

A photograph of a beach with waves and footprints. The image shows a sandy beach with several footprints leading away from the water. The water is a deep blue, and the sand is a light tan color. The overall scene is serene and evocative of a romantic or contemplative mood.

# Rethinking Romanticism

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# Her 'Indian Wealth': Letitia Elizabeth Landon's Transnational Texts

Debnita Chakravarti

One of the most exciting avenues of research in British literature in the recent past has been an enquiry into women's writings of the period between 1780 and 1830. This has led not only to a rediscovery of texts obscured till now by the politics of canonisation and the vagaries of time, but has been instrumental in revising the very margins of Romanticism scholarship. Defined 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. Letitia Elizabeth 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. My chapter aims to explore the unique brand of female Romanticism developed by Letitia Landon through her exploitation of the public perception of India, which she used to develop a poetics that led to the creation of a poetic persona uniquely her own, an exercise crucial to her success as a female poet in an age when poetic genius was so sharply gendered.

In order to comprehend how Landon achieved this, it is imperative to first understand the underlying principle of Landon's poetic tales. Love is