

Beginnings of the Victorian Age

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- Queen Victoria, the last Hanoverian monarch
- Long reign from 1837 to 1901
- Heyday of colonial trade and commerce
- Exploding population
- Society is considered to have been priggish (formal and pretentious), moralistic, and narrow-minded
- Early Victorian literature witnessed the continuing spirit of Romanticism
- Later Victorian literature saw the rise of modernism

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Major events during Victoria's reign

- Rise of Technology and Innovation
 - Industrial Revolution
 - The Great Exhibition of London (1851)
 - The Indian Rebellion (1857)
 - The Great Irish Famine (1846-52)
 - Irish Home Rule
 - The Chartist Movement (1838-48)
 - The Great Reform Acts (1832, 1867, 1884)
 - The Boer Wars (1880-1881 and 1899-1902)
 - The Crimean War (1853-56)
- Remember these major events

Sociopolitical background

- England became
- the leading industrial power in Europe
- an empire that occupied more than a quarter of the earth's surface
- A mood of nationalist pride and optimism about future progress
- Expanding, wealthy middle class
- Unregulated industrialization leading to the deterioration of rural England, shoddy urbanization, and massive poverty concentrated in slums

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Socio-Cultural Background

- Impatience with new ideas on the one hand; numerous intellectual activities on the other
- Victorian Dilemma: In religion, literature and philosophy the Victorian period was an age of doubt.

- Conflict between science & religion following the publication of Darwin (1809-82)'s Origin of Species (1859)
- Conflict between the industrial (urban) and the agrarian (rural) ways of life
- Conflict between oligarchy and monarchy

Victorian compromise

- The Victorian Compromise (GK Chesterton)
- Refers to the blend of strict moral standards and the acknowledgment of social, scientific, and industrial progress prevalent during Queen Victoria's reign in Britain (1837-1901)
- Victorian Compromise includes:
 - Strict adherence to moral codes, such as modesty and propriety.
 - Advancements in technology and science were embraced, paving the way for the Industrial Revolution.
 - Maintaining class distinctions and social order, while dealing with the consequences of urbanization and industrialization.
 - Stereotypical roles for men and women, with women focusing primarily on domestic tasks and morality.
 - A belief in British superiority and expansionism, coinciding with social reform movements.

Victorian Poetry

Victorian Poetry

- Themes and Concerns
- Moral dilemmas and philosophical queries
- Emphasis on depicting everyday life and the reality of the human condition
- Addressed social issues
- Used nature to reflect inner thoughts and social themes.
- Refinement in form, with strict adherence to meter and rhyme, as well as experimentation with new forms and structures, like dramatic monologues.
- Dramatic Monologues were made popular by poets like Robert Browning, these allowed exploration of a character's inner thoughts and motivations with depth and complexity.

Alfred Tennyson (1809-92)

- Born as one of eight children in the gloomy and neurotic household of the local vicar
- Due to family background, certain themes recurred:
 - madness, murder, avarice, miserliness
 - social climbing, marriages arranged for profit instead of love
 - estrangements between families and friends

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At Cambridge

- Entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1827
- First volume of poetry, Poems by Two Brothers (1827)
- Became member of the club called "Apostles", which gave him much needed friends and confidence

- Won the Chancellor's Gold medal for "Timbuctoo"
- Formed a close friendship with Arthur Henry Hallam
- Poems, Chiefly Lyrical appeared in 1830

Attention to detail

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"Timbuctoo" (1829)

- Written when Tennyson was 19
- Won the Chancellor's Gold Medal at Cambridge
- Reworking of his earlier poem "Armageddon" (a poem written when he was 15, which offers a vision of the distant human future, in outer space)
- About a legendary city in Africa

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Poems, Chiefly Lyrical (1830)

- "The Kraken"
- Irregular sonnet
- About a massive legendary creature from Icelandic saga that dwells at the bottom of the sea
- "Ode to Memory"
- Picturesque description of landscape, as in later poetry
- "Mariana"
- Based on the character Mariana in Measure for Measure
- Theme of a woman waiting for her lover's return

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The Young Poet

- Poems (1832-1833) received a savage criticism from John Wilson Croker of The Quarterly Review
- There followed the 'Ten Years' Silence', a period of neurotic refusal to publish
- Arthur Hallam fell in love with Tennyson's sister, Emily
- In 1830, Tennyson and Hallam went to Pyrenees in France-Spain border with a plan to make money

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Poems inspired by life at Pyrenees

- "Oenone"
- Dramatic monologue
- Describes the Greek mythological character Oenone and her witnessing of the events in the life of her lover, Paris, as he is involved in the events of the Trojan War
- "The Lotos-Eaters"
- Dramatic monologue on Ulysses' adventures

- Describes Ulysses' mariners who, upon eating the lotos fruit, are put into a lethargic state and isolated from the outside world; argue that death is a completion of life
- Biblical overtones; but the message is a reversal: here, the fruit offers a release from the life of labour

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Adversities

- Tennyson's poetry was meeting with very adverse criticism
- John Wilson Croker of the Quarterly Review, who had devastated Keats, accused Tennyson and his poetry of lack of masculinity and considered him a member of the Cockney School, for imitating Keats
- Meanwhile, Arthur Hallam died in Vienna of a congenital brain disease in 1833, at the age of 22
- Poverty, madness, epilepsy in the family

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Greatest Short Poems

- The adversities inspired Tennyson's greatest poems:
- "Ulysses," "Morte d'Arthur," "Tithonus," "Tiresias," "Break, break, break" and the many elegies later collected into In Memoriam (1850)
- Tennyson felt compelled to publish because of pressures over copyright and prodding of friends like Edward Fitzgerald
- Poems (1842)

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Tennyson's Dramatic Monologues

- "Ulysses," "The Lotos-Eaters," "Tithonus"
- Tennyson delved into the psyche of his characters, using their voices to express personal dilemmas, thoughts, and emotions.
- The dramatic monologue helped in developing a narrative through a single speaker, painting a vivid picture of events and settings while maintaining an intense personal focus.

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"The Lady of Shalott"

- An Arthurian story in ballad form, depicting tragic love
- The story of the Lady of Shalott, separated from the outside world because she is cursed to remain in her tower in an island beside a river flowing to Camelot, and should not even look out of the window
- A large mirror within her chamber reflects the outside world, and she weaves a tapestry illustrating its wonders by means of the mirror's reflection.
- Seeing Sir Lancelot riding down to Camelot, the Lady leaves her loom to look down on him directly from her window, which immediately fulfills the curse. Her tapestry begins to unravel and the mirror cracks
- She tries to escape in a boat, and she must die as a result

Attention to detail

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"Ulysses"

- Dramatic monologue; companion-piece of "The Lotos-Eaters"
- Ulysses declares that there is little point in his staying home "by this still hearth" with his old wife, doling out rewards and punishments for the unnamed masses in his kingdom

- His spirit yearns constantly for new experiences that will broaden his horizons; he wishes “to follow knowledge like a sinking star” and forever grow in wisdom and in learning
- This poem also concerns the poet’s own personal journey, and is an elegy for his deeply cherished friend
- “to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield,” became a motto for the Victorians. For them Ulysses was a model of individual self-assertion and the Romantic rebellion against bourgeois conformity

Attention to detail

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“Morte d’Arthur”

- In 1833, Tennyson proposed to write an epic about King Arthur
- By 1838, he had completed one of the twelve books, entitled “Morte d’Arthur,” which chronicled the king’s death
- He published this single book in 1842 within the framework of the poem, “The Epic,” which consists of 51 lines that precede “Morte d’Arthur” and thirty lines that follow it
- “The Epic” provides a modern context for the Arthurian story by casting it as a manuscript read aloud by a poet to three of his friends following their Christmas-Eve revelry
- After Tennyson completed all twelve books of Idylls of the King in 1869, he discarded this framing poem and retitled “Morte d’Arthur” as “The Passing of Arthur”

Attention to detail

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“Tithonus”

- Dramatic monologue based on Greek mythology
- Initially conceived as a companion-poem to “Ulysses”
- Tithonus was once a beautiful man who was chosen by Aurora, the goddess of dawn, as her lover
- She granted him immortality but not youth
- Tithonus appeals to Aurora to take back the gift of immortality
- He now realizes the danger in not belonging to the rest of humanity
- This poem was one of a set of 4 works (including “Morte d’Arthur,” “Ulysses,” and “Tiresias”) that Tennyson wrote shortly after Arthur Henry Hallam’s death in 1833.

Attention to detail

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Locksley Hall

- Dramatic Monologue with autobiographical overtones
- The emotions of a weary soldier who comes to his childhood home, the fictional Locksley Hall
- Theme of disappointed love; evils of worldly marriage
- Scorn of industrialized world, but accepts change at the end

Attention to detail

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The Princess, A Medley (1847)

- Tennyson's first attempt at a long narrative poem
- Serio-comic poem in blank verse

- Theme: education of women and the establishment of female colleges
- Presents a ladies' academy & a mutinously intellectual princess at the head
- The 'new' woman
- Tennyson seems to assert that men and women do not have identical roles in the society

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Annus Mirabilis

- 1850 was a great year for Tennyson
- Published his most enduring work, In Memoriam
- Succeeded Wordsworth as Poet Laureate
- Married Emily Sellwood

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In Memoriam A.H.H. (1850)

- The phrase "in memoriam" denotes an epitaph or obituary
- A group of 132 elegies written over a period of 17 years
- In memory of Arthur Henry Hallam
- Original title: "The Way of the Soul"
- Favourite poem of Queen Victoria
- Search for hope after great loss—Victorian theme
- Iambic tetrameter quatrains rhyming abba called "In Memoriam stanza"

Attention to detail

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In Memoriam A.H.H. (1850)

- Long series of meditations on life & death
- The poet's anxieties about change, evolution, immortality
- The passage of time is marked by the three descriptions of Christmas at different points in the poem
- At the end of the poem, Tennyson emerges with his Christian faith reaffirmed, progressing from doubt and despair to faith and hope, as in "Ulysses"
- Epilogue is a marriage song on the occasion of the wedding of Tennyson's youngest sister, Cecilia
- A famous expression "Nature red in tooth and claw"
- Refers to the natural world as sometimes violent & ruthless
- Victorians related this to the theory of "natural selection"

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More Poems

- In 1853 Tennyson and Emily moved to Farringford on the Isle of Wight, where his privacy was constantly invaded
- Because of his obsessive shyness Tennyson invariably resigned or withdrew from public engagements

- The poetry continued to pour forth
- Maud and Other Poems (1855) included “The Charge of the Light Brigade” and “Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington”

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“The Charge of the Light Brigade” (1854)

- Describes a disastrous historical military engagement during the initial phase of the Crimean War fought between Turkey and Russia (1854-56)
- The story of a brigade consisting of 600 soldiers who rode on horseback into the “valley of death”

Attention to detail

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Maud (1855)

- Narrator falls in love with Maud
- Brother forbids alliance
- Meets her secretly in the garden (“Come into the garden, Maud”)
- Kills brother, flees to France
- Maud also dies
- Poet becomes mad and imagines himself dead
- Regains sanity and leaves to fight in Crimean War

Attention to detail

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Idylls of the King (1859)

- The 1859 edition contained only four (“Enid,” “Vivien,” “Elaine,” and “Guinevere”) of the eventual twelve idylls
- Cycle of twelve narrative poems in blank verse on Arthurian themes
- The last of these “Morte d’Arthur” (The Passing of Arthur) followed by To the Queen
- Tales of King Arthur and the Round Table
- From Arthur’s coming to power to his death at the hands of Mordred, the traitor
- Arthur’s attempt and failure to lift up mankind and create a perfect kingdom
- Allegory of the societal conflicts in Britain
- Dedication to recently deceased Prince Albert

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Poetic Drama and Last Poems

- Wrote poetic drama in later years
- In 1875 Tennyson published his first play, Queen Mary
- A group of dramatic works followed, including Harold (1876), Becket (1884) and The Cup (1881), which were not great successes

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Tennyson’s Style

- Subject of Tennyson's Poetry
- Earlier poems lyric and legendary narrative
- Later poems are of ethical interest
- Tennyson was no deep thinker; was content to mirror the feelings and aspirations of the time
- Tennyson's Craft
- Took great care and skill in perfecting the form & technique
- Mixed sound and sense (great musical quality)
- Keatsian descriptive power. Ornate description, pictorial effect, sumptuous imagery (created a lovely image by carefully amassing detail)

Robert Browning (1812-89)

- The son of a scholarly father, Browning was largely educated at home, and read widely
- At 16 he began to study at the newly established London University, but returned home after a brief period
- He wrote verse from an early age, taking as his literary hero Shelley, who influenced much of his work and prompted him to adopt vegetarian & atheist principles for a time
- In 1833 he published *Pauline: A Fragment of a Confession*

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Early Works

- Browning then turned to the dramatic monologue, which characterizes his best work
- His next poem, *Paracelsus* (1835), deals with the life of a Swiss alchemist, a subject suggested by the poet's friend Amédée de Ripert-Monclar
- In 1837 Browning wrote a play, *Strafford*, for the actor William Macready
- After a visit to Italy (1838) he published *Sordello* (1840), which concentrated on "the incidents in the development of a soul" as evinced in the life of a poet who was Dante's contemporary

Attention to detail

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Pauline (1833)

- Subtitled "A Fragment of a Confession"
- Published anonymously
- Introspective long poem...

Attention to detail

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Paracelsus (1835)

- Story of a 16th century alchemist
- Monodrama* without action (*a theatrical or operatic piece played by a single actor or singer, usually portraying one character)
- Hero's unquenchable thirst for that breadth of knowledge which is beyond the grasp of one man

Attention to detail

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Sordello (1840)

- Long poem in heroic couplets
- The imaginary biography of the Mantuan bard introduced in Dante's Divine Comedy
- Relationship between art and life
- Obscure style which led to hostile reception

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Dramatic Poetry

- From 1841 to 1846 Browning's work was published in a series bearing the general title of Bells and Pomegranates (Biblical phrase)
- These included Pippa Passes (1841), Dramatic Lyrics (1842), Dramatic Romances and Lyrics (1845), and some plays
- Browning's best known poems date from this early period:
- "Porphyria's Lover"
- "My Last Duchess," "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister"
- "The Pied Piper of Hamelin"
- "Home Thoughts from Abroad"
- "The Bishop Orders His Tomb in St Praxed's Church"
- "The Flight of the Duchess"

Attention to detail

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Pippa Passes (1841)

- Verse drama
- The first in a series of dramatic pieces
- About a woman who works as a silkworker
- Concluding lines: "God's in his heaven—All's right with the world!"
- Controversial for its frank portrayal of disreputable characters, and for sexual frankness

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Marriage

- Browning paid a visit to Italy in 1844; read Elizabeth Barrett's poems that year
- Elizabeth was six years his elder, a semi-invalid in her domineering father's house in Wimpole Street
- He corresponded with her; met her; admired her poems
- Secretly married her and eloped to Italy
- The Brownings settled in Florence where their son was born
- They lived there until Elizabeth's death in 1861.

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Browning's Characters

- "Fra Lippo Lippi" (15th century Florentine painter and monk being interrogated by some Medici watchmen, who have caught him out at night)

- “Andrea del Sarto” (Renaissance painter in Florence talking to his nagging wife Lucrezia)
- “Caliban Upon Setebos” (Shakespeare’s Caliban talks about the world and his god Setebos)
- “Rabbi Ben Ezra” (Jewish mathematician and scholar; theme of old age)
- Begins: “Grow old along with me! / The best is yet to be...”

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Browning’s Characters

- “Abt Vogler” (18th-19th century German music composer)
- “The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed’s Church” (a Renaissance bishop in his deathbed)
- “My Last Duchess” (recently widowed Duke of Ferrara)
- “The Grammarian’s Funeral” (The speaker is a disciple of an accomplished grammarian who has recently died)
- “Home Thoughts, From Abroad” (A homesick traveller longs for every detail of his beloved home)
- “Porphyria’s Lover” (speaker strangles his beautiful lover to preserve the moment of love)

Attention to detail

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The Ring and the Book (1868)

- In Florence, Browning had discovered in a stall an ‘old yellow book’ of documents relating to a 17th century murder trial & he now began to contemplate his ‘Roman Murder-Story’
- The ‘murder story’, The Ring and the Book, was published in monthly instalments in 1868-1869
- The poem received complimentary reviews & Browning, ‘king of the mystics’, was at last popular with the reading public
- The discursive story of the murder of a young wife Pompilia by her worthless husband, told by nine different people

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Last Works

- Produced a translation of Aeschylus’ Agamemnon (1877)
- His last work Asolando: Fancies and Facts (1889)
One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

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Browning’s Style

- Obscurity; sometimes rugged, angular style
- At its best, noble dignity & verbal music
- Variety of metrical forms
- Cleverly manipulated rhythmic effects
- Didn’t care for beauty of description for its own sake; beauty of expression often captured in a single image

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-61)

- The eldest of the 12 children of Edward Moulton Barrett & his wife Mary
- Spent most of her childhood & youth at the estate of Hope End, near Malvern
- A precocious & ardent student, Elizabeth Barrett studied with a governess & shared her brothers' lessons in Latin & Greek
- At the age of 15 she suffered a serious illness
- She began to write verse at an early age

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Early Career

- Produced a translation of Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound (1833) which she later disliked and revised
- The Seraphim and Other Poems was favourably received when it appeared in 1838
- In the same year she suffered a lung haemorrhage which required a long convalescence
- Poems (1844), which included "A Drama of Exile" & "Lady Geraldine's Courtship" received considerable acclaim
- One of her admirers was Robert Browning, whose verse she had complimented in "Lady Geraldine"
- The poets were married secretly in September 1846 and left for Italy a week later

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Works

- In 1850 she published a further volume of Poems among them the Sonnets from the Portuguese, written during her courtship
- This was followed by Casa Guidi Windows (1851)
- On the death of Wordsworth in 1850, The Athenaeum had proposed Elizabeth Barrett Browning as an appropriate successor to the post of Poet Laureate, but it was not until the publication of Aurora Leigh (1856) that her recognition as the foremost woman poet in English was secure
- Poems before Congress (1860), which supported the cause of Italian unification, was branded as hysterical & unwomanly
- Saddened by the death of her sister Henrietta & the Italian leader, Cavour, she fell ill and died at Casa Guidi
- Robert Browning prepared her Last Poems (1861) for posthumous publication

Attention to detail

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Sonnets from the Portuguese (pub 1850)

- Collection of 44 love sonnets
- Written during the period leading to marriage with Robert Browning in 1846
- Elizabeth did not want to publish them for being too personal
- Urged by Robert Browning to publish
- Appeared as translations of foreign sonnets
- Elizabeth admired Portuguese poet Luís de Camões
- Browning called her by the pet-name "my little Portuguese"
- One famous sonnet: "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways"

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Aurora Leigh (1856)

- Longest and most innovative work
- Epic verse novel in blank verse
- Depicts a woman-poet-hero whose country's destiny depends on the balance of her deeds
- Nine books, which is the Sibyll's number

Matthew Arnold (1822-88)

- For a detailed biography of Matthew Arnold, please see the chapter "Victorian Fiction and Prose"
- Son of the famous headmaster of Rugby School, Thomas Arnold for whom he wrote the poem "Rugby Chapel"
- Legitimate fame is as a prose writer and critic
- Arnold's poems are not numerous, and not of high quality
- Classical themes in meditative & melancholy mood (this is a modernist strain)
- Themes of alienation, stoicism, despair, spiritual emptiness
- Apostle of sanity & culture

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Poetic Career

- Arnold's poetic career began in 1849 with the publication of *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems*, by A (1849)
- Poetic career was over by *New Poems* (1867)
- Wrote 3 types of poetry: reflective, lyrical and narrative
- His poetry was essentially "modern" and dealt with the Victorian conflict and moral issues
- Was considerably influenced by the stoicism of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius
- For Arnold, a poem of revolt against moral ideas is a revolt against life
- In his essay "The Study of Poetry", Arnold considers poetry to be a criticism of life...

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Major works

- *Empedocles On Etna and Other Poems* (1852)
- *Poems* (1853)
- *Poems Second Series* (1855) and
- *Merope* (1858, a classical tragedy)

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Arnold: Poetry

- Lyrics
- "Marguerite poems", "The Forsaken Merman", "Dover Beach", "Scholar Gipsy", "Philomela"
- Poetic plays
- *Empedocles on Etna*, *Merope*

- Narrative poems
- “Tristram & Iseult”, “Sohrab & Rustum”
- Elegies
- “Thyrsis”, “Scholar Gypsy”, Memorial Verses
- Philosophical poetry
- “Stanzas on the Grand Chartreuse”

Attention to detail

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“Empedocles on Etna” (1852)

- Dramatic poem by Matthew Arnold, published anonymously in 1852 in the collection Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems.
- In Poems 1853, he excluded this long poem, and explained in the Preface that the mood of elegiac gloom and helpless suffering which "finds no vent in action" in the poem were too depressing

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“The Scholar Gypsy” (1853)

- A pastoral elegy based on a 17th century story found in Joseph Glanvill's The Vanity of Dogmatizing
- Companion-poem of "Thyrsis"
- An impoverished Oxford student was dejected by the fret and fever of modernity, and left his studies to join a band of gypsies, who had traditional learning and original imagination
- Rumours are that the scholar gypsy is not subject to ageing and death, and was again seen from time to time around Oxford
- Arnold ends with an epic simile of a Tyrian merchant seaman who flees from Greek competitors to seek a new life in Iberia.

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“Thyrsis” (1866)

- Pastoral elegy to commemorate the death of Arnold's friend and poet Arthur Hugh Clough in 1861
- Clough is presented as Thyrsis, and Arnold as Corydon
- Thyrsis is a character from Virgil's Eclogues who lost a singing match with Corydon
- Famous are the lines in which Arnold recalls the Oxford countryside the two of them explored as students in the 1840s

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“Dover Beach”

- The speaker is on the beach, watching the calm sea and the full tide
- The moon's bright light shines on the French Coast across the English Channel and disappears, while the cliffs of England glimmer
- The speaker calls his companion to the window to enjoy the sweet night air. He invites her to listen to the grating of the pebbles as they are flung back and forth by the waves, bringing "the eternal note of sadness in"
- The poet remarks that Sophocles had heard this ebb and flow of human misery, which they are hearing now

Attention to detail

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“Dover Beach”

- The Sea of Faith was once full, and lay around the earth like a girdle
- Yet now, the speaker hears only the melancholy roar of the sea of faith
- The poet tells his beloved that they should be honest with each other, for the world that they live in, which looks so beautiful and new, and lay before them like a land of dreams, does not have joy, love or spiritual light, or certainty or peace or help in times of trouble
- And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

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Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

- Formed in 1848 by painter poets D. G. Rossetti (1828-82), W. H. Hunt (1827-1910) & John Millais (1829-96)
- Influence of John Ruskin
- Revolt against 18th century academism and the canons of the Royal Academy; against realism
- Dedicated to recovering the purity of medieval art which Raphael and the Renaissance had destroyed
- Attempt to return to the truthfulness, simplicity, accuracy & spirit of devotion of Italian painting before Raphael & Italian Renaissance
- Another prominent member: William Morris

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Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

- The Realist side of the PRB was led by WH Hunt and JE Millais
- The Medievalist side was led by DG Rossetti
- The first PRB exhibition was in 1849
- Dickens criticised Millais's painting “Christ in the House of His Parents”

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Other Members

- Coventry Patmore (1823-96)
- James Collinson
- Thomas Woolner
- FG Stephens
- William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919, brother of DG Rossetti and Christina Rossetti)
- Christina Rossetti (1830-94)
- AC Swinburne
- Edward Burne-Jones

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Features and Influences

- In painting it is distinguished by its love of bright colour, vividly naturalistic detail and subjects drawn from religion or literature (Dante, Shakespeare, Keats & Arthurian Literature)
- In poetry, Pre-Raphaelitism found congenial precedents in Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* and the work of Tennyson
- The movement was as short-lived as its periodical *The Germ*

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The Fleshly School of Poetry

- In a review-essay titled "The Fleshly School of Poetry", Scottish author Robert Buchanan castigated the PRB (Rossetti, Morris and Swinburne) for its detailed description of scenes and frank treatment of sexuality
- Rossetti replied with "The Stealthy School of Criticism" in *The Athenaeum*, December 1871
- Swinburne replied with a pamphlet, *Under the Microscope*, in 1872.

DG Rossetti (1828-82)

- Poet, painter and translator
- Father was an Italian patriot exiled from Naples and mother was daughter of Byron's physician, Dr John Polidori
- Thus Rossetti's background and heritage were essentially Italian
- Studied painting

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Rossetti and the PRB revolution

- Met William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais, and these friendships led in the autumn of 1848 to the formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB)
- His paintings were highly symbolic, spiritually charged and suggestive of other, remote, worlds, and sometimes erotic
- His major poems include *Jenny*, a dramatic monologue about a London prostitute, his best-known poem *The Blessed Damozel*, as well as early studies of "Dante at Verona", "The Bride's Prelude" and "Sister Helen"
- He also undertook some mural decorations at Oxford

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The Blessed Damozel

- Written when DGR was 18 years old
- The poem describes the damozel observing her lover from heaven, and her unfulfilled yearning for their reunion in heaven.
- Partly inspired by Poe's "The Raven"
- Medievalism
- Pictorial realism and symbolic overtones
- Union of flesh and spirit
- Sensuousness and religiousness

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Attention to detail

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The Blessed Damozel: Summary

- The Damsel in heaven looks over earth and thinks of her lover.
- To the Damsel Time seemed to last forever because she was without her love.
- Then the lover on earth talks about his beloved.
- The next few stanzas describe heaven, and other lovers reunite around her as she sits and watches alone.
- In stanzas ten and eleven, her lover can hear her and feel her, and describes the sound of her voice like a bird's song
- As she waits at the gates of heaven, she dreams of the day that they ("we two") will be together and present themselves in the beauty and glory of God....

Attention to detail

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The Blessed Damsel: Summary

- The Damsel wants her love to be ideal and perfect, but it is not possible, now. The two worlds separating do not keep them apart in thought but it is not possible to be together. However, she wishes that their love be as it was on earth with the approval of Christ the Lord.
- The Damsel finally realizes that she can have nothing until the time comes. The Damsel suddenly becomes peaceful and lets the light take her. She will enter heaven without her love. Her lover on earth also knows this.
- Physically apart, but together at heart, there is nothing that can be done but hope and pray. Therefore the Damsel "laid her face between her hands, And wept."

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Last Years

- Rossetti was attacked by Robert Buchanan in a pamphlet, "The Fleshly School of Poetry" (1872), to which he replied with "The Stealthy School of Criticism"
- By now increasing illness, morbidity and paranoia beset him, and in 1872 he attempted suicide
- Before he died, he published Ballads and Sonnets (1881), which included a sonnet sequence, The House of Life

Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909)

- Alcoholic and highly excitable character
- Cared for by his friend Theodore Watts-Dunton
- Swinburne followed the poetic style of Rossetti but was not as successful
- When his work Poems and Ballads appeared in 1866, he was much blamed for moral reasons.
- Because of the elements of homosexuality and bestiality in his works, he is classified as a decadent poet
- Tristram of Lyonesse is usually considered to be his best work. It tells the undying story of Tristram and Isolt.
- Atalanta in Calydon is a closet drama
- For a detailed view of Swinburne, see the chapter on Victorian Fiction, Prose and Drama

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William Morris (1834-1896)

- Textile designer, architectural designer, poet, novelist, essayist and painter, translator from Icelandic language
- Major Poetry
- The Defence of Guenevere
- The Life and Death of Jason

- The Earthly Paradise
- Major Fiction ("prose romances" set in a fantasy world)
- News from Nowhere (1890, utopian socialism and science fiction)
- The Wood Beyond the World
- The Well at the World's End