

# Romantic *Weltliteratur* of the Western World

*Edited by* Agnieszka Gutthy



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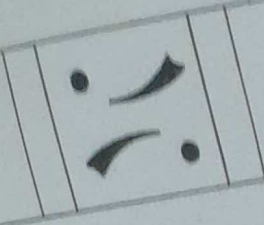
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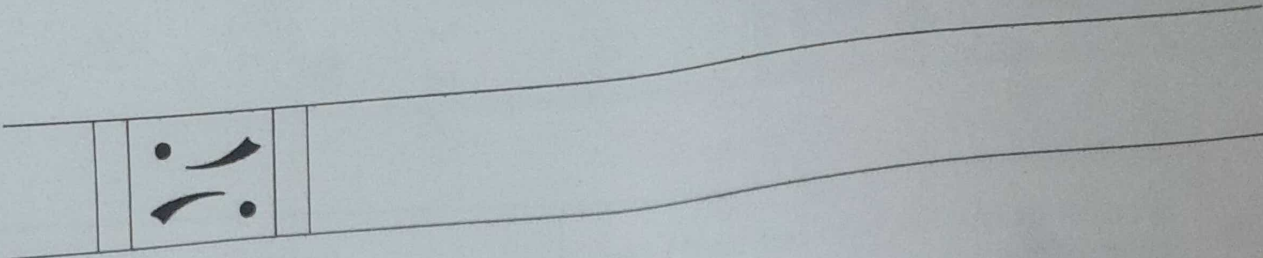
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# 1. The Romantic "I": Italy and India in Letitia Landon's Transnational Texts<sup>1</sup>

DEBNITA CHAKRAVARTI

One of the most exciting avenues of research in British literature in the recent past has been the inquiry into women's writings of the period between 1780 and 1830. This has led not only to a rediscovery of texts hitherto obscured by the politics of canonization and the vagaries of time, but also has been instrumental in revising the very margins of Romanticism scholarship. The last two decades in particular have altered the contours of a conservative area in English literary studies. In terms of poetry, the canon of Romanticism has conventionally been synonymous with the works of the "Big Six": Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats. The introduction of women into this all-male bastion that started about thirty years ago—if we take Roger Lonsdale's landmark *Eighteenth Century Women Poets: An Anthology* (1989) as a marker—revises our understanding of Romanticism. One has only to note that any Romantic anthology published today will invariably include women writers unheard of in academia even a few years ago to recognize the rapidity of this change.

Letitia Elizabeth Landon was one of the major literary figures of the time, enjoying a readership paralleled only by Byron. Landon was the only well-known poet of her day who made erotic love her primary theme. Being an exceptionally prolific writer, she produced one of the largest bodies of love poems in English.

This essay will explore the unique brand of female Romanticism developed by Letitia Landon through her exploitation of the public perception of two lands very different from her own. Landon set many of her popular tales in Italy. Starting with *The Improvisatrice*, Landon used Italy time and again to