

# Drug influence on the romantic poets

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The impact for the first generation after the Industrial revolution was depressing, terrifying and intoxicating to a scarcely bearable degree.

The Industrial Revolution meant for the very first time a great mass of people no longer suffered through a life of brute labor just to avoid starving, to a life of consistent natural disasters and diseases. In this important time for England the new way of poetry took a place, the poetry that latter will find the name as Romantic Poetry. Great poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lord Byron, and Percy Shelley made huge impact on modern literature and have established outstanding legacy of English poems. However, not many of their readers notice the fact that number of Romantic poets were addicted to drugs such as opium and were finding their inspirations in opium houses. Scott a historian of English literature mentions various forms of intoxication that were present in poets lives - from distilled spirits, opium, or nitrous oxide - which may also generate visual illusions. He testifies that poets' phenomena or as called " inspiration" was the result of opium.

Very frequent use of the nitrous oxide which affects the senses so strongly, and produces a short but singular state of ecstasy, would probably be found to occasion this species of disorder" (Hayter, p. 24). Optical specters, then, may result from physical disorders as well as mental disorders, and they may also be solicited by the use of opium and other drugs. As has already occurred to the Coleridgeans in the audience, optical specters were not infrequent in Coleridge's experience: the opening in the wall that he observed in his room in Bristol, the apparition of the Captain that he saw at his fire-side in Malta, the luminescent letters that he inscribed on his thigh while lying in bed, the adulterous nighttime wanderings of Wordsworth that

he thought he witnessed at an inn on their way to Coleorton. Scott recalls, too, Coleridge's reply to "a lady who asked him if he believed in ghosts:-'No, madam; I have seen too many myself'".

While such symptoms may seem trivial and whimsical, Scott argues that the imagination has the power "to kill the body, even when its fantastic terrors cannot overcome the intellect" (Hayter, p. 26-32). The mind, conscious of its own hallucinations, may be relieved from the horror of thinking that nightmare images are real, but that awareness cannot dispel the torment of knowing it has no control over their presence. The most striking features about opium in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which also called in English literature the Romantic era are the contradictory facts that, while it was widely used and easily available, almost nothing was known about it. Medical knowledge of the drug's properties was scanty and unreliable: few people realized, for example, that opium was addictive, and no one understood that withdrawal symptoms were the result of discontinuation or diminished dosages.

Indeed, everything that was known about it seemed positive and beneficial. Opium was used as a "cure" for a host of emotional and psychological. In Coleridge's day, he has pointed out, "most doctors and patients still thought of opium not as a dangerous addictive drug but mainly as a useful analgesic and tranquillizer of which every household should have a supply, for minor ailments and nervous crises of all kinds, much as aspirin is used today" (J. Barzun, p. 41). ...