

Beginning of Romanticism

- Romantic Movement refers to the period from late 18th century to mid-19th century
- The 18th century in both England and Germany saw a strong reaction against the rationalistic canons of French classicism.
- This reaction drew upon the romantic material that had survived from medieval times.
- Features of medieval romances influenced the Romantic movement:
 - Stories based on legendary material
 - Themes of courtly love and seduction
 - Fantasy and imaginative freedom
 - Secular portrayals of history, politics, or everyday life

Romanticism in Literature

- Writers were discontented with the world
- The world seemed to them commercial, inhuman and standardized
- To escape from modern life, they turned to faraway places, medieval past, legends and folklore, nature and common people
- They were also drawn to the supernatural
- A poetic age

What led to the Romantic Revival?

- “Discovery” of Shakespeare
- Following the Licensing Act of 1737
- Shakespeare was a romantic in temperament
- Revival of Folk Traditions
- Fairy tale and folklore themes appeared in painting, literature, music
- Bishop Percy’s Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765)
- Translation of Grimm’s Fairy Tales from German (1823)
- Orientalism in literature and art
- Oriental Tales: Johnson’s Rasselas, Goldsmith’s The Citizen of the World, Beckford’s Vathek
- Translations from Sanskrit and Persian, made by Indologist William Jones (Shakuntala in 1789)

Further influences

- Biblical, mythical and mystical literature
- William Blake’s apocalyptic poetry
- Macpherson’s Ossianic poems
- Influence of Rousseau (1712-78): explored in his fiction the agonies of frustrated love, exalted the “noble savage”, believed man is born with goodness (opposed to Thomas Hobbes), coined the phrase “noble savage” (originally in Dryden’s The Conquest of Granada)

- Exhorted poets to “return to nature”
- French Revolution: ideals of "liberty, equality, fraternity"
- Edmund Burke’s “sublimity of terror”
- The sublime as something that could provoke terror in the audience, pleasure in this sublimity, anything great, infinite, or obscure could be both terrifying and sublime
- Macabre and Gothic elements in paintings
- Gothic Romances
- Transitional Poetry—Lyrical Ballads (1798)

Precursors of Romanticism

- German philosophers: Herder, Schiller, Goethe
- Transitional poets
- Gothic novelists
- Walter Scott

Percy’s Reliques

- Bishop Thomas Percy’s Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765): collection of ancient English poetry, featuring ballads, songs, and metrical tales
- First collection of ballads; became immensely popular
- Includes medieval, Renaissance poetry, folk ballads, and works from that century
- Influenced Romantic poets (Wordsworth, Coleridge) and contributed to the 18th-century folk revival

Transitional Poets

- James Thomson (1700-48): The Seasons (1726-30), The Castle of Indolence (1748)
- Oliver Goldsmith (c.1728-74): “The Traveller” (1764), “The Deserted Village” (1770)
- Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770)
- William Blake (1757-1827): Songs of Innocence (1789), Songs of Experience (1793), The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1790)
- Robert Burns (1759-1796)

Graveyard Poets:

- Parnell’s “Night-Piece on Death” (1721)
- Robert Blair’s “The Grave” (1743)
- Edward Young’s Complaint, or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality (1742-46)
- Thomas Gray’s Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard (1751)

Transitional Poetry

- Reaction against intellectual Augustan poetry
- Deep sense of mystery and wonder
- Renewed impetus on passion, imagination
- Emphasis on originality & inspiration (as against craftsmanship)

- Sentimentalism
- Rural life (against Augustan poetry of the Town)
- Some Augustan elements remained: ordered universe, universal laws by God, some formal rules

Gothic Romance

- European Romantic, pseudo-medieval fiction, an atmosphere of mystery and terror
- Horace Walpole: Castle of Otranto (1764)
- Ann Radcliffe: Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), Italian (1797)
- Matthew Gregory Lewis: The Monk (1796)
- William Beckford: Vathek (1786)

French Revolution

- Early phase: absolute monarchy collapsed, working classes liberated
- Slogan: Liberté (freedom of the common man), égalité (equality of all men), fraternité (brotherhood)
- Revolution gave expression to individualism and revolt across Europe

Later Phase of the French Revolution

- Paved the way for Napoleon's rise to power and the Napoleonic era
- National Convention (from September 1792): republican form of government
- Execution of Louis XVI (January 1793): further cemented the rise of radical factions
- Reign of Terror (1793–1794), led by radical Jacobins (Robespierre): mass arrests, trials, public executions
- Wars with European powers (Revolutionary Wars)
- The Revolution inspired writers (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Burns, Byron, Shelley)

Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815)

- Napoleon Bonaparte became emperor of France, led wars with other European nations
- Defeated at Waterloo in 1815 by Duke of Wellington

Return to Nature

- Aspects of Romantic Poetry: Medievalism, Supernaturalism, "Return to Nature" (Rousseau), against "Follow nature" (human nature)
- Attracted to untamed landscapes, travel, Switzerland, Lake District

Subjectivity

- Romantics emphasized:
 - Subjectivity
 - Strong and sublime emotion (terror, horror, awe) as genuine source of aesthetic experience
 - Spontaneity
- Opposed:
 - Industrialization and modernity
 - Aristocratic/urban values of Enlightenment

- Scientific rationalization of nature

Language

- Simple, rustic language as opposed to urban, aristocratic poetic diction
- Wordsworth: no difference between the language of poetry and prose
- Symbolism (Blake)
- Against priggish, learned, sculpted 18th-century poetry forms

Preface to the Lyrical Ballads (1802)

- Preface as a defence of the idea that poetry must be written in the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation
- Revolt against artificial poetic diction
- Poetry as “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”, “emotions recollected in tranquility”
- Poet has “more than usual organic sensibility”, one who has “thought long and deeply”
- Poetry’s subject: incidents and situations from common life
- Ordinary things presented in an unusual aspect—supernaturalizing the natural
- Against the urban tone of Augustan poetry

Style of Poetry

- Revolutionary: rejected tradition of Alexander Pope
- Avoided ornamental poetic diction
- Poetry in “real language of men in a state of vivid sensation”
- Insisted no essential difference between language of prose and poetry

Poetic Process

- Four stages:
 1. Observation: perception of an object/incident that generates powerful emotions
 2. Recollection: revisiting those emotions in memory
 3. Contemplation: fusing memory and thought, purging non-essentials
 4. Composition: writing the poem as “a man speaking to men”

Early Romantics

- Revolted against: industrialization, modernity, aristocratic/urban Enlightenment values, scientific rationalization
- Supported: strong emotion (terror, horror, awe), rustic life and folk arts, spontaneity, medievalism and exoticism
- Age of Revolution: American and French, Napoleonic Wars, free trade, population rise, political agitation, Gordon Riots, government oppression, Corn Laws, pseudo-scientific race theories

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

- Key Romantic poet, focused on beauty and power of nature, exploring emotional and spiritual significance
- Lyrical Ballads (1798) with Coleridge marked beginning of Romantic Movement
- The Prelude (autobiographical, posthumous 1850): explores his development as poet, relationship with nature
- Did not develop a detailed theory of imagination, but emphasized its intellectual and spiritual role

- Found beauty in everyday life, ordinary people
- Pantheistic sense: seeing God in nature

Major Works

- The Borderers (1797)
- Lyrical Ballads (1798)
- “Tintern Abbey”
- Lucy Poems: “Strange fits of passion have I known”, “She dwelt among the untrodden ways”, “I travelled among unknown men.”, “Three years she grew in sun and shower”, “A slumber did my spirit seal”
- “Michael” (1800)
- The Prelude (14 books, published 1850; 1805 version: 13 books)
- The Excursion (1814)
- “Ode: Intimations of Immortality” (1807)
- Petrarchan Sonnets: “The world is too much with us”, “London, 1802”, “Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802”
- “The White Doe of Rylstone”, “The Solitary Reaper”, “The Old Cumberland Beggar”, “Daffodils”, “Resolution and Independence”, “Ode to Duty”, “Nutting”

Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1802):

- Poetry should use the real language of daily life
- Against artificial diction
- Poetry: impassioned expression, spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, recollection in tranquility
- Poet: “more than usual organic sensibility,” thoughtful
- Material for poetry: incidents and situations from common life
- Emphasis on simplicity and emotional truth

S.T. Coleridge (1772-1834)

- Key Romantic figure, friend of Robert Southey and co-author (with Wordsworth) of Lyrical Ballads
- Explored supernatural, imagination, the sublime
- Influenced by German philosophers (Kant, Schelling)
- Poetry: conversational tone, accessible language, rooted in experience
- Struggled with opium addiction, which influenced later works

Major Poems

- Eight conversation poems:
 - “The Eolian Harp”, “Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement”, “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison”, “Frost at Midnight”, “Fears in Solitude”, “The Nightingale: A Conversation Poem”, “Dejection: An Ode”, “To William Wordsworth”
- Poems on Various Subjects
- “Kubla Khan: A Vision in a Dream”
- “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”

- Asra Poems including “Dejection: An Ode”
- Christabel: Kubla Khan, a Vision; The Pains of Sleep (1816)
- Sibylline Leaves: A Collection of Poems (1817)
- Biographia Literaria (1817), Aids to Reflection (1825), Church and State (1830)
- Edited two periodicals: The Watchman, The Friend
- Lectures on Shakespeare and other poets, verse tragedies Osorio, Remorse

Lyric

- Lyric poetry: personal feelings and emotions
- Origin: ancient Greek song-like poetry
- Traits: brief, focused theme, first-person narration
- Types of lyric:
 - Ode: formal, expressive, dignified language, structured stanzas, deep emotions (Pindaric, Horatian, Irregular)
 - Sonnet: 14-line poem, iambic pentameter
 - Elegy: mournful, laments loss/death
 - Ballad: narrative, folk themes
- Lyric revived in European Renaissance, modeled after classical forms
- During Romanticism, focus on emotion, imagination, individualism

Ode

- Formal, expressive, often addressing a person, place, or thing
- Uses dignified language, structured stanzas, rhyme schemes
- Expresses deep emotions, admiration, praise
- Types:
 - Pindaric: complex, structured (strophe, anti-strophe, epode)
 - Horatian: informal, conversational, often about friendship
 - Irregular: lacks set stanza pattern (Abraham Cowley gave form)