couple had become friendly with Edward Williams and his wife Jane. In the first week of July 1822, both Edward and Percy decided to go on a boat excursion in the Gulf of Spenzia. The boat was overturned by a storm and both of them were drowned. However, their bodies were washed ashore and they were cremated according to Greek custom.

As the dramatic monologues analyse characters, they also deal with different themes. My Last Duchess deals with the jealousy of egotism and the wanton destruction of natural innocence and goodness by a ruthless and cynical worldly being. Ideas of painting and art are discussed in Fra Lippo Lippi and Andrea Del Sarto. The problem which motivates the action in Fra Lippo Lippi is that of reconciling two clashing forces in religious art- the flesh and the spirit. Lippo is quite satisfied with his sensualism, but he is aware of higher things. His training in the convent has only convinced him that he had learnt more during his life in the gutter. His experiences in the street provided him with a glimpse of “real life”. It is what enabled him to give ‘life’ to the monkish figures of his paintings. Fra Lippo Lippi is about an artist who feels compelled to escape the rigid restrictions of monastic life so as to indulge his natural instincts as a man, for that alone can help fulfil him as an artist.

**“What I ask of you is reasonable and moderate; I demand a creature of another sex (meaning female), but as hideous as myself; the gratification is small, but it is all that I can receive, and it shall content me.”**

Victor’s alienation is self-imposed; he does not share his thoughts and ideas even with Clerval who nurses him back for over a month. He worked on his project in an apartment completely cut off from human habitation, and he completes his project in his workshop of ‘filthy creation’ which he then abandons for good. All his fear, horror and agony continue to gnaw his heart and mind and yet he cannot open up his heart to anyone. He is embroiled in a trap of his own creation. He witnesses the tragic execution of Justine, and once again chooses to be aloof and cut off- creates the she-monster, tears it off before he could animate it. From this point his isolation gets intense as it is accompanied by a threat, the first evidence of which is Clerval’s murder, and later that of his newly-wedded wife Elizabeth. He loses his father. He tries to explain his case to the magistrate who hardly believes his story and tells him to relax. But of, now he is totally bankrupt of life, feelings and emotions-the only thing that takes hold of him is the lava- his urge for revenge. For yet another time he chooses to is late himself in the eternal pursuit of the monster, and ends up as a dead man on the vessel. Thus, his alienation or isolation is physical as well as moral or spiritual. Closely related to the theme of birth and creation is the theme of parental neglect and their responsibilities to nurture their children.

**“Every moment I feared to meet my persecutor. Sometimes I sat with my eyes fixed on the ground, fearing to raise them lest they should encounter the object which I so much dreaded to behold I feared to wander from the sight of my fellow-creatures, lest when alone, he should come to claim his companion.”**

What is Victor’s crime? He has usurped the role of God and has created a being in complete violation of natural laws. But of, as some critics feel that his more heinous crime is his abandoning his creation. Normally when children are born, they are looked after, their parents take full responsibility of rearing and nurturing them till they become fully familiar with the world they are brought into. But at, What Victor does? He animated a dead matter and creates a Being (though ugly in shape) and in complete horror abandons him in the world of which he has no idea and where he is totally alien. Having assembled the bones and other tissues from various charnels and graves (in complete disregard of the diversity of the dead matter, their origin, caste culture, creed, language they might have used) and animates the frame. But on, when he observes the Being, he is so horrified that he at once rushes out of his workshop, taking not a bit of care to nurture him. Even when he stretches his arm and tries to say something, he rushes out of his bed room and spends the whole night in the courtyard and as the gate opens he goes away.it is much later when the Being had had its self-education through various encounters, feeding himself on roots, figs and nuts, and learns the use of language by constantly listening to Felix reading out to Safie and communicating with her, that he acquires full command on the language. It is during the Frankenstein’s family visit to the valley of Chamounix that Victor has an encounter with the monster as he goes alone to the summit of Montanvert. At first there is an exchange of harsh words, but the monster over-powers Victor with the eloquent use of the language and forces him to listen to him. He says: **“Remember, that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good, misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous.”** Victor was still full furious, but the monster’s rhetorics compelled him to listen to his tale. And after having listened to the monster’s reasoned arguments, Victor realized his responsibility: **“For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were; and that I might render him happy before I complained of his wickedness.’’** (Vol. II, Ch. III) The monster then related all his tale from the time of his creation to the present; his tale was the tale of self-education, then his suffering at the hands of the people whom he had done no harm; how the injustice made him violent. It was then that he confessed having murdered William and how innocent Justine was to face execution. Finally he pleaded: “I am alone and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species, and have the same defects. This being you must create. (Vol. II, Ch. VIII) and added “You must create a female for me, with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being. This you alone can do; and I demand it of you as a right which you must not refuse. (Vol. II, Ch. IX) Adam requests the Creator to create a partaker of all delights God has provided, for he feels he cannot enjoy himself in solitude. The monster is re-phrasing the same argument. All the same his argument is validated by his arguments. In the long eloquent words of the monster we can find Mary Shelley’s own tragic experience as a child. After the death of her mother, William Godwin married again- an already married woman who had children of her own. She was not sent to any school, the step-mother being averse to women’s education her father succumbed to her wishes. Much that Mary learnt was at home, especially from the library of her father. Completely neglected as she was, the relations between her and her step-mother became more and more strained. So much so that she was sent to Scotland to stay with the Baxter family with which she had a pleasant understanding and where she found love, peace and harmony. She spent many months with this family on each occasion (she went to live there twice). Finally, when she returned home, she found a set of intellectuals with her father and she then eloped with an already-married Percy Shelley. Much later her father’s neglect led to the tragic suicide of her step-sister. We can read much of Mary’s own life in various embedded narratives. Many critics have read the idea of rebellion in the novel mostly relating to the influence of the French Revolution and the disastrous consequences which followed. The revolutionaries who stormed the Bastille in the hope of changing the destiny of France, failed to take the responsibility and hold the country together, and thus, the entire country was flooded with the blood of both-the guilty and the innocent, (Charles Dickens’ Tale of Two cities which recounts some of the events, however, appeared many- years after).

**“And yet you rescued me from a strange and perilous situation; you have benevolently restored me to life.”**

Ambition is natural to man. He aspires to do something big. Mary Shelley, however, equates Victor with mythical figures like Faust and Prometheus; she feels that in his quest for knowledge, Victor crosses all bounds and usurps the role of God in creating life: there is also embedded her critique of ruling out the role of woman. Going back to the Bible Adam-Eve are said to be our grand ancestors. Victor, the inspired scientist wishes to do it all alone. At the university, he is enchanted by the lectures of Waldman who pays the greatest tribute to the ancient philosophers… “They have performed miracles”. Waldman observed, “They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers, they can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earth-quake, and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows.” Waldman’s lectures on chemistry have profound influence on Victor: he too aspires to do something miraculous, but what happens is that his highly intoxicated mind pushes him into the forbidden territory. He performs an act but refuses to take the responsibility, and this proves his undoing. In the beginning as he narrates his tragic tale, he digresses and gives a word of caution to Walton: “Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he **who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.”** (Vol.1, Ch. III)Robert Walton, on the other hand, submits to the wishes of his crew and decides to sail home. Walton, too, was equally ambitious, another Promethean figure who reached the Arctic oceans facing all onslaughts and fury of the weather, just to discover the shortest passage or route to the other countries. But of, he does not reject the world, small world of his fellow-men, and agrees to sail home. Thus, there is a parallel as well as contrast between the two high-spirited men.one wonders what Mary Shelley is trying to convey: is she against pursuit of knowledge? Or is she a full conservative theist (as opposed to Percy Shelley who was expelled from Oxford for his pamphlet The Necessity of Atheism)?ideas and themes get so amorphously and ambiguously inter-mixed that we can get no clear strain of her own ideological beliefs. Great men have always done something bigger than common mankind could even dream of: and what they aspired to do and did, give an impetus to progress that society or the world as a whole feels so proud of. History is full of Promethean figures: it is the very nature of man to aspire high, to reach the unreachable. The progress of humanity can largely be attributed to those few great minds dedicated to the cause. Aren’t the modern-day physicists and astronomers exploring the yet unexplored and trying to explain out (as 150 years back Dr. Darwin did) the very creation of this Universe and that of man himself? It seems Mary Shelley is not rejecting man’s aspirations, what she feels is that all such ambitious undertakings must be accompanied by a full knowledge and sense of one’s responsibility, for such acts can boomerang (as did sixty-odd years back-Hiroshima-how did the physicist feel, and how did the statesmen undo their dreams). Victor is one such over-reacher, the embodiment of man’s soaring spirit which seeks newer worlds, fresh sparks of light, but he disowns his act and refuses to take full responsibility for what he has done. He keeps his guilt to himself, witnesses an innocent being sent to the gallows; he does not open up his heart even to his dearest friend Clerval, nor to his father, nor to Elizabeth. Sharing one’s agony with others brings solace. When Elizabeth asks him the cause of his agitation on the honey-moon night his reply is evasive.

**“I now hasten to the more moving part of my story. I shall relate events that impressed me with feelings which, from what I was, have made me what I am.”**

If we read the proceedings of trial of Justine, we shall find the most unjust role the priest-confessor plays. He comes to the cell and frightens the poor girl of ex-communication and the horrors of hell if she does not confess. Justine succumbs and confesses the crime which she had not committed. And the confession is held sufficient to send the girl to the gallows. Not a single voice is raised by those present in the court room, not as single member of the jury raises an objection. The decision to hang Justine is unanimous. After having read the books like Plutarch’s Lives, Goethe’s Sorrows of Werter and after having received rough and cruel treatment, even the monster is shocked. At one place he tells Victor: **“For a long time I could not conceive how one man could go forth to murder his fellow, or even why there were laws and governments; but when I heard details of vice and bloodshed, my wonder ceased, and I turned away with disgust and loathing. “**(Vol. II, Ch, IX)And, **“Men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other’s blood.”** (Vol. II, Ch. IX). Indeed his monstrousness is the direct result of the injustices inflicted on him by all these whose friendship he tried to seek or whomsoever he encountered. He deserves our sympathy when he cries**-“I desired love and fellowship and I was spurned. Was there no injustice in this? ...Am I to be thought the only criminal when all human kind sinned against me?”** (Vol. III, Ch. VIII). Mary Shelley is very clearly of the view that monsters are not born, they are made.

**“Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!**

**I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!”**

The language of the poem is entirely free of obscurity. The opening lines are beautifully evocative of a fierce and malicious natural force. Rain and storm are personified as agents of destruction. As in other poems by Browning, here too, nature is not described for its own sake, but to form an effective background to the main theme. The sullen wind has been given a life of its own as it tears down the elm-tops “for spite” and “did its worst to vex the lake.” The storm outside is aptly reflective of the despair and the gloom in the heart of the lover which is “fit to break”.

 “Woman are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety will obtain from them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless for at least twenty years of their lives…he (Milton) meant to deprive us of our souls, and insinuate that we were beings only designed for sweet attractive grace and docile blind obedience, to gratify the senses of man when he can no longer soar on the wings of contemplation…How grossly do they insult us who thus advise us only to render ourselves gentle domestic brutes!

**“Shall each man….find a wife for his bosom, and each beast have his mate, and I be alone?”**

Mary Shelley’s interest in the domestic and family affections produced the main link between Frankenstein and her other novels, Valperga (1823) and The Last Man (1826). Both of them locate the source of cultural disaster in man’s renouncement set in the fourteenth-century Italy, examines the destructive effects of ambition and egotism. The Last Man, a fantasy of cultural annihilation in the twenty-first century and usually considered Mary Shelley’s most significant work after Frankenstein, provides a pessimistic account of the evils of social institutions. The fantasy about the gradual destruction of the world by a plague is narrated by Verney, the last man on earth and, like the creature, a reworking of Adam. The novel draws heavily on one of the texts with which the creative becomes familiar: Volney’s.

Just as failure is necessary for success, doubt is necessary for the existence of faith. Doubt distinguishes man from the lower animals; it can also act as a trial of faith. Man doubts-for him there can be no grand certainty. But of, when reason fails him, he plunges ahead under the guidance of feelings. Intellect alone is not enough in religious experience. Intuition and imagination also matter.

**‘The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear**

**The sapless foliage of the ocean, know**

**Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear**

 **And tremble and despoil themselves: -------- O hear!’**

Pointing out that “the names of some of the characters novels are drawn from Mary Shelley acquaintance Baldich writes: “Elizabeth was the name of Percy Shelley’s sister and his mother, and Victor was a name adopted in boyhood by Percy himself a fact which has encouraged some commentators to identify him too hastily with victor Frankenstein when his portrait is given more clearly in the character of Henry Clerval. William was the name of Mary Shelley’s father but also her half-brother and of the son she was raising while writing the novel.”

Mary Wollstonecraft sought an egalitarian system of education both for men and women according to her, an ideal educational structure is that which will make the people virtuous and enable them to exercise their mind independently, without any restraints. Women have always been considered submissive, docile an embodiment of superficiality. Critics of Frankenstein who have seen in the novel an ethical core of condemnation of Victor Frankenstein for his overreaching and his obsessive self-glorification have underestimated the equivocality of Mary Shelley on this subject. It should be kept in mind that the most powerful influence for a strong sense of self-respect in Mary Shelley’s life and writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, who argued strongly that the acquisition of a sense of self-respect was the only means by which women and children could escape being degraded by the institution of the patriarchal family. Those who wish to see Victor Frankenstein unequivocally condemned sometimes make Walton a foil to his obsession.

 “Quite women, she rightly felt, were seen as innately inferior and weak in mind”; perpetually viewed as ignorant and different creatures. Made subservient to their male counterparts down the ages, they have been taught to remain obedient to the male sex; this slavish has been injected into them to make them efficient housekeeper while men have remained quite callous and irrational to their sensibilities and demands.

As already stated, Browning is interested, not in the exterior of man, but in his interior. He concentrates all his energies on observing the intellectual and spiritual activities of his characters. What he wants to present in his poems, is the mental and spiritual behaviour of a character in a given situation. His distinction lies not in the fact that he can read and understand his characters for himself, but in that he can make us read and understand them in the same manner. The secret of success is Browning’s capacity to pack into words exactly what his heart feels and his mind thinks. He takes his readers into confidence and allows them to have a thorough peep into the minds and souls of his characters. That is why, after reading the monologues of Browning, the reader does not feel that he has read only a poem, but that he has been in communion with a soul. Legouis and Cazamian have rightly said that Browning “wants to investigate the whole province of soul, and the interplay of its reactions to influence of environment.” The life of Shelley lays worlds apart from that of Byron. His treatment of Harriet apart, his private life was not vicious, but on the contrary in many respects exemplary. As far as the ideas, which he sang, were capable of application to life, he applied them in his own conduct. He preached the equality of man and he proved that he was willing to practice it. He was generous and benevolent to a fault. Mary Wollstonecraft has sharply criticised the system of education for women as they have been taught, right from the beginning to remain loyal and subservient to their male counter parts. Shelley holds a unique place in English literature by virtue of his power of making myths out of the objects and forces of Nature.

Clutton-Brock has discussed in detail Shelley’s myth-making power as revealed in the Ode to the West Wind: “It has been said that Shelley was a myth-maker. His myths were not to him mere caprices of fancy. They expressed by the only means which human language provides for the expression of such things, that sense which he possessed, of a more intense reality in nature than is felt by other men. To most of us, the forces of nature have little meanings. But for Shelley, these forces had as much reality as human beings. Have for most of us, and he found the same kind of intense significance in their manifestations of beauty that we find in the beauty of human belongs or of great works of art. The nature of this significance, he could not explain; but he could express it with enormous power in his art, and with a precision of statement which seems miraculous where the nature of the subject matter is considered… to Shelley, the West Wind was still a wind, and the cloud a cloud, however intense a reality they might have for him. …we are not wrought upon to feel anything human in the wind’s power; but if we are susceptible to Shelley’ magic, we are filled with a new sense of the life and significance and reality of nature.”

**“I will revenge my injuries: if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear; and chiefly towards you my arch-enemy, because my creator, do I swear inextinguishable hatred. Have a care: I will work at your destruction, nor finish until I desolate your heart, so that you curse the hour of your birth…”**

In her landmark treatise, The Vindication the Rights of Woman, Mary Wollstonecraft advocated the establishment of an egalitarian and human society. She espoused the cause of the emancipation of women, a theme taken up vocally and forcefully by the feminists of the twentieth century. She was labelled a harsh and loose woman for her deep convictions. But despite all criticism and opposition, she firmly stood for an equal status for women in a male dominated society.

For much of the twentieth century, Frankenstein was considered an interesting novel but by no means “great literature”. Writing in 1938 in Mary Shelley: A Biography, R. Colynn Coryllis considered it to be a “periodic piece”, of not very good date, historically interesting, but not one of the living novels of the world. It was generally agreed to be a minor masterpiece, relegated to the margins of “popular” Literature and granted this status only because of Mary Shelley’s impressive literary relations. Frankenstein was considered of some importance primarily because, the general consensus was, it encapsulated in a conveniently simple form the preoccupations of Romanticism. As the concept of a “canon” of great works disappeared and the boundaries of “literature” expanded, Frankenstein began to attract more critical attention.

That Browning was a great literary artist and that he was not indifferent to the beauty of style and technique, becomes clear from the fact that he always kept inventing newer and still newer poetic forms. For every new poem and for every new thought, he wanted to find a new poetic form. It is as a result of this that out of his two hundred to three hundred poems, about half have been written in verse-forms serve the purpose of carrying the ideas forward. So, he wanted to pack every fresh idea in a form that could suit it best. The dramatic monologue was the most favourite form with him because his primary concern was with the human interior. In every dramatic monologue, he wanted to erect a complete personality, a complete human being with his own thoughts and emotions. In The Ring and The Book, different characters tell the same story from different points of view and in so doing, they reveal their own nature and temperament. In Pippa Passes, browning introduces an entirely presence of an isolated figure is the only unifying force.

**“But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infants days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses.”**

The Pentridge uprising of 1817, when 300 men marched towards Nottingham, expecting numerous other such marches throughout the country, was designed to overthrow the government and seemed to confirm the alarming possibility of working-class revolt in Britain. The possibility of such revolt always seems to simmer just below the surface of Frankenstein. When the leaders of the Pentridge uprising were executed in November, Percy Shelley responded with a political pamphlet deploring the state of a country torn between the alternatives of anarchy and oppression. Mary Shelley had radical sympathies, and through her depiction of the monster, she reveals an outraged awareness of social injustice and a passionate desire for reform. At the same time, she could not fully support rebellion against the established order, and, again through the monster, expresses fear of the revolutionary violence that injustice in society might provoke. Like Percy Shelley, she sees only the alternatives of and oppression.

The expression, “all smiles stopped together” is an embodiment of tragedy of a complete life. Browning alone is capable of concentrating so much in so few words. Such expressions are a refutation of the charge that Browning cared only for sense and not for sound. Here, he has exhibited his capacity to care equally for both at the same time.

The Last Ride Together is still another poem giving expression to Browning’s belief in the immortality of the human soul. The lover’s satisfaction is not confined to the ride at its face value. The hope that ride may assume a permanent character, gives him greater pleasure than the ride itself. He asks: “Who knows but the world may end to-night?” The lover believes that there is a possibility of the world coming to an end at the moment he is enjoying a ride with his beloved. Thus their ride could become everlasting.

The Last Ride Together is also full of the beauties of language. In the long-drawn rhythm of its verse, Browning captures the steady stride of the horses. We seem to hear the very gallop of the horses. The music of the poem beats to the sound of the gallop.

After seeing how Browning combines sense with sound, let us look at still another distinctive feature of his style, namely, his ability to create through the medium of language, an atmosphere around his characters; the atmosphere that makes the characters better understandable and remains in unity with the general state of their mind. For example , in Andrea Del Sarto the use of such words as ‘grey’, ‘greyness’, ‘silver’, ‘autumn’, and ‘twilight’ serve to heighten the effect of the spiritual vacuum from which Andrea is suffering. In the same way, Browning avoids making use of verbs and other ‘action words’ in order to emphasise upon the weariness and boredom of Andrea. Thus, we find that Browning determines the vocabulary of his characters in accordance with their mood and temper. It is in this sense that we can say that Browning was a careful artist.

The society has been grossly unjust to them right since the days of Adam and Eve. Women have not been given any respect and dignity, and they have submitted to this unquestioningly. They are seen as highly vainglorious in a society where men take all the major decisions and lay down the law. Women who try to assert their independence are viewed as quite aberrant and bestial. It is a woman fights for an equal status with men as Mary Wollstonecraft had successful done in the late eighteenth century, she is labelled ‘masculine’. Women should reject their marginal or peripheral status and be allowed to realise and enhance their potential to the fullest and not merely seen as ornamental objects confined within the bounds of patriarchy to satiate the lust of men.

Browning’s style often has an element of the grotesqueness to convey the odd and fantastic aspects of nature. Good use of the grotesque occurs in The Englishman in Italy.

The language of Fra Lippo Lippi is again in keeping with the character of the speaker. The words are vigorous and concrete perceptive and sensory- ‘snap’, ‘whipped’, ‘bite’, ‘keep’, ‘twinkle’, ‘prodded’, ‘munching’.

It is by virtue of its beauty of language that the poem contains so many memorable phrases like, “This glory-garland round my soul”, and “The instant made eternity”, (to mention only two of them).’ Similarly, in ‘A Grammarian’s Funeral’, the movement of the mourners. “The lines of the poem seem actually to move to the steady climbing rhythm of their feet”, says D.S. Somerwell.

**‘’ “But soon”, he cried, with sad and solemn enthusiasm, “I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace; or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Farewell. “He sprung from the cabin-window, as he said this, upon the ice-raft which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance.’’**

Mary and Percy Shelley immediately married and Godwin was soon reconciled with his daughter. Mary gave birth to a daughter, Clara, in September1817, soon after the completion of Frankenstein. The novel was published anonymously in 1818 and Shelley left for Italy. Both of their children died soon after; another, Percy Florence Shelley, the only child of the marriage to survive into adulthood, was born in 1819.

**“Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,**

**Whene’er I passed her; but who passed without**

**Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands**

**Then all smiles stopped together.”**

 “Soul dissection” was the business of Browning and he sought to express hidden motives and principle as which govern individual action in his poems. Browning was a poet of human experience. And the aspect with which his imagination found the greatest affinity was that of Love. Variety of situations in love is dealt with by Browning- from the spiritual to the sensual. Love was to him the critical point and test of a man’s life. He differs from other poets of love in this respect that to him, love is Godhead. Human love is a stepping stone to Divine Love. Thus, he celebrates love. Unlike other poets who poets who always combine love with sorrow and death-for the failure in this life could indicate success in the next. The lover of The Last Ride Together is not dejected. He is hopeful enough to declare: “Who knows but the world may end tonight?”

Browning treats the theme of love in a purely unconventional manner. He does not idealise the feminine beauty, nor does he present any extraordinarily romantic situation of love. Using urban imagery from day-to-day life and taking up unique cases of love, Browning gives to his characters a touch of reality. He treats of actual passion and picks that moment which, of course, promises to distil love’s richest significance. W.T. Young writes in this connection: ‘’ He (Browning) seems almost the first to realise that these moments are not necessarily those of the rapture of possession and enjoyment or the fierce bitterness of rejection, but may be any of the scores of episodes in the long chronicle.” Thus rises the novelty of situation in his poetry, the theme of love acquiring protean aspects because of the variety of situations. ‘The term ‘Gothic’ is highly amorphous and open to diverse interpretations; it is suggestive of an uncanny atmosphere of wilderness, gloom and horror based on supernatural. The weirdand eerie atmosphere of the Gothic fiction was derived from the Gothic architecture: castles, cathedrals, forts and monasteries with labyrinths of dark corridors, cellars and tunnels which evoked the feelings of horror, wildness, suspense and gloom. The haunted castles with secret passages, vaults and dark galleries full of terribly howling winds which caused thunderous noises of a mysterious nature aroused fear and terror in the minds of the readers as if they were trapped within a graveyard. Belief in the supernatural, the magic and in the existence of spirits and ghosts has always haunted man.In his love poetry, Browning often offers odd and abnormal situations. Porphyria’s Lover is a case in point. In this poem, the lover strangles his beloved with her fair hair as she sits with her head on his shoulder, because she was “Too weak, for all her heart’s endeavor, / To set its struggling passion free/ From pride, and vainer ties dissever….”

Since he has been gifted only with the art of poetry, Browning decides to make use of it in a special manner in order to write for his love. Therefore, Browning writes this poem in the form of a lyric, whereas the other poems in the volume are in the form of dramatic monologues. He also makes use of a special metre for this poem, namely, the trochaic pentameter, whereas the monologues have been written in iambic blank verse. Thus, Browning makes use of his art of poetry for a special purpose by making: “A strange art of an art familiar.”

**“I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity.”**

Shelley sets up a humanity glorified through love; he worships in the sanctuary left vacant by “the great absence of God” (His youthful atheism lacked warmth and in the end he turned to a type of pantheism). Love, as exemplified in his personal life, is a passionate kind of sensuality which becomes his simple moral code with no duty, blame, or obligation attached. The reign of love when no authority was necessary was his millennium. Most of Shelley’s poems are sad in tone and as such he is regarded as “the singer of endless sorrows”, but this is not true of all his poems. Whenever he writes of the future of mankind, he turns ecstatically optimistic. Wollstonecraft argued: “Men and women must be educated, in a great degree by the opinions and manners of society they live in…Consequently the most perfect education, in my opinion, is such an exercise of the understanding of heist calculated to strengthen the body and form of the heart…This was Rousseau’s opinion respecting men; I extend it to women, and confidently assert that they have been drawn out of their sphere by false refinement, and not by an endeavour to acquire masculine qualities. She was of the firm conviction “that all the writers who have written on the subject of female education and manners from Rousseau to Dr. Gregory, have contributed to render women more artificial, weak characters than they would otherwise have been; and consequently more useless members of society.” Women received “only a disorderly kind of education… in the education of women, the cultivation of the understanding is always subordinate to the acquirement of some corporeal punishment.” Shelley believed in a soul of the Universe, a Spirit in which all things live and move and have their being. His most passionate desire was for the mystical fusion of his own personality with his spirit. Spontaneity and fluidity are the proof of his wealth of imagination. There is no effect of laborious artistry about Shelley’s style at any time. According to Bradley,” The language is poetical through and through, not, as sometimes with Wordsworth, only half-poetical, and yet it seems to drop from Shelley’s lips. It is not wrought and kneaded; it flows.” Mary began a relationship with the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley when she was fifteen. Shelley and his wife Harriet had come to pay homage to Godwin, whose powerful writings had shaped anti-establishment thinking of that time. Mary did meet Shelley for almost two years even though his visits to Godwin’s household became steadily more frequent as he resided with the Baxters in Scotland. In 1814, Percy Shelley , married for a few years to Harriet and father to their child, met Mary Shelley and discovered the vast difference between his wife and her. Mary had both intellect and impeccable parentage, although she did not have any formal education- thanks to her step mother, Mary Jane Clairmont.

Browning also feels proud that he has seen that side of his wife’s soul which remains invisible to the world. People think that they have seen her entire soul, but they are mistaken. One Word More is a fine lyric, a marvellous piece of love-poetry. S.A. Brooke has praised this perfect lyric: “It is full, and full to the brim, with the long experience of peaceful joy in married life”. One cannot say after reading this poem, that Browning is a thinker rather than a poet. The poem rises to a great lyric power in stanza 12,”I shall never in the years remaining...” as well as in stanza 18, “This I say of me but think of you, Love.”

Prospice is another poem of personal love. Written after the death of his wife, the poem speaks of Browning’s desire to be one with his wife in the next world. But of, it is not out of despair that he wants to leave this world. Like a true lover, he must live life to the full. Fe is prepared to undergo all the trials of life before going to the next world. He feels the loss of his wife but the faith that ultimately he will meet her in heaven, gives him courage to continue to struggle with determination. There is full throb of passion in this poem. The belief in his reunion with his beloved is in the nature of an “ecstatic thought”- a complete fusion of emotion and thought.

By the Fireside looks forward to the poet spending his later years- “Life’s November”- as a solitary man, Greek literature . browning goes on to describe a scene which he and Elizabeth had visited. Strong feeling gives to the poem a lyrical quality. An intensity of lyricism is diffused over the poem as the poet looks on the past, the present and the future. This poem expresses to be finest pitch the combination of passion and serenity in love. Indeed ,”for passion, high, serious, noble, tender, for profound understanding of life, of love and of the human soul, and for the greatness of mind that lies behind this; for the lyrical beauty of feeling and form: for all these in combination,” there is no poem in English equal to By the Fireside.”

In order to lay further emphasis on his love for his wife, Browning explains that everybody has a double personality-one for the world and another for the person he or she loves. A lover never shows to the world one side of his personality, because it is meant only for the beloved.

Browning’s philosophy instils hope into the very concept of failure. “We fall to rise, are baffled to fight better, /Sleep to wake” he says in the Epilogue to Asolando. Our failures and defeats on this earth, in other words, have a meaning. Each failure helps us to gain knowledge and progress. Each failure is a step nearer to success, i.e. the soul’s salvation.

**“Sleep fled from my eyes; I wandered like an evil spirit”**

Most of Shelley’s poetry is symbolic. Shelley makes use of symbolism by means of his normal use of images including the personified forces of life and nature. He looks upon the West Wind as a personified force of nature and finds in it various symbolic meanings to suit the purpose of the poem. The West Wind drives the last signs of life from the trees and also scatters the seeds which will come to life in spring. In this way the Wind appears to the poet as a destroyer of the old order and a preserver of the new, i.e., a symbol of change. The Wind also symbolizes Shelley’s own personality. When he was a boy he was one like the Wind: “tameless, and swift, and proud.”He still possesses these qualities but they lie suppressed under “a heavy weight of hours.”

Some of the memorable dramatic love poems are Evelyn Hope, Porphyria’s Lover, The Last Ride Together and Two in the Campagna. Browning exploits that moment in the course of love which promises to distil love’s richest significance. And he realises that these moments need not always be those of the rapture of possession and enjoyment or the fierce bitterness of rejection. They may be any of the diverse episodes in love relationships. Thus, his poems have novelty the lover dying with a sense of triumph in the arms of his beloved, because he has the satisfaction that he has loved. Porphyria’s lover murders his beloved with the motive of making his love perfect through death. The frustrated lover of The Last Ride Together accepts his rejection with a philosophic manliness.

Love is not only a present actuality; it is also an ideal. As an ideal, its satisfaction is always incomplete. Whether personal or dramatic, Browning’s poems deal not with rapture or the impulsive passion of youth, but with the more complex, mature love. Love among the Ruins, Two in the Campagna, or The Last Ride Together, for instance deal with the less easily understood mature love. In The Last ride Together, the rejected lover does not want whine in self-pity or rant in anger. He blesses his mistress and consoles himself that his love will be fulfilled in Heaven. Whatever little his love has achieved for him on earth, is more than what a soldier, statesman or an artist can achieve.

Love is a supreme emotion, and in its fulfilment, social mores and conventions are not to be considered. The union of two beings who love each other supersedes social bonds, for love itself is an elevating force which brings the human beings nearer God. As such, those who hesitate to take the plunge because they are married or because of other reasons, are disapproved of by Browning. In Youth and Art and The Statue and the Bust, the moment is allowed to slip off, and life is an empty failure. It does not matter that the love in The Statue and the Bust is illicit, but what matters, is that the action is postponed till it is too late. Indecision, respect for convention, and cowardice are the sins of the lovers in the poem.

**“Often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation, whilst still urged on by eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion.”**

Nevertheless, the world Mary Shelley creates is entirely secular: the Christian myth serves only to provide analogies. Perhaps we need to consider whether there is in fact, any suggestion within the text that Victor should not have attempted the act of creation. Perhaps the crime upon which Mary Shelley focuses is not what Victor does, but what he fails to do: nurture his creation. Victor’s ambition and achievement may be heroic; chaos only ensues because he is not capable of bearing responsibility for what he produces. Victor’s description of his “secret toil” does suggest that he is engaged in something shameful or unlawful.

Still another stumbling block was his tendency to become obscure, at times deliberately so. This tendency pertained to his thought-content as well as to the style in which he packed it. Hugh Walker says: “His (Browning’s) style and rhythm are often intolerably rough and unmusical. He is full of strained expressions, irritating puns, harsh inversions. He has a provoking and really meaningless habit of clipping the particles. “For every new poem of his, Browning was always on the look-out for new metres, rhymes and stanza-forms. This created fresh problems for his readers in every new poem and minimised the ability to understand them.

In spite of the fact that Browning’s reputation has undergone numerous fluctuations in the course of time, he will continue to enjoy popularity with his readers for a very long time to come. The credit goes to his dramatic lyrics of love which have always served as the sheet-anchor of his reputation.

 Of late, particularly since the fifties of the twentieth century, there has been a reaction in favour of Browning. The modern critics have explored the wealth of modernism in the poetry of Browning. The telegraphic style of the poetry of Browning has left its mark on the poetry of T.S.Eliot. The character-delineation in The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock rings back into the reader’s mind, Browning’s handling of the Duke in My Last Duchess and of the lover in Porphyria’s Lover. The conversational tone of the language of Browning’s dramatic monologues shows its effect on the method adopted by quite a few modern literary artists. Browning’s experiments with various metres and stanza-forms were a source of inspiration for modern metrists like T.S.Eliot and G.M. Hopkins.

The love between man and woman may take many shapes. Browning presents the variety in his poems. The fierce animal passion of Ottima in Pippa is in striking contrast to the romantic love as rendered in The Last Ride Together. Two in the Campagna presents the deep longing for the old assurance. Evelyn Hope suggests the optimistic side of passion- the hope that when Evelyn wakes up in the next world, she will “remember and understand”. Two in the Campagna states the theme: “How is it under our control/ To love or not to love?”

The words “Perfect I call Thy plan/ Thanks that I was a man! / Maker, remake, complete,-I trust what Thou shalt do!” sounded more like a religious sermon than like a piece of poetry. What had once been the main asset of Browning became one of his liabilities. People started considering his philosophy as the philosophy of easy optimist – a philosophy that, they found, was far away from the practical life of men and women. They found in it, an excessive degree of authoritarianism. Their criticism was also directed towards exposing the stylish drawbacks of the poetry of Browning, especially the liberties that he took with the established rhymes and metres. The extraordinary ruggedness of his verse came under severe criticism. All this led to a huge downfall in Browning’s reputation.

It was with the publication of The Ring and the Book in 1868-69 that the reputation of Browning had better days to see. But for, it was quite late because after that his faculties started decaying. Yet, the Ring and the Book was hailed as the highest poetic endeavour and accomplishment of the day. It came to be recognised as the most profound spiritual treasure produced by England after Shakespeare. Consisting of four volumes, it tells the same story of murder, treachery and meanness from different points of view. “The poem never fails to command interest and admiration”, says Ryland. At the end of the nineteenth century, the reputation of Browning was at its pinnacle.

The psycho-analytical interests of the poetry of Browning make him a trend-setter for the techniques of the modern impressionists belonging to the school of the “stream of consciousness.” The way Browning portrays the psychological activities of his characters, leaves its mark on the method of modern psycho-analysts. The modern poets show equally deep interest in the interior of man. They lay bare the very soul of their characters very much in the manner of Browning. The speech of the speaker is caught in its natural thought- process. Different thoughts are narrated just as they come into the mind of the speaker. The writer does not frame them in a logical sequence or arrangement. The speakers move forward or backward in their mind in a natural fashion. Time past and time future are made to be contained in time present. In a way, the writer gives a running commentary on the activities of the human mind.

The character is caught at one of the most revealing moments of his life. It is through a process of subtle self-analysis and self-introspection that the speaker is forced to reveal himself- all the traits, ins and outs, beliefs and disbeliefs, likes and dislikes and weak-points as well as the strong-points of is personality. This is what the modern impressionists do and Browning had started doing it much earlier. Ezra Pound calls it the “psychological realism” of Browning and admits that modern poets owe a lot to it.

After the second decade of the twentieth century, it was again on the decline. Life had become too busy for one to spare time for the longer poems of Browning. The general complexity of life had made its way into the minds of men. So the religion of Browning ceased to have any appeal for them. They found it extraordinarily simple and dogmatic.

Browning’s handling of emotions and passions depend upon how one lives them in actual life and not on how one feels them in imagination. Even while talking of love, he takes his imagery from the day-to-day-life. While talking of the dead Evelyn Hope, Browning does not try to create an effect of gloom through artificial means. Rather, he refers to the objects of day-to-day life and makes us feel the pervasion of death through these objects. After talking of her book-shelf and her bed, Browning comes to the piece of “geranium flower, beginning to die too, in the glass”. The final effect of gloom is produced through words which otherwise sound still more mechanical.

The reputation of Browning has found favour with the critics and readers of modern times due to a variety of reasons, besides his psychological analysis. Browning’s treatment of nature is realistic. He does not idealise it in the manner of Wordsworth. He looks at both sides of the picture and takes his images from all that is pleasant as well as the grotesque, ugly and unpleasant in nature. His landscapes, whether from England or from Italy, are real landscapes. He does not imagine of a land of dreams. Browning is equally realistic in his treatment of love. He does not believe in any extraordinary idealisation of the feminine charms. His method is that of conveying and not of describing and where he describes, his descriptions are realistic.

The characters of Browning are equally realistic. They are very much like living human beings of flesh and blood. He sings of the low as well as the high. His special interest in men and women from lower classes of society, has its own pace in modern context. For example, Kipling and Davies are poets of the weaker sections of the society. Browning shows his affection for the lower animals who find their due place in modern poetry. The imagery of Browning comes from urban setting. The poets of modern times are also more the poets of cities than of villages. Last but not the least, Browning’s ability to bring himself out of the narrow patriotic limits and to sing of any land as well as of his own has its own, relevance in the context of our times.

Thus we find that Browning gives us a deep insight into an abnormal human soul. The portrayal of the lover is so fine that even his crime, instead of creating horror or disgust in the reader, arrests his attention, by virtue of its fascination.

When we sit down to make a general assessment of Browning’s total poetic calibre and achievement, various facets of his poetry strike the mind. Of course, the first and foremost always remains there intellectual and psychological bias of his poetry. Once we have read a greater part of the poetry written by Browning, what starts haunting the mind is the beautiful gallery of men and women who constitute the dramatic monologues of Browning. We feel as if we had journeyed all over the world and met people as simple or as complex as life has to offer. The world of Browning’s poetry is a world of peculiar men and women. There are saints and criminals, artists and cheats, believers and rogues, lovers, ardent as well as jealous, and many more. “There is God’s plenty” as Dryden said of Chaucer, which is also applicable to Browning. Browning’s poetry is a living panorama of life.

In A Grammarian’s Funeral, we get another interesting character-study. The Grammarian is revealed to us in clear and unambiguous terms. His aim is lofty, and his devotion single minded. He wants to be a perfect grammarian and works tirelessly, with zest and vigour, for the achievement of his aim. He continues on his quest for perfection even up to the very last moment of his life.

**“You seek for knowledge and wisdom as I once did, and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you as mine has been.”**

When Frankenstein was published anonymously in 1818, most critics assumed the author to be a man (Percy Shelley, Mary’s husband), because of the dedication of the novel to William Godwin, whose Political Justice (1796) had greatly influenced him. The eventual discovery that it was Mary Shelley, the poet’s wife and Godwin’s daughter, caused some consternation; the blasphemous ideas expressed were considered particularly unseemly for a woman. The style of the novel was generally praised; most agreed with Blackwood’s (March 1818) assessment of “the author’s original genius and happy power of expression.” Finally, while being impressed with the power and vigour of the work, many reviewers criticised the subject matter and the author’s refusal to moralise about Victor Frankenstein’s blasphemous act. The Quarterly Review (January 1818) proves a typical complaint. After summarising the plot and declaring it to be a “tissue of horrible and disgusting absurdity”, the reviewer concludes; “Our taste and our judgement alike revolt at this kind of writing and the greater the ability with which it may be executed the worse it is- it inculcates no lesson of conduct, manners, or morality.” Shelley’s sky-lyrics-‘’Ode to the West Wind’’, ‘’The Cloud’’ and ‘’To A Skylark’’-have all been interpreted as having symbolic significance. The West Wind drives away the old, pale; hectic-red leaves and scatters fresh seeds over the ground. Shelley thus looks upon the Wind as a destroyer of the old order and the usherer of a new one i.e., as a symbol of the forces that will end all evil and bring about the golden millennium in which there will be nothing but peace and happiness for mankind. In the poem The Cloud, the brief life of a Cloud has also been constructed by such critics as a symbol of the immortality of the soul. However, there is no doubt that his concept of the Skylark is entirely symbolic. Shelley’s Skylark, is not just a bird but an embodiment of this ideal, the poet can hear its song but the bird ever remains invisible. The skylark, by its very nature, also symbolizes Shelley’s own poetic spirit.

Andera Del Sarto is another revealing psychological study. Andrea’s painting matches the grey twilight outside his house-soulless and dull and colourless. The poem is a model in the vivid portraiture of a character, revealing himself slowly through his own words. As Andrea begs his wife for the meagre favour of spending the evening with him, the situation proves to be a sparking point for a rambling recollection of his past life, his success and ultimate failure as an artist. We are given a clear insight into the workings of an individual’s mind. We realize Andrea’s hopes and aspirations, his unfilled ambitions, his slow but steady degeneration as an artist in his helpless infatuation for a soul-less woman. We sense his desperate recognition that other artists possess something greater than him, and his realization that in spite of failure in art, he would still choose Lucrezia. As he speaks, his mind ranges over the past- his betrayal of the French King and latter, his own parents who died in poverty, and we hear his weak attempts at self-justification. In the process, he reveals his own self as well as that of Lucrezia.

 **“He paused, looking on me with wonder; and again turning towards the lifeless form of his Creator, he seemed to forget my presence, and every feature and gesture seemed instigated by the wildest rage of some uncontrollable passion.”**

Fired by the ideals of the French Revolution, Mary Wollstonecraft wanted women to emerge as independent creatures in a society that prided itself on the slogan. ”Liberty, Equality and Fraternity,” it is not brutal force that has subjugated women. It is the society that is responsible for their present “inferior” status as weak-minded, fickle creatures; it is the society that has been grossly unjust to women. Among the Romantic poets, Shelley is marveled for his inimitable abstract ideas, but he is less of an artist. He was aiming not at the poetry of art, but at the poetry of rapture. Keats advised him to be “more an artist” and to “load every rift with ore”, but Shelley was aiming at a different effect from that of Keats’s richly decorated and highly finished poetry. The poem” Ode to the West Wind” is universally accepted as one of the best poems in English Literature. The poem is remarkable for its theme, range of thought, spontaneity, poetic beauty, lyrical quality, and quick movement similar to that of the wind itself. This poem along with the “The Cloud” and “The Skylark”, mark an abiding monument to Shelley’s passion for the sky.

In 1979 George Levine and G.C. Knoep, filmmaker, edited a collection of essays. The Endurance of Frankenstein, that marked a turning point in Frankenstein criticism. While still convinced that Frankenstein was “a ‘minor’ novel, radically flawed by its sensationalism by the inflexibly, public and oratorical nature of even its most intimate passages” Levine argued that Frankenstein was the” most important minor” novel in English. It had become a metaphor for our own most crucial concerns expressing the “central dualities and tensions of our time by posting a world without God”. Approaching the novel from a variety of critical perspectives, feminist materialistic and psychoanalytical the essays in this collection demonstrated that there was far more to Frankenstein than a quaint perspective on Romanticism. Mary Shelley was no longer considered to be simply echoing the ideas of her more illustrious Romantic friends and relations. Instead, she was seen as a woman writ offering a female perspective on such issues as birth and family, and a female critique, rather than a celebration, of the masculine preoccupations of Romanticism.

**“All the world is a stage, thought I; and few are there in it who do not play the part they have learnt by rote; and those who do not seem marks set up to be pelted at by fortune; or rather as signposts, which point out the road to others, whilst forced to stand still themselves amidst mind and dust.”**

Shelley’s financial situation improved and they moved to Windsor in August 1815. In January 1816 Mary gave birth to a son, William. Claire meanwhile seduced George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824), and was pregnant with his child. Mary Percy and Claire joined Byron with his friend and personal physician John Polidori the Villa Diodati by Lake Geneva. It was here that the events, recounted in Mary Shelley’s ‘Introduction’ to 1831 edition of Frankenstein, took place. Fanny Imlay, another of Mary’s half-sisters committed suicide in 1816 and two months later, Harriet Shelley drowned herself in the Serpentine, Hyde Park.

In The Bishop Orders his Tomb, we have yet another shrewd psycho-analytical study. We get an insight into a mean, vain and materialistic man, who, ironically enough, is a priest. Again, a man of exquisite aesthetic taste, the Bishop is not eager to leave the pleasures of this life. His worldly life has been replete with voluptuous satisfactions. Now on his death-bed, he wants a tomb built for him. He gives directions to his three sons. Once again, the situation is a starting point for the mind to ramble and range over the incidents of the past. The Bishop recollects his sons’ mother and her beauty. It sets him off to remember the envy of his colleague, Bishop Gandolf. His small-mindedness and meanness come out as he talks of his rival. Gandolf has deprived him of the place in church which he wanted for his tomb. He wants to compensate for the loss by getting a more ornate and costly monument with a better classical inscription on it. His voluptuous tastes come out in his ideas for the designs on his tomb. What with figures of nymphs being chased by Pan, the Bishop is as much a pagan as a Christian.

**“Have my murderous machinations deprived you also, my dearest Henry, of life? Two I have already destroyed? Other victims await their destiny; but you, Clerval my friend, my benefactor.”**

For many of the most recent critics, the text itself is “monstrous”, calling into question traditional values and comfortable categories. The idea of “monstrosity” itself forms a key issue in Fred Bottings Making Monstrous: Frankenstein, Criticism Theory (1991), which engages with both the text of Frankenstein and the criticism that has attempted to identify and fix the text’s significance.

**“My wait is not yet over? ...you live, and my power is complete. Follow me; I seek the everlasting ices of the north, where you feel the misery of cold and frost, to which I am impassive. You will find near this place, if you follow not too hardly, a dead wrestle for our lives; but many hard and miserable hours you must endure, until that period shall arrive.”**

In their exploratory urge and enthusiasm many modern Prometheus (Physicists, astronomers, chemists and others) are endeavouring to ‘open up’ the ‘womb’ of Nature and of the entire cosmos. Some of them claim to have successfully revived the dead tissues and organs of man. Most of them have done wonderful jobs, made discoveries for which they got the awards including the prestigious Noble Prize.

**“Me miserable! which way shall I fly**

**Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?**

**Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell.”**

Mary Shelley, in her mind-boggling novel Frankenstein-projects and anticipates the dangers inherent in man’s over-zealous attempt to fiddle with what lies in the dark ‘inside’ of the entire creation. The novel carries both a moral and unleashing a warning-let us not be guilty of ‘rape’ of innocent Nature, and unwittingly create monsters and thereby be the pioneers of unleashing Satanic forces for the total annihilation of mankind; let us first eliminate the evils which are corroding the present generation root out the cancerous weeds which are spoiling the otherwise beautiful garden earth.

**“Alone, alone, all,, all alone,**

**Alone on a wide wide sea!**

**And never a saint took pity on**

**My soul in agony.”**

The primary family relationship for the Mary Shelley is of father and daughter; mother rarely survive in her long novel. Her most notorious Novella Mathelda, an account for a father’s incestuous desire for his daughter. Although completed in 1819, Mathelda was not published during Mary Shelley’s lifetime. It is in these later novels that she is sometimes considered to provide her most conservative and sentimental celebration of the domestic affections, demonstrating the need for both men and women to set aside individual needs and desires in the interests of the well-being of the family. Even in these last novels, the ambivalence demonstrated in Frankenstein remains, and Mary Shelley tempers her celebration of the family with recognition of the problems for women who define themselves purely in terms of their family roles and responsibilities.

**“Oh! Peace, peace, my love, this night, and all will be safe; but this night is dreadful, very dreadful.”**

Shelley’s idea of the Islands of Delight as expressed in ‘**Lines Written among the Euganean Hills’**, is merely a product of an unfounded optimism and has no logical bearing. Shelley’s faith is no doubt genuine and intense, but it comes from his abstract visions, not from sound logical reasoning. He is ever haunted by the Eternal Mind. He constantly endeavours to look beyond the evil of life and chases the invisible and impalpable. He gives various names to this unattainable thing. In his Hymn To Intellectual Beauty, he describes it as the spirit of Beauty pervading the universe. He speaks of it as an “unseen power” that rarely visits human hearts as an ‘awful loveliness’ that can free this world from tyranny and oppression. Thus, a profound note of yearning for the unattainable is another feature of Shelley’s poetry. According to Cazamian**,”The tone of Shelley’s poetry is that of a keen aspiration, in which mystical desire, with its anguished pangs and spiritual raptures, transcends the joys and sufferings of ordinary mankind.”**

Mary Shelley’s next novel, Perkin Wasbeck (1830), examines the manner in which political forces influence and control the individual, and as in Frankenstein, the way in which the domestic ideal is sacrificed to the desire for power.

**“Amiable cousin! Such were your thoughts, mild and gentle as your own dear voice. But I-I was a wretch, and none ever conceived of the misery I then endured.”**

“….It is as a female fantasy of sex and reading, then, a gothic psychodrama reflecting Mary Shelley’s own sense of what we might implicit in Paradise Lost.” (Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in Adam’s Monstrous Eve)

 **“I expected this reception…All men hate the wretched; now then must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature to whom thou art bound by-ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You purpose to kill me. How dare you thus sport with life? Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind. If you will comply with my conditions, I will leave them and you at peace, but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends.”**

Like the other Romantic poets, Shelley too was an ardent lover of Nature. Like Wordsworth, Shelley conceives of Nature as one spirit, the Supreme Power working through all things **“The one spirit’s plastic distress/ Sweeps through the dull dense world.”** Again he personifies each object of nature as an individual life, a part of that Supreme Power, Nature. He celebrates nature in most of his poems as his main theme such as ‘’The Cloud’’, ‘’To a Skylark’’, and ‘’To the Moon’’, ‘’Ode to the West Wind’’, ‘’A Dream of the Unknown’’. The tone of pessimism set in the beginning with ‘dead’, ’ghosts’, ’corpse in grave’ reaches its climax with ‘ I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed’. In the last stanzas the poet moves from the natural to the human misery and the mention of the hearth combines the two because hearth is seen as the centre of the earth where the natural world and the human one merge. The poet is seeking transcendence into the sublime as did Wordsworth in Tintern Abbey. The affinity of temper between them prompts the poet to appeal to the Wind to save him from his present plight. At this hour of distress the poet can look upon the Wind as a competent savior, a symbol of aid and relief. Finally, the West Wind is treated by the poet as representing the forces that can help bring about the golden millennium, when the miseries and agonies of mankind will be replaced by all round happiness.

Ambiguity characterises the novel. The interrogative mode of quotation from Milton that forms the epigraph to Frankenstein is thus appropriate for a text that raises more questions than it answers. From the formal issues of genre (is the novel “Gothic”, that hybrid genre halfway between romance and realism; “female Gothic”, “realistic”, or early “science fiction”?) and authorial voice (there are multiple dramatized narratives), to the related and equally vexed question of ideology (who is the monster in the story? Or how is a monster made?) The novel tantalizes incessantly. It is not surprising therefore, that the novel has come to be read as one that addresses modernity’s sense of a fundamental philosophical indeterminacy.

 **“You are sorrowful, my love. Ah! If you knew what I have suffered, and what I have suffered, and what I may yet endure, you would endeavor to let me taste the quiet, and freedom from despair, that this one day at least permits to enjoy.”**

Shelley calls the west wind a destroyer and a preserver at the same time. It is a destroyer because it makes the trees shed their leaves making them bare. The west wind is called a preserver since it carries the seeds to places where they lie in hibernation during the winter and when the sister of west wind, the east wind blows in spring time, they start to germinate and blossom into many different colored flowers. Winter is often seen as death since plants die and many animals hide themselves for the season. The earth looks barren and appears lifeless but spring is a time of rejuvenation, flowers blossom and insects and animals begin to start life again. **The poet gives the credit of carrying the seeds to a safer place in winter to the west wind.** This way it becomes the destroyer and the preserver. It is the monster’s eloquence that has received the most attention. We might expect a grunting animal, but what we are confronted with, as Peter Brook notes in ‘Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts’, is a “supreme rhetorician of his own situation.” The monster controls his anti-thesis and oxymoron-s “that express the pathos of his existence”. Victor is indeed eventually persuaded to make him a mate. Language seems to have power in this novel.

Shelley had a deep interest in ancient Greeks. His enthusiasm for the wisdom of the Greek philosophers is implicit in many of his poems. This gives Shelley a sharper appreciation of natural forms and the theory that artists and poets must try to remove the worldly cover from objects and expose the underlying ideal prototype. Platonism appeals to him most because the guiding power behind the ideal forms serves him in lieu of a religion. In ‘**Adonais’**, Shelley’s Platonism has found the most elaborate expression. Sometimes Shelley becomes pantheistic in his concept of nature when he seems to believe that every aspect of nature is a manifestation of only one and invisible soul or spirit and that after the end of the earthly existence, everything is reunited with that one soul.

The complex structure of Frankenstein involves framed or embedded narratives, which has been called a Chinese box structure of stories within stories. In the outermost frame narrative of four letters, Walton writes to his sister, Mrs. Saville. At this stage, we have an epistolary narrative. This is dropped, however, as we move to an embedded narrative: Victor’s account of his life. Victor’s narrative then serves in turn to frame the creature’s embedded narrative, where he recounts his tale, and that of the De Lacey family, to Victor, who in turn recounts it to Walton. The narrative then returns to Frankenstein until the end, when Walton takes over, and we return to the frame narrative for the conclusion of the story. The anarchaic energy of the text, says Glenni’s Byron, is formally restrained by this tight structure, and in this sense may be profitably compared with Emily Bronte’s Wuthering Heights, another nineteenth-century novel with a similarly complicated and right narrative structure enclosing the anarchaic rebellions of the characters against the established order.

Browning’s classicism is also to be seen in his matter-o-fact projection of manners and customs. This is specially so of the poems reflecting the Italian Renaissance in which he vividly captures the spirit of the age. The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed’s Church captures the luxury-loving sensuous clergy of the Renaissance. My Last Duchess is spoken by a Duke who typifies the arrogance, shrewdness, greed and taste in art which was common in the Renaissance nobleman of Italy. A Grammarian’s Funeral presents a scholar who is also typical of the early Renaissance-giving up his life in arduous study. In Fifine, Browning projects a few classical ideas on art, music, religion and science. Its hero sings in praise of human beauty. He considers Art to be the “love of loving”. Music assures the presence of God. Later on his career, Browning dealt with Greek legends. In Pauline, he speaks of Agamemnon. He also refers to Andromeda and Plato. In Artemis, he shows his classical scholarship. Again, Balaustion’s Adventure’s inspired by his liking for Euripides’classical drama. His delight in Greek life and literature is well evident in Aristophanes’ Apology. Browning had a good grasp of Greek literature and language. One can call him a poet with classical tendencies, but he is not wholly a classicist. In fact, he goes deeper into the inner life of man then would a classicist. He is not careful and clear in his style- which is the first thing one would expect from a classicist. He is quite impatient in his execution. He never bothers to revise and correct. He omits articles and participles, leading to difficulty in understanding. Thus, he ignores the stylistic graces of classicism.

**“You will repay me entirely if you do not discompose yourself, but get well as fast as you can; and since you appear in such good spirits, I may speak to you on one subject, may I not?”**

This co-existence of pessimism and optimism-the swift replacement of one by the other-is a major attractive feature of Shelley’s lyric poetry. This poem is considered to be one of the finest lyrics in English poetry because of its sentiments and the perfect technical construction. The poet touches on the four elements- earth, sky, weather and fire and the transition from the wind to himself is very smooth one and does not feel enforced. It is a complex poem because of the number of similes and they do not appear to be enforced or excessive in any way. The movement of the wind from earth to sky and water is observed minutely by the poet keeping scientific facts in mind. The symbolism of destroyer and preserver is carried through the poem; first with the wind driving the dead leaves away to make place for new ones, secondly with the mention of pumice isle which was built with the lava from a volcano. Volcano is both a destroyer and a preserver since while it erupts it pours forth fire but once it subsides it leaves behind valuable minerals and fertile material. Finally, the poet’s own thoughts are dead leaves to be driven away so that new ones can take their place. The theme of rebirth is thus an integral part of the poem.

**“How can I thank you, my best and only benefactor? From your lips first have I heard the voice of kindness directed towards me. I shall be forever grateful; and your present humanity assures me of success with those friends whom I am on the point of meeting.”**

The convention of frame narrative is that we accept that the stories contained within the frame work are remembered and transcribed virtually word for word by the frame narrator. We might, then ask to what degree differences in voice are effaced by this process, if voice is considered in its admittedly rather vague sense of the features of tone and style. Is the voice in the monster’s narrative all that distinct from that in Walton’s or Victor’s? Are there discernible differences which help to express unique personalities, or are the makers which would allow us to distinguish between narrators effaced by the frame narrator’s recounting of the other stories? Some critics have suggested that, since all the narratives come to us from the frame narrator, distinctions between voices are blurred and the question basic to most narrative theories, who is speaking, becomes problematised. Frankenstein is written in the first person narrative, but do we have one or three first person narrators? The poet then describes how the wind carries loose clouds on its stream and spreads them from horizon to the height of the skies. The wind is the funeral song of the passing year because soon after autumn comes winter when the year ends and a new one begins. Winter is often seen as death since plants die and many animals hide themselves for the season. The earth looks barren and appears lifeless but spring is a time of rejuvenation, flowers blossom and insects and animals begin to start life again. The poet gives the credit of carrying the seeds to a safer place in winter to the west wind. This way it becomes the destroyer and the preserver.

**“Oh! What a miserable night I passed! The cold stars shone in mockery, and the bare trees waved their branches above me; now and then the sweet voice of a bird burst forth amidst the universal stillness.”**

As early as 1823, Richard Brinsley Peake produced an enormously successful melodramatic version of Frankenstein called Presumption: or The Fate of Frankenstein. The story had been quickly appropriated for use as a moral fable. It also rendered the monster conveniently mute even as it removed all speeches against social injustice. Subsequent popular resurrections of the novel have ranged from political cartoons deploying the cinematic versions in the twentieth century. The “meaning” of the novel in the popular imagination today is similarly defines by Hollywood’s obsessive affair with the Frankenstein myth. The persistence of Frankenstein is then, a phenomena that tempts one to resort to cliché-“the hideous progeny” that Mary Shelley wished would “go forth and prosper”-has indeed proliferated monstrously. The novel’s remarkable resistance to be stabilised can be traced to its defining characteristic a suggestive ambivalence that provides fertile soil for interpretation. Shelley shows no sense of history and cannot put forth the cause and remedies of the evils he finds in human society. He has an intense belief that   regeneration of mankind is imminent but cannot tell us why and how it is coming. His West Wind is a symbol of the forces that will bring about this regeneration: it is nothing more. He has never told us what these forces symbolized by the wind are in reality. **Shelley belongs to the younger generation of Romantic poets.** Like the other two poets of his generation, he died young. His poetry divided itself into two distinct moods. In one he is the violent reformer seeking to overthrow the present institutions’ in order to bring about the Golden Age.

**“For the first time also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness. These motives urged me to comply with his demand…and, seating myself by the fire which my odious companion had lighted, he thus began his tale.”**

Shelley is pessimistic about the present but optimistic about the future. He believes that regeneration always follows destruction and that a new and utopian order is certain to come when the present degenerate system is ended. His optimism about the imminent dawn of a golden age is genuine and firm and his prophecy of that millennium underlies most of his poems. In Ode to West Wind also this prophetic note is present and present with the greatest intensity of expression.

The problem with using the Chinese box analogy to describe the narrative structure of Frankenstein is that this term tends to suggest that each story is separate, complete in itself. The narratives are not linear or complete however; we are not taken directly from the beginning of one narrator’s tale to the end and then move to the next narrator’s tale. To give an example, Walton’s initial narrative provides us with an account of Victor’s predicament that would, in a linear narrative, come near the end of Victor’s narration. The narratives, rather than being complete and whole in themselves, are (Frame Narratives) interrelated and independent.

Shelley’s lyrics are surpassingly musical and sweet. Swinburne was ecstatic in his tribute to this aspect of Shelley’s lyricism. Shelley out sang all poets on record, but some two or three throughout all time; his depths and heights of inner and outer music are as diverse as nature’s and not sooner exhaustible. He was alone the perfect singing God; his thoughts words and deeds all sang together. Arnold, one of the worst critics of Shelley, admired his music and remarked: “the right sphere of Shelley’s genius was the sphere of music.” Shelley’s careful handling of diction fitting into the sense of his lines enhances the musical quality keeping with the swift, of his lyrics. The rhythm of Ode to the West Wind is thus exactly in gusty march of the wind itself: “O wild West Wind, thou breathe of Autumn’s being.” Shelley never allows morbidity to overcome the enjoyment in his lyrics. Self-pity is no doubt his favorite theme, but in his lyrics, he presents this self-pity, not as something to be feared, but as an essential part of life. Shelley’s readers are never depressed because they are constantly reminded that sufferings lie only in the present and that in future all sufferings will be replaced by pure happiness. His despondency is soon replaced by an ecstatic rapture of joy when he comes to think of the future happiness of mankind, of the millennium to come:

The structure also draws attention to the presence of a listener or narrate for each narrator, encouraging the reader to consider what purpose each narrator has in speaking, what influence he is attempting to exert over the narrate. Their stories, at least in the case of Victor and the monster, are clearly told in a way designed to achieve a specific effect.

Shelley holds a unique place in English literature by virtue of his power of making myths out of the objects and forces of Nature. Beauty, to Shelley, is an ideal in itself and a microcosm of the beauty of Nature and he calls it ‘Intellectual Beauty’. He celebrates Beauty as a mysterious power. In the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, he says that when Intellectual Beauty departs, this world becomes a “dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate” and if human heart is its temple, then man would become immortal and omnipotent.

In his treatment of nature, he describes the things in nature as they are and never colours it. It is true, he gives them human life through his personifications, but he does it unintentionally for he felt they are living beings capable of doing the work of human beings. His mythopoeia power had made him the best romanticist of his age. In Ode to the West Wind, he personifies Nature as the Destroyer and the Preserver, and in ‘‘The Cloud’’, the cloud is a possessor of mighty powers.

**“Remember, thou hast made me more powerful than thyself; my height is superior to thine; my joints more supple. But I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to thee. I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king, if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me…”**

The narrative style additionally serves to invite us to look for echoes and parallels which link the stories together and simultaneously to identify differences between the three characters. Walton’s ambitions, for example, make him a potential Frankenstein, and too is isolated and alienated from the domestic world. However, Watson truly seems to long for the affection and companionship that Victor spurns, and in this sense he is more closely linked to the monster. In addition, no matter how alienated Walton may feel in the icy waste of the Arctic, he has his crew, a community of sorts who prevent him from indulging in the kind of rampant individualism that destroys Victor.

The melancholy, hesitating spirit so often expressed by Tennyson finds no place in Browning’s verse, as Hudson says, and he looked boldly at the evil of existence without for a moment losing his robustly optimistic faith. ‘Hope hard in the subtle thing that’s spirit’, was the note of his message to his generation; and to the many about him who were asking doubtfully whether, after all, life Was really worth the living, he gave answer in the words of Pippa-“ God’s in his heaven-all’s right with the world.”

The theme of God-man relationship reaches its culmination when the Rabbi declares confidently:” I who saw Power see now, love perfect too:/Perfect I call Thy plan: / Thanks that I was a man:/Maker, remake, complete, I trust what Thou shall do.”

**“Oh, Frankenstein! Generous and self-devoted being! What does it avail that I now ask thee to pardon me? I, who irretrievably destroyed thee by destroying thee by destroying all thou lovedst.”**

The West Wind is the breath of Autumn. Dead leaves, black, yellow and red in colour, fly before the wind, as the ghosts fly before a magician. The West Wind scatters the flying seeds. The seeds lie under the ground and when Spring comes, they grow into flowers of different colours and fragrance. The West Wind destroys dead leaves and preserves useful seeds.

Shelley is describing the approach of the terrible West Wind. In the regions of the sky, Shelley’s emotional ecstasy fires his brain to that kind of superb conception which made the ancient Greeks fill the earth, the air sand the water with gods and goddesses who were but personifications of the forces of nature.

**“My uncle will send me news of your health; and if I see but one smile on your lips when we meet, occasioned by this or any other exertion of mine, I shall need no other happiness.”**

The cloud form on the horizon, gather up in the sky and then darken the space. The sky is at first blue, but it assumes a dark appearance on the approach of the vaporous clouds. From the distant and dim horizon to the highest point in the sky, the whole visible space is filled by the movements of the air. The clouds are up and spread themselves. The scattered and disorderly clouds look like the locks of the mighty West Wind personified, as seen approaching through the sky; these locks resemble the dishevelled and erect hair on the heads of intoxicated and frenzied female worshippers of the wine-god who used to dance madly about.

In the story of Frankenstein there is always more emphasis on description than on dramatic action, more emphasis on telling than showing. The language is often highly emotional, melodramatic, threatening, some critics would say, to fall into absurdity. The creature’s language is rhetorical, but so is much of the book. Indeed, we might ask how much difference we find in the language of the three characters- Walton, Victor and the Monster.

After John Donne, Browning is the greatest exponent of the theme of Love in English poetry. Love is a central theme in Browning’s poetry because he conceived of it as the central principle of the universe. Human love was a means to divine love. Love, indeed, unites man and God. The poetry of Browning, therefore, glorifies love in various situations. He talks of personal love in One Word More, Prospice and By the Fire Side. These poems sing triumphantly of the poet’s own happy married love with Elizabeth. Marked by an intensity of devotion and tenderness, these poems give Browning the same position as Donne in being a great poet of wedded love.

 **“The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,**

**As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed**

**Scarce seem’d a vision,-“**

The Wind blows through the jungle and produces music out of the dead leaves. Shelley requests it to create music out of his heart and to inspire him to write great poetry, which may create a revolution in the hearts of men. He wants the Wind to scatter his revolutionary message in the world, just as it scatters ashes and sparks from a burning fire. His thoughts may not be as fiery as they once were, but they still have the power to inspire men. He tells the Wind to take the message to the sleeping world that if winter comes, spring cannot be far behind. In optimistic note he declares that bad days are followed by good days.

**“I will be with you on your wedding-night.”**

The monsters narrative is an attempt to persuade Victor to assume his responsibilities towards his creation and to construct a mate for him. What strategies does the monster use? How does he emphasise his point about the need for companionship and love? Victor similarly has specific aims in telling his tale to Walton, but by the time his narrative concludes, his real purpose has become clear. As the monster uses his eloquence to make him promise him a mate, so Victor promised to take over his quest to destroy the monster.

We might also consider how reliable the narrators are, both in their assessment of themselves and in their interpretation of other characters and situations. When Victor compares his feelings to those of Justine, condemned to be executed, ad assures us that the “tortures of the accused did not equal mine”, do we perhaps feel a little self-absorbed to be the best interpreter of other people’s feelings? Does Victor even really understand his own fears? He tells us he does not want to rush into marriage with Elizabeth because he first has to deal with the problem of the monster, but his dreams suggest that there is more to it than this, that he would rather dabble with test tubes than procreate in the normal way.

**“Thou who didst waken from his summer-dreams**

**The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,**

**Lull’d by the coil of his crystalline streams,**

**Beside a pumice isle in Baiae’s bay,**

**And saw in sleep old palaces and towers,”**

The calm Mediterranean was sleeping. The music of the glassy waves lulled the ocean to sleep. It was dreaming of towers and palaces reflected in its water. The West Wind creates furrows on the smooth waters of the Atlantic Ocean. At the bottom of the Atlantic grow plants and vegetation. These plants are dry, without sap though they live in water. When the West Wind blows in autumn, the plants on the land wither; the plants at the bottom of the ocean also fade and die.

**“Maybe you are come to a place that will not prove much to your taste, but you will not be consulted as to your quarters, I promise you.”**

Nevertheless, language simultaneously seems inadequate and weak. Characters repeatedly assert their inability to express their feelings. Victor, for example, is constantly falling back on such phrases as “no one can conceive” or “I cannot describe”. While this is a traditional feature of the Gothic, it is also a comment on the inadequacy of language to capture and account for inner experience. The experience in Frankenstein is more precisely captured symbolically in dreams; the nightmare Victor experiences after bringing the monster to life, for example, when Elizabeth is transformed into the corpse of his dead mother, tell us post-Freudian readers all we need to know about his attitude towards human sexuality.

It could be said, that Frankenstein is all about language: its potential power and the breakdown of that power when faced with the prejudices and insensitivity of a society that tends to priviledge the specular, to judge above all appearances. The first key stage of the monster’s education is his recognition of the importance of language. In the hovel adjoining the De Lacey cottage, he sees that people communicate “their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds”, and, even more importantly, that the words they speak “produced pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness”, they produce, that is, emotional effects. While aware that his physical appearance would cause only revulsion if he confronted the family, the monster believes that by becoming an adept in the “golden science” of language, he will be able through his gentle words to win their affection. His subsequent success with the blind father initially bears out his faith in language, but as soon as the others enter, the importance of appearance reasserts itself, and prejudice against what looks alien and other wins out. The monster has a similar experience in his attempt to gain love and companionship through language. Victor is indeed convinced by his eloquence. His words had a strange effect on me. I compassionated him.

**“And, by the incarnation of this verse,**

**Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth**

**Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!”**

Idealism is a part and parcel of Shelley’s temperament. He is a rebel, like Byron, against the age –old customs, traditions, conventions and institutions, sanctioned only by practice and not by reason. Unlike Byron, but, he is not only a rebel but also a reformer. He wants to reconstitute society in keeping with his ideals of good, truth and beauty. According to Compton- Rickett, “To renovate the world, to bring about utopia, is his constant aim, and for this reason we may regard Shelley as emphatically the poet of eager, sensitive youth; not the animal youth of Byron, but the spiritual youth of the visionary and reformer.”

**“Of the dying year, to which this closing night**

**Will be the dome of a vast sepulcher,**

**Vaulted with all thy congregated might**

**Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere**

**Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst:-O hear!”**

Victor too is noted for his fluency with words his ability to manipulate language, his “unparalleled eloquence”. His voice, like the Ancient Mariner’s glittering eye, compels the listener to attend. When he speaks, Walton notes, the sailors no longer want to return home, no longer despair; they are rose to action, filled with courage. But of, this does not last; the sailors insist on Walton turning back. Victor’s eloquence also impress Walton, but, notably, this eloquence fails to persuade him to take over the quest to destroy the monster.

This emphasis on description, however, does not involve a detailed analysis of inner feeling. “Everything internal”, George Levine claims in The Endurance of Frankenstein, “is transformed into large public gesture or high rhetorical argument”. Alternatively, it remains unexplored, to emerge only indirectly through images or dreams.

 Insisting on the power of the heard voice, Mary Shelley draws our attention to the difference between reading and hearing narratives; we can only be told of the modulations in the voice of the speaker. It is difficult to convey, through writing, the sound of Victor’s “full-toned voice” whose “varied intonations”, according to Walton, are “soul- subduing music”. We are told the Monsters voice is harsh, but we cannot hear that harshness when we read. Voice is inevitably rather a vague and not particularly useful technical term in literary studies, and distinctions between narrative voice (as opposed to the narrative point of view) tend to be distinctions between whether that a voice is ironic or intimate than it is to determine than it is “full-toned” or harsh.

Though the intense love that Browning felt for his wife finds expression in some beautiful poems, he found the dramatic mode more congenial. Very few poems can surpass the quiet passion of By the Fireside, One Word More, or Prospice, where the veil of reserve is lifted to reveal the poet’s personal feelings for his wife. However, most of other poems by Browning dealing with love are dramatic in essence. Ion each, there is a certain situation and the revelation of the emotions of a character placed in that situation. As a consequence, the individuality of the speaker is brought out. The dramatic mode naturally gave Browning the opportunity to deal with “Love” in various aspects. It is significant that his own love was smooth and fortunate, and yet, he deals very well with rejected or unfulfilled love. It speaks for his objectivity and sense for the dramatic.

**“I did confess; but I confessed a lie. I confessed, that I might obtain absolution; but now that falsehood lies heavier at my heart than all my other sins. The God of heaven forgive me! Ever since I was condemned, my confessor has besieged me; he threatened and menaced, until I almost began to think that I was the monster that he said I was. He threatened excommunication and hell fire in my last moments, if I continued obdurate.”**

But on, the effect is feeling. As soon as he looks upon the monster, Victor is again filled with horror for the “filthy mass that moved and talked”. When he next catches sight of the “filthy mass” at the window of the hut where he is making the female, enough time has passed for the effects of eloquence to have worn off countenance only malice and treachery, and he tears the female to pieces. Desmond king-Hele remarks: “The verse technique and structure of the Ode to West Wind could scarcely be improved: it is the most fully orchesterd of Shelley‘s poems, and consequently the most difficult to read aloud. The ever fluctuating tempo and he artfully random pauses in the long lines reflect the lawless surging of the wind and its uneasy silences. This device is not overworked: the wonder is that Shelley could use it at all when grappling with the problems of the terza rima and operating within a rigid structural framework. In conformity with this framework, which seemed to be in the Style of Calderon, the first three Stanzas are designed to show the wind’s power in three spheres of Nature, in preparation for the prayer to the Wind, as pseudo-god, in Stanzas 4 and 5.

Another answer could be that Mary Shelley is providing an implicit criticism of Romanticism. Prometheus was a popular figure with the Romantic poets, who emphasized his role as the suffering champion of mankind, and saw in him the archetypal rebel hero.

Mary Shelley was born in London on August 30, 1797, the only child of two notable radicals. Her father was the philosopher William Godwin (1756-1836), author of Enquiry concerning Political Justice (1793), which condemned all human institutions as corrupt and championed reason as the guide which would lead mankind to an ideal state. These ideas were presented in fictional form in his Caleb Williams (1794). Mary’s mother was the pioneering feminist Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97), author of A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792). She died only eight days after her daughter’s birth. Four years later, Godwin married the widowed Mary Jane Clairemont.

**“As I turned promontory I perceived a small neat town and a good harbour, which I entered, my heart bounding with joy at my unexpected escape.”**

If we consider Victor as a reworking of this mythic Prometheus, the implication is that he is one of those admirable over reachers who refuse to accept limitations and are punished. He becomes the embodiment of an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, a rebel against limitations set by the Gods, an admirable man who is punished for his daring. However, when we consider the actual characterisation of Victor, problems immediately appear. First, we have to ask how admirable Victor really is: do we accept Walton’s assessment of him as the divine wanderer who possesses qualities which elevate him far above any normal man? Is he really driven by a desire to help mankind, or is he driven by a simple desire for personal glory? Thus, we also need to consider whether the main sin for which Victor is punished is the daring act of creation, or as it was with Prometheus, or if it is his failure to take responsibility for and nurture the creature he produces. Does his crime lie in what he does, or in what he fails to do? We might also ask in what sense he is a “modern” Prometheus. One answer might be that Mary Shelley links the myth with current scientific theories, suggesting that the spark of life is not fire but electricity. Alternately, he may be a “modern” Prometheus because this is such a secular world; there is no divine machinery here, no God against whom to rebel.

The ambivalent attitude of the author towards her work mirrors the disastrous turmoil of Mary Shelley’s own experiences with procreation. Significantly, in both her life and fiction, every birth manifests itself as a potential catastrophe, with the body of the newborn shockingly transmogrified into the monstrous corpse awaiting resuscitating in its mothers dream. Following the death of her first, prematurely born daughter in February 1815, Mary Shelley noted in her journal “Dream that my little baby came to life again-that it had only been cold and that we rubbed it by the fire and it lived-I awake and find no baby- I think about the little thing all day.”

Another answer could be that Mary Shelley is providing an implicit criticism of Romanticism. Prometheus was a popular figure with the Romantic poets, who emphasised his role as the suffering champion of mankind, and saw in him the archetypal rebel hero. In Prometheus Unbound (1820), a reworking of Aeschylus’ tragedies. Percy Shelley presents him as “the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the earnest motives to the best and noble ends”. He also becomes, as Creator, the embodiment of the Romantic poet, the isolated heroic artist fearless in his quest to bring light to men, punished by the authority against whom he rebels, but still noble in his suffering. Contemporary critics consider that Mary Shelley’s modern Prometheus provides a criticism of the egocentric and antisocial tendencies of Romanticism, suggesting there is little hope for humanity in such self-absorption. In this reading, Mary Shelley is seen to push the Romantic figure of the isolated creative imagination to its extremes and clearly demonstrates the dangers associated with solitude and introversion.

**“Like one who, on a lonely road,**

**Doth walk in fear and dread,**

**And, having once turn’d round, walks on.**

**And turns no more his head;**

**Because he knows a frightful fiend**

**Doth close behind him tread.”**

The complete title Mary Shelley’s novel is Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus. It invites us to make an analogy between Victor Frankenstein and the mythic Prometheus. There are two variations of the Prometheus myth. In Ovid, Prometheus is a creator who moulds the first human out of clay. In Aeshchylus, he steals fire from the heavens and gives it to humans; he is subsequently punished by the Gods for his presumption with eternal torment; he is chained to Mount Cancasus, where an eagle preys on his liver all day, that liver being renewed every night. These two myths gradually converged, and the fire became the vital principle with which Prometheus animated his clay images. The west wind wakes the Mediterranean up from its summer dreams and even manages to shake up the otherwise quite calm Atlantic Ocean. For its path the ocean starts to create cracks and the might of the west wind is so great that even the moss and flowers under the sea begin to tremble with fear. Thus, the west wind acquires the quality of being fearful and creating terror. The clouds are carried by the wind to a tomb and are locked there. During this season, the strong wind does not let the clouds gather easily since it blows them away. Shelley imagines that the wind gathers the clouds in a sepulcher till they have enough strength to burst forth and bring rain. Again the idea of destroyer and preserver is implicit. The clouds are destroyed and without rain the earth becomes barren but then clouds burst bringing rain which brings earth back to life. There is greenery everywhere and earth is rejuvenated.

Although now known primarily as a creator of Frankenstein, Mary Shelley was a prolific writer. She wrote essays and reviews, travel books, mythological dramas and numerous biographies. She also edited Percy Bysshe Shelley’s Poetical works (1839), both generally considered marred by distortions and omissions that resulted in an over-idealised portrait of the poet and his work. Her last publication was Rambles in Germany and Italy (1844), an account of her continental travels with her son Percy Florence Shelley.

**“We rest; a dream has power to poison sleep.**

**We rise; one wand’ring thought pollutes the day.**

**We feel, conceive, or reason; laugh or weep,**

**Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away;**

**It is the same: for, be it joy or sorrow,**

**The path of its departure still is free.**

**Man’s yesterday may ne’er be like his morrow;**

**Nought may endure but mutability!”**

Mary Shelley also wrote many short stories. She was a frequent contributor to the ‘Keepsake’ Annuals of the time. While many of these stories are somewhat sentimental, in accordance with the kind of publication in which they were placed, others quite successfully pursue issues developed in Frankenstein. ‘Transformation’ (1831), for example, concerns another monster, this time a deformed Satanic dwarf, ‘The Mortal Immortal’ (1834) is the story of an alchemist’s apprentice, which examines the meaning and consequences of immortality; and ‘The Mourner’ (1830) again considers aggression, monastery, the double and family relationships.

The analogy drawn between Victor and Satan is not necessarily entirely negative; Milton’s Satan is an interesting, even glamorous figure, nothing like the shadowy figure of the Bible, Percy Shelley even considered that Satan was morally superior to God in Milton’s poem, and many of the Romantic poets admired the grandeur and boldness of his aspirations. While Victor must be condemned for the neglect of his creature, it is possible that he too can still be admired for his bold aspirations, his refusal to be satisfied with a mundane and uneventful existence with his family, and his attempt to give mankind a power thought to belong to God alone. To come to that conclusion, however, perhaps we need to be convinced that his work is driven by the desire to benefit others, and not by more selfish motives. Coleridge’s poem was published in Lyrical Ballads (1798). The story concerns an ancient mariner who meets three men on their way to a wedding feast; he detains one and, with his “glittering eye”, holds him while he recounts his story. He tells how his ship was drawn towards the South Pole by a storm and the ship became surrounded by ice.

**“The tumult of thy mighty harmonies**

**Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,**

**Sweet though in sadness.”**

In this world devoid of living things an albatross flies through the fog and the crew greets it with joy. It seems to be a good omen. The ice splits, the ship begins to move, and the bird flies along with it. Inexplicably, the mariner shoots it, and for this act of cruelty a curse descends upon the ship. She is driven towards the Equator and becalmed on a rotting sea under the burning sun. The dead bird is hung around the neck of the mariner. Death and life-in- Death appear, playing dice on a skeleton ship. When it vanishes all the crew die with the exception of the mariner; he is left alone in an alien world. Moved by the beauty of water snakes in the moonlight, the mariner blesses them, and the albatross falls from his neck. He is saved, but in penance, condemned to travel the world teaching love and reverence for all God’s creatures.

Given the early demise of her mother, whom Mary knew only through her writings (which she ceaselessly devoured), she was forced to live with an uncongenial stepmother, Mary Jane Clairmont. The children from Mary Jane’s previous marriage, daughter Jane, who later named herself the more romanticized Claire, and son Charles, were also a part of the muddle that was home to Mary Shelley. Apart from his own child with Mary W., Mary Shelley, there was also another girl who Godwin had the additional responsibility of raising- Fanny Imlay, the illegitimate offspring from Mary Wollstonecraft’s liaison with American businessman Gilbert Imlay. Strange and dysfunctional families were thus an early part of Mary Shelley’s life-a pattern she was to repeat in her elopement and subsequent marriage with Percy Bysshe Shelley.

The last quarter-century has seen a significant reassessment of Frankenstein. Feministic criticism has been of particular importance in this process, stressing the need to consider Mary Shelley as a woman writer who explores women’s experience. Materialist and new historical readings have also added new dimensions to reading of Frankenstein stressing the significance of particular social and economic conditions to our interpretation of the text. By looking at various rewritings and reworking of the Frankenstein myth, from films to cereal boxes to electricity advertisements, critics have also examined the ever-changing significance of the monster, the changing cultural anxieties which he is adapted to embody. Psychological studies, such as William Veeder’s Mary Shelley and Frankenstein (1996) now complement Frendian readings with Lacanian analysis.

Mary Shelley chooses for her epigraph a quotation from Paradise Lost, one of the books in the monster’s library, and this, along with many other references to Milton’s epic throughout the novel, suggests that we need always to keep this story in mind when reading Frankenstein. The epigraph immediately encourages us to associate Victor with God and the monster with Adam. This seems appropriate since, as Creator, Victor assumes the role of God, and the ‘man’ he creates is the monster. If Victor is associated with God, how can he also be the Prometheus rebel against God? Further, while the monster certainly fits the role of Adam, he becomes also the demon, and assuming the role of Satan, the fallen archangel who engineers the fall of Adam and brings Sin and Death into the world. When the monster confronts Victor after the murder of William, he declares he has been changed by his exclusion from paradise: “I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou divest from joy for no misdeed.” The monster even echoes Satan’s words in Paradise Lost when he declares to Walton that, after his potential companion had been destroyed, “Evil henceforth became any good.” The relationship between Mary and her stepmother was apparently strained. Mary nevertheless, had an intellectually stimulating upbringing associating with such friends of her father as Charles Lamb and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

**“If you had listened to the voice of conscience and heeded the stings of remorse before you had urged your diabolic vengeance to this extremity, Frankenstein would yet have lived.”**

Frankenstein may be primarily a Gothic novel, but as the many quotations from such poets as Coleridge suggest, the novel also has significant connections with the Romantic Movement. The link seems almost inevitable, given Mary’s family background. Her father, Godwin, had a notable impact on many of the English Romantic poets and is mentioned frequently in their writings. Her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, was one of the key Romantic poets, and Mary was frequently in the company of such other notable Romantics as Lord Byron. While the influence of Romanticism on Mary Shelley is undeniable, it is nevertheless not quite so easy to decide what stand she is taking on the Romantic concerns that pervade Frankenstein. While in the past critics have gone so far as to call Frankenstein a handbook of Romanticism, they now frequently tend to see the novel more as critique than a celebration of Romantic ideals.

It is perhaps not surprising that Shelley should be wary of the traditional Gothic form. In 1818, when Frankenstein first appeared, the publication of Jane Austen’s Northanger Abbey and Thomas Love Peacock’s Nightmare Abbey, with their parodic use of Gothic conventions, suggested that the genre, once so popular it dominated the novel market, was losing credibility, Austen, in particular, pointed to the direction Gothic would now take when she demonstrated, with her criticism of her heroine’s over-stimulated imagination, that real terror was produced in and by the mind, the human psyche, not by haunted castles and apparitions wandering through the night.

Frankenstein was written at a time of great changes in British society and deals with in a variety of issues central to the development of industrial Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This was a period of significant developments in science and technology and, at least partly as a result of such advances, also a time of social and political upheaval. In her 1831 Introduction, Shelley declares her desire to “curdle the blood and quicken the beatings of the heart”. This is the first of many signals to the reader that Frankenstein should be placed in the genre of the Gothic. Difficulties begin to arise, however, when we attempt to relate Frankenstein to other Gothic novels, as the term Gothic covers a wide variety of texts and is by no means simple to define. The ‘classic’ Gothic published during the period 1765-1820 most notably includes Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Oranto (1765), Ann Radcliffe’s The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) and Matthew Lewis’s The Monk (1796). These texts are lined by what are traditionally considered conventional Gothic traits: the emphasis on fear and terror, the presence of the supernatural, the placement of events within a distant time and an unfamiliar, and mysterious setting, and the use of highly stereotyped characters. It we were to limit our definition to these characteristics, however, it would be difficult to locate Frankenstein firmly within Gothic genre. In spite of Shelley’s claim to be writing a ‘ghost story’ there is nothing supernatural here; it is an emphatically secular and material world that she constructs. There are no decaying monasteries, no decadent monks, headless nuns or terrifying brigands; castles are mentioned as though features or” a travelogue rather than serving as the setting for supernatural events. All the conventional Gothic trappings have disappeared.

**“Remember, that I am thy creature: I ought to be thy Adam, but rather I am the fallen angel, whom thou divest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I am alone irrevocably excluded…On you it rests, whether I quit forever the neighbourhood of man, and lead a harmless life, or become the scourge of your fellow creatures, and the author of your own speedy ruin.”**

In its exploration of these concepts, its focus on the dark side of the psyche, Frankenstein also begins to emerge as a precursor of such later Victorian Gothic novels as Stevenson’s Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Well’s The Island of Dr. Moreau and Wilds’s The Picture of Dorian Gray. Like Frankenstein, these novels refuse to distance the reader from the horrors described but insist instead on the modernity of the setting and the concerns; they draw on science, not superstition, on what is frighteningly possible and familiar rather than entirely absurd and alien. They make an inescapable link between the world of the text and the world of the reader. They emphasise that the horror is in us, now.

The primary concern of Browning was with the soul of man. He selected those men and women who could provide interesting studies in human psychology. My Last Duchess, Evelyn Hope, Porphyria’s Lover, The Last Ride Together, Andrea Del Sarto, The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed’s Church and A Grammarian’s Funeral can be cited as appropriate examples. Compton-Rickett has made a very interesting observation on how Browning brings almost all his themes within the scope of his psycho-analytical approach: “All his (Browning’s) writings are experimental studies in spiritual experience; whether he deals with love or patriotism, intellectual ambition or artistic passion, it is all brought to one common denominator-its effect upon character, its value in the making of the soul.” This gives an effect of unity to the themes of Browning.

For a number of reasons, she rejected her utopian and radical heritage and opted for a more conservative and pessimistic view of the world. Her mother’s early death, her quarrels with William Godwin, her marital difficulties with Percy Shelley (the Romantic poet), her own political instincts, her extensive readings on the French Revolution, along with the fact that she came to intellectual maturity during the decline of Napoleon and the Metternichian Restoration that followed, all contributed to her growing detachment from radicalism. Her gravitation towards conservatism was more overt and explicit later in her career. But of, it is already apparent in her first and most well-known novel, Frankenstein, which was written in 1816-17 and published anonymously in 1818, just after the beginning of the Restoration.

While Shelley provides many sublime landscapers, it is difficult to decide “whether or not she is celebrating them in the Romantic manner; her characters may, but does she? Is there inspiration in the icy mountainous landscape where Victor confronts the creature, in the Arctic regions where both meet their deaths, or do these sublime landscapes simply seem dangerous, alien, sterile? Do they stimulate and inspire or do they simply suggest alienation and the death of feeling? Perhaps these alien and barren landscapes have no more to do with humanity than Victor’s egoistical Promethean desires.

As the Romantics looked within to their own inner natures, they also looked without to the natural around them. Reacting against the earlier eighteenth-century admiration for the ordered and cultivated, they became more interested in the wild and untamed aspects of nature. In this respect they were greatly influenced by Edmund Burke (1729-97) and his Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1757). Burke defined the beautiful as that characterised by smallness, orderliness, smoothness, brightness; the sublime, however, was of much more interest to the Romantics, with its associations of darkness, solitude, infinity, of terror inspired by the gigantic and incomprehensible.

Finally, we need to consider whether there is closure or if the novel remains open-ended. As it is so difficult to fix one meaning or message to Frankenstein, then on the level of the interpretation there is no closure. Although we seem to come to a decisive end with the death of Victor and Walton’s decision to return home, there is actually no real closure on the level of the plot either. The monster vows to immolate himself. As Fred Botting points out in Making Monsters, however, “from the textual evidence the reader can never know what happens to the monster.” This ending is, for us, forever deferred, something projected in the future, and Mary Shelley leaves the reader, like the monster, “lost in darkness and distance.”

**“I could not sustain the horror of my situation; and when I perceived that the popular voice and the countenance of the judges had already condemned my unhappy victim, I rushed out of the court in agony…Anguish and despair had penetrated into the core of my heart, I bore a hell within me.”**

Mothers and daughters, fathers and daughters, husbands and wives, all these strands weave the fabric of Mary Shelley’s life and her writings... like her mother, the so-called “unsex’d female” whose work and life blistered the bind of propriety and decorum in the late 1790s in Britain, Mary Shelley too found in writing the only refuge in a life that was marked by the same notoriety and public visibility as her mother’s. Indeed, writing was the only thing that was considered a worthy activity in the households of both men writers and ideologies with whom she lived till the age of twenty-five. When we turn towards recent definitions of the Gothic that are more concerned to tease out the Gothic essence than to list the surface trappings, we find an emphasis on this dark side of the human psyche. The Gothic is now considered an attempt to expose and explore the unconscious world of desires and fears that both society and the individual, in an attempt to maintain stability, attempt to suppress. Gothic writers are interested in the breakdown of boundaries, in the exploration of what is forbidden, in desires that should neither be spoken of nor acted upon. They are concerned, above all, with excess and transgression. Reading Frankenstein as a Gothic novel, we might suggest that what Victor does and what Victor creates are unnatural. He goes too far, breaks the laws of nature, crosses forbidden boundaries, and what he unleashes, within himself and in society, is disruption and destruction. With suggestions of incest in Victor’s love for his “more than sister” Elizabeth, with the focus on a creative act that usurps the natural functions of both God and women and creation that blurs the boundaries between life and death, with the allowance for the possibility that the creature is Victor’s doppelganger acting out his forbidden desires, an expression of the darker side of his psyche, Frankenstein quite clearly fits within modern conceptions of the Gothic.

An additional complication arises when we see the monster as Victor’s double. If the monster is Satanic, Victor by association, can then be linked not only with Prometheus and with Gog, but also with Satan, the fallen angel. While the analogy drawn between the monster and Satan focuses our attention on the creature’s horrific acts of savage violence, the analogy between Victor and Satan focuses our attention more on Victor’s pride and ambition. In attempting to displace God, he demonstrates the same pride as Satan, who had similar aspirations. Commenting upon his torment of guilt, Victor draws upon the following simile: “Like archangel who aspired to omnipotence, I am chained in an eternal hell”. Victor’s hell is within him, it is hell as a psychological state, but this is also true of the hell so powerfully described by Satan in Paradise Lost. The most obvious connection with the story of the ancient mariner is Walton’s journey into the frozen wastes of the Arctic; Walton even quotes the poem when the ship is trapped in the ice. However, the mariner’s story actually seems to throw more light upon the experience of the other characters. Like Victor, the Ancient Mariner defies God. In shooting the albatross he disturbs the natural order and his world, like Victor’s is transferred into a nightmare vision of an alien universe, a meaningless and terrifying wasteland, a world without God. Even after the mariner is forgiven, we are left with the suspicion that this vision of the world may have been prompted by the mariner’s insight into the truth of the human condition. The monster’s experiences may offer a similar insight into a godless world, an irrational, terrifying world managed only by human institutions which are corrupt and individuals who are responsible and cruel. Further, like both Victor and monster, the mariner is an alienated individual. Once he shoots the albatross, he is no longer at peace with himself, and he is shunned by the wider community. Even after he is forgiven, although he becomes aware of the joys of family and community life, he is forced to do penance which keeps him still a solitary, marginal figure, eternally wandering the world. The poem offers a haunting portrayal of the guilt and loneliness that Mary Shelley also captures through the experiences of her characters.

Browning held a high opinion about the kind of failure spoken of in A Grammarian’s Funeral. Imperfection and failure are the glories of man. He must set his goal high, for the unattainability of ideals is not only an encouragement to progress, but a prophecy of fulfilment in the next world. Death is thus not a sign of extinction of life put a “groom, that brings a taper to the outward room.” Death lights the path to a better world.

Percy Bysshe Shelley had a lifelong interest in science, and Dr. Adam Walker, who theorised electricity as the sparks of life, the soul of the material world, had a particularly strong influence upon him. Shelley’s enthusiasm led to various experiments, which in turn apparently led to results ranging from holes in his clothes and carpet to electrifying the family cat.

When he says, “God’s in his heaven-/All is right with the world,” he doesn’t mean that man should just leave everything upon God.

Further, in his sermons which,” have long been made a part of a young woman’s library”, Dr. Fordyce has laid down the manner in which women ought to be educated. To Mary Wollstonecraft, they are “idle empty words.”

Technological developments had a notable impact on people’s lives, endangering traditional ways of living in much the same way as scientific developments undermined traditional beliefs. In the first stages of the Industrial Revolution the introduction of new technologies posed a significant threat to the livelihoods of working class, frequently prompting violent reactions. The Luddite disturbances of 1811-17, during which factories and mills were attacked and machines destroyed, stirred uneasy memories of the bloodier excesses of the French Revolution of 1789. The French Revolution was initially seen by Godwin, Mary Shelley’s father, and by Wordsworth as the sign of the start of a new era in history. The revolutionaries removed corrupt institutions and, like Godwin, believed in the perfectibility of man. They could be said to be attempting to create a new man; but although their motives were admirable, the means they adopted were violent, and their execution of the King, traditionally considered the representative of the divine on earth, suggested defiance of God’s laws. Some critics have suggested Shelley’s monster may be read as an emblem of the French Revolution itself, a ‘gigantic body politic’, as Anne Meltor states, ‘originating in a desire to benefit all mankind’ but so abandoned and abused ‘that it is driven into an uncontrollable rage’.

 **“ For if that moon could love a mortal…**

**…She would turn a new side to her mortal,**

**Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,**

**Blind to Galileo on his turret**

**Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats-him even.**

**Think the wonder of the moonstruck mortal.**”

Browning’s faith in the salvation of human soul emerges from his faith in the goodness of God. Browning has infused a breath of hope and promise in every word of his poetry. Hudson remarks on Browning and his optimism, that he was an uncompromising foe of materialism. He preached God and immortality as the central truth of the philosophy of life he was absolutely convinced of their reality. “Hope hard in the subtle thing that’s spirit,” was the note of his message to his generation. To the many about him who were asking doubtfully whether, after all, life was really worth the living, he answered in the words of his Pippa: “God’s in his heaven/ All’s right with the world.”

Shelley’s account of a scientist who creates a monster and refuses to take responsibility for the results of his experiments emerges at least partly out of her familiarity with and understanding of the scientific debates and discoveries of her time. In Mary Shelley, Anne Mellor convincingly demonstrates how closely she relied upon the works of Humphrey Davy, Erasmus Darwin, and Luigi Galvani. Davy’s pamphlet, A Discourse, Introductory to a Course of Lectures on Chemistry (1802), provides Shelley with information about chemistry, with the suggestion that chemistry might provide the secret of life, and with material for Waldman’s lectures. Shelley, like Davy, distinguishes the master-scientist who seeks to interfere with and control nature, to modify and change nature’s creations, from the scholar scientist who seeks only to understand. Unlike Davy, however, Shelley believed the former to be dangerous, the latter to be the good scientist, the type of scientist exemplified by Erasmus Darwin. While Percy Shelley, in his 1818 Preface, refers to Darwin as one of the scientists who have considered such an act of creation as ‘not of impossible occurrence’. Darwin, like his better-known grandson, Charles, was an evolutionist, not a creationist, and therefore directly opposed to the fictional Victor Frankenstein who wants to create and change life through chemical means and is not willing to wait for the slow processes of evolution. From this perspective Victor is, like Davy, the bad scientist, the one who interferes with and changes nature. Darwin is the good scientist who only observes and records.

Romanticism is as difficult to define as the Gothic; indeed, we now generally speak of Romanticisms to suggest the complexity of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, there are at least three defining characteristic which can be identified with some confidence as features of Romanticism that are also of specific relevance to Shelley’s Frankenstein. There is a concern with radical social reform, a preoccupation with role of the poet and the workings of the imagination, and an interest in nature. Flush with the hard won knowledge about the secrets of life, a young man locks himself in his apartment to engage in a gruesome but fascinating task, i.e., creating life. He aspires to usurp the roles of both God and woman to create a new species that would acknowledge him as its Creator. The obsession blinds him to everything, but ultimately isolates him from all. When he is successful in his efforts, he is torn by remorse, shame and guilt as he sees the monster he has created out of control.

**…’’ ‘I, the miserable and the abandoned.’…I am an abortion to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on…I have murdered the lovely and the helpless… I have devoted my creator to misery; I have pursued him even to that irremediable ruin.”**

It is specifically galvanism, however, to which Mary Shelley refers Frankenstein, in 1791, Luigi Galvani published Commentary on the Effects of Electricity on Muscular Motion which suggested that animal tissue contained a vital force, which he dubbed ‘animal electricity’ but later came to be known as ‘galvanism’. Galvani believed this was a different form of electricity from that produced by such things as lightning, that it was produced by brain, conducted by the nerves, and produced muscular motion. This theory led to a variety of experiments on human corpses, the most notorious of which was carried out by Giovanni Adini on the corpse of the murderer Thomas Forster after he was hanged at Newgate. Wires were attached to stimulate galvanic activity and the corpse began to move, giving the appearance of re-animation. Such experiments, as these were widely discussed in delightful detail in the popular press, and, as Mellor suggests, no doubt formed ‘the scientific prototype of Victor Frankenstein, restoring life to dead bodies.’ Drawing upon scientific research, then Shelley provides a frighteningly believable prediction of what the future might hold in a world where it is man, and no longer God, who holds the secret of life.

Towards the end of the poem, Browning establishes Divine Love as the only source of communion between Man and God. It was out of His love for Man that God had sent His son, Christ to live and die for men. Divine love, therefore, becomes the key note of Browning’s entire religious poetry and in this he finds the only justification of human faith. In this respect, the religious poetry of Browning can be called purely religious, because it links Man and God on the basis of love.

**”Oh! No moral could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished: he was ugly then: but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion. It became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived.’’**

While Victor describes the monster as “the demon” or “the fiend”, the monster surprises us by speaking with eloquence and dignity, his language gradually assumes a biblical solemnity. Instead of being like Adam in the Garden of Eden, the monster claims to be more like a fallen angel, unreasonably and forcefully driven from heaven. “Only misery made me a fiend”, it tells Victor. “Make me happy and I shall again be virtuous”. He demands a female companion for himself. He is so persuasive that Victor agrees, although the sight of the filthy mass that moves and talks fills him with hatred and loathing.

Epistle of Karshish also presents the theme of Divine love. Here, we have an Arab physician who, in spite of his scientific training, is prone more to faith than to doubt. His faith is the result of the mysticism that he inherits from his race. As a man of science, he is not prepared to accept the story of the rising from the dead. But of, as a mystic, he believes in the fundamental love of God for humanity. He believes that it was out of his love for humanity, that God had sent Christ for human emancipation. He believes that “the All Great were the All Loving too”. Thus, towards the end of the poem, Karshish emerges as a believer in the face of all public criticism. In this sense, the poetry of Browning becomes purely religious, not that he was not aware of the scientific developments of his time; rather, he was a firm believer in spite of all changes that were taking place around him.

**“Beware, for I am fearless, and therefore powerful. I will watch with the wiliness of a snake, that I may sting with its venom. Man, you shall repent of the injuries you inflict.”**

While Frankenstein is generally identified as Gothic novel with important links to the Romantic Movement, critics have suggested that it has connections with many other genres. Frankenstein may be seen as the first work of science fiction, drawing as it does on scientific and technological advances and suggesting the possible future consequences of such developments. Some critics have identified features which link it to the sentimental novel; some have placed it in the tradition of the confessional novel which included such other works at Godwin’s Caleb William; others have suggested that the language and psychological interests of the novel identify it as a precursor of realist modes of writing. As the many conflicting critical views suggest, while Frankenstein may be associated with a wide variety of genres, the novel repeatedly refuses to be limited to any particular one. Frankenstein appears to be, as Muriel Spark suggests in Child of Light, a “new and hybrid fictional species”, and so it is quite appropriate that Mary Shelley should bring her ‘Introduction’ to a dose with the words” And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper.” Both book and monster are constructed out of an assortment of sometimes ill-fitting bits and pieces, and perhaps, ultimately, we should consider whether Frankenstein may be more concerned with questioning the validity and restraints of classifications than fitting comfortably into specific form. The dominant theme thus in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein is that of birth and creation. In giving life to his creature, Victor Frankenstein usurps the role of God. Fired by enthusiasm during his first experiments, he imagines how “A new species would bless as its creator and source…No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs”. In her 1831 Introduction, Mary Shelley suggests that this is his main crime: his presumption in displacing God as creator. When the story was adapted for the stage in 1823, it was, in fact, given the title Presumption; or The Fate of Frankenstein.

Frankenstein also seeks to usurp the power of woman, and in this he may be revealing his rebellion against the normal family unit, and, the responsibilities in belonging to such a unit. He may also be revealing a fear of the natural processes of birth, possibly echoing Mary Shelley’s own ambivalence about child birth. First pregnant at sixteen, and almost constantly pregnant during the next five years, she lost most of her children soon after they were born. Victor’s “workshop of filthy creation” may have womb-like connotations. Further as Ellen Moers implies in ‘Female Gothic’, the creation of the newly-created monster may suggest the appearance of the new born baby.

**“No torture shall ever exhort a consent from me. You may render me the most miserable of man, but you shall never make me base in my own eyes. Shall I create another like yourself, whose joint wickedness might desolate the world? Begone! I have answered you; you may torture me, but I will never consent.”**

The intensity of the monster’s response to his retention by the de Laceys is rooted precisely in the injury done to his sense of amour-propre. He believes that “to see their sweet looks turned towards me with affection, was the utmost limit of my ambition,” but his ensuing account of why he believes he will be successful in his quest shows that he has developed the sense of amour-propre that marks the transition, in Rousseaun terms, from the natural to the social state: “The poor that stopped at their door were never driven away. I asked, it is true, to greater treasures than a little food or rest; I required kindness and sympathy; but I did not believe myself utterly unworthy of it.” Upon the monster’s first rejections by human beings, he simply moves away to find new sources of food and shelter. This is the way of Rousseau’s “savage man” he compare(s) the difficulty of conquering his antagonist with the trouble of finding subsistence elsewhere, and all is at peace. That the monster’s response to his rejection by the de Laceys should be a desire for revenge, rather than simple disappointment, is due to his having developed a sense of his own self-worth. This being, who cannot trace his existence to a protecting God, finds his prospects for happiness controlled by such arbitrary and intractable determinants as his outward appearance, and his sense of justice is outraged. When the monster addresses Frankenstein as cursed, “cursed creator” and tells him that “**I declared everlasting war against the species, and, more than all, against him who had formed me**” he views his entire existence through the prism of his socially acquired sense of justice; he finds his existential condition intolerable, and he focuses his desire for revenge on his creator.

Thus we see that Browning’s philosophy revolves around the soul of man. His concern is with what happens to man and to his soul. The range of his philosophy is very wide. It covers the time past, the time present and the time future. It helps us to look better into life and its problems. Having read the poems of Browning, one finds oneself wiser, because his poems are a study in two worlds. Browning’s optimism was partly a result of experience- his own joyful personal life and zest for life. It is not a facile or blind optimism, for it does not ignore the evil, the doubt and the ugliness of this life. The optimism is based on life’s realities. Life is full of imperfections but in this very imperfection lies hope, according to Browning’s philosophic views. Since Browning’s concern was with the interior of man, he looked at them with the eyes of a psycho-analyst. The dramatic monologue suited him best for his purpose. Browning catches his character in one of the most glaring incidents of his life, and builds up his entire personality mainly around the causes and results of that incident. Right in the process of building up the character, he narrates his past history also. The incident has necessarily to be of great significance because the character is to be compelled to reveal himself fully under the influence of that incident. Browning displays the rare ability of erecting the complete personality of a man on the foundation of a single event from his life. There is not a single trait of personality which is left unexplored or unexposed. Every character of his, therefore, is a complete individual entity in himself, and this happens to be one of the strongest points of Browning’s art of characterisation.

Nevertheless, the world Mary Shelley creates is entirely secular: the Christian myth serves only to provide analogies. Perhaps we need to consider whether there is in fact, any suggestion within the text that Victor should not have attempted the act of creation. Perhaps the crime upon which Mary Shelley focuses is not what Victor does, but what he fails to do: nurture his creation. Victor’s ambition and achievement may be heroic; chaos only ensues because he is not capable of bearing responsibility for what he produces. Victor’s description of his “secret toil” does suggest that he is engaged in something shameful or unlawful.

Percy Shelley’s preface claims that the chief concern of the novel is “the exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection and the excellence of universal virtue”, and domesticity is often idealised. It is the domestic affections for which the creature longs and that Victor repeatedly holds up the ideal to which he should have aspired. The home is represented as a paradise or temple, the woman as the presiding angel.

Nevertheless, as Kate Ellis has most convincingly argued in ‘Monsters in the Garden: Mary Shelley and the Bourgeois Family’, it is quite possible to read the novel as questioning the value of domestic affections and as an attack on rather than a celebration of, the institute of the family. Strictly enforced artificial role distinctions, Mary Shelley demonstrates, result in the creation of a passive, dependent woman who ultimately becomes the monster who must be rejected, and like the creature, no longer the slave but the master. Victor certainly needs to escape the suffocating “silken cord” of the home in order to fulfil his desires, there is no room for ambition or individualism in the domestic world. The treatment of the creature by the De Lacey household points to another defect in the domestic world: it insularity. Ideal though this family may be, it functions only by excluding anything that appears as a threat to its security. The creature devotes himself to the destruction of ideal domesticity once it realise he is doomed to be excluded from it, and in this he may be acting as Victor’s double.

The popular tendency to refer to the creature as Frankenstein is appropriate considering Mary Shelley’s use of the motif of the double- a frequent motif in much Gothic fiction. When Victor refers to the creature as “my own spirit let loose from the grave…forced to destroy all that was dear to me”, he provides the clearest expression of the notion that he and the monster may be doubles, with the monster acting out Victor’s own aggressions. In creating the monster, the civilized beings let loose the violent, monstrous self-contained within, full of primitive emotions, and this monster can be seen as acting out the repressed desires of the civilized being. Doubling even further, however, Walton can be seen as another Frankenstein, for example, and it has even been argued that Elizabeth and the creature can be seen as one.

As a rational and eloquent being, Victor’s creation blurs distinctions between the human and the non-human. To call him, in what has become the accepted manner, the “monster” is problematic. We need to recognize that in doing so we may be in part assuming the perspective of Victor Frankenstein and all the other characters who reject him in horror simply on the basis of his frightening appearance. As Chris Baldick notes in ‘The Politics of Monstrosity’, while monster in modern usage means “something frighteningly unnatural or of huge dimensions”, in earlier usages a monster is “something or someone to be shown. (Cf. Latin, monstare; French, montrer; English demonstrate).”

Victor hires an isolated hut and starts working on the creation of a female monster. The enthusiasm he had shown in creating life in the beginning now fills him with revulsion and horror. He is convinced that he is giving birth to a race of devils on this earth, which might eventually threaten the very existence of man. So he abandons his work, tears apart the inanimate frame and destroys his chemical instruments. In giving life to the hideous creature, Victor may be a Promethean rebel against God, a heroic quester after knowledge after refusing to accept the limitations placed on man. But of, he may alternatively be driven only by an egotistical desire for personal glory. Victor desires to acquire the knowledge hidden from the eyes of the common man. He talks of ridding the world of disease, thereby making man immortal. Yet he does not achieve the glory he intended. He is remembered more for his failure than his genius, for his failure lies not in the creation of the monster but in the intention by which he created it. It was not ambition that killed him, but his distortion of it.

In creating the monster and usurping the role of women, Victor is also rejecting normal human sexuality. His terrible nightmare after the creation of monster seems to support the idea that Victor is repelled by normal sexuality. When he attempts to kiss Elizabeth, she turns into a corpse, the corpse of Victor’s mother, perhaps indicating also that Victor is frightened by incestuous desires. His response to his father’s suggestion that his marriage may be read as a highly telling revelation of his feelings about sexuality: “Alas! To me the idea of an immediate union with my Elizabeth was one of horror and dismay”. He explains that this is because the threat of the monster still hangs over him, but other readings are certainly possible. The same may be said of his words to Elizabeth on their wedding night: “Oh! Peace, peace, my love”, he tells her, “this night, and all will be safe: but the night is dreadful, very dreadful.”

For the more extreme instance of paternal neglect, we need to turn from Godwin and Shelley to Rousseau. Rousseau, to Mary Shelly’s knowledge, abandoned his five children by Therese le Vesseur to the Parisian Founding Hospital. She wrote about this, with some heat, for an encyclopedia of French authors.

We might wonder hoe possibly Victor manages to interpret the monster’s threat: “I shall be with you on your wedding night”. Since it is uttered soon after Victor destroys the female companion, to the reader it seems quite clear that the threat is to Elizabeth, and yet Victor interprets it as a threat against him, and he leaves Elizabeth on the pretext of saving her from the sight of the combat he expects, alone in the bedroom to he murdered by the monster.

The enduring appeal of Mary Shelley’s novel is evidently to do with indeterminacy and ambivalence Hurt is, its textual “monstrosity” as a composition that amalgamates the opposition and allegedly irreconcilable; the old and the new life and death, maleness and femaleness, horror and enthusiasm, fantasy and the tragic inescapabilty of biographical fact. In her introduction to the revised 1831 edition, Mary Shelley sets the tone for the novel as a whole when divided emotionally between affectionate fondness and nauseons repulsion, she sees Frankenstein simultaneously as her “hideous progeny” and “the offspring of happy days”.

Mary Shelley’s challenge to Rousseau’s primitivism echoes some of her mother’s differences with Rousseau. Wollstonecraft maintained a faith in God and reason that provided a metaphysical foundation for believing Rousseau to be ontologically [with respect to the nature of being] wrong in his description of human nature. Mary Shelley had much less faith in such metaphysical sureties, and in the absence of a controlling deity in Frankenstein, the ontogeny of Victor Frankenstein’s creation recapitulates a Rousseauean phylogeny evolution of human kind as a species.

Here the notion of the double aids again in interpretation. It is possible to see the monster as an externalization of Victor’s sexual impulses the ugliness of the monster suggesting his horror of normal sexuality. The monster assures Victor that he will be with him on his wedding night, the time Victor can no longer avoid confronting his own sexuality. He leaves Elizabeth alone, but does that part of himself he rejects, this sexuality, not disappear. Instead, it turns destructive; he unleashes upon her this ugly violent thing: the embodiment of his own twisted sexual impulses.

His ambition may be heroic, but the horrific images of Victor Frankenstein’s “secret toil” suggest that his work is also sordid. While he seems to regret the search for the secret of life we think that it is not the effort but the monster he has created; it is ugly and vengeful. The child that Victor has produced is unnatural and it can have only had unnatural consequences.

Browning’s theme of god, Nature and Man as three interconnected realities is permanent in appeal. In his nature-pictures, Browning has presented real landscapes which are not isolated from the world of man. Man is a part of the world of Nature. Browning’s landscapes and descriptions of nature are primarily from Italy. They are brilliant and colourful. Browning shows special interest in the advent of spring, in sunrise and sunset, and in sharp edges and irregular outlines. Browning’s world of nature is very much a part of the human world and at places it clarifies human thoughts and feelings. In A Grammarian’s Funeral the high peak and the shooting meteors are in keeping with the loftiness of the Grammarian’s aims and the light of his learning. It is a suitable spot to bury the Grammarian, far above the “multitude below”- a place of flashing lightning and gathering clouds, where the dew brings peace and calm. Browning is interested in Nature, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the human values that it represents. It is in this sense that we can say that Browning looks at Nature and Man as two inter-connected realities.

Frankenstein’s central vision of an artificial reanimation of the dead may well find its roots in the author’s painful loss of her mother and first- born child, which may also explain the novel’s intensity of feeling as well as its sudden mood swings from paternal love to guilt and disgust, and from filial subservience to anger and resentment. However it took a casual story-writing competition between Mary, her husband Percy, Lord Byron and Byron’s friend John Polidori for her wilful fantasy to surface and take narrative shape.

**“a stronger light pressed upon my nerves, so that I was obliged to shut my eyes. Darkness then came over me and troubled me; but hardly had I felt this, when by opening my eyes, as I now suppose, the light poured in upon me again.”**

Monsters provide a visible warning of the results of vice or folly. Mary Shelley’s novel, however, problematizes the very notions of monstrosity and humanity. If the creature’s appearance is a visible warning, it is a warning of Victor’s folly, not his own. And although the creature’s exterior may be horrific, he is, at least initially, certainly not “frighteningly unnatural”, rather, he is far more natural and humane than the “father” who rejects him, the villagers who stone him, the ungrateful father who shoots him. It is only when he is exposed to, and suffers from, the viciousness of human society that he himself begins to demonstrate the violent behaviour, to act as the monster his appearance suggests him to be. Can we say that real monsters are created by suffering and oppression? Then again, from what he has seen of his treatment at the hands of ordinary humans up until this point, we might also say that this new “monstrous” behaviour is quite generally characteristic of the “human”, and not just displayed by the oppressed. It is significant that this is the decision of society’s leaders to execute Justine that causes Elizabeth to declare how, in their violence and cruelty, people appear to be “monsters thirsting for each other’s blood”. What, Mary Shelley forces us to ask, is a monster? We can hardly make a clear distinction between the two.

Browning was a great metrical artist. He experimented with a number of stanza-forms and rhyme-schemes. Arthur Symons says regarding Browning’s exceptionally brilliant use of the blank verse: “In one very important matter, that of rhyme, he is perhaps the greatest master in our language. In single and double, in simple and grotesque alike, he succeeds in fitting rhyme to rhyme with a perfection which I have never found in any other poet of any age.” Browning has written My Last Duchess in heroic couplets but the sense runs so naturally from one line to the other that the reader hardly remains conscious of the rhyme. The couplets take the reader alone by virtue of their speed. It is, therefore, that from the point of view of language, My Last Duchess is one of the most lovable poems of Browning.

The words, “Who knows but the world may end to-night?”, are an expression of the speaker’s belief that the world can end at any moment and if it ends at the moment he is taking a ride, then his ride can become eternal in character.

The central enigma of Frankenstein is the evolution of this benign creature into a *child-murderer*, and in sketching this development

**“His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!-Great God! His yellow skin scarcely the work of muscles and arteries beneath: his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of pearly whiteness; but these luxuriance’s only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrievelled complexion, and straight black lips.”**

Mary Shelley uses Rousseauen principles, but she shows an even more fluid transition between the attributes of the natural man and the social being than Rousseau did in his Discourses. It could well be the case that rhetorical purpose has to some degree dictated content in both Rousseau’s Discourses and Frankenstein; Rousseau was addressing questions posed by the French Academy that called for a conceptual opposition between nature and civilization, while Mary Shelley was showing the development of a single individual. In any event, it seems clear in Frankenstein that the natural instinct to compassion leads directly to the desire for social relations in the monster’s dealings with the de Laceys; any such connection is far more difficult to establish in Rousseau. The psychological ground of Frankenstein becomes even more complicated when Mary Shelley effaces the distinction made by Rousseau between amour de soi-meme and amour-propre.

In fact he does not want to admit that the Duchess was innocent and pure at heart. So he indulges in character-assassination and tries to present his wife as if she were loose in morals.

In the summer of 1816, kept indoors by inclement weather, the Shelley’s spent much time at their neighbour Byron’s Villa Diodatiat Cologry on Lake Leman in Switzerland, where the friends kept themselves amused by reading ghost stories to each other and discussing the political and scientific topics of the day. Percy Shelley and Lord Byron were particularly intrigued by the possibility of “ensouling” lifeless matter by means of electricity, which was widely regarded as the force most likely to generate and sustain life. When finally the friends decided to write a ghost story each and see whose was the most chilling and terrifying, Mary Shelley came up with Frankenstein, a tale that owed much to her own life story as to the scientific queries and fanciful ideas entertained by the men closest to her.

In a footnote to the Second Discourse, Rousseau identifies amour de soi-meme as a natural instinct and amour-propre as an artificial sense of hour born of socialism. Amour de soi-meme he calls “a natural feeling which leads every animal to look to its own preservation” whereas amour-propre is “a purely relative and factitious feeling, which arises in the state of society, leads each individual to make more of himself than of any other, [and] causes all the mutual damage men inflict one on another” follows, in Rousseau’s reasoning, that ‘in the true state of nature, there could be ‘no feeling arising from comparisons’ and the natural being ‘could know neither hatred nor the desire of revenge’ since such a being would have no sense of honor to be injured. The congruence between Milton’s and Rousseau’s accounts of the fall from innocence were clear to Mary Shelley. What Milton called pride, Rousseau called amour-propre. Where Milton’s Satan could not bear to be placed below the Son of God, Rousseau would identify this indignation with the ability to objectify oneself and make comparisons on points of relative worth. Satan’s appeal to Eve was that she might be like a god. This sense of honor rooted in comparison and competition recurs in Mary Shelley’s characters. In Frankenstein’s initial dreams of glory, he refers to himself in the third person and imagines himself surpassing all of his predecessors: “So much has been done, exclaimed the soul of Frankenstein-more, far more, will I achieve.” The monster is quite proud of his linguistic prowess, telling Frankenstein, “I may boast that I improved more rapidly than the Arabian, who understood very little, and conversed in broken accents, whilst I comprehend and could imitate almost every word that was spoken. It should be remembered that the monster is not an otherwise normal being with an unfortunately deformed appearance, and his comparisons of himself to Satan are not entirely laments. When he says that “Satan had his companions, fellow devils, to admire and encourage him, if is noteworthy that he identifies himself with the chief, and ‘admired’ rebel and not with any of his fellow devils.”

Thus we find that the speaker’s shift from one idea to another embodies Browning’s faith in the immortality of soul. If a reader at all fails to identify the link between the two ideas, he misses the real significance of the poem. Browning, therefore, demands from his readers, complete agility and alertness of mind which alone can help the reader keep pace with Browning’s thought process. But of, it is not essential that every reader has a mind that works the way Browning’s mind does, and this temperamental gap between Browning and his reader is bound to create problems for the latter. This, therefore, becomes an important cause for the unintelligibility of Browning.

Browning’s love poetry is full of a huge variety of characters and his handling is always marvellous. That is why Chesterton calls Browning “the greatest of love poets” and his poetry, the “finest love poetry in the world” and the “truest of love poetry”. Grierson comments regarding the variety of characters and situations of Browning’s love poetry: “The love he writes of is love between man and woman, and that he knows in many phrases, from the fierce animal passion of Ottima, in Pippa Passes to the romantic love (“Queen Worship” as he called it) so exquisitely rendered in The Last Ride Together and Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli. The natural end of such love is marriage, and Browning, like Donne in an earlier age, is the chosen poet of wedded love.”

**“I declared everlasting war against the species, and, more than all, against him who had formed me.”**

While criticism of Victor Frankenstein has routinely focussed on his desire for the gratitude of his new species, it should not be forgotten, as Ellen Moers has noted, that this passage is also the most direct representation in the novel of the entry in Mary Shelley’s journal that describes her dream of reviving her dead child: “Dream that my little baby came to life again- that it had only been cold and that we rubbed it by the fire and it lived”. The notion that Frankenstein can be given an ethical core through the vehicle of a polarised ideology that criticises Milton, Godwin, Shelley, Rousseau, or others cannot easily accommodate the identification of the overreaching scientist with the most altruistic part of Mary Shelley. The outcome of Mary Shelley’s dream- “I awake and find no baby. I think about the little thing all day- not in good spirits”- subverts the idealisms of both the orthodox and radical traditions. In a Miltonic theology, earthly life serves as a testing ground for a more important hereafter. Wollstonecraft’s concerns are less other worldly than Milton’s. But of, she maintains Milton’s metaphysical belief in the essentially spiritual nature of the human being, while Godwin is drawn in his Utopian projections to envision, in an appendix to An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, the potential immortality of the human species. Mary Shelley’s experiences of having lost her first child and of having been the cause of her own mother’s death in childbirth showed her the fallacy of believing death to be a merely “ideal bound” that could be overcome by force of intellect, but the dream of the recovered baby also showed her the force of the desire behind that illusion.

Frankenstein himself is quite equivocal as he reflects on his own demise. He first advises Walton to “Seek happiness in tranquility, and avoid ambition,” and then immediately reverses himself by saying, “Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed. His disparagement of ambition recalls his earlier advice to Walton “how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow”. This advice is cited by Georgia Levine as the moral of his story but it is a moral that Levine sees’ is argued very ambivalently.” By the novel this ambivalence about the relative value of dreams of glory and domestic happiness can be seen as Mary Shelley’s reading of Rousseau, whose native town, as was Victor Frankenstein’s, was Geneva.

**“Cursed Creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God in pity made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid from its very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow-devils, to admire and encourage him; but I am solitary and detested.”**

Critics of Frankenstein who have seen in the novel an ethical core of condemnation of Victor Frankenstein for his overreaching and his obsessive self-glorification have underestimated the equivocality of Mary Shelley on this subject. It should be kept in mind that the most powerful influence for a strong sense of self-respect in Mary Shelley’s life and writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, who argued strongly that the acquisition of a sense of self-respect was the only means by which women and children could escape being degraded by the institution of the patriarchal family. Those who wish to see Victor Frankenstein unequivocally condemned sometimes make Walton a foil to his obsession.

When Mary Shelley derived from Rousseau the belief that ‘the most characteristic part’ of human nature is his affections and showed the operation of those affections in Frankenstein, she created characters whose psychologies were inextricable mixtures of altruism and narcissism. Walton identifies the reasons for his journey both as a desire for “glory” and for the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind.’ The monster’s first reaction to hearing himself described by the de Laceys as a “good spirit” is to “become more active” in seeking to discover why Felix appeared so miserable, and Agatha so sad so that might be in power to restore happiness to these deserving people; but when they injure his own sense of deserving, his entire being conies to be devoted to revenge. Victor Frankenstein, of course, is the most complexly drawn figure in this matter.

Browning is optimistic about the immortality of the soul and its salvation, and about the goodness of God. More than that, Browning is prepared to console man even for his failures, because he is of the opinion that God must reward us in one life or the other. Even the ‘thrice as old’ lover of Evelyn Hope is full of hope about becoming one with his ‘sixteen years old’ beloved. Here we should remember, however, that Browning’s optimism is not an easy or cheap kind of optimism. He is not showing us an evergreen land as such.

Given such documentary evidence, it is not difficult to detect pertinent resemblance between the story of Frankenstein on the one hand and Mary Shelley’s biography on the other. Haunted by her baby’s death and vainly conjuring possibilities of reviving her, Mary Shelley was also deeply traumatised by the knowledge of her own mother’s death in giving birth to her. It seems important to note here that all her life Mary Shelley felt responsible for causing the demise of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, who was a woman of strong political convictions and the author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), which became the conceptual cornerstone of the nineteenth century British feminist movement.

**“I swear to you, by the earth which I inhabit, and by you, that made me, that, with the companion you bestor, I will quit the neighbourhood of man, and dwell, as it may chance, in the most savage of places. My evil passions will have fled, for I shall meet with sympathy, my life will flow quietly away, and in my dying moments, I shall not curse my maker.”**

According to majority of the critics, Mary Shelley’s greatest achievement resides in her novel’s allegorical multi-faceted which renders references of an intimately personal nature part of a larger historical metaphor that accentuates the universal applicability of Frankenstein as a moral table. Thus, an investigation into the author’s character and the circumstances surrounding the genesis of her tale opens up to a general problem of the nineteenth century woman writer’s irresolvable division between her masculine aspirations on the one hand and feminine duties on the other. Also, as the product of a writing competition between three men and one woman, Frankenstein takes shape under constant male probing or, to put it more acutely barely tolerable patriarchal pressure. “Have you thought of a story? I was asked each morning.” Mary Shelley writes, “and each morning I was forced to reply with a mortifying negative.” Invariably, it seems in Frankenstein the personal becomes political while the biographical subsumes history and fantasy feed on the hypotheses of contemporary scientific conjecture.

**“I heard of the differences of sexes; of the birth and growth of children; how the father devoted on the smiles of the infant, and the lively sallies of the older child; how all the life and cares of the mother were wrapt up in the precious charge.”**

However, not only the scientific themes and pressing emotional issues that inform Frankenstein are inspired by the author-s real-life experiences and circumstances. According to Chris Baldick in Frankenstein Shadow: Myth Monstrosity and Nineteenth Century writing the autobiographical dimension of Frankenstein is perhaps most conspicuous in the novel’s manifold references to Mary Shelley’s immediate family and friends.

**“One might, of course, counter that the monster surely suffers more and the two characters. Victor and the monster, seem to vie with each other for the right to claim the most suffering. “Blest thou wert”, “the monster says over the dead body of Victor”, “my agony was still superior to thine.”**

It is widely understood that, to some degree Frankenstein is a critique of William Godwin and Percy Shelley. This is grounded in such particulars as the ironic conjunction the books impersonal dedication to Godwin and its epigraph from Milton, which suggests a deep ambivalence on Mary Shelley’s part towards Godwin, and the use of Percy Shelley’s teenage readings in Paracelsns and Albert Magnus and his juvenite pseudonym Victor in the creation of Victor Frankenstein. There is, however a relative scarcity of biographical material that would allow Godwin and Shelley to serve as the prototypes of a father-figure who abandons his creation. Her comment that “my father from age and domestic circumstances &other things would not me faire valoir” seems to refer to the time after Shelley‘s death, and it is, in any event, a very short and qualified criticism. The complicated circumstances that may have led her to blame Shelley, at least in part, for Clara Shelley’s death occurred well after the writing of Frankenstein. But of, there was enough in her to have the monster generalize, in reality muted tones, on the difference between maternal and paternal behaviour.

Who, among the opinion of the jury of countless readers, would decide and pass judgment: who is guilty? Victor? The Monster? The society? The mythical Prometheus continues to suffer eternal torture; the modern Prometheus has suffered enough and has finally escaped-escaped only by dying.

**“Oh, Frankenstein! Generous and self-devoted being! What does it avail that I now ask thee to pardon me? I, who irretrievably destroyed thee by destroying all thou lovedst.”**

The poet invokes the wild West Wind, the lifeblood of the autumn. It rushes through the woods bearing with it the dried leaves of various colours-yellow, black, blue and red. It scatters the leaves just as if they were ghosts made to run about by a magician. The West Wind conveys in its sweep various seeds which it scatters here and there. These seeds lie buried in the cold and subterranean regions of earth till the approach of the spring season when they germinate. The vernal zephyr blowing under a clear blue sky opens out buds to take their nourishment from the air, just as a shepherd brings out his flock to feed them on the pasture in the open air. By causing plants to sprout and flowers to bloom, it fills the plains and the hills with bright variegated colour and sweet fragrance. (Shelley compares the spring wind in its function to the Angel of Resurrection who will come down from heaven with a trumpet on the Day of Judgment to rouse the buried dead from their graves). Again, the West Wind is called the destroyer as well as the preserver because while it destroys the leaves, it preserves seeds to germinate later.

A study of the religious poems of Browning reveals that his faith underwent a natural development, and it is as a result of this that the effect of his religious poetry is so enduring. One finds in it experiences of a person whose faith had stood the trial of doubt. His earlier works, especially Pauline, show that under the effect of Shelley and Voltaire, Browning had tried to come out of the orthodox atmosphere of his family background. To an extent, he revolted against the established beliefs. But of, the discerning eye of his mother and her religious outlook finally came to have their lasting effect on the thinking of Browning, whereby he started subduing the self in him that that had compelled him to revolt against the established beliefs.

**“The starry sky, the sea, and every sight afforded by these wonderful regions, seems still to have the power of elevating his soul from earth. Such a man has double existence: he may suffer misery and be overwhelmed by disappointments: yet when he has retired into himself, he will be like a celestial spirit, that has a halo around him, within whose circle no grief or folly ventures.”**

Shelley invokes the mighty West Wind to come to his help, listen to the prayer of his impetuous soul and lend him its awful irresistible rush and vigour. He describes the wind as it manifests itself on the sea agitating, disturbing, threatening it by its wild commotion.

**“My dear Victor, do not speak thus. Heavy misfortunes have befallen us; but let us only cling closer to what remains, and transfer our love for those whom we have lost to those who yet live. Our circle will be small, but bound close by the ties of affection and mutual misfortune. And when time shall have softened your despair, new and dear objects of care will be born to replace those of whom we have been so cruelly deprived.”**

In autumn when the Wind blows, the year is nearing its close. Nature seems to lament over the dying year in the wailing sound of the West Wind. The year will soon die and the tomb over its burial is being constructed; the expiring night will complete the cupola on that tomb, its vault being formed by all the vapour condensed by the West Wind into thick storm clouds out of which rain and thunder and hail will burst forth. Shelley asks this powerful West Wind to hear his appeal. The points of difference between Browning and Tennyson have been summed up by S.A. Brooke: “No stronger contrast could be imagined than that between Tennyson and his great contemporary Robert Browning. Tennyson was representative of his age, he speaks with the accent of his age, and concerned himself immediately with its problems. Browning is, of all poets, the most independent of his time. He takes his subjects from all ages, and treats all alike as if he were a contemporary. Though Italy was for many years his home, his work bears few bears few traces of Italy’s contemporary struggle for freedom. He felt, of course, the stir of the ideas of his time, but their influence is less directly obvious in his work than in any other poet’s.”

While preaching hope and promise, Browning knows well as to what there is for a man to do. He asks man to keep himself in a perpetual struggle. His chief emphasis is on continuous human endeavour. This becomes clear from one of his most personal poems, Prospice.

Thus the dramatic monologue, unlike the soliloquy, implies the presence of some other character or characters, listening and reacting. The Duke of Ferrara is obviously speaking to another character when he says: “That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,…Will it please you sit and look at her?” In a soliloquy, the speaker delivers his own thoughts, uninterrupted by the objections or the propositions of other persons. In a dramatic monologue, however, the reactions of the listener, or other person, are woven into the speaker’s words. In Andrea Del Sarto, for instance, the reactions of the person to whom Andrea addresses his arguments, are clear when the artist says” You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?’’ Or “You smile?” Or again, “…Must you go? /That cousin here again? He waits outside? /Must see you-you, and not with me? Those loans? /More gaming debts to pay? You smiled for that?’’ His listener is his beautiful wife, Lucrezia, and she is impatient to go and meet her “cousin” who is actually her lover.

Browning‘s use of language is more functional than decorative; yet when he is at his best, he maintains balance between his style and content. Equally effective are the lines in which the Duke gives as a glimpse of his personality. The tone of the language is high-sounding. The Duke makes use of a powerful expression and yet the language retains its artistic beauty.

Why are girls to be told that they resemble angels; but to sink them below women? Or, that a gentle innocent female is an object that comes nearer to the idea which we have formed of angels than any other. Yet, they are told at the same time, that they are only like angels when they young and beautiful; consequently, it is their persons, not their virtues, that procedure them this homage. The subsequent thought of the future at once turns his melancholy into ecstatic rapture and he ends the poem with one of the most optimistic and memorable prophecies about the future of mankind. The ecstasy arises out of his ardent belief in the imminent regeneration of mankind and the end of all evils. He hopes that all forms of tyranny and oppression will be replaced, in the millennium to come, by all-round happiness. The joyous rapture is born of an intense feeling of optimism.

**“I lived in daily fear, lest the monster whom I had created should perpetuate some new wickedness…there was always scope for fear, so long as anything I loved remained behind. My abhorrence of this fiend cannot be conceived. When I thought of him, I gnashed my teeth, my eyes became inflamed and I ardently wished to extinguish that life which I had so thoughtlessly bestowed. When I reflected on his crimes and malice, my hatred and revenge burst all bounds of moderations**.”

Most of Shelley’s poetry is symbolic. Shelley makes use of symbolism by means of his normal use of images including the personified forces of life and nature. He looks upon the West Wind as a personified force of nature and finds in it various symbolic meanings to suit the purpose of the poem. The West Wind drives the last signs of life from the trees, and also scatters the seeds which will come to life in spring. In this way the Wind appears to the poet as a destroyer of the old order and a preserver of the new, i.e., a symbol of change. The Wind also symbolizes Shelley’s own personality. When he was a boy he was one like the Wind: “tameless, and swift, and proud.” He still possess these qualities but they lie suppressed under “a heavy weight of hours”. The affinity of temper between them prompts the poet to appeal to the Wind to save him from his present plight ‘‘Oh, lift me, a wave, a leaf, a cloud! / I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed.’’ At this hour of distress the poet can look upon the Wind as a competent savior, a symbol of aid and relief. Finally, the West Wind is treated by the poet as representing the forces that can help bring about the golden millennium, when the miseries and agonies of mankind will be replaced by all round happiness.

The Wind blows through the jungle and produces music out of the dead leaves. Shelley requests it to create music out of his heart and to inspire him to write great poetry, which may create a revolution in the hearts of men. He wants the Wind to scatter his revolutionary message in the world, just as it scatters ashes and sparks from a burning fire. His thoughts may not be as fiery as they once were, but they still have the power to inspire men. He tells the Wind to take the message to the sleeping world that if winter comes, spring cannot be far behind. In optimistic note he declares that bad days are followed by good days.

In My Last Duchess we have instances of a few peculiar states of mind expressed in the language of a drama. The very speed with words carries forward the ideas, invites to understand the total personality of the Duke. The real personality of the Duke lies hidden in the words he uses and in the way he uses them. There are certain words that he utters with a deliberate emphasis and at times he deliberately avoids stressing some words. The Duke feels reluctant before talking of the goodness of his wife’s heart. He poses a question to himself “How shall I say?”

The West Wind scatters the clouds in the sky. The clouds seem like leaves of the intertwined branches of the trees of Heaven and Ocean. The stormy sea and the sky seem to be meeting. The clouds flying with the storm look like the hair of fairies flying in the wind. These clouds are the signals of the coming storm and rain. The sound of the Wind is like the funeral song of the year. The year is dying (about to finish). The night is like the dome (curved roof) of the grave of the dying year. The members of the funeral procession are vapour, hail, rain and lightning.

The poetry of Browning has greater appeal than that of Tennyson not only because of its richer though-content, but also because of its advanced technique. The genius of Tennyson was lyrical and that of Browning was dramatic. “Tennyson is under influence of the romantic revival”, says W.J. Long. On the other hand, Browning frees himself from all pre-conceived concepts of poetry and writes independently. W.J. Long further says that Tennyson “chooses his subjects daintily; but “all’s fish that comes to Browning’s net. He takes comely and ugly with equal pleasure, and aims to show that the truth lies hidden in both the evil and the good.” For example, Browning never indulges in the idealisation of feminine charms. He just gives us a hint about the physical appearance of his women-characters in passing references, as in case of Lucrezia in Andrea Del Sarto. In this respect, Browning sets a trend for modern literary artists who also dwell more on the interior of their characters than on their exterior. One finds echoes of Browning’s techniques in The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock, which deals with the split personality of a man.

In line with this programme, a few Lyrical Ballads recount incidents of unsophisticated rural life, using a language close to common speech. The Preface attacks the artificial ‘poetic diction’ used in conventional 18th century verse (and suggests that 18th-century verse (and suggests that 18th-century verse is conventional). The Preface proclaims that, at this moment of crisis, the poet is the defender of human nature.

The poet’s meaning is, undoubtedly, elusive and baffling, but this very mysterious quality is its special charm. After all, there is no need to worry over the motive of a murder- so often, the murderer himself is unable to tell. If we take the poem as it is, without trying to analyse it in detail, it presents a striking view of a human soul, though an abnormal one. The strange horror has an appeal of its own. And the whole event, though its essence is horrible, is narrated with astounding simplicity and naturalness. It grips the attention even as it prevents the mind from feeling revulsion and disgust.

The idea of the American Revolution excited European intellectuals. French Romantics were radical and liberal, but English Romantics divided. Early 18th century French thinkers had admired the English for having already curbed the royal power; mid -18th-century French thinkers identified repression with king, nobles and clergy. Things were not so clear in England, where the French Revolution had a mixed and changing reception. Youthful rapture was modified by the Terror, when thousands were killed. Tom Paine (1737-1809), a hero of the American Revolution and radical author of The Rights of Man (1791), was welcomed in France. Yet his opposition to the execution of Louis XVI put him in prison and near the guillotine. In 1793 France declared war on England, whose government as a result became more repressive-and had had much to repress. Napoleon set about his ‘liberating’ conquest of Europe; Britain resisted and at length succeeded. But of, her own reforms had to wait until after 1824, when Byron, Shelley and Keats, young radicals at the end of a long and severe period of national reaction against the Revolution and Napoleon, were dead. Blake was the only Romantic to stay true to his vision in middle age. Coleridge and Wordsworth lost faith in utopian solutions, and by 1815 had turned to the Church of England.

**“I wandered like an evil spirit, for I had committed deeds of mischief beyond description horrible, and much more, (I persuaded myself) and was yet behind. Yet my heart overflowed with kindness, and the love of virtue. I had begun life with benevolent intentions, and thirsted for a moment when I should put them into practice, and make myself useful to my fellow beings. Now all was blasted.”**

Shelley asks the West Wind to lend its impetuosity to his spirit; with the spirit of fiery vehemence lent to him by the uncontrollable wind, he wants to proclaim to the unappreciating world the prophecy of regeneration.

The poet asks the West Wind to identify itself with the spirit that is in him, to take his own place and do the poet’s work with its characteristic impetuosity. As the Wind drives the dead leaves, which by burying the seeds and providing nourishment help the growth of a new life in spring, so also let it scatter the thoughts which may lack fire, but can still inspire, be scattered in the society so that from them may come forth those bright new impulses that will serve in the regeneration of humanity. Let the Wind scatter from the fiery heart of the poet his burning thoughts to catch the hearts of men and inspire them with a zeal for progress and regeneration, as the Wind scatters sparks of ashes and fire from which a general conflagration takes place. Let the Wind speak through the mouth of the poet to the human society which has so long defied him and has wallowed in the mire of degradation. Nature springs into new life after winter’s torpor; so also an ideal regeneration of mankind, in which it will have its birth right of liberty and equality restored to it, is not far off, if only the present society is swept off its existence (Shelley is here the prophet of a millennium. He would destroy like the West Wind, only to re-build).

The cold bleakness of the opening lines contrast vividly with the warm cosiness implied in the next few lines. The cottage and the lover’s heart gain warmth with the entrance of Porphyria, who shuts the door and kindles a fire at the cheerless grate. Her actions as she sits by her lover, placing his arm round her waist and drawing down his head to rest on her bare shoulder, speak of intense passion and tender love. She has, at least for the night, left social conventions and the gaiety of a feast behind, braved the rain and storm to be near her over. She could not resist the thought of his pale face unhappy at his unrequited love for her.

Another explanation is that the lover murders her for her soul’s salvation even though he risks damnation himself. She is, at the moment, sublimated and purified by the fire of pure love- she is fit for heaven. If the lover let her go, she might fall from grace and once again let the debasing ties of society corrupt her soul. Hence, the lover kills her for her salvation. It sounds far-fetched, but one cannot put it past Browning’s heroes.

A more convincing explanation says that the crime “might be committed in a momentary aberration, or even intense excitement, of feeling.” This would explain the matter-of-fact simplicity which accompanies such a crime. But of, even this explanation is incomplete, for after the momentary passion, no remorse or regret follows. The murderer merely goes on to narrate his story as if he had committed the most natural of all acts. Desperate deeds committed at the pitch of mental disturbance are followed by deep depression. Here, there is no remorse whatsoever.

Porphyria’s Lover presents no difficulty in its language. But of, critical views have differed about its rather puzzling the pride of rank and other “debasing conventions of society”. Others have called it a study in “morbid and abnormal psychology”. Another explanation is that the poet is here advocating bold unconventionally in the behaviour of true lovers. Browning was indeed in favour of bold action, but one doubts if he would go to the extent of advocating murder, even for the sake of love. One must remember that the poem is dramatic, and hence, objective in nature. It merely presents a particular situation and a particular character’s reaction to it, peculiar though that reaction may be.

There had been a European Romanticism or pre- Romanticism since the ‘Ossian’ craze of the 1760s. Rousseau’s Julie, ou la Nouvelle Heloise(1761)and Goethe’s The Sorrows of Young Werther (1774) added passionate love to the ingredients of sensibility sketched in the last chapter. Thus it was Robert Southey (1774-1843), expelled from Westminster School, could say that he went up to Oxford with ‘a heart full of poetry and feeling, a head full of Rousseau and Werther, and my religious principles shaken by Gibbon.’ He makes out here that he was a typical student of the generation that shared Wordsworth’s reaction to the French Revolution: ‘Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive/But to be young was very heaven.’ Southey became very popular, and eventually a strong Troy.

The literary lull that followed the early deaths of Keats, Shelley and Byron is a true age of transition, the period of the Great Reform Bill of 1832. Features of the Victorian age began to appear: liberal legislation, a triumphant middle class, industrial advance, proletarian unrest, religious renewal. When Victoria came to the throne, the warning voices of Keble and Carlyle were audible. Among the young writers were Tennyson, the Brownings, Thackeray and Dickens. The poetry of Browning embodies a rich variety of themes. He has explored life in its various facets. He has not confined himself to a single age, a single class of people, because he was a widely travelled and well-read man. Before making any subject a part of his poetry, he made it a point to know all about it. It is thus that he never falters in the handling of his themes.

There is one simile which is exquisite and felicitous, where Porphyria’s eyelids are compared to the shut petals of a bud, and the eyes to a bee imprisoned in the bud.

In fact, it is through the “soul-dissection” that various themes are explored. Man does not live in isolation; he comes into contact with various other factors in the outer world. Man’s soul has certain relationships with nature, other men and professions. Men in different situations have diverse reactions. In embodying these various elements in analysing an individual’s psyche, Browning shows his range of knowledge and theme.

Browning has glorified Shelley in Pauline and in Memorabilia. Keats gets glowing tributes in Popularity. Browning presents a somewhat vague picture of Aprile in Paracelsus but he does lay a very clear emphasis on the belief that desire of beauty is not significant, if it is not accompanied by a passion for knowledge. This can be compared with Browning’s belief that technical perfection, without the beauty of soul and instinct does not carry weight, a belief so well expressed in Andrea Del Sarto.

Another explanation is that the poem describes how a man strangled his love in the insane idea of so preserving her passion for himself from deflection. In other words, he wished to preserve that moment of her surrender to him. We are also puzzled by the lover’s action after the crime. He opens her dead eyes to see them “laughing” as before. He imprints a burning kiss on her dead cheek and causes it to blush under his ardour. Then he supports her head on his shoulder and feels that she has gained her cherished desire. All through night they sit, both the dead and the living equally motionless. The last line of the poem, “And yet God has not said a word,” is mysterious. Does it mean that the lover expects some sign of approval for his deed, or does it mean that the very absence of such a sign is an indication of divine approval? It is left to the reader: Browning does not intrude with comment or explanation.

Browning has portrayed quite a few poets also, though not as many as painters. He considers the art of poetry at par with any other fine art. He was of the opinion that a poet has a special place in society, because he understands life better.

Browning considered God as the final and perfect authority that compensates man even for his failures. It is his belief that what man misses here, he gets in the next world. The Grammarian doesn’t enjoy the pleasures of the material world, and devotes himself entirely to the cause of learning, because he knows that the human soul is immortal. The lover of Evelyn Hope expresses the same belief in a different context:

**“God above**

**Is great to grant as mighty to make,**

**And creates the love to reward the Love.”**

Mrs. Orr is of the opinion that whenever in the poetry of Browning, “sense keeps company with sound, we have a music far deeper than can arise from mere sound.” And this s how D.C. Somerwell finally sums up his impressions about Browning’s marvellous handling of verse, especially the blank verse: “Browning will come to be recognised as one of the greatest masters of the greatest of English poetic measures, blank verse. His blank verse has a wider range than that of any other English poet, for he can use it not only for high poetry but also very effectively, for the purposes for which Shakespeare had used prose. At one end of the scale, he is a master of the slow- moving, artfully composed, highly ornamental style, in which both Milton and Tennyson surpassed him… at the other end of the scale, he uses blank verse with unequalled skill and power for humorous conversation.”

In ‘Odeto West Wind’, the poet begins his invocation in a buoyant mood. He looks upon the Wind as the destroyer of the present order and usherer of a new one. In the course of the poem, Shelley’s pessimism reaches its peak. He suddenly remembers his own plight. Why should women be weak and passive, as advocated by Rousseau? Why ought she to sacrifice every other consideration to render herself agreeable to man and let this brutal desire of self-preservation to be the grand spring of all her actions? She came down heavily on the conclusion drawn by Rousseau that men and women should not be educated in the same manner as they are not “constituted alike in temperament and character”.

Rabbi Ben Ezra is the best exponent of Browning’s theme of God-man relationship. Huge Walker sums up his impression of the poem thus: “We reach the culmination in Rabbi Ben Ezra, one of the greatest poems Browning ever wrote. It is put into the mouth of a Jew but for once Browning is not anxious to individualise; his aim is rather idealise…The poem is the embodiment of all that is deepest in Browning’s philosophy of religion, and all that is highest in his morality.”

The Rabbi welcomes age: it is “the last of life, for which the first was made.” He welcomes pain and doubt; they indicate kinship to God, closer than that of the brutes which are undisturbed by them. He refuses to accept, “apparent failure”. It is better to have high aim than low achievement-“a brute I might have been, but would not sink in the scale,” and all is summed up in the doctrine of a universe divinely governed.

To what extent, then can we call Frankenstein a Gothic novel? Almost twenty years later came out Wuthering Heights with wild landscape as the background of the entire novel. Here however we have vast hilly terrains and frozen regions and lastly the frozen ice-the Arctic Ocean, where Victor gets his sledge broken during his eternal pursuit of the monster. We also see the monster appear in the Captain’s cabin and bent over the dying over-reacher. In fact, the entire sequence of the story (or stories) is narrated by Victor to Walton who is busy transcribing every word to be transmitted to his sister (or shall we say the readers?). Victor dies, the monster springs and jumps into the sea, Walton has promised to return. There is then: What happens next? Canthey get away from the frozen ocean? What happens to the monster? We are under suspense, if at all suspense is Gothic. There are descriptions of beautiful landscapes where we find nothing supernatural: every description has a photo-graphic reality.

The Last Ride Together, Porphyria’s Lover and Evelyn Hope are memorable pieces of objective love poetry. Even while depicting cases of failure in love, Browning does not present his characters in the mood of a melancholic obsession or despair at their failure. Rather he shows us what is best in the lovers-the courage in them to face the hard facts of their tragedy. Against the background of love, Browning presents the entire personality of his characters. It is an evidence of his capacity to be objective that he could portray love in various forms and phases, though in his personal life he had experienced a consistently smooth and happy love. Grieson remarks: “The love he writes of is love between man and woman, and that he knows in many phases, from the fierce animal passion of Ottima, in Pippa Passes to the romantic love (“Queen Worship” as he called it) so exquisitely rendered in The Last Ride Together and Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli. The natural end of such love is marriage, and Browning, like Donne in an earlier age, is the chosen poet of wedded love.”

In the summer of 1814, Mary and Percy Shelley eloped. Accompanied by Mary’s step-sister Jane (who later christened herself as Claire), they travelled through Europe before returning to England in the autumn. In London, they had a difficult first year. Percy Shelley was hounded by creditors, while Mary was alienated by her father who refused to speak to her and generally socially isolated. In 1815 she gave birth prematurely to a daughter, who died soon afterwards.

In How it Strikes a Contemporary we get an idea of how an observant and sensitive poet is misunderstood by his unimaginative contemporaries. In Transcendentalism Browning comes out with severe criticism of a poet who tries to present his obscure thoughts under the cover of melody, thus emphasising the disparity between content and technique. In Sordello we have a character, vainly trying to adjust his infinite vision to the narrow limits of time and space at the moment of death. One Word More gives us an insight into Browning’s own poetic belief. Here he separates his poetic self from his personal self, thus emphasing the point that a poet is almost always objective.

Even above the art of painting, Browning placed music. A number of his poems are concerned with the theme of music. Saul finds an expression for the unrestrained and natural mood of joy in youth in the songs of the fields, of strength, of marital prowess and the praise of dead heroes. Abt Vogler is the famous celebration of music which has the power of making harmony out of discords. Music and music-maker have the power to gain that illumination which brings man close to God. Another element which can bring about this communion, is love. It is significant that a passage in Abt Vogler talks of the lover and the bard together having the ability to reach up to God. The passion of both “are Music sent up to God…”

Browning has portrayed artists, poets, painters and lovers. God, Nature and Man figure prominently in his poetry. Religion, crime and philosophy are the other ingredients of Browning’s poetry. Browning’s understanding of life was very deep. He portrayed not only the normal human beings but the abnormal ones with equal success. It speaks of the depth of perception and vividness of observation with which he looked at life.

Thus we find that the theme of God, Nature and Man relationship has great importance in the poetry of Browning. He looks at the beauty of Nature as an expression of the creative joy of God.

A recurring theme in Browning’s poetry is that true joy lies in the effort made, and not in actual achievement. Failure on this earth implies possibility of success in the next world, “Ah, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp,/Or what’s heaven for?” Asks Andrea Del Sarto. “And what is our failure here, but a triumph’s evidence, / For the fullness of the days? /Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should be praised?” asks about Abt Vogler. Browning reserves his scorn for those who are indecisive and do not make an effort to achieve their goal. The optimistic strain in his poems takes into account the presence of evil, for man’s glory lies in attempting to overcome evil and imperfection.

The religion that Browning presents in his poetry is the religion of the fundamental goodness of human heart. It can better be called a practical philosophy of life. Chesterton says in this context: “He shows that there is some good even in those sinners whom even the sinners have abandoned.” Browning shows that even an imposter like Dijabal can be generous and that even a mean imposter like Sludge has a degree of fundamental goodness of human heart. Caliban upon Setebos portrays the religion of a primitive brute, thus showing that every person has the kind of God of whom he is worthy. Cleon and The Epistle of Karshish represent the mood of heathens as they came in contact with Christianity. Rabbi Ben Ezra and Saul take up the Jews of Israel. Bishop Blougram’s Apology has a slight reflection of the doubt-and-faith tussle of the Victorian era. Here we have a person who finds it difficult to choose between doubt and faith. In Holy-cross Day, Browning tells us about the effect of evil on the religious life of a man. A Death in the Desert represents highly religious feelings of Browning.

The lover does not have regrets for having failed to achieve success in one life, because he knows that human soul is immortal and that there are many more lives to accomplish what has not been accomplished in one life.

**“I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers-their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions: but how was I terrified, when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality, the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification.”**

Many of Browning’s poems reflect the spirit of the Middle Ages and the Italian Renaissance. John Ruskin says: “Robert Browning is unerring in every sentence he writes of the Middle Ages.” Browning was profoundly interested in the Italy of Renaissance days. The shocking cruelty, possessiveness combined with an exquisite critical taste of the Duke of Ferrara reflects the spirit of the Italian Renaissance. The same combination of materialism and love of beauty is there in the Bishop of St. Praxed. At the same time, however, the characters belong to all ages and are not restricted to any one period.

 The Rabbi is prepared to “welcome each rebuff that turns earth’s smoothness rough” because he knows that human struggle leads to final success. While sounding an optimistic note, rather he wants man to remain a fighter for ever, as he presents himself in Prospice. Through the Grammarian, Browning teaches the lesson of a single-minded devotion towards one’s aim. Thus we find that while depicting the theme of God-man relationship, Browning makes men aware of their responsibilities; and with this he gives the idea of complete faith in the rightness of God’s total plan. The Rabbi comes out with the message that the beating of the human heart should say: ‘’How Good to live and learn?”

Unlike Tennyson, Browning cannot be called a representative of his age. Tennyson’s poetry reflects the questions of his day-the social, economical and religious atmosphere of Victorian England. On the whole, Browning’s poetry is not involved with contemporary trends, though here and there we can discern some elements such as the rise of spiritualism (Sludge the Medium) or the problem of doubt against faith (Bishop Blougram’s Apology). His concern went beyond immediate problems; he dealt with the human soul-a timeless subject. If he preferred any particular age, it was called the Italian Renaissance rather than his own age.

Shelley calls the west wind the ‘dirge of the dying year’ and in these words is hidden the idea of rebirth. The west wind once again brings winter and December but the end of the year implies the birth of a new one since December is followed by January and the New Year with new hopes and resolutions. The poet is himself in a mood of despondency and misery and says that he falls upon the thorns of life and is bleeding. He is seeking reawakening also through the poem and wants the wind to carry his dead thoughts and ideas like it has taken the leaves and wants fresh ideas to take birth. This is possible only if he first gets rid of stale ideas and thoughts and learns to replace them with new ones.

In that sense even the poet is feeling a sort of intellectual deaths and is desirous of being given a new lease of life. There is a tendency to ascribe profundity to a poem if it is obscure. There is also a tendency to suppose a poet to be obscure because he is profound. It is wrong to confuse the two attributes and conclude that where there is obscurity, there is profundity. Browning’s poetry is not obscure because its thought is profound. He is often elliptical in poems which have nothing abstruse, deeply philosophical or metaphysical in them. One cannot call Rabbi Ben Ezra abstruse or too profound in thought. Yet it poses difficulty for an average reader. The cause for Browning’s obscurity does not lie in the profundity or weight of the thought expressed; it lies mainly in his manner or style of writing.

The charge of obscurity against Browning cannot be dismissed as airy nonsense, even by his ardent admirers. Some critics have erotically said that, except for Sordello, Browning is not really as obscure as he is made out to be. But in, it is not possible to absolve Browning of obscurity, at least in some of his poems. He is certainly not easy to understand at places; many a times the reader has to look for hidden meanings in his lines. Indeed, Browning satisfies the demand made by T.S. Eliot from the twentieth century poet- that he should be difficult. Perhaps it is this very “difficult” in Browning’s poetry that constitutes his appeal to the modern reader. However, this “difficulty” can sometimes be over-done-then the reader loses patience.

Whatever his themes, Browning unifies them with his psychoanalytic approach. Compton-Rickett observes: “All his (Browning’s) writings are studies in spiritual experience: whether he deals with love, or patriotism, intellectual ambition or artistic passion, it is all brought to one common denominator-its effect upon character, its value in the making of the soul.” Moody and Lovett remark: “The world is for Browning, in Keats’s phrase, the ‘valley of soul-making’, and every act, thought, and feeling of life is of concern only as it hinders or determines the soul on its course.” Hugh Walker correctly surmises: “Browning did not much love to work on topics connected with his own generation. To him time was a matter almost of indifference, for the human soul, in which his interest was centred, has remained much the same since the days of Adam.” Therein lies the permanent appeal of the themes of Browning’s poetry.

Browning himself felt that reading poetry should not be an idle amusement. The reader should exert his mind to understand and appreciate poetry. Of course, Browning did not deliberately set out to make his poetry difficult to comprehend. In one of his letters, he remarked: “I have not designedly tried to puzzle people, as some of my critics have supposed. On the other hand, I never pretended to offer such literature as should be substitute for a cigar or a game of dominoes to an idle man.” It is clear that Browning had a serious and high conception of poetry. The elliptical manner of writing just came to him naturally, more often than not, as a result of his various experimentations.

Reading the poetry of Browning is like going through a world of men and women- their likes and dislikes, their beliefs and disbeliefs, their total personality, moral as well as intellectual. It is by virtue of this that the poetry of Browning, though it deals with a variety of themes, does not seem a collection of scattered pieces but a compact whole.

Browning, like Donne, was not satisfied with the conventional patterns of poetic expression used by his contemporaries. He was always trying out experiments, finding out new and unusual techniques. He constantly strove for novelty in poetry. Browning was an innovator. His experiments in poetry led him to write argumentative verse and dramatic monologues. The novelty of the poems itself proved a stumbling block for easy understanding.

Browning shows interest in “clinical cases”, or the cases of crime and abnormality. In Porphyria’s Lover we have a lover who strangles his beloved to death with a string of her own yellow hair. In The Laboratory we have a woman who wants to poison her rival. Browning is especially interested in such cases of abnormal mental set-up. The abnormality in the character of the Bishop in Bishop Blougram’s Apology is that on the one hand he is mean and on the other he has an abiding faith in God. The same is true of Mr. Sludge in Sludge the Medium.

Shelley started writing very early, but his first major work came in 1811. This was Queen Mab, along poem. It is a revolutionary poem, but there is much confusion in the development of the story. The next great poem ‘**Alastor’** came in 1815. In the same year he produced Mount Blanc and Hymn to Intellectual Beauty. These poems expressed the poet’s idealism. In the latter of the two poems, the poet expresses his feeling of the presence of a spirit in nature. In 1818-19, came the great drama, Prometheus Unbound. This is a major poem. As a drama it is not much of a success, but both in theme and in its individual songs it achieves greatness. In 1819, came another great play, The Cenci. This play portrays absolute evil as Prometheus Unbound portrays absolute goodness. This was followed by ‘**The** **Witch of Atlas** ‘and ‘**Epipsychidion’**. In the same year published ‘**Adonais’**, a lament on the death of the poet Keats. In the last year of his life (1822) Shelley wrote Hellas. Shelley left an unfinished poem, Triumph of Life. In addition to these long poems, Shelley wrote a large number of lyrics. The most well-known of these are ‘**Ode to the West Wind’**, ‘**To a Skylark’** and ‘**The Cloud’**. It is in these lyrics that we often find Shelley at his best. ‘**Ode to the West Wind’** is a great achievement-a poem in which great thought is combined with great art. Most of his lyrics are love poems. Many of them express the poet’s deep joy in life as well as his deep sorrow.

The Dramatic Monologue, the poetic form which Browning made particularly his own, is by its very nature difficult to handle. Through the dramatic monologue, Browning attempts to study and present the working of the human mind. He delves into the dark recesses of human consciousness and dissects the human mind. His poems present psychological studies of men; they probe the changing moods and thoughts of a developing soul. Browning takes a subject-i.e., some striking individual at a critical moment of his life- and penetrates to the depth of his nature. He compels the character to reveal the inner most secrets of his life through his own utterances. Psychological insight, analytical subtlety, and power of dramatic interpretation are the main features of Browning’s poetry. The exploration of the minds of different characters is the subject of many poems by Browning- an essentially complex subject. As such, it is not only difficult to write, but also difficult to understand. Much of the difficulty in poems such as Bishop Blougram’s Apology, The Bishop Orders His Tomb, A Grammarian’s Funeral, or Caliban Upon Setebos, rises from the analyses of the mind which they present.

Not only is Browning satisfied with the difficult subject of intellectual analysis, but he often assumes an unexpected point of view. It forces the reader to look at things from an unusual aspect. In Porphyria’s Lover, the speaker loves his beloved so much that he wants to eternalise that love. He strangles her with her own hair so that she would not have to go away from him. The poem is surely a remarkable study in abnormal psychology. The point of view is unusual, but once the reader accepts that, the poem is not difficult or obscure.

The adverse comments of Browning’s contemporary, Tennyson, on reading Sordello are well known. Tennyson claimed to have understood only two lines-the first and the last- both of which, he said, were lies. Mrs. Carlyle was not sure after reading the poem, whether Sordello was a city, a man, or a book. Even if we ignore Sordello, there are other poems such as Caliban upon Setebos, A Grammarian’s Funereal, Bishop Blougram’s Apology and The Bishop Orders his Tomb which tax the reader’s intellectual capacity heavily. Browning is, undoubtedly, a difficult poet.

The first and foremost obstacle in understanding his poetry is Browning’s frequent disregard for grammatical rules. He leaves sentences unfinished or writes long and involved sentences. The meaning is either half-expressed or too confused. He makes excessive use of parentheses, e.g., in his poem, A Grammarian’s Funeral. In the same poem, there are various instances of omission of a word which would have made the meaning clear. The syntax, too, is involved. A stanza such as: (Here’s the town gate reached: There’s the market place/ Gaping before us) / Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace/ (Hearten our Chorus!)/ That before living he’d learn how to live –illustrates the difficulty posed for the reader. The first two lines refer to the place reached by the funeral party. The third line alludes to the character of the Grammarian. The forth line is a direction for the funeral party. The last line is connected back to the third. I the same poem, we are told that the Grammarian “settled Hoti’s business-let it be!” it is all very well to say “let it be!” but who is Hoti? Hoti turns out to be just the Greek particle ‘oti’. It would have been more grammatical and intelligible to have said “the business of Hoti”. One cannot disagree with Stopford Brooke when he observes: “Faults of grammar, of want of clearness, of irritating parentheses, or broken threads of thought, of inability to leave out the needless, of bad punctuation, are faults of which Browning never quite cleared his work.”

The lover of The Last Ride Together has the same bond of faith with god when he says that the world can end at the moment when he is taking the last ride with his beloved and thus the ride can become eternal in character. The lover in Porphyria’s Lover also has the same bond with God. His God has not said a word on his crime, perhaps, because he had committed it out of love.

It is possible that much of the grammatical mistakes and involved syntax might have been corrected if Browning had bothered to revise his text. The superfluity of words might then have been trimmed, and the meaning made clearer. He was, however, careless of technical perfection. His refusal to revise has resulted in clumsy lines such as: “and, since beneath my roof/ Housed she who made home heaven’d behoof.”

The complexities of the human mind which Browning dealt with certainly posed difficulties. But of, if one admits the charge of obscurity against Browning, it is more due to his style than his thought or subject matter. He seems to have preferred a complex style of writing. It is his peculiar manner of using language that leads to difficulty in comprehension. There are thus, several aspects of his style which substantiate the charge of obscurity.

Browning has shown very keen interest in art and artists. They assume a place of importance among his themes. While portraying artists, Browning’s concern is not as much with the technical skill of their art as with its aesthetic worth and the creative force. Poems like Fra Lippo Lippi and Andrea Del Sarto deal with art. “He had”, says W.T. Young, “a poor estimation of mere craftsmanship.” Technically, Andrea Del Sarto is flawless. He can alter and correct the arm wrongly drawn by Rafael. However, he cries:

**“But all the play, the insight and the stretch**

**Out of me, out of me.”**

The fact that fulfilment comes in the other world should not lead us to think that Browning considered life on this earth to be unimportant. The value of the flesh in the development of the soul is not minimised. The soul may not be the body, the breath is not the flute, but,

**“Both together make the music, either marred and all is mute.”**

In Saul, David states:

**“In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in**

**Our soul it bears fruit.”**

Rabbi Ben Ezra condemns the ascetic negation of flesh. No part of life should be rejected, for everything has its noble use: “Let us not always say/ “Spite of this today/ I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole.” Instead we should rejoice in the joy of this life and understand that soul and body help each other. Such a thought is based upon the recognition of ultimate human needs. Man’s life becomes meaningful in the intensity of his experiences. It is in moments of intense experience that man shows his merit and rises to his full stature.

**“It gives me the greatest delight to see you; but tell me how you left my father, brothers, and Elizabeth.”**

The Romantic movement is usually considered to originate around 1789, the year of the French Revolution, optimistically seen by Godwin, Wordsworth, and others as the beginnings of a new age of justice and equality for all. Romanticism is politically inspired by both the French and American revolutions and by wars of independence throughout Europe. It was a time of social unrest and political activism, even in England. Many of the Romantics were initially full of the same optimism and idealism that inspired Godwin, who placed the source of evil in human institutions, insisted upon the importance of justice and equality for all, and believed in the perfectibility of the human race. Unlike Godwin however, most found their idealism eventually conflicted with their experience and became disillusioned about the possibilities of reform through political action. Shelley’s Frankenstein is certainly concerned with the corruption of social institutions, but she shows little faith in the possibility of change, and the creation of the creature, a new improved man, suggests she has equally little faith in the perfectibility of the human race.

Critics have called Browning “a philosophic poet”, Frederick Ryland praises Browning for having “rolled back, as far as England is concerned, the morbid pessimism, the sickly disdain of active life, which infected so much of European literature” in the nineteenth century. W. J. Long comments on the tonic effect of Browning’s philosophic views: “His energy, his cheerful courage, his faith in life, and in the development that awaits us beyond the portals of death, are like a bugle-call to good living.” Hudson remarks: “As a moralist and religious teacher, Browning held a very distinct place in the Victorian Age… He preached God and immortality as the central truths of his philosophy of life.” W.T. Young says: “Browning’s optimism is more earnest and real than any pious hope or dogmatic belief…held by a placid philosopher.” As K.L. Knickerbocker puts it, Browning’s “hypothesis is that under an omnipotent, benevolent God , all must , at least in a cosmic sense, be right with the world. It could not be otherwise.” Browning, as Hugh Walker says, sang fervently of the delight of life.

**“This was then the reward of my benevolence. I had saved a human being from destruction, and, as a recompense. I now writhed under the miserable pain of a wound, which shattered the flesh and bone. The feelings of kindness and gentleness, which I had I entertained but a few moments before, gave place to hellish rage and I gnashing of teeth, inflamed by pain. I vowed eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind.”**

The monster’s isolation and alienation is caused first by his creator; then by the unjust treatment he get from mankind. At no stage is he a welcome guest. He is treated as a monster and beaten up, even shot at. His hideous shape and appearance frighten all, even when he tries to befriend some. He seeks domestic bliss, but is rejected by the people. In fact, he is isolated from the moment he is created, and after getting full self-education and trying all means to get sympathy and love from society and the people, he becomes a rebel and then demonic. He tells Victor: ‘‘I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity; but am I not alone, miserable alone?’’ (Vol. II, Ch. II). Thus, it is his loneliness, his isolation and miserable treatment he received from all those he tried to befriend that turned him into a true monster: “I was benevolent and good, misery made me a fiend. Make me happy and I shall again be virtuous. (Vol. II, Ch.II). he demands a female exactly like him, as deformed as he is, explains his isolation; he knows that he will not be accepted by the society : “ I am alone, and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species, and have the same defects. This being you must create. (Vol. II, Ch. VIII)

**“Poor Justine, poor unhappy Justine, was as innocent as I, and she had suffered the same charge; she died for it; I am the cause of this-I murdered her. William, Justine, and Henry- they all died by my hands.”**

The West Wind is the breath of Autumn. Dead leaves, black, yellow and red in colour, fly before the wind, as the ghosts fly before a magician. The West Wind scatters the flying seeds. The seeds lie under the ground and when Spring comes, they grow into flowers of different colours and fragrance. The West Wind destroys dead leaves and preserves (saves) useful seeds.

God is going to reward only those who have struggled in life and all barriers are going to fall before them. In Prospice, Browning is teaching a defiance of death and a challenge to battle. The poem inspires man with courage and determination. Berdoe says: “In the short poem Prospice is concentrated the strength of a great soul and the courage of one who is prepared for the worst, with eyes unbandaged.”

Browning is very emphatic about the fact that nothing can be attained without personal endeavour and that once man has learnt to struggle, no goal is beyond his reach. Again Prospice can be cited as an example, where he says that though there are many obstacles in the way.

**“The world was all before them, where to choose**

**Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:**

**They hand in hand with wand’ring steps and slow,**

**Through Eden took their solitary way.”**

The monster’s isolation and alienation is caused first by his creator; then by the unjust treatment he get from mankind. At no stage is he a welcome guest. He is treated as a monster and beaten up, even shot at. His hideous shape and appearance frighten all, even when he tries to befriend some. He seeks domestic bliss, but is rejected by the people. In fact, he is isolated from the moment he is created, and after getting full self-education and trying all means to get sympathy and love from society and the people, he becomes a rebel and then demonic. He tells Victor: **“I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity; but am I not alone, miserable alone?**” (Vol. II, Ch. II). Thus, it is his loneliness, his isolation and miserable treatment he received from all those he tried to befriend that turned him into a true monster: “I was benevolent and good, misery made me a fiend. Make me happy and I shall again be virtuous. (Vol. II, Ch.II). he demands a female exactly like him, as deformed as he is, explains his isolation; he knows that he will not be accepted by the society : “ I am alone, and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species, and have the same defects. This being you must create. “(Vol. II, Ch. VIII)

Love provides man with the best opportunity to experience intense moments. Browning had considered love to be a profound spiritual experience. Love is the quality through which man touches the infinite because it is the quality common to God and man. It is also the moral idea towards which man strives. Browning is on the side of those who commit themselves whole heartedly to an ideal. To take a positive step is much better than to hesitate in indecision forever. The lovers of The Statue and the Bust miss their chance through inordinate delay. Similarly, in Youth and Art, the two lovers again let the vital moment slip. Consequently, both their art and lives remain incomplete through their delay. Earthly love is a prelude to divine love; it is a means to the higher end of god-head.

Andrea Del Sarto is yet another poem in which Browning lays emphasis on the role of human struggle. He knows that man cannot achieve perfection, yet he wants man to keep before himself, perfection as the goal, so that he may reach somewhere near perfection. Andrea says:

**“Ah, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp,**

**Or what’s a heaven for?”**

He has been treacherous with his parents and with his king. Persistent struggle gives meaning to life; it does not matter so much if the struggle achieves nothing but failure. The worth of life lies in the “effort to become perfect; not in accomplishment, but in the strife to accomplish” as W. T. Young observes.

Broadly speaking, Browning has written two kinds of love poems-personal and dramatic. His personal poems are very few, because his bent of mind was fundamentally dramatic. He was interested more in looking at others with an objective eye than in indulging in self-analysis. So, his genius was not suited to personal love poetry which essentially requires a lyrical bent of mind on the part of the writer. Still, as we have already stated, Browning, under the influence of the inspiring love relationship with his wife, wrote a few brilliant poems of personal love. By the Fireside when ranks as one of the best poems of marital love in English literature. The poem, written in a mood of complete calm and serenity, presents before us the poet sitting silently with his wife by the fireside, musing on the pleasures of their married life. He reflects on the inspiring and ennobling influence that their true and sincere love had left on his personality. The poem is an expression of Browning’s feeling of gratitude for his wife. The following poems pertain to personal married love: One Word More is a poem of personal love. It was appended as an Epilogue to Browning’s collection of fifty dramatic monologues, entitled Men and Women. It is through this poem that Browning dedicates the volume to his wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The very opening lines of the poem speak of Browning’s affection for his wife. Browning explains to his wife that every great artist in order to show his affection for the woman he loves, goes beyond his routine art to treat of love on a special footing. Rafael was a painter-“Else he only used to draw Madonnas”; but “Rafael made a century of sonnets” for the girl he loved. In the same way, Dante who was otherwise a poet, made a painting for his beloved. Browning also wants to do a special favour for his wife, but he regrets that his art is confined to poetry. He cannot draw a painting or carve statues or make music for her.

Love has the power to lift the lover to a high and noble level and give him new strength, as in By the Fireside. The lover of The Last Ride Together is so ennobled by love that he feels he has achieved more than what a statesman or artist could achieve. In Andrea Del Sarto, however, love for a woman incapable of returning it, has corrupted the artist’s soul. It has sunk him to the level of sensuous slavery. An infatuated man, Andrea has sacrificed his soul for Lucrezia.

Surprisingly for a poet who found perfect felicity in his personal love, several of Browning’s poems deal with the tragedy of love. Besides the rejected love of The Last Ride Together, we have cruelty and jealousy in love presented in The Laboratory, and My Last Duchess. A Woman’s Last Word and A Lover’s Quarrel, present the theme of estrangement. In James Lees’ Wife, the situation of parting between man and wife because love has died, is given from the woman’s angle which is a unique imaginative feat of Browning. Browning, has considered love to be the basic principle of universe. True love will be fulfilled, if not in this world, certainly in the next. The love with which Browning generally deals with is passionate, but the passion is of tenderness and devotion. He does not become sentimental. Above all, it is the variety of love situations in his poetry that is amazing.

There is love triumphant and love as a strengthening force; love eager and young love satiated; love rejected, love betrayed; love, making heroes of men or love enslaving and corrupting them. Live in all its guises, appears in Browning’s poetry. It can be an anticipation of heaven; it can also be a foretaste of hell. On the whole, it is the indecision to take the positive step towards union of true love that is a sin against love- an unforgivable sin in Browning’s opinion. Love, after all, is the only permanent truth of human life. Empires decay, as Love Among the Ruins tells us, but love abides, for “love is best”. As a poet of love, Browning naturally enough, is ranked with that other great love poet, John Donne.

Critics have accorded high praise to Browning as a poet of love. Moody and Lovett say: “To him (Browning) love is the supreme experience and function of the soul, testing its temper and revealing its probable fate.” G. K. Chesterton calls Browning’s love poetry, “the finest in the world.” W.T. Young comments: “He (Browning) treats of actual passion, and he stays at whatever moment in its course promises to distil its richest significance. “ Says Oliver Elton: “Browning considered that love is not only man’s chief happiness, but his chief ordeal.” Hugh Walker points out: “In point of variety, Browning beats all other lyricists of love. “

Browning looks at love as a sacred entity and treats of it as a powerful force in life of man. In a way he considers love to be a condition for the moral up-lift-ment of the human soul. Without love, a character is non-human. He presents in My Last Duchess the Duke who is hollow and mean because he has never known how to love and what it is to be impressed by the innocence and purity of his wife. Browning presents him as a dehumanised personality. Everything in him smacks of jealousy, anger, hypocrisy and pride. His soul does not stand any chance of emancipation. He can love art, not real living people.

Browning was a great psycho-analyst as well as a poet. His primary concern was with the soul of man. He was always interested in studying the actions and reactions of the human mind and heart. In his love poetry, he tried to probe into the deeper meanings of the love relationship of his characters. He was more interested in the psychology of love than in the passion of love. He took love only as an event from life. His aim was to lay bare the entire soul of his characters against the background of the love episode of their lives.

Evelyn Hope provides a very interesting example. It is a poem of love, but having read it, we know not only how much the lover loved the girl. In fact, the entire personality of the lover is revealed to us. He loves a girl of sixteen, whereas he himself is three times her senior in age. From this, we can have an idea of the general quaintness of his character. The fact, he never spoke of his love to Evelyn Hope further confirms that he is not an average human being. But of, he is sincere and honest. His love for the girl is pure, but he does want to attain her physically in one life or the other. He did not speak to the girl about his love for her, because it was not her time to love; but when she is dead, he comes to her place and gives vent to those feelings of love which he had kept suppressed in the heart for a very long period. He keeps a leaf of the geranium flower in the cold hand of Evelyn Hope and believes that when she wakes up in the next world, she will remember and understand, and that the secret shall be revealed to her. He believes that Evelyn Hope was made for him alone and after traversing through a few worlds, he will own her physically. Thus we see that in spite of being a small love poem, it gives us a thorough peep into the personality of the lover. Love is one of the mediums through which Browning undertakes a study of the human soul.

The Last Ride Together is another dramatic monologue emerging from a love situation-the rejection of the lover by the beloved. In spite of the fact that it is the rejection that compels the lover to speak, he concentrates more on the issue of the ride that he is taking with his beloved than on rejection itself. So, it is the ride that becomes the central theme of the poem. The lover is more than satisfied with the ride. It is, therefore, that at the close of almost every stanza in the monologue, he falls back on the ride and refers to it again and again. The pleasure that he enjoys in the ride, makes him forget the pain of having been rejected. Thus the poem becomes a very interesting study of the behaviour of the lover. He does not interpret rejection as a source of his failure in love; rather he carves out of it his final success. The lover dwells primarily upon the possibility of the world ending at the moment of his ride with the beloved, so that the ride could become a reality for all times to come.

Browning was a natural poet of love. Browning’s marriage with Elizabeth was so happy that it left its mark on his poetry. He came out with an overflow of the powerful feelings of love and affection. He has sung so well of love that we can rank him next only to John Donne in the genre of English love poetry. Moody and Lovett have very rightly said that for Browning.

The lover, by concentrating on this wishful thinking, makes it the central theme of the poem. We find that the poem reveals to us, not just one incident of love from life of a person, but the entire personality of the lover, the mode of his thinking, his interpretation of failure is not meant for him. He has the faith that gives him strength to ask: “Who knows but the world may end to night?”

The suffering of both Victor and the monster are caused by their alienation from others. The monster’s isolation is imposed upon him by others: the creator who abandons him and the people who slung him. He longs for companionship and affection; his unhappiness and subsequent violence result from his awareness that he will never experience the love he sees around him. “I am malicious because I am miserable”, he tells Victor, and asks for a female companion to make him happy again. Victor, however, is horrified by the nearly completed female form and the thought of the monster’s family life; he tears the female to pieces. When the monster murders Elizabeth, he is doing only what Victor has already done to him. Victor repeatedly insists that his isolation is also imposed because of the monster’ crimes: he must be an outcast. Nevertheless, he actually chooses to isolate himself from family and friends in order to carry out his scientific experiments. We need to consider further the nature of what he rejects in order to better understand this self-imposed isolation.

**“I little expected in this enlightened and scientific age to find a disciple of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus. My dear Sir, you must begin your studies entirely anew.”**

The spirit of the west wind is described as ‘uncontrollable’. The west wind is unstoppable and it affects everything that falls in its path. It affects the earth, the water in the oceans and the clouds of the sky. It is responsible for carrying them and locking them up in a sepulcher till they burst forth in fury of rain and hail. The poet thinks that the west wind has a free spirit and wanders as and where it pleases. He admires it for its freedom and wishes the wind would carry him along like a leaf or a cloud. Shelley then sums up the spirit of the west wind as ‘tameless, swift and proud.’ It cannot be kept in check so it is ‘tameless’, the speed of the west wind is formidable and it is proud because it would not listen to any one. Finally, the poet refers the west wind as ‘Spirit fierce’ and ‘impetuous one’ that acts on the impulse of the moment.

In many instances Browning’s use of the ugly and rugged is justified. The rhythm of A Grammarian’s Funeral is aptly rugged to give a clear impression of the rough terrain over which the pall bearers are carrying the body of the dead Grammarian to its grave at the top of a hill. Browning had a keen eye for the fantastic and odd in nature, and he evolves a style suitable to convey his impressions of such elements. Such artistic use of the grotesque is the source of the strength and energy of his style, especially in a poem such as The Englishman in Italy.

The lover of The Last Ride Together who may be expected to sulk or rage in the frustration of rejected love, instead, rejoices in the beloved’s consent to a last ride together and blessed her.

The term ‘grotesque’ means anything odd or unnatural in shape, appearance or character, something absurd or bizarre. Browning, unlike his contemporaries, was not a slave to convention; he often experimented in new areas of subject and style of poetry. There is thus admittedly an element of the grotesque in his subject and style. He was struck by the unconventional, the odd and the absurd.

 (No Idealisation of Beauty) Browning was unconventional in another sense also. He did not believe in the idealisation of woman’s physical charms. The details of physical appearance are rare in his poetry; and whatever we know about the physical appearance of his woman characters, is only through passing references made by the speaker in a dramatic monologue. For example, when the Duke in My Last Duchess refers to the smiling face of his dead wife, he means much more than what he says. The description of the smile on the face is not there for the sake of description alone. Browning has inserted it here to show the annoyance and jealousy of the Duke.

Browning’s descriptions of physical appearance are always subtle and functional. In Spenser’s Epithalamion, we have numerous instances of the idealisation of feminine charm but we find nothing of that sort in Browning.

To Browning’s lovers, the lady’s physical charms are not her chief attractions. The lady need not be an incarnation of loveliness with peach blossom complexion, pearly teeth and rosy lips. She is desirable as she is, herself, and she appeals with all her imperfections. There are few lines which could express so much tenderness and love in such an unromantic manner.

On Imagery from Day-to-Day Life, still another distinction of Browning is that he makes use of a very peculiar imagery in his love poetry. His images do not come from the world of nature or from a land of dreams and myth. In order to give a touch of reality to his love-poems, he takes his images from the day-to-day life of ordinary men and women, Chesterton says that Browning draws his images from “suburban streets, straws, garden-rakes, medicine bottles, pianos, window-blinds, burnt cork, fashionable fur coats.” The scene in the room of Evelyn Hope comes from routine life.

Considering unconventional attitudes and conduct, Browning is very bold in the selection of his characters. He does not take only the noble, the chivalrous or kind-hearted faces to be the characters of his love poems. He can portray the merciless and jealous possessiveness of men like the Duke of My Last Duchess. He can take up women bold enough to reject the proposals of their lovers as in The Last Ride Together. In Andrea Del Sarto, he portrays Lucrezia, whose callousness in her treatment of her husband is very much on the verge of infidelity. In Evelyn Hope, we have a middle-aged lover who loves a sixteen years old girl but speaks of it to her only when she is lying dead. In Porphyria’s Lover, we have a lover who strangles his beloved to death, not out of revenge or ill-will, but out of love. He feels that only by murdering her, can he achieve inseparability from her.

Browning has attached mystic significance to his love poetry by talking of love and God as two inter-connected realities. His love is not confined to the body or to this world alone. It is his faith that true lovers meet in the next world after their death. So, love is not an end in itself. It is a means towards the attainment of heavenly bliss. Even when Browning is portraying cases of failure in love, he has a word of hope for them.

Browning believes that a true lover must get his beloved in one life or the other. This faith of his gets a very explicit expression in a short poem. Evelyn Hope. Here we have a lover who is “thrice as old” as his “sixteen years old” beloved. He has been in silent love with the girl. He has never talked to her about it because, “It was not her time to love”.

It speaks of the sincerity with which he has loved her. He knew that he will not be able to get her in this world, yet he continued to love her because his love was inborn and pure. It is only after the death of Evelyn that he comes to her dead body and speaks of the affection with which he had loved her. He speaks of love in relation to God and expresses the faith that he must join Evelyn Hope in one life or the other. He believes that God is always just with true lovers. This is how he explains his faith that after all he must get his beloved.

His over-abundant mental energy sought an outlet in strange thoughts and images. His love of the fantastic in style was a serious concern for him. A Grammarian’s Funeral is the first example that comes to mind for illustrating the grotesque is rhyme as employed by Browning, in this case in the service of grandeur. We have in this poem grotesque rhymes such as ‘cock-crow’ and ‘rock-row’, ‘easy’ and ‘queasy’. Browning coins a phrase ‘soul-hydroptic’ which at once sounds grotesque and also conveys the meaning in most striking terms. If, however, we overlook the excess committed by Browning, we cannot but admit that the grotesque serves a useful purpose in his poetry. He is expert at dealing with the abnormal specimens both content wise and stylistically. He puts together things which no one else would have put together, and produces on our minds a result which no one else would have produced.

He believes that if the world ends at the moment when he is taking his last ride with the beloved, then that moment will become eternal. In spite of the fact that the beloved has turned down his love, the lover is full of hope. The lovers of Browning leave much upon God in matters of love; and the theme of love-God relationship finds a recurrent expression in the poetry of Browning. “God creates the love to reward the love”, and if the lovers do not avail of the moment, they are failures.

Placing a petal of the geranium flower in the cold hand of the dead Evelyn Hope, the lover feels that when she wakes up in the next world, she will understand the meaning of this token of love. For the lovers of Browning death is just a temporary phase of sleep in the drama of love, because a reunion takes place in the next world. The lover of The Last Ride Together experiences the same failure in love in this world, but by virtue of his sincerity in love, he feels “Who knows but the world may end to night?”

The dramatic monologue, though embodying the term “dramatic”, is to be differentiated from drama. The two forms are different both in method and purpose. Drama essentially involves external action and outward conflict. It has a sustained plot and the action does not develop through the medium of a single character, but through a group of characters. In a dramatic monologue, on the other hand, there is a single speaker and it is a dissection of the soul of that speaker which the poet attempts. There is no plot or action, and no chronological sequence of events. The speaker’s mind moves over the past and the future, while speaking in the present. Thus the view of life’s reality becomes “Kaleidoscopic” in a dramatic monologue- various aspects are revealed, the past and the future combine with the present to reveal the “soul” of the speaker. The mode is “dramatic” in so far as it objective-the poet does not intrude himself in the poem but allows the speaker to speak or argue. The writer is behind the scene.

The dramatic monologue is essentially a narrative spoken by a single character. It gains added effects and dimensions through the character’s comments on his own story and the circumstances in which he speaks. The reader can infer or judge the intelligence and honesty of the narrator and assess the value of the views expressed. The form also gives the poet the opportunity to be technically impersonal like a dramatist. Such a form would easily afford Browning the chance for making ‘’experimental studies in spiritual experience.” Whether he deals with love, or patriotism, or intellectual ambition, or artistic passion, or religious aspiration, it is all seen from one aspect, i.e., its effect upon character, and its value in the making of the soul. Browning achieved his best in the dramatic monologues in the collection, Men and Women, Dramatic Lyrics, Dramatic Romances, and Dramatic Personae.

Robert Browning and the form of poetry known as “dramatic monologue” inevitably go together even though he did not invent it. He made the form especially his own. Browning had a dramatic bent of mind. Before attempting and succeeding so well at the dramatic monologue, he had tried his hand at drama proper for the stage. His theatrical trials, however, failed, mainly because he was unable to present sustained physical action as a plot- a basic essential for drama. It is a different matter with the dramatic-monologue, a form which suited Browning’s genius for drama as well as psychological analysis. Browning was interested in the interior of man-his “soul”-and not so much in characters involved in external action. He wanted to lay bare the human mind and heart. As such, he found his ideal medium in the form of the dramatic monologue.

Each of the dramatic monologues has an abrupt and arresting beginning, suggesting that the present situation is a continuation of something that has gone before. Any number of examples may be quoted.

The characters come from different lands and different ages, but especially from Italy of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Browning has been universally praised for his handling of the dramatic monologue. Ralph Ranald observes: “Browning by no means invented the dramatic monologue… (but) in the evolution of dramatic monologue, Browning’s place in the history of English poetry is unparalleled because of the great number and variety of poems he wrote in this form having the inimitable stamp of poetic genius.” Arthur Symons comments: “Such monologues as Andrea Del Sarto or the Epistle of Karshish never have been…surpassed. Each is a masterpiece of poetry. Each is in itself a drama, and contains the essence of a life, condensed into a single episode…Each moves in a certain atmosphere of its own, philosophical, ethical or artistic.” Hugh Walker remarks: “These collections of Monologues form together one of the most precious and profoundly original contributions to the poetic literature of the nineteenth century… (Browning) takes just what interest’s him, and consequently he is nearly always inspired, nearly always at his best.” Phyllis Grosskurth points out: “It is not simply that he has created a gallery of colourful characters, but that, through the device of the dramatic monologue, he has revealed fundamental truths uniting all men.”

There are times when Browning betrays a subjective note in the dramatic monologues. The optimistic concept of failure which occurs in so many of his poems, is Browning’s very own philosophy. But of, the manner of presentation remains objective, for never does Browning intrude to point out a moral. The reader is left to judge for himself from the mood evoked by the poem. A certain amount of subjectivity, however, is inevitable in a method which requires the poet to lend his own mind to his characters to enable them to defend themselves. It is thus that we can deduce much of Browning’s thoughts on life and art from our study of the monologues.

The language of Browning’s monologues naturally conforms to the thought processes of the speakers. Browning himself called it “brother’s language”, implying its informal nature and its frequent omissions of grammatical rules. Parentheses and dashes are used freely, as in A Grammarian’s Funeral, to indicate the interruption and haphazard flow of thought in the speaker’s mind. As the Duke of Ferrara speaks, there is a natural pause and hesitancy as he gropes for the right words- “She had/A heart-how shall I say- too soon made glad,” Sometimes lyrical and emotional, sometimes narrative, reflective or descriptive or reminiscent, the manner varies with the mood of the speaker. Colloquialisms naturally occur in the monologues. The monologues are usually written in verse, “free and vigorous in rhythm, racy and actual, bristling with colloquialisms.”

The monologue reveals character not through outward action, but through the clash of motives and emotions in the soul of the speaker. Thus the poet chooses a moment of crisis in the life of the speaker. The reader is plunged into the midst of a critical situation in the life of the speaker. The character’s reactions in that situation are analysed, and his soul revealed. Attention is thus concentrated on the crisis, and it is for this reason that Walter Pater calls Browning’s poetry “the poetry of situations.” “But do not let us quarrel anymore,” begins Andrea Del Sarto, suggesting that he and Lucrezia have been quarrelling for some time. The startling suddenness of “Gr-r-r-there go, my heart’s abhorrence!” with which the Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister opens, cannot fail to capture attention. Fra Lippo Lippi has a dramatic beginning. In The Last Ride Together, the critical situation is the lady’s rejection of the lover and the lover’s request for a last ride together.

Browning presents plot, character and scene through one character’s speech. He uses two methods of presenting the action. In some of his poems, he follows the method of giving us the events logically. The situation and the character are revealed gradually and simultaneously. The speaker in Porphyria’s Lover is one such example. The second method involves keeping the reader in suspense till the end and only then revealing the motive of the action. The Laboratory illustrates this method. Browning’s range is reflected in the variety of characters he presents in his dramatic monologues. Each has his individual character, mental make-up, aspirations and problems, and, of course, his own particular crisis in life. We have painters as different as Fra Lippo Lippi and Andra Del Sarto. There are musicians like Abt Volger. There are, of course, the bishops-jealous, and sensual like the Bishop who orders his tomb, or extremely voluble like Bishop Blougram. There is the lover of The Last Ride Together and there is the other peculiar love-murderer of Porphyria’s Lover, and yet another kind in Evelyn Hope. And then, there is the Duke of Ferrara, so supremely proud of his nine hundred years old name, jealous of his innocent wife’s smiles.

The dramatic monologue is not a simple form. It combines reflection and lyricism, with dramatic properties rising out of the definite situation it deals with. There is an element of artificiality- we are to imagine that the monologue is listened to, but never answered, and that it is a dialogue of which we hear only one side.

Browning’s technique evolved towards perfection over a number of years. In Men and women, perhaps, Browning has reached full command over the technique. In such monologues as Andrea Del Sarto, Fra Lippo Lippi, Cleon and Bishop Blougram, we see the essence of a life condensed into a single episode, or indicated in a combination of discourse, conversation, argument, soliloquy and reminiscence. Each presents a character while moving in a special atmosphere of its own, ethical or artistic. The Ring and the Book epitomises the keenness of delineation, vigour and ripeness of style and diction which Browning brought to the dramatic monologue. But in after that, Browning began to put across moral teaching in an obvious manner, to the detriment of his style. However, he had already accomplished all that could be done with the form any further attempt from him would naturally be repetitious, and hence, somewhat stale. But of, what he did with the form at the height of his power is superb.

In some of his later dramatic monologues, Browning resorted to elaborate argumentation or “case –making”. The monologues are not satires upon their speakers, even if weaknesses and follies are exposed in the course of speech. They are “defences”. The Last Ride Together gives a defence of the lover’s attitude. Even Porphyria’s lover offers a peculiar defence of his abnormal act. Andrea Del Sarto offers his own excuse for not treating his parents well. Perhaps Bishop Blougram’s Apology is the best known poem for the “case-making” style. The Bishop argues to confound an adversary, not to state the truth. This form is more intellectual than emotional. However, the focus is really on the speaker, and not so much on the nature of the ideas as such. When Mr. Sludge argues on spiritualism, the question is not what can be said on the subject in general, but what Mr. Sludge says. Again, the question is not whether Bishop Blougram or Andrea is justified, but how they would justify themselves.

According to David E. Mussel white, “Anomalous and exorbitant with respect to all that would define it the monster is the very figure of the unknown that haunts modern thought. Frankenstein has maintained its imaginative appeal and socio-political relevance for more than 200 years and at present there seem to be no limits to its on-going popularity, thus proving that Mary Shelley was “no inept neophyte who chanced upon a myth.“

**‘’But beware your hours will pass in dread and misery, and soon the bolt will fall which must ravish from you your happiness forever. Are you to be happy, while I grovel in the intensity of my wretchedness? You can blast my other passions; but revenge, henceforth dearer than light or food! I may die; but first you, my tyrant and tormentor, shall curse the sun that gazes on your misery. Beware; for I am fearless, and therefore powerful. I will watch with wiliness of a snake, that I may sting with venom. Man, you shall repent of the injuries you inflict…but remember, I shall be with you on your wedding night.”**

Frankenstein is full of both analogies drawn between the characters and other figures from literature and myth, and allusions to various other texts; indeed, it could be said that, as the monster is constructed out of fragments of corpses, the text is constructed out of fragments of other texts. The major stories that Mary Shelley appropriates are reworks are the myth of Prometheus, Milton’s Paradise Lost and, to a lesser degree, Coleridge’s The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

The salient features of the dramatic monologue can be understood better, if we compare it with the soliloquy and the drama. Now, the dramatic monologue is spoken by a single person. On the face of it, the form seems to have affinity with the soliloquy- a man talking to himself, or a private debate. We are, however, forgetting that the root meaning of the term “monologue” is “a single man’s conversation.” That may sound slightly paradoxical, because conversation by its very nature means a talk between two persons. The paradox is resolved when we realise that in the dramatic monologue, though the active speech is ascribed to a single person, the presence and reactions of the other persons are conveyed naturally in the course of the single man’s talk. The listener does not actively interrupt the current of speech. In The Bishop Orders His Tomb, the speaker’s words once again presuppose listeners and their reactions, when he says: “Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?” and late, “You mark me not ! What do they whisper thee, /Child of my bowels, Anslem?”

The Bishop is speaking to his sons, and obviously detects a feeling of indifference to his wishes in their behaviour.

Even in Porphyria’s Lover, though there is no actual listener within the poem, the speaker seems to address someone outside him.

A dramatic monologue thus has a wider scope and dimension than a soliloquy. The writer of a dramatic monologue has a wider area of operation whereby he can penetrate very deep into the mind and heart of his character. The form allows full scope for character portrayal. We can almost “see” the listeners in Browning’s dramatic monologues, and observe their faces change in expression as the monologue proceeds. We can form a clear idea about the characters of the listeners through the words of the speaker. How vividly Lucrezia comes out before us, through Andrea’s words in Andrea Del Sarto! Utterly beautiful, but completely lacking in soul, contemptuous of her husband, impatient to be off to meet her lover, trading her smiles for money to give to her “cousin”-that is Lucrezia.

We get a fairly clear idea about the sons of the Bishop as he rambles on about his tomb. They are apparently indifferent to his wishes and are quite eager to leave his death-bed.

T.W. Young calls the dramatic monologue a “comprehensive soliloquy”. The emphasis is obviously on “comprehensive”, for it absorbs into its substance by the speaker’s keenly observant glance”, “surrounding scenery and audience, bringing all that is pertinent to the chosen moment by the channels of memory, argument, curiosity and association; adding through the deep-graven lines which habit has incised upon character much which the soul would fair conceal, and enriching the current of self-revealing speech with the product of any other emotion which may have been powerful enough to share in the fashioning of this critical moment.”

By drawing so much from an incident, Browning has shown us the rich potential of love and his ability to exploit this potential to the maximum. He has added a new dimension to the poetry of love by making it a subject for the study of human soul and he had done it through characters of various kinds. Everywhere he takes up a unique kind of lover and analyses him on the basis of his love experience.

A perfect example of the above definition is the Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister. We read it to the end and realise the gradually self-revealed picture of a narrow –minded, superstitious, sensual-monk. He has been stirred to deep hatred of a brother monk whose mild and generous piety is brought out through the speaker’s jeers and curses.

In My Last Duchess, Browning succeeds in presenting not merely one mood, but the very essence of a whole life history. In the Duke of Ferrara, is the typical aristocrat of the Italian Renaissance- arrogant, ruthless, sophisticated, selfish, jealous, cruel, but at the same time, a connoisseur of art. The mastery of the lines, ‘’This grew; I gave commands; /Then all smiles stopped together” cannot easily be surpassed for its chilling insight into the Duke’s character. The scene unfolds itself before us with natural clarity.

The characters embody Browning’s interest in them. It is not their outward appearances which are revealed, but their very souls are “dissected”. Browning anticipates the modern “stream of consciousness” technique in his psycho-analysis and telescoping of past and future into the present. Like the modern impressionist, he ranges all over vast stretches of time instead of giving an orderly sequence of thought.

The poet wishes, he were a dead leaf or a cloud flying with the wind or a wave feeling the power of the wind. Or he wishes, he were a boy again, when he thought that he could beat the wind by running races. But of, these are not likely to happen. So he appeals to the storm to lift him: “Oh, lift me, a wave, a leaf, a cloud! / I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!” He is like the Wind; tameless and swift and proud.

Andrea Del Sarto presents another type of artist. Here, youthful hopes and ambition have yielded to the dejected acceptance of age. A study of failure, the poem is the tragedy of resignation. Andrea has not realised his capability; his whole self is filled with the sense of having been unfaithful to his art. He is a technically perfect craftsman, but there is nothing of the “play, the insight, and the stretch” in his art.

In Abt Vogler, Browning deals with the power of music and also with the concept of failure. If the Bishop who orders his tomb is a representation of Renaissance worldliness and luxury, A Grammarian’s Funeral represents the austere discipline of the same period.

Browning’s dramatic monologues often present an unusual perspective. In Porphyria’s Lover, the lover seeks to eternalise his union with his beloved by killing her.

In Evelyn Hope, we have a lover who is “thrice as old” as the sixteen years old girl.

This artificiality is to be disguised so that, while we sense a listener’s presence, we do not question his silence. Browning’s mastery lies in the fact that he has successfully overcome the difficulty posed by the form. He uses the form with great liberty, putting it to any use he feels like, even while never over-stepped its limits.

After the dramatic beginning, the characters in Browning’s monologues speak their mind. Their words essentially grow out of the particular situations in which they are placed but ramble over their whole life, past, present and future. “My stress lay on incidents in the development of the soul”, said Browning. The very setting is evoked. Each speaker presents his attitudes and moods, varying according to his intellectual and emotional aptitudes. Andrea, for instance, begins by seeking a respite from quarrelling with his wife. He goes on to persuade Lucrezia to sit by him at the window, for that, he feels, will inspire him to paint better. His reflections on his present life set him off to remember his past life; and misdeeds at the French Court. He expresses the hope for his future that with Lucrezia beside him, he could out-do Rafael and Michael Angelo. In the process, the character of Andrea Del Sarto is revealed in a multifarious manner.

Browning’s dramatic monologues do not merely embody a mood; they evoke an atmosphere of their own. Every detail of the setting for instance, contributes to the total effect. The figures listening to the speaker are vividly brought out by the words of a single character. We can easily feel the presence of the Bishop’s three sons as he orders his tomb. We can easily feel the presence of the Bishop’s three sons he orders his tomb. We can almost see the hated rival, Gandolf, still peeping from a corner as he did while he was alive. Around Fra Lippo Lippi, we can make out the rough faces of the soldiers in the flickering torch-light. As Andrea Del Sarto muses over his failure in life, we can sense the impatience of the beautiful Lucrezia waiting for the cousin’s signal.

Browning’s characters belong to different countries and different ages and almost all of them are from the urban setting. He did not have the Wordsworthian love for the solitary or secluded zones of life. He took his characters from England, Italy, Germany, France and other countries. Arthur Symons believes that Browning studies humanity at various places-on Roman Campagna, in Venetian gondolas, in Florentine streets, on the boulevards of Paris and the Pardo of Madrid, in the snow-bound forests of Russia, beneath the palms of Persia and upon Egyptian sands, on the coast of Normandy and salt plains of Brittany. Browning’s observation of life was so vast and vivid that he filled his monologues with characters of all sorts. There is God’s plenty in them.

Browning is one of the chief exponents of the mind in English Literature. In his dramatic monologues, Browning has tried to do what Shakespeare had already done in his plays, i.e., to portray different types of characters. But of, the monologues are naturally wanting in external action, in plot and in multiplicity of character. It is so because the primary concern of Browning was with the interior of man. He cared very little for giving descriptions of physical appearance of dress. What he wanted to lay bare, was the soul of man and he was not interested in men at large. He was concerned with individuals, so he remained very choosy about the selection of his characters. He never picked them up at random.

By ‘perfection’ Andrea does not mean sheer technical or mechanical perfection. He is sad that his own perfection is only technical. His paintings do not have the artistic worth of the paintings by Rafael and Michael Angelo. His paintings do not appeal to the aesthetic taste of man. He finds a technical flaw in a painting of Rafael. He knows that he can remove the flaw, but at the same time, he is well aware that he does not have the soul of Rafael. But for a soul, Andrea would have been equal to Rafael. He, however, has killed the conscience of his soul. He has sold away his art.

The men and women who live and move in the new world of his creation, are as varied as life itself. There are kings and beggars, saints and lovers, great painters, musicians, priests and Jews, gipsies, street-girls, princesses, dancers, wives with the devotion of the wife of Brutus, joyous girls and malevolent gray-bearded statesmen, cavaliers, soldiers, tyrants and bigots, ancient sages and modern spiritualists, heretics, scholars, scoundrels, rabbis, persons of quality, men of low character, and all as multiform as nature and society has made them.

**“Cursed, cursed creator! Why did I live? Why, in that instant, did I not extinguish the spark of existence which had so wantonly bestowed? I know not; despair had not yet taken possession of me; my feelings were those of rage and revenge. I could with pleasure have destroyed the cottage and its inhabitants, and have glutted myself with their shrieks and misery.”**

The two traits that Rousseau attributes to the human animal in a pre-civilized state are self-preservation and compassion. As he says in the Second Discourse, he finds two principles prior to reason, one of them interesting us in our own welfare and preservation, and the other exciting a natural repugnance at seeing any other sensible being, and particularly any of our own species, suffer pain or death. These traits can easily be discovered in Mary Shelley’s monster. The monster does not come into existence tabula rasa but begins to show a Rousseauean inner being in his first reaction to light and darkness.

In their championing of social progressive causes and their rejection of conventional social morals, many romantics felt isolated, alienated from society as a whole. When they tried to transform the world through poetry, they were equally isolated. For the Romantics, the imagination is used both to escape the world and to transform it and such creativity is seen as powerful, God-like, leading to an emphasis on the assertion of the self and he value of individual experience. They become Promethean figures who rival and defy God himself, creating the world anew through poetry.

**”I was even a fighter, so- one fight more,**

**The best and the last.”**

In The Bishop Orders his Tomb, once again we have the minute revelation of a character, and through character the essence of an age. It is a penetrating exposure of the vain and cynical materialism which characterised the Renaissance Church orders. As the Bishop rambles on his death-bed, we pass through a plethora of moods from confidence to dejection and resignation. He asks his son to make an expensive tomb for him. We realise the meanness and jealousy of spirit as he refers to his fellow bishop. We get to know of his past escapades. We are aware of his worldliness, his typically Renaissance learning, is consuming passion for this world’s pleasures.

Browning’s characters are ‘real’ human beings for they reflect the same combination of simplicity and complexity as do people in real life. They are simple in the sense that all their actions, past and present, arise out of their particular bent of mind. The Duke of Ferrara’s meanness and cool calculation and his arrogance come out clearly, and these traits are the sources of his ruthless behaviour. The Bishop who is ordering his tomb, similarly, shows his traits of vanity and jealousy. At the same time, they are complex characters, for they are not wholly depraved. We wonder that such mean creatures can have such a magnificent taste for artistic beauty. The monk of the Spanish Cloister is a complex mixture of consuming hatred and hypocritical ritualism. The lover in The Last Ride Together blesses his mistress instead of feeling frustrated at being rejected. Complexity of mental make-up is to be found in all the characters depicted by Browning, and it is what lends a “roundness” or completeness to them.

Browning’s treatment of love is bold, realistic and unconventional as indicated by Claims- of- body justified, identifies whereas other Victorians considered the body as an obstacle in the path of spiritual emancipation, Browning attached due importance to the claims of the body. He believed that physical pleasures were as important for a successful married life in this world, as for heavenly bliss in the next. That is why we often find him speaking of love and God at the same time. Not only this, he allows for the warmth of bodily passion even in the next world. This becomes clear in Prospice where his emphasis is on taking his wife into his embrace at the moment of his meeting her in Heaven. He talks of God and of physical pleasures in the same breath.

Browning can sympathise with a wide range of characters. He like Shakespeare, is able to understand the base and degraded natures as well as the noble and idealistic beings. He can sympathise with the cynical worldly wisdom of Bishop Blogram as well as the weakness of Andrea Del Sarto orwith the robust genius of Fra Lippo Lippi . In Caliban Upon Setebos, he presents the grotesque views of a half-monster on the meaning of the universe. In Abt Vogler, the inner meaning of music is presented through a convincing portrait of a music enthusiast. The Spanish monk, Andrea Del Sarto, and Bishop Blougram are all striking individuals. At the same time, they embody traits and psychological aspects which are true to man through the ages. Browning created two kinds of characters-the imaginary ones, and those based on historical personages. His imagined personages are more or less themselves, i.e., they express views and thoughts peculiar to themselves. The speakers of Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister, My Last Duchess, the Bishop of St. Praxed or the girl in The Laboratory speak their own minds and are Browning’s spokesmen. However, when we come to historical characters, the case is different. In Andrea Del Sarto, we get a faithful portrait of the Italian painter; but we get more than that in Andrea’s doctrine of compensation for his efforts in the next world. He also accounts for his failure as growing out of the low goal he had set for himself, i.e., the goal of technical perfection. These ideas are not really the painter’s own, but Browning’s.

Porphyria’s Lover is one study of an abnormal mind. But of, abnormality and perversion is also embodied in a mind corroded with an all-consuming hate. The Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister presents the mind of a monk corroded by jealousy and hatred for a fellow monk. The reflections of the monk as he watches his fellow monk tending plants, offer a striking study of mind eaten up by hatred and jealousy and indulging in a hypocritical ritualism. It is an admirable exposure of a mind far removed from unworldly holiness.

Variety and vividness mark the characterization of women in his poems. His portraits of women are as good as his portrayal of men. In Pompilia, he shows an insight into the mind of woman which is rare for a man. He could show a “real” woman without idealization or degradation, and from her point of view rather than from a man’s. What a fine variety of women-characters we have in Pippa, Pauline, Mildred, Constance and the heroine of the Inn Album!

In Prospice, Browning portrays his own character. Like One Word More, this poem also emerges out of Browning’s love for his wife and their happy married life. Written after the death of his wife, the poem is an expression of Browning’s faith that the departed souls meet in heaven. Browning presents himself as a man full of hope, but his hope is not devoid of courage. He is prepared to undergo all the hardships of life in order to attain the heavenly bliss. We do not find in him a cheap optimist. He is all for unending struggle.

Browning does not want to live life in parts. The rebuffs and joys of life are equally welcome for him. We find that in this brief poem, even without indulging in his usual soul-dissection. Browning gives a reflection of almost his entire personality. In just a few words of poetry, browning has packed the basic philosophy of his life, and all this seems to have been done in an effortless manner.

The analysis of a few of Browning’s poems gives us an idea of his real potential as to how capable he is in character-analysis. He has created marvellous men and women. They remain in the minds of their readers, not merely as characters of a poem but also as fellow human beings. The Duke of My Last Duchess is a merciless and proud human being; still, which reader of Browning will not like to visit his art gallery again and again? It is for long that his words continue to ring in the ears, and his characters haunt the mind.

The characters of Browning fascinate us with a charm which is peculiarity their own. It is a very clear picture of a human being that emerges before us when we read a poem of Browning. There is nothing that Browning leaves unexplained, as far as the total personality of a character is concerned. Still, he leaves a lot to the imagination of the reader. It is left to the reader to rearrange certain misplaced views of Browning’s characters, because most of them speak as they think, and at times they leave aside certain relevant points.

**“God’s in His Heaven-**

**All’s right with the world.”**

The genius of Browning is dramatic but he adds to the plausibility of his characters by making them the spokesmen of his own philosophy of life, i.e., his optimistic faith in the future of man, his belief of God. It is through the agency of Pippa in Pippa Passes that browning conveys that “God is in His heaven/ All is right with the world.”

The Rabbi in Rabbi Ben Ezra has tis to say about his faith in the totality of God’s plan. “I see the whole design, / I, who saw power, see now love perfect too:/ Perfect I call Thy plan: / Thanks that I was a man:/ Maker remake, complete,-I trust what Thou shalt do!”

The characters of Browning become much more interesting once the reader has connected the missing links by refashioning their thought-process in a logical manner.it is only after this exercise on the part of the reader that what otherwise seems unnatural or abnormal in a character gets a shape of naturalness in the total framework of his personality. If still the characters of Browning appear complex to some of his readers, the only explanation one can give is that everywhere, life is the subject of Browning’s poetry and life, after all, is not a simple affair. The characters of Browning are as simple or as complex as life itself.

Another masterly character-analysis is done in My Last Duchess. It is once again a short monologue but within that space, we get a vivid insight into the cold, arrogant, possessive and callous mind of the Duke of Ferrara. The character is built up gradually. The situation which is clarified only at the end of the poem, is that the Duke has been showing his picture gallery to a messenger who has come to negotiate the Duke’s second marriage with a Count’s daughter. Showing the picture of his first wife, the Duke’s words build a complete self-portraiture. Proud and arrogant of his nine-hundred-years old hereditary name, the Duke cannot tolerate his wife’s easy and innocent manner. Incapable of understanding her purity of soul, he gave commands, till all smiles stopped-i.e. he got her murdered.

The ruthless of the character is combined with an exquisite critical taste in art. But of, here, too, it is the selfish arrogance which comes out. If a painting is beautiful, it is not enough for the Duke of Ferrara. Its value lies in the fact that it is rare and that he himself is the lone possessor of the piece. His meanness of spirit is brought out in his incapacity to appreciate “liveliness” in real life. He can only admire “life-likeness” in art. The Duke is, indeed, a powerful piece of characterization by Browning. What is noteworthy is that through the words of the Duke, we can form a correct picture of the whole man with all his qualities- good and bad. At the same time, we get a clear picture of the Duchess. Through the Duke’s words are spoken in a critical and condemnatory tone, Browning’s skill ensures that we get a picture of the Duchess’s true innocence, simplicity and joyous involvement in life.

Fra Lippo Lippi again presents historical facts. At the same time, allusions and hints of interpretation indicate why he had his strength and weaknesses. Would anything destroy Fra Lipo’s zest for life and happiness with the merry-makers of the street? Andrea Del Sarto justifies the ways of God. Believing in the immortality of human soul, the lover in The Last Ride Together hopes that the world may end at the moment when he is taking a ride with his beloved and thus their last ride may become eternal on character.

Let us take a very simple and brief poem, Porphyria’s Lover in which the lover strangles his beloved to death. Just in sixty lines of poetry, browning presents before us not only the character of the lover (who happens to be the speaker of the monologue,) but also of the beloved who remains silent. She remains silent even while her lover strangles her to death with the string of her own yellow hair. The lover says: “No pain felt she; / I am quite sure she felt no pain.”

Not that she was a stone; her silence means her incapacity to revolt. She is meek and submissive. She cannot revolt against her parents whose authority she considers final in the affairs of her marriage. Her parents, out of vanity and pride, are too conscious of their high social status.

But of, in the heart of hearts, she is true to her lover and loves him from the core. The lover himself says: “At last I knew/Porphyria worshipped me.” The lover calls her “fair, perfectly pure and good”. In keeping with the general honesty of her mind and integrity in love, she comes to her lover, braving the rain, storm and winds. It speaks of her innocence and simplicity. The lover knows that she is too weak to revolt. The portrayal of the lover, who is the speaker of the monologue, is vivid. He loves Porphyria as much as she loves him but, whereas she is calm and cool, he is violent and hasty. He does not think twice before strangling his beloved to death. He loves her so much that he does not want to lose her; though in the process of trying to get her, in fact, he loses her, because he brings her life to an end. In his opinion, killing her is the only way of making her his own because he cannot stand the idea of her marrying a person other than himself. This is how he comes to the idea of murder.

It is just in the flash of an eye that he not only decides to murder her but also commits the crime. Then, he justifies his crime in the name of God and love, and this is the only justification he can give. He has killed her only because he loved her too well. Like so many other characters of Browning, he is optimistic and believes in the fundamental goodness of God. He does not anticipate any punishment for his crime. On the other hand, he believes that God will forgive him because there is a degree of love involved in his crime. He makes the head of dead beloved rest on his shoulder.

The ‘God’ of this lover ‘has not said a word’ on the crime only because it was committed, not out of revenge or ill-will, but out of love. The lover believes that his beloved ‘felt no pain’ of death only because he was killing her out of love. He loves his beloved even when she is lying dead. It is out of deeply felt emotions of love that he admires the bright, blushing cheek and the smiling, rosy little head of Porphyria.

Certain critics believe that the lover is insane. But in, we find complete coherence and symmetry in how he narrates the whole incident. He knows well that his beloved worships him and that he loves her. He is not insane, but his attachment with her is so intense that he cannot think of separation, except in the case of death. Therefore, he murders her.

In the personality of the Grammarian, Browning has tried to embody the fundamental principles of his philosophy. The Grammarian believes in the immortality of soul. So, he is prepared to sacrifice the material joys of the world at the altar of learning. He knows that God will compensate him for what he has failed to enjoy in this world. The Grammarian was of the belief that it is, **“**God’s task to make the heavenly period/ Perfect the earthen.” The Grammarian is a distinct individual. He “left play for work”. He always kept his mind pre-occupied with grammar.

Browning brings out the character of the grammarian in a masterly manner. He attributes to him the highest ideals of life- the very beliefs of his own philosophy. Like Andrea, the Grammarian believes that a man’s reach should exceed his grasp. This is how the mourners speak of the Grammarian’s devotion towards learning and of his faith in the immortality of soul. The Grammarian is not “greedy for quick returns of profit.” He considers this life as a preparation for the next. So he is prepared to work for his ideals in this life and to wait for the rewards in the life to come. It is in keeping with the loftiness of his aim that the Grammarian is buried on a high peak. This peak is a symbol of the perfection that he had attained in learning.

With all this, the Grammarian is not merely an individual. He is the very epitome of the Renaissance spirit- a spirit that infused in the scholars of those days the lust for learning. The scholars devoted themselves entirely to the cause of learning, research and study. The Grammarian, therefore, represents an era. By making his characters the representatives of their respective times, Browning attaches to them historical importance. Thus the reader can enjoy them on two levels, namely, on the level of poetry and on the level of history.

If religion is to be defined as the fundamental goodness of human heart, accompanied by a faith in God, then Browning can be ranked among the greatest poets of religion in English poetry. The religious poetry of Browning has a special significance because it was not written at a time when faith was the fashion of the day. On the other hand, Browning wrote it at a transitional period, at a time when doubt and scepticism were creeping into the personal life of men and women. The technological and scientific advancement of the day had shaken the faith of quite a few believers. Such was the period when Browning spoke a word of faith to his generation. W.J. Long puts it thus: “Because of his invincible will and optimism, Browning is at present regarded as the poet who has spoken the strongest word of faith to an age of doubt. His energy, his cheerful courage, his faith in life and in the development that awaits us beyond the portals of death, are like a bugle-call to good living.”

The history of Browning’s religious development can be traced from as far as Christmas Eve. In poems such as Christmas Eve and Easter Day, he reviews in a personal and direct manner, three aspects of Christian thinking. He does not use the dramatic mode here. Browning analyses the three ways of looking at Christianity, namely, the “simple”, the “ritualistic” and the “rational”. In the first, he looks at the Dissenting or Non-conformist reception of Christ’s birth in the Christmas Eve service in the Independent Chapel. In the second case, he looks at the Catholic reception of the birth in the Christmas Eve service at St. Peter’s Church in Rome, and finally in the third case, he looks at the reception of the birth in the Christmas Eve lecture by the professor in the University of Gottingen. Towards the end of the poem, we find that Browning shows his absolute preference for the Non-conformist doctrine over the two. Browning’s friendship with Miss Barrett who also happened to be a Non-conformist and Dissenter had largely influenced him in re-shaping his religious thought in this direction.

Having once chosen his sect, Browning moves a step further in Easter Day. Here he does not involve himself in the controversy of sects and creeds. What he wants to portray, is the conflict between the old blind faith and the new hard faith. He presents this through a debate between two speakers, one of whom is an easy believer and the other who finds it extremely difficult to be a real Christian. Browning wants to know the reason why one must be a Christian. Lifting himself above the controversy of sects, Browning investigates the nature of human relationship with Christ who lived and died for Man’s sake and rose from the dead on Easter Day.

Browning debates one subject after the other in order to know the exact point of contact between Man and God. He fails to find the presence of God in the world of Nature. The earthly blessings also fail to have any special appeal for Browning. In them, he does not find any reason for believing in God. The world of art also fails to establish human contact with god because it suffers from the effects of human imperfections. Even human intellect is a matter of the body and not of soul. So, Browning refuses to accept it as an evidence of the presence of God in Man.

Presenting the actual scene at the very end- almost as a climax- is an effective device in My Last Duchess. Here we are made to move from a character-study of the Duke by the course of outer events. The Count’s party is waiting downstairs, and the Duke must take the Count’s messenger below, away from the picture-gallery and discuss the negotiations for his second marriage. In the case of Porphyria’s Lover, the violent storm outside heightens the effect of the shocking murder; it indicates the disorder both in nature and the human mind. It is this “atmosphere”, created by use of details of setting, that differentiates Browning’s use of the monologue from that of his contemporaries Tennyson’s Ulysses, for instance, is more reflective than dramatic. But of, Browning imparts an added dimension to his poems through dramatic atmosphere.

Finally, in Caliban Upon Setebos, Browning presents the theme that every person has the kind of god whom he deserves. Caliban, a savage, creates in his mind, Setebos, a deity who is as brutal in habits as Caliban. Both are equally callous, listless and cruel. Caliban’s God is not merciful or just. He does not have any sense of right or wrong.

The Victorian Age was fraught with doubts and uncertainties. The development of Science and its discoveries led to a stupendous upheaval in the sphere of religious faith. There was a general cynicism and pessimism in the views of man’s nature or destiny. Thomas Hardy reflects this atmosphere in his novels. In Tennyson, too, we find the element of doubt. In an age torn in faith and doubt, Browning’s voice clearly and strongly proclaimed an opinion which was hopeful, optimistic and soothing. It led to the Victorian attitude towards Browning-that he was a greater thinker than a poet.

**“The woods of Arcady are dead,**

**And over is their antique joy;**

**Of old the world on dreaming fed;**

**Grey Truth is now her painted toy.”**

Browning’s religious poetry looks at God as the highest Truth and Supreme Reality. But of, Browning does not think of God in isolation from Man. For him, God is just, benevolent and loving. In his religious poetry, love is the unifying force between Man and God. In this respect, the religious poetry of Browning is purely religious in form and spirit.

Setebos kills his creatures and causes them pain only for his sport. In this respect, he is as good or as bad as Caliban. J.M.Cohen calls Caliban “the incarnation of what man would be without love.” Thus, the poem becomes a satire on those who try to see God in the image of their own character and thereby ascribe to Him their own attributes. Berdoe observes: “There are few, if any, systems of theology which escape one or the other of the arrows of this satire. Anthropomorphism in greater or less degree is inseparable is inseparable from our conceptions of the supreme. The abstract idea of God is impossible to us, the concrete conception is certain to err in making God to be like ourselves. That the almighty must in Himself include all that is highest and noblest in the soul of man, is a right conception; when we attribute to Him our weaknesses and failings, we are but as Caliban.”

**“I revolved rapidly in my mind a multitude of thoughts, and endeavoured to arrive at some conclusion. Alas to me the idea of an immediate union with my cousin was one of horror and dismay.”**

The first response, to light, is entirely physiological, but this is not so in the reaction to darkness. There is no physical pain associated with darkness; the monster is simply ‘troubled’ -As this passage echoes Adam’s first awakening to consciousness, the monster’s distress is Mary Shelley’s twist on the belief of Milton’s Adam that when ‘gentle sleep/ First found me’, this might mean that ‘ I then was passing to my former state/ Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve The difference between Adam and the monster is precisely that the latter is ‘troubled’ by this possibility; in this he evinces the Rousseauean instinct foe self-preservation that is as automatic as a physiological response. Rousseau argues in the Second Discourse that the attainment of a more reflective sense of mortality is a crucial stage in human evolution, ‘for no animal can know what it is to die; the knowledge of death and its terrors being one of the first acquisitions made by man in departing from animal state”. Mary Shelley’s monster signals his transition from a state of nature to a more fully human condition in one of his most Rousseauean outbursts that incorporates this growing awareness of morality.

Henry Jones comments: “His way of poetry is fundamentally different from any other English writer. He often seems to be roused into speech, rather by the intensity of his spiritual convictions caught fire, and truth became beauty for him; not beauty truth…He is swayed by ideas rather than by sublime moods.” W.T. Young observers: “But no theory can have any worth as an optimistic reading of life which does not reconcile its beneficent principle with the prevalence of evil, pain and misery… (Browning) does not take refuge in the philosophic abstraction that evil is the necessary counterpart of good in thought; he accepts evil as a real thing enough to be an instrument in the hands of love.” As G.K. Chesterton remarks, Browning’s religious beliefs are “founded on imperfections of man; he derives hope from human deficiency.” Browning’s beliefs are pragmatic. Compton Rickett says: “Whatever enriches the experience, favours aspiration, gives strength to heart and mind, is good and is to be used by us whether conventionally sanctioned or not. That which enervates, paralyses, deadens is bad and must be put aside.” W.J. Long puts it thus: “His energy, his cheerful courage, his faith in life, and in the development that awaits us beyond the portals of death are like a bugle-call to good living.”

For Browning, all is right with the world because God who is in His heaven, is essentially benevolent and loves humanity. The religious poetry of Browning looks at love as the unifying factor between Man and God. This theme repeats itself in Saul. David is the speaker in this poem and the poem and the poem is a prophecy of the Christian Messiah. The theme of divine love has been presented as the only hope of man in Epistle of Karshish. But of, in this case of Saul, this theme becomes a living reality. Karshish does not experience this reality in his own life but David does. David fails to cure the king by his medicines. He realises that it is a spiritual treatment and not the physical one, that can cure Saul. He gets a sudden revelation that God is full of love for Man, but there is a condition for that-that man must love his fellow human beings. Therefore, the prophecy of David is that God will become incarnate to show his love-“see the Christ Stand”. David realises that he can cure the King not by medicines but by his love for the king.

There is a rich panorama of life in the monologues of Browning but his special interest was in artists, scholars, poets, musicians, sculptors and painters. In Andrea Del Sarto, he has penetrated deeply into the life, aspirations and failures of a painter. In How It Strikes a Contemporary, Browning takes up a poet and Abt Vogler reveals to us the soul of a musician. While depicting a character, Browning does not portray the man alone, but his entire age and its history. In The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed’s Church, the Bishop represents the Renaissance spirit, “its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, luxury and of good Latin, “as Ruskin says.

In Bishop Blougram’s Apology, Browning presents the problem of a Bishop who hangs between pure belief and pure disbelief. His faith does not take birth from within. It is not a matter of instinct with him. He is prepared to believe only because it is safer not to be a disbeliever, but at the same time, he is not ready to part with his earthly possessions. In his opinion, the best course of action is to adopt practical ways of life and it is on this ground that he calls his own way of life a success and that of Gigadibs a failure. His lust for the material values of life is insatiable. He wants to be loved and respected though the love and respect may take birth from the fear of his position. The Bishop is of the opinion that fixed and calm belief is a source of weakness. This poem does not represent views of Browning. He does not approve of a faith that has an infection of doubt. The religious poetry of Browning is a sermon of complete faith in the totality of God’s plan.

The religion of Browning is the religion of a humanist. He cannot think of the love of God without the love of humanity. The very basis of all religion is the love of man. From this point of view, Browning has written of religion in its purest form. The religious poetry of Browning reaches its pinnacle in Rabbi Ben Ezra, a poem, which in the words of Hugh Walker is “the embodiment of all that is deepest in Browning’s philosophy of religion, and all that is highest in his morality. Nowhere else, except in the Pope of The Ring and the Book can we be so sure that we have Browning’s own thought, just the best that he can conceive unaltered and unmodified by dramatic conditions.”

The eminence of Browning rests so much on what is psychological and intellectual in his poetry that its lyrical element often gets undermined. He is known better as a poet of thoughts and ideas than as a poet of emotions and passions. But of, this is not a correct assessment of Browning‘s total poetic achievement. The lyrical note in his poetry is strong enough and calls upon the reader to study it in separation from the other elements of the poetry of Browning.

That Browning introduced an element of drama in the lyric form of writing, does not mean that he never wrote conventional or pure lyrics. His pure lyrics, though just a few in number, are exquisite in emotional intensity and poetic beauty the sign of the poet’s happy married life with Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The famous address to Elizabeth with which Browning opens his volume of poems entitled The Ring and the Book, speaks of the intensity of his passion for his wife.

The opening lines of another personal lyric by Browning, One Word More, are an expression of the sincerity of his feelings for Elizabeth.

One Word More happens to be an Epilogue to Browning’s collection of fifty dramatic monologues, entitled Men and Women. It is a perfect lyric. The chief fascination of the poem is that it is so widely different from the bulk of Browning’s poetry, which is impersonal and primarily intellectual in character. To a very large extent, the poem is free from the usual eccentricities of Browning. The easy flow of words gives relief from the strains of the thought-ridden poetry of Browning. S.A. Brooke has rightly remarked that One Word More “is a finished piece of art, carefully conceived, up build stone by stone, touch by touch, each separate thought with its own emotion, each adding something to the whole, each pushing Browning’s emotion, and picture into our souls, till the whole impression is received.”

By the Fireside is yet another perfect lyric of Browning. Sitting silently with his wife by the fireside, the poet muses over the ennobling effect of his wife’s love for him. The poet has charged every word with the force of his emotions. Last but not least, Prospice, written after the death of his wife, is an expression of Browning’s personal faith that the departed souls meet in heaven.

The distinction belongs to Browning for having set modern trends not only in his intellectual poetry, but in lyrical poetry also. We find an element of scholarship and mysticism in Soul and Childe Roland also. Whereas A Grammarian’s Funeral is a lyric thought, Roland is a lyric vision.

As we have already stated, the special contribution of Browning to the lyric is that he made it dramatic. In his Dramatic Lyrics, he gives lyrical treatment to emotions and feelings that are his own, but others’. Abt Vogler is an exquisite lyric on the subject of music. A Grammarian’s Funeral is lyric thought. Here, Browning gives an emotional treatment to an intellectual theme. He shows his feeling of love and appreciation for the devotion of the Grammarian to the cause of learning. Thus, by setting an equilibrium between the activities of mind and heart, Browning achieves what T.S. Eliot calls the “unification of sensibility.”

In spite of the fact that his genius was fundamentally dramatic Browning had a real taste for lyrical poetry. It becomes clear from the fact that there runs an undercurrent of lyricism even in those of his poems which are lyrical neither in emotion nor in conception. Pippa Passes is a drama but to a very large extent, its execution is lyrical. The conception is imaginative. The songs of Pippa fall on the reader’s ear with the chant of lyrical note. They keep haunting the mind of the reader long he has read them. Pauline is a narrative poem but again it produces lyrical effects. The description of nature adds beauty to the narrative. At places, we have beauty that takes birth from the feelings of the heart.

Among the impersonal lyrics of Browning, those dealing with the subject of love have their own significance. After John Donne, Browning was the greatest poet of love in English poetry. In his pure lyrics, he sang exquisitely of his personal love for his wife. But at, since they deal with a single mood-that of joy and satisfaction, they fail to provide the variety of interest. This does not mean that Browning knew of love only in one form. In his impersonal love-lyrics, he shows his deep understanding of this emotion in its various moods and tempers. In every new poem, he takes up a new mood of love and presents it in so natural a manner that the reader feels as if it were Browning’s personal experience. In Evelyn Hope, Browning presents a lover who is thrice as old as the girl whom he loves. Still more interesting is the fact, that the lover had never talked to the girl about his passion for her. He spoke of it to her only when she had died. Browning presents the whole unusual phenomenon in so natural a manner that the lover, instead of becoming a figure of ridicule, wins the sympathy and understanding of the reader. The reader sympathises with the lover when he finds him placing the leaf of the geranium flower as a token of his silent love for her.

Here is a fantastic type of romantic love. But of, the lovely perfection of form makes us feel that the situation has greater truth and significance than it really has.

Porphyria’s Lover presents a fantastic situation- a lover strangling his beloved not out of anger or bitterness, but out of sheer love. It has a certain lyrical power which sublimates what could easily have proved horrifying and disgracing.

The Last Ride Together and Andrea Del Sarto deal with failures in love. Whereas in the former, we have a lover who fails to marry his beloved, in the latter we have a husband who fails to win the heart and feelings of his wife. The lover I The last Ride Together does not have any complaints to make or grudge to show for his failure in love, rather, he finds solace in the fact that his beloved has agreed to take a last ride with him. The idea that the world may end at the moment when he is taking a ride with his beloved, inspires him with hope and satisfaction, because in that he foresees the immortalisation of his experience of the ride. We fail to find such hope and gusto for life in Andrea. Andrea is a painter who belongs to a class of his own. He is unparalleled in technical perfection, but his wife has wrecked the soul in him. The soul of the artist in him is dead because he has fallen prey to the temptations aroused by his wife. He admits that he has sinned. Had his wife brought with her physical charms, the beauty of mind and heart, he could have risen to the heights of Rafael and Michael Angelo. His is the crisis of the spirit and the tragedy of soul. There is more than a touch of poignancy in Andrea’s wistful cry, “out of me, out of me.”

The love lyrics of Browning embody an immense variety of mood. In a Gondola presents an experience of passionate, youthful love. In The Flight of Duchess, we have a duchess who takes the courage of crossing all social barriers that stand on the way of her love. It is in poems like these that Browning emerges as a true lyricist. These lyrics prove that Browning is not a poet of thoughts and ideas alone. He can sing of emotions as well. These lyrics provide relief from the effects of the otherwise thought- ridden poetry of Browning.

Fundamentally, Browning was a poet of man. But of, in his early works, he displays his understanding of nature and his keenness of observation. To begin with, he was influenced by Shelley in his treatment of nature. We find this influence working powerfully in Pauline. Like Shelley, he is a poet of the wind and the open sky. It is under the influence of Shelley that Browning writes of the wide and expanding landscape, as in A Grammarian’s Funeral and Two in the Campagna. Like Shelley, Browning catches upon light and colours. He draws beautiful pictures of sunrise and sunset in Pippa Passes.

The picture is a magnificent riot of colour. The description of sunrise as boiling “pure gold” and “rose, reddened” is a marvellous presentation of the light and colour.

It is wrong to suppose that the poetry of Browning degenerates into prose when it presents the ugly side of the world of nature. Rather, Browning writes magnificent poetry even when he does not include nature in it. His nature poetry is more modern in appeal than that of Wordsworth, because it does not give a lop-sided picture.

One way in which he basically differs from the Romantics, especially Wordsworth, is that he fails to find a spirit pervading in nature, the spirit that makes Wordsworth look at nature as the very maker of all his moral being. On the other hand, at times, though admittedly few, Browning finds an element of the sinister in nature. Whereas Wordsworth looks at nature as a friend of man, Browning often finds it mocking at man. For example, in Childe Roland, Browning emphasises upon the hostility of nature to the idealism of man.

If Browning exhibits a powerful influence of Shelley in his treatment of nature, it does not mean that he does not have anything original in it. Rather, Browning shows his originality, not only in how he portrays nature in his poetry, but also in his very concept of nature.

Browning does not present nature as something sharing or seeking pleasure in the joys of man. He considers of man and nature as two in his poetry. In Browning’s personal poem By the Fireside, we find the poet and his wife in a mood of rapture. But of, nature refuses to become a partner in their joy. It does not have anything to do with their pleasures, and, therefore, keeps itself totally apart from them.

Browning had an equally observant eye for the grotesque and strange in nature. Garden Fancies and Sibrandus Schanaburgensis are interesting examples in this regard. At times, he presents nature in all its oddity in order to make us feel its separateness from the world of man.

The very description of the smile of earth as “gigantic smile” speaks of its strangeness and its distinction from the soft and gentle smile of man. In Childe Roland, the grotesque in nature assumes the shape of an agency hostile to human idealism. All this is widely diverse from Keats’s and Wordsworth’s treatment of nature. Whereas Keats could fly into the world of the nightingale to dissolve and quite forget the fever and fret the world “where but to think is to be full of sorrow”, Wordsworth could see ten thousand daffodils at a glance in order to undergo an experience of extreme rapture. But of, in the hands of Browning, nature gets a distinct treatment. Looking boldly at both sides of the picture, he presents what is pleasant as well as what is unpleasant and ugly in nature. So his treatment of nature is more realistic, and more down-to-earth.

Browning displays his love of animal life also in his nature poetry. These details of animal life are remarkable for his close and careful observation. Caliban upon Setebos is a wonderful poem in that respect. It seems as if Browning has entered into the very skin of Caliban. Browning does not merely describe physical activities of the animals. In fact, he penetrates into their very instinct and lays it bare before the reader. This is how he describes the inhuman instinct of Caliban.

We can say that to study Browning as a lyricist, is to put his poetry in the right perspective. To think of him as just a thinker-poet, is to make a partial assessment of his poetic achievement. No doubt, he cared more for sense than for sound. Still, he tried a new measure in every new poem, as a result of which we have an immense metrical variety in his lyrics also. There are passages where he combines sense so well with sound that the effect becomes really marvellous. Hugh Walker has rightly remarked, “Browning has many poems in which beauty of style is conjoined with profundity of thought, and in these poems lies the hope for the permanence of his fame. But of, he drags in his train a most dangerous mass of impediments. Probably no greater service could be done to his memory than to disencumber him of it and to make a selection of his best poems such as Arnold made of Wordsworth.” Speaking of some of the poems of Browning, W. T. Young remarks on the combination of “graceful allusiveness of the Elizabethans, the subtle blending of perfume and memory in the manner of Keats… and the ideal beauty of Shelley… the easy sweep of Byron.” C. Duffing observes: “He is at best in narrative when the idea of a story struck him with lyric intensity, imposing lyric form on the curt outline of a dramatic scene.”

The nature-pictures of Browning are realistic. They are not taken from a single country. Browning’s interests were cosmopolitan. As he took his characters from various ages and various countries, similarly, he picked up his nature-scenes from different places like Italy, England and France. The landscape in Sordello and Pauline are striking for their realism. We have an exquisite piece of nature-picture in By the Fireside. At places, Browning makes his scenes and landscapes serve as background for human thought and emotion and this imparts greater reality to the landscapes themselves. For example, the description of the place where the Grammarian is to be buried heightens the effect of the dead man’s loftiness of aim in A Grammarian’s Funeral. In these lines, Browning makes us feel the expansion of a landscape. This is in keeping with the onward march of the mourners in their search for a suitable place for the burial of the great scholar. Browning often brings sky into his scenery to create an effect of the expanding and widening landscape. This happens in The Flight of the Duchess. The description of the rainbow in Christmas Eve also produces the same effect by virtue of the clarity and vividness of observation with which it is given.

Browning alone is capable of putting so much in so few words. The words are highly revealing because they give us an idea of the savage instinct of animal life.

Browning is primarily a poet man, interested in the psycho analysis of motives and thought. As such, interest in nature for its own sake is not very evident in Browning’s poetry. Rather, nature forms a background to human action. The twilight hanging over the distant city, for example, is described more as a metaphor for Andrea’s art than for its own sake.

Though Browning fails to find anything fundamentally common between man and nature, yet he looks at both of them as an expression of the creative joy and force of God. It is his belief that God created man and nature out of the joy that he took in creation. It is in this sense that he looks at the deeper meaning of nature; a deeper meaning not as it is connected with man but as it is connected with God. Browning believes that though nature and man are the twin creations of God, yet it is man that belongs to the higher order. That is why he never humanises nature. It is his belief that what man finds in nature, is the result of what he himself attributes to it, and in itself, nature does not possess any human attributes.

Browning can draw beautiful nature-pictures. They are fascinating by virtue of the accuracy and vividness with which they are drawn. The picture is an expression of Browning’s tremendous love of colour. His colours do not simply make the picture of a natural scene. In fact, they give the very impression of a painting in all its reality. So while drawing, he paints also. He makes his words perform the job of a brush. Browning’s affinity for vivid colour is again reflected in a passage from Pippa Passes where he describes the beginning of a day and then the grey cloud is suddenly tinged with red in wave after wave, and finally bursts forth the golden sunshine.

Browning is better known as a philosopher-poet than as a literary artist. This impression results from Browning’s pre-occupation with thoughts and ideas. When we read his poetry, what strikes us most is the intellectual exercise into which it puts us. Human soul was Browning’s field of study. So, he was always interested first in capturing the activities of the human mind and heart in their natural order. Not only this, but he wanted to give a running commentary on these activities as well. He wanted his readers to see for themselves, all these activities in their original form and order. As a result of this, Browning often took liberties with style and at times, sacrificed it for the sake of sense and meaning. But of, the fact that Browning cared more for sense than for sound, does not mean that he ignored sound altogether.

In fact, apart from being a great thinker-poet, Browning was a great literary artist also. Hudson says that Browning is “never careless in his writing (as is sometimes erroneously supposed) “Hudson is of the opinion that there is an immense artistic beauty in the poetry of Browning. “Notwithstanding many obvious defects, his greatness as a poet is beyond dispute, and though it is necessary to qualify the claims put forth by adherents of the ‘Browning cult’, critics of all schools now combine in recognising the supreme strength and beauty, and the enduring poetic value, of what is best- and of this there is much in his work.”

In Sludge, he uses an image of a shapeless sea animal to present a noble idea that small and great things are equally infused with the spirit of God.

Often grotesque rhymes are used by Browning-for instance, Theseus/knees’ use, did it/ quiddity, cock-crow/rock-row. Fantastic ingenuity sometimes mars the style, for instance, in the use of words such as “beauteousest” “griefful” and “grudgement.”

Following as he did, the tortuous mental processes of individuals, Browning’s diction often has the rugged cadences of spoken language. Sometimes the use of a broken, varying, irregular verse is essential to convey a particular emotion or impression. It is natural as the Duke of Ferrara strives for the right word to describe his wife’s disposition. In his often rough and unmusical style, Browning is unconventional and original.

Browning had an accurate eye for pictorial detail. Words-pictures abound in his poetry. In a Gondola has beautiful word-pictures. In Andrea Del Sarto, the silver-grey twilight gives added meaning to the painter’s art. Distinct and deep-cut similies can be used by Browning in poems like By the Fireside, where he describes the November colours on the creeper’s leaf.

Browning had his own whims and fancies. He was a widely read man exploited his knowledge to a large degree while composing his poems. His Latin expressions and reference and allusions to little known sources stand in the way of a reader’s understanding of his poems. At times, he leaves his sentences half-finished and his meaning half- expressed. He overloads his style too heavily with parentheses. The grotesque, the odd and the fantastic in nature had a peculiar fascination for him. In Sludge, he makes use of the grotesque image of a shapeless sea-beast to make us feel the presence of God in all kinds of things, small as well as big. He believed that the grotesque was essential to convey the oddity of a philosophical idea or of a character and the subtleties of thought and emotion. At times, Browning makes use of concrete images to give an idea of something abstract, as in the case of the image of the Potter, the wheel and clay in Rabbi Ben Ezra.

These are some obstacles that pose a problem before a reader of Browning. Still, it must be said that Browning was a man with peculiar or eccentric poetic tastes. His poetry belongs to a class of its own. He is the supreme master of a field – that of psychoanalysis. His literary art has its own perfections and imperfections. His poetry will continue to be read, not in spite of, but with its entire flaw.

That Browning was a deliberate and conscious artist, becomes clear from the fact that he takes pains to impart a conversational character to the language and tone of his speakers. He made use of compound words, exclamations and questions. He repeated certain words and made use of alliteration – all in an effort to make his characters as lively as possible. As an example, we can take the few lines from Evelyn Hope where the lover speaks to the girl lying dead, and whom he had loved from the core of his heart. The language is remarkable for its simplicity and naturalness.

Some lines that follow are enriched in more natural and conversational styles and embody the affection of the lover, and his abiding faith. Porphyria’s Lover is equally effective for the naturalness of its language and tone. The drama of murder moves to its climax in a very natural manner. The distinction belongs to Browning for having presented the rare phenomenon of murder, (not out of revenge or ill-will but out of love and affection, in so natural a way that the reader does not to despise the crime. This is how the lover debates to himself before the crime.)

Thus we find that the speakers of Browning’s dramatic monologues, since they have to speak within restraints, at times cannot afford to supply all the relevant material without minimising the effect and beauty of their speech. So, the reader has to exercise his brain and remain very alert while reading the monologues of Browning. His monologues are not meant for lazy or dull minds. Even in the case of the slightest slackness on the part of the reader, the reader may fail to understand the real significance of the monologue.

Thus, Browning lays emphasis on the isolation of nature from man and its ability to restrict itself to an aloof corner. It was a result of his failure to find a spirit connecting man with nature that when Browning started writing purely man-based poetry, nature found no place in it. In his poems of psychological analysis of man, he rarely combines the theme of man with the theme of nature. But of, it shall be wrong to conclude to remain a subject of Browning’s poetry, it degenerated into prose. Equally unfounded is the charge that the decay of Browning’s love of nature is the decay of his poetry as well. His psycho-analytical poems, in spite of all their intellectual and ethical exercises, are magnificent pieces of literary art. My Last Duchess, Porphyria’s Lover, The Last Ride Together and Andrea Del Sarto can be cited as the classic examples.

And this is how the lover finally comes to the idea of murder and commits the crime. The expression, ‘I found a thing to do’, is very much like the expression, “I gave commands; then all smiles stopped together” in My Last Duchess. It speaks for precision and simplicity. But of, Browning varies the language skilfully in the two expressions, so that in the two expressions, so that in the case of Porphyria’s Lover, the words convey the affection of the lover and in the case of the Duke they expose his inhumanity. This variation of language from one character to the other proves that Browning was not careless in the use of his words. He selected his words with extreme care and gave them the right place in his language.

A lyric is a short, personal, musical poem, expressing a particular, emotion at a time. But at, in the hands of Browning, the lyric assumes greater scope and dimension. He expands its area of operation and makes use of it, not merely for an expression of personal and subjective feelings but of the impersonal and objective ones also. As usual with Browning, in the case of handling a lyric also, he frees himself from its established norms and makes use of it in the way it best suits his purpose. His genius was fundamentally dramatic. He considered it better to keep himself in the background and observe and make his characters speak. In keeping with his general literary taste, he introduced an element of drama into the lyric form. He wrote what are known as the “dramatic lyrics of Browning.” And this is Browning’s original contribution to this form of writing-he made the form dramatic. The very title of one of his volumes of lyrics (being Dramatic Lyrics) speaks of what is new in the lyrics of Browning.

We can place that part of the obscurity of Browning’s style which is inevitable in the kind of poetry that he wrote. A major portion of the poetry of Browning is psycho-analytical in approach. First and foremost, Browning was a poet of man. He concentrated his poetic energies on delving deep into the human mind and heart. His primary concern was with unearthing the interior of man. It was his practice to catch an individual at one of the most revealing moments of his life and build up the entire personality of that individual against the background of the given moment. Taking a single incident from the life of a character, he wanted to make the incident a symbolic feature of his career, so that all the likes and dislikes, normalities and abnormalities, beliefs and disbeliefs and the traits and habits of that character could be reflected in the mirror of the given incident. To be precise, Browning wanted to lay bare the soul of his character.

Observing that the “characteristic art-form” of Browning was “the detached speech, or dramatic monologue”, Hudson says that in his dramatic monologues, Browning “takes some striking individual generally at a critical moment- and instead of dissecting him from the outside, as the ordinary novelist would do, penetrates to the depth of his nature and through his own utterances compels him to reveal the innermost secret of his life. Psychological insight, an analytical subtlety and power of dramatic interpretation are among the main features of Browning’s poetry.”

Browning’s art was not the art of a novelist. His genius was dramatic; and still more significant is the fact that whereas a novelist has multiplicity of character and action, Browning had primarily a single character and no action. Therefore, it was more difficult in the case of ‘Browning to erect the personality of a complete human being without the aid of action and other characters. So, what happens is that when a reader reads the poetry of Browning, certain natural difficulties arise, because the kind of poetry that Browning writes, leaves much upon the imagination of the reader.

After all that we have said about the strong points of Browning’s style, a noteworthy feature of it still remains to be studied. The reputation of Browning’s style has continued to suffer from the stigma of obscurity. It is generally believed that Browning‘s style is very obscure, but here we want to sound a word of caution to the reader lest he should be misled by the general concept of obscurity. Broadly speaking, we can divide the obscurity of Browning’s style into two groups: obscurity resulting from unavoidable reasons and obscurity due to avoidable reasons.

The speaker of a dramatic monologue has to speak within a given framework. He cannot go beyond his limitations. In a given spell of time, he has to move backward and forward in order to relate his one particular experience with his past life-history. In other words, the speaker has to supply all the material relevant to the given incident. He has to explain (without becoming narrative) as to what led him to the situation in which he stands before us. With all this, the speaker must maintain the natural tempo of his conversation. He must not damage the fundamentally conversational character of his tone. W.T. Young’s definition of a dramatic monologue can help us to understand this point better: “This (the dramatic monologue) is a kind of comprehensive soliloquy absorbing into its substance by the speaker’s keenly observant glance, the surrounding scenery and audience bringing all that is pertinent to chosen moment by the channels of memory, argument, curiosity and association; adding through the deep-graven lines which habit has incised upon character much which the soul would fain concealing and enriching the current of self-revealing speech with the product of any other emotion which may have been powerful enough to share in the fashioning of this critical moment.”

When Sordello appeared first, Browning was charged with verbosity. With that, he made it a point to use two words in the place of ten. He compresses his words to an excessive degree. He makes use of very few adjectives, and tries to use monosyllabic words wherever possible. He leaves out pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions and articles. Often he starts his line with its ‘tail first’ and thus makes his rhythm unmusical. The following line from Rabbi Ben Ezra is an example of one of his needless use of inversion: “Irks care the crop full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?”

Browning could not get immediate popularity (as Tennyson could) because he was a man ahead of his times. The readers of his times were not used to reading the kind of poetry that he was writing. The easy flow and the poetic charm of Tennyson’s poetry had a greater fascination for them. The subjects of Tennyson’s poems were quite commonplace. Love of the country is an oft-repeated theme of Tennyson’s poetry, whereby it naturally made its place in the hearts of the contemporary readers by providing them greater scope for self –identification, both from the point of view of thought as well as emotion. On the other hand, Browning was a cosmopolitan. He raised himself above the narrow limits which excessive patriotism and jingoism impose upon one. He did not sing of a single individual or a single nation. He was not a poet of sects and classes. He took different characters from different countries. Moreover, the delineation of his characters was psycho-analytical in spirit. This also was new to the readers of Browning’s times because they never expected poetry to do the job of a novel.

Browning has a special fondness for using moon and star imagery. A star stands for purity, nobility, and peace. In Abt Vogler, the musician’s great miracle is that “out of three sounds, the frames not a fourth sound but to start.” In One World More, uniqueness of love is expressed by a reference to the unknown side of the moon.

**“Every moment I feared to meet my persecutor. Sometimes I sat with my eyes fixed on the ground, fearing to raise them lest they should encounter the object which I so much dreaded to behold. I feared to wander from the sight of my fellow-creatures, lest when alone, he should come to claim his companion.”**

 “….If the adult, Satanic Victor is Eve-like in his procreation and his anxious creation, even the young, prelapsarian, and Adamic Victor is- to risk a pun –curiously female, that is, Eve-like. Innocent and guided by silken thread like a Blakeian lamb in a Godwin garden, he is consumed by ‘a fervent longing to penetrate the secrets of nature’, a longing which- expressed in his explorations of ‘vaults and charnel house’, his guilty observations of ‘the structure of the human frame’- recalls the criminal female curiosity that led psyche to lose love by gazing upon its secret face. Eve, to insist upon consuming ‘intellectual food’, and Prometheus’s sister-in-law Pandora to open the forbidden box of fleshly ills. But if Victor-Adam is also Victor-Eve, what is the real significance of the episode in which, away at school and cut off from his family, he looks himself into his workshop of filthy creation and gives birth by intellectual parturition to a giant monster? Isn’t it precisely at this point in the novel that he discovers he is not Adam but Eve, not Satan but Sin, not male but female?

 **….**In fact, may not the story of the fall be, for women the story of the discovery that one is not innocent and Adam (as one hand supposed) but Eve, and fallen? Perhaps this is what Freud’s cruel but metaphorically accurate concept of penis-envy really means; the girl child’s surprises discovery that she is female, hence fallen inadequate. Certainly the almost grotesquely anxious self-analysis implicit in victor Frankenstein’s (and Mary Shelley’s) multiform relationship to Eve, Adam, God and Satan suggest as much.” (Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in Adam’s Monstrous Eve)

Perhaps no other English poet has undergone as many fluctuations in his reputation as Browning. Right from the start of his career as a literary artist, he became a target of criticism. His early works, Pauline, Paracelsus and Sordello came under severe criticism, the last one primarily because of its obscurity. So, Browning failed to get recognition as a great literary artist in the early years of his poetic career. One thing that has stood between him and his readers, is the general obscurity of his poems. He moves from one mental association to another without keeping in mind the nature and speed of the movement of these associations in the mind of the reader. As a result of this, the reader fails to keep pace with the thought-development of Browning’s poems and finds them obscure.

There is a strong element of love in the poetry of Browning. His lyrics of love, both personal and dramatic, are exquisite for their emotional intensity and poetic charm. Last but not least, we mention the literary merits and demerits of the poetry of Browning. There are poems that owe their permanence to the fusion of sense and sound with which Browning has loaded them. Still, there are quite a few poems which embarrass the reader due to their extraordinary faults. Yet they carry the imprint of Browning’s poetic genius, which inherited certain peculiar eccentricities of thought and execution.

First and foremost, Browning is a psycho-analyst. It is his aim to peep into the very soul of his characters. He lays bare the entire personality of his characters-their beliefs and disbeliefs, likes and dislikes, strong points and weak points; in short, their very interior. For this purpose, Browning adopted the form of dramatic monologue, in fact, he handled this form of writing with so great a perfection that it became his monopoly. He made the form his own. He shows his characters not in physical action but in mental action. He catches his character at a moment of pause, a moment that happens to be of utmost significance in his life. The character reveals his entire self, both knowingly and unknowingly, against the background of the chosen moment. Right in the natural course of his address, he moves backward and forward and gives to his readers the knowledge about how he proceeded towards his present predicament. In brief, the characters of Browning reveal “all that is pertinent to the chosen moment by the channels of memory, argument, curiosity and association; adding through the deep-graven lines which habit has incised upon character much which the soul would fain conceal, or is even more unconscious of the necessity for concealing; and enriching the current of self-revealing speech with the product of any other emotion which have been powerful enough to share in the fashioning of this critical moment.”

The poetry of Browning conveys a message. It is the message of an optimist, of one who is looking at the life of Man, with a light of hope in his eyes. The cardinal point of his optimism is his faith in the benignity of the total plan of god. The basic theme is that God is in his heaven and all is right with the world of men. The poetry of Browning gives a word of promise that the human soul is immortal, whereby man must not get obsessed with his failures. There shall be many more lives in which to accomplish what has remained unaccomplished in one. Of course, Browning qualifies his optimism by stressing upon the need of human endeavour.

Actually, Browning had astonished the readers of his times by his extraordinary greatness and extraordinary faults Hugh Walker says that Browning is “at once astonishingly great and astonishingly faulty”. He further adds that the originality of Browning leads him into “irritating eccentricities”. And these very eccentricities are responsible for the baffling behaviour of his reputation.

The immediate contemporaries of Browning did not bother to read him, because they failed to find a reflection of their own age in his poetry. Browning was not a representative of his age. He refused to cater to the general taste of the masses. He did not like to make poetry a medium for providing a discussion on the problems of men and women around him. He considered poetry as a sacred art, much above the ordinary, day-to-day controversy as such. For him, all was right with the world of man though God continued to remain in His own heaven. This unreasoned faith of Browning was not in keeping with the general trend of the day thus, it became an obstacle in the way of his becoming popular with people as a result of which his reputation suffered.

After John Donne, Browning is the greatest poet of love in English poetry. He has written of love in its various kinds. One Word More and By the Fireside are exquisite lyrics of personal love. They express Browning’s feelings of oneness with his wife Elizabeth Barrett Browning. He dedicates himself mentally as well as spirituality to his wife. In Prospice, Browning expresses his desire to be one with his wife in heaven.

As we have already said, Browning looks at life with a glimmer of hope in his eyes. Rabbi Ben Ezra and the Grammarian are the spokesmen of Browning’s basic philosophy of life. The Rabbi declares his faith in God, “Perfect I call Thy plan;/ Thanks that I was a man, / Maker, remake, complete-n I trust what Thou shalt do,”

The dissection of soul is an aim of almost the entire poetry of Browning. Crompton-Rickett has rightly said : “All his (Browning’s) writings are experimental studies in spiritual experience- whether he deals with love or patriotism, or intellectual ambition or artistic passion, or religious aspiration, it is all brought to one common denominator- its effect upon character; its value in the making of the soul. This is his aim.”

The Rabbi knows that “Our times are in His hand” whose plan is fundamentally perfect as well as good. God has gifted man with one of his own attributes- the immortality of soul.

It is by virtue of his faith that “Man has forever” (the immortal soul) that the Grammarian continues to work tirelessly in his pursuit of learning, without caring in the least for the joys and pleasures of the material values of life. He puts it in very unambiguous terms that it is “God’s task to make the heavenly period/ Perfect the earthen,” and to compensate man for what he has failed to enjoy or attain in one life. Like Andrea, Grammarian believes that “a man’s reach should exceed his grasp”

The optimism of Browning holds out a promising hand even to those sinners whom sinners themselves have outcast, as in case of Sludge. The lover of Porphyria is a criminal, he has murdered his beloved, “And yet God has not said a word” on his crime. The silence of God means divine justification of the crime because it has committed in the name of and for the sake of love. W. J. Long talking about the note of optimism in Browning’s poetry says: “Because of his invincible will and optimism, Browning is at present regarded as the poet who has spoken the strongest word of faith to an age of doubt. His energy, his cheerful courage, his faith in life and in the development that awaits us beyond the portals of death, are like a bugle-call to good living.”

“Good living” is very important in Browning’s optimism. He does not preach an easy faith or a cheap hope. Nobility of mind and human endeavour are a pre-requisite of his optimism. Browning was “ever a fighter” (Prospice) and his poetry lays repeated emphasis on constant struggle. Where nobility of mind is absent, Browning has a word of denunciation and condemnation. He arouses out contempt for the hypocrisy and cruelty of the Duke in My Last Duchess. The Bishop Orders his Tomb is an exposure “of the Renaissance spirit-its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin.” The optimism of Browning, therefore, is the optimism of a realist and not that of an idealist.

The style of Browning is reputed for its obscurity. At places, obscurity results from the intricacies of thought. By taste, Browning is a dissector of soul. Packing the entire development of a soul in the words of an address lasting just a few minutes, is a difficult job. Browning does it, but within the limitations that this form of writing imposes upon him. He cannot seek aid from physical action. He does not have a plot. Nor does he have many active characters. There is only one character who has to say all that is relevant, not only to himself but also to his listener. Much is left upon the imagination of the reader. The reader must keep pace with the speed of the development of thoughts in the mind of the speaker. Not only this, the reader must think it in the way the speaker thinks. He must move from one mental association to another in the manner of the speaker, lest he should fail to identify the missing link between two mental associations of different kinds. Therefore, Browning is obscure for those minds which are not active and sharp enough.

Still the fact remains that at places Browning is really obscure and unintelligible. He omits quite a few words and thus creates problems for his readers. At times, he leaves his sentences half-finished and his meaning half-expressed. He does not care for the established norms of poetry. In his search for new and still newer stanza forms, he makes himself original as well as unintelligible at times. His originality leads him into “irritating eccentricities.” He flouts almost all rules of grammar. He tries to write the way he thinks, so that the reader, in order to understand him in the right direction, must think the way Browning thinks. This makes Browning’s style telegraphic and difficult to follow. He makes an excessive use of parentheses. For him, sense is more important than sound and where he sacrifices sound for the sake of sense, he is harsh, rugged and unmusical. At places, he is too condensed and precise, while at others he is verbose.

**“Frankenstein, you belong then to my enemy-to him towards whom I has sworn external revenge; you shall be my first victim.”**

In fine Frankenstein is the story of an ambitious scientist who usurps the role of God and attempts pervert the natural laws that govern mankind. The lines from Paradise Lost appended after the epigraph embody Mary Shelley’s critique of the parents who abandon their children and thus indirectly revealing her own father’s indifference towards her.

Thus, we find that to draw a comparison between Browning and Tennyson is to experience a world of two different realms of poetry. It yields an interesting and enlightening study. If one is an epitome of literary skill and poetic grandeur, the other is unsurpassable in the manner in which he has made use of poetry as a medium for intellectual and psychological penetration into the very being of the individuals.

The basic difference between Tennyson’s and Browning’s treatment of nature is that whereas the former can afford to look at it for its own sake. Browning, almost always, looks at it in connection with Man and God. For Browning, Man and Nature are two entities. In spite of his awareness of what is cruel and ugly in nature, Browning looks at it as an expression of God’s creative force and His joy. The nature-pictures are more vivid, detailed and minute, because he looks at nature for its own sake and goes deep into its physical details.

Still it shall be wrong to say that Browning was a careless artist. That there are nearly half as many poetic forms in his poetry as there are poems, is an evidence of the extraordinary pains that he took to convey every new idea in a form that suited it best. He is one of the greatest experimentalists of stanza-forms in English poetry and has been a source of inspiration for those modern poets who have experimented with various stanza-forms. There are instances where Browning fuses sense so well with sound that the effect is really musical and the reader feels that nothing better could have been said. The sweet melody of My Last Duchess and the music of The Last Ride Together to the gallop of the horses remain unmatched for their artistic beauty. The rhythmic beat of the verses is in keeping with “The thought, mood and movement of the poem”. We can say that in spite of its faults, in spite of the length of quite a few poems, the poetry of Browning shall continue to be read for a very long time to come. It has in store much that can be of fascination for generations of tomorrow.

For Tennyson, an individual is not more important than a collective group of people, but it is the other way round in the case of Browning. “Tennyson’s message reflects the growing order of the age, and is summed up in the word ‘law’. In his view, the individual will must be suppressed; the self must always be subordinate.” W.J. Long further adds: “Browning’s message, on the other hand, is the triumph of the individual will over all obstacles; the self is not subordinate but supreme”, Tennyson is a poet of the masses; browning is a poet of the individuals.

During the late eighteenth century, there was an upsurge of ghost fiction: there was Horace Walpole’s Castle of Otranto (1764): Walpole was a man of genius who threw “the reins loose upon neck of his imagination…The large limps of the gigantic figure which inhabits castle, and which are visible at intervals.” There was Matthew Lewis’ The Monk (1796) and Ann Radcliffe’s The Mysteries of Udolopo (1794). These were the truly Gothic novels; the emphasis was on fear and terror and there was the presence of the supernatural. The stories were placed in the distant, forlorn and unknown regions.

The obscurity of Browning is understandable and justifiable where it results from unavoidable circumstances, namely, his preoccupation with the mind and soul of man, an occupation which by its very nature involves a tremendous intellectual exercise. But of, at place, Browning seems to become obscure deliberately. “His style and rhythm are often intolerably rough and unmusical. He is full of strained expressions, irritating puns, harsh inversions”, as Hugh Walker says. ”He has a provoking and really meaningless habit of clipping the particles-‘as we curtail the already curtailed cur’. Worst of all, perhaps, is his inability to select the essential and to reject the unimportant. He pours out the whole farrago of his thoughts and sometimes does not take the trouble to set them in order. This is the meaning of the charge of verbosity which has been brought against him. He is not verbose in the sense that he takes many words to express a given idea; on the contrary, he is often condensed to a fault. But on, he is verbose in the sense that he gives expression to many thoughts when a few would suffice and the total effect might be produced in less space than he takes.”

Describing Browning as “an uncompromising foe of scientific materialism”, Hudson compares him with Tennyson: “The melancholy, hesitating spirit so often expressed by Tennyson finds no place in his (Browning’s) verse, and he looked boldly at the evil of existence without for a ,moment losing his robustly optimistic faith. ‘Hope hard in the subtle thing that’s the spirit’, was the note of his message to his generation; and to the many about him who were asking doubtfully whether after all was really worth the living, he gave answer in the words of his Pippa- ‘God in his heaven- all’s right with the world’.’’ The poetry of Tennyson aims at setting a compromise between faith and doubt but Browning speaks the strongest word of pure faith to an age of doubt.

Many critics have observed that by usurping the role of woman and by indulging in ‘secret toils’ in the workshop of filthy creation. Victor perverts the natural law; and what he succeeds in creating so horrifies him that he develops fear of even normal sexuality.in his dream when he kisses Elizabeth, she turns into a corpse of his dead mother. This leads to the idea that Victor is frightened by the very thought of sexuality. This view is supported by his own reaction to his father’s suggestion that he should marry Elizabeth: “Alas! To me the idea of an immediate union with my Elizabeth was one of horror and dismay.” This reaction may also be due to the monster’s threat hanging over his mind. After Victor had destroyed the she-monster he was about to animate, the monster had threatened him with the words “I shall be with you on your wedding night.” This interpretation is supported by his behavior after the wedding ceremony when both Victor and Elizabeth go to the cottage at EVIAN to consummate their union. Victor’s mind is almost hay-wire as he looks at Elizabeth’s face. There was considerably anxiety and fear visible on Victor. She naturally asked him: ““What is it that agitates you, my dear Victor? What is it you fear?” And Victor responds, “Oh! Peace, peace my love,” replied I, “this night, and all will be safe: but this night is dreadful, very dreadful.” These words have led the critics to interpretation of his fear of sexuality: there is of course some ambiguity in these words. However, Victor’s agitating is not indicative of his repulsion to natural sexuality. In fact, he cannot get rid of the fear of the monster’s threat and he knows that he meant what he had said. He carries a fully loaded pistol under his bosom (not noticed by Elizabeth), for an imminent encounter with the monster. He checks all passages and approaches to their room.

**“My dear father, re-assure yourself. I love my cousin tenderly and sincerely. I never saw any woman who excited as Elizabeth does, my warmest admiration and affection. My future hopes and prospects are entirely bound up in the expectation of our union.”**

These lines are very touching and highly characteristic of Shelley. Shelley was a rebel and a revolutionary. He had a restless temperament which was even at war with something. In the West Wind, Shelley finds a kindred spirit. Looking at it, he is reminded of his youth when he too was free and uncontrollable. At that time, he did not think it an impossibility to vie with the West Wind in its speed, but the worries and mysteries of this life have proved too much for him and have made him tame and weak. He had lost his old vigour and force, and he appeals to the West Wind to lend him some strength and lift his dejected spirit as it lifts a cloud, wave or a leaf. He was very much oppressed by the hardships of the world and he wants somebody to support him through his struggle for existence in this world. He was indeed tameless and wild like the West Wind at one time, but now he is bowed down by the worries and care, and calls for help.

Next, Shelley describes the agitated surface of the ocean cuts a thousand deep passages on itself for the march of the terrific wind; while the rush and tumult on the surface reach the vegetable world at the bottom of the ocean, the leaves, the flowers, the sapless forests there tremble with fear and are shaken loose pell-mell at the awful roar of the mighty wind. The keynote of the first three Stanzas is balanced. Their settings, land, sky and sea, give equal emphasis to the three states of matter, solid, gaseous and liquid. Each of the four seasons has its appointed place, and there is a full range of colours- red, yellow, blue, grey and black explicitly, white and green implicitly. Turmoil is balanced against calm, life against death, detail against generalization, cold against calm, life against death, detail against generalization, cold against warmth, plain against hill, and so on. The varied evidence of Stanzas1-3 is assembled in support of the narrow, one-track theme in the last two stanzas: the plan is sound, but in points of detail it falls short of perfection for Shelley harps on his prayer rather too long. His defeatism becomes a trifle depressing, unless when reading the poem we happen to be in the same mood as he was…the note of self-pity is overplayed in the last two Stanzas; and this must be counted a blemish in what is otherwise a nearly faultless poem.”

**“What is it that agitates you, my dear Victor? What is it you fear?”**

In his topsy-turvy mind, Victor has misinterpreted the Monster’s words as a threat to him, whereas the threat was directed to Elizabeth. Since the words of threat are spoken after Victor destroys the female companion, it is clear that the monster would do quid pro quo that he would not let Victor enjoy the pleasure of marital union- the pleasure which has been denied to him. Thus, both the interpretations are possible. The ugliness of the monster and the likelihood of monstrous species which the monster and his female companion might have engendered create in Victor an abnormal fear of even natural sexuality. Critics have gone to take the view that the monster becomes an embodiment and an externalization of all of Victor’s repressed desires, the desires he rejects but cannot obliterate. The ambiguities of various textual contexts lead to diverse views.

**“I was bound by a solemn promise, which I had not yet fulfilled, and dared not break; or if I did, what manifold miseries might not impend over me and my devoted family. Could I ever enter into a festival with this deadly weight yet hanging around my neck, and bowing me to the ground? I must perform my engagement, and let the monster depart with his mate before I allowed myself to enjoy the delight of union from which I expected peace.”**

**~Rituparna Ray Chaudhuri**...

‘’Except Setting, accommodation of views and a few changes, words and sentences are taken from authentic books including the text on Frankenstein.’’