

# **British romanticism**

First generation of british romantics: Wordsworth, Coleridge

Second generation: Lord Byron, P. B. Shelley, Keats, M. Shelley

British romanticism was shaped by 3 historical events, known as revolutions:

- Industrial Revolution → romantics were pioneers of ecology → they were against the ind. rev. (it was changing the british landscape, and society)
- American Revolution (or American War of Independence)
- French Revolution

## **Industrial revolution**

First industrial revolution was only in England → and it was impacting massively on british society and landscape

New social class: factory workers, who were highly exploited (long hours, poor wages)

Romantics criticized it because (they were detractors):

- the social injustice it was bringing
- the pollution

## **American war of independence and French revolution**

Romantics were champions (supporters) of political freedom → tended to be in favor of democracy

The 13 colonies became an independent republic → not monarchy

Governors were chosen by people through elections

The French rev. was an act of freedom

Wordsworth and Coleridge started as progressive → they were in favor of the revolutions

But then became more conservative

Wordsworth was in favor of a threshold for people to vote → he thought that only people with a certain education could vote

He changed his opinion because he understood that revolutions are ineffective and lead to violence only

Second generation romantics kept their radicalism → never became conservative  
They also died young → Byron and Shelley died in their twenties  
They were also atheists → it was uncommon and even a crime at the time

## American War of Independence - 248

George III ruled for 60 years → long government → in the end he developed a mental illness, which prevented him from ruling

War of independence began in 1775 → some were rebels (Patriots) and with UK (Loyalists)

The declaration of independence was actually not the reality → many people did not have rights

Adam Smith's theory is at the center of capitalism

He also studied the specialisation and division of labor → he anticipated Fordism

The motor of economy is the individual, not the state, by doing his own interests

Adam Smith founded Liberalism

## First Industrial Revolution - 250

It involved Great Britain only → the later ones involved the whole Europe

In addition the first and second were different because of

- time
- countries
- sectors

The first involved the textile sector and transportation

Coal mines were concentrated in the midland and north England

Mushroom towns → cities met to host factory workers

There were no trade unions to defend the rights of workers

Enclosure made farming intensive → at the beginning peasants were in opposition

Newcomen invented and patented the steam engine → it was improved by Watt

The water frame allowed workers to produce stronger threads by applying less physical work. Moreover it allowed the production of 100 percent cotton clothes

During the industrial revolution more and more people started to migrate from the country to mushroom towns

The competition was about how could build the fastest and most reliable locomotive

George III was an Hannover →this dinasty began when the last Stuart Monarch (Anne I) died without children (1714)

The Hannover came from Germany →the first one was George I (he couldn't speak english, only german)

He was helped by the prime minister →then this position remained

In 1780 he suffered a mental confusion know as the royal madness

In the last years of his kingdom he was still the king, but his son ruled

After the french revolution, England had to fight multiple times the Napoleonic Wars

Nelson was in charge of the navy →Wellington was in charge of the army

The press coined the name "Peterloo" →it criticized the government because it was fighting Napoleon in name of justice and democracy, but then opened fire on civilians

There was a strong migration towards the cities →the rural areas had less inhabitants and this zones were called the Rotten Boroughs

They still had many seats in the parliament, which was unfair because they were less

This was fixed with the Great Reform Act

Starting from 1836, Victoria ruled for 64 years

Augustian poets = neoclassical poets

They wrote in the first half of the 18th century in Britain

They were interested in the greek and roman poetry

Their poetry was complex from a conceptual and linguistic point of view →

- conceptual: it was rich of allusions to classical poetry and lots of figures of speech
- linguistic: they used a lofty style →there was a prevalence of latinized syntax and high sounding vocabulary

Romantic poetry differs →usually the language is more accessible and the poetry was more subjective →it was more about feelings and emotions

Subjectivity is the main feature of romantic poetry

Augustian poetry: example "The rape of the lock" by A. Pope

Romantic poets were more interested in the middle age →augustian poets absolutely not

In Augustian poetry nature is presented as something controllable by humans thanks to their reason

In romanticism nature is presented as an uncontrollable force

Burke was an irish philosopher and thought that there existed 2 types of nature

- picturesque or beautiful →cosy

- sublime nature →destructive nature, that causes fear and ammiration

# Romanticism

In Neoclassicism (Augustian age) nature was perceived as something controllable  
→humans are endowed with reason

In Romanticism it is not possible

For Augustans the most powerful human faculty is reason

For Romantics it is imagination →it is what makes us humans

Coleridge (coauthor of the Lyrical Ballads (first edition 1789)) →he travelled to Germany and studied philosophy

He believed that there were 2 types of imagination:

- primary: allows humans to understand reality
- secondary: more powerful faculty, allowing humans to recreate a new reality

Before Romanticism a good poet was a good copier?? →in romanticism originality played an important role

Childhood was considered as the most important stage during life →children have the sharpest imagination

Romantics were also against child labor because it was dangerous and because in this way children skipped their childhood

Romanticism emphasized individuality →there was interest in the outcast and rebel  
Romanticism followed in Rousseau philosophy →the myth of the noble savage??  
→man is naturally good, than civilization corrupts

English romantic poems were set in either in the past (often in the middleages) and in exotic places (far away from Britain)

Escapism = desire to escape the time one lives in, that is considered unjust

Reality was also considered an expression of God = pantheism →others were atheists

Augustian poetry was characterized by poetic diction (complex language and figures of speech)

Romantic poetry is more readable →syntax was not latinized and the words used were not so high sounding

Romanticism comes from romance, the languages such as Italian, French etc...

In the beginning it had a negative meaning (extravagant, unreal) →but in the 18th century it became neutral and referred to picturesque nature

Relationship between the feelings of the speaker and the nature surrounding →his

feelings reflect into reality

Wordsworth said that nature was a source of consolation for mankind

## Wordsworth

First generation of romantic poets → the members of the second died young in tragic circumstances

He was born in 1770 in a lake district, area in the north of England → near the border with Scotland → characterized by lakes, woods, and rivers → but was impacted by the industrial rev.

He had a tragic life → he lost his parents in his childhood → he was then raised by relatives → he was close to his sister Dorothy → together they had long walks and he also wrote poetry to her

He was a brilliant student → he attended Cambridge University

As a young man he was a radical → he supported the French Revolution → he even decided to go there and witness

There he met a woman, with whom he had a daughter but not married → he then became disappointed of the revolution, which was descending into pure violence

He then decided to leave France → and prepared all the paperwork necessary for his lover and daughter to travel to England

But the borders closed and he was extremely disappointed → this changed also his political view → he became more conservative and critical of revolutions

He was a peculiar conservative: he was also an environmentalist, he was against the Poor Laws (1834, established workhouses)

They were institutions that had to host homeless, but there they had to work hard in exchange with room and board

The living conditions were also terrifying

Workhouses were expected to be terrible, because they had to convince the poor people they had to improve their social condition

This is in line with the Protestant work ethic → God approves hard work

He also believed that people without an education shouldn't vote

In England he married another woman, with which he had 5 children

His daughter never married and lived with his family

Wordsworth became a very famous poet, he was also appointed a Poet Laureate (the official poet of the British Empire)

The Poet Laureate was also expected to write poems for public occasions

Wordsworth is known for the Lyrical Ballads (a collection of 23 poems), some written by him, others by Coleridge (coauthorship)

There were 3 editions:

- 1798 anonymous
- 1800 with preface
- 1802 enlarged

The 2 most notorious ones are Tinter Abbey (Wordsworth) and the Rime of the ting???

## Tinter Abbey

It has to do with a walking tour Wordsworth and Dorothy they had in Wales → here they visited the ruins of a monument (Tinter Abbey)

It was an abbey destroyed in 1534 following "The Act of Supremacy" → it was passed by King Henry VIII (Tutor), which made England an Anglican country → Henry broke away from the Church of Rome

Monasteries and abbeys were destroyed

The two visited the ruins and Wordsworth wrote a poem about that

In Tinter Abbey Wordsworth reflects on the passing of time and on the fact that nature has taken control of the ruins

Nature is eternal, meanwhile everything humans create is ephemeral

The lyrical ballads had to make up for political failures (such as French Revolution) and wanted to achieve their own revolution, a cultural revolution

It is democratic because

- it is a ballad about common people (not heroes, nor aristocrats) → common people wrote mainly about peasants
- really simple language

# Lyrical Ballads

They wanted to achieve a cultural revolution → non violent, because they were disappointed in the french revolution

It is revolutionary because the characters are common people

Moreover the language was simple → so that more people could understand it

It is also a peculiar title → it is oximoric, contradictory: poetry tends to be of 2 kinds:

- lyrical → feelings and emotions of the speaker (the lyrical eye) → examples are sonnets (14 lines), oaths (no fixed number of lines) and elegies (no fixed number of lines, main topic is death)
- narrative → relates a story in verses → tend to be longer

It is oximoric because they are intimate accounts of life in the english country side

They are about stories of common people in the country side but expressed in a lyrical way, with a focus on the feelings

It is oximoric and also hybrid

## Question

Poems are about ordinary lives about ordinary people coming from the country side → they are lucky, because they live near nature

The language used is similar to the one people actually used → it is more emphatic and purified from his defects

He uses the coloring effect of imagination to write in an unusual way

Poets have sharper sensibility and imagination + better understanding of human nature

## **Introduction Lyrical Ballads - page 191**

"The Rhyme of the ancient mariner" is a narrative poem →not a lyrical one, like the other Lyrical poems that result in intimate accounts of  
In the countryside people where under no social constraints →so they were more pure  
→moreover they lived in nature →their emotions were more true  
The language is a simple one, but it is purified from grammar errors and curse words

The poet in order to write needs to be in a situation of tranquillity →the poet never writes about powerful experiences while they are taking place  
He writes after, in a situation of tranquillity

## **Biographia literaria**

It is a long philosophical autobiographical (he reflects on his own biography) essay, written in 1817 by Coleridge  
Typical subjectivity expressed during romanticism  
Coleridge and Wordsworth (after writing the Lyrical Ballads) their friendship cooled down and Coleridge became critical of Wordsworth literature  
For him it was too sentimental and simplistic (Wordsworth's writings)

In this extract they talk about the birth of the lyrical ballads  
They moved together to write them  
They both reflected on the dual nature of poetry:

- it was supposed to be realistic
- at the same time, it was supposed to be interesting →through the use of imagination, which sometimes broke away from realism

They managed to combine these two contradictory aspects of poetry in the lyrical ballads

They made an agreement →Coleridge was going to concentrate on the supernatural →in the rhyme of the ancient mariner there will be supernatural characters (like ghosts)

Suspension of disbelief →the reader was required to apply it →Col. wanted the reader not to worry about the realism of what they were reading, just enjoy the reading  
In order to achieve that →in Coleridge's works the frame is realistic, but with some supernatural aspects

Wordsworth had to concentrate on the everyday life of peasants in contact with nature

## We are seven

Typical aspects of the lyrical ballads:

- simple language, used in everyday life, but purified from grammar errors
- children represent the purity of the life far away from societal conventions and of emotions in the countryside
- the little girl is described as the typical paesant
- it is set the country side (the cottage is a typical house) and natural elements, such as the sea, the tree and the sun-set

She is a so innocent girl that she hasn't comprehended the meaning of death →in fact, she plays by their grave

The narrator has a more realistic approach

She talks about her everyday life

Emotions felt by the girl and the lyrical I / narrator are relevant

## Prof notes

It is made of quatrains →a four-line stanza →but the last one is of 5 verses

Quatrains is the typical structure of a ballad →which is a narrative poem

A story is being told, but there is a focus on the emotions →hybrid nature of the "Lyricall ballads"

The veres/lines are written in either →iamb →the first one is with accent, the second one no:

- iambic trimeters: what should | it know | of death? →3 poetic feet (called iambs) →each iamb has 6 syllabals
- iambic tetrameters: her hair was thick with many a curl

Iambic trimeters is made of 3 iambs →first one being stressed, the second one is unstressed

It is written in alternate/intelocking rhyme

## Stanza 1

And feels its life in every limb →she loves life even if she is in tragic conditions (for ex. her fahter is not mentioned)

What should it know of death? →rethorical question →a child should know nothing

of death

Line 3 → alliteration of L and a consonance in F

Alliteration = consonant is repeated at the beginning of each word, in consonance not necessary

## **Stanza 2**

Line 3 → consonance in H

## **Stanza 3**

Physical description, that lets us understand that she is poor

Alliteration of W at line 2

However, she is still beautiful and almost angelic

## **Stanza 4**

The dialog begins → typical of ballads → in middle ages they were learned in memory  
→ easier to remember with dialogs

## **Stanza 5**

And two is an anaphora

2 of her siblings are sailors

## **Stanza 6**

Line 4 → consonance in M

Line 4 to 4 → are run-on-lines because of enjambement

Dialog and stanzas are typical of ballads

## **Stanza 7**

The narrator speaks → he says that he can't understand the point of view of the girl

Line 4 → alliteration in M

## **Stanza 8**

The narrator insists

The girl is so compassionate that she considers the 2 siblings alive

There is an Aporia = one of the characters raises doubt about what another character

is saying

### **Stanza 9**

They are burried together →side by side, and close to the cottage →emotional and physical vicinity among them all

Line 3 →internal rhyme between more and door

Side by side = diacope = repetition of the same word

### **Stanza 10**

Knit = cucire, hem = orlare, kerchief = fazzoletto →she spends her free time near the burried siblings

Materialistic point of view of the narrator, who is an adult →vs the pure and innocent one of the girl

# Daffodils

Wordsworth's most famous poem, published in 1807, but not part of the "Lyrical ballads"

It's about a beautiful natural landscape → daffodils are near a lake and describes it poetically

The verbs of the first 3 stanzas are in the past, while the last one is in the present → he remembers the experience in tranquillity

Poetry is a natural overflow of feelings, that happens after the experience is finished. The author remembers his encounter with the flowers as he sits on a couch

He had a sister (Dorothy) who was a best friend and a secretary → she also wrote a journal about his relationship with Wordsworth

In the journal it is written that the two went on a walk and saw the field of daffodils → in 1803, 4 years after

Time passes, and he writes about nature afterwards, in a state of tranquillity → he has to feel an emotion similar to the one he felt = 2 conditions to write about the experience

## Stanza 1

I → subjectivity of romantic poetry

Line 1 → simile

Line 3/4 → there is a personification → daffodils are described as people (a crowd, a host)

Line 3 → assonance in O, line 4 still in O

Line 5 → alliteration in B

Line 6 → again personification, because the daffodils dance

The verb tenses are past tenses

The description is of a picturesque nature (not sublime in this case)

## Stanza 2

Simile → "continuous as"

Line 2 → consonance in K

Line 5 → hyperbole (tenthousand flowers, exaggeration) and alliteration in T

Line 6 → personification of dancing flowers and consonance

## **Stanza 3**

Personification of the waves of the lake →they dance  
Diacopy of "gaze" →to look fixatilly  
At the same time he was unaware of the powerful feelings he was experiencing

## **Stanza 4**

Inward eye = imagination  
Solitude = situation of tranquillity  
Last line →consonance in D and in A

The sensation produces the emotions, which are than stored in the poet's memory, a similar emotion reproduces these emotions and can than write  
He wrote "Lyrical ballads", "Daffoldills", "The prelude" (long meditative poem)  
→here he reflects on his own life and his relationship with nature  
It was published before his death →he worked on it all his life  
What is nature to ww? →it is explained in the "Prelude". It is a source of beauty, consolation, literary inspiration and an educator  
WW claims to have been educated by nature throughout his life  
In the "Prelude" he tells about an event which occured when he was 8 years →he had just stolen a little boat (a mischievous action)  
He was sainling, but then he saw that a mountain was following him →for this reason he decide to bring the boat back →example of sublime nature  
He felt like he was been educated by the mountain

WW wrote 7 poems of the "Lyrical ballads" →but 5 of them are called the "Lucy poems" →"We are seven" is not part of the "Lucy poems"  
The Lucy poems are about lucy, who has died young after living a pure life at contact with nature →she was pure and innocent  
Her presence can still be perceived in the countryside area, where she lived  
Jamaica Kincaid wrote a novel "Lucy", published in 1990 →the author is from the west indies (carabbeans) →but she writes in english, because she was born in an english colony  
She mentions Wordsworth →but the settlement is contemporary  
Lucy here is an 19y ou pair girl, who decides to migrate to USA  
It is a post-colonial novel →2 requirments:

- it has to be written by a writer coming from a previous colony of an european country (there are also of france, germany, ...)

- it explores the relationshipt between colonizers and colonized people

## Coleridge - page 300

Coleridge and wordsworth were friend, and also collaborated →they created strong bonds

Friendship was a substitute of family →some of them had difficult familiar situations (like Blake, Wordsworth, Keats →they lost close relatives)

Shelley and Byron were shawnt by their families →because they had an unconventional lifestyle, not approved by the aristocratic families they came from

At some point they started to disagree →colerdige wanted to write more elaborated poetry, and considered wordsworth works simplistic

Christable →is gothic poem (with gothic elements, not in the style)

## Gothic novel

**Gothic literature:** mainly made up of novels →it is an expression of pre-romanticism

The first gothic novel was the "Castle of Otranto" →written by H. Walpole (1764)

Walpole was the son of the first british prime minister

Other important gothic novels are:

- "The monk" →Lewis
- "The mysteries of Udolpho" →Radcliffe (female author)

The raise of the novel →women were central in the development of the novel →first time in history that women took part to the dev. of a literary genre

Women were frequent readers →some of them even wrote them (like Bradly, Aphra Behns →she wrote "The royal slave" at the end of the 17th century)

The royal slave is considered the first novel in english literature

Canon = the authors that are considered the most rapresentative of a nation

Behns was disapeared from the Canon for a long time →she was a female and the novel was anti-colonial

The slave was an african prince who was captured →but he lead a riot against the owner →he is a positive character

Gothic novels were like horror stories →dealing with mistery, crimes →they tend to be set in south europe (in particular in Catholic countries) →demonisation of catholic europe →british authors were protestant

Crimes were committed by villains in dark places like abbeys →the protagonists are mainly innocent people

Some of them have supernatural elements (like ghosts)

## **Interpretation of the ancient mariner**

Other interpretation is a colonial one →the albatross is a native of the place and helps the visitors →but then gets killed

The last thursday of november the Thanks Giving day is celebrated in USA and Canada →in 1621 was celebrated for the first time

The piligrim fathers wanted to celebrate their first harvest →in the newly founded colony in new england →they thanked God and the native americans →they helped the piligrim fathers

But then they were persecuted by americans

Coleridge may have made a critique to the persecution of native americans by the colonizers

Piligrim fathers were puritans →they were persecuted by the anglican king James I →they left in year 1620