18TH AND 19TH CENTURY LITERARY CRITICISM

النقد الأدبي في القرنين الثامن عشر و التاسع عشر

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Contents:

.

LITERARY CRITICISM

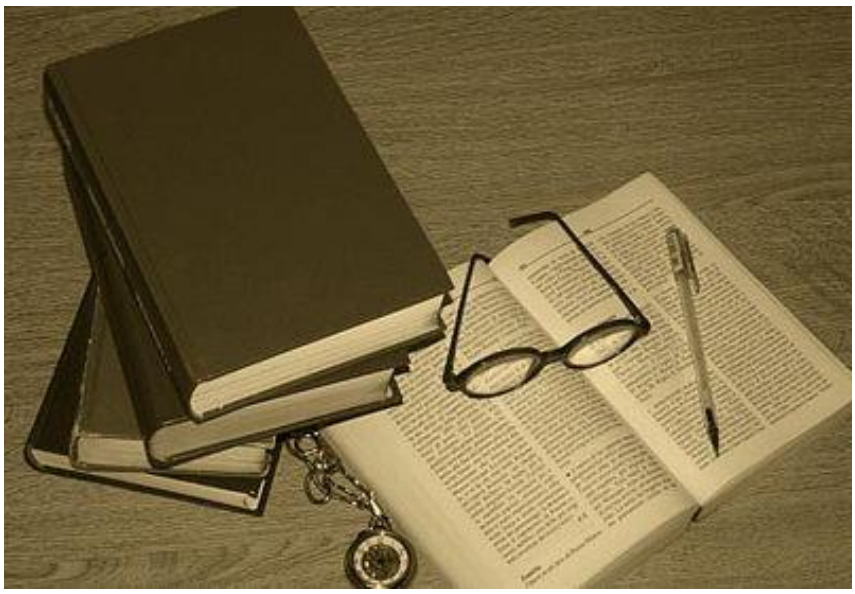
3

2

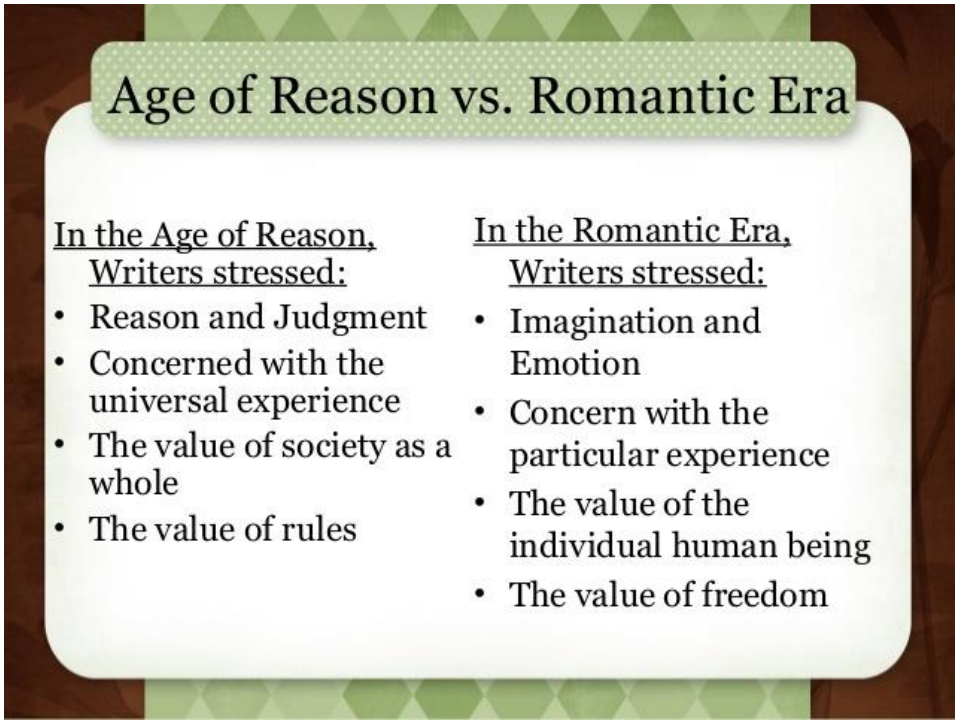
LITERARY CRITICISM

IN

THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY




Romanticism
• The words *Romantic* or *Romance* originally referred to Medieval tales of knights written in the original *Roman* language - Latin. These tales often included love stories between a knight and his lady - resulting in the modern meaning of romance.
• When talking about the Romantic Era in literature, we are actually referring to romantic as "freely imaginative fiction" and not romantic as in "romantic love"

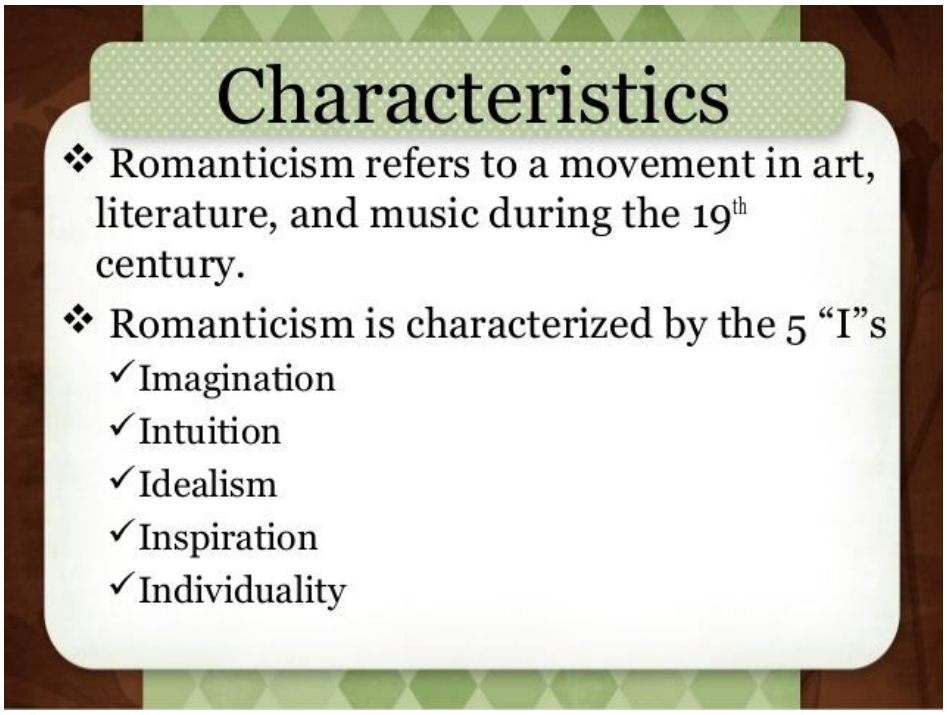

Age of Reason vs. Romantic Era
In the Age of Reason, Writers stressed:
• Reason and Judgment
• Concerned with the universal experience
• The value of society as a whole
• The value of rules
In the Romantic Era, Writers stressed:
• Imagination and Emotion
• Concern with the particular experience
• The value of the individual human being
• The value of freedom

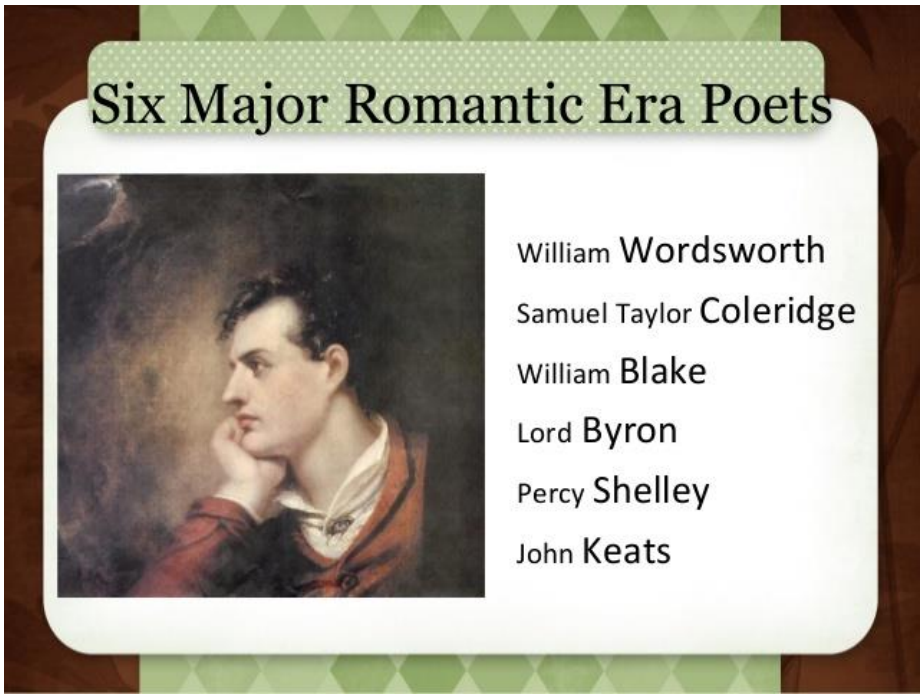

Historical Events
The following historical events led to the Romantic movement in Britain:
The French Revolution
The "September massacre"
The Guillotine
Napoleon Bonaparte
The Industrial Revolution
Laissez Faire economic policy

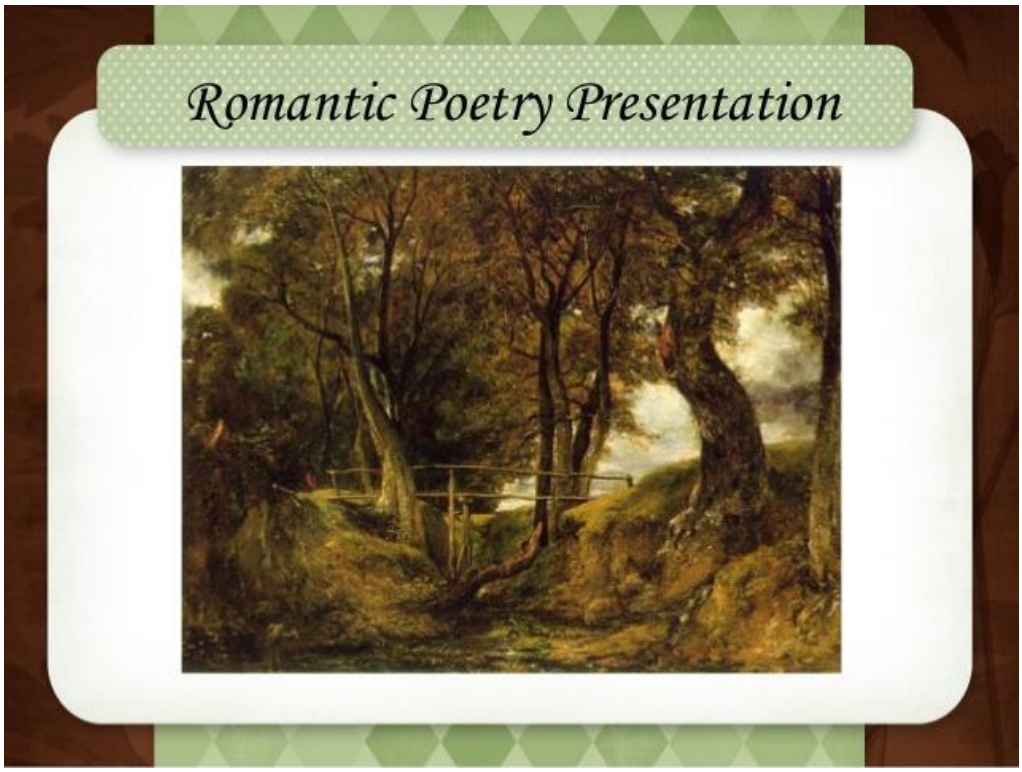

The French Revolution
Began with the storming of the prison called the Bastille on July 14, 1789
democratic overthrow of the monarchy
Triumph of radical principles
The "September massacre" – hundreds of French aristocrats were beheaded by guillotine for their alleged allegiance to Louis XVI

The Industrial Revolution

- City populations increased, resulting in desperate living conditions
- Farmland was no longer communally owned which resulted in large numbers of landless people
- The homeless migrated to the cities to search for work or, more likely, rely on charity (poorhouses or begging), furthering the congestion problem,


Characteristics
❖ Romanticism refers to a movement in art, literature, and music during the 19th century.
❖ Romanticism is characterized by the 5 "I"s
✓Imagination
✓Intuition
✓Idealism
✓Inspiration
✓Individuality


Six Major Romantic Era Poets
William Wordsworth
Samuel Taylor Coleridge
William Blake
Lord Byron
Percy Shelley
John Keats


Romantic Poetry Presentation

"In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favorite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man."

—William Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads"

Romanticism was arguably the largest artistic movement of the late 1700s. Its influence was felt across continents and

through every artistic discipline into the mid-nineteenth century, and many of its values and beliefs can still be seen in contemporary poetry.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact start of the romantic movement, as its beginnings can be traced to many events of the time: a surge of interest in folklore in the early to mid-nineteenth century with the work of the brothers Grimm, reactions against neoclassicism and the Augustan poets in England, and political events and uprisings that fostered nationalistic pride.

Romantic poets cultivated individualism, reverence for the natural world, idealism, physical and emotional passion, and an interest in the mystic and supernatural. Romantics set themselves in opposition to the order and rationality of classical and neoclassical artistic precepts to embrace freedom and revolution in their art and politics. German romantic poets

included Fredrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and British poets such as Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, George Gordon Lord Byron, and John Keats propelled the English romantic movement. Victor Hugo was a noted French romantic poet as well, and romanticism crossed the Atlantic through the work of American poets like Walt Whitmanand Edgar Allan Poe. The romantic era produced many of the stereotypes of poets and poetry that exist to this day (i.e., the poet as a tortured and melancholy visionary).

Romantic ideals never died out in poetry, but were largely absorbed into the precepts of many other movements. Traces of romanticism lived on in French symbolism and surrealism and in the work of prominent poets such as Charles Baudelaire and

The Beginning:

The Romantic Movement began somewhere near the end of the **18th** century in Western Europe and lasted well into the first half of the 19th century. In part, the movement was a rebellion in response to the Enlightenment of the century prior, which focused on the more scientific and rational thought.

The Romantic period isn't just about love stories – it was a political and social movement as well as a literary one. The Romantics were reacting to an 18th century obsession with order, rationality, and scientific precision. Romantic writers felt that these Enlightenment-era thinkers missed the point about what it meant to be human. After all, they argued, you can't write an equation to define human nature. So the Romantic movement was partly a backlash against the rationalism of the 18th century Enlightenment.

When critics talk about the Romantic poets, they usually focus on the "big six": William Blake, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were the oldest of the six, and the younger generation included Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, and our man, John Keats.

The Romantic Movement: Characteristics and Poets:

Characteristics of Romantic literature emphasize passion, emotion, and nature. Romantic poetry was often written in common everyday language for all to relate, not just the upper class. Nature was a focus of many famous poets such as **Wordsworth and Coleridge**. Wordsworth was known as the **"father of English Romanticism."** Any of his works can support the focus of nature. **Robert Burns** uses his Scottish dialect to support the "common everyday language" of the

era. **William Blake** supports the emphasis of emotion in his Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience.

The beginnings:

Literary critics consider **1798**, the year when Wordsworth and Coleridge published their "Lyrical Ballads," to mark the beginning of the English Romantic Movement. However, its actual beginnings date back to the poetry of Gray, Collins, Blake and Burns who are regaded as 'Transition Poets' who lived and wrote at the end of the Neo-Classical Age. Critical opinion is divided as to when the Romantic Movement actually came to an end; infact, some critics consider the Victorian age to be a continuation of the Romantic Age and that the English Romantic Age extended till the beginning of the Modern Age in the twentieth century.

The characteristic features of English Romantic poetry are:

1. Love and worship of Nature and dislike for the urban life.

2. Love for the Medieval Age.

3. Love for the supernatural and the mystical.

4. Poetry came to be regarded as the spontaneous expression of the poet's own subjective feelings and did not conform to the poetic conventions of classical doctrines.

5.Completely abandoned the 'Heroic Couplet' and substituted it with simpler verse forms like the ballads which belonged to the English rural Folk. In fact the 'Ballad Revival' is said to have sparked off the English Romantic Movememnt.

6. The 'poetic diction' of the Neo-Classical Age was completely done away with and the language of the ordinary people became the language of Romantic poetry.

7. The subjects of Romantic poetry were often ordinary people: "The Idiot Boy."

8-Romantic poetry shows a new faith in man with all his feelings, senses and all the sides of his experiences.

9-It rejected rational intellect as the only source of poetry and stressed imagination and intuition as the supreme faculties of the poet.

10-The poet of the Romantics was a man speaking to men, but he was endowed with some special insight into the nature of things.

11-Poetry to the Romantics is an expression of emotions inspired by the feelings of the individual poet.

The Romantic poet is gifted with a strong “organic sensibility.

12-Al Romantic literature is subjective. It is an expression of the inner urges of the soul of the artist. It reflects the poet’s own thoughts and feelings more than anything else.

13-Nature to the Romantics is regarded as something divine. It is something really living, something that has a soul and purpose; it can even share with the poet his joys and sorrows.

14-A common and recurrent theme in Romantic poetry is man in solitude or man with nature. They believed that the nature of man is best revealed when he is in solitude or in communion with nature.

15-The Romantic poetry is anti- heroic in the sense that the subject of this poetry is common man, not heroes or men of high ranks. It also uses the language of ordinary people.

16-The Romantic is extraordinarily alive to the wonder, mystery and beauty of the universe. He feels the presence of unseen powers in nature. The supernatural has a special charm for him; he is attracted by the stories of fairies, ghosts and witchcraft.

17-Romantic poetry is individualistic; it stresses man's individuality. Man is usually presented alone. Every poet has his own individual personality which is rather different from the others.

18-Another predominant feature of the Romantic poetry is the sense of nostalgia for the past.

19-To a Romantic poet, the period of childhood was very important. The child is nearer to nature than the grown- up man and he gains wisdom from nature. Thus he loses his Natural wisdom. " The child is father of the man", wordsworth says.

20-The Romantic poet sees the world through the eyes of a child. This is why Romantic poetry was described as poetry of wonder.

Contrasts with Neoclassicism:

Consequently, the Romantics sought to define their goals through systematic contrast with the norms of "Versailles neoclassicism." In their critical manifestoes--the 1800 "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads, the critical studies of the Schlegel brothers in Germany, the later statements of Victor Hugo in France, and of Hawthorne, Poe, and Whitman in the United States--they self-consciously asserted their differences from the previous age (the literary "ancien regime"), and declared their freedom from the mechanical "rules." Certain special features of Romanticism may still be highlighted by this contrast. We have already noted two major differences: the replacement of reason by the imagination for primary

place among the human faculties and the shift from a mimetic to an expressive orientation for poetry, and indeed all literature. In addition, neoclassicism had prescribed for art the idea that the general or universal characteristics of human behavior were more suitable subject matter than the peculiarly individual manifestations of human activity. From at least the opening statement of Rousseau's Confessions, first published in 1781--"I am not made like anyone I have seen; I dare believe that I am not made like anyone in existence. If I am not superior, at least I am different."--this view was challenged.

Individualism: The Romantic Hero:

The Romantics asserted the importance of the individual, the unique, even the eccentric. Consequently they opposed the character typology of neoclassical drama. In another way, of course, Romanticism created its own literary types. The hero-

artist has already been mentioned; there were also heaven-storming types from Prometheus to Captain Ahab, outcasts from Cain to the Ancient Mariner and even Hester Prynne, and there was Faust, who wins salvation in Goethe's great drama for the very reasons--his characteristic striving for the unattainable beyond the morally permitted and his insatiable thirst for activity--that earlier had been viewed as the components of his tragic sin. (It was in fact Shelley's opinion that Satan, in his noble defiance, was the real hero of Milton's Paradise Lost.)

In style, the Romantics preferred boldness over the preceding age's desire for restraint, maximum suggestiveness over the neoclassical ideal of clarity, free experimentation over the "rules" of composition, genre, and decorum, and they promoted the conception of the artist as "inspired" creator over that of the artist as "maker" or technical master. Although in both Germany and England there was continued interest in

the ancient classics, for the most part the Romantics allied themselves with the very periods of literature that the neoclassicists had dismissed, the Middle Ages and the Baroque, and they embraced the writer whom Voltaire had called a barbarian, Shakespeare. Although interest in religion and in the powers of faith were prominent during the Romantic period, the Romantics generally rejected absolute systems, whether of philosophy or religion, in favor of the idea that each person (and humankind collectively) must create the system by which to live.

The Everyday and the Exotic:

The attitude of many of the Romantics to the everyday, social world around them was complex. It is true that they advanced certain realistic techniques, such as the use of "local color" (through down-to-earth characters, like Wordsworth's rustics, or through everyday language, as in Emily Bronte's

northern dialects or Whitman's colloquialisms, or through popular literary forms, such as folk narratives). Yet social realism was usually subordinate to imaginative suggestion, and what was most important were the ideals suggested by the above examples, simplicity perhaps, or innocence. Earlier, the 18th-century cult of the noble savage had promoted similar ideals, but now artists often turned for their symbols to domestic rather than exotic sources--to folk legends and older, "unsophisticated" art forms, such as the ballad, to contemporary country folk who used "the language of commen men," not an artificial "poetic diction," and to children (for the first time presented as individuals, and often idealized as sources of greater wisdom than adults).

Simultaneously, as opposed to everyday subjects, various forms of the exotic in time and/or place also gained favor, for the Romantics were also fascinated with realms of existence that were, by definition, prior to or opposed to the

ordered conceptions of "objective" reason. Often, both the everyday and the exotic appeared together in paradoxical combinations. In the Lyrical Ballads, for example, Wordsworth and Coleridge agreed to divide their labors according to two subject areas, the natural and the supernatural: Wordsworth would try to exhibit the novelty in what was all too familiar, while Coleridge would try to show in the supernatural what was psychologically real, both aiming to dislodge vision from the "lethargy of custom." The concept of the beautiful soul in an ugly body, as characterized in Victor Hugo's Hunchback of Notre Dame and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, is another variant of the paradoxical combination.

The Romantic Artist in Society:

In another way too, the Romantics were ambivalent toward the "real" social world around them. They were often

politically and socially involved, but at the same time they began to distance themselves from the public. As noted earlier, high Romantic artists interpreted things through their own emotions, and these emotions included social and political consciousness--as one would expect in a period of revolution, one that reacted so strongly to oppression and injustice in the world. So artists sometimes took public stands, or wrote works with socially or politically oriented subject matter. Yet at the same time, another trend began to emerge, as they withdrew more and more from what they saw as the confining boundaries of bourgeois life. In their private lives, they often asserted their individuality and differences in ways that were to the middle class a subject of intense interest, but also sometimes of horror. ("Nothing succeeds like excess," wrote Oscar Wilde, who, as a partial inheritor of Romantic tendencies, seemed to enjoy shocking the bourgeois, both in his literary and life styles.) Thus the gulf between "odd" artists

and their sometimes shocked, often uncomprehending audience began to widen. Some artists may have experienced ambivalence about this situation--it was earlier pointed out how Emily Dickinson seemed to regret that her "letters" to the world would go unanswered. Yet a significant Romantic theme became the contrast between artist and middle-class "Philistine." Unfortunately, in many ways, this distance between artist and public remains with us today.

Spread of the Romantic Spirit:

Finally, it should be noted that the revolutionary energy underlying the Romantic Movement affected not just literature, but all of the arts--from music (consider the rise of Romantic opera) to painting, from sculpture to architecture. Its reach was also geographically significant, spreading as it did eastward to Russia, and westward to America. For example, in America, the great landscape painters, particularly those of the

"Hudson River School," and the Utopian social colonies that thrived in the 19th century, are manifestations of the Romantic spirit on this side of the Atlantic.

Some critics have believed that the two identifiable movements that followed Romanticism--Symbolism and Realism--were separate developments of the opposites which Romanticism itself had managed, at its best, to unify and to reconcile. Whether or not this is so, it is clear that Romanticism transformed Western culture in many ways that survive into our own times. It is only very recently that any really significant turning away from Romantic paradigms has begun to take place, and even that turning away has taken place in a dramatic, typically Romantic way.

Today a number of literary theorists have called into question two major Romantic perceptions: that the literary text is a separate, individuated, living "organism"; and that the

artist is a fiercely independent genius who creates original works of art. In current theory, the separate, "living" work has been dissolved into a sea of "intertextuality," derived from and part of a network or "archive" of other texts--the many different kinds of discourse that are part of any culture. In this view, too, the independently sovereign artist has been demoted from a heroic, consciously creative agent, to a collective "voice," more controlled than controlling, the intersection of other voices, other texts, ultimately dependent upon possibilities dictated by language systems, conventions, and institutionalized power structures. It is an irony of history, however, that the explosive appearance on the scene of these subversive ideas, delivered in what seemed to the establishment to be radical manifestoes, and written by linguistically powerful individuals, has recapitulated the revolutionary spirit and events of Romanticism itself.

THE IDEOLOGICAL RATIONALE:

The ideology that the romantics erected to justify their socio-political ambivalence included, but went far beyond, a new literary theory. Wellek (1955), McFarland (1969, 1981) and Engell (1981) have emphasized the strong interrelations between British and German philosophy and literary theory

throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

This affinity reflects the political and commercial ties between England and the north German states and the rising influence of the modern bourgeoisie in the two areas. Here the bourgeois challenge to the ancient feudal establishment could work itself out more freely than in France, where the suppression of the Huguenots after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) kept the aspirations of the middle classes corked up until the meeting of the Estates General in 1789 led to a violent outburst.

In Scotland, rival schools—both Hume and his friend Adam Smith and the so-called Common Sense philosophers—articulated many of the values of commercial society and the incipient industrial class. And when Hume's application of the experimental Newtonian method to psychology and epistemology overthrew the traditional supports of the hierarchical classical-Christian synthesis in metaphysics, Kant—in the easternmost and most traditional area of Prussia—woke from his dogmatic slumbers to refute the experiential Newtonian method employed analogically in Hume's 'science of mind'.

Kant's critical philosophy reconstructed traditional moral and religious perspectives on new foundations. Following Descartes' Copernican revolution by beginning with the nature of the human mind (rather than with the existence and nature of God), Kant managed to restore the basic elements of the classical- Christian view of the universe.

Abrams terms this manoeuvre, which he sees as characteristic of British and German Romanticism generally, as *Natural Supernaturalism*—a 'secularization of inherited theological ideas and ways of thinking'.

He continues, 'writers I call "Romantic"…undertook, whatever their religious creed or lack of creed, to save traditional concepts, schemes, values which had been based on the relation of the Creator to his creature and creation, but to reformulate them within the prevailing two-term system of subject and author, ego and non-ego, the human mind or consciousness and its transaction with nature' (1971, pp. 12–13). With a different emphasis, Peckham (1970) differentiates Romanticism as a *tertium quid* between the traditional classical-Christian position, which proposed objectified solutions to human anxieties about guilt and death (in either a noumenal realm or a transcendent but personal deity), and

Enlightenment rationalism, which declared such anxieties irrelevant in a perfectible natural order.

Romanticism, Peckham argues, placed the source of values, not in a realm of Forms, a personal God or the laws of Nature, but within the human psyche, unaided by a transcendent being or source. In the view of Reiman (1988), the philosophical key to the English romantics—particularly Lamb, Hazlitt, Shelley and Byron—is the tradition of Academic and Pyrrhonist Scepticism. These romantics emulated Cicero, William of Ockham, Montaigne, Hume and Sir William Drummond, using Sceptical analyses to undermine dogmatisms based on either sensory evidence or rationalist arguments; they did so to win a free intellectual space and to save traditional values in the face of the mechanistic materialism of both Benthamite theorists and greedy entrepreneurs, while shedding the enervated traditional*ism* of the British establishment.

To romantics in France and Germany, where the overriding ideological threat in this period came not from religious establishments but from Enlightenment rationalists backed by French armies, religious institutions seemed a bulwark to defend traditional humane values. Thus Chateaubriand, in *Atala* (1801) and *Le Génie du Christianisme* (1802), set the tone for the same Catholic bias that Madame de Staël in *De l'Allemagne* (1813) declared to be central to German Romanticism. In Germany itself, Friedrich von Schlegel (1772–1829) and 'Novalis' (1772–1801) who began as Protestants both became leading Catholic apologists, while Friedrich D.E.Schleiermacher (1768–1834), another coadjutor in the romantic centre at Jena at the turn of the century, became the seminal theologian of modern Protestant liberalism. These men and their mentor Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805) were all literary theorists and critics influential in European Romanticism.

INNOVATIONS IN LITERARY THEORY:

Despite contentions that there was no sharp break in literary theory between eighteenth-century neo-classical critics and the romantics, there have been demonstrations of at least two shifts in perspective during the late eighteenth century about the nature of the creative process and the language of poetry that constitute the basis of a peculiarly romantic poetics. Abrams (1953) shows that the metaphors used in writing and talking about poetic creation shifted dramatically from a mimetic to an expressive mode early in the period. Even when Hayden (1979) qualifies Abrams by arguing that the mimetic Aristotelian tradition persisted through the romantic period, he merely underscores the conservative nature of the romantic 'revolution', in which the pioneers expressed novel theories by means of inherited language, while maintaining that they were merely clarifying and fulfilling earlier traditions.

At a more technical level, Stone (1967) traces a shift in emphasis from rhetorical techniques in neo-classical criticism to imaginative inspiration in romantic critical theory. While valuing the inspired psyche more than a mastery of rhetorical and versifying technique, the romantics also valorized the Sublime over the Beautiful and the Picturesque. The romantic Sublime is associated with 'waste and solitary places' that the romantics, with their bias toward inwardness, preferred to 'Nature methodized' (by the commercial utility of canals and tilled fields), and as Weiskel's Freudian study (1976) argues, it grows out of the psychological shocks of childhood. (See Modiano, 1985, for another view of Coleridge's and Wordsworth's aesthetics.)

The articulation of an aesthetics and poetics featuring the expression of strong feelings is natural enough to humanists whose sense of shock, loss and isolation was of sublime proportions and who were anxious to return to

traditional values that were disappearing; these individuals felt themselves to be outcasts from a society that was so scarred and distorted that to reflect through mimetic art the life around them would betray their basic values. Having internalized the lost or betrayed values of an earlier, more nearly perfect era, they sought to become, in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson's essay (1892), 'The Lantern- Bearers' who witnessed to forgotten truth in a darkened world, hoping to provide 'the true realism…to find out where joy resides, and give it a voice far beyond singing'. In this effort they differ from later naturalistic and even disillusioned humanists of the twentieth century (such as Kafka) who use their art to portray an actuality they hate, but are unable to escape. This conception of the poet as the guide of a society confused as to what constitutes reality appears prominently in the critical writings of Wordsworth, Coleridge and—perhaps most vividly— in Shelley's *Defence of Poetry:*

Poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order, are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance and architecture and statuary and painting: they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society and the inventors of the arts of life.(ed. 1977, p. 482)

A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth…. Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted…. Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar.(pp. 485, 487)

Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration, the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present, the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire: the influence which is moved not but

moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World.(p. 508)

NEO-ROMANTIC SUCCESSORS:

The burden of Shelley's and Coleridge's literary theory and criticism—echoed by Stevenson and later critics in the romantic tradition—is that a saving remnant of morally sensitive individuals can, through their inspired words or inspiring examples, guide society out of the wilderness of materialism and calculation to a realm of love and morality. This view of the function of poetry and criticism alike has a messianic flavour that was lacking in the thought of both Dryden and Dr Johnson, but continues in both branches of the descendants of the romantics. In one tradition, which includes such critics as Carlyle, Arnold, Sainte-Beuve, George Eliot, T.S.Eliot, F.R.Leavis, Lionel Trilling, Northrop Frye and Geoffrey Hartman, criticism of society is chiefly by precept.

The critic or artist-critic of this stamp works within the social institutions to purify society as it is by pointing out to his contemporaries the moral implications of their degenerate practices (and, sometimes, their writings) through contrasting them with those of literary masterpieces, invariably from some Great Tradition of the past. This humanistic critical tradition variously describes itself as liberal or conservative, but it wars both with the establishment and with utilitarians and Marxists, in or out of power.

Another branch of the romantic tradition, one including Leopardi, Poe, the Pre-Raphaelites, many French poets of the mid-nineteenth century, Pater Swinburne, Wilde, and some avant-garde poets and critics of the twentieth century, believes that the romantic artist-critic improves society not by haranguing the public, but by turning away from both moralistic and pragmatic concerns to set an example of good living. Instead of berating a society that they believe to be

incorrigible, these writers seek to glorify the beautifully impractical and pursue the aesthetically pleasurable, in the hope that an intelligent minority will adopt their lifestyle. These neo-romantics create various aestheticist counter-cultures that flourish and wither in each generation. Neither preaching nor aesthetic neo-romantics embody the original romantics' balanced critical stance. Because the early romantics, separated from their parents' world by the French revolution, drew their inspiration from lost Edens that were both personal and socio-political, and because the love and security of their early childhoods fed their hopes of achieving through art both psychological renewal and a rejuvenated social order, they accepted the view that art should both teach *and* delight. They were, therefore, serious about the social value of play and imagining.

Literary critics in both neo-romantic branches emphasize high points and epiphanies—emotional moments

of special illumination. Their rivals for the identification and interpretation of epiphanies are religious and Marxist critics, while the enemies of all epiphanies are Freudian and deconstructionist critics, who demystify and explain away the value of such transfigurations and turning points. Yet even these competing schools have been influenced by the original romantics as well as by their two main branches of successors. The deconstructionists' undercutting or debunking of idealizations was prefigured by Schiller's concept of Romantic Irony and exemplified in the writings of various German writers and, in English literature, by Byron's later poetry.

In spite of eclectic crossbreeding during the long interactions of the various modern critical traditions, critics of the two neo-romantic branches are clearly distinguishable from one another and from their chief modern rivals. Both Social Conscience and Exemplary Genius neo-romantics

value imaginative artistic expression as a good in itself—perhaps as the highest good. (Marxist and utilitarian critics would consider it merely a socially useful tool; deconstructionists and Freudians as an illusory but perhaps necessary veil over reality.)

For those in the Social Conscience branch, great works of art are touchstones that, by disseminating the 'best that has been thought and known', help teach society its fundamental values. For Exemplary Genius neo-romantics, the great imaginative works and their writers exemplify how the 'happiest and best minds' rise above adversity and neglect to find happiness through the exercise of their own creativity, and/ or redeem a saving remnant by exposing society's limitations by the contrasting example of the artist, either existing triumphantly in a realm of freedom and love, or destroyed by the hostility and neglect of society. These ideas derive from the writings of the original romantics (as in

Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and Vigny's *Chatterton*), but neither moralists nor aestheticists can recreate the whole romantic ideal.

Once the modern heirs to the romantic tradition are seen in their two rivalrous branches (bickering like Stalinists and Trotskyites in most departments of literature), critics in the romantic tradition are easily identified. Clearly Frye, Abrams, Peckham, and many other academic critics who have argued that the romantics faced and, to an extent, solved the most significant modern dilemma— in the words of the title of a poem by Lamb, 'Living without God in the World'— are Social Conscience neo-romantics, pointing their contemporaries toward the values of the Romantics as an antidote to the nihilism and despair that has been rife in modern intellectual and artistic circles. I.A.Richards, Leavis, Kenneth Burke, and others whose attitude toward the romantics is more ambivalent or even hostile, have

nevertheless inherited through Arnold and other Victorian derivative romantics the same prescriptions for facing modern social problems— a stiff dose of tough-minded imaginative literature every morning and a True Lie or two at bedtime. Though their cases are more complex, probably Frank Kermode and Christopher Ricks have strong affinities for the Social Conscience Romantics.

Ricks's analysis of *Keats and Embarrassment* (1974) teaches a social code for people moving from one social milieu to another, while his exploration of the prejudices of T.S. Eliot provides awareness of the subtle impositions of social forces on the sensitive individual in pluralistic modern society. Kermode's efforts in *Romantic Image* (1957) and *The Sense of an Ending* (1967) to refute both rationalist and eschatological divisions of history into neat epochs, and the value he accords in *The Genesis of Secrecy* (1979) to hidden inner meanings in both early Christian and modern literary

traditions, link the problems of the modern world directly to those of the age of belief and of high Christian humanism (Milton, particularly, in *Romantic Image*), thereby validating traditional—even romantic—solutions to the questions moderns face.

The views of such neo-romantic critics are distinguishable, on the one hand, from the less inward, materialistic analyses of Marilyn Butler, Terry Eagleton, Terence Hawkes, Fredric Jameson, and Raymond Williams, in which the external forms of the society take precedence as signs of social good health, over the inward grace of the individuals who compose it. On the other hand, the neo-romantics differ sharply from such orthodox or neo-feudal critics of the romantics' achievement as Hoxie Neale Fairchild or A.N.Wilson, who find all romantic ideals either derivative or doctrinally flawed.

Harold Bloom and his imitators—self-proclaimed 'strong critics', who attempt to ensure their survival by asserting their own individual genius at the expense of their predecessors and contemporary rivals—epitomize the Exemplary Genius branch of neo-romantic criticism. Bloom employs two complementary strategies to maintain a place in the competition of an exploding intellectual population: first, he draws traditional humanistic ideas from the whole poetic and critical tradition since Milton and declares them his own by virtue of his conquest of his intellectual fathers; second, he creates a myth of his intellectual growth and *agon* that he hopes will generate the same imaginative interest as autobiographical credos by Rousseau, Coleridge or Carlyle.

It would probably be impossible today to develop a genuinely romantic, as opposed to a neo-romantic, criticism in the West. The early romantics had the unusual, though not unique, experience of having been born, or receiving their

early training, in one social and intellectual milieu and coming of age in another. Earlier periods when the old verities broke down into intellectual wars between the scions of a stable but decadent past order and a new establishment guided by *Realpolitik* included, for example, the Greek world during the time of Alexander the Great and his successors; Rome during the civil wars that led to the overthrow of the Republic; the time of Augustine, at the decline of the Roman Empire; and the religious wars of the Reformation period.

Since the Second World War, writers from Eastern Europe and the Third World have exhibited literary and critical perspectives similar to those of the German and English romantics of the early nineteenth century (though they have the additional self-consciousness of knowing the work of those earlier romantics). Such writers as Boris Pasternak and Alexander Solzhenitsyn have drawn on the traditions of Russia's past to criticize developments in Soviet society.

There are surely many literary figures—creative writers and critics—known to those in Third World countries for whom their nation's independence from colonial rule and the subsequent political instability of their nations must have been traumatic. Those who remember the limitations of the old feudal or colonial rulers, while finding the succeeding regimes equally inhumane, may have been drawing from romantic idealizations of earlier cultural traditions, romantic hopes for, and images of, an idealized future for their people.

Features of Romantic Poetry

Romantic poetry is a type of poetry, which exhibits such features as emotion, imagination, escapism, supernaturalism, Hellenism, medievalism, love for nature etc. Now, let's move ahead and discuss the salient features of romantic poetry:

1- Romantic Poetry: A Reaction against Neoclassical Poetry

Romantic poetry carries unique features, which definitely distinguish it from other kinds of poetry. It is absolutely in contrast to neoclassical poetry. Neoclassical poetry is poetry of intellect and reason, while romantic poetry is the product of emotions, sentiments and the voice of the heart of the poet. Romantic poetry is what the heart of the poet says. It is a catharsis of the poet's emotions, thoughts, feelings and ideas bound in his heart. Romantic poetry is a reaction against the set standards, conventions, rules and traditional laws of

poetry. That is the reason; romantic poetry is acknowledged as poetry of progressivism in contrast to neoclassical poetry. According to William J. Long, ***"The Romantic Movement was marked, and is always marked, by a strong reaction and protest against the bondage of rule and custom which in science and theology as well as literature, generally tend to fetter the free human spirit."***

The romantics were against the influence of reason in their poetry. They didn't give any preference to reason and intellect in their poetry. On the other hand, neoclassical poets believed in the influence of reason. Pope said that:

True wit is Nature to advantage dress'd,

What oft was thought but ne'er so well express'd.

2- Imagination in Romantic Poetry

Imagination is the hallmark of romantic poetry. It is a part and parcel of romantic poets like John Keats, Samuel Coleridge and P.B Shelley. Unlike neoclassical poets, who shunned imagination and didn't give any preference to imagination in their poetry, romantic poets laid extraordinary stress on imagination. They discredited the influence of reason and intellect in any form in their poetry. Samuel Coleridge considered an integral part of his poetry. In his ***Biographia Literaria***, he has discussed two types of imagination-Primary and Secondary Imagination. He says,*"The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and a repetition in the finite of the external act of creation of the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, coexisting with the conscious will, yet still identical with the primary in the kind*

of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode its operation."

Johan Keats was a great supporter of imagination in poetry. He says, ***"I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination- What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth."*** It is Keats's plight of imagination that helps him leave the real world and transport him into the world of nightingale. Look at the following example:

Already with thee! tender is the night,

And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,

Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;

But here there is no light,

Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown

Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

(*Ode to Nightingale* by John Keats)

3- Nature in Romantic Poetry

Love for nature is another important feature of romantic poetry. Nature had a pivotal position in their poetry. Nature for them is a wellspring of inspiration, satisfaction and happiness. It is pertinent to mention here that all the romantic poets differed in their views about nature. Wordsworth is considered the great lover of nature. Wordsworth recognized nature as a living thing, teacher, god and everything. He was the true adorer of nature. He says:

One impulse from the vernal wood

Can teach you more of man

Of moral, evil and good

Than all the sages can.

(The Tables Turned : An Evening Scene On The Same Subject by Wordsworth)

Shelley was similarly an extraordinary lover of nature, yet he didn't think about nature as an instructor, aide and a wellspring of pleasure. He believed that nature is a living thing and there is a union between nature and man. Shelley likewise put stock in the recuperating force of nature like Wordsworth. Wordsworth gives a philosophical touch to nature, while Shelly stays upon the intellectual aspect of nature.

John Keats is also an eminent lover of nature. John Keats didn’t love nature just for the sake of guidance or spiritual inspiration; rather, he adored nature just for the sake of its sensuousness and beauty. Keats enjoy nature in its full essence. He says:

There was an awful rainbow once in heaven,

We know here woof; texture she is given

In the dull catalogue common things.

(*Lamia* by John Keats)

Coleridge was completely different from other romantic poets of his age. He considered nature as it is. He has a realistic perspective of nature. He believes that nature is not the source of joy and pleasure. It all depends upon our mood and disposition. He is of the opinion that joy doesn't come from any external nature, rather, it emanates from the heart of our hearts. He says in this regard:

I may not hope from outward forms to win

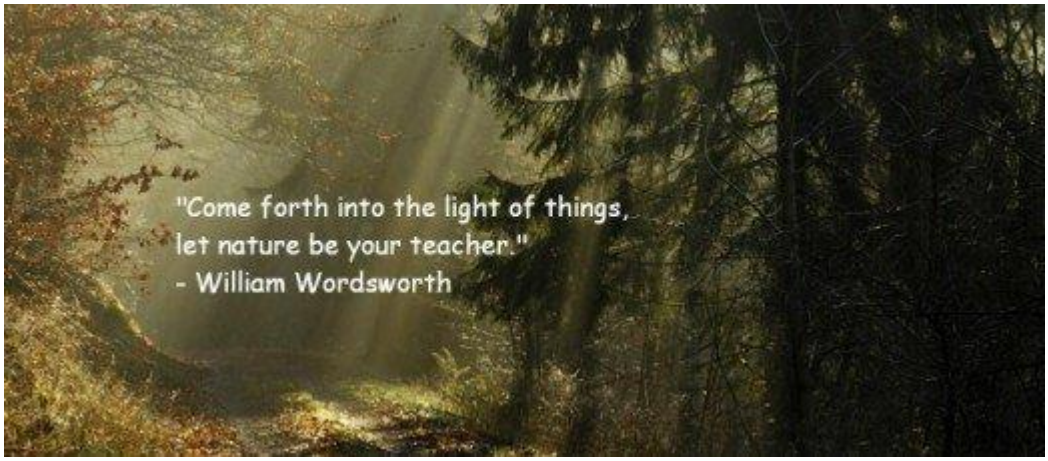
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

O Lady! we receive but what we give,

And in our life alone does Nature live:

Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!

(*Dejection: An Ode* by Samuel Coleridge)



Nature: A Feature of Romantic Poetry | Source

Romantic Poetry

The Ask.com defines romantic poetry as:

"The word 'romantic poetry' can mean one of two things. The first of these is any poetry that deals with romantic

themes, including love, loss and beauty. Romantic Poetry (all caps) can be referring to the poetry written in the 19th century by the British poets who specialized in this type of writing."

4- Escapism in Romantic Poetry

Escapism is another striking characteristic of romantic poetry. Escapism is a term, which implies a writer's failure to face the agonies of real life and take shelter somewhere else instead of fighting against the odds. Escapism is the main theme of romantic poetry. As most of the romantic poets were in the grip of miseries, they tried to take asylum in the bower of their poetry. It was their most loved pastime to escape from reality and take asylum in the realm of their imagination. For example, Keats desires to fly away with the nightingale to forget the miseries of the world:

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,

Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,

But on the viewless wings of Poesy.

(*Ode to Nightingale* by John Keats)

5- Melancholy in Romantic Poetry

Melancholy likewise occupies a prominent place in romantic poetry. Melancholy is a major source of inspiration for the romantic poets. Due to extreme melancholy, all the romantic poets have a tendency to compose subjective poetry. They write poetry, which is the voice of the heart of their heart. They don't try to compose philosophical and complicated poetry. They just want to give vent to their feelings and emotions so that to ease their minds. They want to take a load of their minds. Look at the following example:

……***for many a time***

I have been half in love with easeful Death,

Call'd him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,

To take into the air my quiet breath;

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,

To cease upon the midnight with no pain.

(*Ode to Nightingale* by John Keats)

6- Medievalism in Romantic Poetry

Medievalism is likewise an important characteristic of romantic poetry. Medievalism means one's love for the Middle Ages. Romantic poetry is replete with elements of medievalism a great deal. John Keats and Coleridge are the leading romantic poets, whose poetry exhibited an ample amount of medievalism. Romantic poets were against

intellectualism, urbanism, industrialization and humdrum life. They wanted to get rid of these things by taking asylum in far off lands of their imagination. That is why; Middle Ages appealed to their taste to a great extent. They adored weird, remote and recondite places. Resultantly, they were more attracted to Middle Ages than to their own age. Look at the following example:

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,

Alone and palely loitering?

The sedge has withered from the lake,

And no birds sing.

(La Belle Dame sans Merci: A Ballad by John Keats)

7- Hellenism in Romantic Poetry

Hellenism implies love, commitment and unmistakable fascination in the antiquated society, values and individuals of Greek. Romantic poets loved Hellenism a great deal in their poetry. They loved to explore the ancient culture of Greek in their poetry. John Keats' poetry is loaded with various allusions to the art, literature and culture of Greek. ***Ode on a Grecian Urn*** is a perfect example in this regard. The pictures engraved on the Grecian Urn show Keats's love the Greek ideals, culture and art. Look at the following example:

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?

To what green altar, O mysterious priest,

Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,

And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?

What little town by river or sea-shore,

Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,

Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?

(Ode on a Grecian Urn by John Keats)

8- Supernaturalism in Romantic Poetry

Supernaturalism is another important feature of romantic poetry. Most of the romantic poets used supernatural elements in their poetry. Supernaturalism is a unique trait of romantic poets. They used supernaturalism not just for the creation of horror and awe; rather, they used it for the pleasure of the reader. Samuel Coleridge is the leading romantic poet in this regard. His poem, ***'Kubla Khan'*** is the most romantic poem in the history of English literature. It is completely the product of his imagination. The whole poem is a collection of supernatural elements. Look at the following example:

And all should cry, Beware! Beware!

His fleshing eyes, his floating hair!

weave a circle round him thrice and

Close eyes with holy dread for him on

Honey – drew hath fed and drunk the

Milk of paradise.

(*Kubla Khan* by Samuel Coleridge)

9- Subjectivity in Romantic Poetry

Romantic poetry is poetry of the miseries, despairs and personal stories of the poets. It is poetry of sentiments, emotions and imagination of the poets. Romantic poetry is against the objectivity of neoclassical poetry. Neoclassical poets avoided to describe their personal emotions in their poetry. They wanted to present a true picture of the society,

while the romantic poets avoided description of their contemporary age. John Keats is the leading poet, whose poetry is a biography his life. He wrote poetry just for the sake of poetry. He didn't want to convey any moral message to his readers. He just wanted to write poetry and prove himself the best poet in his age. That is why; we find numerous clues to his personal life in his poems. Look at the following example:

or many a time

I have been half in love with easeful Death,

Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,

To take into the air my quiet breath;

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,

To cease upon the midnight with no pain.

(*Ode to a Nightingale* by John Keats)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

(1772-1834)

In the first half of his Biographia Literaria, Coleridge tells of the evolution of his philosophical ideas from 18th-century associationism and empiricism to idealism, an evolution which he claims to have effected spontaneously, previous to his knowledge of German philosophy. The fact remains that whole passages of this book are translations of Schelling's System of Transcendental Idealism. Kant's influence (for instance, in Coleridge's discussion of the internal purposiveness of the work of art, or his distinction between the beautiful and the agreeable) is evident in the earlier Principles of Genial Criticism (1814), and his essay On Poesy or Art (1808) was inspired by Schelling's On the Relation between Art and Nature (1807).

Whatever credit we give to his claim of originality, it is anyway true that Coleridge was a major channel for the introduction of the new philosophical and critical ideas in England, and a perceptive thinker himself. He develops a metaphysical and psychological theory along the lines set by Fichte and Schelling. Coleridge appeals for standards of criticism based on his philosophical psychology: already in his 1800 preface, Wordsworth had affirmed that "the ultimate reference of taste would be a study of the manner in which language and the human mind react on each other" (1800 prologue, 433). Coleridge, too, opposes the idea of criticism as a mere evaluation of literary works, and, above all, as a pointing out of petty faults: the main task of a critic is to elucidate the beauty of a work. The models to be followed in criticism are the classical critics: Aristotle, Horace, Longinus. Coleridge, we may note, may be a romantic poet and critic, but he values sound sense, and not emotion, in his ideal critic,

just as he values in the poet (e. g. in Wordsworth) the union of deep feeling with profound thought. Critics, he believes, ought to refer "to fixed canons of criticism, previously established and deduced from the nature of man" (Biographia 36). His aim is to reduce criticism to a system by the deduction of causes from principles involved in our faculties . . . . I laboured at a solid foundation on which permanently to ground my opinions in the component faculties of the human mind itself and their comparative dignity and importance. (11)

Coleridge will examine different psychological theories form Aristotle to the German Romantics, as a step towards the determination of those faculties. He opposes the mechanicism of some 18th century theories (Hartley, Hume), and asserts the active faculty of the mind, will . Will and thought, he says, are not blind mechanisms, as Hartley presented them, but rather controlling powers. The association of ideas (in the sense of Locke) may well be mechanical, but the mind works by

alternately opposing and yielding to this mechanic movement, by an act of the will. So, there is in the mind an active and a passive power: they are connected by a third one, which is both active and passive: imagination. In Chapter XII of his Biographia Coleridge develops an idealist theory of knowledge which draws heavily on Schelling, and which is the basis for his theory of the imagination.

In Chapter XIII he develops a difference between Primary Imagination, Secondary Imagination and Fancy:

The imagination then I consider either as primary or secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and

differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffusses, dissipates, in order to re-create' or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital , even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space, and blended with, and modified, by that empirical phenomenon of the will which we express by the word choice . But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association. (167)

The practical conclusion for writers is that "the poet should paint to the imagination, not to the fancy" (252).

The origin of the opposition between primary and secondary imagination is vaguely Kantian. Fancy is a limited

or false parallel of Secondary Imagination. Coleridge criticises Wordsworth's near-equivalence between imagination and fancy; fancy merely combines; Wordsworth's fancy is Coleridge's wit, which is a pure play of the intellect, of concepts, without the passion of poetry. Primary Imagination can be related to Kant's Understanding, while Secondary or Poetic Imagination is nearer to Kant's Reason. In Kant's theory, the role of the Understanding face to experience was an active one: it sets its own forms and categories on experience, synthesizes the impressions into phenomena and elaborates judgements. "Every human being, thus, is, so far as he perceives anything at all, a creator and an idealizing agent" (Wimsatt and Brooks 393). Coleridge establishes and analogy between the imaginative capability of the poet and the creativity of the "infinite I Am." The parallel between the creativity of the poet and that of the cosmos makes us think of Schelling, but in Coleridge's account there is an emphasis on

the consciousness an deliberation of the cosmic creativity, so that the word "God" is perhaps more appropriate here.

The poet, then, differs in degree and not in essence from other men. He has a greater ability of organizing, and a greater control over it. The Secondary imagination works the perceptual products of the Primary Imagination into symbols of ideas. Coleridge, like Aristotle, states that the poet must copy the essence, and not the mere fact, "which presupposes a bond between nature in the higher sense and the soul of man."

Nature and consciousness mirror each other, developing through similar phases and processes. The poet, in watching nature, seeks "a symbolical language for something within me that already and forever exists" rather "than observing anything new."

Schelling and Plato are reconciled in Coleridge's dictum that whatever new things we discover are already known

truths which had been forgotten. Like Schelling, Coleridge believes that art makes conscious, or rather explicit, what is unconscious in nature (although we may assume it to be conscious in God), and that this process is essentially the same as that of idealizing reality. The role of art in Schelling or Coleridge is similar to that of philosophy: art is a kind of philosophy, a "figured language of thought" ; a work of art is of a "middle quality between a thought and a thing."

The unity of a work of art is the integration of all its parts (matter) into one idea.

Imagination integrates the opposites, finding a balance of contraries. As Wordsworth had said, it makes strange what is familiar and familiarizes what is strange. Indeed, this idea was the groundwork for the original plan of the Lyrical Ballads to be written in collaboration by Wordsworth and Coleridge. Wordsworth was to deal with themes of common

life whose imaginative heightening would lead to an intuition of the presence of the unknown; Coleridge would develop fantastic themes (The Ancient Mariner) imaginatively infusing them with the known so as to produce credibility. In any case, Coleridge says, the work of the poet must join accurate observation with the modifying power of imagination, mixing the old and the new in such a way that the freshness of sensations is always present in the poem.

Other derivations of this general definition of imagination as an integration of opposites can be found in Coleridge's critical statements. For instance, he defines meter (Biographia XIV) as the result of a balance between passion and organization; or else he distinguishes imitation (infusing difference among the same or the same among different elements) from copying, or makes the remark that the women in Shakespeare's plays, while preserving their individuality, are all essentially the same, variations on one woman. All

these are instances of "a highly reflexive application of the doctrine of conciliation to the work of art conceived as a non-illusory object" (Wimsatt and Brooks 392).

It has been argued that, for all their elaboration, Wordsworth and Coleridge's theories of the imagination are narrow and restricted, in that they are made ad hoc, to suit the special kind of poetry they were writing. The subject of romantic poems is usually inspiration, creation, the poet's own sensibility, etc. They are highly reflexive, and so is Coleridge's theory of the imagination.

However,[i]t is one thing to say that all our knowledge is a "self-realizing intuition" which reconciles subject or conscious self with object or nature. (It is impossible to write a poem which will especially illustrate this transcendental principle. How could any one expression better illustrate or embody it than any other?). It is a vastly different thing to say

that the forms of nature are, or are capable of being, suited to moral reflections-or that the latter can be, in any peculiar way, elicited or superinduced from the former. This is a very special showing of how "nature" is "thought", and "thought" is "nature". (It may be quite possible to illustrate this in a special kind of poem. (Wimsatt and Brooks 399)

Surely the Romantics' praise of symbol as opposed to allegory suits their own poems, just as it may lead to an undervaluation of much important literature (Dante, Cervantes, Rabelais are excepted by Coleridge). Their explanation of a parallel working of nature and the human mind makes their projective imagery especially suitable; the subjectivization or personification of nature (what Ruskin called "the pathetic fallacy") is the most representative image in romantic poetry.

So, their theory of imagination is a description of their own poetry: it is a poetry which suggests similitudes usually without stating them overtly. In the Romantic metaphor "[b]oth tenor and vehicle are wrought in a parallel process out of the same material. The landscape is both the occasion of subjective reflection or transcendental insight and the source of figures by which the reflection or insight is defined" (Wimsatt and Brooks 402; cf. Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" or "Intimations of Inmortality"). The best poems of the Romantics are philosophically purposive: they are the logical outcome of the approximation between poetry and philosophy made in contemporary theory, of Schelling's doctrine that poetry was the highest kind of philosophy. Romantic poems are over-reflexive, they "contain and assert the philosophy of nature and art which is supposedly also their formal principle" (Wimsatt and Brooks). This is something like Pope's

"imitative harmony" translated to purely conceptual terms, and set at the heart of the poem's structure.

> This . . . they were led to do and were able to do because of the intimate union which they conceived to obtain between art and nature. The theory was enlessly reflexive and self-conscious . . . . Romantic poems tend to be about Romantic imagination. (Wimsatt and Brooks 402)

This hidden intellectualism leads to some incoherence in Coleridge's criticism. He states that pleasure is the immediate object of a poem, but then he cannot discriminate a good poem from a bad one unless he speaks of the passion and truth behind it. And his undervaluation of all which can be intellectual, of that which is mere "wit" or "fancy" restricts the field of subjects available for poetic treatment. Nothing too playful or merely witty is adequate subject for a romantic poem, which tries to reach the infinity behind the fact.

Poetic Diction:

In his essay "Shakespeare's Judgement Equal to His Genius" (1808, pub. 1836) Coleridge re-states the main Romantic views on poetry. He wants poetry to be based on genius and originality, and to deal with its subject matter in such a way that its language will be organically linked to it; or rather, that the subject-matter is co-extensive with the poem: "to the truly great poets . . . there is a reason assignable not only for every word, but for the position of every word." Coleridge is the major English exponent of organicism as a metaphor for the work of art; he opposes organic form and mechanic form in the same way as the German romantics (Herder, Schlegel). Imagination produces organic forms, fancy merely mechanic forms. "The work of art must grow organically from within itself. Its principles of order are finally internal and not imposed from without" (Adams 459).

There are rules in the work of art, Coleridge admits as he criticises the neo-classicists, but they are not imposed mechanically. The order of the work of art is like that of a living body: each part is connected to the whole, and each is at once end and means.

The true ground of the mistake lies in the confounding mechanical regularity with organic form. The form is mechanic, when on any given material we impress a predetermined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material; as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes, as it develops itself form within, and the fulness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. Such as the life is, such is the form. ("Shakespeare's Judgement" 462).

Coleridge opposes in this way, like Schelling or Goethe, symbol to allegory. Just as he opposes the rules of drama, in his Biographia Literaria he opposes that conception of poetry inherited from the eighteenth century: he is against the closed couplet, and favours lines running into each other and the use of plain words whenever possible. There is no question of "poetic diction" as something which can be isolated from the poems themselves. This was the defect of the poetry of the previous century for Coleridge: it presented "not so much of poetic thoughts as thoughts translated into the language of poetry" (9).

The effect of a good poem, Coleridge says, is to make us see life anew, to remove "the film of familiarity" which sets at length on all our thoughts and perceptions. An imaginative poem is characterized by its "awakening the mind's attention form the lethargy of custom and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us" (Biographia 168).

This freshess of perception can never be achieved with a poetic diction which is old-fashioned, well-known; clichés and hackneyed expressions rather have the opposite effect, they dull our perception. However, as it happened with Wordsworth, Coleridge lays the stress not so much on novelty as on quality of expression; badness comes not so much from repetition as from intrinsic faults.

But Coleridge's attitude to poetic language is not the same asWordsworth's. He will criticise Wordsworth's primitivistic assumptions as well as the implications which derived from them with respect to poetic language. Coleridge does not share Wordsworth's faith in the intrinsic virtues of the cottagers and country life. He believes in the value of culture and education, rather than in "untutored minds" in contact with nature.

He points out that Wordsworth's definition of "the language of real life" was equivocal: on one hand, he identified it with the language of the lower classes; on the other, that language was to be a "selection." In fact, he says, if you "select" from a particularity (language of peasants) what you obtain is a generality (language of men): "I adopt with full faith the principle of Aristotle that poetry as poetry is essentially ideal, that it avoids and excludes all accident, that its apparent individualities of rank, character, or occupation must be representative of a class" (Biographia 192). Language, for Coleridge, does not spring immediately from nature in the way Wordsworth would have it: it is the product of a whole society, and it has a long history, in which the role of the learned is fundamental.

Even allowing that the same words can be used in prose and in poetry, Coleridge claims, the "poetic manner of combining words" is not that of prose. Coleridge identifies

badness in poetry as faults of logic, psychology, good sense and taste: in general, faults against the rules of the Imagination. The criterion to define badness is not to be found in the oposition between the hackeneyed and the new. The same is true for Wordsworth, although he complains that some themes and expressions beautiful in themselves could no longer be used because of their having been so drawn upon by bad poets. Today we tend rather to lay the stress upon this idea, following T.S. Eliot: "It is as wasteful for a poet to do what has been done already, as for a biologist to rediscover Mendel's theories."

Definition of a poem:

For Coleridge, metre is the proper form for poetry. It favours, when it is successful, the most perfect blend of content and form; it must be adequate to the content of the poem and become one with its meaning. The role of metre is

to intensify the attention of the reader to every element in the poem, as well as to the whole. Metre tends to increase the vivacity and susceptibility both of the general feelings and of the attention. This effect it produces by the continual excitement of surprize, and by the quick reciprocation of curiosity still gratified and still re-excited, which are too slight indeed to be at any one moment objects of distinct consciousness, yet become considerable in their aggregate influence (Biographia 207).

However, it is not a necessary element for poetry: only the most suitable form. And this is so because the language of poetry is not the same as the language of prose, even if its vocabulary is the same. It is peculiar to the Romantic era that poetry is defined not only with respect to science, but also with respect to other kinds of literature. Coleridge points out that poetry does not equal rhythmical language nor does it equal literature.

A poem is that species of composition which is opposed to works of science by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having this object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part . . . one the parts of which mutually support and explain each other , all in their proportion harmonizing with, and supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement. (Biographia 172)

The communication of pleasure, Coleridge affirms, is the only legitimate way for a poet to moralize his readers (cf. the similar view in Dryden).

We may note that Coleridge has defined the whole of the poem as a system, a structure (cf. Aristotle on plot). This is only possible not merely through Wordsworth's orderly mind

feeling spontaneously, but through reflection, consciousness and hard work.

In poetry, in which every line, every phrase, may pass the ordeal of deliberation and deliberate choice, it is possible, and barely possible, to attain that ultimatum which I have ventured to propose as the infallible test of a blameless style, namely its untranslatableness in words of the same language without injury to the meaning, Be it observed, however, that I include in the meaning of a word not only its correspondent object, but likewise all the associations which it recalls. For language is framed to convey not the object alone, but likewise the character, mood and intentions of the person who is representing it. (Biographia 263)

The same could be said of imagery. Together with dramatization, Coleridge points out the importance of imagery as an element which is used by the "invisible" author in

directing the response of the reader. Imagery is significant and becomes alive when it is modified by a predominant passion, or when it has the virtue of reducing multiplicity to unity, or succession to an instant; or when a humour and an intellectual life is transferred to it from the poet's own spirit. That is, when it has an experiential, subjective and perceptual value, "when it moulds and colors itself to the circumstances, passion or character present and foremost in the mind " (Biographia 178).

The guiding spirit of the imagery may be the author in an immediate way, or the author through his characters. This is the difference between Shakespeare and Milton: "All things and modes of action shape themselves anew in the being of Milton; while Shakespeare becomes all things, yet for ever remaining himself" (Biographia 180).

This new view of the relationship between the poet and his language will inspire many studies of the poets' imagery in

the twentieth century, from Caroline Spurgeon's study of Shakespeare's imagery as a means of characterization and creation of atmosphere to Charles Mauron's "psychocriticism," which analyzes the mind of the poet on the basis of his "obsessive metaphors." This new perspective becomes possible after Coleridge and other romantic: let us note that language for Coleridge is no longer a mere means to communicate things or concepts: it is more like a tool which shapes reality. Likewise, we find a new definition of metaphor in Coleridge: it is a thought of its own, which creates a new meaning, and not a dress or cloak for a pre-existing thought.

In seeming paradox with his organic conception of the poem, Coleridge affirms that a poem of any length neither can be, nor ought to be, all poetry. Yet if a harmonious whole is to be produced, the remaining parts must be preserved in keeping with the poetry; and this can be no otherwise effected than by such a studied selection and artificial arrangement as will

partake of one, though not a peculiar, property of poetry. And this again can be no other than the property of exciting a more continuous and equal attention than the language of prose aims at, whether colloquial or written. (Biographia 173; cf. similar ideas in Wordsworth and Poe).

The Poet:

Imagination and emotion, the principal characteristics of the poem, are in truth the characteristics of the poet. To discuss what poetry is, Coleridge affirms, equals to discuss what a poet is. A poet is a person endowed with a peculiar ability to conciliate discordant qualities, a person endowed with a special ability to feel emotions combined with an unusual mental order (this conception is inherited by I. A. Richards). Needless to say, this is a gift which cannot be acquired.

The mind of the poet may seem disorderly at first sight, but in fact this appearance conceals a much more basic order: the poet is in tune with the universe. The universe is orderly, and the mind of the poet is orderly as well. His whole imaginative activity is one of ordering, of distinguishing the similar from the same. In this sense, poetry is a kind of repetition of God's creative act which is also an act of adoration of God.

Like Wordsworth, Coleridge insists on the necessity of objectivization in the poet; in shaping a poem, it is essential to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.

Subjectivity is all right, but the truly great poets are characterized by their power to go beyond their circumstance,

and by their keeping outside their work, which unfolds by itself: they objectivise, dramatise without personal involvement. Such is the case with Shakespeare: in his poems as well as in his plays, "You seem to be told nothing, but to see and hear everything" (Biographia 177). And such is not the case with some of Wordsworth's rustic poems, in which you can hear the ventriloquist poet behind the puppet characteræan instance of defective dramatization. Coleridge desires an "utter aloofness of the poet's own feelings from those of which he is at once the painter and the analyst" (Biographia 177), something which reminds us of later pronouncements by novelists around the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the 20th century (Flaubert, Henry James, Joyce). The influence of Coleridge in this respect is far-reaching and goes beyond the Romantic age to inspire much of the New Critical attitudes in our own century.

William Wordsworth

(1770-1850)

Preface: Poetic Diction:

Poetic diction had been felt as a problem in English literature at least since the time of Chaucer and the late Middle Ages, when there was a wave of Latinisms in an effort to enrich the English language. Spenser had proposed another solution, the use of archaisms. During the Neoclassical era, the passion for decorum had led to a progressive dessication of poetic diction, which was believed to be apart and above everyday (or "idiomatick") language. The typical eighteenth-century poem is loaded with adjectives which are the heritage of poetic tradition rather than of observation, often neatly coupled with a noun in a stock phrase (for instance, "fresh pastures and singing brooks") which has been called by some the "neoclassical kenning"; a product of imitation and

tradition, the kind of expression you would never find outside poetry. Its very immobility is a sign of the world-view which supports this poetic tradition: a belief in order, conservatism, dogmatic immobilism. This existence of a "poetic language" characterized by special words and expressions was felt by many to be a mark of distinction: thus, Gray and Johnson were proud of the English poetic idiom.

The neoclassical "kenning," however praised by Johnson, was a dead weight placed on poetry. The real kenning (in old Germanic poetry) does not present us the individual experience of the poet, but is instead the voice of the community, it is alive in that sense. The neoclassical kenning is a formula inherited from a poetic tradition which is no longer able to voice the experience of its culture; it is a poor substitute for real perception and poetical intuition. Wordsworth writes an "Essay on Epitaphs" in which he

criticises Pope's conventional epitaphs, which made a lavish use of classical clichés.

He also opposes the conception of words as a "dress" for thought. In the preface to the 2nd edition of the Lyrical Ballads (1800) he states his poetic manifesto, which is at the same time that of English romanticism. Wordsworth will provide "the first thorough-going Longinian criticism of poetic diction in English" (Edinger). He carries further the demand for mimetic truth and the recapturing of experience that is found in the aestheticians of the 18th century, and he separates the concept of verisimilitude from the classical doctrine of the three styles, which is abandoned at last.

Wordsworth calls his poems "experiments," and he presents them as models of a new kind of poetry. His aim, he says, is "to ascertain how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state

of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a poet may rationally endeavor to impart" (433). So, an experiment, first of all, in a new poetic diction.

The principal object, then, proposed in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of the language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting in tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. (434).

Narrative poems such as "Michael" or "The Two Brothers" in this collection are perhaps the best examples of this experimental diction.

Wordsworth's demands in the field of poetic diction can be related to the "perceptual" or "experiential" standard gradually developed for literature during the XVIIIth century: He proposes that poetic diction be modelled on spoken language, and not previous literary productions. The prevailing norm among poets of his time he calls an "inane phraseology" (434), a set of "arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their own creation" (435). We may note that this setting of actual (spoken) usage as the norm is already present in Horace, and his advice is repeated by Dryden, Pope, Goldsmith and Swift in the heyday of neoclassicism. But then Wordsworth is reacting against the poetic language of his contemporaries, rather than against Pope or Dryden.

He also demands that poetic diction be modelled on primitive, passionate and natural utterance, that which is most spontaneous, the product of emotion. This faith of Wordsworth's in spontaneous utterance, this appreciation of what is natural and not elaborated may be linked with the popularistic strain of romanticism, and was prefigured by Ossianism, Vico's theories of mythical thought and to the democratic faith in the people and simple intuition. Let us not forget that Wordsworth writes in the wake of the French Revolution, of which he had been an ardent admirer: he is not far from accusing the earlier poetry of being aristocratic, and far from the real concerns and language of the common people. Goethe, another admirer of the bourgeois revolution, had set in the middle classes his literary ideal of spontaneity.

Wordsworth already needs to look further. A very similar brand of popularistic faith will be found later in Tolstoi. In Wordsworth, this is a reaction against the polite

and aristocratic side of Neoclassicism. He holds a naturalistic creed according to which emotions are simpler, clearest and purest in the country and among the lower classes: the town and the higher classes are decadent, and are far from the natural poetry which can be heard in the mouth of simple people. Among the higher classes, the passions are restrained by conventionality: among the common people they are less restrained, and so they are "more accurately contemplated, and more forcefully communicated" (434). Wordsworth thinks that the problem of poetic diction is one of urban artificiality, which produces the hackneyed verbal conventions of late Neoclassicism. The preservation of the previous poetic tradition was for Wordsworth a mere instance of social vanity; poetical clichés, personification of abstract entities, etc., are to disappear from the new poetry.

Many of Wordsworth's poems are "dramatic", that is, much of the speaking is not attributed to the poet or his

persona, but rather to a character, usually a peasant. It is the emotion of this character which gives its coloring to the diction; and such a diction must not look learned, bookish or "poetic" in any old sense. "Such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent , and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets" (434).

The voice of the author or that of poetical conventions must not be heard behind that of the characters; elaboration of language is acceptable if necessary only in the poet's own speeches. Near the end of his "Preface," Wordsworth asks for the indulgence of the reader in case he had let slip by "those arbitrary connections of feelings and ideas with particular words or phrases, from which no man can altogether protect himself" (442). Indeed, other critics (Coleridge in 1817, and Sir Henry Taylor in 1834) would accuse Wordsworth of falling in the same defects which he had criticised: stock

phrases and unnatural language in the mouth of characters ("ventriloquism," as Coleridge puts it). Lack of both novelty and decorum in his low moments. And, conversely, most later critics have argued that Wordsworth's theory of poetry falls short of explaining his own poetic achievement. It may be noted that Wordsworth always speaks of a selection of the language of the lower classes: this is contradictory with the spirit of the new conception he is bringing forward.

As a corollary of these views, Wordsworth proposes to suppress the concept of poetic diction altogether. Poetic diction was not true to nature, and so it is suppressed. Indeed, Wordsworth affirms, the language of many sections of good poems differs in no way from that of prose, apart from the question of metre:

a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good prose. We will go

further. It may be safely affirmed that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. (436)

The difference between poetry and prose, Wordsworth holds, is that prose works with concepts and poetry with emotions. But this is not a difference in language, he says. The only clear difference in language is meter, and even that is not so clear, if we take into account the rhythm of some kinds of prose.

Then, why use verse at all? Wordsworth says that it is a means to contain and refrain passion by means of a mechanical regularity. But then he contradicts himself doubly when he not only admits later on that meter intensifies, rather than diminish emotion, and that metre works through continual and regular impulses of surprise . Coleridge will

give a better account of how regularity and surprise can be produced at the same time.

1815 Preface: Poetic Imagination:

As we have seen, the Romantics stress the expressive and subjective aspects of literary creation. Already in Wordsworth's 1800 preface, the emphasis had fallen on the relationship between the poet and the poem, on the problem of composition, creation, imagination. Emotion, imagination, expression, sincerity, and imagination are among the chief concerns of all other English romantic poets and theorizers of Romanticism (such as Coleridge, Shelley, Blake, Hazlitt, Keats, Mill, Carlyle, Arnold). The German romantics had considered the poetic imagination as the human faculty which is in immediate contact with truth: truth is now a question of feeling, and no longer a question of logic. Already in Wordsworth we find a new valuation of the imagination, and a

care to distinguish it from lower faculties of the human spirit. The best known is the antithesis between imagination and fancy. During the 17th and 18th centuries both terms had been rough synonyms, although in some psychological theories (such as Hobbes' in Leviathan) "imagination" was used for the soberly literal and non-creative settlement of impressions in memory. In spite of this modest claim, imagination held its ground of respectability during the reaction against rhetoric, while fancy, associated with "wit," with fortuitous, non-essential and cold establishment of (false) associations. Following this tradition, William Taylor (British Synonyms Discriminated, 1813) defined fancy as a dynamic faculty, as the power of combining and evoking sensations, while imagination is a lower, static faculty. Wordsworth criticised these definitions in his 1815 preface. He oposes Taylor's sensationalist definition of imagination, defining it in the

German way, as a dynamic, creative faculty. Indeed, for Wordsworth, even fancy is creative in a limited way:

> Fancy does not require that the materials which she makes use of should be susceptible of change in their constitution, from her touch; and, where they admit of modification, it is enough for her purpose if it be slight, limited and evanescent . . . .
>
> The law under which the processes of Fancy are carried on is as capricious as the accidents of things, and the effects are surprising, playful, ludicrous, amusing, tender or pathetic, as the objects happen to be appositely produced or fortuitously combined. Fancy depends upon the rapidity and profusion with which she scatters her thoughts and images; trusting that their number, and the felicity with which they are linked together, will make amends for the want of individual value: or she prides herself upon the curious subtility and the

successful elaboration with which she can detect their lurking affinities.

Finding a witty pun could serve as a typical operation of fancy. Imagination, however, is a higher and more fundamentally active faculty: it does not deal with fortuitous affinities, but with the essential relationships between objects, their underlying unity. This unity which is not perceived by discursive reasoning, but rather by feeling; imagination is a subjective re-fashioning of appearance:

[the Imagination] draws all things to one . . . . it makes things animate or inanimate, beings with their attributes, subjects with their accesories, take one one colour and serve to one effect.

[the Imagination] recoils from everything but the plastic, the pliant, and the indefinite . . . . When the Imagination frames a comparison . . . a sense of the truth of

the likeness, from the moment that it is perceived, grows-and continues to grow- upon the mind; the resemblance depending less upon outline of form and feature, than upon expression and effect; less upon casual and outstanding, than upon inherent and internal, properties: moreover, the images invariably modify each other . . . . the Imagination is conscious of an indestructible dominion; æthe Soul may fall away from it, not being able to sustain its grandeur; but, if once felt and acknowledged, by no act of any other faculty of the mind can it be relaxed, impaired, or diminished.

The poetic symbol, instead of the pun, could be the emblem of the imaginative faculty: it belongs to a higher order of creation. In Wordsworth's great ode, "Intimations of Immortality," a child is compared to a running brook and set against the images of lambs playing on a field. The relationship between both is essential, and not accidental, because the child participates in the unity of nature in the

same way as the brook and the lambs, while the narrator-observer is estranged from this scene and can only approach it as the subject of poetry, at a higher level of consciousness.

The concern for imagination is in the case of Wordsworth a German heritage, coming through Coleridge. However, Coleridge did not agree with Wordsworth's definition of the imagination, and would eventually refute it, drawing a sharper distinction between imagination and fancy, which according to Wordsworth had some common characteristics: "To aggregate and to associate, to evoke and to combine, belong as well to the Imagination as to the Fancy."

Neoclassical "imagination", even in its most comprehensive definitions, is fancy for Wordsworth and Coleridge. Fancy forms casual and fleeting combinations of memories already stored: so, it deals with concepts, not with actual experiences of things. Imagination, on the other hand,

acts directly on experience, giving unity to objects, abstracting or adding properties to them. So, the whole 18th-century interpretation of these terms has been displaced:

Wordsworth's definition of imagination would also be found insufficient by Coleridge on other account. Wordsworth explicitly links imagination only to "gratification," and not to values. But a moral view of imagination is implicit in his poems and in his discussion. The poet does not teach any definite concepts, but he conveys immediate intuitions of nature, which are even more valuable. "The poet thinks, and feels, in the language of human passions" (1800 Preface, 440). This conception we may link to Hazlitt's and John Stuart Mill's observations on poetic imagination. Poetry may not teach us how to think, but it teaches us how to feel. The emotions conveyed by poetry are "of such a nature, and in such a connection, that the understanding of the reader must

be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified" (1800 Preface, 435).

Poetry adheres to that knowledge which is common to all men, it deals with the sympathies essential to human nature: love, fidelity, nostalgia, etc. "And thus the poet . . . converses with general nature" (1800 Preface, 439). Poetry thus contributes to rescue man from the drabness of the modern world, in which a blunting of the mind and feelings seems inevitable. But then Wordsworth indulges in romantic imperialistic claims and declares poetry the most embracing and discriminating knowledge, as anything can be the object of poetry.

Poetry had been defined by Wordsworth in 1800 in this way : "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings ; it takes its origin form emotion recollected in tranquillity" (441). But the poet does not simply pour out

emotion: both memory and contemplation come into play. And the poet has had a long training on how to feel before he can be able to convey valuable emotions. These feelings do not come from an ordinary person: the poet has a superior sensibility, and has cultivated it through long and deep thought, creating some habits of mind which, followed "blindly and mechanically," produce descriptions of sentiments. The poet is more capable than the average of seeing difference in similarity, and similarity in difference, a cognitive ability on which our taste and moral feelings depend. The poet has the ability to conjure up passions in himself and to express them.

Nevertheless, in spite of all these cognitive elements, the emphasis is on the subjective emotion. The value of the poem is no longer measured with the Aristotelian norm, the succesful shaping of an action. This action, if indeed it is present, is rather a means to convey the poet's emotion.

Both Wordsworth and Coleridge conceive of poetic experience as an active response of the mind to personal perception and experience (more active, though, in Coleridge's account than in Wordsworth's). The observer does not merely record what he sees: he transfigures it when moved. In this way, perceiving with emotion, he may disclose the immanent beauty of things which escapes ordinary perception. These ideas are still influential in our century. They may be linked to the concept of "defamilirization" pur forward by the Russian Formalists, or to Wallace Stevens's conception of poetry as the sense that we can feel reality in itself, not dissolved in the conceptions of our own minds. But Wordsworth's conception is less intellectual, more emotive and sentimental. Through feeling, Wordsworth argues, we sense a unity in nature and a sense in experience, which had been dissolved by reason and the analytic faculty of the human mind.

Poetry, which has been the work of feeling, must be judged by feeling alone. Wordsworth forgets his proposal of an objective foundation of taste and asks the reader to judge his poems according to his personal reaction, and not according to the prejudice of others. This appeal to individual feeling against the criterion of authority is also highly romantic.

Thomas Love Peacock (1785-1866)

Peacock and Shelley are the spokesmen for two opposed attitudes towards poetry; they were friends to each other, but their views on literature were radically opposed. Peacock spoke against poetry and Shelley defended poetry. Arguments of this kind appear again and again during the 19th century.

Peacock's arguments derive from those used since the late 17th by such people as Sprat, Fontenelle, Diderot; he is a sympathizer of Neoclassicism, and an upholder of the ideals of the 18th-century Illustration, which in the 19th century derives towards a reverence for science and an optimistic confidence in the power of mankind to get rid of superstition.

In England, these views are upheld most explicitly by Utilitarian thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham or James Mill. Bentham declared that art was completely useless and

superfluous, and had no place in a well organized society, where all effort should be directed to the happiness of the greatest number of people. He puts forward the Platonic argument that art is pernicious to society because it feeds the passions and prejudices. His insensitivity towards literature was absoluteæhe defined poetry as that kind of writing where the lines do not run till the end of the page. But these attitudes are not restricted to Utilitarians. Lord Macaulay, an important essayist and historian, declared that a certain "unsoundess of mind" was necessary for the cultivation of poetry, and Hazlitt observed that art regresses as civilization advances.

This idea is the starting point for Peacock's main critical work, a short essay entitled "The Four Ages of Poetry" (1820)," the most sustained account of the conflict beween poetry and science as it stood in the age of the Romantic poets" (Wimsatt and Brooks 416). Peacock opposed romantic poetry. The decline of poetry is inevitably linked to the

progress of mankind: poetry has now become obsolete. It belongs to a past age, it is not of the present. Peacock presents us with "a superficially cyclic account ofthe history of culture and poetry, and springing out of that a triumphantly unfair assault on contemporary English poetry" (Wimsatt and Brooks 416).

Peacock's theory of the four ages of poetry is modelled as a variation of the classical topos of the ages of the world: "Poetry, like the world, may be said to have four ages, but in a different order; the first age of poetry being the age of iron; the second, of gold; the third, of silver, and the fourth, of brass" (491). Along these four ages, we can witness the gradual withdrawal of poetry from the realm of fact first, and then of thought.

The age of iron is a savage age of warriors and superstition, a savage age where poetry is the only kind of

intellectual activity. Not that it is eminently refined: it is merely propaganda for the deeds of the savage chieftains.

The golden age sees the rise of kingdoms, social institutions; it is more settled, and tends to reminisce the deeds of the iron age. It is an age which glories in its ancestors. The truly great poets, like Homer or Aeschylus, belong to this age; their poetry is rough, energetic and inclusive. Poetry is still the greatest intellectual achievement: science and philosophy have not been developed yet. But, Peacock observes, "with the progress of reason and civilization, facts become more interesting than fiction: indeed this maturity of poetry may be considered the infancy of history" (492). Moral and cognitive aims begin to prevail over mythology, and soon the sciences are born: it is the end of the golden age.

The silver age is the age of civilized life. The Romans, the neoclassicals, are the perfect examples of a silver age.

Poetry is less original than that of the golden age: it tends to take that poetry as its model, at least as far as serious genres are concerned. Virgil imitates Homer, and the originality of the silver age is restricted to the minor or comical genres. It is an age of refinement and selection; perfection is more appreciated than variety, and this often results in monotony. Poetry has limited its range, and tends towards the commonplace. History, morals, philosophy, all sciences attain a high development; their findings are too specialised to afford a subject for poetry; poetry ceases to be an instrument of knowledge, it cannot follow the development of these sciences. "Good sense and elegant learning, conveyed in polished and somewhat monotonous verse, are the perfection of the original and imitative poetry of civilized life . . . . It is now evident that poetry must either cease to be cultivated, or strike into a new path" (493).

The age of brass wants to restore the original strength of purity by a deliberate return to primitivism. It wants to become the second childhood of poetry: it tries to revive the golden age and the intimacy with nature, but to no avail. It lacks energy, and instead of the great epics of the golden age, we have a verbose and minutely detailed description of thoughts, passions, actions, persons and things, in that loose rambling style of verse, which anyone may write, stans pede in uno, at the rate of two hundred lines in an hour. (495).

Peacock's primary aim in writing his essay is a satirical one, and "the clichés of Romanticism do not escape him unscathed" (Adams 490). Peacock parodies the poetry of Wordsworth: he believes that Wordsworth's primitivistic ideals are a hoax and a perversion of the intellect; it is a false return to nature that Wordsworth effects. In fact, all modern poets are the same:

While the historian and the philosopher are advancing in, and accelerating the progress of knowledge, the poet is wallowing in the rubbish of departed ignorance, and raking up the ashes of dead savages to find gewgaws and rattles for the grown babies of the age . . . . A poet in our times is a semibarbarian in a civilized community. (496).

Vico and the German romantics had already established the relationship between the poet, the child and the savage, but in an entirely different spirit: the poet's function is to refreshen, to revitalize by opposing his creative feeling to the reason of the modern world. Not so for Peacock: the poet works through feeling and not reason, all right, but then Peacock does not regard this as a commendation. In his view, "the highest inspirations of poetry are resolvable into three ingredients: the rant of unregulated passion, the whining of exaggerated feeling, and the cant of facticious sentiment" (496). Peacock does not seem to fear the dehumanization of

the modern world through reason. Poetry may be ornamental and even pleasurable, but it is in no way useful or beneficial. It only survives thanks to the favour of the mass of uneducated people, who yield to every easy sentiment. The really learned men do no longer care about poetry:

intellectual power and intellectual acquisition have turned themselves on other and better channels, and have abandoned the cultivation and fate of poetry to the degenerate fry of modern rhymesters, and their Olympic judges, the magazine critics (497).

Peacock's faith in the benefits of progress and the new scientific spirit is little qualified. "The romantic theorist could, of course, retort that the poet's 'primitivism' provides a necessary opposition to rationalism run rampant" (Adams 490).

There is a certain contradiction in Peacock's idea of the four ages. On the one hand, he is confident that the age of poetry is well past; on the other he acknowledges that there have been two complete cycles, and that he is living (we are living) in the second brass age. There was one complete cycle starting with the Greeks and ending with the late Roman empire, and another one starting with the Middle Ages and ending now. But Peacock does not seem to believe that a new age of iron is imminent. That is, he seems to be supporting both a linear and a cyclical conception of history. This ambigous attitude towards history is also to be found in Dryden and later neoclassicals.

Peacock's essay also represent the immediate link between the Classical doctrine of the four ages of mankind (golden, silver, iron, and bronze), the Viconian ideas about myth and metaphor and the positivist doctrine, soon to be advanced by Comte, of the three ages of mankind (theological,

metaphysical, scientific). Like Comte, Peacock rejoices in the disappearance of the mists of the past and the oncoming of a rational future for mankind. The most curious thing about it all is that Peacock was a novelist and poet himself; but then his attitude as a writer is constantly ironic, cynical and contradictory.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

Shelley is the most accomplished instance of the second generation of Romantic poets, leading a scandalous life and adhering to any suspicious doctrine he found, from atheism to political revolution or vegetarianism. He wrote A Defense of Poetry (1821)

On the model of Sidney's Apology (also called The Defence of Poesy), as an answer to Peacock and to all the scientist movement which disparaged poetry. Poetry reveals the order and beauty of the universe. "Shelley's Defense of

Poetry makes perhaps greater claims for the poet than anyone had ever dared" (Adams 490). In this work, "strains of 18th-century primitivism mingle throughout with a Germanically-colored romantic excitement about the immediately spiritual and morally plastic power of the poet" (Wimsatt and Brooks 419).

"Beginning with the familiar Romantic distinction between imagination (synthesis) and reason (analysis), Shelley proceeds to attribute to the products of imagination immense spiritual and cultural powers" (Adams 490). To start with, reason is merely contemplative, while imagination is creative: "Reason respects the differences, and imagination the similitudes of things. Reason is to the imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance" (499). Poetry he defines as "the expression of the imagination" (490); it was born when man was born. Man has in him this creative principle, or rather,

this ability to tune up with the universe, but it is present in the poet in a greater degree (cf. Coleridge, Sidney). The poet is "more delicately organized than other men" (512; cf. Coleridge, Richards). Poetry is not a question of the will, but of inspiration. Shelley believes in inspiration: the poet's activity is the manifestation of some hidden cosmic creative force. He uses Plato's image of the magnetised rings and Coleridge's image of the aeolian harp to express this. Indeed, the real poetry is not that which we can find in the poem; it is rather the very experience or inspired trance of the poet: "when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet" (511). So, Shelley's definition of poetry is not formalist or textual; it is based on the experience of the poet, not on characteristics of the text or

the experience of the reader: "Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds."

Poetry immortalizes the best of man. "Poetry redeems from decay the visitation of the divinity in man" (512). It is to be noted that the poet experiences his vision in some degree, but he is also instrumental to it: poetry goes far beyond the poet, as we can gather from the enthusiastic eulogy of the poet which concludes the Defense , and which is in the best "divine madman" tradition :

Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which ring to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. (513)

So, the poet is something like the unconscious voice of nature; a poetical formulation of this doctrine can be found in Shelley's Ode to the West Wind, which is a kind of "romantic Ars poetica " (Wimsatt and Brooks).

The poet also sows the seeds of social revolution. In ancient times he was a legislator and a prophet; and even now, the poet sees the future in the present and understands the the spirit of events, sees more profoundly than his contemporaries. At times, Shelley seems to believe seriously that all original thought has to be expressed in metre; and for him, Shakespeare or Milton are among the greatest of philosophers. A poet delights, instructs and moves: but this he does not do in a purposive way. Poetry is not a kind of discourse directed towards the public; rather, the poet sings in solitude, and is overheard by other men (cf. Mill). And poetry is not, as Peacock (and Plato) seems to suppose, identical in end with history or science, only more imperfect. The real

value of a poem is not in the portrayal of particular things, but in the poetical quality which idealizes them. This poetical quality may appear in the whole poem, in a part, or even in a word. And the external form used to convey this quality may be rude, barbarous or immoral: but this does not affect the nature of the poetry. Poetry has a quality of its own: it is not a mirror of reality, like history; rather, it is a beautifying mirror: through poetry, we see the infinite in the finite. "A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite and the one; as far as relates to his conception, time and place and number are not" (500). Poetry does not teach in the same way as science: "poetry acts in another and diviner way. It awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thoughts." The poet provides men with the creative faculty to imagine that which they already know conceptually (cf. Sidney's "moving").

The functions of the poetical faculty are twofold ; by one it creates new materials of knowledge and power and pleasure; by the other it engenders in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them according to a certain rhythm and order which may be called the beautiful and the good. (510).

The creative activity of the poet is manifested in his work on language. The poet is the maker of language: "he helps remake the world by reconstructing the form through which we see it." The life of language springs from the perception of relationships between things , from metaphor. Shelley combines remarkably Vico's and Sidney's views when he says that "in the infancy of society every author is necessarily a poet, because language itself is poetry" (500). But metaphors die after a certain time, the relationship ceases to be perceived and language becomes disorganized, "and then , if no poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized, language will be dead to

all the nobler purposes of human intercourse" (500). Poetry makes us perceive the world anew by making us feel what we perceive; it removes "the film of familiarity from experience; "It recreates the universe, after it has been annihilated in out minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration."

Shelley offers a number of other definitions of poetry and poetic creation that are vague and Romantically all-inclusive . . . . Almost anyone who expresses a profound thought is classifiable as a poet under one or another of his definitions . It would seem that poetry is an activity of which a poem is but one of many possible products. (Adams 490)

He is not sure whether he wants to give to all artists the name of poets, or to claim that poets invented all the other arts; this is plausible, he says, because language, the material of poetry, is nearer to us than the materials of other arts;

language is a kind of arbitrary outpouring of human imagination. Indeed, he sees poetry as the source of all invention, a kind of all-inclusive knowledge, the closest human analogue to real creation. Here we find the essential difference between Shelley's defense and that of Sidney:

Sidney in all his talking about the teaching and persuading power of poetry would never dream that poetry was teaching or persuading any doctrine which it did not discover in some legislative competent authority outside itself, either Scriptural revelation or ethical philosophy. With Shelley just the opposite is true. (Wimsatt and Brooks 422-423)

Admittedly, he pushes this argument too far. Shelley is at his best on his remarks on poetry as a language-creating activity which makes us see the world anew. Shelley's Defense is remarkable by its enthusiastic synthesis of many Romantic positions; on the whole it is both extreme and not

radically original, but its faith and its imagery make it a forceful statement of the Romantic view of poetry.

Victorian Criticism

Victorian critical theory reflected the ideological upheaval that was present within society as a whole. New advances in empirical sciences such as biology and geology gave rise to questions about the nature of reality and previous ideas about religion and truth were called into question. Increased overcrowding, poverty, and disease, in addition to a climate of materialism and mechanization resulted in a generalized cultural feeling of anxiety. Given this milieu, the proper function of literature and of criticism became a subject of widespread debate.

Critics of the day examined literature in relationship to other modes of discourse, such as science, religion, and art. According to Alba H. Warren, Jr., the post-Romantic critics "recognized few common aims." Terry Eagleton explains that Victorian literary critics were conflicted with respect to their

role in the culture of the time, stating that “either criticism strives to justify itself at the bar of public opinion by maintaining a general humanistic responsibility for the culture as a whole, the amateurism of which will prove increasingly incapacitating as bourgeois society develops; or it converts itself into a species of technological expertise, thereby establishing its professional legitimacy at the cost of renouncing any wider social relevance.”

Matthew Arnold, perhaps the most influential critic of the Victorian era, saw cultural expressions such as art and literature as having an important impact on the overall well-being of society. He felt that great literature conveyed deep and everlasting truths about the human condition. These works, combined with detached, objective criticism, would naturally move culture toward intellectual, moral and spiritual perfection. Arnold also attempted to address societal anxieties regarding new science and the threat to religion by proposing

that people look to poetry for inspiration and as a buffer of sorts from bleak reality.

In the view of Patrick Parrinder, it was Arnold who “bore the brunt of propagandizing for literary culture in the Victorian age. He saw literature as embodying the spiritual life of modern society and taking over the edifying and consoling functions of religion.” T. S. Eliot, however, claims that Arnold's work as a critic is weakened by his “conjuring trick” whereby he considered poetry as substitute for both religion and philosophy. Eliot posits that Arnold's reputation as a literary critic is overblown and unsubstantial, a viewpoint that Lionel Trilling challenges in his essay, “The Spirit of Criticism.”

Later in the century, in contrast to previous concerns with science, culture, and religion, came the development of the Aesthetic Movement with its credo of “Art for Art's Sake.”

The movement centered on Walter Pater's Preface to Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873), which was written after a trip to Italy where Pater became quite impressed with the vitality and sensuality of Italian culture and Renaissance art. The Aesthetic Movement pivoted on the belief that, since the absolutes of religion and morality were rendered relative and mutable, the purpose of life had necessarily changed as well. Pater wrote that, since life was so short, it was imperative to seek, "not the fruit of experience, but experience itself." According to the Aesthetes, to be truly alive was to be immersed in "ecstatic experience," with free enjoyment being the supreme priority and "beauty" a central focus. Aesthetic critics became concerned with seeking and identifying beauty, not as an absolute, but as a "relative, ever-changing" quality. Albert J. Farmer claims that "the aim of the aesthetic critic should be, therefore, to find, not some inadequate universal formula, but the formula which expresses beauty in this or that

individual case, under these or those particular circumstances."

Other notable Aesthetes included Algernon Charles Swinburne and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Critic Parrinder acknowledges that the doctrine of art for art's sake had appeared earlier in the nineteenth century, but that "it was not until the time of Pater and Swinburne that aestheticism emerged as a coherent force in England." Although several modern critics align Swinburne with aestheticism, Clyde K. Hyder suggests that Swinburne's position is not quite that simple. "Though Swinburne emphasized aesthetic criteria in judging literature," Hyder comments, "it is an error to suppose that he disregarded moral standards or historic considerations." Swinburne is also known for popularizing poets and novelists that other critics had dismissed. "Who among English critics has done so much to awaken interest in so many different authors?" asks Hyder, crediting him with

recognizing the value of William Blake, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Lord Byron, Robert Browning, and Charles Dickens well in advance of most other scholars and critics. Even Eliot, while categorizing Swinburne as an "imperfect critic," acknowledged that "he was sufficiently interested in his subject-matter and knew quite enough about it; and this is a rare combination in English criticism."

In addition to Arnold, Pater and Swinburne, there were a number of other scholars who contributed to critical thought during the Victorian period. According to René Wellek, George Henry Lewes was the first to promote the use of realism in a novel. Lewes believed that all art should closely reflect reality, although Wellek points out that he did not insist on literal portrayals and, in fact, disliked what he called "detailism." Instead, he advocated that the purpose of the artist was to obtain "the necessary coherence of reality," while allowing for artistic license.

In the 1840s, John Ruskin published Modern Painters. Although the book was primarily a criticism of visual art, Ruskin's theory on imagination is widely considered one of the more important critical developments for literary criticism as well. It is described by Alba H. Warren, Jr. as, "a theory of a penetrative function by which the imagination seizes the object in its very core of reality and meaning." With the publication of The Gay Science (1866), Eneas Sweetland Dallas posited his own ambitious theory on imagination. He claimed that real imagination occurs through the unconscious and that a poet who possesses this gift will display it in his work. To this end, Dallas attempted a scientific approach to poetry, creating classifications of "genres in a triadic scheme." Wellek writes, "Oddly enough, the scheme overlays a highly irrationalistic psychology that locates the origin of art in the unconscious or the 'hidden soul.' The incongruous mixture of psychology of the unconscious with insistently symmetrical

schematization makes Dallas' books piquant dishes not to be missed by connoisseurs of the history of criticism.”

Appendix 1

LITERARY CRITICISM

What's a Literary Theory?

In literary criticism, a **theory** is the specific method, approach, or viewpoint a critic or reader has staked out from which he or she interprets, analyzes, and evaluates works of literature – and often the world.

There are numerous literary theories. Some you may find useful, some not so useful. That‟s for you to judge. But you should learn how each theory or approach works before you make your final judgment.

Here are the essential questions when looking at literary theories:

What are some of the many different ways a reader can approach a book? How does each work? What are the benefits

and limitations of each literary lens? Which critical theories make sense and seem useful to you? Which don‟t? Why?

Types of literary Criticism

a. Theoretical criticism proposes an explicit **theory** of literature, in sense of general principles, together with a set of terms, distinctions, and categories, to be applied to identifying and analyzing works of literature, as well as the **criteria** (The standards, or norms) by which these works and their writers are to be evaluated. The earliest, and enduringly important, treatise of theoretical criticism was Aristotle‟s **Poetics** (fourth century B.C.).

b. Practical criticism or **applied criticism**, concerns itself with the discussion of particular works and writers; in an applied critique, the theoretical principles controlling the mode of the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation are often left implicit, or brought in only as the occasion demands.

Among the more influential works of applied criticism in England and America are the literary essays of Dryden in the **Restoration**; Dr. Johnson‟s **Lives of the English Poets** (1779-81); Coleridge‟s chapters on the poetry of Wordsworth in **Biographia Literaria** (1817) and his lectures on Shakespeare; William Hazlitt‟s lectures on Shakespeare and the English poets and so on.

c. Impressionistic criticism attempts to represent in words the felt qualities of a particular passage or work, and to express the responses (the “impression”) that the work directly evokes from the critic. As William Hazlitt put it in his essay “On Genius and Common Sense” (1824): “you decide from feeling, and not from reason; that is, from the impression of a number of things on the mind … though you may not be able to analyze or account for it in the several particulars.” And Walter Pater later said that in criticism “the first step toward seeing one‟s object as it really is, is to know one‟s own

impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly," and posed as the basic question, "What is thing song or picture … to **/me**? (Preface to **Studies in the History of the Renaissance**, 1873). As its extreme this mode of criticism becomes, in Anatole Franc‟s phrase, "the adventures of a sensitive soul among masterpieces.")

d. Judicial criticism, on the other hand, attempts not merely to communicate, but to analyze and explain the effects of a work by reference to its subject, organization, techniques, and style, and to base the critic‟s individual judgments on specified criteria of literary excellence.

7. Types of Traditional Critical Theories and Applied Criticism

a. Mimetic criticism views the literary work as an imitation, or reflection, or representation of the world and human life,

and the primary criterion applied to a work is the “truth” and “adequacy” of its representation to the matter that it represents, or should represent. This mode of criticism, which first appeared in Plato and (in a qualified way) in Aristotle, remains characteristic of modern theories of literary realism.

b. **Pragmatic criticism** views the work as something which is constructed in order to achieve certain effects on the audience (effects such as aesthetic pleasure, instruction, or kinds of emotion), and it tends to judge the value of the work according to its successes in achieving that aim. This approach, which largely dominated literary discussion from the versified **Art of Poetry** by the Roman Horace (first century B.C.) through the eighteenth century, has been revived in recent **rhetorical criticism**, which emphasizes the artistic strategies by which an author engages and influences the responses of readers to the matters represented in a literary work. The pragmatic approach has also been adopted by some

structuralists who analyze a literary text as a systematic play of codes that effect the interpretative responses of a reader.

c. **Expressive criticism** treats a literary work primarily in relation to its author. It defines as an expression, or overflow, or utterance of feelings, or as the product of the poet‟s imagination operating on his or her perceptions, thoughts, and feelings; it tends to judge the work by its sincerity, or its adequacy to the poet‟s individual vision or state of mind; and it often seeks in the work evidences of the particular temperament and experiences of the author who, consciously or unconsciously has revealed himself or herself in it. such views were developed mainly by romantic critics in the early nineteenth century and remain current in our own time, especially in the writings of **Psychological and Psychoanalytic critics** and in **critics of consciousness** such as Poulet and the Geneva School.

d. **Objective criticism** deals with a work of literature as something which stands free from what is often called an "extrinsic" relationship to the poet, or to the audience, or to the environing world. Instead it describes the literary product as a self-sufficient and autonomous object, or else as a world-in-itself, which is to be contemplated as its own end, and to be analyzed and judged solely by "intrinsic" criteria such as its complexity, coherence, equilibrium, integrity, and the interrelations of its component elements. The conception of the self-sufficiency of an aesthetic object was proposed in Kant‟s **Critique of Aesthetic Judgment** (1790) was taken up by proponents of **art for art's sake** in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and has been elaborated in detailed modes of applied criticism by a number of important critics since the 1920s, including the **New Critics**, the **Chicago School**, and proponents of European **formalism**.

8. Six Approaches to Literature.

1. Historical / Biograph

1. Historical / Biographical Approach

Historical / Biographical critics see works as the reflection of an author‟s life and times (or of the characters „life and times). H/B approach deems it necessary to know about the author and the political, economical, and sociological context of his times in order to truly understand the work (s).

Advantages: This approach works well for some works - - like those of Alexander Pope, John Dryden, and Milton - - which are obviously political in nature. It also is necessary to take a historical approach in order to place allusions in their proper classical, political, or biblical background.

Disadvantages: New Critics refer to the historical/ biographical critic‟s belief that the meaning or value of a

work may be determined by the author‟s intention as “the intentional fallacy.” Thus, art is reduced to the level of biography rather than universal.

2. Moral /Philosophical Approach

Moral / Philosophical critics believe that the larger purpose of literature is to teach morality and to probe philosophical issues. Practitioners include Mattew Arnold (works must have “high seriousness”), Plato (literature must exhibit moralism and utilitarianism), and Horace (literature should be “delightful and instructive”).

Advantages: This approach is useful for such works as Alexander Pope‟s “An Essay on Man,” which presents an obvious moral philosophy. It is also useful when considering thethemes of works (for example, man‟s inhumanity to man in Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn). Finally, it does not view

literature merely as “art” isolated from all moral implications; it recognizes that literature can affect readers, whether subtly or directly, and that the message of a work- - and not just the decorous vehicle for that message - - is important.

Disadvantages: Detractors argue that such an approach can be to “judgmental.” Some believe literature should be judged primarily (if not solely) on its artistic merits, not its moral or philosophical content.

3. Formalism / New criticism

A formalistic approach to literature, once called **New Criticism** involves a **close reading of the text**. Formalistic critics believe that all information essential to the interpretation of a work must be found within the work itself; there is no need to bring in outside information about the history, politics, or society of the time, or about the author‟s life. Formalistic critics spend much time analyzing irony, paradox, imagery, and metaphor. They are also interested in

the work‟s setting, characters, symbols, and point of view.

Terms used in New Criticism:

 Tension – the integral unity of the poem which results from the resolution of opposites, often in irony or paradox

 Intentional Fallacy – the belief that the meaning or value of a work may be determined by the author‟s intention

 Affective fallacy – the belief that the meaning or value of a work may be determined by its affect on the reader

 External form – rhyme scheme, meter, stanza form, etc.

 Objective correlative – originated by T.S. Eliot, this term refers to a collection of objects, situations, or events that instantly evoke a particular emotion.

Advantages: this approach can be performed without much research, and it emphasizes the value of literature apart from its context (in effect makes literature timeless). **Virtually all critical approaches must begin here**. **Disadvantages:** The

text is seen in isolation. Formalism ignores the context of the work. It cannot account for allusions. It tends to reduce literature to little more than a collection of rhetorical devices.

4. Psychological Approach

Psychological critics view works through the lens of psychology. They look either at the psychological motivations of the characters or of the authors themselves, although the former is generally considered a more respectable approach: most frequently, Freudian and/or Jungian (archetypes) psychology to works.

5. Mythological/Archetypal

A mythological/archetypal approach to literature assumes that there is a collection of symbols, images, characters, and motifs (i.e., **archetypes**) that evokes a similar response in all people. According to the psychologist Carl Jung, mankind possesses a

“collective unconscious” (a cosmic reservoir of human experience) that contains these archetypes and that is common to all of humanity. Myth critics identify these archetypal patterns and discuss how they function in the works. They believe that these archetypes are the source of much of literature‟s power.

Advantages: Provides a universalistic approach to literature and identifies a reason why certain literature may survive the test of time. It works well with works that are highly symbolic.

Disadvantages: literature may become little more than a vehicle for archetypes, and this approach may ignore the “art” of literature.

6. Feminist Approach

Feminist criticism is concerned with the impact of gender on writing and reading. It usually begins with a critique of patriarchal culture. It is concerned with the place of female

writers in the cannon. Finally, it includes a search for a feminine theory or approach to texts. Feminist criticism is political and often revisionist. Feminists often argue that male fearsare portrayed through female characters. They may argue that gender determines every-thing, or just the opposite: that all gender differences are imposed by society, and gender determines nothing. **Elaine Showalter's Theory** In A literature of Their Own, Elaine Showalter argued that literary subcultures all go through major phases of development. For literature by or about women, she labels these stages the Feminine, Feminist, and Female:

 Feminine Stage - - involves "imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition" and "internalization of its standards."

 Feminist Stage - - involves "protest against these standards and values and advocacy of minority rights …."

 Female Stage - - this is the “phase of self-discovery, a turning inwards freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity.”

Advantages: Women have been underrepresented in the traditional cannon, and a feminist approach to literature attempts to redress this problem.

Disadvantages: Feminists turn literary criticism into a political battlefield and overlook the merits of works they consider “patriarchal.” When arguing for a distinct feminine writing style, they tend to neglect women's literature to a ghetto status; this in turn prevents female literature from being naturally included in the literary cannon. The feminist approach is often too theoretical.

9. Conclusion

Literary criticism does not require that we all agree about what a work of literature means, how it works, or whether it‟s

effective. We don‟t even have to agree with any expert‟s judgment. We have only two obligations when we assert our opinions. First, we are obligated to explain as clearly as possible the reasons behind our ideas and back them up with evidence from the actual text we're discussing. Second, we are obligated to listen respectfully to critics‟ ideas in the hope that we can learn from learning how others respond to works of literature.

Appendix 2

Neo classical Criticism:

Neoclassicism refers to a broad tendency in literature and art enduring from the early seventeenth century until around 1750. While the nature of this tendency inevitably varied across different cultures, it was usually marked by a number of common concerns and characteristics. Most fundamentally, neoclassicism comprised a return to the classical models, literary styles, and values of ancient Greek and Roman authors. In this, the neoclassicists were to some extent heirs of the Renaissance humanists. But many of them reacted sharply against what they perceived to be the stylistic excess, superfluous ornamentation, and linguistic over sophistication of some Renaissance writers; they also rejected the lavishness of the Gothic and Baroque styles.

Many major medieval and Renaissance writers, including Dante, Ariosto, More, Spenser, and Milton, had peopled their writings with fantastic and mythical beings. Authors such as Giraldi had attempted to justify the genre of the romance and the use of the "marvelous" and unreal elements. Sidney and others had even proposed, in an idealizing Neo-Platonist strain, that the poet's task was to create an ideal world, superior to the world of nature. The neoclassicists, reacting against this idealistic tendency in Renaissance poetics, might be thought of as heirs to the other major tendency in Renaissance poetics, which was Aristotelian. This latter impetus had been expressed in the work of Minturno, Scaliger, and Castelvetro, who all wrote commentaries on Aristotle's *Poetics* and stressed the Aristotelian notion of probability, as well as the "unities" of action, time, and place.

However, whereas many Renaissance poets had labored toward an individualism of outlook, even as they appropriated elements of the classical canon, the neoclassicists in general were less ambiguous in their emphasis upon the classical values of objectivity, impersonality, rationality, decorum, balance, harmony, proportion, and moderation. Whereas many Renaissance poets were beginning to understand profoundly the importance of invention and creativity, the neoclassical writers reaffirmed literary composition as a rational and rule-bound process, requiring a great deal of craft, labor, and study. Where Renaissance theorists and poets were advocating new and mixed genres, the neoclassicists tended to insist on the separation of poetry and prose, the purity of each genre, and the hierarchy of genres (though, unlike Aristotle, they generally placed the epic above tragedy). The typical verse forms of the neoclassical poets were the alexandrine in France and the heroic couplet in England. Much neoclassical thought

was marked by a recognition of human finitude, in contrast with the humanists' (and, later, the Romantics') assertion of almost limitless human potential.

Two of the concepts central to neoclassical literary theory and practice were imitation and nature, which were intimately related. In one sense, the notion of imitation – of the external world, and primarily, of human action – was a reaffirmation of the ideals of objectivity and impersonality, as opposed to the increasingly sophisticated individualism and exploration of subjectivity found in Renaissance writers. But also integral to this notion was imitation of classical models, especially Homer and Vergil. In fact, these two aspects of imitation were often identified, as by Pope. The identification was based largely on the concept of nature. This complex concept had a number of senses. It referred to the harmonious and hierarchical order of the universe, including the various social and political hierarchies within the world. In this vast

scheme of nature, everything had its proper and appointed place. The concept also referred to human nature: to what was central, timeless, and universal in human experience. Hence, "nature" had a deep moral significance, comprehending the modes of action that were permissible and excluding certain actions as "unnatural" (a term often used by Shakespeare to describe the murderous and cunning behavior of characters such as Lady Macbeth). Clearly, the neoclassical vision of nature was very different from the meanings later given to it by the Romantics; this vision inherited something of the medieval view of nature as a providential scheme but, as will emerge shortly, it was informed by more recent scientific views of nature rather than by Aristotelian physics. The neoclassical writers generally saw the ancients such as Homer and Vergil as having already discovered and expressed the fundamental laws of nature. Hence, the external world, including the world of human action, could best be expressed

by modern writers if they followed the path of imitation already paved by the ancients. Invention was of course allowed, but only as a modification of past models, not in the form of a rupture.

Having said all of this, the neoclassicists were by no means devoted to slavish imitation of the classics. La Bruyère indeed thought that the ancients had already expressed everything that was worth saying; and Pope, in one of his more insistent moments, equated following the rules of nature with the imitation of Homer. But Ben Jonson, Corneille, Dryden, and many others were more flexible in their assimilation of classical values. Nearly all of them acknowledged the genius of Shakespeare, some the genius of Milton; Boileau recognized the contribution of an inexplicable element, the *je ne sais quoi*, in great art, and Pope acknowledged that geniuses could attain "a grace beyond the reach of art." Moreover, the neoclassicists attempted to

develop and refine Aristotle's account of the emotions evoked by tragedy in an audience, and an important part of their endeavor to imitate nature consisted in portraying the human passions. There raged at the beginning of the eighteenth century various debates over the relative merits of "ancients" and "moderns." The ancients were held to be the repository of good sense, natural laws, and the classical values of order, balance, and moderation. Such arguments were found in Jonathan Swift's *The Battle of the Books* (1704) and in the writings of Boileau and Pope. Proponents of the "modern" laid stress on originality of form and content, flexibility of genre, and the license to engage in new modes of thought.

The connection of neoclassicism to recent science and what would eventually emerge as some of the core values of the Enlightenment was highly ambivalent and even paradoxical. On the one hand, the neoclassical concept of nature was informed by Newtonian physics, and the universe

was acknowledged to be a vast machine, subject to fixed analyzable laws. On the other hand, the tenor of most neoclassical thought was retrospective and conservative. On the surface, it might seem that the neoclassical writers shared with Enlightenment thinkers a belief in the power of reason. The neoclassicists certainly saw literature as subject to a system of rules, and literary composition as a rational process, subject to the faculty of judgment (Pope uses the word "critic" in its original Greek sense of "judge"). But, while it is true that some neoclassical writers, especially in Germany, were influenced by Descartes and other rationalists, the "reason" to which the neoclassical writers appeal is in general not the individualistic and progressive reason of the Enlightenment (though, as will be seen in a later chapter, Enlightenment reason could from other perspectives be seen as a coercive and oppressive force); rather, it is the "reason" of the classical philosophers, a universal human faculty that provides access

to general truths and which is aware of its own limitations. Alexander Pope and others emphasized the finitude of human reason, cautioning against its arrogant and unrestricted employment. Reason announced itself in neoclassical thought largely in Aristotelian and sometimes Horatian terms: an adherence to the requirements of probability and verisimilitude, as well as to the three unities, and the principle of decorum. But the verisimilitude or likeness to reality here sought after was different from nineteenth-century realism that sought to depict the typical elements and the universal truths about any given situation; it did not operate via an accumulation of empirical detail or a random recording of so-called reality. It was reason in this Aristotelian sense that lay behind the insistence on qualities such as order, restraint, moderation, and balance.

Interestingly, Michael Moriarty has argued that the neoclassical insistence on adherence to a body of rules

embodies an ideological investment which must be understood in terms of broader developments in the literary market. A specifically literary criticism, he urges, began to emerge as a specialized and professional discipline in the seventeenth century, with literature being identified as an autonomous field of study and expertise. Seventeenth-century criticism addressed an expanded readership which it helped to create: this broader public ranged from the aristocracy of the court and the salons to the middle strata of the bourgeoisie. The critical ideology of this public was oriented toward pleasure and to evaluation based on polite "taste." The rise of periodical presses during the second half of the seventeenth century "provided a new channel for discourse about literature addressed to a non-scholarly social elite." But there was a reciprocal interaction: the habits of literary consumption modified critical discourse; for example, despite the epic's high theoretical status, the demands and tastes of an increasing

theater-going public generated far more criticism about drama. Along with these developments, a class of literary men newly emerged from bourgeois backgrounds, the *nouveaux doctes*, specialized in a specifically literary training, and focused on language, rhetoric, and poetics. This mastery enabled them to establish a new, more respectable identity for themselves as men of letters, whereby they could offer polite society the kind of pleasure befitting its dignity. They defined this pleasure in Horatian terms, as necessarily conjoined with instruction; it was a refined pleasure, issuing from a conformity to rules. It was these rules, impersonally and sacredly embodied in ancient authorities such as Aristotle and Horace, and in modern authorities such as the Académie Française, which consecrated the work as a product of art and which legitimated "the poet's status as a purveyor of pleasure" to the dominant groups.

This general tendency of neoclassicism toward order, clarity, and standardization was manifested also in attempts during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to regulate the use of language and the meanings of words. In France, the Académie Française was established for this purpose in 1635, and writers such as François de Malherbe argued that meanings should be stabilized in the interests of linguistic clarity and communication. Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* was published in 1755. The impetus behind these endeavors was reflected in John Locke's theory of language, and his insistence, following Descartes, that philosophy should proceed by defining its terms precisely, using "clear and distinct" ideas and avoiding figurative language. This ideal of clarity, of language as the outward sign of the operations of reason, permeated neoclassical poetry, which was often discursive, argumentative, and aimed to avoid obscurity. This movement toward clarity has been variously theorized as

coinciding with the beginnings of bourgeois hegemony, as reacting against a proliferation of vocabulary and meanings during the Renaissance, and as marking a step further away from a medieval allegorical way of thinking toward an attempted literalization of language.

Ironically, neoclassicism helped prepare the way for its own demise. One avenue toward this self-transcendence of neoclassicism was through the concept of the sublime. The first-century treatise called *On the Sublime*, attributed to "Longinus," had viewed the sublime as a form of emotional transport beyond the rational faculty. Boileau's translation of this text in 1674 was followed by flourishing discussions of the topic in England and Germany, which were often accompanied, as we shall see in chapter 14 on Kant, by an extensive examination of the concept of beauty. In fact, in England, the contrast "between sublimity and correctness had socio-political resonance, since the former was associated

with the English subject's liberty, the latter with both the English and the absolutist French court" (*CHLC*, V.III, 552–553). Another legacy of the neoclassicists was an examination of the notion of "taste" in terms of consensus of qualified people. This notion of consensus prepared the way for an aesthetic oriented toward reader response rather than mere adherence to an abstract body of rules. The following sections will consider some of the major figures of neoclassical literary criticism in the countries where it was most pronounced: France and England.

Neoclassicism in England: Dryden, Pope, Behn, Johnson:

A precursor of neoclassicism in England was Ben Jonson, who drew upon ancient Roman and Renaissance Italian sources and whose recourse to the laws of dramatic form was part of a combative mentality "in the battle to distinguish true poet from false rhymester."4 The main streams of English neoclassical criticism were inspired by (and reacted against) the French example. French influence in England was intensified by the Restoration of 1660, whereby Charles II, exiled in France after the English Civil War, returned with his court to England. Boileau's *Art Poétique* was imported into England through a translation by Dryden. Boileau's influence, however, was most pronounced upon Pope; Dryden himself defended English drama against some of the French critics.

As noted earlier, the France of Louis XIV had embarked upon a neoclassical program of national proportions. While neoclassical criticism in England was not so systematic, many saw the adoption of neoclassical ideals as necessary to produce a stable and ordered political state (*CHLC*, V.III, 549). But Dryden and others decried the servility and enslavement of French critics to the royal court. England had its fair share of stern preceptors: Thomas Rymer was so insistent on adherence to the unities and the principle of probability that he indicted Shakespeare. But others, such as John Dennis, acknowledged that literature must change with varying religion and culture, and even extolled Milton above the ancients. As Joshua Scodel has pointed out, English neoclassicism was in general flexible enough to accommodate within the tradition authors such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton, who "did not fit a rigid classical paradigm." Moreover, classical norms being adapted to

developments in England underwent certain shifts in meaning (*CHLC*, V.III, 543). While Addison too took a dim view of English drama, he anticipated discussions of the imagination, taste, beauty, and the sublime on the part of later writers such as Shaftesbury, whose *Characteristics* (1711) was the first large-scale treatment of aesthetics, Hutcheson, Burke, and Hume. Many of these writers drew upon the philosophical foundations of empiricism and associationism as established by Hobbes and Locke. The classical tendency in England embraced a number of major prose writers who laid the foundations of the modern English novel, such as Daniel Defoe (1660?–1731), Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), and Henry Fielding (1707–1754). As will be seen below, Dryden and Johnson were perhaps the most flexible exponents of neoclassicism in England, attempting to mediate between the merits of ancients and moderns. In general, the critics ranging

from Jonson to Dryden effectively advanced the notion of a viable English literary tradition.

Appendix 3

A Glossary of Literary Criticism

Alazon:

A deceiving or self-deceived character in fiction, normally an object of ridicule in comedy or satire, but often the hero of a tragedy. In comedy he most frequently takes the form of a miles gloriosus or a pedant.

Anagogic:

Relating to literature as a total order of words.

Anatomy:

A form of prose fiction, traditionally known as the Menippean or Varronian satire and represented by Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, characterized by a great variety of subject-matter and a strong interest in ideas. In shorter forms it often has a cena or symposium setting and verse interludes.

Apocalyptic:

The thematic term corresponding to "myth" in fictional literature: metaphor as pure and potentially total identification, without regard to plausibility or ordinary experience.

Archetype:

A symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literary experience as a whole.

Auto:

A form of drama in which the main subject is sacred or sacrosanct legend, such as miracle plays,

solemn and processional in form but not strictly tragic. Name taken from Calderon's Autos sacramentales..

Confession:

Autobiography regarded as a form of prose fiction, or prose fiction cast in the form of autobiography.

Dianoia:

The meaning of a work of literature, which may be the total pattern of its symbols (literal meaning), its correlation with an external body of propositions or facts (descriptive meaning), its theme, or relation as a form of imagery to a potential commentary (formal meaning), its significance as a literary convention or genre (archetypal meaning), or its relation to total literary experience (anagogic meaning).

Displacement:

The adaptation of myth and metaphor to canons of morality or plausibility.

Eiron:

A self-deprecating or unobtrusively treated character in fiction, usually an agent of the happy ending in comedy and of the catastrophe in tragedy.

Encyclopaedic Form:

A genre presenting an anagogic form of symbolism, such as a sacred scripture, or its analogues in other modes. The term includes the Bible, Dante's Commedia, the great epics, and the works of Joyce and Proust.

Epos:

The literary genre in which the radical of presentation is the author or minstrel as oral reciter, with a listening audience in front of him.

Ethos:

The internal social context of a work of literature, comprising the characterization and setting of fictional literature and the relation of the author to his reader or audience in thematic literature.

Fiction:

Literature in which the radical of presentation is the printed or written word, such as novels and essays.

Fictional:

Relating to literature in which there are internal characters, apart from the author and his audience; opposed to thematic. (N.B. The use of this term is regrettably inconsistent with the preceding one, as noted on p. 248.)

High Mimetic:

A mode of literature in which, as in most epics and tragedies, the central characters are above our own level of power and authority, though within the order of nature and subject to social criticism.

Image:

A symbol in its aspect as a formal unit of art with a natural content.

Initiative:

A primary consideration governing the process of composition, such as the metre selected for a poem; taken from Coleridge.

Ironic:

A mode of literature in which the characters exhibit a power of action inferior to the one assumed to be normal in the reader or audience, or in which the poet's attitude is one of detached objectivity.

Irony:

The mythos (sense 2) of the literature concerned primarily with a "realistic" level of experience, usually taking the form of a parody or contrasting analogue to romance. Such irony may be tragic or

comic in its main emphasis; when comic it is normally identical with the usual meaning of satire.

Lexis:

The verbal "texture" or rhetorical aspect of a work of literature, including the usual meanings of the terms "diction" and "imagery."

Low Mimetic:

A mode of literature in which the characters exhibit a power of action which is roughly on our own level, as in most comedy and realistic fiction.

Lyric:

A literary genre characterized by the assumed concealment of the audience from the poet and by the predominance of an associational rhythm distinguishable both from recurrent metre and from semantic or prose rhythm.

Masque:

A species of drama in which music and spectacle play an important role and in which the characters tend to be or become aspects of human personality rather than independent characters.

Melos:

The rhythm, movement, and sound of words; the aspect of literature which is analogous to music, and often shows some actual relation to it. From Aristotle's melopoiia.

Metaphor:

A relation between two symbols, which may be simple juxtaposition (literal metaphor), a rhetorical statement of likeness or similarity (descriptive metaphor), an analogy of proportion among four terms (formal metaphor), an identity of an individual with its class (concrete universal or archetypal metaphor), or statement of hypothetical identity (anagogic metaphor).

Mode:

A conventional power of action assumed about the chief characters in fictional literature, or the corresponding attitude assumed by the poet toward his audience in thematic literature. Such modes tend to succeed one another in a historical sequence.

Monad:

A symbol in its aspect as a center of one's total literary experience; related to Hopkins's term "inscape" and to Joyce's term "epiphany."

Motif:

A symbol in its aspect as a verbal unit in a work of literary art.

Myth:

A narrative in which some characters are superhuman beings who do things that "happen only in stories"; hence, a conventionalized or stylized narrative not fully adapted to plausibility or "realism."

Mythos

- The narrative of a work of literature, considered as the grammar or order of words (literal narrative), plot or "argument" (descriptive narrative), secondary imitation of action (formal narrative), imitation of generic and recurrent action or ritual (archetypal narrative), or imitation of the total conceivable action of an omnipotent god or human society (anagogic narrative).
- One of the four archetypal narratives, classified as comic, romantic, tragic, and ironic.

Naive:

Primitive or popular, in the sense given those terms of an ability to communicate in time and space more readily than other types of literature.

Opsis:

The spectacular or visible aspect of drama; the ideally visible or pictorial aspect of other literature.

Pharmakos:

The character in an ironic fiction who has the role of a scapegoat or arbitrarily chosen victim.

Phase:

- One of the five contexts in which the narrative and meaning of a work of literature may be considered, classified as literal, descriptive, formal, archetypal, and anagogic.
- One of six distinguishable stages of a mythos (sense 2).

Point of Epiphany:

An archetype presenting simultaneously an apocalyptic world and a cyclical order of nature, or sometimes the latter alone. Its usual symbols are ladders, mountains, lighthouses, islands, and towers.

Romance:

- The mythos of literature concerned primarily with an idealized world.
- A form of prose fiction practised by Scott, Hawthorne, William Morris, etc., distinguishable from the novel.

Romantic:

- A fictional mode in which the chief characters live in a I world of marvels (naive romance), or in which the mood is elegiac or idyllic and hence less subject to social criticism than in the mimetic modes.
- The general tendency to present myth and metaphor in an idealized human form, midway between undisplaced myth and "realism."

Sign:

A symbol in its aspect as a verbal representative of a natural object or concept.

Symbol:

Any unit of any work of literature which can be isolated for critical attention. In general usage restricted to the smaller units, such as words, phrases, images, etc.

Thematic:

Relating to works of literature in which no characters are involved except the author and his audience, as in most lyrics and essays, or to works of literature in which internal characters are subordinated to an argument maintained by the author, as in allegories and parables; opposed to fictional.

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