

Romanticism

Romanticism

- in England: from the end of the 18th century until the 1830's
- background: French Revolution (1789), Napoleonic War (1815 Napoleon defeated); Industrial Revolution and workers' protests; beginning of women's rights movement; Great Famine in Ireland (1840's)
- terms related to the period: Georgian Era (1714-1830: the rule of kings George I, II, III, IV); the Regency Period (1811-1820)

English Romanticism

- founders: William Wordsworth, S. T. Coleridge;
other poets: Lord Byron, P. B. Shelley, John Keats
- Wordsworth & Coleridge: *Lyrical Ballads* (1798);
Wordsworth: Preface to the second edition (1800)

Wordsworth: Preface to the 2nd edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800)

definition of poetry:

Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind.

Romantic poetry and literary theory

- the source of art is in the poet's self; poetry is not imitation but expression
- lyrical poem in the first person becomes a dominant form
- Coleridge: imagination is a creative power (opposed to "fancy"); it has the divine ability to transform the world into a unified, organic whole
- a new importance of the symbol as a poetic device; symbol captures the essential unity of the world, of the self and nature; its meaning is complex, both personal and universal

Romantic poetry and literary theory

- a new appreciation for the everyday and ordinary; poetic language should be natural
- attention for the solitary (tragic) hero
- longing for the infinite, the transcendent; overcoming limitations
- the sublime as aesthetic category: the experience of delight and fear together

Wordsworth & Coleridge
Lyrical Ballads
(1798; 1800; 1802)

LYRICAL BALLADS,

WITH

A FEW OTHER POEMS.

BRISTOL:

PRINTED BY BIGGS AND COTTE,

FOR T. N. LONGMAN, PATERNOSTER-ROW, LONDON.

1798.

image: *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798; bl.uk

William Wordsworth

“Tintern Abbey”

The Prelude, or the Growth of the Poet’s Mind (1850; posthum.)



image: royalacademy.org.uk

from “Tintern Abbey”

Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

from *Prelude*

high role of the poet

Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved
Others will love, and we will teach them how,
Instruct them how the mind of Man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this Frame of things
(Which 'mid all revolutions in the hopes
And fears of Men doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of quality and fabric more divine.

from ***Prelude***
crossing the Alps

Imagination— here the Power so called
Through sad incompetence of human speech,
That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss
Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps,
At once, some lonely traveller. I was lost;
Halted without an effort to break through;
But to my conscious soul I now can say—
“I recognise thy glory”: in such strength
Of usurpation, when the light of sense
Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,

There harbours; whether we be young or old,
Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
Is with infinitude, and only there;
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort, and expectation, and desire,
And something evermore about to be.

The melancholy slackening that ensued
Upon those tidings by the peasant given
Was soon dislodged. Downwards we hurried fast,
And, with the half-shaped road which we had missed,
Entered a narrow chasm. The brook and road
Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy strait,

And with them did we journey several hours
At a slow pace. The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
And in the narrow rent at every turn
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—

Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.



Samuel Taylor Coleridge

“Rime of the Ancient Mariner”

“Kubla Khan”

Biographia Litteraria (1817)

image: artuk.org

from “Rime of the Ancient Mariner”

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

(...)

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

from “Rime of the Ancient Mariner”
ending

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.



George Gordon, Lord Byron
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage
(1812-1818)
Don Juan (1819-1824)

image: bbc.co.uk



Percy Bysshe Shelley
Prometheus Unbound (1820)

image: wordsworth-editions.com

“A Song: Men of England”

Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

Wherefore feed and clothe and save
From the cradle to the grave
Those ungrateful drones who would
Drain your sweat—nay, drink your blood?

Wherefore, Bees of England, forge
Many a weapon, chain, and scourge,
That these stingless drones may spoil
The forced produce of your toil?

Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?
Or what is it ye buy so dear
With your pain and with your fear?

The seed ye sow, another reaps;
The wealth ye find, another keeps;
The robes ye weave, another wears;
The arms ye forge, another bears.

Sow seed—but let no tyrant reap:
Find wealth—let no imposter heap:
Weave robes—let not the idle wear:
Forge arms—in your defence to bear.

Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells—
In hall ye deck another dwells.
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see
The steel ye tempered glance on ye.

With plough and spade and hoe and loom
Trace your grave and build your tomb
And weave your winding-sheet—till fair
England be your Sepulchre.

from “Ode to the West Wind”
ending

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened Earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?



Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley
*Frankenstein; or, the Modern
Prometheus* (1818)

image: wikipedia



John Keats

“Ode to Autumn”

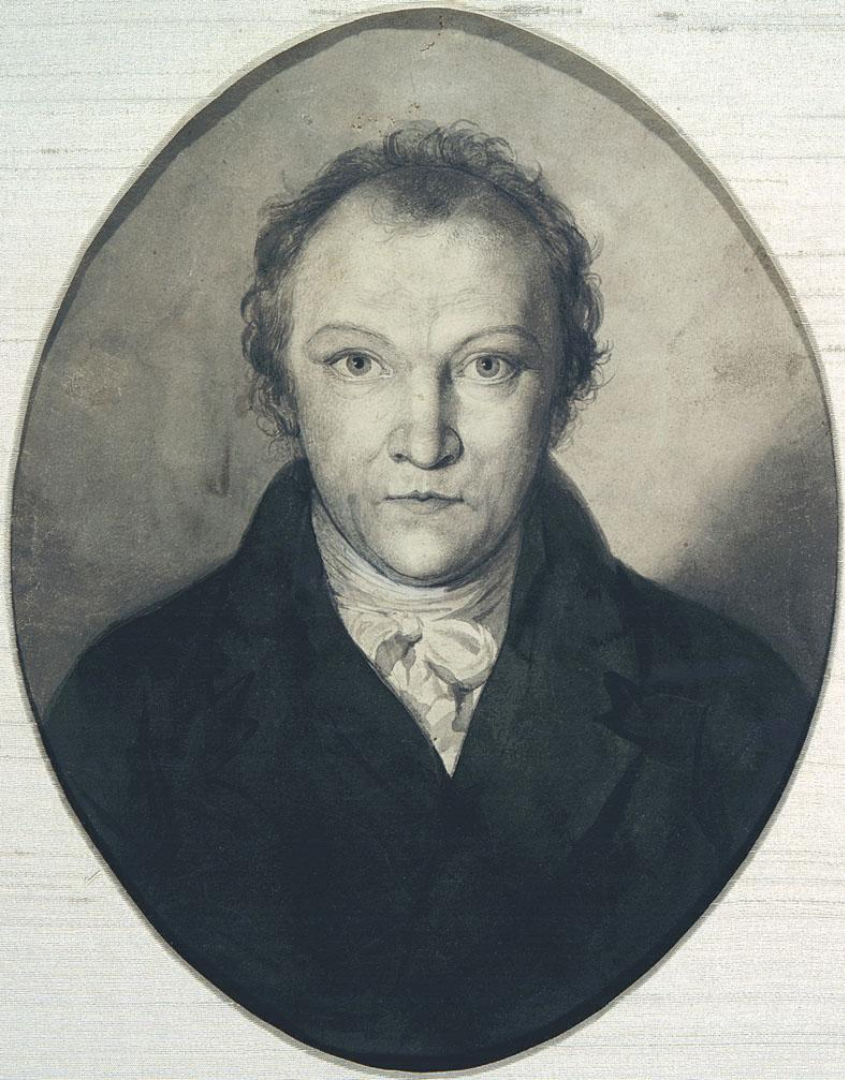
“Ode to Melancholy”

“Ode on a Grecian Urn”

image: [britannica.com](https://www.britannica.com)

from “Ode on a Grecian Urn”
ending

When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say’st,
Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.



William Blake

Songs of Innocence (1789)

Songs of Experience (1794)

the Prophetic Books

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell
(1790-1793)

image: Blake's self-portrait; blakearchive.org

from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

Plate 5

The Voice of the Devil

All Bibles and sacred codes have been the causes of the following Errors:

1. That Man has two real existing principles; Viz: a Body & a Soul.
2. That Energy, calld Evil, is alone from the Body, & that Reason, calld Good, is alone from the Soul.
3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies.

But the following Contraries to these are True:

1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that calld Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.
2. Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.

Energy is Eternal Delight.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

plate 5

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