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University of Szeged
Institute of English & American Studies
2022

Published by
the Institute of English & American Studies of the
University of Szeged

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ISBN (print) 978 963 306 886 1
ISBN (pdf) 978 963 306 888 5

This teaching material has been made at the University of Szeged, and supported by the European Union. Project identity number: EFOP-3.4.3-16-2016-00014

Printed by JATEPress
Nr. 28/2022

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UNIT 1
INTRODUCTION TO ROMANTICISM IN ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURE

AIM OF THIS UNIT: A socio-cultural, historical contextualisation of the Romantic period with a focus on Great Britain and parallels with European and American cultural history

KEY WORDS & TOPICS: Romanticism and/as counter-Enlightenment, Romanticism vs Neo/Classicism, dialectical worldview, the creative powers of imagination, exaltation of emotions and epiphanies, negative capability, sublime, egotistical sublime, Mother Nature, pantheism, exoticism, the Noble savage, heroic quest theme, revolutionary movements, Romantic nationalism, myth of the Romantic genius, cult of sensibility, Graveyard Poets

KEY ARTISTS:
Authors: William Blake, William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, George Gordon Byron, Percy B Shelley, John Keats, Thomas Chatterton, Thomas Gray, Edward Young, James McPherson, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe *Philosophers*: Edmund Burke, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, John Locke, Benedictus Spinoza, *Painters:* William Turner, Caspar David Friedrich, Eugene Delacroix, *Historical figure*: Napoléon Bonaparte

COMPULSORY READINGS: William Blake's "London", William Wordsworth's "The Daffodils", Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard"

- **Romanticism** is an artistic, literary, cultural, intellectual movement that originated in Europe in the late 18th century (~1770–1850).

THE PREDOMINANT ATTITUDES OF ROMANTICISM

- a deepened admiration of the docile beauties or sublime magnificence of **Nature**
- an exaltation of spontaneous individual **emotions and epiphanies** over socially controlled rational calculation, formal conventions, or traditional procedures

- an ardent belief in the revolutionary powers of creative **Imagination**, **visionary insight** as gateway to transcendental experience, spiritual truth
- an introspective analysis of the **human psyche**, personality, moods, mental potentialities –an emphasis on the individual, the subjective, the personal
- a preoccupation with the **genius**, the rebellious hero, the exceptional visionary poet (his passions, inner struggles, prophetic powers) -- the **Revolution** is a potent metaphor
- a revisiting of **folk culture**, simple peasant wisdom, national/ethnic cultural origins, the **Noble Savage** myth
- an obsession with the **'far away and long ago:'** medieval myths, dreams, superstitions, the exotic, remote, mysterious, weird, occult, monstrous, diseased, and even satanic
- a predominance of a **dialectical worldview**: concerned with the irresolvable conflict of opposites, **unresolved ambiguities**: the awareness of coexistent discordant qualities leads to a modern manner of experiencing reality, a sensibility, a recognition of the vulnerability of physical frame and the mightiness of the mind, a free expression of imagination

ROMANTICISM AS A COUNTER-REACTION

Romanticism has been often described in terms of a rebellious criticism of the past, and as a **counter-reaction to** a variety of established socio-cultural trends or fossilised worldviews including **the Industrial revolution, the Enlightenment rationality, (neo)Classicism, and physical materialism**.

ROMANTICISM AS A COUNTER-REACTION TO INDUSTRIALISATION & MECHANISATION

Succeeding to the Industrial Revolution great masses of people moved to the metropolitan area in search of better lives, however **urbanisation** (the shift of the population from the rural to the urban region) failed to grant satiety to many who suffered in cities due to overpopulation, pollution, poverty, poor working conditions in factories, malnourishment, and alienation.

A CASE STUDY: CORRUPTED CAPITALS VS DANCING DAFFODILS

The misery of city life is encapsulated in **William Blake's 1794 poem on "London"** in which a solitary walker witnesses the weakness and woe of poor workers exploited, 'cannibalised' by the capital. In this apocalyptic and acoustically dense poem, full of cries, sighs, and curses, a solitary wanderer records on gloomy picture postcard-like impressions the drawbacks of civilisation, those "mind forged manacles" which make young and old city-dwellers (including chimney sweep, harlot, soldier) to voluntary abuse themselves for the sake of survival. Blake juxtaposed images of the dangerous, steam-powered "dark satanic mills" he associated with the dominance of mechanical reason or an environmental apocalypse and "England's green and pleasant land," a peaceful, vital, regenerative natural landscape, Mother Earth, catering for an interdependent web of companion species that could serve a model for political practice.

William Wordsworth's 1807 poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" ("The Daffodils") perfectly illustrates just how different experience is provided by a solitary walk in the rural outdoors. Nature seems to offer an alternative, an idealised elsewhere where city dwellers can escape to find health, inspiration, purification, spiritual illumination throughout intimate encounters with the natural landscape. The solitary wandering in meadows or mountains, the ravished encounter with uncivilised wild animals untainted by dark passions, corruption, or the knowledge of mortality, or simple country people who still live in harmony with nature, or the amazement felt on witnessing the overwhelming beauty and power of natural phenomena like a thunder, a waterfall, or migrating birds, the discovery of the totality of being in the petal of a flower or a grain of sand become powerful metaphors of Romantic poetry. Nature is always filtered through the imagination of the poet, whose creative sensitivity allows him to make an honest, direct connection with reality in Nature that is a privileged space undistorted by social judgment, a locus where God dwells and where inspiration can be drawn from.

W. Blake: London, 1794

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.
In every cry of every man,
In every Infant's cry of fear,

W. Wordsworth: Daffodils, 1807

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
Continuous as the stars that shine

In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.
How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackning Church appalls;
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.
But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born Infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

AN INFLUENTIAL NOTION: THE NATURAL POWER OF THE SUBLIME

The Sublime was the most important concern of eighteenth-century aesthetics. It is a quality of greatness (physical, moral, intellectual, artistic, spiritual, metaphysical) beyond all possibility of calculation, measurement, or imitation. It was often contrasted with the Neoclassic idea of Beauty. Philosopher **Edmund Burke** in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) defined "the passion caused by the great and sublime in nature as an astonishment, a state of the soul in which all motions are suspended with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other."

The elementary powers of natural phenomena, such as a thunderstorm, a wild horse, or an infinite starlit sky provoke an ambiguous dual emotional combination of **awe and horror** in the human spectator who is simultaneously **1. frightened** because he is reminded of the fragility of his human physical bodily frame (that could be shattered any time by all mighty nature) and **2. fascinated** by the magnificence of his own human mind and imagination that is capable of recognising this fragility. A sinking ship on fire, a thunderbolt, or a raging bull might provide aesthetic pleasure provided the threat of danger is contemplated from a safe distance, provided you do not have to fight for your life, but can freely lend yourself to this intellectual and emotional experience.

The sublime bridges the gap between the limited human faculty of understanding and the unimaginable infinity of physical universe. The heroic enterprise of trying to imagine the unimaginable is a Romantic trope inspired by Greco-Roman myths about **overreacher characters** who aim beyond the confines of their humanity, aspire to reach transcendental realms, to gain unearthly knowledge or powers with which they could redeem the life of humanity but are doomed to fail.

In Wordsworth's view of the **egotistical sublime** Nature deserved to be an object of religious and moral veneration because it perfectly symbolised "the inner motions of our consciousness." He believed the external World "to be fitted to the human mind" and suggested that the meticulous mapping of Nature could allow for self-inspection. In his poem on Tintern Abbey a touristic visit to an ancient architectural ruin nested in the heart of natural vegetation gradually overgrowing it offers him pretext to speculate about his own psychic maturation via a comparison of his past memories and present experiences of encountering the same landscape. This idea of egotistical sublime relocates the sublime experience within the kernel of the human heart.

→ EXERCISE: Read the myths of Prometheus, Sisyphus, Danaides in *Encyclopedia Mythica* at https://pantheon.org/ Compare their tragic destinies. Explore: How is the romantic trope of the fallen hero inspired by these mythical origins?

Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog,*
1817, Kunsthalle Hamburg.

Eugene Delacroix, Horse frightened by Lightning, 1825.

→ EXERCISE: LISTEN to the initial fanfare entitled "Sunrise" of Richard Strauss's tone poem *Thus Spoke Zarathusra* inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical novel of the same title. Although the music was composed in 1896 but it bears typically Romantic features. What are these? How does Strauss capture a cosmic scale sublime in his music?

Apocalyptic Sublime: John Martin.
The destruction of Pompeii, 1821

Maritime Sublime: JWT Turner

Pastoral Sublime: John Constable

→ EXERCISE: For a selection of articles and images on the *Art of the Romantic Sublime* see Tate Gallery's website at: http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/the-romantic-sublime-r1109221 What are the differences between the natural, the psychiatric, and the apocalyptic sublime?

ROMANTICISM AS A COUNTER-REACTION TO ENLIGHTENMENT & THE AGE OF REASON

Romanticism succeeds to the period of Enlightenment, also called the Age of Reason, an intellectual and philosophical movement that predominated the long 18th century in Europe, and was marked by a belief in human rational intellect's capacity to know reality and master a scientifically measurable nature. Among major thinkers of the era, **Newton** argued for the regular, ordered nature of the universe (he created calculus, described universal gravitation and the three laws of motion), **Locke**'s empiricism claimed that human sensorial experiences allow for a systematic comprehension of the world, and **Spinoza**'s philosophy advocated democracy, individual liberty, freedom of thought and expression and the eradication of religious authority.

→ EXERCISE: Which are the major features of the Enlightenment Scientific Revolution described in this video at www.History.com?
Collect and compare them with features of Romanticism. http://www.history.com/topics/enlightenment/videos/scientific-revolution

Whereas Romanticism embraced Enlightenment's idea of questioning traditional authority, it moved clearly against the tenets of the previous epoch by suggesting

that humanity could/should be improved through the celebration of its imaginative and emotional faculties instead of rationalism. The Mind as a privileged spot of the Enlightenment perception is replaced by an increasing attention in **issues of the Heart and the Soul** in Romanticism. Inspiration and intellectual experience become grounded in sentiments, sensations, and spontaneity.

The narcissistic pride of a human being, who believes that he can reach a complete, encyclopedic knowledge of the world with the help of reason and scientific scrutiny, diminished in Romanticism when the greatest wisdom of all seemed to be that human being cannot know everything. The poet **John Keats** called "**negative capability**" *"when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason"*. The recognition of the limits of his knowledge is a major intellectual, psychic aesthetic, and philosophical experience: the mortal human becomes aware of the vulnerability of his physical frame yet also recognises that despite his microscopic insignificance he can reach an intimate contact with the magnificent totality of being through his capacity to appreciate the beauty of fragility and the sublimity of greatness. The genius of the human mind resides in the fact that he knows that he cannot know everything but he can imagine anything.

ROMANTICISM AS A COUNTER-REACTION TO (NEO)CLASSICISM

In the chart below you can see the major differences between Romanticism and Neoclassicism and explore how the Romantics attempted to defy the tradition of the previous era. Beginning around mid-18th century, the Enlightenment and the emerging Neoclassicism were intertwined movements, inspired by similar philosophical theories, aesthetic ideals and social critical agendas. Both were indebted to the spirit of the Revolutions, but Neoclassicism was more of an artistic manifestation of aesthetic and cultural ideals, while the Enlightenment was a wider philosophical and political movement focusing on the human condition.

NEOCLASSICISM	ROMANTICISM
traditionalism, respects/imitates classical rules, models, regularity of form, beaty of proportion, Stylistic decorum	innovation, originality, exploitation of the unconscius, the supernatural, the far away and long ago poet prophet, rejects poetic diction, writes a visionary mode of art
poetry=craftmanship	poetry= "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth)
subject: human nature as part of organ-	subject: external nature described with

ised society to yield instruction and pleasure	sensuous accuracy, nature is stimulus for thought
„True wit is what oft was thought But never so well expressed." (Pope) Common places of human wisdom	personal revelations of poets who are solitary non-comformists, outcasts, rebels, visionary prophets
the individual as an urban, civilised being limited by pride, custom, social conventions	the individual as a being of limitless aspirations twds the infinite, cosmic, primitive elementary powers, purity of pagan philosophy against Christian dogma, aim: impose order upon chaos but preserve heterogeneity, complexity of being
Apollonian controlled by superego	Dionysian wild, natural, spontaneous
art is a MIRROR that offers a realistic reflection of the world	art is a LAMP that illuminates the unseen world beyond perceived reality

ROMANTICISM CHARACTERISED BY THE DIALECTICAL TENSION OF UNRESOLVED AMBIGUITIES

"Romanticism was nothing more than the union of the gay and the serious, the grotesque and the terrible, buffoonery and the horrible, in other words, if you prefer, of comedy and tragedy." (Alfred de Musset)

NEW REVOLUTIONS AND OLD LEGENDS

Romanticism gained inspiration simultaneously from the revolutionary political movements of the 'here and now' as well as from 'far-away and long ago's' escapist legends and superstitions.

Romanticism rebelled against conventions, and deemed a creative individual's original insights more worthy than the fossilised traditions of social customs and blamed civilisation for the corruption of the inherently benevolent human being. Therefore, it is no wonder that a fundamental impetus of Romanticism came from **revolutionary movements**. The French Revolution of 1789 as a far-reaching social and political upheaval overthrew the monarchy, established a Republic, experienced violent periods of political turmoil, and finally culminated in a dictatorship under Napoleon. But it rapidly brought many of its principles and radical ideas – encapsulated in its slogans *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* (**Liberty, Equality, Fraternity**) – to Western Europe and beyond, and triggered the

global decline of absolute monarchies while replacing them with liberal democracies. The American Revolutionary War of Independence (1775-1783) – that began as a conflict between Great Britain and its Thirteen Colonies and eventually declared the independence of the United States of America and vindicated human beings' equal rights for freedom, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness – was just as influential on the Romantic frame of mind. While the cultural assertion of Romantic nationalism was decisive of post-Enlightenment art and political philosophy, many British Romantic poets became political, or even military supporters of revolutionary movements on an international plane: Lord Byron was involved in the fight for Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire and PB Shelley who was a pacifist and critic of war shared his revolutionary fervour in favour of freeing Hellas.

→ **EXERCISE**: Listen to the Marseillaise. This revolutionary song was written in 1792 after the declaration of war by France against Austria and became the French national anthem. Check the lyrics. How do they communicate a patriotic call to mobilise all citizens to fight against tyranny and foreign invasion to reclaim freedom and democracy 1. on a lexical 2. on a stylistic level?

Eugene Delacroix: Liberty Leading the People, 1830.

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres. The Dream of Ossian, 1813. Ossian, a blind bard, sings of the life and battles of Fingal, a Scotch warrior.

Besides the political interest in matters of 'here-and-now,' another major inspiration of Romanticism came from the literary, artistic heritage of the **'far-away and long ago'** including old romances, myths, legends, fairy tales, and folk lore both from the Northern countries (the Finnish epic poem Kalevala, James Macpherson's Ossian based on ancient Gaelic sources) and Oriental exotic locales (the first English edition of *Arabian Nights* dates of 1706). A revived excitement about the medieval era placed **chivalric heroic virtues**, such as comraderie, honour, loyalty, devotion to women and pity for the weak in the centre attention and turned into a popular leitmotif the **quest theme**. Stories about chivalric quests thematised the journey of a brave hero who was looking for a magical object that could redeem the life of a human community or reanimate the potency of a decaying land/ a fallen kingdom. Throughout the apparently impossible mission the altruistic hero's faith, empathy, and imagination helped him overcome obstacles. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's interest in Arthurian legends and the search of the Knights of the Round Table for the Holy Grail is rooted in Romanticism. The interest in historically distant **heroic achievements and supernatural phenomena** was conjoint with a curiosity about alternative, non-conscious, **irrational ways of perceiving reality**. The focus on superstitions, nightmares, prophetic visions, daydreaming fancies, and amnesia, and forgetfulness attested the introspective, psychologizing attention to paid to mankind's "inner being".

AMBIGUITIES OF THE ROMANTIC GENIUS

The dialectical tension permeating the Romantic worldview is perfectly illustrated by the Romantic portrayal of **the creative artist as a genius** who embodies a wide range of seemingly self-contradictory, ambiguous features as a blind visionary, a misanthropic saviour, a patriot in exile, and a politically self-aware dreamer…

It is primarily the **revolutionary fervour** that determines the charismatic character of the Romantic artist, who rebels against conventional morals, customs, reason, and the pragmatism of his times – by daringly following the individual, inventive frenzies of his imagination.

The Romantic genius is often portrayed as a **madman, a visionary poet-prophet seer** who is both blessed and cursed with his vanguardist clear-sightedness matched with an uncompromising, rebellious spirit that his contemporaries misinterpret along the lines of mental derangement or moral corruption. He is a sacrilegious diviner, a **blind clairvoyant** who witnesses visions imperceptible for mortal eyes; he founds his poetic prophecies in the unspeakable, and fantasizes about the unimaginable. He is just as much unique, and unrepeatedly **one-of-a-kind** as he is a Romantic **stock-character** type. He conjoins **the sanguinary and the sickly**, the raging and the melancholic madness, but he is also the only one who manages to gain a genuine understanding of Truth, the essence of our very human being. He might be a **misanthropic** figure irritated or despaired by the ordinary people's superficial perception of the world, nevertheless he ardently strives to use the insights learnt from his ecstatic revelations (counterbalancing his Byronic spleen) to redeem his fellow human beings he yearns to purge from ignorance as a **sacrificial saviour** figure. He resembles the mythical hero **Prometheus** who steals fire from God to alleviate the life of mankind and undertakes the eternal suffering for his undeserving kind. He despises the mundane, but on other occasions the Romantic artist hopes to gain inspiration from the innocence of simple folk, assuming that the unknowing of uneducated peasants or naive children might eventually be the foundation of true wisdom. The Romantic artist's self-definition along the lines of radical difference makes him an outsider, a solitary loner in a **self-inflicted exile**, however he will keep being tortured by **home-sick**ness, yearning to be reintegrated into the community that has rejected him. The Romantic genius is a **sentimental, sensitive dreamer** who gains inspiration from emotions and epiphanies but he is also very much **aware of the painful political realities** of his times, willingly confronting tyrannic regimes with his social criticism and liberal insurgency. He is a **pacificist** who is ready to **support military action** meant to forcibly overthrow a government in favour of a new, more democratic state system. With Blake, he believes that "the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom".

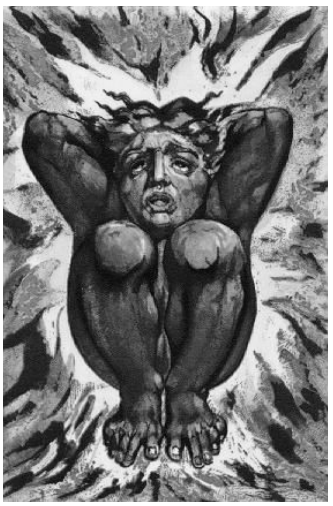
→ EXERCISE After having read the above paragraph, CONTINUE THE LIST of ambiguities characterising the Romantic artist:

sentimental, sensitive dreamer	politically self-aware revolutionary
self-inflicted exile	home-sickness

You can find potential ANSWERS at the end of the Unit.

The Romantic genius is a **Renaissance Man** excelling in a multimedial variety of art forms and intellectual skills: as an artist he can be at once **a poet, a painter, and a printmaker** (like Blake), but he also excels is **politics** (see Shelley's and Byron's role in revolutionary movements, Beethoven's dedication of his Eroica Symphony to Napoleon as the champion of freedom whose name he crossed out when he crowns himself emperor of france and proves to be a tryant not a liberator), is interested in **psychology, philosophy** (see the Stoicism involved in Keats's poetry), **theology**, and **literary criticism** (see metafictional commentaries on own lyrical products in preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*), and as an **amateur scientist** proves to be enthusiastic about emerging scientific discoveries (Wordsworth and Coleridge attended scientific events – demonstrations on electrical machines, laughing gas, or mesmerism – to "increase their stock of metaphors", while the Shelleys researched chemicals and electrobiology (see Nichols 2005)). However, these various disciplines interacted to create a **Unity of Thought**, and enhance a new way of looking at the world which surpassed the simple decorative function attributed to poetry in the previous eras.

Typical **visual depictions** portray the Romantic genius with maniac eyes, flowing hair, wild gestures. Think of portraits of German composer Ludwig van Beethoven who composed divine symphonies despite his deafness, of Edgar Allan Poe whose mysterious tales of terror fed of his mental delusions, or William Blake's paintings of "Los, the Symbol of Poetic Genius Consumed by Flames."



William Blake.
„Los, the Symbol of Poetic Genius Consumed by Flames"

Note that the notion of the **Romantic genius is emphatically gendered as masculine**. Artistic creation was a male privilege, the era's societal restrictions of female behaviour –confined to the procreative role of daughter, wife, and mother— prevented women from participating fully in the artistic community. Paradoxically, the Romantic rhetoric praised the 'feminine' qualities of male creators but claimed that women (identified objectified with the uncivilised, bestial, infantile non-subject position) could not and should not create. (Battersby 1989) Thus, the immense scandal provoked by Mary Shelley's female authored monstrosities in *Frankenstein*. (See Unit 2)

PANTHEISM AND THE CHALLENGE OF INSTITUTIONALISED RELIGION

Romanticism was a response against the scientific rationalisation of nature during the Enlightenment as well as a reaction against the material changes in late 18th century society which accompanied the expanding industrial capitalism, held responsible for a simultaneous degradation of the land and its people exploitatively reduced to a commodity status. The Romantic Movement believed that primary reason for moral corruption, psychic deterioration, social malaise, and political confusion was the spiritual alienation of the urbanised masses from their natural environment. Hence, the solution for private and public ills was to get "back to nature" seen as a pure source of a spiritual renewal that could no longer be granted by the institutional religion due to the tyrannic domination and dogma of the church fathers.

The increasingly influential worldview of **Pantheism** spread the belief that all things in universe make part of an all-encompassing divinity. According to **Pantheism** God cannot be reduced to a distinct anthropomorphic entity or an institutional church structure because everything composes an all-encompassing god. Everything is God and God is everything. The universe, Nature, and God are interchangeable. A fusion with Nature signifies a Union with God. This was a heathen vision hardly compatible with any conservative, be it Protestant or Catholic, religious ambience but very much in line with the Romantic democratizing intent which praised that the supreme spiritual experience of the transcendental is available to anyone and everyone regardless of social restrictions and judgmental prejudices.

Pantheism rejected the Neo-classical idea of the Great Chain of Being assuming a hierarchy between forms of existence: the wind or a bee was seen just as divine as man, as God. The ideas of Pantheism resonate well with Spinoza's Ethics and are perfectly encapsulated in lines 93-99 of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey:"

> And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

The idea of a benevolent Mother Nature free of man-made biases and the yoke of customs was widespread in the era – and was vividly contrasted by the Victorian era's radical reconsideration of Nature as "red in tooth and claw," a violent

site of the Darwinian struggle for survival, a vast entity largely disinterested in the petty machinations of mankind.

If, for the Romantics, **feelings** acted as a touchstone of humanity, **a proof of Being**, Nature offered a perfect site for the stimulation and projection of human imagination and emotions. The **solitary wanderings** in wild, untamed, astonishingly pure natural sceneries allowed for an escape away from daily toils, financial struggles, metropolitan noises, pollution, and hypocrisy. Outdoor recreation and the appreciation of natural and historical heritages were enabled by emerging technological innovations like railway locomotives and steam boats which could speed-up city-dwellers' journeys to rural regions and touristic spots distant from civilised regions. The Romantic wanderer's position is highly ambiguous: he ecstatically submerges within the intellectual-affective experience of the Sublime found in Nature, both fascinated and somewhat intimidated by the majestic site of gigantic powers of the non-man-made environment: as a hiker, explorer he acts as a conqueror of Nature yet as a city-dweller on a brief touristic outing meant to return to his urban home, he remains a stranger, an outsider to Nature.

These paradoxical feelings of conquest and alienation are perfectly captured on **Friedrich's paintings** which usually portray the tourist as a small figure contemplating a vast sublime natural scenery while standing with his back to the viewers who are, hence, invited to identify with this solitary wanderer, and to step within the landscape's painted imaginary realm. **William Turner's sea paintings** of magnificent ships wrecking, struggling with raging waves, thunderbolts, impenetrable fog, or snowstorms, popularised the marine sublime, turning the human encounter with sea or ocean an object of horrified awe.

Note that the untamed Nature's picturesque, spiritually elevating, soul-cleansing quality can only be perceived and 'realised' with the help of human interpretive consciousness, fantasizing imaginative faculties which take the place of faith's spiritual convictions which have been characteristic of the previously preeminent religious wordlview.

William Turner, *Slavers Throwing overboard the dead & dying: Typhoon coming on,* 1840. (detail)

→ EXERCISE: Enumerate the main features of the Pantheistic celebration of Nature characteristic of the Romantic worldview. Rely on what you've read in Chapters 2.1.2 & 3.3.

→ How do these features gain a visual manifestation on Thomas Cole's Romantic painting cycle called the *Voyage of Life*? You can find the potential ANSWERS at the end of the Unit.

ORIENTALISM AND DEMOCRACY

One of Romanticism's favourite literary stock characters was the figure of **the Noble Savage**: an idealised figure of a 'wild' human who lives in harmony with Nature, in an exotic elsewhere far from the corruptive influences of civilisation, and symbolises the innate goodness of human being. The concept can be traced back to ancient Greece, and has been glorified in the Romantic writings of French philosopher, writer Jean Jacques Rousseau. Romantics believed that revolution conjoint with a return to natural environment can assist social change and help returning humans to a pre-lapsarian, Edenic state. While William Wordsworth's treatment of childhood bears traces of the Noble Savage tradition, literary antecedents in English literature include protagonists of John Dryden's *Conquest of Granada* (1672) and Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko: or, the Royal* Slave (1688) and popular cultural literary descendants like James Fenimoore Cooper's *Leatherstocking* tales (1823–1841), Robert E Howard's Conan, the Barbarian series (1932), or even E.R.Burroughs' stories about Tarzan, the Ape-Man from the 1920s.

The cult of the native tied in with **Romantic orientalism**, a paradoxical set of emotional and intellectual attitudes by which the self-termed Westerners related to 'Eastern culture'. The far-away Orient was an object of erotic excitement, epistemophilic curiosity, demonizing mystification, or utopic idealisation. Reduced to an emblem of *otherness*, a presumably irreducible difference, the Islamic, Indian, or Chinese Orient was misread as a source of fascination and fear – **associated with the primitive, savage, monstrous, animalistic, grotesque, awesome, terrifying, sublime, sensual, feminine, unconscious…** The popularity of the recently translated *Arabian Nights* contributed to the emergence of the **Oriental tale** genre that featured exotic settings, supernatural events, extravagant emotions, and both allowed for an escapism from everyday reality just as much as a confrontation with the alien, other, not-me.

A typical example of **exotic imagery** can be found in Coleridge's opiate dream of Kubla Khan, about an oriental despot dwelling in a pleasure dome nested in a lush natural scenery offering sensual delights and cognitive confusion unspeakable in the civilised language of the human tongue. The singing Abessynian maid in Coleridge's poem had just as a mysterious, forbidden, erotic lure as the veiled ladies of the Middle Eastern **harem** featuring in Shaharazade's tales, Ingres' oriental paintings, and throughout the picaresque exotic journeys of Byron's Don Juan. On the other hand, the fact that **street Arab** was a common name for the ragged homeless beggar children who wandered the streets of London illustrates how the oriental other was associated with degraded social status, powerlessness, and ignorance presumably concomitant with moral corruption, and bestiality. The paradoxically abjectified and fetishised Orient was simultaneously an Eldorado-like land of riches, a locus of slave markets, and a terra incognita awaiting to be conquered by its Western colonisers.

This strategic marginalisation of the **Orient in opposition to the British Empire** is certainly difficult to harmonise with the democratizing intent of the Romantic revolutionary movements which celebrated the liberty, equality, and fraternity of all the people –provided they were Westerners. The essentialist view of the East as static, undeveloped, and unlikely to progress was accompanied either by an imperial guilt of the anxious colonisers, or at best a patronizing attitude, and a relentless desire to accumulate and appropriate oriental cultural products (be it in the realm of decorative arts (eg. style coined *chinoiserie*), culinary arts (eg. Turkish delights) or literary output (eg. see numerous recyclings of Greek mythology)).

CONCLUSION

DEFINITION OF PHILOSOPHICAL ORIGINS OF ROMANTIC DIALECTICS: Romanticism's dialectical thought, inspired by an essentially Christian spirituality and a pagan physicality, is largely indebted to G.W.F. **Hegel**. According to **Hegelian dialectic** is a cumulative historical process of surmounting conflicts, in which the completion of all knowledge is theoretically possible for mankind. Both history and the logical argument of philosophy proceed on dialectical lines, resolving the thesis/antithesis clash through a synthesizing process that "preserves what is overcome within the pattern of the larger totality in an organic spiral of accumulation". This **monism** or totalizing theory shows opposites to be aspects of the same process: you cannot think of goodness without thinking of evil as its antithesis which defines it, so contradictory concepts are complementaries, inextricably linked as **unity or synthesis**. **The knowledge of this Absolute is possible via Reason**. The possibility and necessity of overcoming

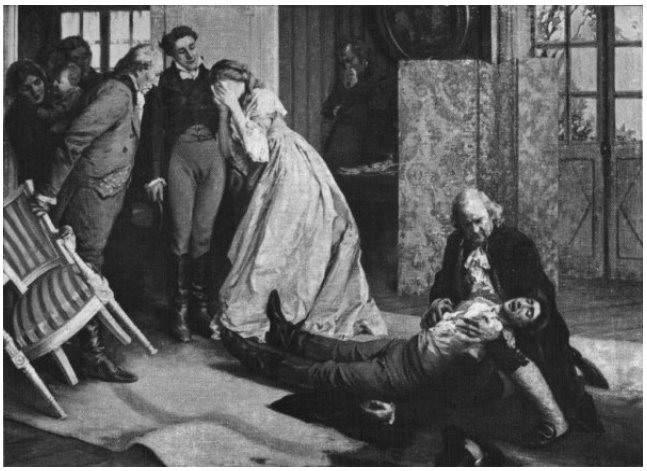
culturally fixed binary oppositions is the foundation of Jacques Derrida's post-modern philosophical project called **deconstruction**.

ROMANTICISM AND THE CULT OF SENSIBILITY

The so-called Age of Sensibility dates to the period between 1744 (the death of Pope, a figurehead of Classicism) and 1798 (the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* co-authored by Wordsworth and Coleridge). The revival of the significance of feelings was 1. a counter-reaction to the Enlightenment era's prioritisation of rationality as the only justifiable means of connecting with reality, 2. a backlash against Stoic philosophy's understanding of passionless resignation as the foundation of human virtue, and a 3. rejection of Thomas Hobbes' pessimistic view of mankind as innately selfish, disinterested, and driven by no other affect than a hunger for power. Romanticism celebrated the intense emotional responsiveness to beauty and sublimity in art and nature as a sign of the recipient's cultured gentility and moral sophistication. Benevolence, empathy, and sensibility (responsibility to another person's distress and joy) came to be regarded as innate attributes of human essence. Sympathetic tears shed by a frail woman or a noble man were equally considered to be corporeal symptoms of moral virtuousness and polite breeding. Pleasurable sorrows, melancholic delights, sadly pleasing sobs were considered to be part and parcel of the aesthetic experience. While sentimentality is commonly disapproved of today as a negative sign of weakness, the era heralded the natural kindheartedness of noble savages, kindly peasants, innocent children.

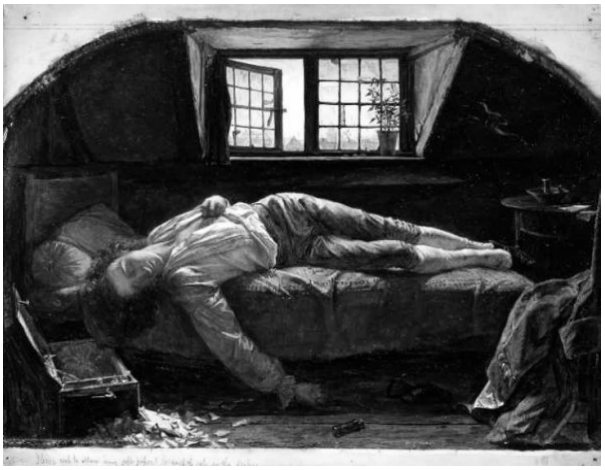
A major, global-scale inspiration for the Cult of Sensibility was the *Sturm und Drang* (Storm & Stress) German proto-romantic movement (1760s–1780s), emblematised by Johann Wolfgang Goethe's classic semi-autobiographical, sentimental epistolary novel entitled ***The Sorrows of Young Werther*** (1774). Goethe's protagonist is a young artist gifted with a passionate, sensitive temperament desperately in love with Lotte, a young maiden engaged then wedded to another man. To resolve the love triangle Werthe decides to commit suicide, he shoots himself in the head, but lives on for another 12 hours, during which plenty of tears are shed, until Werther passes away, and Lotte likely follows him because of a heartbreak. The novel immediately gained a cult following, audiences were captivated by the theme of 'extreme passion that culminates in self-destruction.' This public fascination gave rise to a fanatical copycat culture: men dressed in Werther's signature outfit (custard yellow trouser and electric-blue jacket), women perfumed themselves with 'Eau de Werther', and several readers committed suicide with a copy of *Young Werther* in their pocket. Legend has it that *Werther* was Napoleon's favourite book he carried with himself on his campaign to Egypt. (In *Frankenstein* the creature's sentient nature was proven by the

episode when he found the book to spot parallels between his own rejection and Werther's **unrequited love**.) The immense emotional impact the fictionalisation of hopeless romantic entanglements had on audiences illustrates just how much artistic consumption implied an affectively-invested experience for Romantic readers. It also demonstrates that masculinity and sentimentality were perfectly compatible features at the time. Werther's bold expression of emotions was decoded as a rebellion against accepted social norms and rational philosophy, hence an example of independence that seemed worth imitating.



Wolgang Goethe. The Death of Young Werther, 1774.

Another sentimentally idealised tragic heroic figure of Romantic art was **Thomas Chatterton** (1752–1770) an English poet whose career was precociously disrupted at age 17. Chatterton was most well-known for a literary forgery: he deceived learned readers of his days by presenting his own work as that of an imaginary 15th century poet called Thomas Rowley. Since he failed to earn the artistic success that could sustain him financially, and was willing to make a compromise by choosing a civil profession, he poisoned himself. The portrait of this witty, arrogant, beautiful genius became part of collective cultural imagery of the Romantic era. (see Henry Wallis' painting.) Chatterton's suicide was romanticised as a form of rebellion, a genuine expression of free will – just like in the case of Werther's or the ballet heroine Giselle's farewell to life.



Henry Wallis. The Death of Chatterton, 1856.

On the theatre stage, the melancholic theme of unreciprocated romantic affection was matched with supernatural motifs in one of the era's most popular **ballet**s, ***Giselle*** (1814, music by Adolphe Adam, coreography by Jean Coralli, updated by Marius Petipa) about a peasant girl whose heart broke because of unrequited passion, yet when the Willis, a group of mystic women who dance men to death, summon her from the grave, her endless devotion frees the beloved from the revengeful demons' grasp. On the other hand, the **drama of sensibility or sentimental comedy** replaced the amoral and satirical representation of aristocratic license in Restoration comedy: middle class characters' dialogues mixed humour with an abundance of elevating sentiments, and manipulated happy endings evoked pleasurable tears in the audience – yet passions were often toned down in favour of empathy. In **Richard Steele's play,** ***The Conscious Lovers*** (1722), the ethically exemplary hero overcomes his emotional distress, and embraces the virtue of patience to avoid a duel with his friend, and hence save a precious human life.

The highly popular Sentimental Novel genre – like **Sterne's** ***A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*** (1768) – recycled the picaresque tradition, travel writing, and the sensation novels to offer a subjective discussion of personal views on manners, morals, and amorous adventures. In **Henry Mackenzie's** ***The Man of Feeling*** (1771) the orphaned hero was encouraged to gain money but instead he remained honest, wept with the inmates of Bedlam madhouse, fed and helped prostitutes, saved orphans, paid debts of the poor, nursed the ill, then contracted a fever, and in the end died holding the hands of his beloved.

GRAVEYARD POETRY

Graveyard Poets also called **Churchyard Poets** were never a formal school but a number of pre-Romantic English poets fashionable in 1740s and 1750s whose gloomy, meditative poems on mortality were often set in the graveyard and featured gothic motifs like "skulls, coffins, epitaphs and worms" elicited by the dreadful yet fascinating atmosphere of the final resting place. **Thomas Gray's** (1716–71) **"Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard"** (1751) is pervaded by a gentle gloominess as the poet muses upon the conditions of village life, rural existence, conjoint with thoughts on the inevitability of decay and death. **Edward Young's "The Complaint, or Night Thoughts (On Life, Death and Immortality)"** (1742-46), a lengthy, didactic poem in 9 books, communicates a similar melancholic feel, and relates the subjects indicated in its title to the inspirational spatio-temporal period of night-time. In these meditations over sorrows, existential philosophical musings on matters of life and death, are filled with an affective charge yet the pathos of these works lack the histrionics of sensationalism.

In **James Macpherson's "Poems of Ossian"** (1765) the **memento mori** theme (reminding readers of their mortality and hence both the precious precariousness of their life and the vanity of their earthly ambitions) gains a legendary frame as the blind bard Ossian sings of the heroic victories of warriors of time past. The Graveyard Poets' interest in the sublime, the uncanny, the interactions of finite humans and infinite nature, the inward gaze at troubled territories of human psyche, the lure of death, and ancient English folk poetic forms make their precursors of the Romantic movement, and in particular the Gothic literary genre. The preoccupation with the thrills of unusual and uncharted psychological regions and the dwelling in mystery and melancholy that typified "the poetry of night and tombs" (Tieghem) later gained a crystallised form in the dark fantasies of Gothic fiction. The melancholic nature of this artistic mode is perfectly captured on Caspar David Friedrich's painting "Cloister Cemetery in the Snow."

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE
(You can find the **ANSWERS** at the end of the unit)
1. How can we understand Romanticism as a reaction against the values of Enlightenment and Neoclassicism?
2. Why do Romantics prioritise emotion over reason? What can feelings and fantasies offer that logical, scientific thinking cannot?

3. EXTRACURRICULAR EXERCISE: How does the Romantic idealisation of Nature relate to contemporary concerns about environmental protection (climate change, global warming, extinction of species, deforestation)
4. Multiple choice test (occasionally more than one correct answer)
i. The experience of the Sublime is a combination of: A. comedy and tragedy, B. pain and curiosity C. awe and terror D. envy and loathing
ii. Negative capability refers to: A. the potential of pessimistic worldview, B. the capacity to spend money even if you are in debt, C. the tendency to refuse help from others, D. the ability to accept uncertainties
iii. The Romantics regard Nature as: A. benevolent and nurturing, B. inspirational, turbulent, beautiful, C. hostile and violent, D. treacherous and corrupted, E. repulsive and irresistible, F. dangerous and boring
iv. Pantheism means: A. the belief that everything is imagination and imagination is everything, B. the belief that everything is dying, and death animates every living thing, C. the belief that everything is human, and mankind is everything, D. the belief that everything is God and God is everything
v. A Noble Savage is A. a vegetarian cannibal, B. a kind-hearted witch doctor, C.an indigenous wild human uncorrupted by civilisation, D. a best dressed up in elegant human clothing
vi. An example for the Noble Savage is: A. Winnetou, B. Robinson, C. Conan, the Barbarian, D. Tarzan, E. Indiana Jones, F. Tutankhamun, G. Dracula
5. Decide if the following statements are TRUE or FALSE. i. Romanticism favoured universal, scientific, empirical truths, whereas Enlightenment embraced individual truths about the self. ii. The fundamental human rights are life, liberty, and property. iii. Whereas previous, classical ages were interested in the child only concerning its future transformation into an adult being, the Romantics celebrated the child for its purity uncontaminated by civilisation. iv. The proverb "Boys don't cry" dates from the Age of Sensibility.

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ANSWERS to EXERCISE No1: The dramatic music encapsulates the vast possibilities, powers, and immense mysteries of the universe and the existential philosophical questions about the meaning/aim of human existence in the natural world, also tackled by Zarathustra's visionary prophecies. As Marin Alsop points out, the piece starts in the depths of the orchestra, almost out of the range of human hearing, and then the unison of trumpets evoke a sense of strength, breadth, optimism, and possibility. The rising sun embodies a perfect sphere of hot plasma, a source of energy that gives us warmth and light to enable life on Earth, but it is also an inhabitable star at the center of the Solar System, a globe of fire that rises each day to remind us of the passing of the time, the finitude of our human existence incompatible with its cosmic temporality indifferent to the transcience of our species.

ANSWERS to EXERCISE No2:

sentimental, sensitive dreamer	political self-awareness, revolutionary action
self-inflicted exile	home-sickness, patriotic feel
despises the ordinary	gains inspiration from simplicity
misanthropic	wants to redeem humanity
mad passion	clear-sightedness
sacrilegious, critical of institutional religion	deeply spiritual
pacifist	support military action against tyranny
excess	wisdom

ANSWERS to EXERCISE No3: The Romantic Pantheistic worldview is neatly encapsulated in Thomas Cole's series of paintings called *The Voyage of Life*. On this allegorical

depiction of the four stages of life, the human being is depicted as a solitary boatman who travels lonely on the River of Life surrounded by a magnificent yet wild natural scenery whose spirit seems to take shape in the mysterious form a guardian angel who accompanies him, imperceptibly, throughout his journeys. The landscape reflects the changing four seasons of the year which play a major role in conveying the metaphorical, spiritual message of the story, as the tiny figures of man and angel seem both lost in and cradled by the vast background scenery of Nature. „In childhood, the infant glides from a dark cave into a rich, green landscape. As a youth, the boy takes control of the boat and aims for a shining castle in the sky. In manhood, the adult relies on prayer and religious faith to sustain him through rough waters and a threatening landscape. Finally, the man becomes old and the angel guides him to heaven across the waters of eternity." The American painter's work was influenced by the Second Great Awakening, a Protestant religious revival during the early 19th century in the US, it reflected Romanticism's enthusiasm, emotionality, and appeal to the supernatural and rejected Enlightenment's skeptical rationality and deism.

ANSWERS to FINAL TEST

4. Multiple choice test: i. C, ii. D, iii. A, B, iv. D, v. C, vi. A, C, D

5. True or False: i: F, ii. T, iii. F, iv. T, v. F

UNIT 2
GOTHIC FICTION IN THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

AIM OF THIS UNIT: The unit provides an overview of the most significant features of Gothic fiction focusing on representative novels of the genre, including the emblematic *Frankenstein,* and complementing the literary examples with visual and musical ones.

KEY WORDS & TOPICS: gothic fiction=horror+romance, uncanny, hesitation, literary suspense, the other, the monster within, the lure of the supernatural, horror/terror/female gothic, a literature of excess, antiquated spaces, atmospheric condition, sensationalism, mock documentarism, pseudo-sciences, villainous patriarch, damsel-in-distress, Wandering Jew, monstrous female imagination, predictable unpredictability

KEY AUTHORS: Horace Walpole, Anne Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, Charles Maturin, Mary Shelley

COMPULSORY READING: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

INTRODUCTORY QUOTES

> "When thinking of the Gothic novel, a set of characteristics springs readily to mind: an emphasis on portraying the terrifying, a common insistence on archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural, the presence of highly stereotyped characters and the attempt to deploy and perfect techniques of literary suspense are the most significant. Used in this sense, 'Gothic' fiction is the fiction of the haunted castle, of heroines preyed on by unspeakable terrors, of the blackly lowering villain, of ghosts, vampires, monsters and werewolves." (David Punter. *The Literature of Terror - A History of Gothic Fictions) from 1765 to the present day*. London: Longman 1996.)

> "In literature, the word Gothic normally refers to the kind of work that seeks to create an atmosphere of mystery and terror through pronounced mental horror. Applied to fiction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the primary and constant element of the term is terror or horror – terror suggesting frenzy and horror suggesting perception of something incredibly evil or repellent." (G.R. Thompson.: *Poe's Fiction. Romantic Irony in the Gothic Tales)*

> "[…] inner evil is projected outward, but in such a manner that it will ultimately be apprehended as lurking in the shadows within us." (Elizabeth Mac Andrew: *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction*)

"[…] the modern muse will see things in a higher and broader light. It will realize that everything in creation is not humanly beautiful, that the ugly exists beside the beautiful, the unshapely beside the graceful, the grotesque on the reverse of the sublime, evil with good, darkness with light. […] All things are connected." (Victor Hugo: *Preface to Cromwell*)

→ EXERCISE: COLLECT the adjectives from the above quotes to get an idea about the major defining features of Gothic fiction. What sort of atmosphere do they suggest?

Visual illustration of the Counter-Enlightenment fascination with dark fantasies
Gillray, James. "Tales of Wonder." satirical print of Ladies Reading *The Monk*, 1802.

Goya, Francesco. "The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters" (1797–98).

Henry Fuseli. *Nightmare*, 1782

An iconic image of Romanticism and Gothic horror, Swiss-English painter **Henry Fuseli's *Nightmare* (1782)** was exhibited in 1782 at the Royal Academy of London where it simultaneously shocked and fascinated the public with its nightmarish representation of dark passions and dreads dwelling in the unconscious realm. The picture portrays a beautiful woman deep asleep, bathed in bright light but surrounded by ominous darkness, stretched across her bed, her head hanging down, with a demonic, apish, incubus crouching on her chest and a black mare with glowing eyes and flared nostrils awaiting by her feet. The painting constituted an enigma, because it had no moralizing intent, mythical inspiration, or spiritual agenda. It is often regarded as a precursor of late 19th-early 20th century psychoanalytical theoretisation of dreams and unconscious processes. Allegedly, Freud had a copy of the painting in his office. The picture resonates with a passage from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* "She was there, lifeless and inanimate, thrown across the bed, her head hanging down, and her pale and distorted features half covered by hair." The ominous counter-Enlightenment message of the picture suggests that light (of reason) cannot penetrate nor explain the darker sides of human psyche.

→ EXTRACURRICULAR RESEARCH: Can you think of any contemporary horror/thriller film imagery reminiscent of the pictures above?
HINT: Compare with Fuseli's painting the poster at www.imdb.com for Ken Russell's film *Gothic*, a cinematic homage to the creation story of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

A DEFINITION OF THE GENRE OF GOTHIC FICTION

Gothic Fiction is a literary genre distinguished by **a combination of horror and romance**. The effect of this dark romantic mode feeds on the fusion of calculated corporeal reactions of terrified shivers and sentimental tears. In line with the counter-Enlightenment trend of Romanticism, Gothic fiction turns away from the mimetic novelistic representation of modern life and the empiricism of scientific revolution and shifts its attention towards obscure, mysterious, ominous, superstitious aspects of existence, mingled by a "misty eyed nostalgia for the medieval past and barbaric energies" (Roberts 21). The readers found pleasure in the predictability of the unpredictable plotline, a compound of the unknown and the familiar (the revenant coming back to haunt the living is a major trope, someone who used to be familiar is now clearly different). The joys of extreme emotions, the thrills of fearfulness, and the awe of the sublime offered an affectively charged, embodied interpretive experience. (The genre also provided metafictional, metaimaginative insights on the functioning of the readers' psyches under critical conditions.) Gothic fiction is fundamentally fuelled by the feel of **hesitation**, Tzvetan Todorov called a par excellence feature of the literary fantastic mode, when readers can dwell in the perverse pleasure of uncertainty.

A passage from major Gothic author Ann Radcliff's *Mysteries of Udolpho. A Romance Interspersed with Some Pieces of Poetry* (1794) illustrates the **atmospheric condition**, the mood-creating tone of the genre that gave contemporaries calculated chills.

Blanche, revived by this assurance, again indulged a pensive pleasure, as she watched *the progress* of *twilight gradually spreading its tints* over the woods and mountains, and stealing from the eye every minuter feature of the scene, till the grand outlines of nature alone remained. Then fell the silent dews; and every wild flower and aromatic plant that bloomed among the cliffs breathed forth its sweetness; then, too, when the mountain-bee had crept into its blossomed Led, and the hum of every little insect that had floated gaily in the sun-beam, was hushed, the sound of many streams, not heard till now murmured at a distance. *The bats alone, of all* the *animals inhabiting this region*, seemed awake; and, while they flitted across the silent path, which Blanche was pursuing, she remembered the following lines, which Emily had given her: TO *THE BAT* From haunt of man, from day's obtrusive glare, Thou shroud'st thee in the ruin's ivy'd tow'r.

"The progressing twilight shedding its tints", "the long billows of vapour" partially hindering the sight and living ground for the reimagination of the surroundings, a subjective, affectively charged reconstruction of nature create

"mysteries in the air." These mysteries are augmented by dark secrets of the past and a crisis in the present which are located in a typical scenery.

> → EXERCISE: WATCH Prof. David Punter's lecture on Gothic Fiction and try to summarise his explanation for the Romantic fascination with antiquated spaces
> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gAQ-uBEy2iA

The name Gothic refers to the (pseudo)medieval buildings, the **antiquated spaces** in which many of these stories take place: old castles with dark caverns, dungeons, labyrinthine passageways, haunted houses, enchanted forests, graveyards and moonlit crypts, the urban underworld and decaying storehouses, hidden laboratories, dark alleyways and backdoors. Many of the gothic horrors were banished beyond the home's boundaries to keep the safe limits and preserve a conservative status quo suggesting that these horrendous affairs would never happen here to us, but belong to **fantasies of 'far away and long ago'**. Evil deeds committed by tyrannical Spanish inquisitors, lustful Italian brigands, bloodthirsty German robbers, or the unsocialised French mob reflect fears associated with the foreign unknown. According to David Punter, in "the literature of terror, the middle class displaced the hidden violence of the present social structures, conjured them up as past, and promptly fell under their spell." This **temporal confusion** of present anxieties projected on the past, and past secrets coming back to haunt the present are characteristic of the Gothic.

These stereotypical sites are peopled by **stock characters**: damsels in distress, mysterious or decaying maternal figures, *femmes fatales*, tyrannical patriarchs, hideous villains, chivalric heroes, magical supernatural beings, ghosts, spectres, fallen angels, monsters, doubles, mad scientists. Many shape-shifting of deceitful figures are believed to reflect the protean nature of the genre. Gothic novels often tackle **sensationalist** themes which involve the violent disintegration of traditionally stable family units by traumatizing crimes like incest, matricide, patricide, moral and legal transgressions. **EA Poe's gloomy tale "The Fall of the House of Usher"** (1839) fuses themes of the corruption of the family by hereditary disease and moral corruption, the maddening of the mind, and the decay of ancestral mansion's architectural structure: as the incestuous relation between Roderick and Madeline Usher and the unforgivable sin of a burying Madeline alive come to light, Roderick loses his sanity and along with his nervous breakdown the house literally cracks, shatters into fragments, and collapses into the lake that mirrors the ominous mansion. The combination of the disintegration of the family, of reason, and of the house also illustrates why Gothic was coined by Fred Botting, the most prominent literary critic of the genre a

literature of excess. Echoing the era's aesthetic ideal (embraced by the Graveyard poets, landscape painters like Friedrich or Turner, and philosophers such as Burke and Kant) the Gothic opted for the awesome and terrifying sublime, the masculine magnificence of a raging ocean at night time, a misty mountain chasm or an erupting volcano instead of the Classist ideal of the more effeminate beauty of a well-tended garden or a calm lake reflecting the light of the sun.

Sharply opposed to the Enlightenment worldview's insistence on human reason's capacity to master reality, Gothic novels are preoccupied with the themes of **madness**, mental derangement, **confused remembrance** (the feeling of *déja vu, jamais vu,* hidden or forgotten secrets of the past haunt, dark prophecies, superstitious precognitions), and cognitive dissonance (the Freudian **uncanny** or *unheimlich*, when repressed psychic contents which were supposed to remain hidden come to light, and suddenly something familiar appears as unknown or radically unknowable, or on the contrary something unfamiliar gives the impression that we have already encountered it before, in a distant undefinable past.) In line with the ambiguity characterising Romanticism, mysterious occurences were often presented in a **mock-documentarist manner.**

→ EXTRACURRICULAR RESEARCH: To explore the literary technique of integrating 'lost and found documents,' letters, newspaper cuttings within fictional narratives meant to testify the veracity of fantastic events: see Chatterton and the Rowley forgeries in Unit1, focus on mockuments in Shelley's Frankenstein, Stoker's Dracula, Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym and a continuation of this tradition in the 'found footage horror film' genre. How can you sum up the similarities?

Predictable Gothic plotlines produced **a "nation of knowing readers"** (Lynch) and enjoyed an immense popularity. 38% of all published novels belonged to this genre. This commodified astonishment is commonly assumed to have anticipated 20th century popular/mass culture. Others ridiculed the social irresponsibility and the unoriginal, formulaic, repetitive nature of the genre coined "a cheap trash of circulating libraries". Historical novelist Walter Scott summed up the gist of the Gothic plotline as follows: "a castle with its eastern wing long uninhabited, and the keys lost, secret and mysterious associations of Rosycrucians and illuminati, with all properties of black cowls, caverns, daggers, and dark lanterns." Indeed the stories of the most popular Gothic novels might sound today ridiculously simplistic because of their absolute disrespect of requirements of credibility.

→ EXERCISE: LISTEN to Franz Schubert's 1814 adaptation of Goethe's poem, Erlking. How does the Gothic theme of the death of a child assailed by a supernatural being gain musical manifestation? To find potential answers and learn more on "Sounds of Horror. The Gothic in Classical Music" read Joseph Camilleri's article in Corymbus. 2016. http://corymbus.co.uk/sounds-of-horror-the-gothic-in-classical-music/

REPRESENTATIVE NOVELS

Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) commonly regarded as the first Gothic novel merged medievalism, terror, and sensationalist romance centred on dysfunctional families, sinful desires, and ominous prophecies in a style that proved to be highly influential of the genre. The anonymous first edition, in line with the popular mock-documentary tradition, presented itself as the (fake) translation of a (fake) 12th century story by a (fake) medieval author. The preface contained an apology for the supernatural events including miracles, visions, necromancy, and dreams) but it also suggested a self-knowing celebration of anarchic imaginative possibilities enabling the novel's making. The novel located in Southern Italy tells the story of lord Manfred and his family terrified by the ancient prophecy "that the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it". The conflicts are initiated by a supernatural event, Conrad, Manfred's sickly son is crushed to death on his wedding day by a gigantic helmet falling down on him from above. Manfred fears that this inexplicable happening might be signalling the realisation of the ancient prophecy and to evade his destiny he decides to marry Conrad's bride Isabella himself while divorcing his wife who failed to give him a proper heir. Isabella flees the villainous tyrant Manfred aided by the portrait of a forefather coming alive to beckon Manfred away, friar Jerome and young Theodore (who is recognised by a marking below his shoulder as Jerome's son) and a mysterious foreign knight who turns out to be her old father (who falls in love with Manfred's daughter Matilda and makes a deal with him to marry each other's daughters). Thinking his own daughter is Isabella, Manfred accidentally stabs her when she is meeting her beloved Theodore. Heartbroken Theodore turns out to be rightful prince of Otranto, he marries Isabella as the only person who can understand his sorrows. Manfred is left to repent, he confesses his crimes and devotes himself to religious life.

Horace Walpole is also famous for **Strawberry Hill House**, a villa near London he had rebuilt in Gothic style that was an architectural prefiguration of the 19th century Gothic revival.

Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) is another quintessential Gothic romance. Even Scott who spoke very derogatively of the genre praised Radcliffe for her "superlative skills in the rendition of visual, natural landscapes" and humans' mysterious kinship with nature, as well as "her deft manipulation of the experience of terror, horror, and wonder." In her posthumously published essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry" (1826) Radcliffe explained her preference for anxious psychological suspense instead of bodily gore, **terror instead of horror**, an omnipresent sense of mystery instead of fast-paced actions, and vague hints at ghostly activity instead of explicit manifestations of the supernatural. Radcliffe became the most highly paid professional writer of the 1790s (in an age when an author received an average of £10 for a manuscript, her publishers bought the copyright for *The Mysteries of Udolpho* for £500). She also became canonised as a major artist of **the female Gothic** genre (a term coined in the 1970s by feminist literary critic Ellen Moers). In her dark stories, the sufferings and struggles of orphaned and innocent young heroines who attempt to flee the abuses of evil and violent patriarchs, malevolent male villains represent the experiences of women within the oppressive patriarchal social structure. The heroine's imprisonment in a castle's underground cellar or dark dungeon is a powerful metaphor for women's domestic incarceration, legal deprivations, lack of political rights, and confinement within marriage, maternity, of tight-laced feminised embodiment. They reflect women's fear of patriarchal oppression, demonisation of her own self-mutilating self-censorship.

In *Mysteries of Udolpho* Emily St Aubert must survive the death of her parents, the machinations of an evil uncle, Signor Montoni, an Italian brigand who tries to trick her out of her inheritance and traps her in a gloomy castle where she must face supernatural terrors. After many frightening and coincidental events happen in the castle, Emily flees with the help of her secret admirer, returns to the estate of her aunt, takes control of the property and is reunited with her beloved Valancourt with whom she shares a mystical love of Nature. Emily's misfortunes mark the origin of a feminist literary consciousness and have influenced many significant women writers from Mary Shelley to the Bronte sisters, who were all impressed by the "prolonged quasi erotic suspense of the heroine's predicament" (Roberts), the relentless will of the heroine fighting the patriarchal antagonists, and the powerful landscapes (grottos, waterfalls, and woods) which counterbalanced the (faux)antiquated settings.

The Mysteries of Udolpho's Gothic style was parodied in **Jane Austen's novel *Northanger Abbey*** (written in 1798 and published in 1818) in which the gothic affinity was a sign of the immaturity, and naive credulousness of the young impressionable heroine. The seventeen-year-old bookworm heroine's overactive imagination is agitated after her reading Radcliffe's novel. She begins to suspect dark mysteries in every corner of the abbey where she lives, and misinterprets her friends and acquaintances as Gothic villains and victims. In the end she must realise that reality eventually might be more down-to-earth and less mystery-ridden than in her favourite books.

→ EXTRACURRICULAR EXERCISE: For an example for the continuation of the female gothic tradition read Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) that criticised the patriarchal medical institutions' mistreatment of women suffering from post-partum depression by the famed rest cure that condemned women to utter passivity, forbid them intellectual exercise like reading, and hence drove them to madness.

Matthew Lewis' *The Monk: A Romance* (1796) is an example of the **male Gothic** specialised in horror, explicit violence, scandalous themes, and quasi pornographic intensities (one can contrast with the more allusive terror effects of the female gothic writerly mode). In 18th century Madrid, Ambrosio a formerly virtuous cleric succumbs to the temptation of beautiful Matilda, an agent of Satan who seduces him in the guise of a monk, he commits violent sexual transgressions, assisted by demons he gets involved in the rape and murder of the innocent Antonia, and to escape execution he signs away his soul in his own blood in a pact he makes with the devil. In the end the devil informs Ambrosio that the women he killed, Elvira and Antonia were his mother and sister respectively, the devil satisfies Ambrosio's wish and releases him from prison but lets eagles rip him apart

and drop him on sharp rocks where he dies in agony, and his corpse is washed into a river. **Charles Maturin's *Melmoth The Wanderer* (1820)** discusses a slightly similar theme, inspired by the mythical themes of the **Faustian pact** with the devil and that of the **Wandering Jew**: a scholar sells his soul to Satan in exchange for prolonging his life with an extra 150 years and searches in vain for someone he could tempt into damnation by making take over the pact for him.

> → EXTRACURRICULAR RESEARCH ACTIVITY: For further readings in Gothic subgenres check the following notions: horror/terror gothic, female gothic, homely gothic, urban gothic, historical gothic, lesbian gothic, children's gothic. How do they deviate from the Gothic origins?

MARY SHELLEY: FRANKENSTEIN, OR THE MODERN PROMETHEUS (1818)

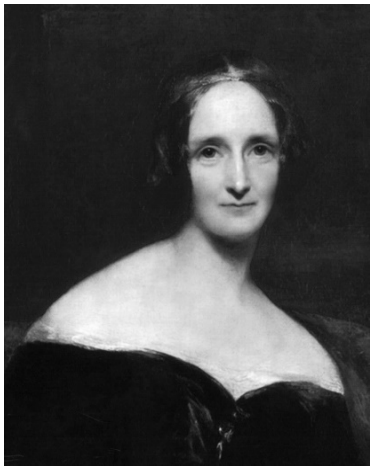
MARY SHELLEY'S BIOGRAPHY

Mary Shelley (née Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin) came from an illustrious family. Her mother, **Mary Wollstonecraft** (1797-1851) was a novelist, educational writer, proto-feminist philosopher, and a propagandist for the rights for women. Her most famous works, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Women: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (1792) made pleas for the fundamental change in society's perception of the function, place, and potential of women. Women were treated as second-rate citizens in era; they did not have the right to vote, to attend public education, to inherit, or to occupy the public sphere in any ways. Wollstonecraft argued for women's essential significance for the nation as the primary caretakers and educators of children constituting the future generations and as potentially equal companions to their husbands instead of passive, objectified, silenced, financially dependent, "relative creatures". After giving birth to her second daughter, Mary she died in puerperal, childbed fever: the experience of the parent abandoning the child, of failed parent-child relationship, and of 'birthing/mothering oneself' through reading, writing, or artistic creativity which act as compensatory substitutes for the lost maternal care permeate her daughter's novel, *Frankenstein*. After Mary Wollstonecraft's death her husband, Godwin published his *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Women* in which he portrayed his wife with love and compassion but also shed light on Wollstonecraft's love affairs (with painter Fuseli among others), her illegitimate children, and suicide attempts – and hence was criticised for "stripping his dead wife naked".

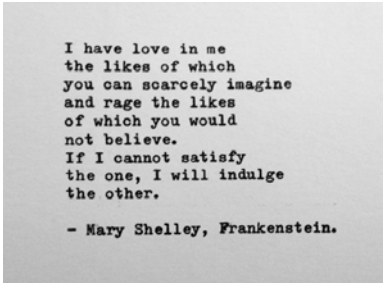
The father, **William Godwin** was a novelist, libertarian philosopher, anarchist journalist and atheist dissenter whose most famous philosophical treatise, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) preached democratic ideals. He claimed that human being was innately good and reason would be sufficient to guide his conduct in the proper direction. He criticised corruptive legal regulations, considered unjust the institution of marriage, the accumulation of property, and punishments. He thought the man is born virtuous and viciousness enters the spirit only as a result of inhumane social regulations and the injustice of others. The idea that people become monstrous only if you treat them monstrously is an idea that surfaces in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

After the death of her mother, Mary received excellent home-schooling from her father, even if as girls they could not attend formal public education, she and her older half-sister Fanny Imlay benefited from the household's immense book collection. Mary was only 16 when she met **Percy Bysshe Shelley**, a young political radical, free thinker poet who visited Godwin's home with his first wife Harriet. They instantly fell in love and eloped to France with Mary's stepsister **Claire Clairmont**. Although Godwin was an advocate of the free love movement, he rejected their relationship (Percy was still married to Harriet with whom he eloped three years before). However, theirs was a lasting romantic union and a mutually inspirational creative partnership: they shared their devotion to literature, languages, arts, free thinking, and ethical vegetarianism. Two years after the elopement, and succeeding to Harriet's and Fanny's suicides, they married with Godwin's consent and spent the rest of their lives together with travels (to France and Italy) and writing. They indulged in each other's company although Mary could never understand how can Percy harmonise his devotion to 'one true love' and his embracing of free love ideals (she accepted his extramarital affairs but refused his attempts to share her with his friend Thomas Hogg) and she also had to suffer repeatedly the death of three of her four infant children. Percy prematurely died at 29 (his boat caught in a storm, he drowned in sea in Livorno); afterwards Mary tirelessly promoted the work of her late husband, brought up their only son, and wrote a few more novels – including *The Last Man* a pioneering science fiction novel on human apocalypse in the distant future, "The Mortal Immortal" a speculative short fiction on the damnation of eternal life, and *Mathilda* centred on the theme on incest – although these never approached the success of *Frankenstein.* She died of brain cancer in 1851, aged 53.

→ EXERCISE: WATCH National Theatre's brief documentary on Mary Shelley's biography:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4p96vqI3zA
Which events were highlighted as the most influential episodes of her life?



Richard Rothwell's portrait of Mary Shelley was shown at the Royal Academy in 1840, accompanied by lines from Percy Shelley's poem *The Revolt of Islam* calling her a "child of love and light".



THE ORIGIN STORY

The **origin story** of Mary Shelley's most famous work, *Frankenstein* is legendary. During the travels succeeding to her elopement from home with the love of her life **Percy Shelley**, in the summer of 1816 they travelled to Switzerland, to spend some time in **Villa Diodati** on the board of Lake Geneva, in the company of the scandalous Romantic poet **Lord Byron** whose passionate fleeting affair with **Claire Clairmont** left her pregnant and obsessed with him. Due to cold and extremely rainy climatic conditions of the "Year without a Summer" they were forced to stay in-doors and one stormy night decided to organise a ghost-story writing competition. Each of them wrote their spine-chilling tales of horror, Dr John Polidori, Byron's assistant came up with ***The Vampyre***, a dark tale about a bloodsucker that later exercised a strong impact on Bram Stoker's novel ***Dracula***. 19 years old Mary initially had no idea what to write, but later during the night she allegedly saw before her mind's eyes as if in a "waking dream" a "pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together." That thing proved to be a sentient and sapient monster brought to life by young Victor Frankenstein's scientific experiments, abandoned by his maker because of his hideous looks, then taking revenge on his 'fallible father' and the whole humanity expulsing him. The success of this Gothic horror science fiction novel would endure long after the other writings produced that summer night had faded.

> Night waned upon this talk, and even the witching hour had gone by, before we retired to rest. When I placed my head on my pillow, I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. My imagination, unbidden, possessed and guided me, gifting the successive images that arose in my mind with a vividness far beyond the usual bounds

> of reverie. **I saw — with shut eyes, but acute mental vision — I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together.** I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life and stir with an uneasy, half-vital motion. Frightful must it be, for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handywork, horror-stricken. He would hope that, left to itself, the slight spark of life which he had communicated would fade; that this thing, which had received such imperfect animation, would subside into dead matter; and he might sleep in the belief that the silence of the grave would quench for ever the transient existence of the hideous corpse which he had looked upon as the cradle of life. He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes.
>
> I opened mine in terror.
> (Author's Introduction to Frankenstein, her recollection of her waking-dream of Victor Frankenstein and his monstrous creation)

→ EXTRACURRICULAR RESEARCH: LOOK at the digitised manuscript of Frankenstein at the Shelley Godwin Archive at: http://shelleygodwinarchive.org/contents/frankenstein/

Two years after its conception *Frankenstein* was published anonymously and even when Mary Shelley's name was indicated on the cover from the second edition on, many readers doubted her to be the genuine author of the text because of the horrific nature of the story. Even Mary Shelley asked herself in her introduction to the third edition in 1831: "How then I, a young girl, came to think of to dilate upon so very hideous an idea?" First, many assumed **Percy Shelley to be the actual author** given that he wrote the original preface to *Frankenstein* along with a positive review of the book, and the subtitle of the novel *The Modern Prometheus* resonated with his obsession with the mythological hero who stole fire from Gods to improve the life of mankind and about whom he published a lyrical drama entitled *Prometheus Unbound* in 1820. Some critics claimed that Frankenstein's "hideous progeny" is a self-ironic proto-feminist metafictional commentary on the disastrous consequences/output of **monstrous female imagination**, a dark vision on what happens if women usurp the male privilege of authorship. Mary Shelley's gothic horror novel was deemed monstrous by contemporaries for contradicting the social codes of docile, angelic, sentimental femininity.

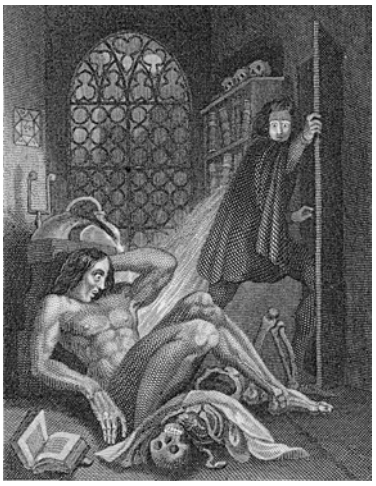


Illustration by Theodor von Holst
on the frontispiece of the 1831 edition

1931 Film Poster of *Frankenstein*
starring Boris Karloff

INTERTEXTUAL TIES, INSPIRATIONS

Frankenstein **intertextually fused a variety of different traditions**. Initially, the writing competition for which Mary invented it was inspired by *Fantasmagoriana* (1812), a collection of ghost stories translated from the German into French, the friends read out for each other at Villa Diodati; but the novel also incorporated the Promethean myth in Ovid's retelling, and paid a nod to seminal texts of British fantastic literature, including John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" and William Beckford's *Vathek: An Arabian Tale*. These works share the theme of *hubris*, a popular plot device of Greco-Roman tragedies, that denotes the excessive ambition of a human **overreacher** character who rebels against the rule of God, usurps divine privileges, to be duly punished by the retributive justice of nemesis. Prometheus steals fire from Gods and then is tortured eternally as he is tied to a rock and a vulture tears out each day his liver that grows back each night. Vathek denies his faith, aims to own supernatural powers, and is banished to wander aimlessly in hell. The Ancient Mariner shoots the albatross bird, a divine messenger, and must witness the death of the crew of his ship and as the sole survivor must go on telling his tale until the end of times. Milton's epic concerns the fall of man, the temptation of Adam and Eve with fruit from the Tree of Knowledge by the fallen angel Satan and their expulsion from Eden. The hubris of ambitious young chemist Dr Frankenstein is the alchemist's dream to create a human being under laboratory conditions by means of a scientific experiment and hence usurp the divine act of creation.

PLOT OVERVIEW

Although Victor Frankenstein snatches from morgues and graveyards the most beautiful body parts he sews together, and animates with the help of electricity, the creature turns out to be a hideous progeny, a loathsome wretch that repulses his maker who abandons and dismisses the Creature when it awakens. The monster goes in search of his missing father. He hides near a country cottage, learns to speak by listening to the family who live there, and teaches himself to read with the help of a copy of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Bitterly disappointed when humans flee him because of his monstrous looks, he swears revenge on his creator for bringing him into a world that hates him, and tracking Victor's whereabouts on the basis of his diary, he strangles Victor's younger brother. A maid is falsely accused and executed for the murder, and Victor suffers because he knows the identity of the killer but can tell it neither to his family nor to the police. The Creature then meets Victor in the mountains, tells him his story, and begs him to create for him a mate, for all living things deserve happiness they can find in companionship. Although the Creature threatens him with destroying his family unless he fulfils his wish, Victor eventually tears apart the female monster he starts making for fear that the pair could procreate a monstrous species that could endanger all humankind. The Creature is enraged and swears that he will be with Victor on Victor's wedding night. He keeps his promise and assassinates first Victor's best friend then his bride. Victor vows to devote the rest of his life to finding the monster, he chases him northward toward polar regions, where meets Walton. We learn the remainder of the story from Walton's letters to his sister: Victor dies during the expedition, the monster weeps over his corpse, laments over his solitude, pain, hatred, and remorse and disappears among the icebergs to die.

SCIENTIFIC BACKGROUND

The creation of the monster is a complex metaphor. The novel can be regarded as a bitter **science-fiction story** that provides a commentary on the possible dangers of technological progress and industrial revolution. The fire Prometheus steals from Gods can brighten up and warm human lives but it can also annihilate them. (For the pacifist vegetarian Shelleys the meat cooked over the fire allows the transition from herbivorous to carnivorous lifestyle and holds ominous implications.) Dr Frankenstein's scientific methods mimic 19th century (pseudo)scientific endeavours including galvanism (the stimulation of muscle contractions by electrical currents for therapeutical purposes or even for attempts to reanimate dead bodies), animal magnetism or mesmerism (attempts to channel the body's magnetic fluids through "the laying of hands"), hypnotism, and daring experiments with the sublime force of electricity. In an era when

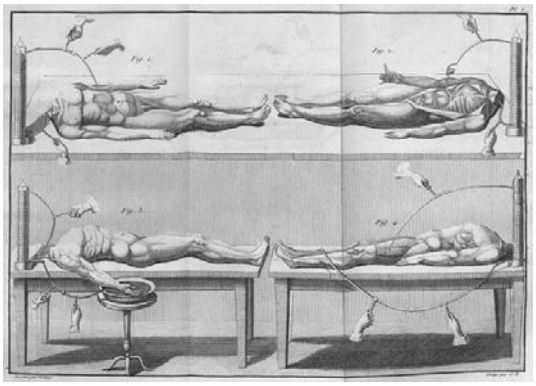
religion, and especially the institutional church power, was losing its unanimous influence, thinkers became increasingly preoccupied with the 'essence that animates life' and many associated 'the spark of being' with electricity. England's 1751 Murder Act allowed the bodies of executed murderers to be used in scientific experimentation without their consent prior to death, therefore these morally dubious endeavours could use human corpses instead of animal carcasses in their research. The mad scientist figure, a stock character of Gothic fiction, also reflected some of the period's fundamental anxieties projected on the surface of the anatomised body.

Besides commenting on contemporary phenomena, *Frankenstein* was also inspired by the tradition of pre-scientific occultism, famous alchemists like Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus or Albertus Magnus, and their attempts to achieve natural wonders by scientific means: to gain the secret of eternal life, turn mercury into gold (the philosopher's stone), call to life a homunculus (a miniature, fully formed human created in an alembic), or animate inanimate matter (see tradition of Golem).

→ EXERCISE: Watch a video on galvanism at: https://study.com/academy/lesson/galvanism-in-frankenstein.html
How have late-18th century pseudo-scientific endeavours influenced Shelley's fiction?

→ EXTRACURRICULAR RESEARCH: Read about "the real electric Frankensteins" of the 1800s and Andrew Ure's infamous anatomical and reanimation demonstrations. Consult Frankenstein's Science edited by Goodall and Knellwolf, 2016 and Harkup's Making the Monster. The Science behind Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, 2018.

→ THINK of how you can account for the postmillennial revival of interest in 18th century sciences, pseudo-sciences, and science- fiction?



Experiments with headless cadavers, 1804

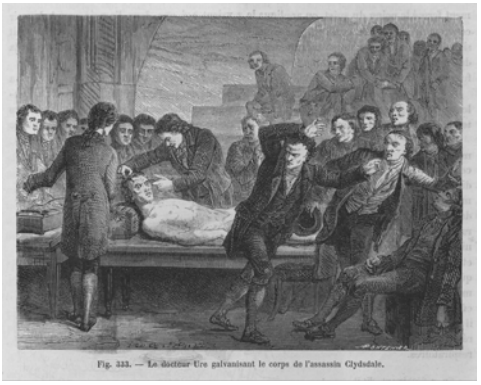


Fig. 333. — Le docteur Ure galvanisant le corps de l'assassin Clydsdale.

Horrified scientists watch Dr Ure make the corpse of a criminal twitch with electricity

MORAL PHILOSOPHICAL, ETHICAL QUESTIONS

Frankenstein deals with a major **ethical, philosophical question** regarding the nature and the **cultural construction of monstrosity**. Dr Victor Frankenstein's creature does not have a name, once he is reanimated to life he is immediately abandoned by his maker who is repulsed by his hideous looks. ("**I beheld the wretch — the miserable monster whom I had created."**) Throughout the novel, this technologically-conceived being is identified by the horrified humans he meets with dehumanizing labels such as a "creature", "monster", "demon", wretch", "abortion", "fiend" and "it", whereas when addressing his maker he refers to himself as "the Adam of your labours" and "elsewhere as someone who would have [been] your Adam", but is instead "your fallen angel." In readers' responses to the text and popular cultural discourse the names of the maker and the creature are systematically confused: the nameless monster is very often denoted by the name of the doctor who calls him to life. This confusion perfectly encapsulates the moral dilemma of the book: perhaps the revengeful, raging beast would not have turned violent had he not been abandoned by his 'father' nor rejected by humankind. Should not the careless parent be held responsible for the monstrosities committed by his neglected child? Should not the able-bodied majority who define the normative criteria of acceptable cultural embodiment (and hence the systematic frame of social exclusion) be blamed for the misery and rage of the rejected disabled people? **This dilemma has interesting implications from various perspectives:**

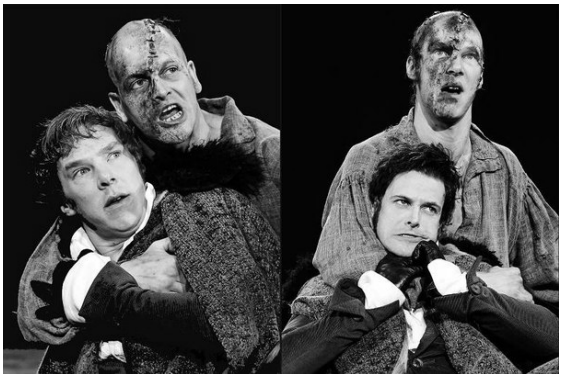
- In the questioning of the monster's monstruosity we can discover the **Romantic belief in the inherent benevolence of human being and**

the role of culture in its corruption → hence the assumption that monsters are not born so but are created by social exclusion,

- This ties in with the **postmodernist social constructionist view of disability** arguing that social circumstances unable to cater for the needs of differently abled bodies and prejudiced cultural evaluations turn impairments' biological deficiencies into disability grounded in discriminatory practices. (see Mossman)
- The making of the creature also resonates with the **ambiguous affects of aesthetic experience**: the artistic creation process necessarily results in pleasure and disillusion, since artistic re-presentation tries to inefficiently substitute for the lost presence, words/images cannot grant immediate access to the thing itself, all art is compensation, something beautiful is yearned for but the result rarely satisfies the creator, is this really what I meant to say?, words/image as insufficient means of communication, shift between reality – experience – re-presentation – (mis)interpretation
- The novel plays with **idea of the Gothic double**: both Victor and the creature are monstrous in their own ways, and even captain Walton whose letters to his sister provide an epistolary frame to the novel, impersonates a doppelganger of Frankenstein since he is driven on the Northern polar expedition by the same hunger for knowledge and fame as the doctor.
- Milton's epic about the fall of mankind *Paradise Lost* is one of *Frankenstein*'s major texts, but Mary Shelley's **challenges the conventional, Biblical distinctions** and suggests that the positions of God, Satan, and Adam are relative or exchangeable. Victor as a creator usurps the role of God by making an artificial human being but his irresponsible power leads to chaos and he seems just as divine as demonic given that it is his experiment that unleashes the monster upon the world. The creature refers to himself both as Victor's Adam and a Fallen Angel, and hence toys again with Miltonian tropes in a destabilised religious framework. The question of sin and punishment, of soaring and fall, of the perfectionability and corruptibility of human being constitute decisive moral-philosophical, theological dilemmas of the text.
- Victor Frankenstein commits the **hubris of playing God**, but a **moral-philosophical question** might be: Is his fatal sin creating the Creature in the first place, or is his sin failing to take care of and raise the Creature, instead casting him out into the wilderness? Whose monstrosity is

at stake if the creature acts violently towards humans because this is the only way he knows how to respond to a world which has shown him nothing else?

→ EXERCISE No6: WATCH the trailer for The Royal National Theatre's 2011 stage adaptation of *Frankenstein*. How can you explain director Danny Boyle's decision to have the two lead actors (Johnny Lee Miller and Benedict Cumberbatch) alternating in the roles of Victor and the Creature? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aY85IzWexWo



the 2011 stage adaptation of Frankenstein

MOTIFS OF FAILED PARENTING

The novel also has haunting autobiographical implications. The theme of "**failed parenting**," of "parent abandoning the child" – Victor deserting his creature – evokes the pains of half-orphaned child Mary whose mother died in childbirth and who spent her childhood missing maternal care, reading books by her mother's grave, finding foster-parenthood in literature, as legend has it. The theme also resonates with the trauma of the teenage mother Mary who lost her premature illegitimate offspring in Spring 1815 (three more of her babies died later due to miscarriage or infant malady). Moreover, her partner Percy Bysshe Shelley – pennamed Victor! – abandoned young Mary during depressive periods of her pregnancy and left her with her stillborn child to elope with Claire for a fleeting love affair.

From a **feminist psychoanalytical perspective, traces of matrophobia** (a fear and loathing of motherhood) permeate the novel. For Victor the greatest of all horrors would be the creation of a feminine monster whose birthing of a deformed species could realise the nightmare of an **invasion fantasy** (a foreign race destroys the human species). The graphic description of Victor's fever dream of his mother's rotting corpse and the abject murder of his bride by the

monster on Victor's wedding night (uncannily reminiscent of Fuseli's painting) offer further textual evidence for the matrophobia thesis. (To this pathological diagnosis we could add both necrophilia and necrophobia if we think of the resurrection and the abandonment of the monster.)

Feminist literary critics read *Frankenstein* as a birth myth that simultaneously fictionalises maternal traumas related to childbirth and female writers anxieties related to the male privilege of authorship. The novel combines the dreadful Gothic quest of the missing mother with the Romantic quest for origins (see Mulvey-Roberts): it is a dark fantasy about "**bibliogenesis**" daringly asking "Where do books/babies/monsters come from?" (see Hoeveler)

FURTHER SYMBOLICAL MEANINGS

The monster as an outcome of a dangerous dark desire for forbidden knowledge has a wide range of possible interpretations.

- As we have pointed out above, the waking dream of monster-manufacture in Mary Shelley's preface can be related to the troubling experience of **awakening sexuality** and can have **autobiographical implications** with regards the author's **traumatic life-experience of motherhood** (her mother's death in childbed and her own failed teen-age pregnancies) (see Gilbert and Gubar).
- The creature incarnates **disability rejected as monstrous** by the 'normal' society that defines the criteria of culturally meaningful, acceptable, able embodiment.
- The creature's **technologically-, scientifically enhanced artificial body** also points in the direction of postmodern notion of malleable, reimaginable 'designer' bodies (eg. prosthetic implants, plastic surgery, body modification practices, see Mossman)
- From a poscolonial perspective, the monster can represent the **racial other** in line with the Western stereotype of the exotic/erotic/evil Oriental or even a mixed-race person torn between different culture. (see Spivak) His large stature and dark appearance is stereotypical of the description of black people in the travel and adventure literature circulating at the time and Frankenstein's chasing his monster all over the Arctic resembles a slave driver trying to hunt down a runaway slave (Malchow).
- The monster can also symbolise the **fear of the working classes**, the alienated proletariat masses (which is interesting to compare to Dracula's displaced aristocrat figure).

- The monster can also embody **revengeful Mother Nature** who rebels against the Enlightenment rationality impersonated by Victor's figure.
- Yet other interpretations read Victor's relation to scientist colleague friend and his creature in the terms of a **male homosocial bonding** gone wrong, turned into murderous rejection. (see Mellor) The tension of **forbidden same-sex desire** permeates the claustrophobic space of the laboratory, whereas Victor's solitary endeavours to create a hideous progeny with his bare hands are connected to the non-normative, 'self-polluting' sexual practice of **masturbation** (see Crockett).

INCOMPATIBLE NARRATIVE VOICES

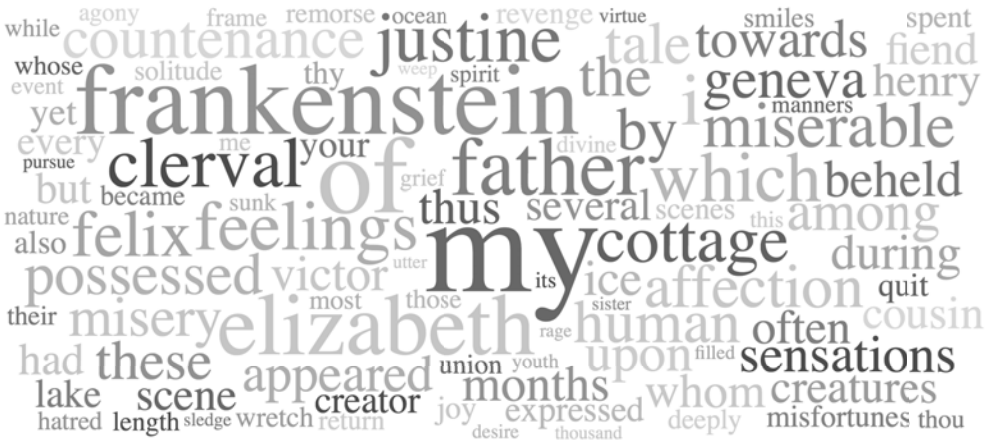
The complexity of the text is most obviously demonstrated by its combination of a variety of presumably **incompatible narrative voices**. It borders on

- the absurd (the creature learns to write by eavesdropping on family)
- the genuine pathos (the monster's loneliness, existential drama)
- the sublime (the grandeur of Trans-Siberian track, vastness of Northern Polar region)
- the abject (dream of dead mother's rotting cropse, fear/fascination by my hideous progeny, matrophobia)
- the uncanny invading everyday life (secrets of biological vs mechanical reproduction) (oscillates between suspense of terror gothic & gross violence of horror gothic) (the crisis of nuclear family) (the fear of the other: racial difference, working classes, non-heteronormative reproductive sexuality, industrial progress) (a cataclysm violating the order of Mother Nature)
- the trauma narrative (autobiographical implications, Victor's nervous breakdowns)
- the scientific (a proto-science fiction novel)
- the sensational (sacrilege, murder, revenge)

→ EXERCISE: WATCH a 2003 BBC documentary on Frankenstein at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73im4ovhd0g

→ How do the ideas presented in the documentary relate to the WordCloud below?

WordCloud for Frankenstein prepared with Meandre Dunning LogLikelihood algorithm



MEMORABLE QUOTES

One of the novel's major feats is the contrasting of the perspective of the scientist who is repulsed by his creature he deems monstrous and inhuman because of his unusual bodily form and the perspective of the monster entrapped by his hideous anatomy who experiences very human thoughts, emotions, and desires, and articulates an existential crisis, a yearning for empathy, and a pain of abandonment all human readers can easily relate to.

FRANKENSTEIN'S DISILLUSION, NIGHTMARE, RE-ENCOUNTER WITH THE MONSTER AND HIS INHUMANE ABANDONMENT OF HIS PROGENY

"The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. **I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart.** Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room and continued a long time traversing my bed-chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. At length lassitude succeeded to the tumult I had before endured; and I threw myself on the bed in my clothes, endeavouring to seek a few moments of forgetfulness. But it was in vain: I slept, indeed, but I was

disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed: when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch -- the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed down stairs. I took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house which I inhabited; where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life."

THE MONSTER'S SOLILOQUY, A DEHUMANISED CREATURE'S HUMAN CONFESSION

"I seek not a fellow feeling in my misery. No sympathy may I ever find. When I first sought it, it was the love of virtue, the feelings of happiness and affection with which my whole being overflowed, that I wished to be participated. But now that virtue has become to me a shadow, and that happiness and affection are turned into bitter and loathing despair, in what should I seek for sympathy? I am content to suffer alone while my sufferings shall endure; when I die, I am well satisfied that abhorrence and opprobrium should load my memory. Once my fancy was soothed with dreams of virtue, of fame, and of enjoyment. Once I falsely hoped to meet with beings who, pardoning my outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was capable of unfolding. I was nourished with high thoughts of honour and devotion. But now crime has degraded me beneath the meanest animal. No guilt, no mischief, no malignity, no misery, can be found comparable to mine. When I run over the frightful catalogue of my sins, I cannot believe that I am the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness. But it is even so; the fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am alone."

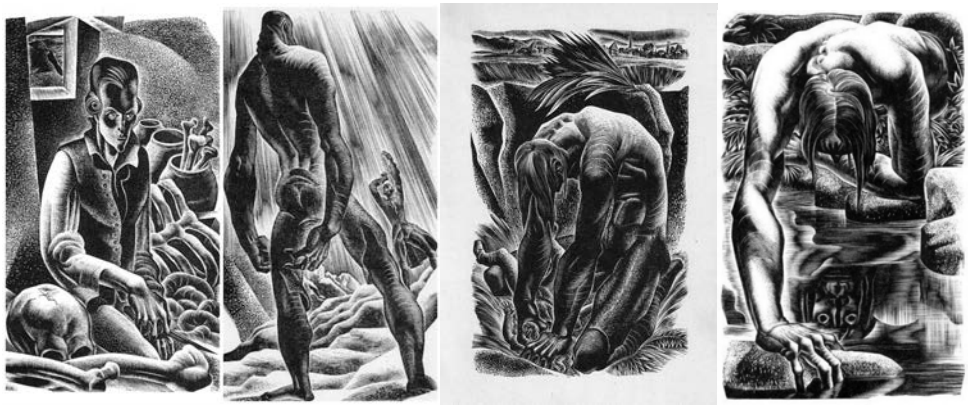
"Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant, but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When

I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?

I cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge. **My person was hideous and my stature gigantic. What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them."**

"I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers — their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions: but how was I terrified, when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification."

→ EXERCISE: Collect the expressions by which Victor and the Monster describe themselves, their thoughts and feelings. How do they relate to one another?



Lynd Ward's woodcuts illustrated a 1934 edition of *Frankenstein*, published in New York by Harrison Smith and Robert Haas

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Think about how the following notions become decisive generic features of Gothic fiction:

-uncanny atmosphere

-moral philosophical dilemmas related to overreacher character's Faustian deal,

-traumatic bodily experiences & psychic turmoil, (eg. embodied by the double),

-scientific anxieties (concerning the (un)knowability of reality) staged by the mad scientist figure?

2.) Enumerate arguments for why you can interpret the Creature as both monster and victim.

3.) What are the differences between terror and horror gothic?

4.) Multiple choice test (occasionally more than one correct answer)

i. Gothic fiction rarely ever features the following stock character type: A. male villain figures B. cursed families C. heroic female figures D. damsels in distress E. supernatural characters

ii. Gothic fiction is a subgenre of Romantic literature. A True, B. False

iii. A contemporary Gothic text would be: A. Stephenie Meyers' Twilight, B. JK Rowling's Harry Potter, C. Suzanne Collins' Hunger Games, D. Tim Burton's Corpse Bride, E. Star Wars franchise

iv. Gothic tales typically blend otherworldly and worldly concepts such as: A. The Supernatural and the Psychological, B. The Old and the New, C. Nature and Machinery, D. Reason and Religion, E. Fleshly Desire and Platonic love

v. Gothic artists were inspired by the architecture of which period:
A. Prehistoric cave dwellings, B. Medieval castles and cathedrals, C. Renaissance gardens D. Victorian villas

vi. Which texts inspired Frankenstein?: A. The myth of Medusa, B. Milton's Paradise Lost, C. The myth of Prometheus, D. Shakespeare's Hamlet, E. Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, F. Beckford's Vathek, G. The Biblical story of the Cain and Abel, H. Homer's Ilyad

5.) Match the names with the numbers

A. Jane Austen, B. Mary Shelley, C. Horace Walpole, D. Melmoth, E. Henry Fuseli, F. Anne Radcliff

1. Strawberry Hill, 2. female Gothic, 3. the Wandering Jew, 4. Gothic parody, 5. Villa Diodati, 6. Nightmare

ANSWERS to EXERCISE No1: terrifying, archaic, supernatural, suspenseful, haunted, persecuted, unspeakable, ghostly, villainous, mysterious, maddening, frenzy, repellent, evil, lurking, fascinating, unshapely and graceful, grotesque and sublime, evil and good, dark and light, exciting

ANSWERS to EXERCISE No2: Punter provides various reasons for the romantic fascination with antiquated spaces. While castles represent residues of a dark, feudal aristocratic past, monasteries and convents are loci of catholic religion, in opposition to predominant Protestantism. It seems impossible to find one's way out of unmappable sites, underground labyrinthine spaces, trapdoors and forgotten, cobwebbed corners, which, stage claustrophobic scenarios of imprisonment, and represent trouble psychic realms, unconscious dreads (like the fear of being buried alive)

ANSWERS to EXERCISE No3: The low notes and the fast pace express the desperate flight from the Erlking (representing Death) and a feeling of supernatural dread. The psychological tension filling the ballad results from the young boy's sense of the imminent danger of Death and the father's reluctance to believe him, and the paternal misinterpretation of the Erlking's voice as the sounds of a thunderstorm. The song comprises four personalities: the boy's heightening hysteria is signaled by his rising vocal pitch, the father's voice remains steady and lower in pitch, while the Erl-King's voice is first sweetly beguiling, then takes on a mad, menacing edge. The series of staccato chords suggest the pounding pace of the horse and lend urgency to the narrative.

ANSWERS to EXERCISE No4: Extraordinary family background: atheist father, feminist mother. Historical background: aftermath of war. Economical background: industrial revolution's unrest. Era's scientific discoveries. Personal encounter with Shelley and Byron. Visit to Switzerland, the New Republic.

ANSWERS to EXERCISE No5: *Frankenstein* was inspired by the era's popular yet controversial scientific assumption propagated by Dr Galvani's work who suggested that electricity could reanimate dead tissue and possibly restore life.

ANSWERS to EXERCISE No6: The alternating casting performs an ethically invested play with the relativisation of monstrosity. The creature the scientist calls to life is not evil per se it is just the paternal abandonment and the social exclusion that makes it cruel. This ties in with the Romantic understanding of moral corruption as an outcome of social injustice, hypocrisy, alienation and disinterest resulting from technological progress. It is telling that in today's popular cultural, the name Frankenstein is used more frequently to refer to the nameless creature than to the doctor who actually bears this name.

ANSWERS to EXERCISE No7: Frankenstein is a dark tale born out a nightmare. Mary's beloved father, Godwin implanted in her daughter the scientific interest in galvanism's experiments with electricity and anti-establishment anarchist philosophy – hence the cursed paternal heritage a major motif of the text. The creature and the doctor are alike in their misery. Etc.

ANSWERS to EXERCISE No8: Victor: hard work, deprivation of health and rest, ardent desire for scientific success, breathless horror and disgust ↔ Monster: hope for happiness and affection turned into bitter and loathing despair, lonely suffering, false hopes, feels guilty and miserable → The two are alike in their feeling isolated from the rest of humanity, in feeling misunderstood, lonesome, disillusioned, and broken-hearted.

ANSWERS to FINAL EXERCISE

4.) Multiple Choice test: i.C, ii. A, iii. A & D, iv. A, D, v. B, vi. B, C, F

5.) A4, B5, C1, D3, E6, F2

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UNIT 3
WILLIAM BLAKE'S POETRY

AIM OF THIS UNIT: In this unit you will learn about the art and life of the most influential lyricist of the Romantic period: poet, prophet, painter, printmaker, William Blake. His *Songs of Innocence and Experience* and his *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* will be in the centre of our attention as perfect examples for the Romantic dialectic imagination (studied in Unit 1) while *Vala, or the Four Zoas* will illustrate the functioning of mythopoetic creativity.

KEY WORDS & TOPICS: visionary poetry, the third inward Eye, mythopoeia, intermedial ingenuity, illuminated printing, relief etching, Plato's cave allegory, Swedenborgian society, a higher level of innocence, Proverbs of Hell, Urizen, Luva, Tarmas, Los, Albion, Romantic dialectic thought, "Without contraries there is no progress," "All Art is Imagination"

COMPULSORY READINGS: William Blake's "The Lamb", "The Tyger", "The Sick Rose", "The Chimney Sweeper", "Little Girl Lost", "Little Girl Found"

THE ART & LIFE OF WILLIAM BLAKE: POET, PROPHET, PAINTER, PRINTMAKER

PROPHETIC IMAGINATION

William Blake (1757–1827) is renowned today as the earliest and most original '**poet prophet**' of the Romantic era. Although he remained largely neglected and even dismissed as mad during his own lifetime, posterity acknowledged the creative **intermedial ingenuity** of his work as a poet, engraver, painter, printmaker, as well as the philosophical, mystical undercurrents, and the **mythopoetic** powers of his visionary oeuvre and prophetic imagination.

The son of a hosiery merchant, Blake grew up in modest financial circumstances but a relative intellectual, spiritual liberty. He was home-schooled by his deeply religious Moravian mother with his five siblings, and grateful for having been left to remain a "child of Nature", he later wrote "Thank God I never was sent to school/ To be Flogd into following the Style of a Fool[.]" His life and work were permeated by an **intense spiritualism** due to the visions which constituted an integral part of his life from early childhood. The fact that his family were

dissenters from the Church of England – probably Baptists – meant that his religious views were developed in an atmosphere of inspiration, excitement, and revelation, contrary to established church's more sober, reasonable form of faith. Allegedly, he was only four years old when he saw God's head appear in a window, and later on witnessed Ezekiel in the fields, along with "a tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars." His wife once confessed to a friend that "I have very little of Mr Blake's company, he is always in Paradise".

His artistic goal became to **capture these visions** in poems and drawings. Blake's prophetic spiritual views clearly violated the Christian dogma of the Church of England. In "A Vision of the Last Judgment" he called the Creator of the World a very Cruel Being, referred to God as Nobodaddy or Urizen, and celebrated Satan, the Fallen Angel as a revolutionary spirit. For him, Jesus Christ was a supremely creative being, above dogma, logic, and morality: a symbolical embodiment of the vital, pre-lapsarian unity between humanity and divinity whose crucified bodily pain and joy of resurrection could help us to reexplore 'natural desires' conventionally prohibited by the Church.

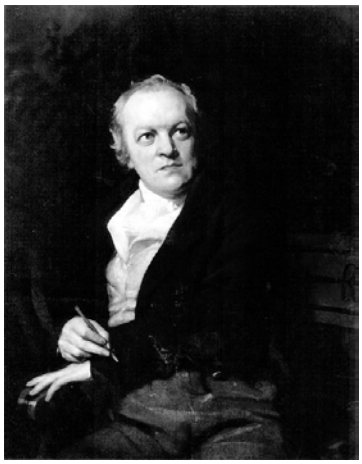
His religious beliefs bordered on a **pantheistic worldview** that sees divine presence abound in every element and event of the natural universe, regardless of institutional hierarchisation of sanctity. In his "Auguries of Innocence," he attested a sensitivity familiar to us today from Buddhism, he wanted:

> To see a World in a Grain of Sand
> And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour.

Blake identified poetry with prophetic vision and believed that its aim was "to open the immortal Eyes of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought". He celebrated the **'Third Eye' of Imagination**, the inward look of visionary insight that allows the poet to transcend superficial mundane ocular perception, to see beyond surface reality, and to grasp the immanent Ideal, to get in touch with the infinite totality of being beyond mundane visual experience. As he put it, "I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative eye any more than I would Question a window concerning a Sight. I look thro' it & not with it." He believed that if we look with reason we shall only see ourselves but if we look with imagination we shall embark on exploring infinity. He explained his visionary view of the world in the following way: "'What,' it will be Questioned, 'when the sun rises do you not see a round disc of fire somewhat like a guinea?' Oh! no, no! I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!'"

Legend has it, that Blake deceased at 70 (of an undiagnosed disease) as a true visionary: on his deathbed "His eyes Brighten'd and he burst out Singing of the things he saw in Heaven." His wife believed that afterwards she was paid regular visits by "Mr Blake's" ghost whom she kept consulting about selling original manuscripts.

Blake "did not yield to Jesus but created Jesus in his own image" (Kazin). His quest for the infinite conflicted with the guilt of the finite man. He was a prophet who was not redeemed by his own prophecy: he gradually grew uncertain of his visionary powers and remained a disturbed split personality, a divided self, and in this sense a prophet of the condition of the modern man.



Thomas Phillips. *Portrait of Blake*, 1807

William Blake, *Elohim Creating Adam*, 1795

→ EXTRACURRICULAR RESEARCH ACTIVITY: Watch the Ashmolean Museum's brief documentary on Blake's visionary work at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IH-6R0XaGc

→ CHECK the various editions at the William Blake Archive at www.blakearchive.org Compare the different covers of Songs of Innocence and Experience. How did Blake choose to visually represent Innocence & Experience? How did his style evolve? In what ways were his relief etchings different from his commercial works?

SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Blake's aesthetic, philosophical, and spiritual agenda to look beyond the common-sense world of appearances and explore the eternal, divine realm of infinite Truth and Beauty is partly **indebted to the Bible**. In particular, the ***Book of Revelations*** focused on the events to come after the Apocalypse and the Last Judgment, and Biblical visionary passages like the verse in the Corinthians commented the prophecy of clear-sightedness: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

Blake was also profoundly inspired by the mystical, philosophical ideas of Swedish theologian Emanuel Swedenborg, the **Swedenborgian Society** and the New Church, a religious movement developed from Swedenborg's writings which awaited the second coming of Christ, worshipped God in only one person, urged all to cooperate in repentance for the regeneration of lives so that all human beings can become angels in Heaven, and most importantly suggested spiritual awakening can be reached through divine visions, and conversations with angels. Blake criticised the institutionalised religion of Catholic Church as mind-numbing and obsessed with power, and believed that true worship was private communion with the spirit, a gift of individual, imaginative, spiritual exercise.

The search for an immanent ideal beneath the superficial surface-reality also resonates with Greek philosopher **Plato's famous Cave Allegory**. Plato explains the limited/manufactured nature of human sense perceptions and the resulting misinterpretation of reality by a metaphorical analogy: throughout all their lives people are imprisoned in an underground cave, deprived of light, with only a bonfire they cannot see behind their back, and chained to the wall of a cave, they are watching shadows projected on the walls, and mistake these shadows (reflections of objects moving in front of the fire) for reality. Were they to miraculously release themselves from bondage, they would have trouble in making sense of the Sun, as an entity from an incomprehensible, higher reality, radically different from the one they have grown familiar with. The realm of pure form, pure fact, and pure imagination, therefore, is not that far from human beings, yet it seems impossible to reach because of our being enchained by social norms, customs, morals, and reason. Nevertheless, the acquisition of this eternal realm of infinite realm of ideals is the aim of Blake's art. His guiding principle is the Platonic idea: "a philosopher recognises that before philosophy, his soul was a veritable prisoner fast bound within his body… and that instead of investigating reality by itself and in itself it is compelled to peer through the bars of its prison"

The complexity of Blake's prophetic poetry is illustrated by the **kaleidoscopic multiplicity of his inspirational sources**. He claimed that "All Art is Inspiration" and gained stimulus for his artistic endeavours from his own and his deeply religious mother's hallucinatory visions, Biblical prophecies, esoteric writings of German mysticism and the Swedenborgian society, Platonic philosophy's ideas of immanence, as well as the passionate ambitions of the French and American Revolutionary Movements which fought against all institutionalised forms of oppression: the political tyranny, the dogmatic despotism of Church fathers, rationality's rule over freedom of thought and imagination. In a typically Romantic vein, Blake was aware of the gap between the transient, common world of appearances and the infinite realm of Truth and beauty which man can only perceive by means of imagination, the vehicle of poetic and prophetic inspiration.

A SYNTHESIS OF CONTRARIES

INTRODUCING SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

Blake's most popular work to date is perhaps ***Songs of Innocence and Experience Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul*** (1794), an illustrated collection of two sequences of poems published in one volume. (It appeared in two phases, Blake printed and illuminated the first volume with *Songs of Innocence* in 1789 and then five years later complemented the set with new *Songs of Experience* and published all these poems bound in one volume.) As the subtitle suggests the two sequences map contradictory states of the human soul in pairs of poem which stand in a dialogic relationship with one another. However, Innocence and Experience, "The Lamb" and "The Tyger", "The Divine Image" and "The Human Abstract" are not just opposing elements of the Romantic dialectics but constitute thesis and antithesis which Blake fuses with a visionary wisdom into a higher-level synthesis that proves the divine design, the interconnectedness of all things.

Innocence and Experience represent human being's moral, psychological, and physiological conditions which echo on a Biblical level Milton's existential-mythical states of Edenic and Post-lapsarian (after the Fall) being, and are also concomitant with the stages of human maturation marking the move from Childhood's pure-sightedness, vitality, and hope to the Adult world's socio-political compromises, corruption, inhibition and fears. The complementariness of the contrary states are emphasised by the recurring titles repeated with or without a variation: "Infant Joy" (SI) is followed by "Infant Sorrow" (SE), "The Shepherd"'s praising tongue and the "Nurse's Song" (SI) by "The Voice of the Ancient Bard" (SE), and both sequences include poems of little girls and little

boys lost and found. The simple yet symbolically charged figures – Shepherd, Nurse, Mother, Infant, Lamb, Lion, Rose, Bird, Pebble, etc – evoke the imagery from a curious combination of religious and profane genres, including nursery rhymes, lullabies, street ballads, game songs, and Biblical psalms.

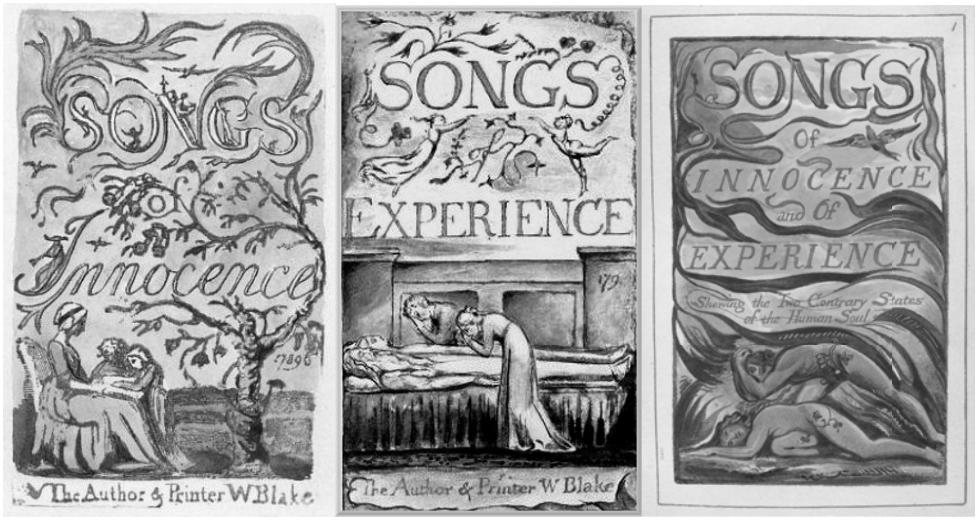
A comparison of the two Introductions illustrates how *Songs of Innocence* focuses more on the happy, tender, sunlit world of the nursery and village green, an innocent vision of pastoral harmony, naïve vulnerability, trusting love in parental and divine security, preceding the dualisms of adult consciousness (before the separation of the human, natural, and divine states of being). *Songs of Experience*, on the other hand, moves away from the docile symbology of the sacrificial Christ-like lamb, incarnating the unity of innocence, and is already aware of the harmful influence of the "mind-forg'd manacles" of repressive religion, tyrannical politics, and hypocritical social customs of mundane reality. It offers a "darker, more dreamlike version of the same landscape, with nightmare intimations, glimpses of forests and shadowy city streets, a sense of twilights and nightfall, and menacing animal and insect shapes," as Holmes put it. Despite the central themes of anger, anxiety, cruelty, and injustice, the volume holds hope for a brighter future when mankind will reject flawed doctrines and return to a more sensitive/sensual, natural, pastoral life-style that is apt to combine the positively enriching features of innocent and experienced perception. Revolt fostered by imagination may eventually do right the unhappiness of the world.

INTRODUCTION-TO SONGS OF INNOCENCE	INTRODUCTION TO SONGS OF EXPERIENCE
Piping down the valleys wild, Piping songs of pleasant glee, On a cloud I saw a child, And he laughing said to me: "Pipe a song about a Lamb!" So I piped with a merry chear. "Piper, pipe that song again;" So I piped: he wept to hear. "Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe; Sing thy songs of happy chear:" So I sung the same again, While he wept with joy to hear. "Piper, sit thee down and write In a book, that all may read."	Hear the voice of the Bard, Who present, past, and future, sees; Whose ears have heard The Holy Word That walked among the ancient tree; Calling the lapsed soul, And weeping in the evening dew; That might control The starry pole, And fallen, fallen light renew! "O Earth, O Earth, return! Arise from out the dewy grass! Night is worn, And the morn Rises from the slumbrous mass.

So he vanish'd from my sight, And I pluck'd a hollow reed, And I made a rural pen, And I stain'd the water clear, And I wrote my happy songs, Every child may joy to hear.	"Turn away no more; Why wilt thou turn away? The starry floor, The watery shore, Are given thee till the break of day."

→ EXERCISE No1: Compare the "Introductions" and enumerate the lexical, semantic, syntactic differences between the two poem-sequences:

Child	Bard
laughing, piping, singing, cheering	hearing the Holy Word, weeping
bucolic atmosphere	apocalyptic atmosphere



A major merit of the *Songs* is that they can be enjoyed on many levels of scrutiny: they combine extreme simplicity of form with complex mysterious meanings. One can appreciate the lyrical intensity of the musicality condensated in the lines rich in poetic devices like alliterations, assonances, onomatopoeia, or synaesthesia, simultaneously evocative of the soothing, lulling rhythmicality of

nursery rhymes, folk ballads, prayers, or magic spells – endowed with nearly hypnotic acoustic qualities. The illuminated manuscripts, decorating each text with small illustrations, combine visual and verbal delights. And it is all the more challenging to attempt to decode the significations of the mirrored image-texts, which in dialogic pairs might complement but also challenge each others' meanings. Critics agree that the Songs can be interpreted as miniature versions of Blake's 'trademark' prophecies fusing religious and moral-philosophical messages concerning the challenges, aims, and responsibilities of earthly existence and humans' divine potentials. The (meta)ethical, spiritual investigations – Is there truth? What is right/wrong? Who grants meaning to finite existence? – are accompanied by practical issues of moral importance, social realities of poverty, exploitation, child abuse and racism which accompany the "Dark Satanic Mills" of Industrial Revolution Blake criticised bitterly in poems as "The Chimney Sweeper", "The Little Black Boy" in which he argued for the spiritual excellence and the right for redemption of all sentient, living beings regardless of their class, race, age, or sex. As Morris Eaves argues, *Songs* function like "psychological fables" which embrace Blake's leitmotif "an evolving narrative framework of fall and redemption that is applicable on several interpenetrating levels – individual, social, religious, political, artistic, and cosmic."

THE LAMB AND THE TYGER

Perhaps the most well-known pair of poems of *Songs* is composed of "The Lamb" and "The Tyger" a doubled philosophical riddle and Biblical parable using contrary animal symbolics to tackle the same theme of the dual nature of God and the unknowable origins or reasons of kindness and evil coexisting, alternating on the microscopic scale of human psyches and the macroscopic spectrum of earthly existence – experienced in different ways from the perspective of innocence and experience.

THE LAMB

Little Lamb, who make thee
Dost thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, wolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

THE TYGER

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare sieze the fire?

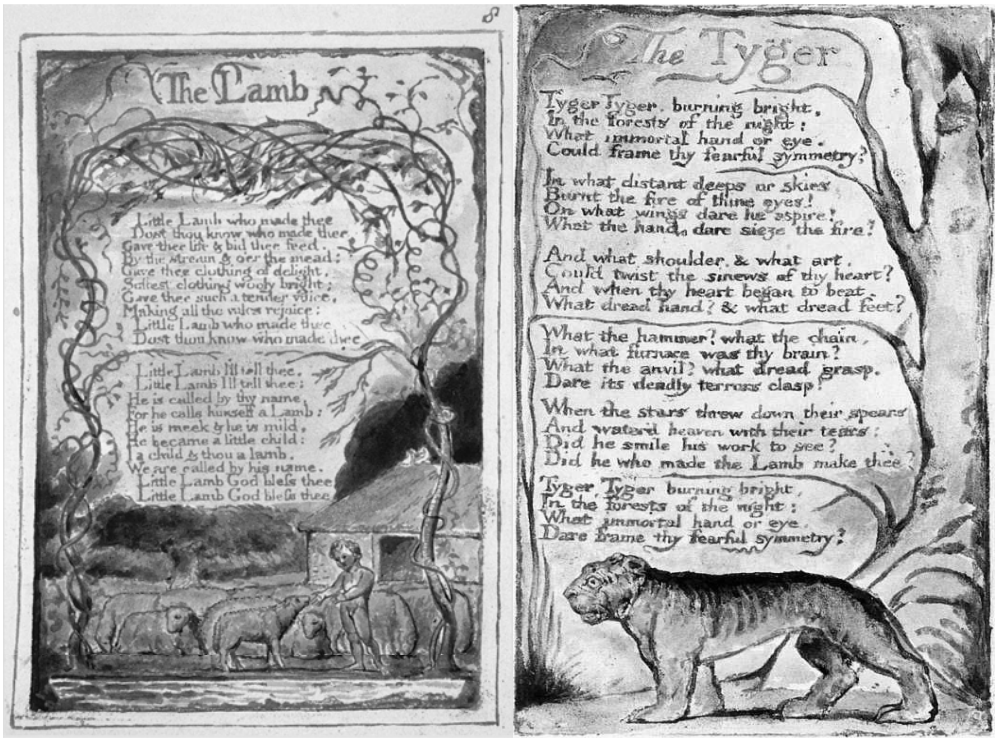
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee;
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb
He is meek, and He is mild,
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are called by His name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

And what shoulder, & what art.
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?



"THE LAMB" (1776) is a metaphor for Jesus Christ, alternately referred to in the Bible as "the Lamb of God" and the "good shepherd of the flock of God." It is a meek, vulnerable, harmless creature associated with warmth, homeliness, purity, and innocence, often compared in religious iconography with the infant Jesus. It is an ultimate proof of the kindness of a benevolent God who has created beauty, love, and joy to fill human life with meaning, and who has sent his only begotten son to Earth to die in place of sinful mankind and to redeem fallen humanity from its sins. As a sacrificial animal who dies to save others it represents major Christian virtues by providing an example for natural empathy, altruism, and infinite compassion for our brethren. The simple rhyme scheme (AA BB CC DD AA AA EF GG FE AA) and the cosy, rural, pastoral frame match the effortless, unconscious, innate kindness that God has implanted in all of us as a natural foundation of our relations to our neighbours and all living, sentient beings. Blake's "threefold vision of innocence" is embodied by the Child, the Lamb, and Christ – all dwelling in human souls.

The gentle rhetorical questions pondering about the origins of the Lamb ("Who made thee?" "Do you know?") 1. celebrate the caring kindness of the Creator who has called Goodness into being, 2. illustrate the pantheistic view that God as an omnipresent entity is infused in everything, dwelling even the simplest of its creations, like an ignorant beast, 3. evoke the innocence of child play, an infant's mumbled monologue gently addressed to an anthropomorphised animal he regards to be equal, hence offers a model for democratic interpersonal, interspecies ties, rejecting any form of unjust hierarchisation. This reciprocal "I-Thou" relationship between the human lyrical voice and the animal addressee reflects the loving, trusting relationship between God and man – uniquely grounding faith in freedom. The tentative questioning culminates in a thankful celebration of the joy of being alive, a hymn to pure existence, a gratitude for being blessed with the potential to live a world full of harmony.

The repetitive, rhythmic musicality of the poetic language also communicates a comforting feel. Although the original melody is now lost, we know that the poem was intended to be sung, hence the soft, cradling lullaby-like tone resonating with the uncorrupted, childish mind of the speaker. Analyses of the illustrations to the illuminated manuscript interpret the young trees as framing the scene to enclose it from the world of experience.

"THE TYGER" (1794) was published in *Songs of Experience* as a companion poem to "The Lamb." Its lyrical dilemmas revolve around similar ideas as the ones raised in "The Lamb" concerning the majestic, mysterious unknowability of God's design but it is much more sombre than the previous Biblical animal allegory since instead of divine kindness its divine retribution is in the focus of

attention. The tiger is not a homely herbivore like a lamb, but a ferocious carnivore, a natural predator who kills without remorse but you cannot blame him for its violence since this natural bestiality is part of his very "tigerhood", the way God made him to be. The question is not so much why the Tiger is a voracious monster but how could a benevolent God who granted us the pleasures of kindness be responsible for the existence of such monstrosity.

The theme of monstrous creation and the mingling of mechanical imagery with exotic foreignness prefigures Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* story (**see Unit 2**) and its complex recycling of the Prometheus myth where the fire stolen from Gods for the sake of improving the life of mankind represents fatal passion, unforgivable hubris and consequent punishment, and the deadly consequences of industrial revolution and scientific progress. The inanimate material of anvil, hammer, furnace, and chain manufacturing the organic bodily being of the beast, reminiscent of a weapon of war, evoke Descartes' views on animals as soul-less, thoughtless automatons, machines inferior to men. Yet if God the Ultimate Maker of all Things is represented as a heavenly blacksmith, a craftsman (a Christian version of Hephaestus from Greek mythology) who creates life through physical, manual labour (instead of the Biblical performative speech act, the words "Let there be…) would he ever forget about gifting all his creatures with an immortal soul? In fact, the poet himself dissects the Tiger to learn more about its essence and purpose of being with the anatomical scrutiny and technical attention of a mechanic, a craftsman, or a scientist. The knowledge hence forged about the tiger is just as much of a chimerical hybrid as the creature itself, made up of sinews, flesh, blood, metals and fire.

The Tiger is a magnificent beast perfectly embodying the Romantic notion of the Sublime: it equally fascinates and terrifies with its bestial strength, horrific beauty, and "fearful symmetry." Its metonymical markers, the all-consuming flame-like stripes, the brightly burning eyes, and the beating crimson heart all evoke the natural element of fire, a metaphysical constant of the world, both an emblem of destruction and bedazzlement by this destruction, an instrument of chaos and fatal inspiration, illumination amidst nocturnal ominousness, too. The Tiger stages the duality between primal ferocity and aesthetic beauty, as well as the inseparable identity of the hand that created the kindness of the Lamb and the ferociousness of the Tiger. The allusion to wings suggests that the Tiger might be the Fallen Angel, Lucifer surrounded by the fire of Hell. The paradox functions on multiple levels: the Tiger may represent God's wrath, but God's wrath is always just, rightfully inflicted upon the deserving – those astonished humans who might be physically vulnerable and destroyable but preserve their spiritual, intellectual magnificence on accounts of being capable of perceiving

the aesthetic, moral-philosophical, theological aspects of the violence, passion, and fierce strength governing the world.

The rhetorical, moral questioning of the divine agenda once again focuses on the mysterious origins of good and evil, which constitute two sides of the same coin. However instead of the blissful rejoicing voiced in "The Lamb" here the monstrous side of creative powers provoke a frightened fascination encapsulated in the questions: Who could and who dared to mingle with dangerous, dark, diabolic energies? The rebellious boldness of wrongdoing is the subject of Romantic fascination and accordingly surfaces on multiple levels of the poem: **1. How dares the tiger do evil? 2. How God dared to create the tiger? 3. How the poet dares to think such sacrilegious, heretical thoughts questioning the rightfulness of God's intentions?**

The language of the poem achieves immense power through the use of alliteration, a trochaic beat, mysterious, exotic, apocalyptic imagery, and repetitive questions demanding the creature about its origins. The Tyger not only demonstrates Blake's visual imagination at its best but also complements ocular stimuli with further sensual sense-impressions, audio-visual, tactile, kinetic imagery (burning eyes of fire, hammer- and heart-beats, seizing, grasping, clasping hands). While "The Lamb"'s inquiry is settled and seems to reach satiety with a final blessing, "The Tyger' heightens the density of its intertextual imagery by uniting the two animal contraries representing innocence and experience in the final, unanswerable dilemma addressed to the Tyger: "Did he smile his work to see? Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" Despite the dialogic framework, the poem also remains somehow static because of the repetitions: the Tiger in the end seems more than a physical being, it is more like the essence of an idea "beyond good and evil," to a certain extent unknowable, yet regenerateable through mutual forgiveness.

Blake's illustration of a rather meek tiger seems to mock the questioner's anxiety with image-textual contradiction or a promise of false safety, suggesting that "fearful symmetry" may inhere in the fabulous feline, or it may reside in imagination, the beauty of the beast residing in the eye of the beholder.

LAMB	TYGER
meek, vulnerable, harmless baby animal	sublime magnificent beast
God's kindness in creation	God's wrath is just

easy confidence in the benevolence of creation: beauty & love grant meaning to life	bitter recognition that violence, passion, fierce strength govern the world
"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."	"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."
sacrificial animal, dies to save/redeem men natural empathy, altruism	voracious monster, kills to survive natural predator
cosy, rural, pastoral frame	disturbing, exotic, mechanical other
child play, mumbled monologue (gentle talk to anthropomorphic animal)	rhetorical, moral questioning of divine agenda, on nature of good/evil
ecstatic delight: Who made thee? Do you know?	frightened fascination: Who could? Who dared?
soothing effect of poetic language	monstrous creative powers of poetry
fuzzy warmth: grateful joy of being alive, hymn to pure existence	destructive fire: danger, chaos, but illumination, fatal inspiration too
blessing: world of harmony	curse: world of chaos BUT triumphant human awareness of totality of being, fusion of vulnerability and mightiness

→ EXERCISE No2: From the list of the words below decide which one you would associate with Blake's Lamb and which one belongs to Blake's Tiger. Continue the list of the paired concepts starting out from the close-reading of the two poems.

lullaby, metal, meek, forest, proximity, tender, sublime, childhood, nightmare, distance, day, wool, maturity, mead(ow), night, fearful

→ EXTRACURRICULAR RESEARCH: How can you relate the mythical story of Prometheus's stealing the fire from Gods for men with the Biblical story of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge? What were the punishments to these transgressions? How does Blake re-visit the theme of the Fall in his poem "The Garden of Love" published in Songs of Experience? What can be a psychoanalytical and an ideology-critical interpretation of the "briars binding my joys & desires"?

→ EDUTAINMENT ACTIVITY: Watch an animated interpretation of William Blake's "The Tyger".
Animated by Mark West, AnimaCrackers, read by Kristin Hughes. Bach's Cello Suite No. 5 in C minor, performed by Colin Carr.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oF9kbTedTL8

THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1790) is a composition in a free-flowing poetic prose that contains a sequence of vivid visions in an emblematic tone meant to imitate Biblical prophecies and to express Blake's own intensely personal, Romantic, revolutionary, spiritual beliefs. Initial poems are followed by observations about life, his spiritual development, stories of prophets, angels, and devils, and culminate in an almost apocalyptic verse. As for its inspirations, the illustrated text written in the aftermath of the French Revolution records the era's libertarian impulses; the title echoes Swedenborg's theological work on heaven and hell; while the plot device of the poet's descent to hell was borrowed from Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Blake communicates a unified vision of the cosmos, where bodily desires and spiritual aspirations cannot be separated (-- neither from each other, nor from the divine sphere, "for everything that lives is Holy"). The energy emanating from human bodies is not associated with temptation and ultimate downfall but is seen as a source of eternal delight. Throughout a systematic challenging of hierarchically organised dualisms, Hell – as a locus of dynamic, Dionysian energies repressed in the name of civilisation – is preferred to the much more static Heaven adulated by the dogmatic views of institutionalised religion. If Satan is a rebellious hero against an authoritarian deity, human being can become divine provided he rejects repressive religion, social custom, and the tyranny of reason. In Blake's

unified vision of the universe, Heaven and Hell, Soul and Body, Good and Evil are one, and their interdependence is necessary since without these opposites and the choice between them men would have no reason to evolve. In Blake's words:

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate are necessary to Human existence. From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy. Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell.

The most well-known part of the book *Proverbs of Hell* offers provocative, diabolical aphorisms which use paradoxical ideas to energise thought. Their prophetic, poetic density mocks the short-sightedness of rationality. "The road of Excess leads to the palace of Wisdom" "The tygers of Wrath are wiser than the horses of Instruction."

MYTHOPOETIC CREATIVITY

"I must create a System or be enslaved by another Man's" – Blake claimed and accordingly invented a fictional universe, a private mythology of his own making through combining Biblical revelations, Greco-Roman myths, pagan beliefs and archetypal motifs grounded in humans' collective unconscious. While classic mythologies arise out of centuries-long oral tradition, **mythopoeia** is penned over a relatively short period of time by a single author who forges a mythological framework to stimulate imagination and communicate a particular worldview. (A good example for mythopoeia is Tolkien's fantastic legendarium including origin myths, creation myths, an epic poetry cycle, as well as fictitious linguistics, geography, geology, folklore, etc.) In Blake's prophetic books, his dazzling invented mythology recreates the Cosmos to transmit his revolutionary spiritual and political ideas into a prophecy for a new age. A central theme of his myths is the struggle between opposites (reason and imagination, body and soul, repressive church and free love) which must be reconciled for the regeneration of mankind.

The longest elaboration of Blake's myth cycle is ***Vala or The Four Zoas: The Death and Judgment of Albion the Ancient Man*** **(1797-1803)**, an unfinished prophetic book designed to summarise the artist's mythic universe. The titular protagonists are the Four Zoas, each representing a function of humanity. **Urizen,** also referred to as The Ancient of Days, stands for conventional reason, discipline, order, law, limitations, tradition, and materialism; he imposed the ten commandments of religion on humans; he is the symbol of restrictive morality and oppressive ideologies, of ascetism, abstinence, science and tyranny, all the limiting forces of society which must be overthrown by imagination. Urizen

is depicted as a creature of air, belonging to the sky, as a bearded, old, white man using architect's tools, like a compass to create, measure and constrain the universe, and nets with which he ensnares people within webs of social customs. His opposition, **Los** also known as Urthona in its unfallen form, represents imaginative power, poetic inspiration, and visionary intuition; an anagram of the word Sol (Sun) it represents the beating human heart and is figured as an earthly creature. Willing to transcend the dualistic binary model of mapping the universe, Blake added to Urizen and Los, the characters of **Luvah** who is represented as a youth born out of creative-destructive fire, a Christ-like figure, embodying love, passion, and emotive faculties (also known as Orc in his fallen, most rebellious, amorous form, as emblem of spiritual freedom), and **Tharmas** who stands for instincts, strength, and the sensual life of the body – complemented by the emanation maternal Enion and the fallen aspect, a wailing, jealous woman who act as complementaries to each other. Each Zoa has its unfallen and fallen aspect, as well as a **feminine emanation** (a part that is separated from but belongs to an integrated male being, like Eve separated from Adam). Urizen's paired female equivalent, for example, is celestial Ahania who represents pleasure; his fallen aspect is none other than Satan, Prince of Lies and Chaos; but Urizen also has many daughters with three representing aspects of the body, and sons with four representing four elements. Blake's prophetic book are of an extremely **high semioticity**: each detail, element, and character hold complex symbolical significations.

The four Zoas dramatise a war taking place in the human soul: they represent the contrary psychological, spiritual forces in struggle with one another. The complexities and paradoxes of the divided human self (a twofold identity with one half being good and the other evil) are projected onto cosmic scale clash of divine powers. A primary antagonism takes place between two contrary modes of meaning-formation: the scientific knowledge of empirical reason versus the true visionary understanding of imagination.

According to the Blakeian mythology, the four Zoas result of the fall and division of the primordial man, **Albion**. Urizen created Man a limited, imperfect creature out of the infinitude and perfection of God. His limiting powers of reason produced the restricting dimensions of space and time and trapped the spirit in the five senses. The Fall, which Urizen's act of creation made inevitable can be undone by the triumph over Urizen, a reconciliation of Urizen with Los and Luvah in order that the complete and undivided Man who was divided into many at the Fall may rise again. With regained unity, the Soul mounts the **Scala Perfectionis** (from unity through diversity to the restoration of unity). This resurrected, regenerated, new man, Albion is portrayed as a radiant young man with perfect anatomical proportions (naked as most of Blake's mythical figures,

and reminiscent of Leonardo's Vitruvian Man) surrounded by a bright halo of sunrays.

The Blakeian mythopeia has a patriotic, Romantic nationalistic ring to it: the name of Albion derives from the ancient name of Britain allegedly founded by Albion, the Giant son of Poseidon, Greek God of the sea. As Ward puts it, "Albion, the Eternal Man, is torn by spiritual, psychological, sexual conflicts personified in his four warring faculties the four Zoas until he declares an end to the strife and recovers his lost harmony of spirit." Although Blake ends his poem with the Final Judgment, the concluding scene holds the promise of a final reconciliation, and Albion impersonates a symbol of ardent hope.

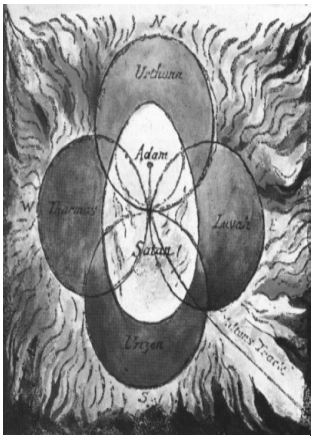
While Vala remained unfinished, its theme was revisited in other prophetic works, including *Milton a Poem* and *Jerusalem the Emanation of the Giant Albion*. The poem from the preface to *Milton* called "And did those feet in ancient time" commonly referred to as **"Jerusalem"** was turned into a hymn by Hubert Parry and became an alternative national anthem of England. The poem has become popular for its patriotic praise of English landscape, its Christian foundations, its courage, and undefeatable spirit. Blake's focus was likely more on the prospect that Jesus's visit can create a Heaven in England and compensate for the malicious influence of the "dark Satanic Mills" (of Industrial Revolution, Church, education) than on Romantic nationalism.

→ EXERCISE No3: Listen to "Jerusalem" and collect the phrases which turn the lyrics into an inspirational hymn.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ebtI8vbYFQ

→ EXERCISE No4: Make a catalogue of the prominent figures of Blake's private mythology. Fill the table below, based on the text above, link the names with characteristic features. You can find the ANSWERS at the end of the Unit.

Name	Symbolical significance	Feminine emanation	Fallen aspect	Visual depiction	Body part



William Blake, *The Four Zoas*

The Ancient of Days setting a Compass to the Earth, 1794

Los as depicted in the *Book Of Urizen,* 1794

INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES

Blake's visionary oeuvre is grounded in his own revelations he recorded in a **variety of media forms**, combining verbal and visual representations of his wildly imaginative mythopoetic universe. His poetry was complemented by fascinating **paintings, etchings, and engravings**, which enhanced his textual productions with illustrations meant to stimulate visual perception, "To put ideals into practice, and revolt against the vegetative eye!" From an early age he attended drawing school and became apprentice to the engraver of the London Society of Antiquaries. In 1779 at the age of 21 he became a journeyman copy engraver, working on projects for books and print publishers, was admitted to the Royal Academy of Art's School of Design, began exhibiting his own fine art works, and a few years later privately published his *Poetical Sketches* (1783).

While Blake was an established engraver, and received abundant commissions to paint watercolour scenes from the works of Milton, Dante, Shakespeare, and the Bible, the most innovative artistic technique he invented was illuminated printing, a method he claimed to have learnt from the ghost of his dead brother. With the making of **illuminated manuscripts** – he supplemented texts by adding miniature illustrations, decorated initials, coloration – he could control every aspect of the artistic production. Throughout the engraving, illuminated printing, and bookbinding process Blake was assisted by his wife Catherine Boucher, whom he taught how to read, write, draw, mix colours, prepare plates, and experience visions as he did, and who supported his creative genius and cheered his melancholic spirits throughout 45 years of their marriage.

The other special method Blake invented was **relief etching**: instead of carving within the material he put the design (text and image) on the surface of a copper plate with a pen or a brush dipped in an acid resistant medium and then immersed the plates within acid allowing the untreated copper to dissolve and leaving the design standing in relief. Because of the poisonous vapours and the destructive effects of the acid he compared the method to an infernal process, whereby one creates by annihilation. Moreover this technique seemed like a prophetic mode of meaning formation: the melting away of apparent surfaces displayed the hitherto hidden infinite. "He designed, lettered, engraved, printed, and water-coloured each plate individually, so that every copy emerges with slight differences in setting, as an individual work of art." (Holmes)

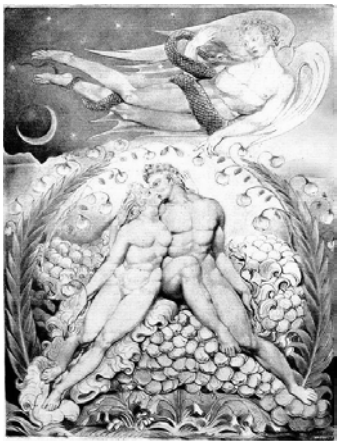
CRITICAL RECEPTION

Despite his inventive methods, Blake's creative genius remained **unjustly neglected** by his contemporaries and was acknowledged only by posterity. He sold only thirty copies of *Songs of Innocence and Experience* during his lifetime; one reviewer called his exhibit a display of "nonsense, unintelligibleness and egregious vanity" and referred to Blake as "an unfortunate lunatic;" and even his obituary in *The Literary Chronicle* described him as "one of those ingenious persons…whose eccentricities were still more remarkable than their professional abilities."

However, posterity recognised him as a seminal figure in the history of poetry. Victorian scholar William Rossetti called him a "glorious luminary," and 20th century literary critic Northrop Frye's influential monograph *Fearful Symmetry* (1974) praised "the immensely increased sense of the urgency and immediacy of what Blake had to say", whereas a 2002 BBC poll ranked him 38th on a list of the 100 Greatest Britons. The lyrics of his "The Lamb" and "The Tyger" have been integrated into school curricula, and "Jerusalem" from *Milton* has become a kind of second national anthem in Britain.

SUMMARIZING QUOTE

> "Self-taught, energetic, passionately imaginative, Blake elaborated his visions into a 'bardic' system of symbolic knowledge, a 'prophetic' philosophy which is partly religious, partly political, and partly artistic. Influenced by the millennial hopes of the French Revolution, and the Christian mysticism of Swedenborg and Jacob Boehme, Blake rebelled against the institutions of Church and State. He challenged conventional ideas of education and sexual morality, and promulgated a libertarian view of the world in which 'Everything that lives is Holy'." (Richard Holmes, 2009)



William Blake.
Satan Watching Caresses of Adam and Eve

FINAL CHALLENGE: TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE
1.) How did Blake relate to the notion of the divine?
2.) Which were Blake's major sources of inspiration?
3.) How do *The Songs of Innocence* and *The Songs of Experience* relate to one another? --What are the differences between the two prefaces? --What do the tiger and the lamb metaphorically represent? --What are some of the poetic devices Blake uses in this pair of poems? --As for Blake's further animal imagery, what does the worm on "The Sick Rose" represent?
4.) How does *Vala and the Four Zoas* encapsulate Blake's mythopoetic fantasy?
5.) Who is Albion?
6.) Multiple choice test (occasionally more than one correct answer)
i. Blake's poems were accompanied by A. footnotes B. morals C. illustrations D. comics
ii. Blake received formal education only in the subject of A. Literature B. Arts C. Philosophy D. Latin
iii. Blake taught his wife to A. read B. bind books C. sing D. cook E. see visions F. herd sheep
iv. The daughters of Albion are: A. mermaids B. prostitutes C. fallen angels D. nuns E. seamstresses D. Englishwomen
v. Plato's allegory is located in A. a cave B. an attic C. a mountaintop D. a river E. a dungeon and reflects on mankind's A. vanity B. ambition C. limited knowledge D. faith
vi. Does not belong to the Four Zoas A. Los B. Luvas C. Lilith D. Urizen
7. True or False

i. Blake was tremendously popular in his time.
ii. Blake claims to have learnt illuminated printing from the ghost of his dead brother.
iii. The poem "The tiger" was inspired by the death of Blake's beloved pet cat.
iv. Blake claimed to have learnt everything he knew from the Bible.
v. Blake's enthusiasm for nudes – he believed could best communicate human passions – lasted throughout his entire life.

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ANSWERS TO EXERCISE No1

Lamb	Tiger
Child	Bard
laughing, piping, singing, cheering	hearing the Holy Word, weeping
bucolic atmosphere	apocalyptic atmosphere
joy	anxiety, fear
docile tameness	violence
innocence	lapsed soul aware of its mortality, fallibility
nursery rhyme-like	Biblical tone
daytime	evening

ANSWERS TO EXERCISE No2:
Lamb: childhood, mead(ow), day, wool, tender, proximity, lullaby, meek Tiger: maturity, forest, night, metal, fearful, distance, nightmare, sublime

ANSWERS TO EXERCISE No3:
A hymn is a song in praise of God usually full of religious symbols such as the holy lamb of God on England's pleasant pastures (the redemptful Christ liberating the land), Jerusalem built among dark Satanic Mills (hope amidst malicious impact of industrial progress, religious dogmas, social mores), chariot of fire (a whirlwind that takes prophet Elijah up to heaven), green and pleasant land (idyllic English countryside, hope to return to Paradise)

ANSWER to EXERCISE No4.

Name	*Symbolical significance*	*Feminine emanation*	*Fallen aspect*	*Visual depiction*	*Body part*
Urizen	Reason	celestial Ahania	Satan, prince of lies and chaos	bearded old man in the sky	head
Luvah	Love	seductive Valah	Orc, shadowy female	Christ-like youth born of creative, destructive fire	heart
Tharmas	Sensual body	maternal Enion	wailing, jealous woman	man rising out of water	bodily unity
Urthona	Imagination	musical Enitharmon	Los	earthly creature	loins

ANSWER to FINAL CHALLENGE

Multiple choice test : i.C, ii.B, iii.A,B,E, iv.D, v.A/C, vi.C

True or False: i. False, ii.True, iii.False, iv. True, v. True

Unit 4
LAKE POETS AND LYRICAL BALLADS: WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE'S CREATIVE COLLABORATION

AIM OF THIS UNIT

The unit offers an introduction to the first literary landmark of the English Romantic Movement, the volume of poetry entitled *Lyrical Ballads* co-authored by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The discussion of the *ars poetica* outlined in the Preface is followed by brief analyses of the volume's most important poems.

KEY AUTHORS

William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge

COMPULSORY READINGS

Wordsworth:

- "We are Seven,",
- "Resolution and Independence,"
- "Immortality Ode," "Lines composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey,"
- "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud, or the Daffodils"
- "Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*" (extracts),
- "The Prelude, or Growth of Poet's Mind" (extract),

Coleridge:

- "Kubla Khan or a Vision in a Dream. A Fragment,"
- "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,"
- "Christabel,"
- extracts from Biographia Literaria

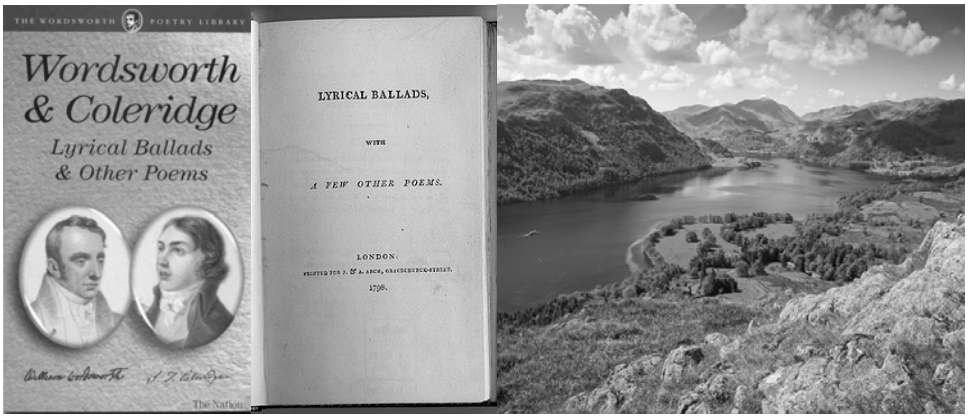
KEY WORDS & TOPICS:

The Lake Poets, the Mirror vs the Lamp, landscape poem, dramatic monologue, egotistic sublime, pantheistic thought, a cult of Nature, the idealisation of childish imagination, the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, emotion recollected in tranquillity, sea story, the Wedding Guest as implied reader, hubris, the Wandering Jew, metapoem, anti-poem, the Abyssinian Maid, the deep romantic

chasm, the person from Porlock, a willing suspension of disbelief, imagination as a synthetic and magical power, primary vs secondary imagination. fancy vs imagination, the two generations of Romantic poets

KEY QUOTATIONS:

> "The child is the Father of Man."
>
> "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity"
>
> "It was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic, yet so as 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"



LYRICAL BALLADS: THE FIRST LITERARY LANDMARK OF THE ENGLISH ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

Lyrical Ballads, perhaps the most well-known collection of Romantic poetry in English, is a joint volume co-authored by **William Wordsworth (1770–1850)** and **Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834)**. As the title of the collection suggests, the poems aimed to conjoin the lyricism of ancient rustic bards and the balladistic oral storytelling mode of folkloric tradition, the simple narrative songs of common country folk, recording "the organic relationship between human beings and the natural world" (Thompson 87). This corpus of new poetry based on a new concept of poeticity was fuelled by the literary collaboration and friendship of the two most outstanding creative geniuses of the era, whose families lived as neighbours in the small village of Holford, Somerset, that provided a safe rural retreat for the young revolutionary spirits with unorthodox opinions.

This picturesque region in North-West England, famed for its mountains, forests, and lakes, called the **Lake District**, inspired the imagination of the poets dwelling there – among them William Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, S.T. Coleridge, Robert Southey, Charles Lamb, and Thomas de Quincey. The group came to be referred to as **Lake Poets** or **the Bards of the Lake** although they were far from a homogeneous, cohesive school. Ironically, the poems composed in the region eventually attracted so many tourists to the lakes that the masses of visitors ruined the natural, 'uncivilised' lure of the landscape which enchanted the artists visiting there in the first place.

→ EXERCISE: To understand the reasons why these two revolutionary minds retreated into the non-metropolitan countryside read Jonathan Kerr's social-historical contextualisation of the era at the Dove Cottage and Wordsworth Museum Website@ https://wordsworth.org.uk/blog/2014/08/13/a-new-species-of-poetry-the-making-of-lyrical-ballads/

The 1790s was an immensely difficult period for most people throughout Europe. Through this decade, Britain sustained major economic recession, and crop failures further threatened the economic and political stability of the country. By 1798, Ireland was in the throes of large-scale rebellion. And following the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, England entered into a long and costly war with the new renegade French republic. To make matters worse, the British state had to contend with the legions of reformers within its own borders, those who sympathised with France and wanted to import its republican and democratic model… [Even the artistic] commitment to "common" life and language could be (and often was) taken as a sign of [condemnable] solidarity with [the dangerously egalitarian ideals of] Republican France… Many Christians believed that these tumultuous times meant that the apocalypse was near, and some even suggested that the anti-Christ was no less than England's Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger. Not since the English Revolution had the country faced such alarming upheaval and discord within its borders.

Lyrical Ballads, a collection including twenty-three "**experimental poems**," beginning with Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and ending with Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*, first appeared as **a joint anonymous publication** in 1798. Its second, two-volume edition in 1800 featured on the title page only the name of Wordsworth. Although Coleridge added an extra poem to his initial four contributions, it was Wordsworth who most significantly enhanced the original manuscript by complementing the revised version with an entire second volume of poems, as well as a *Preface* which outlined in a manifesto-like manner

their literary critical, theoretical views on the agenda of English romantic lyricism. Wordsworth elaborated on his ideas in *Poetic Diction*, an appendix added to the 1802 edition. A final, fourth edition followed in 1805.

THE PREFACE

Wordsworth's pioneering suggestions formulated in the *Preface* were met by his contemporaries' critical miscomprehension. (It was much later, in between the period of 1843 and 1850 that Wordsworth became canonically acclaimed as a Poet Laureate.) He opined that the principal subject of poetry should be "**incidents and situations from common life**" described in "**a language really used by men**," not highbrow topics described in sophisticated, lofty, formulaic style, but rather down-to-earth, rustic themes, the thoughts of simple folk, and the course of "**ordinary things**" coloured by the poet's creative imagination. In his wording, "**poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity**." The successful composition of an artwork is grounded in a combination of rational thought and emotional labour; the self-conscious mind is dwelling in a passionate "state of enjoyment". Accordingly, the Poet fulfils at once a democratic and a messianistic mission: "he is **a man speaking to men**: a man […] endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm, and tenderness, who has greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul…who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply." His goal is to argue, in spite of our differences, for a shared humanity in need of solidarious bonds. Because of their common interest in the freedom of thought, the equality of humankind, and the spontaneous pantheism of uneducated labourers, Wordsworth and Coleridge risked being labelled French-sympathiser socialists, enemies risking the British national status quo from within.

As MH Abrams famously pointed out, before Romanticism literature was understood as a **mirror** meant to reflect the world via a mimetic mode of representation, whereas Romantic artists thought of writing as a **lamp**, whereby the light of the writer's inner soul spilled out to illuminate the world, creating a vision woven of a delicate interplay of lights and shadows. Critics agree that the powerful effect of *Lyrical Ballads* results of its authors' styles and themes mutually complementing one another. Wordsworth dealt with "**the extraordinary in the ordinary**," the deeply moving, cathartic feelings aroused by apparently superficial commonplace phenomena, like a mother's joy in watching her *Idiot Boy*, or a sister's relentless affection for her deceased siblings ("**We are Seven**"). On the contrary, Coleridge was more interested in exploring "**the ordinary in the extraordinary**," and mapped the deranged states of (un)consciousness haunted by nightmarish visions and supernatural forces under extraordinary circumstances (like a guilt-ridden

psyche on a ghost ship in "**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**," or a drug-induced fever dream of forbidden delights in "**Kubla Khan"**). Hence, the collection could alternately embrace bucolic idyllic, melancholic contemplative, philosophical, horrendous supernatural, and fantastic adventurous tones.

AN IDEALISED VIEW OF NATURE

The poetic visions of *Lyrical Ballads* gained inspiration from an idealised view of **Nature uncorrupted by the flaws of civilisation**, and the **ancient wisdom of simple country folk living in harmony with their surroundings**. Major point-of-view characters/ focaliser lyrical voices in the volume included the female vagrant, the old huntsman, the little shepherd boy, the leech gatherer, and the old Cumberland beggar. The sentimental ideas echoed the Enlightenment French philosopher **Rousseau**'s celebration of **the Noble Savage**, the indigenous primitive called "nature's gentleman," whose innate goodness has not been spoilt by the ideological manipulations and moral decay concomitant with socialisation's disciplinary cultural indoctrination. The quest for a pure state of mind and existence could only take place outside of the metropolitan sphere, away from the progressive technological innovations. Romantic poets believed that the **Industrial Revolution** turned farmers – who migrated to the city to become factory workers – into miserable machines, and alienated people from their natural humaneness. Genuine freedom and poetic liberty could only be regained by returning to the cradle of **Mother Nature** which simultaneously offered **a spiritual and a political experience**: becoming overwhelmed by the sublime beauty of the landscape throughout a solitary walk, for example, signified a fundamentally democratic experience of blurring into the community of living things. It was assumed that the love of Nature leads to the love of Man, too.

→ EXERCISE: Watch the BBC documentary on Romantic poets' relation to Nature
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liVQ21KZfOI

→ READ the extracts below and discuss what they reveal about how Wordsworth and Coleridge relate to Nature.

"Come forth into the light of things, let nature be your teacher."

„A poet ought not to pick nature's pocket. Let him borrow, and so borrow as to repay by the very act of borrowing. Examine nature accurately, but write from recollection, and trust more to the imagination than the memory."

THE CULT OF CHILDHOOD

Nature was commonly reinvested with meanings projected on it by the poet's **creative imagination**. Even semi-autobiographical implications infiltrated this vision which very often referred back to youthful memories of the child's awareness of the immortal presence of the divine in Nature. This **nostalgia** was often tinged with a **melancholic longing**, since the naïve freshness and the **spontaneous pantheistic relationality** to the lifeworld characterising the child's worldview was necessarily lost with the poet's coming of age, and his integration within the superficial, biased cultural value-system of the hierarchically organised social structure. The iconic figure of **the innocent country child** gifted with infinite untainted imaginative potentials offered a particularly privileged role-model for the Romantic poet.

Thomas GAINSBOROUGH. *Girl with Pigs*, 1782.

Wordsworth is often credited as a founder of the **Romantic cult of childhood** that prevailed in the Victorian period and beyond. His poetry traces an ahistorical, apolitical, idealistic image of the child – very different from Blake's more contextualised, social-critically self-conscious lyrical representations. The Wordsworthian Child is a **child of Nature** living in a perfectly harmonious cohabitation with his natural surroundings, flora, fauna, and landscape. Nature acts as the best possible guardian figure, a teacher who gently educates the youngster by an effortless inspiration of his imagination, sensations, and psychic experiences, to establish the emotional foundation for adulthood. In "My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold" Wordsworth downright claims that "**The Child is the Father of Man,"** suggesting that youth is richer in wisdom and insight than old age. Much like in later Freudian psychoanalysis, for Wordsworth, childhood emerges as the single most decisive period of human life, that adults struggle to

recall but can never fully regain. Hence this ideal image of the Child (much like that of Nature) is a product of the disillusioned adult's nostalgia.

Wordsworth's **"Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (1807)** records the profits and losses of growing up by combining the traditions of the **conversation poem**, the **elegy**, the Biblical sentiment of a religious **prayer**, and the **apocalyptic tradition**. It laments that the youthful period of wisdom and true insight is necessarily replaced by the sober vision of the grown man. With the passing of time and of human life the visionary power of youth becomes lost and nature no longer appears to the poet as it did before in his early days. Aging means a growing apathy and misanthropy, a gradual disconnection from the direct contact with natural reality, and a resulting fading of poetic imagination. The adult lyrical voice bemoans his estrangement from the world, and the **loss of immediacy**, crying out "The things which I have seen I now can see no more.", "Whither is fled the visionary gleam? Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" Even if fleeting visions of a "Child of Joy" allow the poet to momentarily revive what he has lost, his childhood union with Nature remains fundamentally unreachable for the speaker. Yet the shared human destiny to lose sight of the divine with aging and memories of the divine allow us to sympathise with our fellow human beings. Hence childhood offers a genuine pretext for the poet to comment on his major experiences in exploring **the workings of imagination, memory, the immediacy and unspeakability of lived experience, the immortality present within Nature, and the fallibility of humanity**.

> → EXTRACURRICULAR EXERCISE: Revisit your earlier chapter on William Blake's poetry and explore how the child image outlined in his Songs of Innocence relates to Wordsworth's celebration of infantile innocence.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

PRELUDE, OR GROWTH OF A POET'S MIND (1805–1850)

In "**Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind**" – a unique **autobiographical poem** in **blank verse** Wordsworth completed in 1805 but continued to revise throughout his entire life and published only posthumously in 1850 – the **growth of the poet's consciousness is mapped through his interactions with Nature beginning in childhood**. *Prelude* was inspired by **Rousseau's *Emile*** that emphasised the educational significance of children's early intimacy with Nature. On the other hand, it was Coleridge who urged his friend to write a poem for readers disillusioned with the failure of the **French Revolution**, for

those who gave up hope on the possible amelioration of mankind, and who questioned the efficiency of visionary philo sophies. (Wordsworth never gave a title to the poem, but simply referred to it as "the Poem to Coleridge," and his letter to his sister described is as "the poem on the growth of my mind.") *The Prelude* was intended as an introduction to "The Recluse," a philosophical poem on Man, Nature, and Society, with the sensations and opinions of the poet living in retirement in its focus, a project that remained unfulfilled.

In "The Prelude", this 14-books-long semi-autobiographical account of his personal psychic, spiritual, and artistic development, Wordsworth maps the events of his life (including childhood, school, time at Cambridge, residence in London, visit to revolutionary France). The various episodes demonstrate how his interactions with his environment were formative of his personality, morality, and art. The first two books on childhood include accounts of juvenile self-inspection and self-discovery, the significance of which is realised only in adulthood.

A **sublime episode** described in Book XIII is also noteworthy: Wordsworth describes a memorable experience that took place at a walking tour in North Wales, when he set out with some friends to **climb Snowdon by moonlight**. At first the mountain was covered in darkness and a thick fog but as the travellers moved on their way upwards they burst through the mist into a brilliant moonlight that illuminated a sea of mist below them. The conquest of the mountain top becomes a powerful metaphor of the ascent of the poetic consciousness into a new peak of imaginative vision. As he looks down on the landscape of clouds beneath his feet the lyrical voice contends: "it appeared to me, the **perfect image of the mighty mind**." The **landscape poem** outlines a model of the human psyche. The small, illuminated region on the mountaintop stands for conscious, rational, self-reflective thought that is surrounded by a "huge sea of mist" concealing what Wordsworth called "an **underpresence**" and what 20th century Freudian psychoanalysis came to refer to as the unconscious. In the subconscious realm disturbing, traumatic or taboo psychic contents are repressed, relating to sexual instincts, aggressive or self-destructive impulses, intuitions, fantasies, dreams which are not available to the conscious mind yet serve as fundamental engines of artistic creativity. Just like moonlight has the power to transform the view from Snowdon, the imagination can similarly impose order (or disorder) upon the external world. The "higher mind" of the imaginative poet can peep into the hidden life of things, he gains stimulation from the sensorial world to look beyond tangible, material reality. The poet's creative imagination is endowed with a divine quality, as it re-creates reality. His imagination interacts with the external world, **transfigures** it, and enables us to perceive invisible realities, to experience the power palpitating beneath Nature's visible forms.

TINTERN ABBEY (1798)

The poem is an exciting combination of the following lyrical subgenres:

- As a ***landscape poem*** or a piece of **topographical poetry**, it focuses on the description of a geographical location, with a focus on the atmosphere of a setting, the feelings, thoughts, sense impressions aroused by that space in the human spectator.
- In the ***conversation poem*** the lyrical voice addresses someone very close "in an informal but serious manner of deliberation that expands from a particular setting" (Baldick 70). The genre in English practically emerges from the close cooperation of Wordsworth and Coleridge in *Lyrical Ballads*.
- An ***ode*** traditionally refers to a long lyrical poem, serious in subject, elevated in style, and elaborate in its stanzaic structure (Abrams 235). It is meant to glorify an idealised individual, a sublime object or natural phenomenon, a significant event, or an elevated abstract notion. The praise permeated by intense emotions, ceremonious devotion and pathos can address a wide variety of subjects ranging from God/divinities, Nature, Art, Love/Friendship, Nation/Home-Country, Life/Death, etc. The tripartite structure of a classic ode consists of the strophe, the antistrophe, and the epode.
- A ***dramatic monologue*** is a form of poetry, in which a single person presents a lengthy speech in a critical situation to a fictitious auditor/audience who remains silent and invisible. The words uttered reveal the fictitious speaker's personality and temperament to the auditor/audience. This poetic role-play has been perfected by Robert Browning. Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" shares some features of the genre: the monologue is performed at a significant moment of the speaker's life, is addressed to an important, silent listener, his sister –yet the lyrical self's autofictional ego-construction portrays the author figure whose evolving memories, observations, and "thoughts towards the resolution of an emotional problem" constitute the major subject matter of the piece. (Abrams 85–86)

The full title "Lines Written (or Composed) a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798" reveals that the poem is grounded in an autobiographical episode. A walking tour Wordsworth made with his sister in the Welsh countryside allows him to outline his philosophical views on the worship of nature, the functioning of memory/imagination, and the dynamics of artistic creativity. In fact, not one, but two memo-

ries are presented and interfaced in the text, as the artist returns to a region he has previously visited as a troubled twenty-three-year-old youngster. The renewed encounter with the same old landscape provides a pretext to reflect on his psychic, artistic maturation, and aesthetic agenda.

In Wordsworth's **pantheistic** worldview, nature has a spiritual dimension, worthy of a deeper zeal of holier love. Mental images of Nature can engender mystical intuition of the divine. (Nature is "The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,/ The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul/ Of all my moral being.") Yet, just like a literary work of art, a landscape would be meaningless without the **beholder's interpretive consciousness**. Hence the fascinating-frightening magnitude, the sublime powers of the natural or the built environment are called into being by the creative artist's imagination that revitalises reality and inoculates it with philosophical, spiritual, aesthetic meaning. The building of the abbey itself never actually appears in the poem, it only emerges as a memory trace transforming in the mind of the poet, who is more interested in his own personal development from "dizzy raptures" and "wild ecstasies" to "elevated thoughts" and "sober pleasures" than the actual growth or decay of nature itself. This writerly perspective is called **egotistical sublime**. (The term was first used by second generation Romantic poet Keats who criticised Wordsworth's self-absorbed/narcissistic projection of his seer-prophet-poet persona on the Nature he adulates, by means of an anthropocentric anthropomorphisation of Nature.)

JMW Turner, *Ruins of Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire*, 1794–1795

Wordsworth reflects on the significant role nature plays in his poetry, on how nature was formative of his identity, and how his relationship with nature has changed since boyhood. His **boyish thoughtless passion** for and forgetful fusion with the natural environment became replaced by an adult, manly "sense

sublime of something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is in the light of setting suns," a "**tranquil restoration**" of an internalised image of abbey, an intellectual-imaginative feat that **relieves the burdens of fleeting doubts in the existence of God**. Moreover, as the last stanza addressed to the tourist companion, the "dear friend," "dear sister" reveals, the **enchantment by nature is a passion that unites the people** sharing this worship of "these steep woods and lofty cliffs, / And this green pastoral landscape."

> → READ carefully Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and collect the terms he associates with his first, 1793 visit and his 1798 return.

1st visit to Abbey: 1793	2nd visit to Abbey: 1798
solitary walk	walking tour with sister Dorothy
boyish days	manly return
coarser pleasures	joy of elevated thoughts
glad animal movements	a sense sublime
an appetite, a feeling and a love	…
aching joys, dizzy raptures	…
…	…

THE DAFFODILS, OR I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD (1807)

The poem has a simple topic and plot. During an outdoor walk, the sight of a "crowd" of "golden daffodils" "dancing in the breeze" ravishes the poet who is left speechless by the beauty of the spectacle. It is only later, in the solitary confinement of his study room, when in a "pensive mood" the "**inward eye**" of his imagination recalls the visionary apparition that he manages to realise and to formulate in matchingly delightful words the sublimity of the experience. (At first, he simply gazes blankly at the flora and it is only the retrospective thought, "emotion recollected in tranquillity," that realises the magnitude of the encounter.)

The **sonnet** pays homage to the beauty of Nature left intact by humanity and urges the reconciliation of civilised man with his environment. The huge mass of fragile little plants embodies a sense of physical immediacy and provokes a simple yet cathartic emotional pleasure by contrasting the pain of loneliness and

the transitoriness of human life with the lasting permanence of the memory of the daffodils, and the infinite unity of the universe. (The waves of the yellow flowers evoke the endless ocean, life-giving sunrays, stars in outer space – and hence reinforce the sense of the sublime). Via the **egotistical sublime**, the daffodils earn their true magnitude from the **poet's reminiscence/memory**; the vision of nature etched on his psyche and spirit to be cherished forever. His imagination allows him to relive the unrepeatable experience: when depressed, lonesome, or dull, he thinks of the daffodils, and can rejoice again.

Feminist critics highlight that although the poem's lyrical self is a solitary walker, Wordsworth spotted the daffodils together with **his sister, Dorothy**, whose diary includes a detailed description of the sight inspiring the brother's poem. The last lines – "and my heart with pleasure fills, and dances with the daffodils" – are attributed to the poet's wife, Mary.

→ EXERCISE: Compare Dorothy's journal-entry with William's poem.

When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow park we saw a few daffodils close to the water side, we fancied that the lake had floated the seed ashore and that the little colony had so sprung up – But as we went along there were more and yet more and at last under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about and about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the Lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing. This wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot and a few stragglers a few yards higher up but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity and unity and life of that one busy highway – We rested again and again. The Bays were stormy and we heard the waves at different distances and in the middle of the water like the Sea.

— Dorothy Wordsworth, The Grasmere Journal Thursday, 15 April 1802

→ LISTEN to the Audiofile recording of Wordsworth's "Daffodils" as read by Jeremy Irons: https://soundcloud.com/rentonsi/jeremy-irons-reads-daffodils

→ EXERCISE: Look for poetic tropes and figures in Wordsworth's "Daffodils". Give examples for: alliteration, personification, simile, repetition, rhyme, paradox

COLERIDGE'S POETRY

BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA (1817)

Coleridge summarises his philosophical views and poetic agenda best in his literary autobiography ***Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*** (shortly referred to ***Biographia Literaria***) published in 1817. He comments on the different stylistic/thematic approaches he and Wordsworth embraced in *Lyrical Ballads*. Although the co-authors agreed on several points, such as the need to "awaken the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom" and to arouse enthusiasm for the surprising complexity of being, Coleridge was more interested in the "persons and characters supernatural or at least romantic" and otherworldly wonders than the everyday ordinary things' charm which Wordsworth aimed to strategically illuminate. Coleridge used the famous poetic term ***"the willing suspension of disbelief"*** to describe how he expects his readers to get rid of their logical reasoning and expectations of realism for the sake of their total, joyful immersion within the fantastic fictional realm called into being by the creative artist.

In Coleridge's wording, the poet "**brings the whole soul of a man into activity**," "he diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that **synthetic and magical power**, to which we have exclusively appropriated **the name of imagination**." His aim is to reveal "**the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities**: of sameness, with difference; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgement ever awake and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement…" Coleridge attributed to imagination a so-called **esemplastic power** that had a capacity to shape disparate things into a unified whole, and hence convey a new sense to the images,

words, feelings derived from different human experience, endeavours, thoughts he brings together in one single creative artwork. "To Coleridge the affinity of this **synthesis** with the organic function of assimilating nutriments declares itself: imaginative unity is not a mechanical juxtaposition of unproductive particles. Imaginative unity is an organic unity: a self-evolved system, constituted by a living interdependence of parts, whose identity cannot survive their removal from the whole." (Abrams 175)

For Coleridge the mind is not a *tabula rasa* upon which external impressions are carved. Imagination has a transformative potential to revitalise the world, it is "**the repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation**," via in the infinite I AM. He divides the mind into two distinct faculties: primary and secondary imagination.

Fancy= a lesser mode of passive, mechanical fantasy, an accumulation of data in the memory, a documentation of what is seen, a logical way of organizing sensory material without really synthesizing

Imagination= a spontaneous and original act of creation

- ***Primary imagination***= The living power and prime agent of all human perception. Allows all people to unconsciously grasp the structure of the world. Already perception is active and creative. Automatically balances and fuses innate capacities and powers of the mind with the external presence of the objective world that the mind receives through the senses. Represents man's ability to learn from Nature.
- ***Secondary imagination***= The echo of the primary imagination. A superior faculty, associated with the artistic genius who can consciously shape new worlds in addition to the given reality he perceives. Coexists with the conscious will. Only different in degree, but holds the same agency. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to recreate. It struggles to idealise and unify, it rewrites the world of the self, and of nature. It calls the whole soul of man into activity of the highest degree.

KUBLA KHAN (1816)

The origin story of this poem composed in 1797 (published in 1816) is legendary. Coleridge claimed that he composed the poem one night after he experienced an opium-induced dream that abounded in strange visions of the Tartar King Kubla Khan's exotic world he read about earlier. When he woke up he immediately started to write down what he saw in his dream, but he was interrupted by an expected visitor, a person from Porlock whose knocking on the door interrupted his reverie and made him forget his dream. The "**person from**

Porlock" came to represent the obligations of the mundane, ordinary reality crashing down on the fragile fantasy fragments of the creative genius. The poem was subtitled "**Or, a vision in Dream. A Fragment**" and its enigmatic lure was enhanced by its remaining incomplete. Coleridge's contemporaries were dissatisfied with the blurry, chaotic account of disordered memory fragments which left readers more confused than enlightened; and criticised the text for being an **anti-poem**.

The poem easily lends itself to be interpreted as a **metapoem**: it reflects on the turbulent process of artistic creation. Its highly stylised language, full of elaborate sound devices (eg. alliteration, assonance), is very far from the natural language spoken by simple folk that Wordsworth propagated as the major instrument of poetry. Kubla Khan's enchanted pleasure dome by the sacred river, where the song of an Abyssian maid enraptures the visitor, is an exotic equivalent of the poet's ivory tower, where artistic creation takes place in a sphere isolated from the daily toils of the common world. The "**deep romantic chasm**" by the side of the palace stands for the dark side of the human soul, the **unconscious region of the mind** where desires fuelling poetry spring from. The mighty fountain represents artistic/life energy that necessarily culminates in death. The fusion of opposites ("sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice") symbolises the **dynamics of creativity**, the oscillation between pain and pleasure, between unconscious energy and conscious control.

The tragedy of the poet lies in the **fleeting nature of the vision**, the realisation that forgetting is a part of remembering, the ungraspable nature of present perfection, the inadequacy of language in representing the fantastic visions, and the succeeding residue of the tip-of-the-tongue experience. The pleasure dome of Kubla Khan in Xanadu is man-made, hence finite, whereas the Nature surrounding it is an infinite, both savage and holy, enchanted place. The ancestral voices prophesy war as a penalty for seeking infinite pleasure. The poet's imaginative longing for a **fabulous elsewhere** is both a blessing and a curse. The poet can move from the world of conventional meaning and normal understanding to the world of imagination, but he must return from there, back to our ordinary reality where he will struggle to share his vision with his incredulous audience reluctant to believe his strange dream.

Gustave Doré's illustrations to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER (1798)

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner **(1797–8)** revisits the popular **Romantic Gothic** theme of the **sea voyage** that describes a geographical journey into the uncharted, mysterious territories of Earth but also represents a **psychic journey** into the depths of the human mind's unconscious regions. The sublime seascape is seen through the dark superstitious visions of sailors whose life is dependent on the unpredictable forces of Nature. The central theme is **crime, punishment, and possibility or impossibility of redemption** –with a metafictional focus on the curative, **ritualistic powers of storytelling**. The poem stages a unique narrative situation: the title character is giving an account of his past fatal adventure to a Wedding Guest who is an ordinary, sedentary figure, with a limited experience whose reactions to the story (ranging from fascination to impatience, fear, and pity) represent the **implied reader**'s responses to the mesmerizing **ballad**.

The Mariner recalls how he committed an act that Greek tragedies refer to as ***hubris***, a deed motivated by foolish and arrogant pride that defies human moral standards and upsets the Gods who then duly punish the perpetrator. In a blind fit of thoughtless passion or out of mere spite the sailor shot a magnificent albatross bird who seemed to guide the ship on its way and brought bad luck on the crew. His crime aroused the wrath of the spirits that led them to still, uncharted, deadly waters where horrendous creatures emerged out of the sea joined by a ghostly vessel with Life-in-Death on its deck playing dice for the soul of the sailors. Everyone dies on the board except the Mariner who wears the dead albatross in his neck like a cross. The poem fully transitions from the natural to the supernatural sphere, the Mariner's solitary agony has a spiritual aspect, evoking **Biblical themes** of sin, sacrifice, atonement, and forgiveness. The first stage

of recovery and redemption comes when the Mariner learns to love the "thousand slimy things" wriggling around him in the dark waters. He blesses the water snakes and realises the beauty of all creatures of Nature, and his kinship with even the lowliest life forms. Hence his cursed isolation is over. By virtue of the redeeming power of prayer, empathy, and pantheism, his external punishment ends (the Albatross falls off his neck), yet he remains a **haunted/ haunting figure**. He is never freed from the neurotic compulsion to confess his crime, to retell his story over and over again to anyone who is willing to listen. (His remorse and penance prevail eternally through the collective cultural memorial gesture of storytelling: "Till my ghastly tale is told/ This heart within me burns")

Coleridge gained inspiration for the poem from a variety of sources. These include:

1. travel narratives, accounts of sea voyages (such as James Cook's expedition to the South Seas, Pacific Ocean or Thomas James' voyage into the Arctic)
2. the legend of the Wandering Jew (or the Flying Dutchman) doomed to wander Earth until Judgment Day for tempting Jesus on the cross
3. the Romantic grotesque: the idea of human being as a puppet in the hands of capricious, blind transcendental powers (see image of Death playing dice)
4. Orientalism's exotic lure: Scheherazade from *Arabian Nights*
5. Gothic horror
6. Pantheism: consolatory powers of Nature in a world governed by (religious, existential) uncertainty
7. Christian allegory on the salvation of/by Christ

   6+7 → continuity between pagan superstitions and Christian theology: crisis& significance of faith, belief/imagination & incredulity
8. autobiographical self-portrait on poet's supernatural visions, struggle with language ("no tongue/ their beauty might declare"), isolation, loneliness
9. his own poetic agenda described in *Biographia Literaria:* supernatural incidents, dramatic truth of emotions, appeal to readers' affections, shadows of imagination, turmoil of human psyche, willing suspension of disbelief constituting poetic faith
10. Opium-induced visions

→ EXERCISE Read Coleridge's poem, Christabel (1797–1800), a mock-medieval Gothic romance in poetic form in which the innocent title character gradually succumbs to the evil lure of the demonic enchantress, the vampire-like Christabel. Answer the following questions:

1. What are some common themes in "Kubla Khan" and "The Ancient Mariner"? (transgression, corruption, the supernatural, etc)

2. How does the Gothic theme of the double emerge in the text?

3. Can you read the poem "symptomatically," in the light of Coleridge's life-long bipolar disorder and opium addiction?

4. Why does Coleridge use a storyteller who seems unsure of what is going on? (see notion of unreliable narrator, troubled main focaliser)

5. How can you interpret the enigmatic line: "Behold! Her bosom and half her side – a sight to dream of, not to tell!" What is the significance of the exclamation, the unspoken, and the ambiguous here?

EXTERNAL LINKS

- Lyrical Ballads 1798 at Project Gutenberg https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/9622
- Lyrical Ballads 1800 vol. 1 at Project Gutenberg https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/8905
- Lyrical Ballads 1800 vol. 2 at Project Gutenberg https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/8912
- Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* 1802 at *English UPenn* http://www.letras.ufmg.br/padrao_cms/documentos/profs/marcel/LyricalBallads.pdf
- *Biographia Literaria* at Project Gutenberg https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6081

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH A QUIZ
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1w3KkY0LbJ0HZSn70mmleuLKYBAdq8pyKQooAYGbMMZQ/prefill

1. The "willing suspension of disbelief" refers to

A. the painful loss of imaginative faculties caused by children's coming of age
B. nostalgia concomitant with old age
C. forgetfulness caused by opium addiction
D. renouncing of logical reasoning for the sake of fantasizing.

2. Tintern Abbey is NOT

A. a conversation poem
B. a landscape poem
C. a sonnet
D. an ode

3. Lyrical Ballads was first published without the authors' name on the cover.

A. True
B. False
C. Only Coleridge's name featured on the cover
D. Pseudonyms featured on the front page

4. The Lake Poets were a group of the 2nd generation of Romantic poets.

True
False

5. Wordsworth had more poems in *Lyrical Ballads* than Coleridge did.

True
False

6. The Wedding Guest in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is

A. a fictional portrait of the poet's father
B. an implied reader
C. a Romantic variant of Prometheus's mythological figure
D. an unreliable narrator

7. The "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" refers to Coleridge's love of the Lake district.

True
False

8. The person from Porlock was

A. a member of the Ancient Mariner's crew
B. a visitor who interrupted Coleridge's work

C. Kubla Khan's court magician
D. a travel companion Wordsworth met near Tintern Abbey

9. The Child is the … of Man.

10. "The Daffodils" was possibly inspired by a journal entry by Wordsworth's

A. mother
B. sister
C. daughter
D. bride

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Unit 5

THE SECOND GENERATION OF ROMANTIC POETRY: REVOLUTION AND IMAGINATION IN BYRON'S, SHELLEY'S AND KEATS' OEUVRE

AIM OF THIS UNIT:

The unit offers an introduction to the second generation of English Romantic poetry, focusing on the arts of Lord Gordon Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats.

KEY AUTHORS:

Lord Gordon Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats

COMPULSORY READINGS:

Byron: "Beppo, a Venetian Story," extract from "Childe Harold"

PB Shelley: "To a Skylark," "Ode to the West Wind," "Mont Blanc, Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni"

John Keats: "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," "Ode on a Grecian Urn," "Ode to a Nightingale," "Ode to Autumn"

KEY WORDS & TOPICS:

a poetry of conflicts (socio-political, philosophical, psychic personal), didactic/ allegorical/ symbolical poetry, Byronic villain hero, spleen, oriental tales, picaresque, ottava rima, digression, colloquial satire, closet drama, Don Juan, Childe Harold's pilgrimage, Manfred, Cain, Darkness,

the necessity of atheism, flood of rapture divine, a trumpet of prophecy, Prometheus Unbound, the Mask of Anarchy, Song to the Men of England, The Defence of Poetry, ode, invocation,

negative capability, synaesthesia, ekphrasis, the mind as a mansion of many apartments, Hyperion, Lamia, the fall of Endymion, Isabella, or the Pot of Basil, the Eve of St Agnes

KEY QUOTATIONS:

"If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

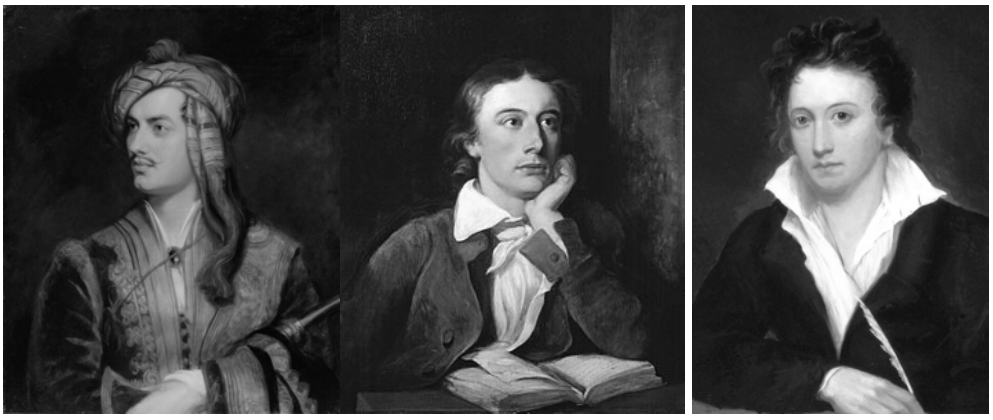
"The great Mountain has a voice, not understood by all"

"Truth is beauty, beauty is truth."

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

"O What can ail thee, knight-at-arms, Alone and palely loitering? The sedge has wither'd from the lake, And no birds sing."

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:
I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal."



BYRON (1788–1824) SHELLEY (1792–1822) KEATS (1795–1821)

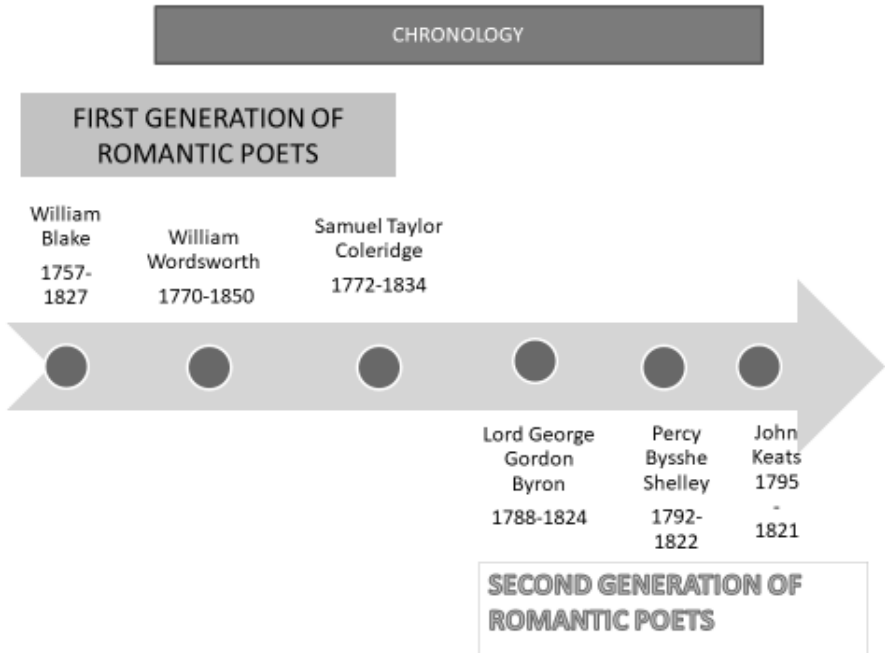
INTRODUCTION: THE TWO GENERATIONS OF ROMANTIC POETS

The beginning of English Romantic poetry is most often presumed to coincide with the publication of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* or Blake's *Songs of Innocence*. The end of this influential literary period is marked by Queen Victoria's ascension to the throne in 1837 and the advent of a new social structure and cultural conventions concomitant with the Victorianism succeeding to Romanticism. Canonically, Romantic poetry in English has been divided into two periods distinguished by two generations of poets. Wordsworth, Coleridge,

and Southey belonging to the first; Byron, Shelley, and Keats to the second generation of Romantic poets. There is certainly a continuity between the aesthetics and politics of the two generations.

SIMILARITIES:

Their art is equally characterised by a pantheistic love of Nature as an organic living whole, an active force of social criticism and philosophical self-reflection, and an exaltation of sensations.



DIFFERENCES:

1st GENERATION	2nd GENERATION
Wordsworth's simple language	complex language, elaborate versification, elegant diction is an expression of philosophy
embrace conservative life in old age in Lake district	die young, far from home
the poet prophet addresses universal existential themes of human destiny	the poet prophet is involved in a historically located fight for social change, against tyranny

Coleridge's hope in salvation even in dark poems as Rime of the Ancient Mariner	general disillusionment, clash/unbridgeable gap between real and ideal (Byron, Keats)
belief in continuity memories and Nature live on (in Tintern Abbey, We are Seven)	continuity is impossible (eternity is still, dead, art is separated from life in *Grecian Urn*)
feelings are innocent and eternal *(We are Seven)*	feelings are fatal, deceptive, ephemeral (La Belle Dame sans Merci)

LORD GORDON BYRON'S POETRY

The works by the second-generation Romantic lyricists are often labelled a **poetry of conflicts**.

This conflictual nature is best exemplified by the antagonistic thoughts and feelings manifested in Lord George Gordon Byron's life and art, permeated by a strange combination of gaiety, extravagance, idealism, and disillusioned melancholy.

CONFLICTS IN BYRON'S ART AND LIFE

- He gained reputation for his aristocratic excesses, his glamorous lifestyle, including notorious sexual escapades (promiscuity, bisexuality, disastrous marriage, incestuous relation with his half-sister), and eccentrism (a private menagerie, taste for the Gothic macabre). He was famed for his atheist radicalist proclamations, scandalous duels, gambling, and support for revolutionary causes, ↔ He was a troubled person, humiliated and traumatised in his childhood because of his congenital disorder, his lame club foot. He identified more and more with the fictional figure of the Byronic villain hero he created.
- He loved Liberty, died for it in Greece. ↔ He despised common people.
- He hated England. ↔ He resented exile. (In 1816 he left England to never return, lived in Switzerland for a while (met the Shelleys), then settled in Italy.)
- He despised warfare. ↔ He was attracted to war. (He supported the Greek revolutionaries against the Turkish oppression, and the Italian

carbonari, a secret militant nationalist association against the Hapsburg rule.)

- ❖ He was a libertine. ↔ He longed for a settled life as an English peer.
- ❖ He was a skeptic who questioned rebellion. ↔ He believed in his own beliefs.
- ❖ He was the genuine embodiment of a Romantic hero. ↔ He attacked Wordsworth and Coleridge, and praised Pope.

These conflicts were projected on the suffering ego of the poet Byron, however there is a development is his oeuvre from personal egotism reflected in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* to the social, communal solidarity. His interests became increasingly outward and his conflicts were resolved in satire, eg. in *Beppo*.

THE STAGES OF BYRON'S POETIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Early Period (1807–1815)

NARCISSISTIC INTROSPECTION

- more concerned with himself than society
- the conflicts are there but unrealised
- the invention of the Byronic villain hero (a fusion of the real and the poetic self)
- Weltschmerz, spleen
- Orientalism
- The Bride of Abydos, The Giaour, the Corsair, Lara

2. Middle Period (1815–1818)

NIHILISM

- Conflicts are recognised and produce tension
- scepticism about solutions
- individual and collective conflicts coexist:
- tyranny, corruption in society ≈ the troubled mind of the divided self
- heroes on the defensive: poetry penetrates to the dark depth of personality
- Darkness, The Dream, Manfred, Cain

3. Last Period (1818–1824)

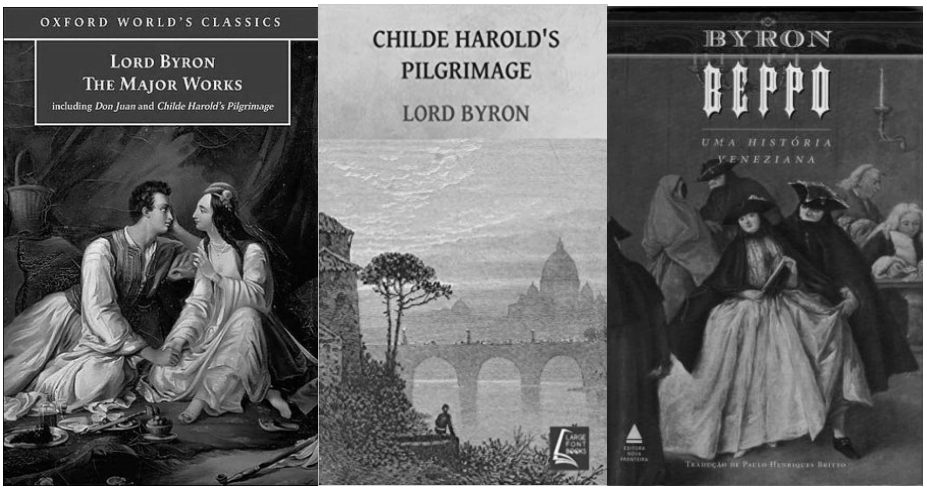
SATIRE

- the Byronic villain hero blames society for the discrepancy between what he seemed
- to be and what he actually was
- attacks the same discrepancy of society via the dark humour of satire
- vices are ridiculed: social criticism and psychologisation
- colloquial satire of a disillusioned idealist
- ottava rima, digression
- Beppo, Don Juan

When Byron's first volume of poetry ***Hours of Idleness*** (1807) received a negative critical response, he revenged himself with a scornful, satirical attack on the critics and on the established culture of his times in ***English Bards and Scottish Reviewers*** (1809).

Byron spent the following years with travelling, and his journeys to Spain, Malta, Albania, and Greece in between 1809 and 1811 proved to be formative of his personality and poetic career. His trips provided him with abundant inspiration for his trademark character: the sensitive, high-minded wanderer exiled from the society that he despised and rebelled against yet longed to belong to, a disillusioned artist tired of his hedonist existence and seeking consolation in foreign landscapes. The **Byronic villain hero** – an enigmatic figure grounded in the poet's fictional self-portrait – was characterised by a melancholic spleen, self-pity, pride, but also an extreme sensitivity and a generous mind. Glamorous, beautiful, restless, misanthropic, and mysterious, he was haunted by the guilt of crimes he sought to forget in violent, dangerous adventures, while "gloomily absorbed in memories of his past sins and the injustices done to him by society" (Ousby 62).

The character first appeared in Byron's ***Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*** (1812–1818) that became an immediate success after its publication and turned Byron into a real celebrity figure, and a fashion icon of the **Byron mania**. This long semi-autobiographical poem mixed the description of the places Byron visited with moral, political, historical reflections, combining melancholic laments with rhapsodic appeal to degenerate nations to arise and recover their lost glory. In the fourth canto Byron actually drops the mask and writes in the first person, fully blurring life and art, as the artist seems to fully identify with the villain-hero figure he created. The character re-emerges in Byron's Cain, Manfred, and Don Juan, and is revived later on characters like *Wuthering Heights*'s Heathcliff, *Jane Eyre*'s Mr Rochester, or *Twilight*'s Edward Cullen.



Byron's **oriental verse tales** – "**The Giaour**" (1813), "**The Corsair**" (1814), and "**Lara**" (1814) – thematise mysterious, violent heroism, turbulent passions, and individual defiance which usually culminate in death or misery, and serve as exotic counterpoints to the ordinary, down-to-earth stillness of British life. They are perfect examples for the Romantic **Orientalism** craze, Western cultures' vivid fantasizing about strange "elsewhere" of a largely mystified, fictionalised East (Asia, North Africa, the Middle East), where the terrifying and tempting "exotic other" dwells. Postcolonialist scholars, like Edward Said, have criticised from the 1970s the patronising, stereotypical Western representations which reduce Eastern cultures to otherness, utopia, metaphor, source of land, labour, and material goods.

READ *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*'s examples for Romantic Orientalism

- Blake's tiger;
- dream of "an Arab of the Bedouin Tribes" in book 5 of Wordsworth's *Prelude*;
- the founder of the Mongol dynasty in China as well as an Abyssinian "damsel with a dulcimer" in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan";
- Eastern plots, characters, and themes in Byron's "Oriental tales," and *Don Juan*
- a poet's journey into the innermost reaches of the Caucasus (the legendary boundary between Europe and Asia) in Percy Shelley's *Alastor*;
- a tempting affair with an Indian maiden in Keats's "Endymion"
- a feast of "dainties" from Fez, Samarcand, Lebanon in Keats' "The Eve of St. Agnes";

- an Arab maiden, Safie, as the most liberated character in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Manfred: A dramatic poem (1816–17), a **closet drama** – a play not intended to be performed onstage, but read by a solitary reader or out loud in a small group – features the typical Byronian hero, a guilt-ridden, restless, solitary wanderer, tormented by an unspecified sorrow. The work was inspired by **Goethe's *Faust*** and written only a few months after the ghost-story writing competition with the Shelleys that gave impetus for *Frankenstein*. It is set in the sublime region of the Alps, abounds in **supernatural elements** and **metaphysical philosophical** reflections. The outcast hero struggles with the remorse he feels because the death of his sister caused by some obscure, destructive, unspecified relationship with her. He conjures the Spirits of Earth and Air, the Witch of the Alps, the Destinies and Nemesis to seek forgiveness in vain, but eventually his soul is saved by the spirit of beloved sister. Critics assume it is a **semi-autobiographical, confessional** text on Byron's incestuous relationship with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh that provoked on immense scandal and terminated his marriage just before the poem's composition.

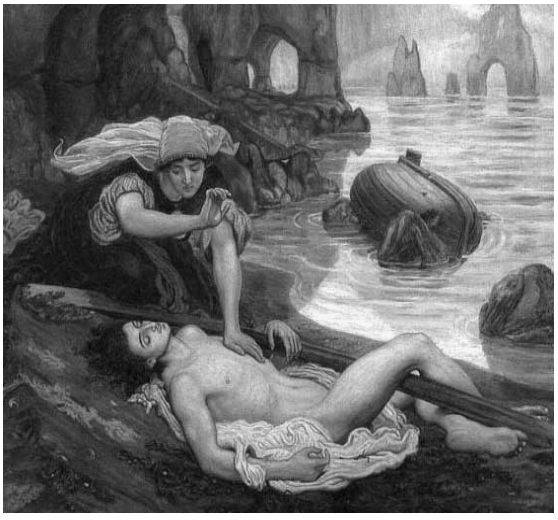
> → **Manfred** has several musical adaptations. LISTEN to Robert Schumann's 1852 Ouverture and Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky 1885 Symphony
> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A74nG-Aq07k
> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzjGnpkYq4g

The closet drama on ***Cain*** (1821) gives a blasphemous, perverse twist to the Biblical story by transforming Cain, the first murderer into a focaliser (we see the events from his perspective). Cain is a rebel hero dissatisfied with the post-lapsarian life of toil, and curious to learn from Lucifer more than God will reveal to him.

Beppo: A Venetian Story (1817) is a long poem Byron wrote in Venice presumably inspired by an autobiographical experience, an exciting yet uncomfortable episode of being a *cavalier servente*, a tolerated lover of the wife of an elderly Italian nobleman. This specimen of **discursive narrative poetry** – a precursor to *Don Juan* – offers an ironic commentary on public issues of contemporary social life and manners. (It mocks London smoke, weather, chilly women, and bourgeois hypocrisy), while satirising both English and Italian life and himself (his prejudices, vices, fate). According to the plot, a long lost soldier Giuseppe (Beppo in short) returns to Venice to find out, masked in the Carnival disguise of a Turkish merchant, that his wife has consoled herself with a gallant lover.

Byron recycles the stock characters of the ***commedia dell arte*** tradition, but he also creates a Romantic version of the **urban wit** he admired so much in Pope.

This is Byron's first attempt at using ***ottava rima***, an eight-line, ten-syllable verse form, the metre of Italian burlesque poetry. This verse form allows for a variety of both expression and mood, for satire and sentiment, and gives disciplined freedom to his verse in loose stanzas. The narrative structure is peculiar. Less than half of the 99 stanzas are directed to telling the story, so that the poem is predominated by digression that deviates from the storyline extensively to mockingly comment on a variety of mundane topics in a **colloquial satire**. This **digressive structure** is possibly a metaphor for Byron's own life experience, suggesting that life is a digression between birth and death, that linear sequential storytelling's chronology is inevitably fractured is art and life alike. Ironically, there is even a digression on the nature of digression, coupled by tongue-in-cheek self-reflective commentaries like "I find digression is a sin." This **unplotted poem** seems to say that no story can account for the variability of life.



FORD MADOX BROWN: THE FINDING OF DON JUAN BY HAIDÉE (1869–1870)

Don Juan (1819) is Byron's most well-known work, a long, unfinished poem, in 16 cantos, a satirical epic in *ottava rima*, a novel in verse that immediately gained an immense popularity. He creates a negligent version of the Spanish **picaresque** genre, that traditionally tracks how the roguish young hero of low birth makes his adventurous way in a corrupt society via his cunning and courage. Byron boldly mingles his attitudes as ironist and idealist, jester and critic, observer and sufferer,conjoining historical and fictional events and personages. Although the poem was criticised for immorality, this Don Juan is not a heart-

less womaniser but an innocent, passive, young man who learns from a variety of international amorous adventures. On a Greek island he has a love affair with Haidée a pirate's daughter, in Constantinople the sultana tries to seduce him, in Russia he becomes a favourite of Catherine the Great. He is a questionable hero because he is "**more acted upon than acting**," he remains at the mercy of external forces and the caprices of women; hence, his search for identity is never fully accomplished.

The adventures (shipwreck, cannibalism, diplomatic mission) give an opportunity to formulate satirical and philosophical commentaries on the workings of English society, human hypocrisy, to debunk conventionally accepted myths and morals (the supposed glory in war, fidelity in love, benevolence of nature, kindness of men). The narrator is a sophisticated, sharp-sighted observer, with cynical amusement and warm sympathy for the poor, weak, and victimised. He reveals that pity, humour, and compassionate acceptance are the only way to face our chaotic and uncontrollable world.

→ EXERCISE:

How does Wordsworth's solitary wanderer differ from Byron's? What makes Byron's Don Juan a hero and what makes him an anti-hero? Why does Byron make so many digressions from the plot?

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY' POETRY

The dominant conflict of Shelley's poetry was rooted in his simultaneous attraction to **revolutionary poetic radicalism** and **(neo)Platonic idealism**. He formulated best his *ars poetica* in the preface to his *Prometheus Unbound:* "I have a passion for reforming the world." His political poetry – informed by pacifist, socialist, and even vegetarian ideologies; all advocating liberty, democratic ideals, and the moral responsibility to fight tyrannical oppression – can be divided into three distinct categories: didactic, allegorical, and symbolical abstract poetry.

1. **Didactic poetry**: "**Song to the Men of England, England 1819***"* is a political sonnet (written in 1919 and published only in 1839) that described King George III as despised, dying, mad, old king, the nobility as leech-like princes who suck the blood of the nation, the Parliament as a relic, and the people as starved, hopeless, and Godless. Still the last two lines reflect a relentless belief in Romantic ideals of love and beauty, a hope that a glorious Phantom may spring forth from this decay. The Phantom refers to the French Revolution that placed the slogans Liber-

ty, Equality, Fraternity on its banner, while acting as the ultimate apocalyptic *deus ex machina* to save the country.

2. **Allegorical poetry**: "**The Masque of Anarchy**" (1819) is a political poem inspired by the Peterloo Massacre where cavalry charged into a crowd gathered to demand the reform of parliamentary representation. It advocates nonviolent resistance against unjust forms of authority ("God, and King, and Law") and dreams of a democratic assembly "of the fearless, of the free." The poem is grounded in the rhetorical device of the **allegory** that uses an extended metaphor and symbolic imagery to transmit a social critical message about real life problems. Here, members of the Lord Liverpool's government appear as masks worn by Murder, Hypocrisy, and Fraud. Led by the skeletal king Anarchy they strive to take over England until they are stopped by maiden Hope who arises from the mist to save the people. Shelley's thoughts inspired Gandhi's passive resistance and Thoreau's civil disobedience, too.

3. **Symbolic abstraction:** Shelley defined his poetic agenda in the Preface to his ***Prometheus Unbound*** as "beautiful idealism of moral excellence," arguing that cultivated imagination should promote the moral, intellectual revolution he believed to be a pre-requisite of lasting, democratising change in political institutions (Duffy 127). These thoughts emerge in *Ode to Liberty* (1820) that describes Europe's ongoing political upheaval in terms of the brute force of systematic volcanic activity. *Prometheus Unbound* is a four-act lyrical closet drama (1820) that celebrates the revolutionary intents of the trickster Titan, Prometheus, a mythological figure who defied Gods, stole fire from the Olympus, and gave it to humans to improve mortals' life. Unlike in the classical Greek myth, in Shelley's lyrical drama inspired by Aeschylus' tragedy, Prometheus's fate is not eternal punishment and suffering. Tyrant Zeus, abandoned by his supportive elements, falls from power, and the philanthropic Titan is released.

NOTES:

1. In the original myth, Prometheus is chained to a cliff, where each day an eagle, the emblem of Zeus, comes to feed on his liver, which grows back overnight to be ripped out again the next day.

2. Prometheus is a complex figure: his theft of fire enables human progress and civilisation but it also unchains violence; flames can be used to gain warmth but they can also burn a house down or fry the meat of a prey. (Shelley as a vegetarian condemned meat eating.)

3. The modern Prometheus in the subtitle of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (written at Villa Diodati in 1816, published in 1818) represented the dangerous consequences of human quest for (scientific) knowledge, the risk of overreaching. – P.B. Shelley's lengthy poem Alastor or the Spirit of Solitude (1816) has a slightly similar theme combining the gothic supernatural lure with cautionary warnings and metaimaginative self-reflections about artistic fantasising agency. An evil genius animates the Poet's imagination that zealously pursues the most obscure part of Nature in search of "strange truths in undiscovered lands."

Mary was P.B. Shelley's second wife. Percy abandoned his pregnant wife Harriet to elope with sixteen-years-old Mary Godwin. They travelled to France, Italy, and Switzerland, where she wrote *Frankenstein*, a story of failed, monstrous parenting, possibly recording within a science-fictional framework her traumatic experiences of miscarriages and Shelley's negligent fathering. Their relationship was passionate, troubled, but mutually inspiring. They could eventually marry when Harriet committed suicide but they lost custody of Shelley's children on grounds of his atheism, and their marriage was repeatedly put on trial by Percy's affairs with other women, his financial troubles, and the premature death of four of their babies (only one son survived into adulthood).

Percy died in a truly Romantic fashion, shortly before his thirtieth birthday he drowned in the sea (with a volume of Keats' poems in his pocket) when his boat called Don Juan (in homage to Byron) sunk in the thunderstorm. He was cremated on a beach near Viareggio for health reasons, but, as legend has it, Mary snatched his heart from the funeral pyre, she kept it in a silken shroud and carried it with her nearly everywhere for years. After her death, Percy's heart was found in her desk wrapped in the pages of one of his last poems, *Adonais*, and was eventually buried in the family vault with their son in 1889. Moreover, the British Library's thick, red-leather-bound volume containing Mary Shelley's letter to Maria Gisbourne about Shelley's death presumably contains within an inlaid in the back cover some of Shelley's ashes and fragments of his skull.

Louis Édouard Fournier. *The Funeral of Shelley*, 1889.

→ **WATCH** a short biographical video on Percy Bysshe Shelley from *Literary Classics* (1999)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeadtFfUO3c

The root of Shelley's romantic conflict lies in his attraction to both atheism, political radicalism, and materialism (represented by Godwin's socialist thoughts) AND idealism (along the lines of Plato's philosophy). This conflict is experienced on several levels (see chart below). In Shelley's poetic oeuvre we can map a development from the simple belief in utopian revolution to a more symbolic view of how good/love/liberty will ultimately defeat evil/hate/tyranny. Gradually, his lyricism became less didactic and actual, and much more abstract, filled with mystery, ecstasy, and myth-making. His last unfinished poem **"The Triumph of Life"** (1822) can be interpreted as the reconciliation of materialism and idealism, an attempt at the fusion of the two opposing trends.

CONFLICTS IN SHELLEY'S ART

- SOCIAL/POLITICAL CONFLICT

  What IS in the world (*England 1819*) ↔ What MIGHT BE in the world (*Prometheus U)*

- PERSONAL CONFLICT

  BODY ↔ SPIRIT (Ode to the West Wind, To a Skylark)

- PHILOSOPHICAL CONFLICT

  NATURE AS NECESSITY (*The Cloud*) ↔ NATURE AS SPIRIT OF LOVE (*To a Skylark*)

"Mont Blanc, Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni" (1816) is an **ode to nature** in irregular rhyme that praises the mountain as the locus of "the secret Strength of things Which governs thought, and the infinite dome Of Heaven is as a law, Inhabits thee!" It is a **picturesque travel narrative in a lyrical form** with a poetic climax that personifies "the great Mountain [who] has a voice, not understood by all." The poem testifies to the **co-dependent union of the human interpreter and the natural lifeworld**. The artist's consciousness gains inspiration from nature, but nature has power only in relation to/by courtesy of the human mind. The poetic genius strives to invest it with meanings even if the sublime landscape might be too overwhelming to be captured by mundane thought. ("The immensity of these aerial summits excited when they suddenly burst upon the sight, a sentiment of ecstatic wonder, not unallied to madness").

Challenging Wordsworth's and Coleridge's nature poetry, Shelley neither credits God for the sublime natural wonders nor does he cherish nature as fundamentally benevolent. In his view, the mountain's spirit teaches us that Nature can be both a nurturing and destructive force depending on how we relate to it. In that sense, **the powers of Mont Blanc parallel the powers of imagination** that holds a capacity to create and decompose, to comprehend truths and dwell in illusions, to prophetically capture the totality of universal being and to be dazed and confused by sensory perceptions. The poem builds on the Romantic trope of **the poet as seer**.

„Ode to the West Wind"'s idea of the poet-prophet-trumpet emerges in *The Defence of Poetry* (1819) where Shelley writes:

"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."

"Ode to the West Wind" (1819) is perhaps one of Shelley's most well-known poems written in Florence, Italy where the poet in a self-afflicted exile **mourned** the death of his infant son born to Mary Shelley and lamented that he cannot help English people from abroad. Yet the ode still carries an **optimistic** message. The wild west wind appears as an untamed element of nature that can freely spread the poet-prophet's revolutionary, messianistic message, the lyrical voice ardently hopes that his words will find fertile ground in people's minds, and will inspire social reforms. The wind, like the poet, is a **trumpet of prophecy** that can awaken all; it can both preserve and destroy, but always brings about change. The final line is a rhetorical question that resonates with an idealistic, nearly utopian promise, an optimistic vision of future. "**If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"** implies that due to the cyclical rhythm of the lifeworld, decay is necessarily followed by rebirth and the **regeneration of Nature as a source of Truth and Beauty**. The trope of Spring stands for human consciousness, imagination, liberty, and morality – everything that Art hopes to bring to Mankind.

"To a Skylark" (1820) is a **nature ode** inspired by an evening walk with Mary in the countryside of Livorno, Italy. The Skylark is **more of a spirit than a bird**. Its song emanates from Heaven and stays behind even when the bird disappears. Unpremeditated art flows from its breast and heart, and floats like "unbodied joy" in the golden lightning of sun, as "flood of rapture divine." Any

human hymn to love or victory pales by comparison. The poet is preoccupied with the question, what inspires the bird's song, whom does it address, what does it mean? He asks, **"What are the fountains of thy happy strain?"** and concludes that the skylark knows things more true than mortals can dream of because it lives **unaware of love's sad satiety**, its song is flawless because it is neither tormented by desire, nor troubled by the awareness of impending death. Perfect bliss is impossible for humans, since our existence is permeated by experiences of loss, pain, and insatiable yearning. The sweetest songs of mankind are melancholic accounts of the saddest thoughts. The lyrical I begs the bird for guidance on how to create **harmonious madness** (an oxymoron), and simple satiety in/via art, while he knows that his quest for ethereal, spiritual bliss must remain futile. "Teach me half the gladness That thy brain must know. Such harmonious madness From my lips would flow. The world should listen then, as I'm listening now." Paradoxically the simple, thoughtless beast offers more universal delights than any poet can. Yet this **"pining for what is not"** constitutes the very essence of human (and especially artistic) being.

JOHN KEATS'S POETRY

JOHN KEATS (1795–1821) was a major figure of the second generation of Romantic poets despite his short writing career (1816-1821) terminated by his premature death from tuberculosis at the age of 25. Keats's interest in social conditions was not as revolutionary as Shelley's, and not as satirical or sceptical as Byron's. His themes mainly dealt with personal conflicts in a poetry of sensations that held wider intellectual, philosophical implications concerning human existence, the longing for freedom, and the unattainability of beauty. His influence was immense on Victorian poetry and art.

CONFLICTS IN KEATS' ART

- FACT↔ MAGIC
- SUBJECTIVE IMAGINATION ↔ OBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE
- BODY ↔ SPIRIT
- MELANCHOLY ↔ JOY
- SENSUOUS BEAUTY ↔ SPIRITUAL BEAUTY

Keats's earliest work **"Endymion" (1818)** is an escapist, idealist poem dedicated to the poet predecessor Chatterton. This dream-like tale recycles the Greek myth of the shepherd beloved by the Moon goddess Celeste, in a pastoral vision musing about the amorous interactions between the opposite spheres of Earth

and Heaven, between mortal and immortal realms. The oft-quoted initial lines testify to a proto-aestheticist cult of beauty: "**A thing of beauty is a joy forever.** Its loveliness increases, it will never Pass into nothingness; but still will keep A bower quiet for us, and a sleep Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing." Similar to the shorter poems of the period 1817-18, "Endymion*"* is preoccupied with **Sensuous Beauty, Joy, and Magic**, without exploring in depth their contraries.

Keats's poetry is distinguished by a sensuous richness, dense images, and **synaesthesia** where several sense impressions are experienced simultaneously. Perceptions blend and intensify one another, as acoustic stimuli may trigger tactile, olfactory, gustatory, and visual sensations which transgress the limits of consciousness. The mystery of creative power is originated from the union of sleep and awakening. Dreaming allows for a magical liberation from facts, however awakening is followed by disillusion, a sense of loss, and an existential anxiety concerning the impossibility to tell which is the real and which is the make-believe world? In fact, instead of shying away from the feeling of incertitude, Keats turns into a cornerstone of his poetry. According to his famous definition, **negative capability** refers to a state of mind "when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after faith and reason" The great poet refutes Enlightenment rationalism, and accepts that not everything can be explained/resolved, that reality is rich in a multiplicity of potentialities, that the truth=beauty found in imagination is the only real authority.

Keats wrote **strange lyrical tales of passion, death, and devotion** which inspired the era's famous painters including William Holman Hunt, John William Waterhouse, John Everett Millais and Arthur Hughes among others. (*see images below*) **"Lamia," "Isabella, or the Pot of Basi**l;" and "**The Eve of St Agnes"** (1820) are narrative poems which tell the stories of a woman trapped within a serpent's body, a maiden hiding her dead beloved's head in a flower pot, and medieval superstitious ritual for foreseeing future husbands, respectively. Mysticism is preferred to rationality as a more favourable ground for fantasising, as the following quote attests: "Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings/ Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,/ Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine-/ Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made/The tender person'd Lamia melt into a shade."

La Belle Dame Sans Merci" (1819), a visionary ballad with a fairy-tale atmosphere and a faux-medieval setting, tackles one of Keats's favourite plotlines: a dream coming true is followed by a disillusioned awakening to reality, and a reluctance to define what is real and what is make-believe. A framed dream narrative, mirroring the initial rhetorical question in the final lines, is structured as follows: 1. A questioner ponders about a lonely, disturbed knight loitering apparently aimlessly in a desolate landscape; 2. An embedded narrative recounts the knight's forest encounter with a lady who fatally mesmerised him with her mysterious charms.; 3. The epilogue describes the consequences of the lady's disappearance, the irredeemable loss of the dream.

Frank Bernard Dicksee.
LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI, 1901. Bristol Museum.

Conforming to the Keatsian agenda of "negative capability," the poem is full of **uncertainties, doubts, shadows**, a sense of inexplicable events going on, a paradoxical feel of forgotten revelations, an odd combination of bliss and terror, of enrichment and deprivation, eliciting psychic and physical disorientation. One can recognise the classic supernatural trope of "**fairy enthrallment**" but in a **metafictional** manner one can also wonder if the faerial figure is just a fictitious construct of the poet's mind, Keats called "a mansion of many apartments." It is unclear if the idyllic union of lovers was broken because of the lady's treacherous ruthlessness, the knight's inability to retain the vision, or the radical incompatibility of the two spheres of dream and reality. The poem lends itself to be read as a **tragic quest narrative** of the poet-knight but the lady is indubitably the pivotal character of the vision who intrigues our imagination. It is difficult to decide is she is a demon lover beldam, a serial seductress *femme fatale*, or an otherworldly, ethereal fairy. Her "**sweet moan**" that bewitches the knight can be just as much an expression of love, ecstasy, as sorrow, and pain. Similarly, her "**language strange**" might either transcend above or degenerate from human communication. Does she speak in bestial grunts or a pre-lapsarian angelic discourse? And is the encounter more like a domestic, bucolic idyll, an interspecies romance, a fatal accident, a plot of seduction, or a scene of harassment? And if the latter is the case, who seduces whom? These remain open-ended questions since the young man fails to answer the impatient inquiries: "O WHAT can ail thee, knight-at-arms, Alone and palely loitering? The sedge has wither'd from the lake, And no birds sing." **A fading vision of perfection and a melancholic uncertainty** permeate the entire text.

Keats' Odes are miniature dramas of the reconciliation of the ideal and the real. They are mature expressions of the Keatsian conflict – between pleasure/pain, happiness/melancholy, imagination/reality, art/life – coming to a balanced complexity. The poems celebrate the sensuous beauty of the material world that seems even more precious because of its transience, its fragility, the ill poet's growing awareness of vulnerability, decay, and impending death. The generic framework of the ode, the intellectual and emotional glorification of natural or cultural objects, serves a pretext to reflect on mutability, the quest for permanence, the limited therapeutical, compensatory potentials of visionary imagination, the effects of the passage of time on beauty and human love, and the relentless permanence and insatiability of yearnings. They express an aesthetic approach to life, where the transitory life of sensuous beauty is contrasted with the permanent art of spiritual beauty. Keats was prolific throughout his short writing life, in 1819 he composed the odes entitled *Ode to a Nightingale, Ode to Psyche, Ode on Melancholy, Ode On Indolence, Ode on a Grecian Urn.* Some of these are

so-called companion pieces that are in close relationship with another: *Ode on a Grecian Urn* is concerned with Art, while *To a Nightingale* reflects on Nature.

In **"Ode to a Nightingale"** 1819) the birdsong is a **symbol of timelessness**. It allows the listener to escape from the civilised human world of disillusion, transience, decay, corruption and change to an ideal natural realm ruled by liberty, warmth, music, perfection, permanence, and infinity. The poet's recognition of the immense happiness of the nightingale and the ultimate artistic perfection of its song provides such an intense experience, that his aesthetic delight borders on pain ("my heart aches"). It is even more so because he is aware that his **daydreaming** immersion into the immortal bliss of the bird will be necessarily followed by an **awakening** to the numb melancholy of mortal human existence (full of "the weariness, the fever, and the fret"). As the poet is moving into darkness, and listening to the fading song, he is willing to exchange visual sensations for auditory, acoustic ones, and considers closing his eyes forever. He contends that even dying would be a positive experience amidst the enjoyment of such beauty. ("Now more than ever seems it rich to die, To cease upon the midnight with no pain, While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad In such an ecstasy!"). Death could make time stand still and freeze-frame the perfect moment, so that the bird song would be a requiem for the poet who no longer feels mortal pains. However, dying would also disconnect him from the perfect artwork. Paradoxically, a beautiful ending would be the ending of the ability to respond to beauty, too. The poem suggests that in order to appreciate beauty you must be alive, you must learn to accept the ephemeral nature of pleasures, and learn to live with sorrows, suffering, mortality. As the bird flies away, the lyrical self asks himself with an uncertain rhetorical question "**Was it a vision or a waking dream? Fled is that music – Do I wake or sleep?"** The **nightingale transcends death**; as a songbird it seems capable of living through its song; it **symbolises immortal imagination**. This is a **metapoem**, rich in synesthetic imagery, reflecting on the limits and potentials of artistic creativity, and offering account of Keats's personal journey into the mind set of negative capability.

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—
that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

→ EXERCISE:

Listen to the **Skylark's Song** and the **Nightingale's Song** here:

https://www.british-birdsongs.uk Then collect the similes and metaphors Shelley and Keats use to describe the birds' songs?

SKYLARK ('s SONG)	NIGHTINGALE ('s SONG)
raindrops from rainbow clouds	summer in full-throated ease…
a high born maiden in a tower…	a light-winged Dryad of the trees

Ode on a Grecian Urn (1819) is an example of **ekphrastic poetry**: the poet-focaliser proves his imaginative and writerly skills by providing a verbal description of a visual artwork. Keats's account of the beauty of the people and events painted on an ancient vase concludes that though art has the capacity to escape the ravages of time and freeze-frame a perfect moment into infinity, but only at the expense of an eternal unfulfilment, the loss of dynamic liveliness. **Perpetual stasis** is sublime, suspenseful, both admirably and irritably silent. The bride on the urn remains forever between the wedding ceremony and the bridal bed; the consummation of desires is endlessly delayed. The "warmth of life" is captured in a "cold pastoral." The urn itself is addressed personified as "**Thou still unravished bride of quietness**," and the questions it provokes ask: How to create verbal images that live up to the decoration of the urn? (This rivalry between the linguistic and the visual modes of representation belongs to the ***ut pictura poesis*** tradition.) How to translate, via an intermedial shift, images into text? (The former is able to express spatiality, the latter temporality.) How to make words stand the test of time as the urn did? The final aphorism-like lines, "**Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.**" acknowledge the immortality of artistic beauty that stands in stark contrast with the ephemeral but lively passions of human existence's lived reality. Keats's metapoem comments on both the wonders and limitations of art.

→ WATCH biopic period drama on Keats's art & life, *Bright Star*, directed by Jane Campion

Ode to Autumn adopts an admirable nature imagery to express a transient moment in the flux of time, the bittersweet pleasure derived from the lack of permanence. Autumn is a season whose bounty represents both the intensification of life, ripeness, fertility and inevitable decay, a soft dying of the day. Although, the fleeting nature of beauty provokes heartache, we must learn to appreciate that pain, and accept loss and the passing of time as natural parts of life, so that we can live in harmony with Nature. The Goddess of Autumn appears as a careless girl, a burdened gleaner, a patient watcher, while the lyrical I is missing from the text. His presence is marked by his absence, perhaps a fading into Nature. The melodic and picturesque language of the poem stimulated a variety of senses. Even if Autumn is the season of passing, it makes us feel alive.

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH A QUIZ
https://forms.gle/R2CBxEBeYh9RGdWCA

1. What is ottava rima?

A. an Italian verse form
B. an Italian novelistic subgenre
C. an Italian dessert
D. an Italian dance

2. Shelley wrote odes to

A. Mont Blanc, a Skylark, the West Wind
B. Mont Everest, Spring, the Grecian Wind
C. a Grecian urn, the West Wind, a skylark
D. Mont Blanc, the West Wind, the sky

3. Place the stages of Shelley's poetic development in the correct order

A. 1.allegory, 2. symbolic abstraction, 3. didacticism
B. 1. symbolic abstraction, 2. didacticism, 3. allegory
C. 1. didacticism, 2. allegory, 3. symbolic abstraction
D. 1. didacticism, 2. symbolic abstraction, 3. allegory

4. Which is not an example of Romantic Orientalism?

A. Coleridge's Kubla Khan
B. Alastor's journey in Shelley
C. Byron's Giaour
D: Keats's La Belle Dame Sans Merci

5. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." is a line by

A. Keats
B. Wordsworth
C. Shelley
D. Byron

6. Select the FALSE answer. The Second generation of Romantic poets…

A. preferred elaborate versification to simple language
B. believed continuity was impossible
C. died young
D. believed feelings were innocent and eternal

7. The Byronic villain hero is NOT characterised by:

A. humility
B. mystery
C. glamour
D. pride
E: self-pity
F.melancholic spleen

8. What is the title of the image?

A. Keats's farewell
B. The sacrifice of a Viking warrior
C. The funeral of Shelley
D. Byron death by fire

9. Negative capability means

A. the capability of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts
B. the capability of saying no
C. the capability of appreciating the dark, gloomy, ghastly aspect of being
D. the capability of living in debt

10. Which bird does not feature in any famous Romantic poem

A. Skylark
B. Cuckatoo
C: Albatross
D: Nightingale

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Unit 6
INTRODUCTION TO THE CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE VICTORIAN PERIOD

AIM OF THIS UNIT:

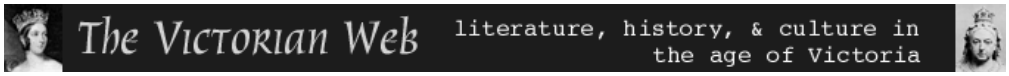
The unit offers an introduction to the cultural and historical context of the Victorian period to facilitate the comprehension of the late 19th century literary works which are to be discussed in the following chapters.

KEY FIGURES:

Queen Victoria, Charles Darwin, Thomas Alva Edison, Nikola Tesla, Alexander Graham Bell, Benjamin Disraeli, William Gladstone, John Stuart Mill, Thomas Robert Malthus, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis, Friedrich Nietzsche, John Ruskin, Lewis Carroll, Florence Nightingale, Emmeline Pankhurst, Jack the Ripper, Gilbert and Sullivan

COMPULSORY READINGS:

Browse through *The Victorian Web* (victorianweb.org) An online digital database on literature, culture, and history in the age of Victoria. Founded and edited by George P Landow, Professor of English and History of Art, Brown University.



KEY WORDS & TOPICS:

- Pax Britannica, Belle Époque, Britain as a leading Imperial Power,
- Industrial Revolution, Urbanisation, Mechanical Age, technological and scientific progress, the war of currents, (steam engines, phonograph, daguerreotype, post-mortem/spirit photography)
- Democratisation, socialism, Representation of the People Act/Reform Act of 1832, Fabian society, Communist manifesto, Marx, class struggle
- suffragettes, the Woman Question, the Angel in the House/ the Fallen Woman, madwoman in the attic

- Exploitation/Idealisation of children, child labour, the cult of the child, three Rs
- Rising bourgeoisie, idea of self-made man, inventions, etiquette, conduct books, prudishness/ erotic counterculture, bathing cabinets, *The Pearl*
- Darwinism, the survival of the fittest, natural selection, degeneration, moral Darwinism, Galton's eugenics, Gall's phrenology, physiognomy
- the Great Exhibition, the Crystal Palace, Victoria and Albert Museum
- Pseudo-sciences, The Royal Society of Psychic Research, mesmerism, galvanism, spiritualism
- Cult of beauty, aestheticism, arts and crafts movement
- Arts: combines Romantic imagination with Neoclassical idea on public role of art
- Colonisation, exoticism, orientalism, *Arabian Nights*
- Religion: secularisation, age of doubt, simultaneously existing contradictory belief systems: faith, fantasy, scientific hypothesis –epistemological crisis
- *Punch* humour magazine, comic operettas, vaudeville theatre
- Golden age of the novel: fantasy+realism, escapism+politics, prophecy+pragmatism

THE VICTORIAN AGE: A PERIOD OF POWER AND PARADOX

The cultural historical period of the Victorian era gains its name from the long reign of **Queen Victoria** from June 1837 to January 1901.[1] The era was preceded by the Georgian Regency Era and followed by Edwardian era, and its latter half overlaps with the Continental European Belle Époque. This complex and rich epoch, commonly referred to as the **second English Renaissance**, saw a great expansion of wealth, power, and cultural productions (see Landow), as well as rapid techno-scientific progress, economic development, and revolutionary ideas which elicited epistemological crises and associated Victorian consciousness with a conflicted frame of mind.

[1] The long reign of Queen Victoria was surpassed only by her great-great-granddaughter Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth 2, who became in 2017 the first British monarch to celebrate a Sapphire Jubilee, commemorating 65 years on the throne.

PAX BRITANNICA AND BRITAIN'S IMPERIAL CENTURY

In the age of **Pax Britannica**, a long period of prosperity and peace, the **British Empire** became a leading imperial hegemonic power due to colonial conquests all over the globe and remarkable technological, scientific, economic progress within the borders of the UK. Between 1815 and 1914 it added 10,000,000 square miles (about 26,000,000 km^2) with roughly 400 million new subjects to its territory. Victoria became Empress of India in 1877. The Royal Navy earned an unchallenged power over the key naval trade routes. They occupied Egypt, as well as the Chinese Markets after opium wars, and New Zealand became a British colony in 1840. This entailed the worldwide spreading of the English language, the British imperial system of measures (foot-pound-second), and the rules for commodity market based on the English common law. The British Empire had no real international rival left: after the victory over Napoleonic France, the British (together with the French) defeated the Russians in the Crimean War (1854-6), protecting the Ottoman Empire, and they also triumphed over South Africa in the Boer War (1899-1902).

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS

While the First Industrial Revolution began in the mid-18th century through the use of steam power and the mechanisation of production that caused the growth of industries (coal, iron, railroad, textiles), the late 19th century was the

heyday of the **Second Industrial Revolution,** also known as the **Technological Revolution of the Mechanical Age**. It was marked by

- rapid urbanisation (people moving to cities in search of better livelihood),
- mechanisation (manual labour's replacement by machine-based manufacturing),
- industrialisation (increase in the number of factories, in production capacity);
- an extensive mass utilisation of electricity, petroleum, and steel;
- the emergence of cutting-edge technological inventions as steam powered ships, railways, internal combustion engines, and electrical power generators;
- major changes in agriculture, manufacturing, transportation.

Multiple reasons contributed to the second Industrial Revolution, concomitant with imperialism and capitalism, the two most decisive power-technologies of the times.

1. The financial profit gained from the colonies fuelled the era's industrial investments.
2. The effective national border control blocked the spread of diseases, it reduced epidemics and infantile mortality, hence augmented the available labour power.
3. Britain emerged from the Napoleonic wars as the only European nation unaffected by financial problems and economic collapse.
4. Protestant work ethics, entrepreneurial class' belief in progress, engineering ingenuity
5. Democratic access to technological innovations, scientific discoveries

The economic progress had a positive effect on socioeconomic and cultural conditions. Many inventor-entrepreneurs recognised the potentials of mass production and large teamwork in the first industrial research laboratories.

VICTORIAN TECHNOLOGICAL INVENTIONS

DATE	INVENTION	INVENTOR	HYPERLINK: LEARN MORE
1826 1838	photography daguerrotype	Joseph Nicéphore Niépce Louis Daguerre	Look at Victorian photography at the *Victoria & Albert Museum*'s website
1826	telephone	Alexander Graham Bell	
1825	1st passenger steam train	John Stephenson	
1839	paddle steamboat	Isambard Kingdom Brunel	Look at William Turner's paintings of steam powered vehicles
1850, 1852	sewing machine +1st public flushing toilet in London	Isaac Singer	
1863	underground railway (tube) opens in London		Read about *Railways in Victorian Fictio*n on British Library's website
1872	penny farthing bicycle	James Starley	
1873	typewriter	Christopher Sholes	
1877	phonograph	Thomas Edison	Listen to Edison's first phonograph recording
1880	electric light bulb	Thomas Alva Edison	
1894	moving images (cinematograph)	Lumieres Brothers	Watch the Lumieres Brothers' first films
1895	X rays	W KRoentgen	
1895	wireless radio	Guglielmo Marconi	

PANORAMIC TABLEAUX OF VICTORIAN LIFE

William Powell Frith, *The Railway Station*, c.1862–1909

William Powell Frith, *A Private View at the Royal Academy,* 1883

Sir Luke Fildes, *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward,* 1874

Ford Madox Brown, *Work*, 1852-63

DEMOCRATISATION AND SOCIALISM

Throughout the Victorian era, England became a **real democracy**. Its **voting- and educational system were reformed**, social reform movements gained increasing ground, with the spreading of **trade unions**, **suffragettes**, and **socialism**.

The **Representation of the People Act** was designed in 1832 to reform the voting system and "take effectual Measures for correcting diverse Abuses that have long prevailed in the Choice of Members to serve in the Commons House of the Parliament." It granted seats in the House of Commons to large cities that sprang up during the Industrial Revolution, and took away seats from the "rotten boroughs" with very small populations. It increased the number of individuals entitled to vote, augmenting the size of the electorate by 50–80%. 1 in 5 adult males could vote.

Women dissatisfied with their exclusion from the public sphere, also started to fight through organised protest for their rights to vote, study, inherit, divorce, hence gain a full citizenship. The first wave of feminist movements dates to the militant women's organisations of the **suffragettes**. (Women's suffrage means the right to vote in elections.) The **WSPU** (Women's Social and Political Union) was founded by **Emmeline Pankhurst** in 1903 and engaged in direct action and the nonviolent resistance of civil disobedience. They tried to storm the parliament, chained themselves to railings, went on hunger strikes, some of them committed even more radical attacks against patriarchy.

Emily Davison jumped in front of the king's horse at Epson Derby and **Mary Richardson** slashed with a meat chopper Velazquez's Rokeby Venus painting as a rebellion against women's oppression by the male gaze. The suffragette campaign was suspended with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914; a 1918 act gave the vote to women over 30 with certain property qualification, and eventually The Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act of 1928 allowed all women the vote from age 21.

An increasing number of **workers' trade unions** were formed to act as bargaining agents and legal representatives for a unit of employees in all matters of law and rights. They sought control over working hours, wages, working conditions, benefits, etc. The democratising aspirations of socialism constituted a part of the Zeitgeist. **Karl Marx**, German-Jewish philosopher political economist, sociologist, humanist, political theorist, revolutionary, communist icon wrote *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848. He famously opined that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of **class struggles**" and argued that capitalism produces internal tensions which will inevitably lead to its destruction. Just as capitalism replaced feudalism, capitalism will be displaced by bourgeoisie's fall, a communist classless society emerging after the transitional period of socialism, in which the state would be nothing else but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. In the **Fabian Society** founded in 1884, middle class British intellectuals promoted socialism (with outstanding literary figures among them, including Havelock Ellis, Edith Nesbit, Quaker Edward R Pease, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, HG Wells). They advanced the principles of **social democracy** via gradualist, reformist rather than revolutionary means; and aimed to transform society by setting an example of clean, simplified living for others to follow. These efforts laid the foundation of the Labour Party.

The **public education system** was reformed in the newly industrialised, urbanised nation states. By the 1850s free elementary level education became available to masses of children. Schools were either state funded, or operated in conjunctions with religious institutions, local churches or voluntary societies. While wealthy children could also have private tutors at home, ragged schools, run by

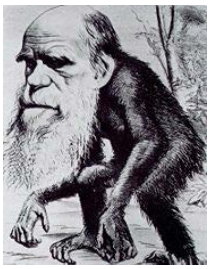
charities, gave poor children free meals and clothing and taught them a trade such as shoemaking or domestic skills. The education act of 1870 decided that it was crucial for the future prosperity of the nation that a quality education be provided to its youngest. School was proclaimed to be the cure for the social ills of the times, providing youngsters with the foundation needed to become obedient, moral citizens. Lessons followed the **three "R"s**: Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic; by the end of the century some schools added to their syllabus sports like cricket, needlework, drawing, craft work, map drawing, geography, history, religion, gardening and music.

SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION AND A CRISIS OF BELIEF

The era's most important scientific discovery was certainly naturalist, biologist, geologist **Charles Robert Darwin**'s evolutionary theory. In 1831 young Darwin joined the crew of **HMS Beagle** as the ship's naturalist for a trip around the world, to study the transmutation of species (the altering of one species into another), surveying the coast of South America and the Galapagos. He became a popular author due to the journal he published of this voyage. But more importantly the journey determined his whole career in so far as it provided him "the seeds" of the theory he worked on throughout his entire life. He outlined his cutting-edge ideas, we now refer to as Darwinism, in his book ***On the Origin of Species*** (1859). In an unprecedented manner he argued that all species of life have evolved over time from common ancestors through the process of **natural selection**, **adaptation** strategies, and the **survival of the fittest.** (This means that favourable heritable traits become more common in successive generations of a population of reproducing organisms, while unfavourable heritable traits gradually disappear due to the differential reproduction of genotypes.) The theory established the foundation of biology by offering a **unifying logical explanation for the diversity of life**.

It also meant a radical **challenge for the Victorian frame of mind** to consider that mankind has possibly not been created in the image and likeness of God as the Biblical understanding of life previously has suggested, but rather originates from or is related to lesser lifeforms, primitive beasts. Tellingly, contemporary caricatures of the ***Punch*** humour magazine portray Darwin as a chimeric creature with a human head and an ape's body, and framed by the slogan "Man is but a worm." The religious worldview was overwhelmed by a more secular, scientific one, and provoked a genuine **epistemological crisis**, a recognition of the insufficiency of the interpretive models used to make sense of reality, of man and his lifeworld. The Romantic idealisation of Mother Nature as a gentle cradle of fallible humans was replaced by the horrendous vision of "**Nature red in tooth and claw**" as *poet laureate* Tennyson put it. Anxieties about **degenera-**

tion, a deviation from the normal course of development, or a fall back on the Great Chain of Being were fictionalised in Victorian fantastic novels. (Think of the monstrous figure of Mr Hyde, or the mutants inhabiting the island of Dr Moreau.) Critics have convincingly argued that Darwin's idea of **sexual selection** (the intraspecific competition between the individuals of one sex's males for the possession of female mates) and his research ***On the expression of the emotions in men and animals*** (1871) affected the in-depth psychological exploration of interpersonal relationships in literary genres as far-fetched from scientific scrutiny as sentimental *Bildungsromans* and novels of manners.



→ Listen to a simulated soundscape of the Beagle voyage on the website of *The American Museum of Natural History*'s excellent Darwin exhibition. www.amnh.org/exhibitions/darwin/a-trip-around-the-world

By today, it is clear that the Darwinian theory of evolution by natural selection has laid the foundations of modern biology: it has enabled us to decipher our genes, to fight viruses, and to understand Earth's fossil record and rich biodiversity. However, other branches of Victorian biology akin with Darwinism are regarded today as morally dubious, scientifically unjustifiable pseudo-sciences. **Franz Joseph Gall**'s **phrenology** predicted mental states, and set up whole criminological typologies by judging people by the shape of the skulls, while **Francis Galton**'s (Darwin's cousin) **eugenics** aimed to improve the quality of the population genetic stock through selective breeding. (This social philosophy came to be associated with the Nazi ideology's deprivation of reproductive rights those deemed unable to live up to the Aryan ideal).

THE RISING BOURGEOISIE

The most influential social class the Victorian era was the rising middle class, the so-called **bourgeoisie.** The industrious urban middle class made great fortunes throughout the Industrial Revolution, and converted their economic success into a political power (with the 1832 Reform Act) they used to shape society in their own image. An iconic figure of the bourgeoisie was the **self-made man**, the **inventor** or the **entrepreneur**, who – unlike the corrupt aristocracy – gained privileges based on hard work, prudence, perseverance, self-reliance, personal achievements and merits, instead of birth rights and inheritance. The bourgeoisie supported the educational reforms and free market to facilitate

equal opportunities for the working classes who were granted the chance to realise their abilities through social mobility. A favourite figure of Victorian fiction is the **social climber** who uses his/her wits to rise higher in social hierarchy (see Pip in Dickens's *Great Expectations*, or Becky Sharp in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*). ***Bildungsromans***, fictional biographical accounts of psychic, and moral development were also popular. The bourgeoisie contained a broad and heterogeneous layer of society, including businessmen, merchants, administrators, civil servants, teachers, doctors, lawyers, government officials, as well as clerks and assistants who helped these institutions to operate, united by their belief in possibilities of **individuality, improvement, and progress**.

The bourgeoisie lived well: they enjoyed abundant domestic help, varied and substantial food, access to personal transport, education, regular holidays, commodious houses with reasonable sanitary services, and a liberal purchase of commodities and culture. Their financial stability allowed them to dwell in a variety of leisure time activities: to travel, visit museums, or attend concerts. The era marks the rise of tourism and the foundations of public art collections like **The Victoria and Albert Museum, the Science Museum, and the Natural History Museum**.

→ WATCH an illustrated tour of *The Great Exhibition* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sDj8VquIQY&t=398s

These museums were founded from the incomes of most widely attended exhibition of the era: **The Great Exhibition**, the first World Fair to showcase the greatest cultural and industrial innovations of century in 1851, in London. The show was organised in **the Crystal Palace**, an architectural wonder of the time, constructed of cast iron frame components and glass. (The building located in Hyde Park became a primary model of High Victorian design, a prototype of modern architecture, that was, alas, later destroyed in a fire.) The exhibition

curated by the **Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce** had 6 million visitors, meaning the third of the population. This unprecedented interest provoked a variety of anxieties: conservatives feared that the mass of visitors might become a revolutionary mob, radical Marxists criticised the exhibition as an emblem of the capitalist fetishism of commodities, traditionalist art critics like **John Ruskin** despised Crystal Palace as a model of mechanical dehumanisation by design. The rich range of exhibits included a precursor to today's Fax machine, daguerreotypes, the first voting machine, a Tempest Prognosticator (a barometer using leeches), the first public conveniences designed in the Retiring Rooms, and The **Koh-i-noor**, the world's biggest known diamond.

The bourgeoisie used **morality** to assert class dominance. Retrospectively we associate Victorians with prudishness, sexual restraint, moral austerity, and self-discipline. Our assumptions are based on the popularity of **conduct book genre**, which carefully prescribed normative models of good behaviour in all spheres of life, the widespread use of the **language of flowers** to express sexual feelings, or strange 19th century customs like squeezing women in whale-bone **corsets**, enjoying a sea-side outing in a **bathing cabinet**, or covering piano legs for fear of naughty thoughts. The feminine ideal of the time was the virginal, submissive **Angel in the House** – a term introduced by **Coventry Patmore**'s 1854 poem – a domestic goddess, who retained her asexual chastity even as a wife and mother, and devoted herself to sweetly sanctifying the home as a pure refuge for her menfolk from the urban pollution and corruption.

However, the moral ambiguity and **double standards** of the era are perfectly illustrated by the fact that the other stereotypical feminine figure in the Victorian patriarchal imagination's binary set-up was the **Fallen Woman**, the sexually hyperactive female who offered and enjoyed promiscuous passions out of wedlock, the prostitute or the oriental fantasies' exotic enchantress, a mysterious combination of the cunning seductress and the tragic victim of circumstances: dangerous, despised, desired, and demonised. Paradoxically, while the Victorian bourgeoisie cherished the **cult of domesticity** – the cultural institutions and idealised vision of the happy home and family (Gorham 2013) – as solid foundations of its conservative ideology; the number of brothels was the highest ever in London at the time.

A vivid **erotic counterculture** flourished in metropolitan region with erotic magazines like ***The Pearl***, sexually allusive **vaudeville** theatre acts, child prostitutes and rent-boys roaming the London streets. Steven Marcus called the Victorians **sexual hypocrites** who struggled to "maintain a veneer of respectable society over an underbelly of pornography and prostitution;" while Michel Fou-

cault pointed out that far from silencing sexuality as a taboo subject, the Victorians inaugurated a plethora of legal, demographical, medical, sexological discourses that allowed sexuality to become a legitimate subject of investigation and discussion. Several scandals of the era were connected to sexuality: **Jack the Ripper**'s serial murder of East End prostitutes, **Oscar Wilde**'s trial for charges of homosexual "acts of gross indecency," or journalist WT Stead's campaign to raise awareness about **child prostitution** that involved kidnapped, drugging, and selling a girl to prove the point. Regulations to reclaim the Fallen Women for respectable society included the foundation of Magdalene Asylums, the Contagious Diseases Act, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act raising of the age of the consent from 13 to 16.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Found, 1869

William Holman Hunt
Awakening Conscience, 1854

→ READ an extract from John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies* (1865)

Browse issues of *The Pearl* Magazine, a monthly collection of erotic tales, rhymes, songs and parodies published in London between 1879 to 1880

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Pearl

AMBIGUOUS MINDFRAMES IN AN AGE OF DOUBT

The Victorian era is a tremendously exciting period because of the simultaneous coexistence of multiple models for making sense of reality and a concomitant

crisis and proliferation of beliefs. Victorian morality – that propagated sexual restraint, low tolerance on crime, and strict social code of conduct – was grounded in a religious world view. However, the late 19th century saw a **vibrant and competitive religious culture**. The predominance of the Church of England gradually decreased, legal barriers were removed that had previously excluded Christians (such as Catholics and Methodists) outside the Church of England from most public offices and degrees at Oxford and Cambridge. The non-Anglican Protestant denominations (including Baptists, Methodists, and Quakers) gained a new prominence (they represented nearly 50% of the worshipping nation!). Although the period was marked by the greatest burst of church building since the Middle Ages, Darwin's theory of evolution radically altered the understanding of the natural human lifeworld as grounded in the truth of the Bible. Many experienced a **crisis of Christian faith** as the convincingly-argued scientific theory made their old certainties crumble. A sense of mourning over God's non-existence (see philosopher Nietzsche's famous 1884 claim, "God is dead.") the undermining of spiritual values by atheistic connotations of Darwinism and socialism, can be tracked in Victorian poems, like Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" and Thomas Hardy's "God's Funeral," among others. Others opined that Darwin simply discovered a new law of Nature designed by God.

→ EXERCISE

What could this Victorian motto mean?

"My mind is no longer a Christian even though my body is."

→ TRIGGER WARNING. POSSIBLY DISTURBING CONTENT!

To get a better view of the Victorian obsession with afterlife, and the intersection of faith & technology study the unsettling art of POST-MORTEM PHOTOGRAPHY

https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-36389581

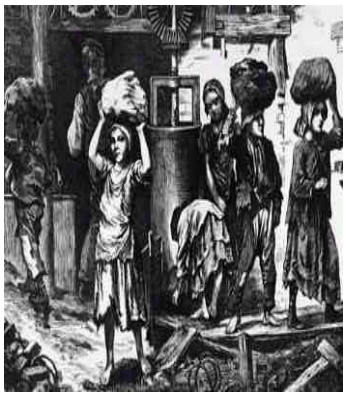
On the other hand, perhaps because believing in something is more intellectually compelling then doubt, new faiths emerged as **Spiritualism** and Theosophy, which drew on Buddhism and Hinduism. Remarkably, Victorians often approached new religious practices with scientific scrutiny, by relying on technological inventions to study transcendental, supernatural phenomena with rational means. **The Royal Society of Psychical Research** used scientific methods to analyse paranormal phenomena like communication with the spirit of the dead; Victorian **ghost photography** enjoyed a tremendous popularity; and **mesmer-**

ism (animal magnetism) was used by faith-healers as a therapeutical method to shift within patients in a trance-like state the energy field of the invisible natural force possessed by all living things, including humans, animals, and vegetables. The typically Victorian **overlapping of contradictory belief systems** – the **blurring of scientific reality and fantasy** – is also illustrated by how new technological discoveries were used for strikingly different purposes: electricity was used for medical treatments, public lighting, and stage magic alike.

Under Microscopes, an Enchanted World, Cottingles Fairy Hoax, Spirit Photography

As the interest in natural history reached its peak in the Victorian era and many of the technological-scientific inventions were affordable to the bourgeois public, collecting natural specimens (fossils, bones, shells, plants) or gazing through the "magic glass" of the **microscope** became popular hobbies. People frequently turned to the language of the fantastic to describe their incredible encounters with the previously unseen natural realms. The trope of **nature as Wonderland** (the world popularised by Lewis Carroll's 1865 nonsense fairy-tale fantasy book about ***Alice's Adventures in Wonderland***) and a vocabulary drawn from fairy stories became widely used in natural history, biology, or geology books intended for child audiences but delighting adult readers alike. It seemed that scientific enquiries, religious faith, and the literary/artistic construction of fairy lands were alike in so far as they demanded imaginative agency, an open-minded belief in the invisible, an empathic trust in possibilities of transformations of all kinds (spiritual, physical, magical, and evolutionary). The **hunger for re-enchantment** in a secularised era is attested by the tremendous popularity of **Andrew Lang's Fairy Books**, the translations of ***Arabian Nights***, and **Victorian fantasy** literature in general (MacDonald, Kinsgley, Carroll, Lear, Kipling, Nesbit) that flourished in opposition to the era's repressive social and intellectual conditions, and under the guise of children's literature boldly used non-realistic techniques of nonsense, dreams, visions, fictional worldbuilding to extend our understanding of this world (Prickett 2005).

The Victorian era is commonly associated with a **Cult of Childhood**, a flourishing of children's culture and literature. Up until the 19th century children were regarded as miniature adults, while the Victorian bourgeoisie invested its hope in the future generation, and started to recognise and admire children's unique characteristics that required protection, a separate time, space, and attention to develop. Children were primarily associated with **innocence, unrestrained imagination and an intimacy with Nature** that artists of the era found exemplary, and a purity ever so rare amidst the corruption and dehumanisation of the industrialised world. In the post-Darwinian social reality permeated by religious scepticism, the Child replaced God as an **object of worship**. (See Thomas Gotch's painting of *The Child Enthroned*)


Thomas Gotsch. *The Child Enthroned*, Victorian Child Labour, John Millais. *Bubbles*

Artists gained inspiration and spiritual elevation from **child friends**, and underage muses contributed to the rise of the golden age of children's literature. Mathematician **Lewis Carroll** improvised ***Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*** (1865) throughout a rowing expedition to entertain seven-years Alice Liddell, while the era's most famous art critic **John Ruskin** wrote his ***Sesame and Lilies*** (1865) – containing famous lectures on girls' education and aesthetics too – inspired by his pupil, "pet," ideal Rose la Touche who was nine when they met. These relationships between unmarried adult men and young girl children were not regarded with any suspicion at the time and had nothing to do with our post-Freudian fears of paedophilia. They were considered as mutually enriching bonds, proofs of the sensitivity of the artist-pedagogue. For the bourgeoisie the Child symbolised hope in the future, a promise of social mobility. Popular child characters of Victorian fiction included:

1. **Orphan figures** who were free to shape their destinies unrestrained by the Father's Name. (*Bildungsromans*, orphan ingénue, Bronte's Jane Eyre)

2. **"Child Christ" figures** "too good for this world" whose innocent sufferings touched readers' souls (sentimental novels, Andersen's Little Match Girl, Dickens's Little Nell)
3. **The good bad child** (Dickens's Artful Dodger)

The **class distinction** meant a double standard in the evaluation of the social prestige or neglect of children. The offspring of the bourgeoisie were idealised under the influence of Queen Victoria's setting domestic values at the heart of her tenure as a monarch. In the first 14 years of her reign she gave birth to 9 children, and hence strategically a pan-European dynasty as a model for a nation. On the other hand, working class youngsters were abused and exploited. They had to work under miserable conditions in mines, in blacking factories, as chimneysweeps, child prostitutes, or pickpockets controlled by criminal gangs.

Democratising socialist reforms tried to improve the life of these underage citizens with the 1842 Mines Act (that banned employment underground of boys under 10 and all girls), the 1848 Public Health Act (a response to the cholera epidemic), and the 1880 Elementary Education Act (that made schooling compulsory under the age of 10). The Victorians sought to establish emotional bonds with their children, but they also firmly believed that "Children should be seen and not heard in the company of adults." They were aware of the tremendous tension between their social reality and their imaginary ideals. These tensions were reflected in the era's most popular literary genre, the **novel** that fused fantasy with realism, escapism with politics, and prophecy with pragmatism.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH A QUIZ

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScvHlePnjxoBtzitH4btPImwgINjAbt4PcoNRQMjnm-wfpeDQ/viewform

1. Which monarch spent the longest time on the throne?

A. Queen Victoria II
B. Queen Victoria
C. Queen Elizabeth
D. Queen Elizabeth II

2. Why was the Victorian era called an age of doubt?*

A. because of the Queen's ignorance about the exact number of her subjects
B. because of Victorian artists challenging the ideas of Romanticism
C. because of Charles Darwin's theory of negative capability
D. because of the simultaneous coexistence of contradictory belief systems

3. Which was NOT a technological invention introduced in the Victorian period?

A. cinema
B. photography
C. radio
D. television

4. The Fabian Society promoted:

A. socialism
B. feminism
C. catholicism
D. aestheticism

5. The most influential social class of the Victorian era was

A. the working class
B. the ex-patriots
C. the aristocracy
D. the middle class

6. Which is NOT regarded as a pseudo-science today?

A. phrenology
B. darwinism
C. mesmerism
D. eugenics

7. The idea that "favourable heritable traits become more common in successive generations of a population of reproducing organisms, while unfavourable heritable traits gradually disappear due to the differential reproduction of genotypes" is called:

8. Which item was NOT displayed at The Great Exhibition?

   A. the largest diamond in the world
   B. daguerrotypes
   C. a dodo bird
   D. voting machine

9. The dichotomically arranged Victorian stereotypes of femininity were impersonated by

   A. the Angel in the House vs the Fallen Woman
   B. the Lady of the Light vs the Damsel of the Dark
   C. the Dreaming Daughter vs the Midnight Mother
   D. the Little Girl Lost vs the Vampiric Vamp

10. Punch was the name of a

   A. popular humour magazine
   B. popular dessert
   C. popular children's game
   D. popular political party

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Unit 7
VICTORIAN POETRY FROM TENNYSON TO THE PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD

AIM OF THIS UNIT:

The unit offers an introduction to Victorian poetry, and shows how the lyricism of the era can be regarded as a continuation of the Romantic tradition rejuvenated by new leitmotifs and genres.

KEY FIGURES:

Lord Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, Matthew Arnold, Algernon Charles Swinburne

Arthur Henry Hallam, Elizabeth Siddall, John William Waterhouse, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, William Morris

COMPULSORY READINGS:

Lord Alfred Tennyson: The Lady of Shalott, Ulysses

Robert Browning: My Last Duchess, Two in the Campagna

Dante Gabriel Rossetti: *The Blessed Damozel*

Christina Rossetti: *Goblin Market*

Algernon Charles Swinburne: *Faustine*

Matthew Arnold: *Dover Beach*

KEY WORDS & TOPICS:

continuity, dramatic monologue, occasional poetry, agnosticism, pantheism, Darwinism, Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, aestheticism, ekphrasis, symbolism, decadence

VICTORIAN POETRY: A CONTINUATION OF THE ROMANTIC TRADITION

The Victorian era witnessed an extraordinary flowering of literary culture, comparable only to what occurred during the reign of the other long-lived British monarch, Queen Elizabeth, in the Renaissance period. Most genres flourished – although significant dramas produced for the stage were scarce, and the most predominant mode of literary self-expression was indubitably the novel in its many forms. Victorian poetry is distinguished by a singular diversity: "produced by authors of both sexes in every social class from all districts in the British Isles and its colonies" it employed various verse forms, and lyrical subgenres – from dramatic monologue, to verse drama, and the pastoral elegy – and engaged a wide variety of "cultural discourses, mingling political, religious, social, economic, scientific registers in a direct or nuanced ways" which reflected the conflicted Victorian frame of mind. (see Cronin 2002)

Victorian poetry can be interpreted as a continuation of the Romantic tradition.

1st GENERATION of Romantic poetry	Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge
2nd GENERATION	Byron, Shelley, Keats
3rd GENERATION	Tennyson, Brownings
4th GENERATION	Rossettis, Morris, Swinburne

Affective continuity

Before the 19th century, the poet was acknowledged as the maker of the poem, but if his product was discussed in terms of emotions, those affects belonged to the reader. It is from the Romanticism on, that the poem came to be regarded as an expression of the poet's own "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" and "passions recollected in tranquillity", as Wordsworth put it. The uninspired poet was no longer believed to be out of touch with external forces, but in no proper touch with his own feelings. The idea of the poem preserving an umbilical link with its creator prevails in the Victorian era.

Theoretical continuity

Both Romanticism and Victorianism embraced the *expressive theory of art*. According to this, Poetry is a projection of the poet's thoughts and feelings which are modified and synthetised through the *imaginative process* that revisions reality in a new light. The Artist emerges as his own art critic, who generates both the artis-

tic product and the criteria by which it is to be judged. (One can compare the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, or Keats's metapoetic line "Beauty is truth. Truth is beauty" in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" to the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's artistic manifestos or Tennyson's ars poetica and reflections on "the way of the soul" in his "In Memoriam A.H.H.", Matthew Arnold's nonfiction work "Literature and Dogma.")

Thematic continuity

The Romantic plots of insatiable desire, of the melancholic awareness of mortality, of the poet's heroic struggle to find the right words to communicate his message properly recur. (Eg. "Infinite passion and the pain/ Of finite hearts that yearn" in Browning's "Two in the Campagna") Poets still enjoy fantasizing about "the far-away and the long-ago" to escape pragmatism and utilitarianism, but they rather chose Medieval legends and fables and even cautionary fairy tales over the classical mythological themes preferred by their Romantic predecessors. (Eg. Tennyson's "The Lady of Shallot," C. Rossetti's "Goblin Market") Victorians are still preoccupied with the relationship of Man and Nature, but they have a less idealistic view of it. The Romantic vision of a gentle, caring Mother Nature is replaced, under the influence of Darwinian evolutionary theory's ideas on the struggle for survival by a more ominous image of the natural (and social) environment as a site of aggressive conflicts, of "Nature red in tooth in claw," as Tennyson put it. Victorians inherit from the Romantics an odd combination of religious scepticism and mystical faith, both expressed in lyrical form (Eg. Matthew Arnold. "Dover Beach"). Victorians are still interested in spiritual and moral conflicts and, like the previous generation of poets, express political criticism and hail the universal rights for freedom and equality (eg. Elizabeth Barrett's Browning's political poetry on slavery, child labour, or the exploitation of women).

Stylistic continuity

Victorians still use the language of common people to express their poetic ideas, but while Romantics like Wordsworth gained inspiration from the simple language of peasant folk from the rustic country region, the Victorians shifted their focus onto the city dweller's ordinary point of view. The poetic persona of the solitary walker moved from the rural to the urban landscape and metropolitan region. Both generations of poets used a sensorially stimulating discourse, abun-

dant in synaesthesia and alliteration, to express personal feelings, social critical opinions, or sometimes even abstract ideas like the conflict between religion and science and superstition (especially in the latter period).

Structural continuity

Both Romantic and Victorian poetry have a tendency to embrace a dualistic logic, and organise their ideas in terms of opposites, such as art/ life, immortality/ mortality, ideal/ real, fantasy/utilitarianism, eternity/human history. The spiritual themes of conflicting faith and doubt, of an archaic pantheistic wisdom conjoint with unknowing scepticism or agnosticism, the desire for enchantment and the disillusioning rationalisation by scientific knowledge also gain increasing ground.

Intermedial, cross-genre continuity

Both eras are characterised by a heightened sense of pictoriality: in their lyrical language they use elaborate imagery to convey thoughts and emotions, and often complement their poems with visual illustrations to fuel their image-texts with a special intermedial dynamics. Victorians (like Romantics) disrespect the decorum to experiment with the mixture of genres, most memorably fusing lyricism with dramatic monologue, to mock readerly expectations by lending the poem both a contemplative and a theatrical quality through an unreliable narrator figure's soliloquy. Popular subgenres of Victorian poetry include: *Narrative poetry*: (Tennyson's "Lady of Shallot", C. Rossetti's "Goblin Market"), *Dramatic poetry. Dramatic monologue* (Tennyson's "Ulysses", Browning's "My Last Duchess"), *Aestheticist ekphrastic imagetext* (The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's work, Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel")

THE POETRY OF LORD ALFRED TENNYSON

Alfred Tennyson (1809–1892) was perhaps the most esteemed and popular poet of the Victorian period. Upon the death of Wordsworth, he was named **Poet Laureate** in 1850, and preserved this prestigious position for more than four decades. Admitted to the peerage in 1883, he earned the title Baron, and was henceforward referred to as Lord Tennyson. He was the favourite poet of Queen Victoria who claimed to have gained comfort after the death of her husband from Tennyson's "In Memoriam A.H.H.," still considered one of the greatest English poems about grief, loss, and consolation.

Tennyson's first verses in ***Poems Chiefly Lyrical*** published in 1830 before the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign (1837) sparked little critical attention. It is his 1842 collection *Poems* including new poems and reworked older ones printed in two volumes ("The Lady of Shalott," "Ulysses" and "The Lotos Eaters") that established him as the leading poet of his generation. His powerful visual imagery, his eye for beauty, his mythological, chivalric, heroic, allegorical themes, his medievalism, and sensuous melancholy had a considerable impact on the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. (Rossetti, Holman Hunt, Waterhouse, and Elizabeth Siddall all created their visual adaptations of "The Lady of Shalott") His contemporary critics praised him for being "a leader and a landmark of popular thought and feeling."

He epitomised the conflicted Victorian frame of mind in so far as his poems combined agnosticism with pantheism and mythologically inspired fantasizing; while staging the conflict of religious faith and scientific knowledge, coupling moralising (ideas, truths) with self-indulgent melancholy (sentiments, doubts). The tension between his interest in natural sciences and his Christian belief allowed him to put human affairs in perspective as a small part of the drama of the universe. In a non-idealistic view of the natural environment, influenced by Darwinism, he realised that "Nature red in tooth and claw" is not a benevolent maternal cradle of humankind, but disinterested in our struggles makes us ask about human life "What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a million million of suns?"

His best critic and friend, Arthur Hallam found five distinctive excellences in Tennyson's poetic manner:

1. the control of a luxuriant imagination,
2. accuracy of adjustment in moods of character, so that narration and feeling naturally correspond with one another,
3. skill in emotionally fusing a vivid, picturesque portrayal of objects,
4. modulation of verbal harmony, (note the musicality of language: "Sweet is every sound,/ Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;/The moan of doves in immemorial elms/ And murmuring of innumerable bees.")
5. mellow soberness of tone addressed to the *understanding heart* rather than mere understanding. (Bloom xiii)

ULYSSES (1833, 1842)

"Ulysses," a **dramatic monologue** in blank verse form (iambic pentameter with no rhymes), focuses on the fallibility and vulnerability of a mythological hero

who must face old age, decay, and the common burden of human mortality, yet eventually communicates a message of hope, and relentless defiance. The speaker is the famed adventurer King of Ithaca familiar from Homer's *Odyssey* (800-700 BC) and Dante's *Inferno* (1320). (The former classic narrates Ulysses' epic voyage home after the Trojan War and his heroic defeat of Cyclops, Sirens, Scylla, and other monsters; while the latter retells his condemnation to a descent to hell for pursuing knowledge forbidden to men and for creating the deceptive Trojan Horse.)

Tennyson's Ulysses finally returns to his kingdom after his dangerous travels yet he does not feel satisfied by being reunited with his family. He yearns to embark on further adventures, to explore again. ("How dull it is to pause, to make an end,/ To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!") Throughout his soliloquy Ulysses introduces his heir, his son Telemachus to the public, he addresses his mariner comrades, and ponders about his own destiny. He emerges as an **unreliable narrator**: the contrast between the past active adventurous and contemplative sedentary domestic existential modes is mirrored in the clashing of the distinct voices of the responsible social being and the melancholic poet, as well as the identification of the self both along and against a textual tradition ("I have become a name"), upon realising that he has become **simultaneously a hero/a mythical idol and a fallible human being**. Ulysses goes through **four emotional stages**: first he bitterly rejects the barren, monotonous life in Ithaca, then he recalls nostalgically his heroic past, and finally after recognising his son's governance, he boldly begins to plan another journey. Via these changing affective states, Tennyson attributes psychological depth to the 'lyrical voice'.

"To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." – The poem's last line encapsulates the old Ulysses' determination. **His heroism resides in the fact that he knows his limits, yet he yearns to surpass them.** He seeks new adventures and never ceases "to follow knowledge". The line is inscribed on the Memorial Cross erected on **Antarctica's Observation Hill** in commemoration of the explorers (Robert Falcon Scott's party in 1912) who lost their lives during their mission. Although more recent analyses highlighted a touch of **irony** in Ulysses' heroic characterisation, arguing that he is a flawed protagonist because his desire to leave back his kingdom is selfish, but it is important to take into consideration the circumstances of the poem's creation to see the solemn **ceremonious message** of Tennyson. He wrote the poem at age 24, in 1833, when his best friend Arthur Hallam died during a tour in Europe. Ulysses inspired by the soulmate's passing actually communicates this "sense of loss and that all had gone by, but still life must be fought out to the end" – as Tennyson himself acknowledged. It is the death of a beloved that warns us of the responsibility that comes with the recognition of our mortality, and urges to live life to the fullest in spite

of all difficulties. This **existential philosophical** message turns the tone of the poem **self-reflective, contemplative, and hopeful against all odds**.

The poetic subgenre used in "Ulysses" is the **dramatic monologue**, also known as the **persona poem**. A fictive figure, clearly not identical with the poet, performs a speech in a specific situation at a critical moment. The soliloquist interacts with other people who are listening to him but we know little about the audience's reactions only form occasional clues in the discourse of the single speaker. The monologue of the lyric speaker arouses the readers'/listeners' interest, reveals the speaker's temperament and character, and also seemingly accidentally gives away more than the speaker actually intends to communicate. (The reader can make guesses about the past background events from the single monologue presented on the occasion.) The speech is addressed to others (people of Ithaca, mariners of Ulysses) but it also functions as a self-reflective monologue addressed to oneself for purposes of introspection. (see MH Abrams)

→ **LISTEN** to Laureena McKennitt's musical interpretation of the poem.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRIHzr3Pxhc

THE LADY OF SHALOTT (two versions: 1833, 1842)

"The Lady of Shalott" is a lyrical ballad based on the Arthurian legend of Elaine of Estolat who died of unrequited love for Sir Lancelot – who was Knight of the Round Table, greatest comrade of King Arthur, and secret adulterous lover of Queen Guinevere. In Tennyson's revisiting of the legend, the Lady is imprisoned in a castle tower on an island under a mysterious spell that makes her weave a magic web inspired by the mirror reflections of the outside world she contemplates in her mirror. Her inability to look at the world directly and her being spellbound by mirror reflections of reality reminds both of Greek philosopher **Plato's cave allegory** (illustrating the soul's aspiration towards ideas, and humans' limited access to an illusory experience of reality, →*For detailed explanation see Chapter on Blake*) and of the **romanticisation of impossible love and succeeding heartbreak** (See Goethe's Young Werther, Shakespeare's Ophelia). The Lady "half sick of shadows" decides to leave her enchanted chamber behind to meet Lancelot and face reality even at the cost of her death. As she flees her tower, her tapestry begins to unravel and her mirror cracks from side to side; and she dies before her boat reaches Camelot. Her greatest **tragedy** is that the young knight who find her fails to acknowledge her mystical powers and to realise her sacrifice, and can only lament the loss of a "lovely face." Although the Lady meets the Victorian ideal of femininity (she is virginal, mysterious, yet

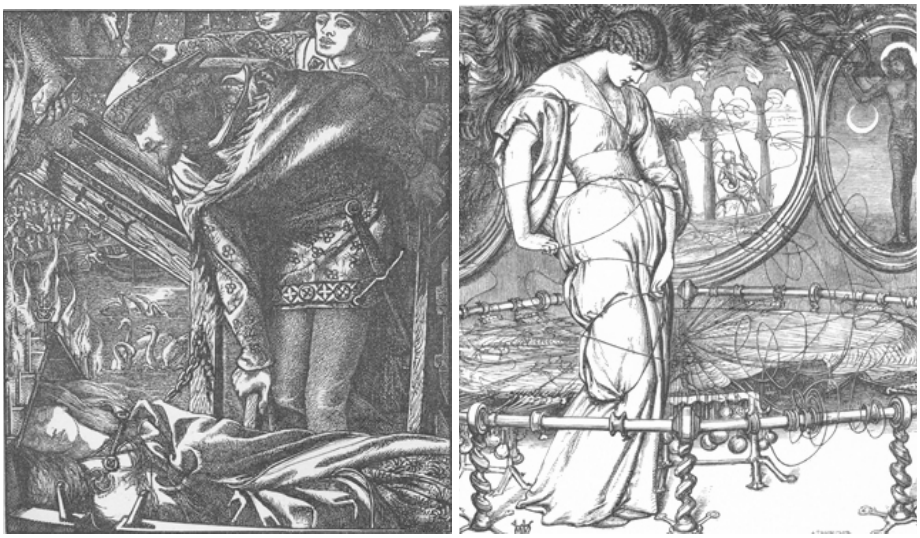
submissive, and domestic) chivalric love seems to be questioned, demythified here. Lancelot's remark is strangely inadequate to the tragedy and mystery of the enigmatic sorceress, he does not recognise the sublime magnitude of the supernatural's intrusion into the ordinary. The Lady become martyr for a love she can never actually experience.

JOHN WILLIAM WATERHOUSE'S PAINTINGS TO THE POEM (1888, 1915)

The poem offers a **metaphor of artistic creativity**. The enchanted castle's **"ivory tower"** represents the artist's dilemma: the difficult decision between the privileged seclusion of solitary creativity that reimagines the world in the ingenious but often unappreciated artwork, or the immediate immersion into the mundane real facts and practicalities of the actual world and people. (**The dilemma between (re)creating an alternate reality or living the real world.**) The Lady's looking into the **mirror** has nothing to do with narcissism or the vanity painting genre in which women contemplate their own beauty reflected in the mirror. She is more of an active onlooker than a passive spectacle. The **creative powers of her gaze** weave a magic web, a unique prophetic encapsulation of past, present, and future events, inspired by the mirror-reflections. Her **weaving** makes her resemble Greco-Roman mythological figures: the Moiras (Fates weaving the thread of life), Penelope (Ulysses' wife who weaves a wedding dress during the day and unweaves it during the night to escape her suitors), Ariadne (whose thread leads Theseus out of the Minotaur's labyrinth), and Philomela (whose tongue was cut out but told about her abuse by picturing the crime in a tapestry). It is difficult to tell if the enchanted enchantress is **a prisonkeeper or a prisoner**, if her **artistic representation surpasses or fails to live up to real presence**, if she **obeys or defies her curse**, if her solitary confinement grants her **death-like stasis or supernatural immortality**. (See Keats' "Ode on a

Grecian urn") Her magic song echoing down to Camelot ravishes the reapers whispering about her, and is contrasted by the simple "tirra lira" of Sir Lancelot's light-hearted lark song. Eventually her name inscribed on the boat can signify her **"coming to writing," a women's writing** (enhanced by the feminine aquatic imagery of the river waves on which she is sailing) that is doomed to remain illegible, misunderstood by a fundamentally patriarchal culture. The poem performs a **play with notions of space and reality** by contrasting Camelot's exterior world with the Lady's interior psychic world and the alternate world called into being by the material work of art she creates.

The **medieval romanticism and enigmatic symbolism** inspired many painters, especially the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and their followers.



DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI's & WILLIAM HOLMAN HUNT's illustrations

→ **VISUAL EXTRAS** Inspect more pictorial interpretations of "The Lady of Shalott" at The Victorian Web. https://victorianweb.org/painting/subjects/shalott1.html

IN MEMORIAM A.H.H. (1850) (*The Way of the Soul*)

The poem is a **requiem, a fragmentary elegy** Tennyson wrote as a tribute to his beloved friend **Arthur Henry Hallam**, his sister's fiancé, who died aged 22. The expression of the personal experience of intense male friendship and the grief felt over its loss is conjoint with the discussion of public socio-cultural concerns, current debates concerning science, nature, and religion. Writing the

poem holds a **therapeutical effect** for the artist, as "the mechanic exercise" in "measured language" soothes his pain. But he also **struggles with doubt** wondering if words can ever convey the intensity of his feelings, and remains uncertain whether a man's love for another, "a private sorrow's barren song" is a legitimate lyrical subject in an age of political unrest, social change, and **epistemological crisis** sparked by scientific discovery. As Holly Furnaux highlights, the poem's "**regular rhythm** echoes the involuntary biological processes of breath or heartbeat, the unwilled organic functions that keep [the poet] going, despite the ravages of grief." The recurring theme of the desire for physical contact between the two men, the longing for a touch of hands, chests, lips lends the poem a **homoerotic tone**. The text also draws imagery from a **variety of scientific fields** including geology, embryology, anatomy, and astronomy, and famously evokes the Darwinian evolutionary theory's key notion of the struggle for survival with the phrase "nature red in tooth and claw". Science offers an interpretive framework to understand reality but it cannot impart the **spiritual strength** offered by religious beliefs. The lyrical self oscillates between multiple identificatory positions, **between despair and consolation, between scientific and religious comprehension** (which can neither account for the senseless premature loss of Hallam). The **shattering of certainties** provoked by mourning resonates with the **profound reconsideration of God** necessitated by emerging Victorian scientific and technological innovations. (Furneaux) Tennyson's conclusion is nevertheless heartwarming: "'Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all."

THE POETRY OF ROBERT BROWNING & ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

Robert Browning (1812–1889) was still attached to the Romantic notion of the poet as magician, visionary, and prophet, yet he also shared his generation's desire for a respectable literature of facts and moral usefulness. His mastery of **dramatic monologue** and **psychological portraiture** earned him a place among the immortals in Westminster Abbey's Poet's Corner.

His poems speak of faith mixed with uncertainty and the desperate yearning for the reopening of the gates of Heaven **("Christmas Eve and Easter Day"**, 1850), the alluring but menacing natural world worshipped and feared by the poet **("Caliban", "Saul"**), simple people, craftsmen, travellers, collectors, enquirers who make up Victorian society (**"Men and Women"**), the love of "two hearts beating each to each" ("**Meeting at Night",** 1845), and even a murder case told from nine different perspectives to illustrate the relativity of truth ("**The Ring and the Book**" 1848)

Browning describes **life in turbulent metaphors of quest, adventure, pilgrimage, ride, research, ocean voyage, a task of knight errantry**. His relation to the world is characterised by a state of excited, unquiet possession. The goal of the adventure might remain unclear. In "**Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came**" the knight errant reaches a Dark Tower after years of mysterious, apparently hopeless quest, and realises that the grim plain – full of ominous signs, a repulsive cripple who points out the way, a war ridden ground, nameless engines of torture, and the Tower – is, in fact, his destination. Aware that there is no more way forward, dauntless, he sets his horn to his lips and blows the signal. The tragic **quest has no closure**, it remains open ended, in a suspended animation in the nightmarish dreamscape permeated by a Gothic atmosphere of suspense.

BROWNING AS A SPOKESMAN OF HIS DAY

"In politics and morals he stands for the liberalism of his generation, his religion is an undogmatic evangelical noncomformity, he is a Victorian tourist rampant in his gusto for men and cities and his patronizing connoisseurship in the art of the past; he is a representative philistine in his hearty message of progress and his shadow-boxing with Doubt." (Salingar on Browning)

MY LAST DUCHESS (1842)

Browning excelled in the lyrical subgenre of **dramatic monologue**. In this type of poem a fictive speaker's soliloquy unintentionally reveals aspects of his/her character while describing events in a specific situation at a critical moment. This is a very compact form: the speaker's psychological character and prehistory comes to light in a single vivid scene. There is an ironic tension between the setting and the drastic actions implied and the distanced, neutral standpoint of the speaker whose subjective, unreliable lyrical voice might tell more than (s)he intends to communicate. The reader/listener fills in the gaps of the missing bits of information, and gradually pieces together the story from the casual remarks or the digressions of the speaker. Throughout these **ironic character sketches**, the **monologue turns into confidential self-justification in defence of a questionable philosophy of life**. The semi-conscious monologues of memorable characters – like a Victorian Catholic priest, an Arab physician examining Lazarus, Shakespeare's savage Caliban, or an American spiritualist medium – reflect a drama in the psyche and unveil secrets the speaker does not wish to convey.

In **"My Last Duchess"** an Italian aristocrat is showing around a guest in his house, commenting on his collection of artworks. His random remarks about the portrait of his former wife give away his cruelty to her. His mysterious claim, "I gave commands, Then all smiles stopped together…" is a euphemistic understatement referring to the **haunting unsaid**, a story of obsessive, possessive passion, jealousy and tragic crime. The Duke could not keep his spouse to himself, so his male desire of ownership had her killed, turned into an art object. The poem is an example of **ekphrasis**, the verbal description of a visual artwork. Yet, because of the silenced murder associated with it, the painting invites moral rather than aesthetic judgment. It is bitterly ironic that for the speaker, the portrait is just a single piece in a whole collection, just one stop on a guided tour. After the brief comments on the portrait, the host leads his guest towards the next exhibit, a sculpture of Neptune taming a seahorse. To his mind, the **crime** is a justifiable act, a marital right, a fleeting memory, a forgettable and forgivable episode. The poem refers to the actual historical figure of Renaissance Duke of Ferrara, Alfonso II, married to Lucrezia Medici, as well as to the mythical villain of Bluebeard. Some scholars argue that there is place for the Duchess's rebellion, as being turned into an icon, a pictorial sign she becomes a **visual countertext** to the Duke's authority to textualise.

→ EXERCISE

READ Coleridge's "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" and Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came."

COMPARE how the poems create suspense, and reflect on the questions of choice and destiny, courage and ordeal, knowing and uncertainty.

READ Margaret Atwood's short story "My Last Duchess", compare it with Browning's poem.

"TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA"

"Two in the Campagna" from the collection *Men and Women* (1855) is a love poem that deconstructs love, a **conversational poem** that remains a soliloquy, a pastoral that witnessed decay. Rome countryside emerges as a kind of alternative social landscape where a gentle discord takes place between Nature and the poet-tourist's mind contemplating it. The major leitmotif is the **melancholic recognition of the fleeting transience of Nature, History, Thought and Love**. "Finite heart's infinite yearning" is a metonymical marker of human's simultaneous (spiritual) magnificence and (physical) vulnerability. The lyrical voice's metafictional commentary reflects on the inability to ever perfectly cap-

ture ideas verbally, to grasp the situation, to transcend the crude experience of self-consciousness. Just like the thought chased through the landscape can never be captured, the total communion of lovers can never be achieved. Despite the helpful erotic suggestions of nature, we cannot feel each other's feelings. **Poetry and Love are both imperfect, but this is precisely what makes them beautiful.** The poem has a **marital, autobiographical** aspect, and also makes use of the Romantic tradition of **Weltschmerz**, the divine discontent, while philosophically pondering about the human condition. The poem is driven by a **desire for transcendent union**, its recurring question is about shared experience: "do you feel today/ as I have felt?" Published a few years before *The Origin of Species*, the poem anticipates the **Darwinian ideas**: the poet emerges as a **naturalist**, who observes nature (as well as its maker who might still reside in Heaven) as well as his own psychological, mental processes, and draws parallels between the two. The flow of thoughts is expressed via the rhetorical device of **enjambment**, whereby the meaning runs over from one poetic line to the next without any terminal punctuation.

→ EXERCISE

How do these lines attempt a Darwinian reconciliation of the universe? "Such miracles perfumed in play, / Such primal naked forms of flowers, / Such letting nature have her way / While heaven looks from its towers!"

Robert Browning is often mentioned in connection with **Elizabeth Barrett Browning** because of their legendary romance, and lasting creative partnership, throughout which they mutually inspired each other's work during their travels together in Italy. Robert praised the poetry of his wife for its "fresh strange music, the affluent language, the exquisite pathos, and true new brave thought" and wrote to her "You speak out, you. I only make men & women speak, give you truth broken into prismatic hues, & fear the pure white light, even if it is in me, but I'm going to try."

Elizabeth wrote **romantic love poetry** (*Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850)) but she was mostly famed for her **political poetry**: she campaigned for the abolition of slavery ("The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point"), the reform of child labour legislation ("The Cry of Children"), the Tuscan struggle for liberty ("Casa Guidi Windows") and women's rights ("Aurora Leigh") among others. **"A Curse for a Nation"** is a passionate cry for justice, addressing the poet's sister-campaigners to rebel, to write. ("Weep and write./ A curse from the depths of womanhood/ Is very salt, and bitter, and good.'/ So thus I wrote, and mourned indeed,/ What

all may read.") A poet of liberal social conscience she was a candidate of *poeta laureta*. She had a tremendous influence on Emily Dickinson and Virginia Woolf.

The verse novel, ***Aurora Leigh*** (1856) a narrative poem in nine books is her most ambitious work. Grounded in her own life experiences it plays with stereotypes of the Victorian novel and **rethinks the traditional feminine roles** with regards to marital dependence versus independent individuality. It follows the life of a studious, intelligent, aspiring poetess who struggles to balance work and love. Her handsome cousin proposes to her, to be first rejected because he questions her artistic abilities, but then he eventually grows worthy of her. She reinterpets the institution of marriage by assuming that to become a good wife, one must become a perfect Artist driven by autonomous free will. Characters include a fallen woman, a raped girl, and a prostitute portrayed not as sinners but victims.

THE PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was a group of young English painters, poets, and critics founded in London in 1848 who rejected the conventional aesthetic ideals established by the Royal Academy as exemplified in the work of the Renaissance master Raphael (especially his painting *Transfigurations*). Their main aims were as follows:

- Challenge classical doctrines and dogmas (expounded by Sir Joshua Reynolds)
- Rebel against triviality of popular genre painting of the time
- Treat serious subjects with realism instead of idealisation (follow John Ruskin's advice who urges artists to 'go out to nature' –Millais paints river in *Ophelia* for five months spent outdoors)
- Natural accuracy of details (nearly scientific scrutinisation), pure realism, including peculiarities of physiognomy & character →scandal provoked by blasphemous realism of Millais's *Christ in the House of his Parents*
- Themes: religious/Biblical, mythical, neo-medievalism, literary/poetic (illustrations!), bucolic scenes, focus on love, death, dreaminess, turn away from hideous urban world BUT social problems, prostitution, poverty, double standards of sexual morality (William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience*)
- Ground Aesthetic Movement in Religion of Beauty, Cult of Personality

- Focus on multisensory details, decadent, bohemian sensuality, synaesthesia, auditory details, tactility, bodyliness →shocking, immoral for Victorians (Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix*)
- realism BUT non-mimetic: archaic medieval quality, symbolical balladistic mode, ambiguity of waking dream, reverie and melancholy of fall, fairy-tale themes (Edward Burne Jones' *Sleeping Beauty*)
- Provocative, seek controversy and attention, use bright colours
- Brilliant sense of atmosphere and mood
- Portray beautiful, powerful, mysterious, muscular women
- Use religious language for evocative purposes
- Combine genuine ideas to express with attentive study of Nature, and a heartfelt sympathy →goal: simply to make good Art
- Key figures: "self-possessed, articulate, passionate, and charismatic": Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, Edward Burne Jones, John William Waterhouse
- famous muse (and an artist on her own right): Elisabeth Siddall

→ WATCH BBC mini-series *Desperate Romantics* about the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4BraAD71cE

DG Rossetti

WH Hunt

JE Millais

John Millais, *Ophelia*, 1851

Holman Hunt. *Hireling Shepherd*, 1851.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI (1828–1882)

Painter, illustrator, poet, translator, **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** – the son of an Italian scholar émigré – was the strongest personality and the effective organiser of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He is famous for

- his sensual, symbolical, mythological imagery,
- his aestheticism and idealisation of beauty (his fleshly, yet divine, ethereal feminine ideal was embodied by his muse and partner Elisabeth 'Liz-

zie' Siddal, portrayed on many of his paintings as well as Millais's "Ophelia"),

- his eccentricities (he dug up the grave of Lizzie to recuperate his poems addressed to and buried with her),
- his carnal poetry and his attempts to contain the sensual feel of the fleeting moment (in **"Nuptial Sleep"** he wrote, "He woke, and wondered more, for there she lay"

He was also interested in the spiritual/psychic depth of the female soul, the physical separation by death, and the infinite longing mirrored (above in the infinite realm of Heaven and below on Earth, the land of the mortals). The painting is separated into three parts as a triptych: it depicts the Damsel musing in Heaven, the mourning lover's chained earthly existence and thoughts, and the shared memories and mutual fantasies both connecting and separating them.

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL (1847) is a **sonnet** Rossetti wrote when he was 18, and illustrated in an **altar-piece-like painting** when he was 50. The poem contrasts and confuses the spiritual, psychic and physical experience of yearning and revisits the leitmotif of love poetry, the **idealisation of eternal/ impossible love**. The dead beloved is looking down from Heaven, yearning for her lover she left behind, filling heaven with pain. The minute details of her beauty (3 lilies in her hands, 7 stars in hair) are rich in symbolical significations and are enhanced by the sensory experience of her unfulfilled, insatiable desire ("I saw her smile/I heard her tears."). Rossetti's major source of inspiration was the pair of separated lovers in **Dante's *Vita Nuova***.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI (1830–1894)

Christina Rossetti was Dante Gabriel Rossetti's sister, a foremost female poet of her times, who wrote in a variety of genres, including sonnets, hymns, ballads, devotional and children's poetry. She was affiliated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood but also criticised their narcissistic self-glorification and objectification of women/ muses in her **"In an Artist's Studio."**

THE GOBLIN MARKET

"The Goblin Market" (1862) is a complex poem that lends itself to a variety of different significations. It narrates two sisters' encounters with mysterious forest creatures, goblin merchant men who seduce the girls with offering them irresistible, delicious fruit. Laura yields to the temptation and can only be saved from wasting away by her sister, Lizzie who comes to her rescue with the antidote she steals from the goblins.

1. Because of the enchanted forest, the magical beings, and the talking animals, the poem lends itself to be interpreted as a **fairy tale**. More specifically it evokes a **cautionary tale of consumption** that warns against the tasting of a forbidden food item (eg. the Grimms' Hansel & Gretel).

2. As an allegory about temptation, self-sacrifice, and salvation, the poem has a **Biblical significance**. The fruit reminds of the apple Eve picked from the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. The magical powers of the food evoke the Eucharist's Transubstantiation of the Christian religious ritual. Lizzie risking her life by returning to the goblins to gain fruit that can cure her sister is a sacrificial Christ figure.

3. The poem has a remarkably **sensual imagery** due to the description of the oral delights and seducing sense impressions (taste, smell, touch) offered by the fruits. The scene of the goblins attacking Lizzie, smearing their fruits against her mouth in a vain attempt to make her eat reminds of a rape fantasy. Whereas Laura licking off the juices from Lizzie's body has **lesbian erotic connotations**. (*"Eat me, drink me, love me." "Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices, Squeezed from goblin fruits for you." "She sucked and sucked and sucked the more/ Fruits which that unknown orchard bore,/ She sucked until her lips were sore, /Then flung the empty rinds away"*)

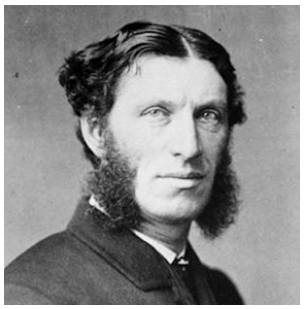
4. The poem also comments on the **functioning of desire**, that is unsatisfiable by definition. This idea is a precursor of **Freudian psychoanalysis**. The melancholy felt over the betrayed expectations in love is merged with the dark lure of lustfulness,
5. The theme of **addiction** refers to drug abuse and its **psychopathological consequences**. Some members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood used opiates (present is poppy seed) as a recreational drug to stimulate their imagination. Dante Gabriel Rossetti grew addicted to chloral hydrate, Lizzie Siddal possibly died of laudanum overdose.
6. The two sisters represent the binary opposition between the two **Victorian stereotypes of femininity**: the **angelic virgin** and the **fallen woman whore**. Their Biblical equivalents are the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene. Twinning the sisters (fusing into one as in DG Rossetti's illustration to the painting) represents the blurring of these opposites, and the troubling of gender roles (ie. the simultaneous challenging of the idealisation and the demonisation of women). The misrepresentation of women is challenged through the depiction of rebellious, daring, imaginative female agency and sisterly solidarity.
7. The twin sisters might also stand for the **split self**, humans' vulnerability to temptation (succumbing to evil) and the altruistic urge to act of kindness (the will to do good).
8. Romantic ideas of **"carpe diem" and "vanitas mundi"** traditions are contrasted. If Laura represents addiction, Lizzie stands for ascetism.
9. The poem has a **social critical layer**. Rossetti was a volunteer worker from 1859 to 1870 at the St Mary Magdalene house of charity in Highgate, a refuge for former prostitutes, and possibly dedicated and read out the poem to the **fallen women** she encountered there. The text sensually describes erotic desire but also urges social redemption and forgiveness. Christina Rossetti opposed slavery, cruelty to animals, and underage prostitution.
10. The leitmotif of Greek tragedies, the trope of **hubris and redemption, crime and punishment** is recycled here (Compare with Coleridge's "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner")
11. The merchant men's call "Come buy and buy!" highlight Victorian fiction's thematisation of the **market** as a site of financial transactions and social interactions, and an instrument of commentary on the emerging

consumerism. (Compare with the symbol of the marketplace in *Vanity Fair*)

12. The gothic **fantasy of vampirism**, of imminent unpredictable danger, and the demon lurking within can be tracked in the text.
13. The sisters' final **maturation into storytellers** might refer to the narrative construction of history, the curative potential of storytelling, the misremembering caused by nostalgia, proto-feminist agency or the compulsion for confession and self-correction.
14. Tracking the publication history of the poem, from girls' schoolbook to *Playboy Magazine*, reveals how each era activates a different layer of the rich variety of meanings embedded in the text.

→ SEE more illustrations of "The Goblin Market" at *the British Library's Website*
https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/an-introduction-to-goblin-market

MATTHEW ARNOLD (1822–1888)



Matthew Arnold was a poet and cultural critic who instructed his readers on contemporary social issues. (In Culture and Anarchy (1869) he defended liberal arts, his Literature and Dogma (1873) contained his religious criticism, in The Popular Education of France he shared his thoughts on democratic education, On Translating Homer (1861) discussed principles of literary criticism.)

"Dover Beach" published in 1867 in his collection New Poems is a piece of occasional poetry (poetry produced for aparticular occasion, in this case Arnold's honeymoon). It conjoins immediate experience and long-term memory with a reflection on the nature of existence. The **symbolic beach landscape** is a site where feelings of **elegiac brooding** and **metaphysical dilemmas** can be projected. The sea waves outside symbolise Eternity, and life going on despite the tragedies. The starlit scenery provides a perfect romantic setting for the tender call addressed to the beloved companion in this **dramatic monologue**. Change is seen as troubling, the ebb and flow of ocean waves symbolise human misery. **Love remains the only source of hope and means of survival amidst the sea of pain, the "maze of confusion".** All the rest is illusion and disillusion. Hence the melancholic call: "Let us be true to one another!" The soothing, rhythmic movement of sea provides consolation in a world ruled by chaos. The gloomy vision of the darkling plain "swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight" in the desperate fight makes a historical reference to the **night battle at Epipolae**. In this combat of the Peloponnesian war described by Thucydides "ignorant armies clash[ed] by night" unable to distinguish enemies from comrades confused by "mournful roar." This memory of past familiar from ancient literature (Greek classics, including Sophocles' Antigone with a reference to the divine curse), a knowledge shaped by well-educated imagination guides all to the recognition of the significance of empathy, understanding, and true love, the only value left counter to History.

→ LISTEN to Tom Hiddleston reading "Dover Beach".

https://soundcloud.com/tom-hiddleston-m-xico/tom-hiddleston-matthew-arnold-dover-beach

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE (1837–1909)

Algernon Swinburne was a **decadent, symbolist** poet who enjoyed shocking his contemporaries with scandalous acts as well as controversial themes and **taboo topics** embedded in his poetry, including lesbianism, cannibalism, sado-masochism, bestiality and anti-theism. He toyed with the lure of evil and in the fashion of art for art's sake, embraced being unclean for the sake of uncleanliness. His roundel, „The little eyes that never knew light" resonate with Victorian post-mortem photography.

His poem **"Faustine"** from the collection *Poems and Ballads* (1866) focuses on a demonic, vampiric, voracious, dominatrix ***femme fatale*** figure, evocative of the castrating symbol of the **Vagina Dentata**. He salutes her with the greeting of Roman gladiators marching towards their death "Ave Faustina Imperatrix, Morituri te Salutant." Divine order is contrasted with hazard and fate as the devil is throwing dice with God for the cursed soul of Faustine – in a scene reminiscent of Coleridge's "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner". Swinburne is preoccupied with the same dilemma Blake has raised in his rhetorical question: "Did he who made the lamb make thee?" This philosophical, ethical, religious dilemma tackles the co-existence of good and evil. Swinburne's question to his anti-heroine "Did Satan make you to spite God? / Or did God mean to scourge with scorpions for a rod / Our sins, Faustine?" asks if life is worth to be lived in sin, and what is the meaning of life if you are a sinner? (this question is raised in Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray* too) Via an amoral relativisation the blame is removed from the wrong-doer, as Faustine appears to be just as much a victim as a predator. The question is as follows: "If she is doomed to be evil, it's in her nature and cannot help it, is it really her fault?" Her omnipotent power is not a result of her choice, she is a new-born soul without any consciousness. Strangely when addressing the Evil, the poet asks who she is, but even more importantly **how she is**. He attempts to communicate with the **cursed woman** (a dark double of the Lady of Shallot), and strives to understand her, ravished by the **riddle he attempts to solve in vain**.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH A QUIZ

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/12jSchPDPUKGEgrijOtHwX7ON5YdcUi1eEV4NkxPQ5tc/edit

1.Victorian poetry can be regarded as a continuation of Romantic poetry

A.True

B. False

2. Who are prominent artists of the 4th generation of Romantic poetry?

A. Byron, Shelley, Browning
B. Tennyson, Coleridge, Blake
C. Rossetti, Browning, Tennyson
D. Dante, Swinburne, Matthew Arnold

3. Who was the poet laureate of the Victorian era?

A. Blake
B. Browning
C. Tennyson
D. Rossetti
E. Millais

4. In Memoriam A.H.H is dedicated to

A. Tennyson's father
B. Tennyson's fiancée
C. Tennyson's friend
D. Tennyson's dog

5. Robert Browning excelled in the poetic genre

A. dramatic monologue
B. dramatic dialogue
C. lyrical drama
D. ode

6. The Lady of Shallot is based on

A. the Bible
B. Arthurian legends
C. Norwegian folklore
D. Tennyson's childhood experience

7. The two sisters in The Goblin market are called

A. Izzie and Lizzie
B. Laura and Dora
C. Christina and Corinna
D. Lizzie and Laura

8. Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" refers to the historical event of

A. battle of Epipolae
B. battle of Thermopylae
C. battle of Waterloo
D. battle of Dover

9. Which is NOT true of the Pre Raphaelite Brotherhood?

A. they challenged classical doctrines
B. they grounded an aesthetic movement in the cult of beauty
C. they used bright colours
D. they were fond of idealistic representation of Biblical themes

10. Which is NOT an intertext of "Faustine"?

A. The Tyger
B. The Blessed Damozel
C. The Ancient Mariner
D. Dorian Gray

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Unit 8
THE NOVEL IN TRANSITION: JANE AUSTEN, WALTER SCOTT, WILLIAM THACKERAY, GEORGE ELIOT

AIM OF THIS UNIT:

The unit explains the significance of the novelistic genre in the Victorian era, and offers a brief introduction to the major prose writers of the transitional period between Romanticism and Realism.

KEY FIGURES:

Jane Austen, Walter Scott, William Thackeray, George Eliot

COMPULSORY READINGS:

Jane Austen. Pride and Prejudice

KEY WORDS & TOPICS:

subgenres of Victorian novel (novel of manners, historical novel, *Bildungsroman*, social satire, etc)

THE VICTORIAN PERIOD, THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE NOVEL

The English novel becomes the dominant form in the Victorian Age. As *Fraser's Magazine* put it in an 1850 issue, "Whoever has anything to say, or thinks he has…puts it forthwith into the shape of a novel." The novelistic genre of the era is characterised by popularity, abundance, variety, and artistic growth.

Novels are distinguished by comprehensiveness. Most works offer a total, **panoramic** picture of society. They focus on the interrelation of Man and Society; to trace the unfolding of interrelated destinies on public and private levels. A popular theme is **social mobility**, the rise (or fall) from one social class to another. Widely read **novels of education** (***Bildungsromans***) are fuelled by the promise of progress. They deal with the moral, psychological maturation and often financial development of their protagonist, the self-made man. The genre's multi-layered, multi-voiced, dialogic nature allows for the exploration of **heteroglossia** (Bakhtin), the parallel presence of a diversity of voices, discursive styles, points of views in a single literary work. Novels address sentiments and provide amusement but they also represent extended arguments in **social, polit-**

ical, religious, scientific, or philosophical questions. Favourite themes include: **the modern mass urban experience, malicious effects of industrialisation, institutional abuses, sense of community in teeth of materialism, inequality and socialism, science vs religion**.

Books were produced for the **mass market**. The number and range of readers radically increased due to the easy availability of cheap editions like shilling shockers, penny dreadfuls, or **dime novels**, as well as circulating libraries lending books. **Serialised novels** were published on a weekly or monthly basis in periodicals in instalments stretching over the course of several months. Serialisation allowed for audience interaction. (Dickens responded to outraged readerly reactions by rewriting the not-so-happy-ending of *Great Expectations*.) Episodes usually culminated in cliff-hangers conforming to the slogan of the medium: "Make them [the audience] laugh, make them cry, make them wait!"

→ VISIT *The Circulating Library*, an online database of Victorian fiction. Browse through magazines and journals which published serialised fiction.

www.victorianresearch.org/atcl/view_periodicals.php

To get an idea of the diversity of novelistic subgenres and the different themes, styles, and attitudes which could merge in a single oeuvre study the chart below. Note *Propaganda/ Social critical message* at one end and *Entertainment/ Fantasy* at the other end, and study where individual subgenres are located in between the two.

PROPAGANDA (novel with a purpose)

- Social Problem Novel (Mrs Gaskell)
- Industrial Novel (Kingsley, Charles Reade)
- Political Novel (Benjamin Disraeli)
- Clerical Novel (Anthony Trollope)
- Moral Fable
- Existentialism (Hardy)
- Novel of Education, Bildungsroman, Künstlerroman
- Novel of manners (Jane Austen)
- Historical novel (Walter Scott)
- Realism (Dickens, George Eliot)
- Social Satire (Thackeray)
- Picaresque (Dickens)
- Regional Novel (Hardy)
- Sensation Novel, Detective Novel (Wilkie Collins)
- Sentimental novel of sensibility

- Gothic Romance (Brontës)
- Adventure Novel, Sea Novel (RL Stevenson)
- Sporting Novel (RS Surtees)
- Gothic (Bram Stoker)
- Fantasy (MacDonald)
- Children's Lit, Fairy Tale Fantasy
- Nonsense (Carroll)
- Symbolism, Aestheticism (Oscar Wilde)
- ENTERTAINMENT (novel of escape)

JANE AUSTEN

The novels of Jane Austen (1775–1815) are important precursors of the Victorian novel. They are renowned for their unique combination of **sentimentality and social criticism**. The **novel of manners** subgenre – most often associated with her name – deals with the behaviour, values, customs, language and characters of a particular social class in a specific historical context: in her case the British bourgeoisie at the end of the 18th century. She often reveals the conflicts between the rebellious (and usually repressed) individual aspirations and the collectively accepted social codes of polite conduct. Austen's novels offer a realistic reconstruction of her contemporary social world through the detailed observation of her characters' psychology, their struggles with hypocritical social conventions, and the tensions between their desires (sensibility) and their responsibility (sense). Her critique of the Victorian marriage market is particularly harsh. She uses biting **irony** to reflect on women's subservient role and their dependence on "marrying well" to guarantee a favourable social standing and economic security.

Because of the complex emotional relationships fuelling her plotlines, posterity canonised Austen's novels as **romances** focused on themes of love, courtship, treachery, and heartbreak. Yet Austen is just as much a woman writer of **passion and rebellion** (similar in this respect to Georges Sand) as she is a novelist of cultivated intellect who offers a **smart satire** of the very novel of sensibility genre that she is recycling. She exchanges the pathos of the classic sentimental novel (Richardson's *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded*, and Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*) for a singular sense of humour. She plays with creating **witty parodies** of well-known writerly modes: sentimental romance, Gothic sensationalism, and popular historical writing. This critical viewpoint enables the **transition from 18th century Romanticism to 19th century literary realism**.

Main Austenian themes: Social Criticism + Ironic Sentimentalism

- Conflict of marriage for love ↔ marriage for property
- Bildungsroman: maturation of youngster into adulthood implies loss of imagination, innocence, good faith → learning to live with compromises
- Things are not what they seem at first sight: illusion/social pretence ↔ reality
- Comedy of manners: irony grounded in recognition that proper conduct is sanctioned or condemned simply based on social convention → commentary on classism and hypocrisy: the possession of property entails responsibilities of which the public expression is good manners
- Social significance of ability to express and interpret emotions (influenced by Darwin's notions of natural selection, survival of fittest, study of facial expression, moral Darwinism)
- Reading, misreading, re-reading emotions→ with the agenda to find appropriate partner to gain social prestige (women's only chance of survival/success)

JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS

Clearly, Austen was interested in anti-heroines who rejected the social script of docile, angelic femininity. ***Lady Susan*** (1793) is an ambitious first, an **epistolary novel** inspired by Restoration drama about the ploys of a recently widowed, beautiful and manipulative sexual predator, "the most accomplished coquette in England". Lady Susan is selfish, unscrupulous and scheming, while the figure of spoiled, self-satisfied, rich girl Emma was created with Austen's bold intention "to take a heroine whom no-one but myself will much like" in ***Emma*** (1815). Emma irritates everyone by overestimating her own matchmaking abilities,

meddling in other people's lives, and letting her imagination to lead her astray. ***Northanger Abbey*** (1818) pokes fun of Gothic sensationalism by introducing a naïve, tomboyish, otherworldly heroine with an overactive imagination. Catherine Morland regards morality rather than marriage to be a token of happiness. Her fantasising (influenced by her favourite book, *Mysteries of Udolpho*) leads her to incorrect speculations, and ridiculous assumptions. (She discovers a mysterious manuscript in her bedchamber at night when the candle goes out, but in the morning she discovers it is just a laundry list. She is a failed detective figure with nothing to detect.)

Sense and Sensibility (1811) was published under the pseudonym "A Lady". Playing on the **philosophy of Cartesian dualism**, in a **double Bildungsroman** it tells the intertwined destinies of two teenage sisters of marriageable age, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, who are driven by opposing principles in their lives: one being motivated by reason, the other by emotion. ('Sense' means good judgment, wisdom, or prudence, and 'sensibility' refers to sensitivity, sympathy, or emotionality.) Ironically, the more sentimental younger sister eventually reconsiders her romantic inclinations as selfish and makes a rational choice to accept the marriage proposal of an honourable, elderly gentleman, while the more pragmatic sister marries of true love. Some compared the text to a "**dramatised conduct book**" that values "female prudence" (associated with Elinor's sense) over "female impetuosity" (associated with Marianne's sensibility). Others praised the novel for its authentic portrayal of **women's patriarchal oppression** – sometimes supported by women themselves who can "become agents of repression, manipulators of conventions, and survivors" against all odds. The book initiated a "**new privacy**" in the novel genre by virtue of the letters and the personal viewpoints of Elinor which rupture the predominantly omniscient narrative perspective.

Pride and Prejudice (initially entitled *First Impressions*) (1813) is a **romantic coming-of-age** *Bildungs* novel of manners that follows the personality development of young Elizabeth Bennet who learns to differentiate between superficial appearances and actual moral values. The novel is famed for its ironic depiction of genteel rural society's manners, its witty commentaries on social prejudice, women's limited possibilities, fashion, education, the **marriage market**, class bias and financial interests in Regency era Great Britain. Already the opening line – "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." – sets the **satirical** tone of the book. According to the initial dilemma, Mr Bennet's five daughters must marry well because none of them can inherit the family estate (fortune can only be passed on to male heirs). Despite its sarcastic comments on pride, prejudice, and **hypocrisy**, the novel stresses the importance of intimate relationship grounded

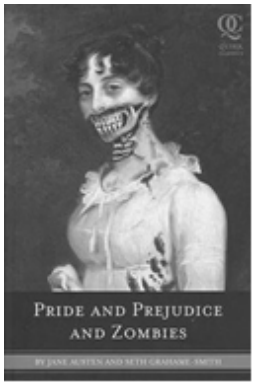
in true love. It celebrates how the initial misunderstanding between lively, spirited Lizzie Bennet and haughty Mr Darcy is followed by later mutual enlightenment and a romantic happily ever after. The most predominant discursive mode of the novel is **drawing room small talk** but the plot revolves around the **quest for the self**.

The **ambiguities** governing the text include:

- ❖ deepest subject of novel is happiness ↔ concerned w how difficult to attain happiness
- ❖ light and omnipresent irony ↔ irony illuminates much that is disturbing and unkind
- ❖ funny, silly characters ↔ subtext of anxieties: humiliation, fear, male privilege, threat of spinsterhood
- ❖ politically irresponsible ↔ criticise bourgeois aspirations, conservative mythmaking
- ❖ avoids any explicit mention of sex ↔ a predatory rake seduces two underage girls
- ❖ a love story ↔ cold economics are at the root of the action and behaviour
- ❖ Elizabeth & Jane triumph ↔ Charlotte, Lydia, Mrs Bennet live in loveless marriages
- ❖ class barriers are overcome ↔ class barriers are never overturned
- ❖ feminism pervades novel ↔ ends with fantasy weddings to rich, privileged men.
- ❖ Happiness triumphs ↔ happiness comes at a cost, if it comes at all. (Morrison 4)

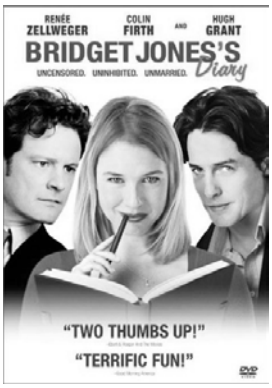
At the centre of ***Mansfield Park*** (1814) is a poor relative brought to Mansfield Park as an act of charity. Fanny demonstrates Austenian virtues of modesty, firm principles, and a loving heart while she witnesses her rich cousins' dangerous flirtations, romantic entanglements, and scandalous elopements. ***Persuasion*** (1818) is Austen's last novel, written during the author's race against her failing health. Its protagonist, Anne Elliot is already an aged **spinster** at 27 with few romantic prospects. Eight years ago she was persuaded by her friend Lady Russell to break off her engagement to a handsome naval captain with neither fortune nor rank. When he returns he has acquired both, but still feels the sting of her rejection. A splendid **satire on pretension and vanity**, this last novel

captures the heartache of missed opportunities and brings back the hope in second chance.



Janeite fan culture

Jane Austen completed only six novels, but the enduring passion for the author has driven fans to re-read her books repeatedly, inspiring book clubs, countless film adaptations, sequels, spoofs, fan art, and cosplay. HTTPS://WWW.BUZZFEED.COM/SHYLAWATSON/JANE-AUSTEN-MOVIE-ADAPTATIONS



→ READ the extracts below and discuss Austen's irony.

→ SATIRE ON MARRIAGE MARKET

A lady's imagination is very rapid; it jumps from admiration to love, from love to matrimony in a moment.

→ SATIRE ON MODERN LANGUAGE

"I do not understand you." "Then we are on very unequal terms, for I understand you perfectly well."

"Me? Yes; I cannot speak well enough to be unintelligible.

→ PROTO-FEMINIST SATIRE ON FEMININE ROLES

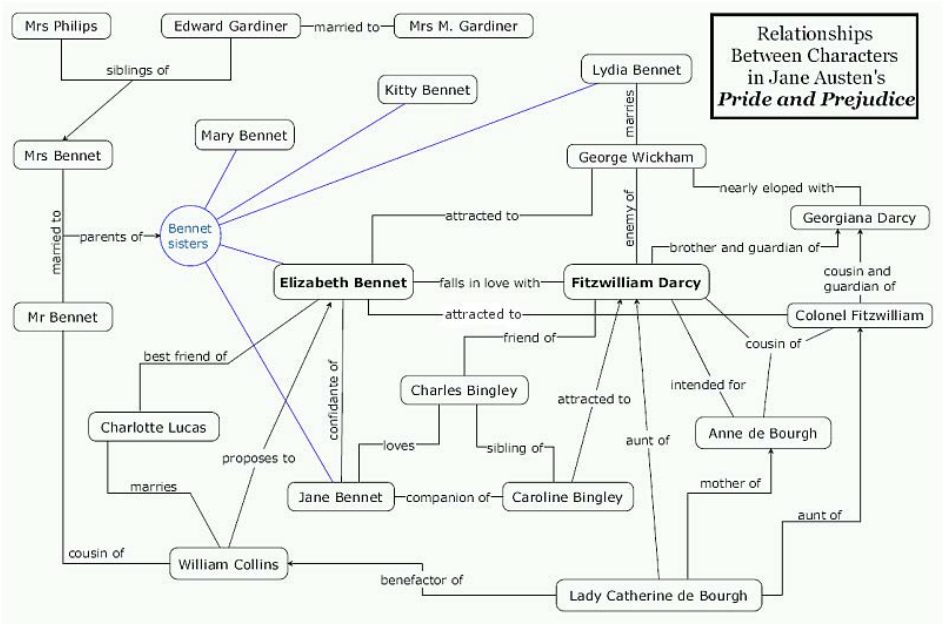
A woman especially, if she has the misfortune of knowing anything, should conceal it as well as she can.

→ SATIRE ON PSYCHOLOGY

But people themselves alter so much, that there is something new to be observed in them for ever.

→ SATIRE ON MONEY

A large income is the best recipe for happiness I ever heard of.



WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

William Makepeace Thackeray's (1811–1863) novel ***Vanity Fair*** was first published as a monthly **serial** in 19 illustrated instalments from 1847 to 1848 in *Punch* magazine. While its initial subtitle ***Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society*** reflects the intention to provide a panoramic, picturesque portrait of contemporary Britain's wide variety of social classes, personality types, and lifestyles; the subtitle of the 1848 single volume edition ***A Novel without a Hero*** reveals the agenda to reject the literary conventions of heroism through the focus on the **fallibility of humankind**.

The novel satirises the upper-middle class London life in 1810s, commenting on modern manners, hypocrisy, snobbery, opportunism, consumerism, the abuse of power, the effects and aftermath of war. In line with the domestic realistic genre, the plot follows the parallel lives of two stereotypical female figures, the angelic, innocent, dependent Amelia Sedley and the manipulative, coquette, social climber Becky Sharp in a (mock)Bildungsroman, a double novel of education. Due to the unreliable narrator's sceptical, satirical tone, the moral-psychological maturation of characters is occasionally dubious. (Becky becomes from an orphaned social outsider a picaresque heroine, a cunning society lady who uses her charms to achieve her aims. Yet she is one of the most likeable figures of the novel.)

The book is a strange **historical novel**: it deals with the impact and aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, but the battle scenes are left in the background, and the focus falls on romantic affairs such as love, courtship, seduction, betrayal and marriage. The military festivals take place in ballrooms. Thackeray is more interested in the subjective experience of the psychological, social, economic effects of war than the actual, (pseudo)objective historical events.

The title makes an intertextual allusion to **John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress (1678)***, a Christian allegory, and moralizing puritan classic that narrates Every-man's journey from the City of Destruction (this world) to the Celestial City (that which is to come= Heaven). In Bunyan, just outside the Valley of the Shadow of Death, the traveller Christian meets Faithful who accompanies him to Vanity Fair, a place built be arch demon Beelzebub where commodities on sale are meant to satisfy human greed, vanity, and lust. The title also resonates with the Biblical trope **Vanitas Vanitatum** that reminds mortals of the shallow, transitory, futile nature of earthly delights and the timeless worth of Christian moral, spiritual values.

The World identified with a fair, a marketplace calls attention to the fact how financial interests, materialism, snobbery, vanity, pretence, selfishness, and classism organise interpersonal and social relations. Thackeray's aim "*to make a set of people living without God in the world (only that is a cant phrase) greedy pompous mean perfectly self-satisfied for the most part and at ease about their superior virtue."* However, he regards corrupted humanity with compassion mingled with sad detachment, profound melancholy, and witty satire.

Thackeray renounces of the prestigious privileged authority of the author-creator and positions himself as a **puppeteer**, a master of lowly street entertainment form. In the Preface called "Before the Curtain" the story is framed as

a puppet play. The narrative guise of the author is a manager of performance, a clowning moralist, and a peculiar scepticist who presents a puppet show in one of the booths of Vanity Fair. The lofty concept of **Art is debased into a fair-ground performance**. Identifying his characters with puppets – "the famous little Becky Puppet", "the Amelia Doll", "the Dobbin Figure", "the Little Boy's Dance", "the figure of the Wicked Nobleman" – also means that they cannot be held responsible for their vices. Tongue-in-cheek he spares his readers of moralising.

The novel is organised on **three temporal levels**:

1. It makes a timeless, universal, allegorical statement about human pride and selfishness
2. It is a novel of the 1850s: satire on bourgeois snobbery, social climbers, manipulators
3. It is a novel of 1815: about the aftermath of Waterloo, individual life enmeshed in the great events of History, war formative of 19th century society and spirit (unlike Tolstoy's *War & Peace*, a hymn to Russian nationhood)

"I have no other moral than this to tag to the present story of "Vanity Fair." Some people consider Fairs immoral altogether, and eschew such, with their servants and families; very likely they are right. But persons who think otherwise, and are of a lazy, or a benevolent, or a sarcastic mood, may perhaps like to step in for half an hour, and look at the performances. There are scenes of all sorts; some dreadful combats, some grand and lofty horse-riding, some scenes of high life, and some of very middling indeed; some love-making for the sentimental, and some light comic business; the whole accompanied by appropriate scenery, and brilliantly illuminated with the Author's own candles."

→ SEE THACKERAY'S ILLUSTRATIONS TO VANITY FAIR @ https://victorianweb.org/art/illustration/thackeray/gallery1.html

WALTER SCOTT

Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) is often regarded as the founding father of the **historical novel**, a genre that attempts to convey the spirit, manners, and social conditions of a past age with realistic detail and fidelity to historical fact albeit in a fictional form. The insistence on **truthfulness** was a counter-reaction to the fake medievalism of Gothic novels. The focus on history was motivated by **patriotism**, and a desire to **revive the former glories of Scotland**. Scott was inspired by Scottish legends, tales, and folk songs. He celebrates the last heroic struggles of Highland Clans against modern urban civilisation of the Lowland region. His work is permeated by a certain ambiguity, an irresolvable conflict between the bitter nostalgia for Scotland's lost independence and the satisfaction with the progress assured by the Union with England. As a born storyteller, he organises a **huge cast** of vivid characters in exciting historical settings, while familiar with customs and events of the era he plays the role of the **social historian**, and excels in linguistic stylistic skills.

A master of dialogue he feels equally at home with Scottish regional dialects and polished courtesies of knights and aristocrats. He was also the first to introduce **ordinary people into historical fiction** that previously concentrated only on nobility and royalty.

His most popular works are:

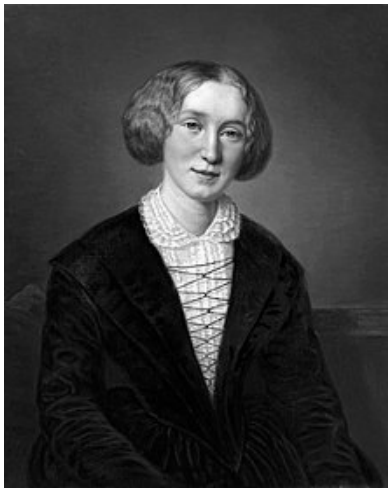
- ***Waverley*** (1814), a story of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 commemorated the loyalties of a vanished Scottish Highland society through the adventures of a young English dreamer and soldier Edward Waverley. The novel was first published anonymously but met immediate success and quickly became a popular bestseller.
- ***Rob Roy*** (1817) centred on 18th century Highland outlaw, the Robin Hood like folk hero, who rebelled against the government, supported the poor, and represented the virtues of old heroic Scotland, and the unstable place of tradition in modern times of progress.

- ***Ivanhoe*** (1819) revisits England under the reign of Richard I, features ploys of his evil brother John, chivalric tournaments, romance, and crusade.

Scott's novels according to their subject can be grouped as follows:

1. Stories of English history: Tudor & Stuart period (*Kenilworth*)
2. Stories of English, European history set in the Middle Ages (*Ivanhoe*)
3. Stories of the Scottish past, near present (*Waverley*)

GEORGE ELIOT



GEORGE ELIOT'S NOVELS

Adam Bede (1859)
The Mill on the Floss (1860)
Silas Marner (1861)
Romola (1862–63)
Felix Holt, the Radical (1866)
Middlemarch (1871–72)
Daniel Deronda (1876)

Mary Ann Evans (1819–1880) known by her pen name, **George Eliot**, was the novelist who developed the method of **psychological analysis characteristic of modern fiction**. She used a pseudonym to escape the stereotype of women's writing limited to light-hearted romances in the era. Novel was a serious art form for her, in no need of sentimentalism, nor a central hero, nor a happy ending. She also worked as poet, critic, journalist and editorial assistant of the left-wing journal *The Westminster Review*. She translated serious philosophical works such as Spinoza's *Ethics* and Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity,* and embraced the latter's ideas which considered faith to be an imaginative necessity of man, and equated the idea of God with the moral, aesthetic imperative of goodness. In her fiction she combined deep human sympathy and rigorous moral judgment.

The aim of her **psychological realism** was to portray illiterate, simple men struggling with the hypocrisy and harshness of country life in provincial England. Conforming to her agenda, the **realistic representation of ordinary people** sparks sympathy, and thus exercises the highest ethical potential that fiction has to offer.

Just like in Wordsworth's poetry, the common folk's proximity to nature rather than to culture is taken as emblematic of human nature in its purer form. In a

panoramic view of society, she portrayed the interactions of different classes and sexes. Her metaphor of **life as a labyrinth** explored our egotistic view of existence, scratches on the mirror surface seen as concentric circles. The **organic structure of her novels** is composed of an inner circle, a group of individuals involved in moral dilemma, and an outer circle, referring to the social world where the dilemma has to be solved.

She described her first long novel, ***Adam Bede***, published in three volumes (1859) as "a country story—full of the breath of cows and the scent of hay," "the faithful representing of commonplace things." The plot revolved around a rural love rectangle and was inspired by an anecdote her Methodist aunt told about a girl condemned for child murder. ***The Mill on the Floss*** (1860) is a double Bildungsroman that depicts the failed efforts of siblings Tom and Maggie Tulliver to adapt to their provincial world, embrace their socially prescribed gender roles, and eventually survive a final climactic flood. The drift of the river represents how the **individual spiritual aspirations are overwhelmed by social obligations**, the clash of free will and determinism or fate.

Middlemarch, A Study of Provincial Life (1871–72) is set in a fictitious Midlands town from 1829 to 1832 and follows intersecting stories with many characters from different social classes (the landed gentry, the clergy, manufacturers, professional men, shopkeepers, publicans, farmers, labourers…). The novel reflects with realistic insight on **social issues** (status of women, marriage, hypocrisy, self-interest, idealism, political reform, education), **historical events** (the 1832 Reform Act, early railways, accession of King William IV), and **epistemological crisis** (religion, science medicine, reactionary political views in a settled community facing unwelcome change).

→ EXERCISE

→ SEE the manuscript of *Middlemarch* and read essays on George Eliot's work on British Library's website.

→ LISTEN to *Middlemarch* in an audiobook at LibriVox

→ BROWSE overview of Middlemarch at the Victorian Web.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH A QUIZ

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeWCrabiDkRcSDe-9qgz6VF9YB9pt7v3X03L14AQnqb6Z9clQ/viewform

1.Which is the most dominant literary form in the Victorian era?

A. poetry
B. drama
C. novel
D. essay

2. A Bildungsroman is a:

A. novel of education
B. novel about buildings and architecture
C. a combination of horror and romance
D. Roman literary genre influencing Victorian fiction

3. Which is the least escapist and most political novelistic subgenre?

A. picaresque
B. novel of manners
C. regional novel
D. social problem novel

4. Which is FALSE about Jane Austen's fiction?

A. uses horror elements to challenge stereotypical view of feminine literature
B. uses irony to poke fun of social conventions
C. plays on Cartesian dualisms by comparing destinies of two sisters
D. uses a penname for some of her writings

5. A novel of manners

A. deals with tabboo topics silenced in a particular era
B. allows the author to experiment with different manners of writerly styles
C. deals with behaviours of a particular social class in a specific historical era
D. embeds newspaper cuttings and letters in the text to reach a documentary effect

6. Walter Scott is the founding father of

A. the clerical novel
B. the historical novel
C. the sporting novel
D. the sensationalist sentimental novel

7. Which authors were interested in the lives of common people living in close intimacy with nature?

A. Coleridge and Jane Austen
B. Wordsworth and Thackeray
C. Wordsworth and George Eliot
D. Keats and Walter Scott

8. Vanity Fair's preface positions the author as a:

A. puppet master
B. trapeze artist
C. circus impresario
D. flute player
E. divine creator

9. Fill in the GAP: 'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a …'

A. house
B. dog
C. car
D. wife

10. Which work is NOT distinguished by a witty use of irony?

A. Byron's Beppo
B. Wilde's Importance of Being Earnest
C. Goethe's Young Werther
D. Austen's Sense and Sensibility

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Unit 9
THE NOVEL IN TRANSITION: FUSING SENTIMENTALITY AND SOCIAL CRITICISM IN CHARLES DICKENS' FICTION

AIM OF THIS UNIT:

The unit offers an introduction to Victorian novelist Charles Dickens' art and life.

COMPULSORY READING:

Charles Dickens. Great Expectations

KEY WORDS & TOPICS:

Bildungsroman, social problem novel, sentimental novel, Bildungsroman, serial fiction

THE CREATIVE GENIUS OF CHARLES DICKENS

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was an immensely popular writer of his times and he likely remains one of the most widely read classics today. The reason of his success was that he efficiently combined a variety of genres which addressed a large and varied audience. His influence can be measured by the fact that his name became a household term: *Dickensian* refers to phenomena reminiscent of Dickens' writings, such as poor social conditions or comically repulsive characters.

In his **social problem novels** (also called "**condition of England novels**") he criticised social injustice, the unequal distribution of power, wealth, and prestige in Victorian England, the inhuman, degrading living conditions of the London poor. He often wove topical events into his narrative. His **urban fiction** focuses on the dark underside of city life, leads us workhouses, debtors' prisons, slums, the Victorian Underworld.

His representation of street urchins, prostitutes, and petty criminals spoke to the emotions of readers, and borrowed its heart-breaking tropes – most prominent-

ly the figure of the unjustly suffering innocent orphan, a "child Christ figure" – from **sentimental literature**.

His criticism of child labour is fuelled by **autobiographical inspiration**. The traumatic experience of being forced to work in a blacking warehouse[2] because of his father's debts was sublimated in his novels about abandoned, abused child heroes in what we can consider as **therapeutical writing**. The lost, helpless, persecuted child hero, a nameless orphan character is an Everyman figure, easy to identify with for all readers. The **Bildungsroman** structure, the story of the psychic, moral development and social rise of his hero is often complemented with a **Künstlerroman** plot, the story of the maturation into a socially responsible, self-reflective creative artist. Dickens also excelled in recycling **motifs from fairy tales** (unexpected, miraculous turns of events, role of chance, opposition of radically evil and good figures), **picaresque novels** (a rogue hero's adventures, journeys in multi-layered society, struggle with misleading appearances, and happy restoration of status quo due to final recognitions), and **political journalism** (social criticism via humorous caricaturisation of typical human character flaws and social malfunctions like nepotism, corruption, hypocrisy.)

His novels were published **serialised** in weekly or monthly instalments. The episodic structure – whereby each chapter ended in **cliff-hangers**[3] – generated suspense, excitement, and maintained the interest of readers. Perhaps Dickens was the first author to have a genuine **fandom**. Legend has it that anxious readers stormed the wharf in New York in 1841 when the ship bringing the journals with the final episode arrived to the port, so curious were they to learn about the misfortunes of Little Nell, one of Dickens' beloved heroes in *Old Curiosity Shop*. The author was even willing to respond to audience reactions and modified his plot and his characters to satisfy readers' desires. (see improvement of disabled Miss Mowcher's character in *David Copperfield*, and two endings of *Great Expectations*)

☹ Dickens has often been criticised for the lack of psychological debt, the incredible coincidences randomly resolving the conflicts of his plotlines, his sentimentalisation of the sufferings of the poor, powerless, and pure (especially innocent children), and his moral Darwinism that turned looks into personality markers (evil characters were depicted as ugly, the good as beautiful).

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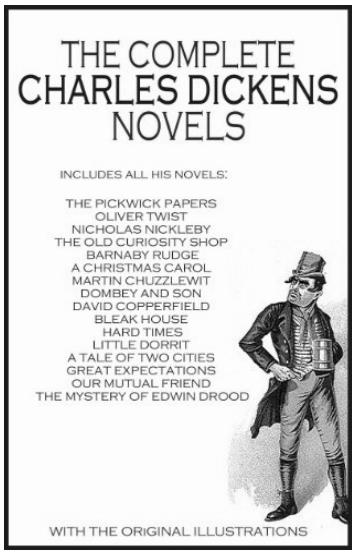
[2] While his father was imprisoned for his debts, young Charles worked ten hours a day in the rotting basement of a factory overrun by rats, pasting labels on pots of boot blacking for six shillings a week.

[3] A cliffhanger is a type of narrative or a plot device in which the end is curiously abrupt. The main characters are left in a difficult situation, without offering any resolution of conflicts.

☺ Yet his discussion of sentiments – the celebration of the gift of self-sacrificial altruism and the martyrdom of the kind-hearted innocent – can also be interpreted as ironic commentary on the hypocrisy and narcissistic self-congratulation of his contemporary readers' compassion craze. The political criticism of his social realism is indubitable: he reminds us that the Cult of the Child was the product of an era that remorselessly abused children[4], and calls attention to the paradoxical simultaneity of the idealisation of bourgeois children and the demonisation/ dehumanisation of the poor. Dickens' social sensibility, sense of realism, and political, critical views also came from the experiences of his early career as a Parliamentary Reporter and journalist. ***Sketches by Boz, Illustrative of Everyday Life and Everyday People*** (1836-7) gathered in a single volume his journalistic writing published under the penname Boz, illustrated by George Cruikshank. The 56 sketches offered a colourful depiction of London life.

→ EXPLORE VISUAL EXTRAS

WATCH a BBC animation about the Life of Charles Dickens.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unKuZ2wlNdw



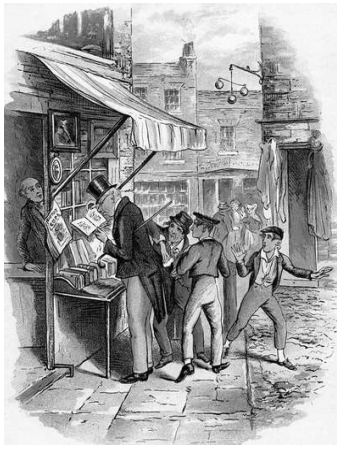
The serial publication of his first novel ***The Pickwick Papers*** (1836–7) marked the beginning of Dickens's literary success. Within a few years' time he became an international literary celebrity famed for his humour, social satire, and keen character observation. The novel is a sequence of loosely related comic adventures of the Pickwickian who make journeys by coach and get in all sorts of troubles in the English countryside, while they seek to explore the curious phenomena of life. Besides the introduction of memorable characters, the book provides a comic depiction of rural life before the Industrial Revolution.

Dickens was a prolific writer who published fifteen novels along with several short stories, no-

[4] In Dickens' time 'a fearful multitude' of an estimated 30000 naked, filthy, lawless, untutored, delinquent, brute, little city savages, street-children roamed London's streets. Their marginalised, dehumanised status was reflected in their common address as 'ownerless dogs', 'street urchins', 'gutter snipe', 'Hottentots' or 'street Arabs' (Cunningham 1991: 104, Andrews 1994: 29)

→ LISTEN to Christmas Carols at Classicfm.com

→ READ about Christmas music in *A Christmas Carol* at the Dickens Society's Website



vellas, essays, and plays. Just to mention a few, ***Nicholas Nickleby*** (1838–9) is a social satire about a young man trying to support his mother and sister, and featured memorable villains such as a malevolent businessman uncle, rakes manipulating women, and a wicked head of an abusive boys' boarding school where the protagonist temporarily served as a tutor.

Martin Chuzzlewit (1843–4) is a picaresque novel that traces an ironical study of the effects of greed, hypocrisy, and corruption on a character.

A Christmas Carol (1843) is a **potboiler** (a popular piece written for profit and entertainment), a Gothic ghost story with a didactic moral message that centres on Scrooge, a misanthrope who turns into a loving man under the influence of visits from ghosts of Christmases past. It calls attention to the importance of empathy and solidarity, to paying attention to the people living around us. At the time when he wrote the novella Dickens was concerned with the desperate situation of street children who turned to delinquency for the sake of survival. He supported the **Ragged Schools** movement that assumed that free education could improve the life of these youngsters.

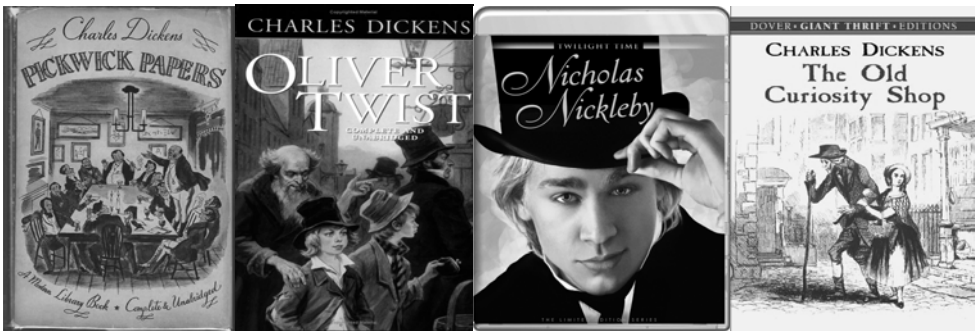
He wrote two historical novels. ***A Tale of Two Cities*** (1859) set in London and Paris is an intriguing story of love, courage, and self-sacrifice during the French Revolution. ***Barnaby Rudge*** (1841) focuses on individuals caught up in the mindless violence of the mob during the Gordon Riots (1780).

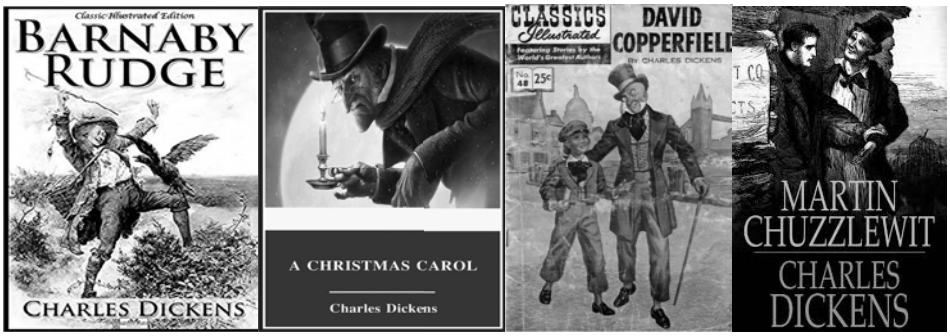
Bleak House (1852–53) evolves and incorporates Gothic imagery, scenery and plot to tell a tragic, romantic tale about the inheritance and absurdities of English law in the 1850s. ***Our Mutual Friend*** (1864–65) is a satirical murder mystery on the malicious influence money has on personality development. (His other murder mystery novel ***The Mistery of Edwin Drood*** (1870) remains unfinished.)

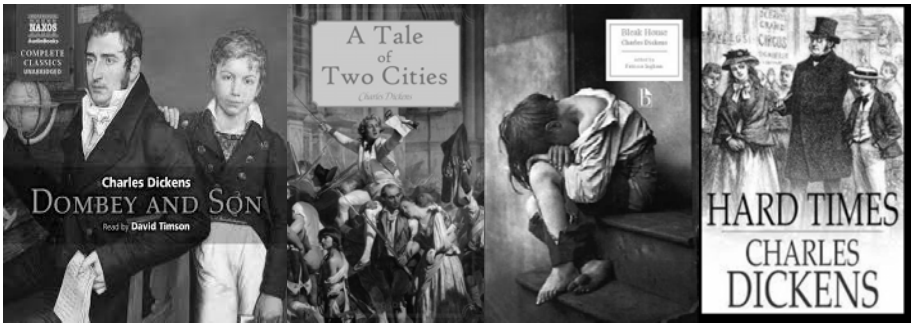
Dombey and Son (1846–48) revisits the theme of financial success as a token of a happiness in a bittersweet story about a wealthy businessman who dreams to have a son to continue his business. The original title *Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son: Wholesale, Retail, and for Exportation* identifies the text as finance fiction, but the novel touches upon social problem novel themes too, such as arranged marriages, child cruelty, betrayal, deceit, and interpersonal relations between different social classes.

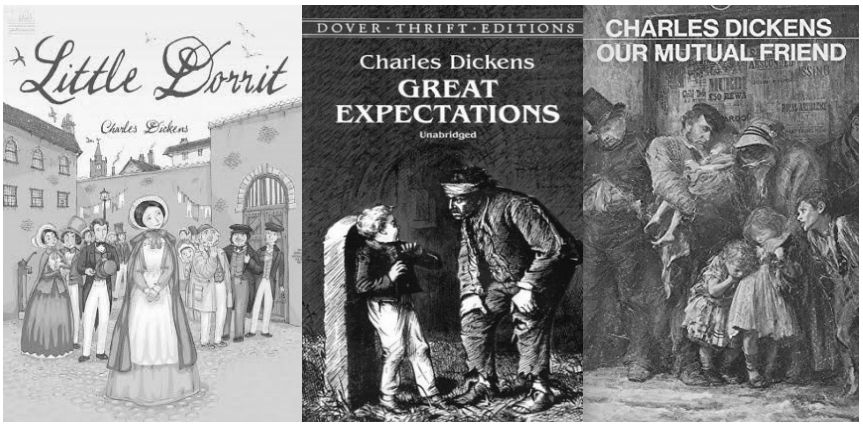
Hard Times (1854), ***Little Dorrit*** (1857) and the ***Old Curiosity Shop*** (1840–41) combines tropes from the sentimental novel, the psychological novel, and social realism as tragic and moving tales portray characters' growth through hardship, disappointments, toil and troubles and reflect on the shortcomings of government and society.

Oliver Twist (1837–39), ***David Copperfield*** (1849-50) and ***Great Expectations*** (1860–61) are Bildungsromans (possibly Künstlerromans) narrating the coming of age stories of purehearted poor orphans who must overcome obstacles, fight villains, defeat social prejudice, and learn from their own mistakes to reach their happy ending as fine young gentlemen.









→ EXERCISE

→ READ this introductory passage from the *Tale of Two Cities* and think about how Dickens's words reflect on the Victorian era.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way--in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

OLIVER TWIST (1837–9)

Intertextual References*: Oliver Twist*'s subtitle, *a Parish Boy's Progress* (1837–9) resonates with *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan's 17th century religious allegory about Everyman's striving for goodness throughout his journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. The theme of struggling with the lure of earthly delights is tackled in a more secular context on William Hogarth's 18th century painting series depicting *A Rake's Progress*. The idea of progress is a governing principle of the Darwinian theory of evolution, and of the bourgeois worldview grounded in the belief in the infinite improvability of self and society alike.

Genre: The temptation/ pilgrimage/ conversion/ reconciliation plotline ties in with the conventional narrative structure of the Bildungsroman.

As an exposure novel, the book problematises social ills (oppression, poverty, neglect, abuse) in a realistic tone fused with grotesque sarcasm, dark humour, and sentimentality. Because of dealing with crime, murder, and explicit, graphic depiction of violence, the novel was classed as a sensation novel, or a Newgate Novel (named after Newgate Prison).

Throughout the description of the life of the London poor in orphanages, workhouses, and suburban slums Dickens efficiently combined melodrama with caricature and absurdity.

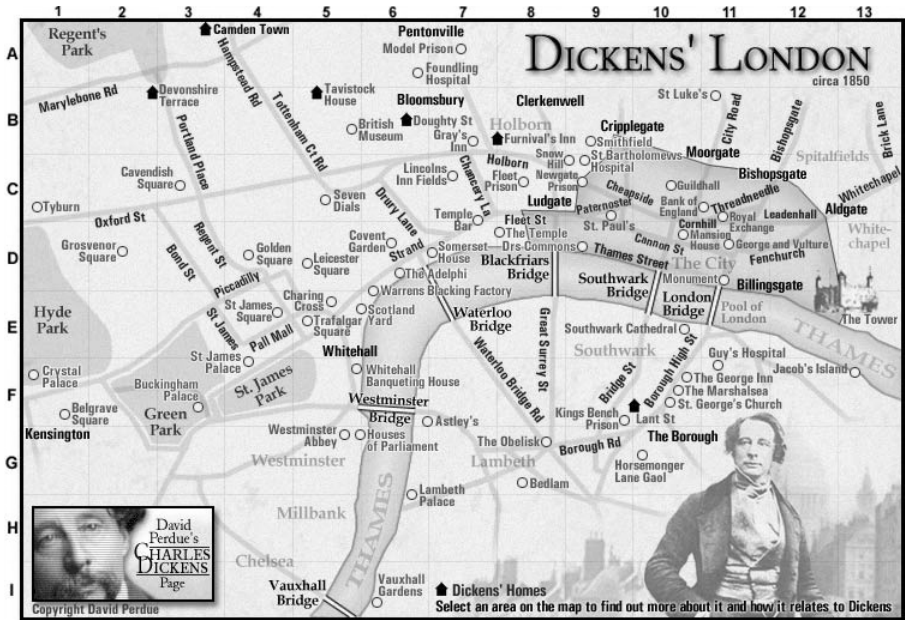
The sentimentalisation of the innocent child's suffering is a popular trope in Victorian fiction akin with many of Andersen's fairy tale themes (see Little Match Girl)

Plot: The story follows the adventures of Oliver Twist, a poor but pure hearted orphan boy. Misfortunes force him to leave the baby farm (orphanage) where he is sheltered to toil at a workhouse then a funeral home (because of his desperate looks, he is hired as a mourner at children's funerals) to eventually join a gang of juvenile pickpockets in London. In the end, he is miraculously rescued and can join his long lost, wealthy family.

Social criticism: The novel can be interpreted as an argument stated in fictional terms: an attack on the inhumanity of New Poor Law (1834) which halted government subsidies to the able-bodied poor unless they entered workhouses (that offered humble accommodation and employment to them). The realistic depiction of the London Underworld allowed for a demythologisation of the glamorous portrayal of criminals (thieves, prostitutes, gamblers). The fallible humanity of these wrongdoers was highlighted without their demonisation or idealisation, while foregrounding the collective social responsibility in maintaining or putting an end to injustice. Dickens calls attention to the double standards in the evalua-

tion of children conforming to their class belonging. While the offspring of the bourgeoisie are cherished, spoilt, and idealised as tokens of the hope in a better future, poor children were abused under miserable circumstances working in mines, factories, or the streets. Streetchildren as young as 5 or 6 could work as chimney sweeps, pickpockets, beggars, or prostitutes. Dickens' poor children symbolised innocence amidst corruption.

The Artful Dodger The innocently suffering Oliver Twist is often regarded as a fictional self-portrait of the author. Yet his streetwise sidekick friend, the grown-up-boychild, orphan *ingénue* Artful Dodger is just as exciting as a rational realist agent of social criticism and a romantic agent of inventive infantile imagination. This accomplished young pickpocket, the leader of Fagin's gang of juvenile criminals **challenges the two contrary Victorian child-stereotypes**. He is neither meek, molested angel nor beastly criminal prone to sin. He is dirty, unscrupulous, sly, treacherous, but also a helpful friend to the runaway workhouse Oliver in need. As James Kincaid points out, the Dodger is the harbinger of the modern naughty kid hero, '**the good-bad child**,' never malicious but mischievous, a 'loveable barbarian' who cannot be held responsible for his misdeeds as he is fundamentally good at heart and only deviated from his naturally empathic self by his social circumstances.



→ STUDY a map of Dickens' favourite locations at the Londonist website

Local colour: Many of Dickens's stories take place in London but the city is much more than a background, as an enchanted place – compared by the author to a magic lantern, the popular proto-cinematic entertainment form of the era – it gains a special symbolical character, even a personality of its own. The foggy London slums of the Victorian times might have already disappeared, but several sites are still identifiable. Dickens's son wrote a guidebook entitled Dickens's Dictionary of London in 1879.

DAVID COPPERFIELD (1849–50)

The Personal History, Adventures, Experience and Observation of David Copperfield the Younger of Blunderstone Rookery (Which He Never Meant to Publish on Any Account) (1849–50) was published in 19 monthly 1 shilling instalments, with 32 pages of text and 2 illustrations by Hablot Knight Browne "Phiz." Dickens called the novel "his favourite child". The autobiographical (autofictional) form is highlighted by the title's insistence on the subjective viewpoint of the narrator-focaliser-lifewriter. Ironically, David's unwillingness to have his memoirs published attests the veracity, the credibility of the narrative, granting the truth value of a found manuscript to the text. The autobiographical inspiration is commonly justified by the similarity of David Copperfield's and Charles Dickens's initials. The novel is a Bildungsroman/Künstlerroman that tracks the journey how a poor runaway orphan becomes a respectable man, husband, father, and writer. The theme is similar to that of Oliver Twist: the trial and triumph of innocence amidst corruption.

Dickens offers a realistic yet sarcastic depiction of **Victorian social realities**, including the

- difficulties youngsters had to face in boarding schools (see Salem House ruled by ruthless headmaster Mr. Creakle),
- unjust dehumanisation by prostitution (explains reasons for fall of fallen woman),
- hypocrisy of materialistic society (see the falsity of the pomp and ceremony of Victorian burial practices, turning death into a business),
- discrimination in education,
- unfair treatment of working class,

→ SEE ALL THE ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE NOVEL BY PHIZ @

https://www.charlesdickenspage.com/illustrations-david-copperfield.html

- villainy disguised as humility, masked ruthlessness (his morally disgusting villains are his best comic characters: Uriah Heep, Fagin, Bumble)

GREAT EXPECTATIONS (1849–50)

Great Expectations (1860–1), Dickens's 13th novel was first published in *All the Year Round* in 1860–61 and issued in a book form in 1861. One of its author's greatest critical and popular successes, it chronicles the coming of age of the orphaned Pip, while addressing issues preoccupying Victorian contemporaries (**pitfalls of the bourgeois dream of social class mobility, the dangers of urbanisation, industrialisation, the assumption that wealth is a token of happiness, snobbish misjudging people by appearances**) as well as timeless human experiences and dilemmas (**the question of genuine human worth, moral values, sin, redemption, gratitude, suffering, love, seduction, revenge, disillusion**).

In line with the ***Bildungsroman/Künstlerroman*** plotline, the story centres on the coming of age of a simple country boy driven by the desire to be a gentleman, who must fight the corruptive influence, biases, and manipulations of city life to learn that there is more to life than wealth. Dickens uses easily recognisable **stock characters** which reoccur in contemporary **sensation novels, sentimental novels, and realist novels** alike: the orphaned child, the escaped convict, the *femme fatale* madwoman, the malicious benefactor, the corrupted manipulator. Appealing to readers' emotions, evoking pity and/or horror, while raising social critical sensibilities, these figures embody vices presumed to be typical of the Victorian times. The novel also recycles tropes from **Gothic fiction**, recognisable in the figures of **doubles** (Estella/Miss Havisham: 2 *femmes fatales*, Pip/Herbert: 2 social climbers, Miss Havisham/Magwitch: 2 adults willing to shape children in their own image), the ominous atmosphere of the marshland, the unforgivable crime of Magwitch, and Pip's terror in the opening passage when he comes to realisation of his very existence, establishes his sense of self through fear (through being scared to death by the escaped convict).

As the title suggests, a central theme of the book is the challenging of expectations, coming to term with disillusions, and the recognition of misjudgement. The series of misreadings Pip struggles with are as follows:

- Misreading gravestone's letters on parents' tomb as personality markers
- Misreading convict as evil

- ❖ Misreading Miss Havisham as benefactor
- ❖ Misreading Estella as love of his life
- ❖ Misreading social ascension as token of satiety

Misconception and succeeding revision/ correction of one's faulty judgments has an interesting extradiegetic aspect: Dickens, persuaded by public opinion and writer friends' advice, changed the novel's ending to a happier one. The closure is still ambiguous but it holds a possibility for the lovers to unite.

The novel lends itself easily to a **psychoanalytical reading** and was presumably one of Sigmund Freud's favourite books.

- ❖ The *Bildungsroman* genre chronicles how throughout his socialisation, the hero learns to suppress his sexual and aggressive drives and desires to allow his superego triumph over his unconscious. The narrative voice involves the perspective of an innocent, wide-eyed child contrasted with that of his wiser, sadder adult self.
- ❖ Dickens excels in fictionalising the **trauma of orphanhood** and the conflicts of dysfunctional families. (Pip is brought up by his sister who is unable to express her emotions for him. Note that unloving female figures are symptomatically punished in Dickens' plot.)
- ❖ The story can be interpreted as the search for love, for social prestige, but also the **search for a Father figure**. Orphaned Pip seeks an elderly, caring, knowing paternal figure in Joe, Magwitch, and Jaggers alike. They all fail, hence Pip must grow up by becoming a father (to) himself.
- ❖ The opening passage of the book offers a psychoanalytical case study of the **traumatic self-constitution: Pip comes to sense of self through fear.**

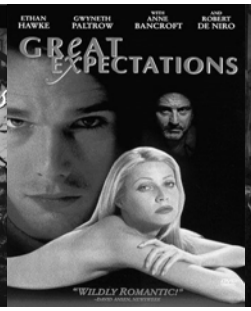
Ours was the marsh country, down by the river, within, as the river wound, twenty miles of the sea. **My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things** seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried; and that Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dikes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing

was the sea; and **that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip**.

- The **quest for a name** is paradoxical as the story starts with Philip Pirrip naming himself as Pip, creating for himself an inalienable self-identity by courtesy of the performative act of **self-naming**. (The self-made man is a great role model of Victorian times/fiction.)

My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. **So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.**

- For Pip's emerging consciousness his emotions and moral judgments are ambiguous. As a good boy obeying to the altruistic impulse of humaneness he is helping a hungry man lost in the marshes, but hence he also becomes a partner in crime, an accomplice, bringing a life-long anxiety of shame and remorse upon himself. The hero must struggle with these **contradictory emotions** throughout his maturation, realising the difficulty of harmonising the dream "to be good" and "to become a gentleman."
- The story is organised by contradictory plotlines fuelled by desire and fear. (The Freudian pleasure principle and death drive emerge as major motivations of all deeds of human actors.)
    1. Pressure of secret communion with convict
    2. Pressure to comply with social expectations
    3. Dream of breaking spell of Satis House, to become a gentleman, to marry Estella
    4. Nightmare of erotic frustration, broken faith, Miss Havisham as a witch, Estella as her trainee double
    5. Misrecognition of benefactor, of road to happiness
    6. Sympathy for/ fear of/ disgust by Magwitch
    7. Connection of Estella & Magwitch



As the numerous film adaptations attest, the novel enjoyed a lively creative aftermath.

Intertextual sources of inspiration: the novel efficiently **combines the following genres**:

- Novel of manners
- Mystery novel
- Bildungsroman, Künstlerroman
- Picaresque
- Realist novel of social change
- Fairy tale
- Gothic novel
- Pantomime tradition

→ EXERCISE

→ READ the quotes below and think about their significance in the novel.

As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them (for their days were long before the days of photographs), my first fancies regarding what they were like were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, "Also Georgiana Wife of the Above," I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. To five little stone lozenges, each about a foot and a half long, which were arranged in a neat row beside their grave, and were sacred to the memory of five little brothers of mine,—who gave up trying to get a living, exceedingly early in that universal struggle,—I am indebted for a belief I religiously entertained that they had all been born on their backs with their hands in their trousers-pockets, and had never

taken them out in this state of existence.

And when it come to character, warn't it Compeyson as had been to the school, and warn't it his schoolfellows as was in this position and in that, and warn't it him as had been know'd by witnesses in such clubs and societies, and nowt to his disadvantage? And warn't it me as had been tried afore, and as had been know'd up hill and down dale in Bridewells and Lock-Ups? And when it come to speech-making, warn't it Compeyson as could speak to 'em wi' his face dropping every now and then into his white pocket-handkercher – ah! and wi' verses in his speech, too – and warn't it me as could only say, 'Gentlemen, this man at my side is a most precious rascal'? And when the verdict come, warn't it Compeyson as was recommended to mercy on account of good character and bad company, and giving up all the information he could agen me, and warn't it me as got never a word but Guilty? …

We spent as much money as we could, and got as little for it as people could make up their minds to give us. We were always more or less miserable, and most of our acquaintance were in the same condition. There was a gay fiction among us that we were constantly enjoying ourselves, and a skeleton truth that we never did. To the best of my belief, our case was in the last aspect a rather common one.

Suffering has been stronger than all other teaching, and has taught me to understand what your heart used to be. I have been bent and broken, but – I hope – into a better shape.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH A QUIZ
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1jJLGDfJBwRASkbSki_xOojIGhUACU7zSzi87D_gXpn4/edit

1. Dickens started out his career as a

A. teacher
B. factory worker
C. journalist
D. pharmacist

2. Dickens wrote under the penname

A. Boz
B. Pip
C. Phiz
D. Fib

3. Dickens called this novel his favourite child:

A. Nicholas Nickleby
B. Oliver Twist
C. David Coppefield
D. Great Expectations

4. Great Expectations is a combination of the following genres

A. social problem novel, regional novel, sentimental novel
B. Gothic fiction, children's literature, Künstlerroman novel of manners, Bildungsroman, picaresque
C. mystery novel, novel of social change, dramatic monologue

5. This character is NOT doubled in Great Expectations

A. femme fatale
B. adult influencing child
C. child influencing adult
D. social climber

6. Oliver Twist and David Copperfield were inspired by Dickens' childhood experience of

A. working in a blacking factory
B. working as a chimney sweep
C. working as a child prostitute
D. working in a mine

7. Pilgrim's Progress is a major inspiration of

A. Oliver Twist and Pride & Prejudice
B. David Copperfield and Great Expectations

C. Oliver Twist and Vanity Fair
D. Pip's Progress and Oliver's London

8. Which one is a potboiler?

A. A Christmas Carol
B. The Mistery of Edwin Drood
C. A Tale of Two Cities
D. Dombey and Son

9. Which Dickens novel features scenes from the French Revolution?

A. Barnaby Rudge
B. Oliver Twist
C. Bleak House
D. A Tale of Two Cities

10. Which novel featured the death of Little Nell?

A. Martin Chuzzlewitt
B. Old Curiosity Shop
C. Great Expectations
D. Little Dorrit

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Unit 10
GOTHIC ROMANTICISM IN THE NOVELS OF THE BRONTË SISTERS

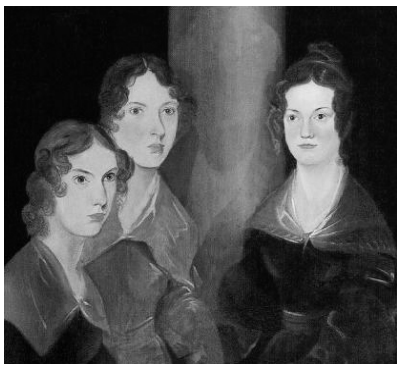
AIM OF THIS UNIT: The unit explains the significance of the Brontë sisters in Victorian literature with close readings of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*.

KEY FIGURES: Anne Brontë, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë

COMPULSORY READING: Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*

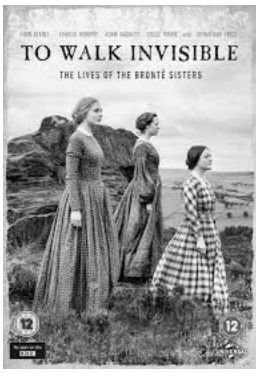
KEY WORDS & TOPICS: gothic romanticism, madwoman in the attic, Electra complex, dark double, Liebestod, governess novel, sensation novel, family romance, double Bildungsroman, homely Gothic, social problem novel, Florence Nightingale, Married Women's Property Act

THE ART AND LIFE OF THE BRONTË SISTERS



The Brontë sisters painted by their brother Branwell

The **Brontë sisters**, **Charlotte (1816–55), Emily (1818–48), Anne (1820–49)** wrote under male pennames (Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell) at a time when artistic *creativity* was mostly a privilege of men. (Women were commonly associated with their normatively idealised *procreative*, childbearing potential, or at most with lesser genres George Eliot referred to as "silly novels by lady novelists".) Today their novels are known as literary classics. Their best known works – **Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*, Emily's *Wuthering Heights,* Anne's *Agnes Grey*** – were all published in 1847, a miraculous year for the siblings.



In **their art** they appropriated conventions of the novel form to render a vision of their own, modifying and merging a variety of subgenres (Bildungsroman, romance, Gothic fiction, ghost story, regional novel, psychological realism). Refusing socially assigned positions of passive reader-consumers or scribbling women, they creatively invented their own voices as self-conscious artists.

Their writing ties in with the generic characteristics of the **Mid-Victorian novel** distinguished by a new view of man and society. The books fictionalised the experiences of

- rootlessness, restlessness, social mobility, doubts about one's fixed place in social hierarchy,
- individual's responsibility for moral choices,
- psychological turmoil: clash between id and superego
- cultural, historical determinism: fate-determining forces of being conditioned by inherited environment, natural given,
- plot grounded in the evolution of a character determined by duty and freed by renunciation, rebellious individual will,
- social questions (abuse of power, racism, women as property)

Their triple **biography** is marked by the myth of the doomed family, and the romanticised figure of lonesome orphans who lived in a private world of daydreams, gifted and cursed with clandestine creativity, overactive imagination, and vehement passions. The Brontës sisters' father, a poor Irish Anglican clergyman was appointed as the rector of the village of Haworth, on the Yorkshire moors. After the death of the girls' mother in 1821, their Aunt Elizabeth came to look after the six children and the family that functioned as a somewhat claustrophobic, self-sufficient unit separated from the rest of the world.

The siblings were often left alone together and began writing compulsively at an early age, entertaining each other with the invented fantasy kingdoms of **Angria and Gondal**. (These magic kingdoms were full of melodrama, Byronic vilains, violence, wondrous, fantastic events and a strong moral strain suggestive of parsonage life.) The three sisters' first **joint volume of poetry** printed at their own expense (1846) attracted little attention. Success came later when they put their passions in the popular **Bildungsroman** novelistic form. *Wuthering Heights* was condemned by some critics because of its harsh violence and immorality (its author was believed to be a deranged man) and heralded by others for its narrative structure. *Agnes Gray* was appreciated for seriously discussing the difficulties of poor educated women of the times. It was *Jane Eyre* that became a real best-seller. Charlotte lived the longest and earned the most literary fame during the Victorian era.

The Brontë sisters' **childhood experiences** had a considerably impact on their literary writings' gothic romantic atmosphere. These **vital influencing factors** – listed below – all stimulated intense affective reactions (melancholy, anxiety, insatiable yearning) which can be tracked in the psychological characterisation of their fictional figures.

- **Early death of mother, introvert father, brother's addiction** to drugs and drinks (see representation of alcoholism in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*) (the sisters took care of the father when he became sick, he eventually survived all his children who died of tuberculosis, possibly contaminating each other),
- Orphanhood, emotional deprivation, hypersensitive personalities, private world of daydreams shared by sisters, (see *Jane Eyre*)
- **Aunt's Calvinistic worldview** (threats of eternal punishment, pedagogy of fear),
- Family servant's folk-tales and superstitions, (ghosts in *Villette*, *WH*)
- **Spirit of the moorland** surrounding Haworth parsonage: a gloomy, mysterious, 'uncivilised' location mirroring psychic struggles, rebellious spirits, passionate souls depicted in the novels, (→see regional novel aspect of *Wuthering Heights*)
- **Clergy Daughters School**: humiliation, poor food, harsh regime, typhoid fever epidemy, terrible conditions affecting health, psychic and physical development of pupils (→fictionalised in *Jane Eyre*) The four eldest girls (excluding Anne) entered the school which educated the offspring of less prosperous clergy members. Maria and Elizabeth fell

gravely ill, were removed from the institution, and died shortly afterwards. Charlotte and Emily were also withdrawn from the school and returned to Haworth.

- **Frail health**: After erratic schooling, then brief teaching or governess posts in their adulthood, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne returned to Haworth to look after their sick father. Tormented by anxiety because of their addict brother, they all struggled against ill-health. The sisters eventually likely died of consumption, the wasting disease romanticised in the era, today referred to as tuberculosis. (see consumptive characters: Helen Burns in *Jane Eyre*, Frances Hindley in *Wuthering Heights*, Mark Wood in *Agnes Grey*, theme of contagion in *Shirley*)

ANNE BRONTË (1820–1849)

Anne Brontë's debut novel ***Agnes Grey*** **(1847),** published under the penname Acton Bell, was likely based on her own experiences as a governess. The novel commented on the restricted possibilities of middle-class women seeking a respectable form of paid employment. It dealt with issues of social inequality, oppression, abuse of women, isolation, and empathy. In a mock-Bildungsroman form the heroine's coming of age failed to result in her gain in moral virtue.

The novel explores the precarious social position of the governess. Neither a family member, nor a complete outsider, esteemed for her intellect but despised as a servant and a spinster, oscillating between the status of an intimate ally or accomplice aware of family secrets and a neglected, inferior, invisible presence, the governess embodies the marginal figure per se, and hence excites Victorian imagination. The socially intermediate status functioned as "a device to bring the governess's plight into focus, and to furnish the writer with a framework of female development" in the popular **governess novel** genre.

An actual historical figure who likely inspired Anne Brontë's representation of the working woman was **Florence Nightingale**, a pioneering nurse, humanist and feminist, commonly referred to as the Lady with the Lamp, who nursed soldiers and introduced sanitary reforms during the time of the Crimean War. She was also famed for criticising marriage as an institutionalised form of dependence.

Anne Brontë's second and final novel, ***The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*** **(1848)** protested the **subordinate position of women in marriage**. Its plot focused on a drastically unhappy marriage and the heroine's escape from it. The graphic description of the husband's alcoholism and debauchery was profoundly disturbing for Victorian sensibilities. Yet the book –bordering on a sensation novel because of the tackling of these taboo topics – became an instant success and sold out within a few weeks' time. Despite the scrutinisation of characters' emotional motivations, the novel holds social critical potential and a political message that resonates with the thoughts of the suffrage movement. When Anne's heroine leaves her husband and decides to support herself and her son by painting, she violates both social conventions and the current English legal regulations which stipulate that married women cannot own property of their own, sue for divorce, or control custody of their children. (The **Married Women's Property Act** of 1870 slightly improved the subordinate status of women.)

- → READ more about the Brontë sisters at the British Library's Discovering Literature Website. www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles
- → READ about fantasy and realism in Wuthering Heights
- → READ about the rebellious child in Jane Eyre
- → READ about the madwoman in the attic in Jane Eyre
- → READ MORE ON THE VICTORIAN GOVERNESS NOVEL AT THE VICTORIAN WEB www.victorianweb.org/victorian/gender/wadso2.html

CHARLOTTE BRONTË (1816–1855)

- ***Jane Eyre*** **(1847)**, Charlotte Brontë's most famous novel is a **fictional autobiography**. Its first person singular voiced narrator is a plain and small[1] but headstrong governess who matures – conforming to the ***Bildungsroman*** plotline – from poor orphan and abused child into a humble governess, then a respectable wife.
- The novel recycles a number of **fairy-tale themes**, such as the **"from rags to riches"** story of social ascension familiar from *Cinderella*, the interspecies romance and "incompatible opposites attract" trope from *Beauty and the Beast*, and the doomed, all engulfing passion motif of *Bluebeard*.
- Conforming to the conventional structure of the traditional **family romance**, the lovers can finally reunite after complicated yet predictable *détours* of the plot. Yet the sentimental novel scenario is subverted on multiple grounds.
- With a **feminist twist** the 'same old love story' theme is troubled as the 'happy ending' implies that:
    1. The new couple can unite only at the price of eliminating the previous wife.
    2. Rochester becomes blind in the fire (symbolising passion). He is disabled while Jane gains agency, on becoming responsible to look after him. She becomes his eyes, hence challenges the male gaze[2].
    3. ""Reader, I married him"[3] is Jane's defiant conclusion to her rollercoaster story. It is not, "Reader, he married me" — as you would expect in a Victorian society where women were supposed to be passive; or even, "Reader, we married." Instead Jane asserts herself; she is the driving force of her narrative." (Tracy Chevalier)
- Unlike sentimental novels that exploited the reader's capacity for tenderness, the novel shocked Victorian readers by recycling taboo themes

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[1] Charlotte told her sisters that her aim was to create 'a heroine as plain, and as small as myself, who shall be as interesting as any of yours'.

[2] The male gaze is a feminist term that problematises the unequal distribution of power positions. Men act as active onlookers, while women "appear" objectified, eroticised, reduced to passive spectacles to be looked at.

[3] Speaking out of the text, addressing the reader beyond the pages of the book, shifting narrative regsiters (from intradiegetic to extradiegetic level) is a postmodern narrative device called metalepsis.

familiar from **sensation novels** (*ménage à trois*, bigamy, pyromania, transvestism, attempted murder, insanity)

- and ***Gothic fiction*** (the madwoman in the attic: the darker double, the shadow of the Angel in the House, unfeminine madness, Rochester's supernatural call to Jane, haunted house theme). The novel can be associated with the **homely Gothic** subgenre: a dark secret that should have remained hidden comes to light within the safe environment of home that suddenly emerges in a new light as unfamiliar, dangerous, and claustrophobic.
- The novel performs **social criticism** commenting on child abuse
- , the feminisation of insanity, women's imprisonment in gender stereotypes, the transitional position of the governess suspended between social classes, the double standard in the evaluation of male and female passions, among others.
- The author mixes the **novelistic tropes of her time** (the Dickensian Bildungsroman/social problem novel's typical character of the *unjustly suffering innocent orphan figure*, the *raging madwoman* of sensation/ Gothic fiction) with her own **autobiographical experiences** (being educated at Clergy Daughter's School, working as a governess).
- The novel has exciting **scientific implications**: it criticises the **Darwinian** view of **degeneration** as a maternal inheritance and the idea of moral insanity. (With the figures of Bertha and Grace Pool it demonstrates how the era associates madness with moral corruption, poverty, debauchery, alcoholism, and racial difference). A popular book of natural history, ***A History of British Birds*** illustrated by Thomas Bewick offers bookish young Jane an escape from her bullying cousins; and the strangely impressive words the texts and images transport her to foreshadow her future encounters with the supernatural. *Jane Eyre* strategically uses bird imagery and avian metaphors: Jane emerges as dove, linnet, skylark, while Rochester as eagle, cormorant.
- Further features include: **melancholic tone, ambiguous sensations, psychological realism**: description of physically powerful emotions, psychological instability, oscillation between hope and renunciation, between bodily control and overwhelming desire

The Madwoman in the Attic is a powerful symbolical figure in Jane Eyre, and in Victorian fiction in general. In Charlotte Brontë's novel, Rochester's former wife, Bertha Mason who became violently insane, is locked up in her room on the third floor of Thornfield Hall, and occasionally emerges as an uncanny absent presence, a ghost from the past to disturb the budding domestic bliss of Jane and Rochester. Bertha's bestial rage eventually sets the house on **fire** (the flames representing her wild passions), and although Rochester attempts to save her, she throws herself off from the roof, and hence leaves her husband free to marry Jane.

Psychoanalytically informed feminist readings (Gilbert & Gubar 1979) interpreted the raging madwoman Bertha as a **dark double** of docile Victorian femininity represented by plain and pure Jane. If Jane embodies the era's gender stereotype of the **Angel in the House**, Bertha stands for the **Fallen Woman**, who is corrupted, bestial, brutal, passionate. Bertha's rage might even symbolise the repressed aggressive/erotic impulses, and creative energies of the gentle governess Jane. In fantastic fiction the attic or the cellar – places which belong to the house but are in a way invisible, mostly uninhabited, permeated by an atmosphere of anxiety and gloominess – represent the unconscious realm, whereas the ground floor (where Jane lives) stand for the superego.

The novel can be criticised for the **lack of female sisterly solidarity**: the first wife must die (must be written out of the story) so that Jane and Rochester can live happily ever after. Yet it is exciting to note that Jane also had her episodes of raging madness during her childhood when she used to be a "bad child", a "wild cat." There is a memorable episode in the novel when she is falsely accused of lying and is closed up in the **Red Room**: her tantrum signifies a rebellion against normative society forcing false narratives upon her (associating her poverty, her femininity, and her age with moral corruption; degrading/disabling/"othering" her multiply marginalised identity position). Her madness marks a passionate quest for a self-authored identity. While seeking herself, Jane must fight the

Electra complex – in Jungian psychology the term refers to a girl's psychosexual competition with her mother for the possession of the father figure – and defeat her female rival.

Through the lens of **medical humanities/ disability studies** the figure of the madwoman reveals a lot about the contemporary view and treatments of mental disorders. Victorians made a distinction between **melancholic and raging madness** (**Ophelia** versus **Lucia of Lammermoor**). They often romanticised female psychological disorders, especially losing one's mind because of heartbreak: pathologisation coincided with eroticisation. While nervous disorders of the upper classes where associated with the hypersensitivity of a noble soul and a fragile physical frame, the insanity of the lower classes was commonly associated with degeneration, bestiality, and moral corruption. Female rebelliousness – the unwillingness to comply with social codes of conduct expecting women to be submissive and sweet – was seen as mental disorder in the need of cure. (Doctors advised these female patients to pursue less intellectual activities, and beware of readings that would overexcite their imagination, to undergo rest cure, and to marry and to give birth to children at their earliest convenience, to calm their nerves.)

The representation of Bertha's madness borders on **fantastification**. The **madwoman emerges as a monster**. She is referred to as a clothed hyena, a wild beast, a hideous demon, a vampire, a goblin, an exotic other, an abject and passionate wretch, an "it", marked by her hysteric laughter, bestial screams, and inability of meaningful rational verbalisation. Her elimination from the story is necessary for the purification of Jane's microcosm and Victorian society at large. She is the evil in Rochester's soul from which he must be purified in the final purgatorial fire.

Postcolonial and socialist critics problematise the fact that madness is represented in terms of sexual, racial, and class difference. Bertha comes from Jamaica, her dangerous instability is a symptom of her hereditary disease resulting of her ethnic difference, and mixed race Creole heritage. The fear of racial difference surfaces elsewhere in the text when Jane is first faced with Bertha's savage looks, she compares her to a "German vampire." The madwoman's solitary confinement is assisted only by her suspicious, debauched, and alcoholic maid, Grace Pool, a hired nurse who emerges as Bertha's lowly double, and an embodiment of the dark and dangerous working class lurking on the periphery of the safe and clean bourgeois home.

The novel holds exciting **legal implications**: Bertha is insane but Rochester cannot divorce her, because her actions are uncontrollable, and hence an illegitimate ground for divorce.[4]

→ **READ** the extracts below.

→ How is the Madwoman in the Attic represented?

→ How is she contrasted with the Angel in the House?

He lifted the hangings from the wall, uncovering the second door: this, too, he opened. In a room without a window, there burnt a fire guarded by a high and strong fender, and a lamp suspended from the ceiling by a chain. Grace Poole bent over the fire, apparently cooking something in a saucepan. In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, ***a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face… A fierce cry seemed to give the lie to her favourable report: the clothed hyena rose up, and stood tall on its hind-feet.***

"Ah! sir, she sees you!" exclaimed Grace: "you'd better not stay."

"Take care then, sir! — for God's sake, take care!"

The maniac bellowed: she parted her shaggy locks from her visage, and gazed wildly at her visitors. I recognised well that purple face, — those bloated features. *Mrs. Poole advanced.*

"Keep out of the way," said Mr. Rochester, thrusting her aside: "she has no knife now, I suppose, and I'm on my guard."

"One never knows what she has, sir: ***she is so cunning: it is not in mortal discretion to fathom her craft."***

"We had better leave her," whispered Mason.

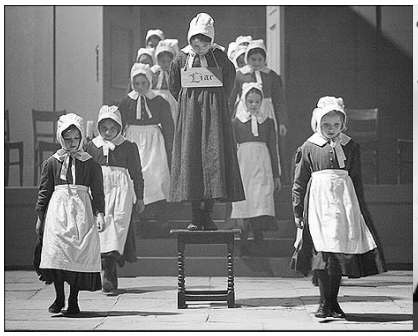
Go to the devil!" was his brother-in-law's recommendation.

"'Ware!" cried Grace. The three gentlemen retreated simultaneously. Mr. Rochester flung me behind him: ***the lunatic sprang and grappled his throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggled. She was a big woman, in stature almost equalling her husband, and corpulent besides: she showed virile force in the contest — more than once she almost throttled him,*** *athletic as he was. He could have settled her with a well-planted blow; but he would not strike: he would only wrestle. At last he mastered her arms; Grace Poole gave him a cord, and he pinioned them behind her: with more rope, which was at hand,* ***he bound her to a chair****. The operation was performed amidst the* ***fiercest yells and***

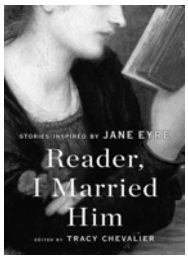
[4] Note that Charlotte Brontë dedicates the second edition to Thackeray whose literary work she admired. She was unaware that **Thackeray** had a mentally ill wife locked away in an institution whom the author was unable to divorce. Rumours abounded after the dedication.

***the most convulsive plunges**. Mr. Rochester then turned to the spectators: he looked at them with a smile both acrid and desolate.*

***"That is my wife ," said he. "Such is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know** — such are the endearments which are to solace my leisure hours! **And this is what I wished to have" (laying his hand on my shoulder): "this young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon, I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout.** Wood and Briggs, look at the difference! **Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder — this face with that mask — this form with that bulk; then judge me, priest of the gospel and man of the law, and remember with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged!** Off with you now. I must shut up my prize.„*



The Madwoman refuses to stay locked away in the attic.



Jane Eyre's 20th–21st century rewritings/reimaginings:
Daphne Du Maurier: *Rebecca* (1938)
Hitchcock: *Rebecca* (1940)
Jean Rhys: *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)
Jasper Fforde: *The Eyre Affair* (2001)
Paula Rego, lithographes to *Jane Eyre* (2002)
Tracy Chevalier. Reader, I Married Him. Stories Inspired by Jane Eyre (2016)
Alice Brosh McKenna,Ramon Perez. *Jane* (graphic novel, 2017)

Further Novels by Charlotte Brontë

The opening chapter of ***Shirley*** **(1849)** warns readers that – unlike in the author's previous novel, *Jane Eyre* – they will not find "passion, and stimulus, and melodrama" in the pages that follow but something "real, cool, solid, and unromantic as Monday morning." The **social problem novel** is set in the Northern

part of England during the final years of the Napoleonic Wars and thematises ominous events that unfolded in Yorkshire during the industrial depression including a machine-breaking incident, a **Luddite riot**, conflicts between workers and employers in the textile industry, and an assassination attempt on a local mill owner. The **unmarried spinsters** and the **unemployed mill workers** are "signs that healthy circulation within the matrimonial and labour markets has been blocked off, and that ordinarily productive economies have closed down" (Shuttleworth). Instead of elaborating on a romance line, Brontë brings the full strength of her poetic abilities to bear on the landscape in lengthy descriptions of natural surroundings (Coriale).

Villette (1853) – a reworking of Charlotte Brontë's posthumously published first novel *The Professor* – fused the popular sentimental theme of the **"master and pupil romance"** with some of her personal experiences, fictionalising a period of her life when in her twenties she was teaching English in a *pensionnat* (boarding school) in Brussels and fell in love with a married pedagogue. The subjective, **(fictional) autobiographical** tone is reinforced by the first person singular confessional narrative of Lucy Snowe. The heroine is rebelling against her social circumstances: as a self-reliable working woman she seeks economic independence (unlike Jane Austen's heroines trapped within the confines of the marriage market), and (much like Jane Eyre) she takes pride in her intelligence and refuses to use her appearance, her feminine charms as social capital. Brontë projects psychological depth onto Lucy's character: we feel her unease and homesickness caused by her geographical and cultural dislocation as a stranger in a foreign country; her intimidation by Rochester-like arrogant and prickly Monsieur Emanuel she grows infatuated with; her struggle with isolation, solitude, and poverty as a working woman who is unwilling or unable to comply with expectations of femininity; as well as her efforts to mature from passive, obedient girl into a woman who is confident in her own choices. Apart from the obvious **Bildungsroman** theme, the novel bears features of **Gothic fiction** (the ghost of a nun revisits Lucy several times), and has been praised for its description of emotional attraction as a mixture of spiritual and physical longing, an experience transcending sensuality. Lucy's a **complex narrative voice**, who simultaneously elicits empathy and remains distant, and might occasionally be intentionally disorienting the reader. The ending is ambiguous, Monsieur Emanuel declares his love to Lucy and arranges for her to become the headmistress of her own dayschool, but he sails away (to oversee a plantation on the West Indies) perhaps never to return, as Lucy says: *"M. Emanuel was away three years. Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life."*

A notable difference in imaginative quality separates the novels of Charlotte and Emily Brontë from those of the other great novelists of the 19th century. The

difference appears to be one of emotional intensity, the product of a unique concentration upon fundamental human passion in a state approaching essential purity. …An astonishing mixture of romantic commonplace and personal inspiration, primitive feeling and spiritual exaltation… (Traversi 247)

EMILY BRONTË (1818–1848)

> "We seem at times to breathe lightning. Emily was a natural genius, a native and nursling of the moors who worked in a wild workshop, with simple tools, out of homely materials."
>
> Charlotte Brontë on *Wuthering Heights*

Emily Brontë's ***Wuthering Heights*** (1847) is a novel revolutionary in poetic concept and narrative structure.

It was regarded as a scandalous work in its time because of its focus on the **darker side of love**. It tells a story about **all-engulfing fatal passion** that reaches beyond death, and blurs the desires of destruction and self-annihilation. It is an early literary fictionalisation of the intertwined **Freudian psychoanalytical notions of the pleasure principle and the death drive**. The depiction of psychic and physical violence rupturing romantic relationships, aggressive/ sexual impulses, and dangerous, bestial instincts overwhelming the rational mind were considered as improper taboo topics conforming to the era's bourgeois codes of politeness. The book boldly troubled Victorian ideals regarding religious hypocrisy, moral worth, naturalised class differences and gender inequality, while combining narratological strategies of the **psychological novel**, the **social problem novel**, and the **regional novel**. The style flickers between **gothic romanticism** and flinty **realism**.

The Shakespearean/ **Romantic Liebestod** theme of **star-crossed lovers** who can only unite in death (see Romeo & Juliet) is revisited in the insatiable yearning of the two protagonists, Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff. The story is a **failed family romance**. The couple's amorous relationship is hindered by their

class differences, family conflicts, wrong decisions, the anxiety of atonement, a remorseful revolt against social expectations, as well as the twin characters' vehement temper, and their excessive resemblance *("He shall never know I love him: and that, not because he's handsome, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made out of, his and mine are the same."***)** These eventually peak in a **revenge tragedy,** and a **gothic ghost fantasy** aftermath.

The book recycles easily recognizable symbols and **fairy tale fantasy tropes**. At the beginning, mirroring the *Beauty and the Beast* plot, Catherine, the heiress of the mansion Wuthering Heights, a beautiful wild child asks her father to fetch her a gift from the city market. Instead of the whip she wants (symbolising her violent, passionate temper), the old man brings home a gypsy boy, a foundling of dubious origins called Heathcliff. (His lack of last name suggests he might be a fairy changeling; he is also referred in the novel as *'a wolfish man"* and *"the devil incarnate"*, while Catherine is *"magically ministering angel…beneficient fairy…little witch"*). He grows up together with her as a foster brother and a genuine soulmate.

The pair eventually breaks each other's hearts as Catherine –obeying social expectations instead of her own desires – marries the soft and sickly Edgar Linton from the neighbouring mansion Thrushcross Grange, and feels disillusioned for her entire life, while Heathcliff, a brooding Byronic villain hero takes revenge on all who betrayed him by marrying and relentlessly tormenting Edgar's sister Isabella (who represents in his eyes the bourgeoisie's luke-warm satiety and hypocritical morals that prevented his union with Catherine). Catherine slowly wastes away because of wedding the wrong man. After her death Heathcliff seems to be losing his mind and grows obsessed with begging Catherine to return to haunt him so that they be can be together. ("Ghosts *have* wondered on earth… Be with me always—take any form—drive me mad!") In this **double failed Bildungsroman** the lovers can finally unite post-mortem, as ghosts to roam their beloved, uncivilised moorland forever.

Earthly reconciliation may only come in the second generation of the family: a prospective status quo is promised in the scene when Cathy (Catherine and Linton's daughter) lovingly teaches Hareton (the son of Hindley, Catherine's brother, Heathcliff's sworn enemy) to read and write, and hence suggests the possibility to rewrite one's own destiny, to overcome the hubris committed by the forefathers, and to reach peace with oneself and others. Cathy and Hareton marry and inherit both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange after Heathcliff's death.

The **symbolical significance of Nature/natural landscape** reminds of Romantic poetry's **egotistical sublime** (where the frightening and fascinating

scenery provides a pretext to reflect on one's own psychological state) and the **regional novel** (in which the plot is fuelled by social-political, economic, or agricultural specificities and the peculiar atmosphere of the geographical location where the story takes place). Cathy's and Heathcliff's raging passions are mirrored in the stormy weather, the turbulent winds, the misty darkness, and the unfriendly, thorny, swampy, wild moorlands (a fictional Yorkshire moors). The gloomy **Gothic scenery** matches the troubled psyche of the characters maddened by love. Wandering in the moorland's infinite, boundary-less territory, submerging in its **supernatural atmosphere**, offers a liberating break out of the claustrophobic prisonhouse of social expectations for the protagonists.

Cathy's and Heathcliff's finally roaming the moorland as ghosts represents an **ecstatic pantheistic experience** clearly contrasted with the idyllic pastoral theme. Only Nature can offer a post-mortem consolation for what has been ruined by culture in life. "To be One with each other" implies to be One with the Universe, with Nature, and to worship this One-ness in every animate and inanimate thing, every cloud, tree, and rock. As Catherine says, *"My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I am Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being."* Death, in that sense, is not tragic, it signifies a fading back into Nature, a return to this primary union, an embracement of the quiescence of fossils. As oddly bonded Gothic doubles, they both die of consumption (starving themselves to death, refusing a life without the other *("Oh God! It is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!"*)) Transcending beyond carnal sexual desire, theirs is a total spiritual union.

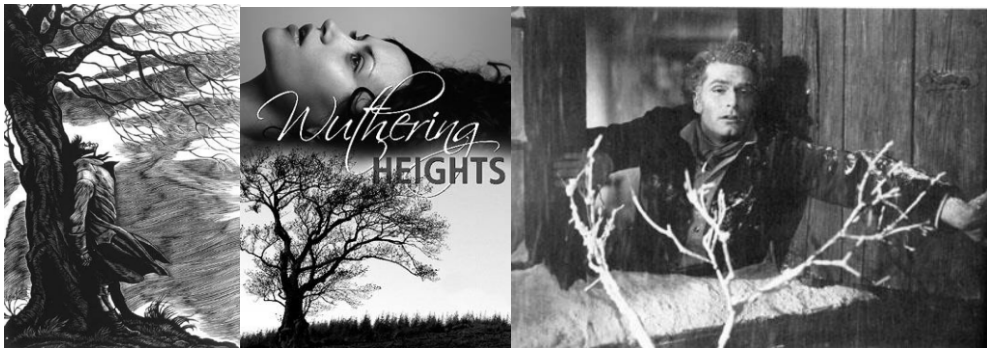
Brontë explores the **psychological complexity of passion**: the combination of pain and joy felt over the recognition that the other is "more myself than I," and a resulting oscillation between hatred and adulation, phobia and fetishisation. In a turmoil of emotions, the desire to fully possess the other is complemented by a painful recognition that the beloved has a part of reality I can never get access to, and hence total fusion is impossible, as well as a fear of losing the "I" while fusing with "you" to merge within the communal union of "us". In this feverish story, passion is a matter of fate, lovers have no choice but to be together, even death cannot do them apart.

> I cannot express it; but surely you and everybody have a notion that there is, or should be an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of creation if I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if

> all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger: I should not seem a part of it.

The **pathological aspects of desire** are also explored, unveiling necrophiliac, incestuous, sadistic, narcissistic, infantile yearnings which like contaminating disease infect everything around them. (*"And I pray one prayer–I repeat it till my tongue stiffens–Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living! You said I killed you–haunt me, then!…Be with me always–take any form–drive me mad! only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you!"*)

These immoral subject matters (insanity, incest, domestic abuse, aggression) were typical of the **sensation novel** that deliberately set these shocking themes in ordinary, familiar, often domestic context to challenge the Victorian assumption that sensational, horrific events were foreign from comfortable middle-class existence. (↔Gothic horrors were mostly located distanced in the far-away and the long-ago) However, *Wuthering Heights* moves beyond the cheap thrills of the sensation novel by elevating passions into transcendental dimensions: Catherine's female rage surfaces in the foggy, stormy weather conditions, the ominous thunderstruck landscape, evoking an angry goddess shaking.



Genres evoked in *Wuthering Heights*

- Psychological novel
- Sociological/social problem novel
- Work of edification on nature of grand passion
- Failed double Bildungsroman
- Domestic fiction, failed family romance
- Ontological psychodrama
- Regional novel
- Expanded fairy tale tradition
- Gothic novel

- Ghost story
- Ballads, folk tales, legends
- Sensation novel
- Revenge tragedy

The motif of the **FALL** plays a vital role in the novel.

- Catherine and Heathcliff experience **the archetypal fall of the Bildungsroman hero**, but there is no place for resurrection, a cure, or a satiety terminating the quest.
- The fall from innocence to experience: the trouble of maturation

"I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free!"

For Catherine (like for Maggie Tulliver in *Mill on the Floss*) her coming of age, her maturation from girl into woman is a tragic experience. The renunciation of her wild childhood self signifies a traumatic loss because becoming a civilised, engendered, self-disciplined lady implies not only the loss of freedom but also entails a painful breaking up of the primary union with Heathcliff. Her passionate temperament makes her unable to comply with Victorian expectations of submissive, docile, passive femininity; and her repressed rebellious past self, a bestial double revives and consumes her from within. (Heathcliff is also killed by "something from within," his own despairing desire for his lost soul.)

- The fall from Hell to Heaven: the move from WH to TG
- The fall from Nature to Culture

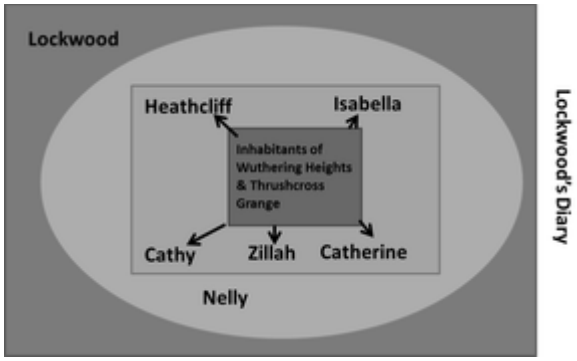
> Heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret, as well as the other. I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there, had not brought Heathcliff so low I shouldn't have thought of it.

When Catherine marries Linton she moves to the neighbouring house Thrushcross Grange, a bright, beautiful, cosy, bourgeois domicile, that is the exact opposite of Wuthering Heights, a dark, cold, creepy, angry, unhappy place. However, the move from savagery to refinement, from bareness to wealth, the ascension from a lower to higher social class fails to satisfy her. She never feels at home in the heavenly surroundings of the gentle Linton family, and is tormented by homesickness for the hellish, harsh, unwelcoming environment of her prepubescent years. Catherine's illness caused by her leaving behind the wilderness also refers to the maleficent effects of civilisation.

❖ Falling in love with the wrong man

It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*



Wuthering Heights is remarkable for its complex, multi-layered narrative structure. The **non-linear** storyline is disrupted by **flashbacks**, time-shifts, and the **retelling**s of the same events from different characters' perspectives (Catherine and her daughter Cathy, Catherine and Isabella).

The **double plotting** transforms domestic fiction into a gothic tale and vice versa. The novel employs a **frame narrative**. In the present tense narrative time frame Mr Lockwood, a visitor to Thrushcross Grange asks the housekeeper Nelly Dean to tell the story of her landlord Heathcliff. Nelly is an **unreliable narrator** because she is old, forgetful, superstitious, gossipy, and sentimentally, nostalgically involved in the events she recalls retrospectively (twenty years later). Mr Lockwood's surface/outer narrative contains Nelly's tale that contains many other characters' accounts of the actions. Uncertainty permeates the story-world, because of the lack of omniscient narrator, the abundance of emotionally biased dialogues, and mysterious silencings. Several **gaps** are left in the readers' understanding: we never learn the origins of Heathcliff, how he got his money, if Catherine is really a ghost or not…)

Comparison of two houses and their symbolical significations

WUTHERING HEIGHTS	THRUSHCROSS GRANGE
Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw	Edgar and Isabella Linton
Hareton	Linton
Wild raging of raw nature	Civilised politeness, cultured society
Darkness	Light
Functionalism, struggle for survival	Aesthetic decorations
Hellhound beasts	Lapdog pets
Natural freedom	Bourgeois Conventions
Oneness, Totality	Isolation
Hellish	Heavenly
Homely	Alien

→ READ 19th century reviews of Wuthering Heights

https://www.wuthering-heights.co.uk/wh/reviews.php

VISIT THE WEBSITE OF THE BRONTE SOCIETY www.bronte.org.uk

→ LISTEN to Kate Bush's song inspired by the tragic love of Heathcliff and Cathy. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1pMMIe4hb4

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH A QUIZ

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/15c6Gpw5JtsK8Y_6GRi3tpxPBTz7LCgUhKLfO9s5nEzY/edit

1. The pennames of the Brontë sisters were

   A. Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell
   B. Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bond
   C. Adam, Basil, and George Eliot

2. Angria and Gondal were

   A. deceased sisters of Charlotte, Anne, and Emily
   B. pennames of the Brontë sisters
   C. fantasy kingdoms invented by the Brontë
   D. fantasy food recipes of the Brontë sisters

3. The Madwoman in the Attic is a character in

   A. Agnes Grey
   B. Jane Eyre
   C. Wuthering Heights
   D. Mistery in the Attic

4. Which is NOT a governess novel?

   A. Agnes Grey
   B. Jane Eyre
   C. The Tenant of Wildfell Hall
   D. Wuthering Heights

5. Which are the genres recycled in Wuthering Heights?

   A. psychological novel, social problem novel, detective fiction
   B. fairy tale, Bildungsroman, regional novel
   C. ontological psychodrama, domestic fiction, work of edification

6. Who was the oldest of the Brontë sisters?

   A. Anne
   B. Charlotte
   C. Emily

7. Heathcliff's character can be compared to

   A. Goethe's Werther
   B. a Victorian patriarch
   C. a Byronic villain hero
   D. Prince Charming
   E. a mad scientist figure

8. The Romantic Liebestod theme governs the relationship of

A. Jane Eyre and Rochester
B. Lucy Snow and M Emanuel
C. Hareton Earnshaw and Cathy
D. Catherine Earnshaw and Rochester

9. The name of a fictional Belgian town invented by Charlotte Brontë is

A. Lowood
B. Colette
C. Villette
D. Wildfellville

10. Electra complex refers to

A. the psychological competition between sisters
B. the psychological competition between mother and daughter
C. the psychological competition between male and female authors
D. the psychological competition between aristocratic and working class women

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Unit 11
REGIONAL REALISM AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THOMAS HARDY'S WORK

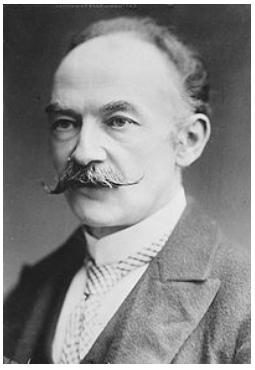
AIM OF THIS UNIT: The unit explains Thomas Hardy's significance in Victorian literature with a close reading of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

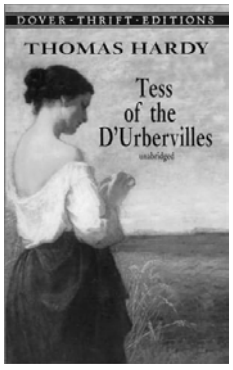
KEY FIGURES: Thomas Hardy

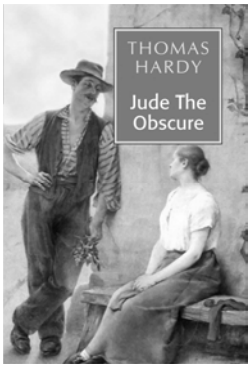
COMPULSORY READING: Thomas Hardy: *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

KEY WORDS & TOPICS: agnosticism, regional novel, naturalism, moral philosophy, alternative morality/logic/religion, relativisation of social conventions, challenge of divine justice, problematisation of the question of purity, female revenge story, liberty in death, Tess as a pagan goddess, suspense, resistance to male gaze by forgetfulness

THE ART AND LIFE OF THOMAS HARDY (1840-1928)







'Though a good deal is too strange to be believed, nothing is too strange to have happened.'

- Thomas Hardy was an English novelist and poet famous for setting most of his works in **Wessex**, the South-western part of England, today known as Dorset county.
- The eldest of the four children of a stonemason he grew up in humble circumstances, in an isolated cottage on the edge of the open heathland, where his early experience of **rural life's seasonal rhythms and oral culture** proved to be largely influential of his future writing.

- He learnt **architecture**, and the profession brought him social and economic advancement. Yet due to the lack of funds and **declining religious faith** he eventually abandoned his ambitions of university education and prospective ordination as an Anglican priest.
- In his late twenties, he decided to commit himself to literature. He tried his hands in **poetry**, then gained increasing success with his prose published in **serialised novel**istic form. He supplied *Tinsley's Magazine* with eleven monthly instalments of the moderately successful, autobiographically inspired, melodramatic love story ***A Pair of Blue Eyes*** (1873).
- Yet it was ***Far from the Madding Crowd*** (1874) he contributed as a series to the more prestigious *Cornhill Magazine* that earned him real fame as a **Wessex novelist**. He was the first to immortalise in English fiction the **atavistic lure of the agricultural region of his childhood** in a distinctive **blend of humorous, melodramatic, pastoral, and tragic tone**. The **sombre countryside** he came to know as a child remained the scenery to many of his novels.
- After a serious illness he moved with his wife to **Dorchester**, where he was appointed a local magistrate and designed and built Max Gate, the house in which he lived until his death.
- While ***The Mayor of Casterbridge*** (1886) incorporates recognizable details of Dorchester's history and topography, *Wessex Tales* (1888) resuscitates the region's aura in short story form.
- Hardy's late novels are considered to be his finest: ***Tess of the d'Urbervilles*** (1891) and ***Jude, the Obscure*** (1895) conjoin features of the **regional novel**, the **social problem novel**, and **moral philosophical fiction** to offer sympathetic representations of working-class people's – the erring milkmaid's and the studious stonemason's – high hopes, momentary joys, and troubled journeys towards their tragic destinies.
- Hardy rated poetry over prose fiction, and was preoccupied in the last three decades of his life with a **rich variety of lyrical forms** – war poems, philosophical poems, dramatic monologues, ballads, satirical vignettes, and even a huge poetic drama in blank verse ***The Dynasts*** subtitled "an epic drama of the war with Napoleon" (1902, 1905, 1907) – published in seven volumes of poetry. A stunning corpus of more than a thousand poems provides a mansion one could live in forever, as one of his critics put it.

- In his eighties he secretly wrote a **biography of himself** for posthumous publication under the name of his widowed second wife. Following his death, his cremated remains were interred with national pomp in **Westminster Abbey**, while heart was buried in the churchyard of his native parish.

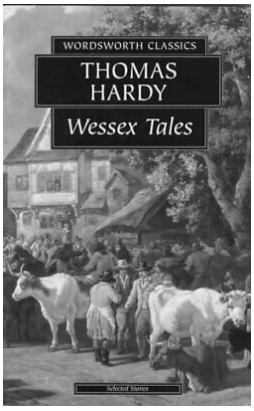
KEY TERMS IN THOMAS HARDY'S FICTION

REGIONAL NOVEL

Hardy was an outstanding practitioner of the regional novel, a genre of fiction that is set in a recognisable geographical location and describes the everyday life, social relations, customs, language, dialect, mental attitudes, and other aspects specific of the given region's culture. Stories

1. may focus on the relation of nature and its inhabitants,
2. may use landscape and climate for the characterisation of human agents, or
3. employ the local colours to reflect on larger existential philosophical dilemmas.

Nature and nurture are interconnected in so far as the environment is assumed to influence the life of the people living in it. **The environment is just as much topographical, as it is geographical, social, economic, political, cultural**, etc. Hence, the notion "region" also holds social-political connotations, and, as a result, the genre of regional novel tends to mingle with the **social problem novel**. Even conflicts and their resolution or tragic consequences seem somehow determined by the setting. Regional novelistic writings often focus on **rural regions** depicted in a sentimental, nostalgic, melancholic tone that reflects the author's familiarity and intimacy with the location.



Hardy created a setting for his regional novels in the **Wessex area**. This Southern, largely agricultural region of England was slow to emerge from the old rhythm of rural life and labour into the modern industrial world. Practically Hardy writes of an England that is on the brink of virtually disappearing: a more pagan, more primitive, more intuitive and sincere life cut off from the mainstream of national progress, and closer to Nature that is regarded both as mothering and hostile environment. Hardy's representation of the landscape and Nature changed over the years: he **moved from the pastoral to a more realistic depiction of rural English society**.

TEMPORALITY: TIMELESSNESS & HISTORICAL TRANSITION

Hardy's characters are often peasants from the Wessex region who live in a **timeless** symbiosis with the land that has changed little over the centuries. They inhabit an **atemporal, atavistic zone** that is about to be ruined by the emerging modernism's fake values dictated by higher social classes, the machine monsters, and dehumanising technological progress. Unaffected by the impetus of historical progress and the **unpredictably fast pace of modernisation**, the Wessex country folk's life in Hardy's novels is determined by the **cyclicality of seasons**, the regular rhythm of agricultural activities, the monotonous, inevitable toil of physical labour. Hence, Hardy's characters are often marked by an unillusionistic, accepting, stoic attitude to existence.

Hardy's **life and work spanned over two contrasting eras: Victorianism and Modernism**, which represent radically different value systems and worldviews. A sensitive, contemplative personality by nature he disliked changes, yet the transitional period he lived in was rich in traumatic life experiences enough for three generations. He was born just after Queen Victoria's rise to throne, when children were entertained by stories of veterans of the Napoleonic wars. He witnessed the time of industrial evolution, the collapse of traditional rural life, the rise of imperialism, and the historical cataclysm of First World War, and died just a decade before the eruption of the Second. His **tragic, sombre, agnostic worldview** was **shaped just as much by the Zeitgeist as his personal attitude**.

TRAGIC VISION OF LIFE

Hardy's novels are permeated by a fundamentally tragic, melancholic, stoic vision of life. Major recurring themes include:

- beauty destroyed,
- present shatters the past,
- blaming of the innocent,
- dignity of suffering,
- dark harshness of life, futile quest for happiness,
- brute sexual instincts, pure love doomed to fail,
- social prejudice (classism, sexism, racism),
- poverty, prostitution, rape, disease, filth,
- religious dogma, unjust laws, indifferent society, blind chance ruin lives

NATURALISM

Naturalism is a **subgenre of realistic writing** that lacks the supernatural, idealistic, or symbolical aspects of Romanticism, Surrealism, or the Fantastic. The aim is the artistic reproduction of believable everyday life, the truthful mirroring of reality as it is. Literary writings of this mode were **inspired by scientific discoveries of Darwinism** and depicted human behaviour as largely "influenced by nerves and blood," as one of the greatest naturalist writer, Émile Zola put it. Naturalist writing was a **forerunner of the psychological novel** in so far as it aimed to explore how the hereditary and the social environment determines one's character (balancing between nature and nurture, biologism and social determinism, corporeal drives and cultured mind).

AGNOSTICISM

- Critics agree that Hardy gradually moved from the Christian teachings of his boyhood to a growing **scepticism** in dogmatic religious beliefs sparked by scientific discoveries of **Darwinism**, the epistemological view of **Rationalism** (that regards reason as the chief source and test of knowledge), and his **quest for moral justice** that defined his enquiring mind.
- The religious motifs in his fiction reflect his personal **oscillation between faith versus doubt**, his divided feelings between an emotional attraction to the Church and a deepening tragic view of life, as well as an anxiety that conventional religious teachings are inadequate to cope with moral dilemmas of human existence or to justify the suffering of the innocent.
- His major novels display a growing bitterness: scepticism moves closer to **agnosticism**, the gradual questioning of a benevolent, anthropomorphic Deity, a growing **uncertainty about the knowability and the truth value of metaphysical claims such as the existence of God**, redemption and afterlife. As the idea of **humans' free will is challenged**, life becomes a futile quest for happiness; religion turns into a philosophical struggle with a transcendental entity.
- The Christian concept of the forgiving, loving (even vengeful but always man-faced) God the Father figure is replaced by pessimistic speculations about the **capricious unconscious will of the Universe** that remains largely indifferent towards the fate of mankind.

This sombre, absurd view of life is a **forerunner of modern existentialism**, and is akin with philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche agonised cry "God is dead." (Note: Hardy has a poem entitled "God's funeral")

→ READ Hardy's poem below.

→ THINK about the humanist alternative he offers in place of the Christian vision of afterlife. If not in Heaven, how can humans reach eternity? How do these ideas relate to Pantheism?

„Transformations"

Portion of this yew
Is a man my grandsire knew,
Bosomed here at its foot:
This branch may be his wife,
A ruddy human life
Now turned to a green shoot.
These grasses must be made
Of her who often prayed,
Last century, for repose;
And the fair girl long ago
Whom I often tried to know
May be entering this rose.

So, they are not underground,
But as nerves and veins abound
In the growths of upper air,
And they feel the sun and rain,
And the energy again
That made them what they were!

→ READ the final paragraph of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* below. Note how the narrator's tired, unimpassioned tone suggests his weariness with the unjust ways of the world. Tess' ancestors who implicitly caused her downfall (she left her family in search of her noble relatives) remain unaffected by her agony. Her tragedy lacks a cathartic quality, it seems just an ordinary part of human existence. She dies and life goes on as if nothing happened.

Tess, Chapter LIX

Justice was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Aeschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess. And the d'Urberville knights and dames slept on in their tombs unknowing. The two speechless gazers bent themselves down to the earth, as if in prayer, and remained there a long time, absolutely motionless: the flag continued to wave silently. As soon as they had strength they arose, joined hands again, and went on.

→ READ Hardy's confession below to learn more about decisive figures in his art and life.

"My pages show harmony of view with Charles Darwin, T H Huxley, Herbert Spencer, David Hume, John Stuart Mill and others"

MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Hardy was alternately described by biographers and critics as

- a reserved hermit and a vehement revolutionary,
- a realist with a sociographical zeal and a lyrical impressionist,
- a spiritual person and an agnostic unbeliever, challenged church doctrines, struggled with the idea of the divine, bordered on pessimist fatalism but used Biblical motifs in his art,
- an advocate of vanguardist artistic, philosophical ideas yet ready to make compromises.

These ambiguities also surfaced in the moral philosophical layers of his work. As a precursor of the modernist Existential(ist) Angst, he envisioned **humans as solitary beings victimised by the cold cruelty of society, blind chance, and the indifference of universe, finding only momentary consolation in Nature**.

Harold Bloom regards the philosopher **Schopenhauer**'s notion of "the will to live" and Romantic poet **Shelley**'s ideas of "visionary scepticism," "tragic sense of eros," and "shadow self" as Hardy's major inspirations. Modernist novelist DH Lawrence praised Hardy for

> setting behind the small action of his protagonists the terrific action of unfathomed nature; setting a smaller system of morality, the one grasped and formulated by the human consciousness within the vast, uncomprehended and incomprehensible morality of nature or of life itself, surpassing human consciousness.

- Hardy's protagonists **transgress the conventionally established human moral codes and in consequence are punished by the social system**. But the justice served does not feel right to the reader, and their fall seems tragic because their wrong choices result from their very human, very relatable imperfections.
- According to Northrop Frye's typology, Hardy's main theme is the principal topos of Western *tragedy*: the demonic ritual of a public punish-

ment, **the sacrifice of the hero** for the illusory cleansing of society. His characters, as Harold Bloom puts it, are "hungry for love, desperate for some company in the void of existence," but their desires gain no communal support and land them as **outsiders**. No matter how desperately they try to create a more just moral, political, religious code for themselves – as in the case of Tess – they are doomed to experience a **tragic fall**.

→ READ more about Hardy's life and art at the **Victorian Web** & **The British Library**

www.bl.uk/people/thomas-hardy
www.victorianweb.org/authors/hardy/index.html

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES. A PURE WOMAN FAITHFULLY PRESENTED (1891)

Tess of the D'Urbervilles. A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented initially appeared in a censored and serialised version in 1891 in the illustrated newspaper *The Graphic*. The novel received hostile reviews because it questioned Victorian sexual morals by its **compassionate portrayal of a fallen woman** and its disclosure of society's shortcomings: hypocrisy, unjust double standards, and a lack of empathy. (The negative criticism of the immorally portrayed themes of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and his following novel *Jude the Obscure* likely precipitated Hardy's long-contemplated move from prose to poetry.)

PLOT Tess is a simple, kind-hearted, beautiful peasant girl who wants to help her impoverished family by undertaking a job as a poultry keeper at the household of rich relatives. She is seduced and likely raped by Alec, the son of her employer. She gives birth to an illegitimate child she names Sorrow whom the priest refuses to baptise and bury. Years later, working as a milkmaid, she meets

Angel Clare, the son of a Reverend, they fall in love, and marry despite their class differences. But Angel abandons Tess when she confesses to him that she is no longer a virgin, blaming her for her corruption. While Angel is in Brazil, Tess accidentally meets Alec who has become a wandering preacher. Tempted by her charms again, he convinces her to become his mistress in return for the financial support of her family. When Angel returns to ask for his wife's forgiveness, it is too late. Troubled Tess thinks that the only way to settle accounts is to kill her seducer who ruined their life. She stabs him, and with Angel runs away to spend a few idyllic days in a county cottage on the run, before being arrested by the police while resting at Stonehenge. The novel ends with Angel and Tess's sister, Liza Lu watching the raising of the black flag that signals Tess's execution. They join hands, and walk away on their way.

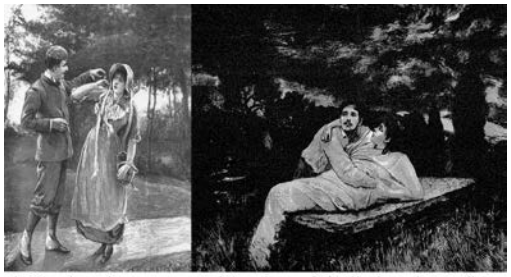
AN UNCONVENTIONAL HEROINE

Tess is an ultimately **paradoxical character**:

- an angelic fallen woman,
- a pure heart abused by a corrupted society,
- a peasant girl of noble ancestry, a working class May Dance Queen,
- both sensual **and** innocent *femme enfant* figure,
- a pagan Earth Goddess **and** a Madonna→ pagan sacrifice (Stonehenge) and St Theresa
- a sacrificial victim **and** a violent revengeful madwoman,
- a spectacular beauty **and** a desire to fade back invisibly into nature,
- a victim of cruel chance **and** of premeditated crime,
- a character marked by heartbreak, **and** physical labour, animal imagery,
- (tormented soul **and** body) → ultimately tragic figure
- a peasant destroyed by industrialisation **or** an educated rural workwoman destroyed by landed bourgeoisie (Alec), liberal idealism (Angel), Christian moralism (village),
- intimacy w. nature (milkmaid) and work w agricultural machinery (threshing machine)
- symbolises chastity (Artemis), fertility (Ceres), abduction to hell (Persephone), fall (Eve)

Tess is a sacrificial victim but she also gains empowerment in a variety complex ways.

- A "Wessex Eve" she is invested w primordial powers seen as possibly sinful by others.
- She survives her rape, her child's death, Angel's abandonment, Alex's re-appearance.
- She lives through a period of autonomy before she dies.
- Murdering Alec is her only available expression of autonomy → she gains liberty by choosing death, serving justice even at the price of her execution.
- She acts according to an **alternative morality** (challenging the notion of purity)
- She follows an **alternative logic** (serving justice at price of her own death)
- She acts in line with an **alternative law** (kills her abuser)
- She invents an **alternative religion** (baptizes her own child)



Alec, Tess and a strawberry: '..selecting a specially fine product of the "British Queen" variety, he stood up and held it by the stem to her mouth.'

Angel, Tess and a grave: [He] laid her down in the stone coffin at the ruined abbey ... "I would rather be dead and buried when the time comes for you to despise me, so that it may never be known to me that you despised me."

MORAL PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN *TESS*

- Tess is a victim of: **social prejudice**, human vice, cruel fate, and indifferent cosmic powers. She is destroyed by her two love interests, intruders into her environment, who represent **different modes of masculinities** (Alec the immoral villain, Angel the gentle, liberal humanist who yearns to work for the honour and glory of mankind), but both fail to appreciate her for who she is, and entrap her in the status of **sacrificial femininity**.

- Alec abuses her innocence and takes advantage of her psychic and financial vulnerability. Angel reduces her to an idealised abstraction by calling her "Daughter of Nature," "Demeter," "Artemis." Then he enacts the **double standards of Victorian morals**: after confessing his own premarital affair to Tess he condemns her when she admits in return her own past traumatic sexual experience. Sexual licentiousness is pardonable for men, but unforgiveable for women, and eventually culminating in victim blaming. (Tess is held responsible for men being attracted to her, because of her beauty she is seen as a temptress.)
- Hardy problematises his era's **dualistic understanding of femininity** that identifies a woman in terms of simplistic stereotypes either as "an angel in the house" (a virgin/mother) or a "fallen woman" (a whore).
- Hypocritical norms equate purity with innocence and ignorance, and are unable to make sense of Tess's character, who is **no longer a virgin but preserves her moral cleanliness**.
- In the novel's pessimistic universe, a **fatally corrupted world dooms the last remaining purity to be destroyed**, because it reminds us of our own impurity. It is the earthly peasant girl who teaches the learnt intellectual Angel a moral lesson, although at the cost of her death.

GENRES EVOKED IN *TESS*

- **Naturalist novel**: describes realistically the harshness of life; Tess is multiply marginalised: rural, poor, female
- **Regional novel**: set in rural England during the Long Depression of the 1870s
- **Sensation novel:** rape and revenge story, crime, death, sexuality, bigamy
- **Social problem novel**: explores how one's fate/ character are determined by social circumstances and hereditary conditions; problematises classism (Tess's harmony w the natural world is contrasted with the hypocritical, exploitative, superficial world of fake nobility); discloses the double standards of sexism and injustice of demonisation/idealisation of women
- **Philosophical novel**: notion of free will questioned, deterministic fatalism, struggle with god, questioning of idea of divine benevolence ("Where was Tess's guardian angel?"), destabilisation of traditional values (justice, love, faith, nobility, chastity), human being is just a puppet in the hands of fate/ blind chance?

- **Pre-cursor of psychological novel**: complicates conventional ideas on modesty and desire

THE GAZE IN *TESS*

Kaja Silverman highlights how the **narrator oscillates between different spectatorial roles** in the novel, alternately taking on the positions and perspectives of

a tourist	landscape painter	passerby	desiring man

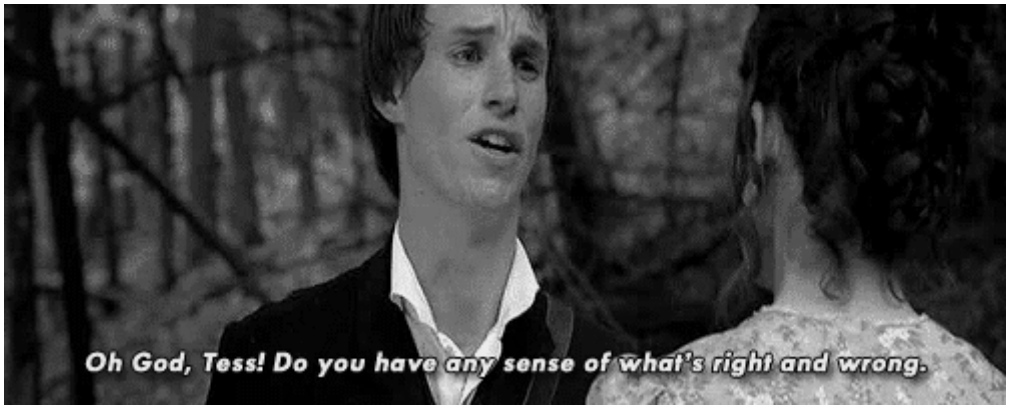
The so-called male gaze – often problematised by feminist theoreticians – reduces Tess to the status of an erotic object meant to satisfy masculine desires. Tess's only way to **escape this objectification is a kind of passive resistance**. She is curiously absent from crucial events of the story: the horse's death, her seduction by Alec, the night in The Chase, Angel's return, her capture at Stonehenge. On these traumatic occasions she seems to be not only dozing off, falling asleep, but also submerging in a sleep-like trance, a death-like quiescence, followed by a dream-like oblivion. By pretending not to where she is, she stimulates forgetfulness, and somehow **fades back into Nature** to escape from the culture that corrupts her life. She alienates herself from her body responsible for her downfall. This **self-induced disembodiment at the peak of psychic crisis** makes her to drift like a corpse upon a current, dissociated from its living will. Instead of female spectacularity she opts for female interiority. Fading back into Nature coincides with disidentification, the sacrificial loss of the ego, but the assimilation of the human figure into the natural background also brings relief, escape via blurring into nothingness, the totality of being. Hers is the fate of the classical tragic hero.

→ WATCH trailers of film adaptations of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

→ *Tess*, dir. Roman Polanski, 1979

→ *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, dir. Ian Sharp, 1998

→ *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, BBC mini series, 2008



→ EXERCISE:

→ THINK about how the speaking names carry a symbolical significance in Tess of the d'Urbervilles. Eg. Tess (St Theresa), Alec (Alexander the Great), Angel Clare (bright angel), Sorrow, etc.

→ How does the final scene in the BBC film adaptation of Tess, before the heroine's sacrifice at Stonehenge, revisit the themes of paralysing stasis, waking dream and troubled desiring pictures in Andrew Wyath's 1948 painting Christina's World?

HARDY'S NOVELS

Hardy's classification of his novels:

1. novels of characters and environment,
2. romances and fantasies,
3. novels of ingenuity.

1868	The Poor Man and the Lady	lost	unpublished first novel
1871	Desperate Remedies	sensation romance novel of ingenuity	bigamy, adultery, murder, suicide, quasi-gothic
1872	Under the Greenwood Tree: A Rural Painting of the Dutch School	1st Wessex novel prose idyll, novel of character/ environment	life of group of west gallery musicians
1872	A Pair of Blue Eyes	melodrama w cliffhangers romance	love triangle, beautiful Emma's dilemma bw boyish architect & older literary man
1874	Far from the Madding Crowd	Wessex novel, novel of character/environment	love, honour, betrayal, harsh reality of farming communities in rural England
1875	The Hand of Ethelberta	a comedy in chapters novel of ingenuity	humour, romance, happy ending, governess heroine
1878	The Return of the Native	sensation novel, novel of character/environment	tragic potential of romantic illusion, protagonists' failure to recognise opportunities to control their destinies
1880	The Trumpet Major	historical novel, romance	set in Weymouth during Napoleonic wars
1881	A Laodicean: The Castle of the De Stancys. A Story of Today	novel of ingenuity	people unable to make their mind up, torn bw possibilities, title: from Laodicean Church in Book of Revelations; who were neither hot nor cold
1882	Two on a Tower	romance	drama of oppositions and conflicts, male desire set against female constancy
1886	The Mayor of Casterbridge	psychological fiction	tragic (personal, economic) struggle bw two men

1887	The Woodlanders	a woodland story psychological fiction, novel of character/environment	disastrous impact of outside life on a secluded community in Dorset
1891	Tess of the d'Urbervilles	Wessex novel, naturalist, psychological novel, social problem novel, novel of character/environment	moralizing, sympathetic portrayal of working class, empathy expressed for fallen woman
1892	The Well-Beloved: A Sketch of Tempera-ment	Wessex novel romance	sculptor's search for ideal woman
1895	Jude the Obscure	Wessex novel, novel of character/environment, tragic Bildungsroman, New Woman novel	stonemason wants to become a scholar, is caught bw contrasted kinds of love, deadly war bw flesh and spirit, passion and intel-lect, aspirations and reali-ty, criticism of marriage, moralizing, sympathetic portrayal of working class

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH A QUIZ

https://forms.gle/daPRgPmkEGJvkzaB6

1.Thomas Hardy set most of his novels in

A. Essex
B. Sussex
C. Wessex
D. London

2. Select the claim that is NOT true of naturalism.

A. It is a subgenre of surrealistic writing.
B. It is a forerunner of the psychological novel.
C. It is inspired by scientific discoveries of Darwinism.
D. It aims at a truthful depiction of reality.

3. Far from the Madding Crowd, like most of Hardy's novels is set

A. in metropolitan London
B. in a farming community in rural England
C. in outer space
D. in medieval Scotland

4, Tess of the d'Urbervilles received hostile reviews on its publication because of

A. its tender portrayal of a homosexuality
B. its unusual epistolary narrative form
C. its realistic portrayal of children's death
D. its compassionate portrayal of the fallen woman

5. "Justice was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Aeschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess." This line from Tess of the d'Urbervilles encapsulates Hardy's view of God. It can be characterised as

A. conservative Protestantism
B. New Age polytheism
C. atheism
D. agnosticism
E. pantheism

6. The subtitle of Tess of the d'Urbervilles is

A. A Pure Woman's Fate
B. A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented
C. A Poor Woman Faithfully Presented
D. A Pure Woman of Wessex

7. How does Hardy describe Tess? (multiple good answers)

A. a Wessex Eve
B. a cunning nymph
C. a daughter of Nature
D. a demonic seductress
E. a water lily in a desert

8. Hardy classified his novels in 3 categories. Which was NOT one of them?

A. novels of characters and environment
B. novels of ingenuity
C. regional sensation novels
D. romances and fantasies

9. Which are Hardy's Wessex novels? (multiple good answers)

A. Great Expectations
B. Tess of the d'Urbervilles
C. Daughters of Wessex
D. Two on a Tower

E. Jude the Obscure
F. Desperate Remedies
G. Far from the Madding Crowd

10. Which site holds a special symbolical significance in Tess of the d'Urbervilles?

A. Shrine to Minerva
B. Goat's Hole
C. Tintern Abbey
D. Stonehenge
E. Giant's Causeway

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Unit 12
SYMBOLISM, SENSATION, ADVENTURE, AND HIGH FANTASY IN THE VICTORIAN NOVEL: FROM OSCAR WILDE TO BRAM STOKER

AIM OF THIS UNIT: The unit introduces the three movements formative of the late 19th century artistic views: Symbolism, Decadence, and Aestheticism. It demonstrates – through the example of Oscar Wilde's fiction – how the sophisticated symbolism of the decadent aestheticist agenda may fuse with the more popular entertainment mode of gothic fiction's pleasurable thrills. It also provides a brief overview of the Victorian era's most popular novelistic forms, including the sensation novel, the adventure novel, detective fiction, and fantastic fiction.

KEY FIGURES: Oscar Wilde, Bram Stoker, Robert Louis Stevenson, Wilkie Collins, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

RECOMMENDED READINGS: Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, The Happy Prince and Other Stories, Bram Stoker's Dracula, RL Stevenson's Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Hound of the Baskervilles

KEY WORDS & TOPICS: symbolism, aestheticism, art for art's sake, decadence, orientalism, epigram, dandy, double, degeneration, Faustian deal, mad scientist, shapeshifter, ekphrasis, "the love that dares not speak its name," penny dreadful, urban gothic, epistolary novel, uncanny, fear of degeneration, horror romance, sensation novel, Newgate novel, invasion fantasy, new woman, pseudo-sciences, unreliable narrator

SYMBOLISM, DECADENCE, AESTHETICISM

SYMBOLISM:

- was an artistic movement of the 2nd half of the 19th century.
- turned against realism by rejecting the naturalistic, mimetic representation of everyday reality.
- was more interested in the Ideal than the Ordinary.

- favoured spirituality, imagination, dreams, mysticism, other-worldliness, esoteric affinities, revived mythical themes.

Aubrey Beardsley's illustration to Oscar Wilde's Salome

- celebrated the prophetic might of imagination as a token of the escape from monotonous, mundane reality.
- was hostile to plain meanings, declamations, false sentimentality and matter-of-fact description.
- was fond of powerful visual imagery, stimulation of multiple sense impressions (synaesthesia), ambiguous associations, metaphorical, suggestive writing
- aimed to express indirectly Absolute Truths

- Symbols stand in for abstract ideas or emotions. They convey universal truths on complex levels of meanings which need a certain cultural background knowledge for their decoding that will inherently activate a network of associations, and hence fuse certainty (Truth/Ideal) with uncertainty (ambiguity, sense of evanescence).

DECADENCE

Félicien Rops.
Pornocrates, 1878

- The Decadent movement dates of the same period as Symbolism and is closely connected to it.
- Minor differences: while Symbolists were more interested in the explorations of dreams and ideals through metaphorical imagery, the Decadents were obsessed with morbid and taboo topics, including the darker side of sexuality, self-destructive passions, the sublime beauty of decay.
- The decadent artist's world weariness revived the Romantic moods of Byronic spleen and pleasurable thrills of the Gothic.

- ❖ Further characteristics include a general scepticism, delight in perversion, crude morbid humour, sacrilegious revelations.

The movements praise the superiority of human imagination over logical reasoning and natural laws. (This is another difference: Symbolism used natural imagery to transcend beyond banal reality of everyday existence while Decadents belittled nature in the name of the celebration of artistry and the excessive pursuit of unnatural delights.)

MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

1857	Charles Baudelaire. The Flowers of Evil (Les Fleurs du Mal)	poems deal with themes relating to decadence and eroticism (spleen and ideal, revolt, death, wine)
1873	Walter Pater. The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry	British essayist, stylist, art critic, influential on aestheticism: celebrates ideals, sensuous pleasure, cult of beauty
1884	Joris-Karl Huysmans. *Against Nature* (*A rebours*)	representative book of Parisian decadence: eccentric, reclusive, neurotic aesthete tries to retreat into artistic world of his creation, a catalogue of his musings on art, literature, painting, religion, and hyperaesthetic sensory experiences
1894-1897	The Yellow Book	British quarterly literary periodical associated with "impressionism, feminism, naturalism, dandyism, symbolism and classicism [which] all participate[d] in the politics of decadence in the 1890s," founder of a culture of scandal (→The Yellow Nineties)
1899	Arthur Symons. The Symbolist Movement in Literature	monograph that brings French symbolism to the attention of Anglo-American literary circles

→ READ

→ the digitalised version of *The Yellow Book*'s issues at the website of Heidelberg Bibliothek.

→ WATCH: virtual tour of Aubrey Beardsley exhibition at Tate Britain

→ LISTEN to Claude Debussy's symphonic poem Prelude to the *Afternoon of a Faun*, and *Claire de Lune* (Moonlight) examples of symbolism in music

AESTHETICISM

- was an intellectual and artistic movement more interested in aesthetic values and the **CULT OF BEAUTY** than socio-cultural critical messages or political ideology
- rejected moralising, didacticism, rationality, pragmatism, usefulness
- argued for the self-sufficiency of the artwork ("All art is quite useless"):
- embraced the idea of **ART FOR ART'S SAKE** (*l'art pour l'art*)
- fused w philosophies of **LIFE FOR ART'S SAKE** (the wish to turn one's life into art) and **SEX FOR SEX'S SAKE** (shameless hedonistic aspect of the cult of beauty)
- was largely influenced by Immanuel Kant's philosophy: the pure aesthetic experience = disinterested contemplation of an object that pleases for its own sake without any reference to reality or external ends of utility or morality
- shaped by elitism, irrationalism, Hellenistic ideals, orientalism,
- largely affected decorative arts, arts and crafts movement, **dandy** fashion, ornamental aesthetics (feathers, flowers, shells)
- suggested rather than stated, overflows with sensuality, symbols, **synesthetic** effects

OSCAR WILDE (1854–1900)

AESTHETE

Oscar Wilde was an Irish poet, playwright and novelist. He became acquainted with aestheticism during his university studies (at Trinity College Dublin and Oxford) through his tutors John Ruskin and Walter Pater, and his love for Neo-Platonism. After moving to London, Wilde became one of the most popular authors of his times, a real celebrity figure and fashion icon. He embraced the idea of Art for Art's Sake, the anti-utilitarian, non-mimetic cult of beauty.

DANDY

As a dandy figure Wilde cultivated the **idea of beauty in his own person**: a stylised physical appearance, a refined language, cynical witticisms, and leisurely hobbies. His idea was to turn Life into Art via a **cult of the self**. For the dandy, fashion, clothing and vestimentary items held the potential to communicate political, social-critical, aesthetic messages. The legendary **green carnation** Wilde wore in his buttonhole, and urged young followers to decorate their vests with, represented one of his favourite ideas: that **Nature should imitate Art**, and not the reverse, and artists should embrace unnatural, decadent passions. Some cultural historians suggest that the green carnation was a secret code, an identificatory marker used by gay men ('inverts' as they were referred to) at a time when **same-sex desire** was illegal and punishable by law.

WRITER

Throughout the 1890s Wilde earned literary fame through a variety of genres.

His collection of **fairy tales**, *The Happy Prince and Other Stories* (1888) contained five children's stories rich in religious allegory, moral didacticism, and

aestheticist, symbolical layers of meaning, as well as gay sub-textual significations.

He combined aesthetic details with social themes in his **dramas**. His **tragedy** ***Salome*** (1891) written in French told the story of the Biblical evil enchantress femme fatale figure who asked for the head of John the Baptist in return for her dance of seven veils. The play was never shown on the English stage because of its immoral subject matter. His **society comedies** including ***An Ideal Husband*** (1895) and ***The Importance of Being Earnest*** subtitled "A Trivial Comedy for Serious People" (1895) mocked Victorian social mores and manners (hypocrisy, the marriage market, maintaining fictitious **alterego** personas in the country and the city to escape burdensome social obligations; discrepancies between public and private honours and corruptions). His comedies abound in **verbal fencing games**; the comic effect arises from the characters trying to outsmart each other with **witticism**: clever, often ironic remarks, punning, even bordering on language games. Wilde was famous for his wit, his bon-mots or **epigrams** – brief, interesting, memorable, surprising or satirical statements -- are often quoted and cherished for their timeless comic quality.

some of OSCAR WILDE's WITTICISMS

"The world is a stage, but the play is badly cast."

"I can resist anything but temptation."

"Always forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them so much."

"Some cause happiness wherever they go; others whenever they go."

"The only thing to do with good advice is pass it on. It is never any use to oneself."

"Anyone who lives within their means suffers from a lack of imagination."

"True friends stab you in the front."

"Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months."

"There is only one thing worse in life than being talked about, and that is not being talked about."

"A gentleman is one who never hurts anyone's feelings unintentionally."

"My own business always bores me to death; I prefer other people's."

"I like men who have a future and women who have a past."

"Work is the curse of the drinking classes."

"Quotation is a serviceable substitute for wit."

In his non-fiction essays, like ***The Soul of a Man under Socialism*** *(1891)* he combined his aesthetical critical views on art with libertarian socialist ideas. He argued that charity rooted in sentimentalism is a waste of time that sustains the capitalist system. Instead of altruistic virtues he urged more radical gestures "to reconstruct society on such a basis that poverty will be impossible."

His only novel ***The Picture of Dorian Gray*** **(1890)** revisited **Gothic fantasy** themes of the double, the Faustian deal, the cult and the corruption of beauty. The title character, as a genuine Narcissus figure, becomes aware of his own beauty and realises that it must fade when he faces his portrait painted by Basil Hallward, an artist infatuated with his charms. Dorian –influenced by the hedonistic philosophy of art lover dandy Lord Henry Wotton – expresses his desire to sell his soul in return for eternal youth and beauty, wishing that the picture would age and decay in place of him. His wish is miraculously granted: he pursues an immoral, libertine life full of vanity, debauchery, and crimes, and all his evil deeds leave their imprint on the picture rather than him. In the end, when he wants to destroy the portrait as an evidence of his sinfulness, artwork and living being exchange places. The servants entering the room find lying on the floor an unknown withered old man stabbed in the heart, and a magnificent painting of an irresistible youth restored to its former beauty.

→ WATCH cinematic adaptations of the novel *DORIAN GRAY* (2009) and *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY* (1945)

The novel embraced the tenets of **aestheticism** while studying the relation of beauty and the evil from a moral, philosophical, and artistic perspective. In an **ekphrastic** narrative, one form of art describes another: the verbal description of a visual artwork stimulates an intermedial dynamics. The point of Dorian's Faustian deal is that he exchanges mortality for vanity, strangely confusing the invisible (his corrupted soul and secret crimes hidden on the painting) with the spectacular (his 'false' beauty attracts all eyes.) In the 1891 revised edition, the

preface to the novel contends that "the artist is the creator of beautiful things;" it denies the distinction between moral and immoral book and prefers value judgment based on the good or bad literary qualities; and concludes that "all Art is quite useless."

According to Dorian's new hedonism, the only things worth in life are beauty and sensual satisfaction. Yet this "Life for Art's sake" agenda raises **moral philosophical, ethical questions**: What is the meaning of life if you are a sinner? Is there a redemption? Can crime escape punishment? Wilde offers a vivid, picturesque description of the Victorian underworld, the corrupted delights of the privileged elite, **forbidden pleasures** of opium dens, public houses, lives distorted by ennui, vanity, hypocrisy, and manipulative games. The novel had a real **shock value**: it was coined "a poisonous book with odours of moral, spiritual putrefaction," and was deemed controversial for violating the laws guarding public morality.

Wilde claimed that the novel depicts **a triple self-portrait** in which all his identity facets were fused: Narcissus, the immaculate youth + the artist aesthete + the witty dandy. As he put it: "Basil Hallward is what I think I am, Lord Henry is what the world thinks me, Dorian is what I would like to be—in other ages, perhaps."

„This portrait would be to him the most magical of mirrors. As it had revealed to him his own body so it would reveal to him his own soul… he would keep the glamour of his boyhood. Not one blossom of his loveliness would ever fade. Not one pulse of his life would ever weaken. Like the gods of the Greeks…" (Wilde, 136).

In 1895 Wilde was prosecuted with charges of "sodomy" and "acts of gross indecency," and after a humiliating trial that became a celebrity scandal of the time. When cross examined at court he spoke eloquently of "the love that dares not speak its name," yet his statement was counter-productive in so far as it served to reinforces charges of homosexual behaviour.

While in prison, he wrote "**The Ballad of Reading Gaol**" (1897) in which he identifies symbolically with all the prisoners who share the common burden of brutal punishment. The proletarian ballad form was meant to address his kind, the criminal classes. In "**De profundis**" (1987), a poetic letter addressed to his

lover poet Lord Alfred Douglas "Bosie," his spiritual journey through trials and his identification with Jesus Christ as an individual romantic artist offered a counterpoint to his former hedonistic lifestyle and philosophy of pleasure. He died alone and deserted in Paris, and was buried in Père Lachaise cemetery where his grave is still a pilgrimage site of his readers.

Charles Gill *(prosecutor): What is "the love that dare not speak its name"?*

Oscar Wilde *(defence): "The love that dare not speak its name" in this century is such a great affection of an elder for a younger man as there was between David and Jonathan, such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy, and such as you find in the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare. It is that deep spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect. It dictates and pervades great works of art, like those of Shakespeare and Michelangelo, and those two letters of mine, such as they are. It is in this century misunderstood, so much misunderstood that it may be described as "the love that dare not speak its name," and on that account of it I am placed where I am now. It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it. It is intellectual, and it repeatedly exists between an older and a younger man, when the older man has intellect, and the younger man has all the joy, hope and glamour of life before him. That it should be so, the world does not understand. The world mocks at it, and sometimes puts one in the pillory for it.*

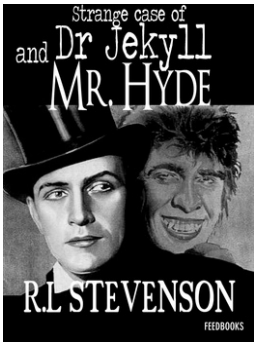
→ WATCH A BIOGRAPHICAL FILM ***WILDE*** (DIR. BRIAN GILBERT, 1997)

GOTHIC FANTASY

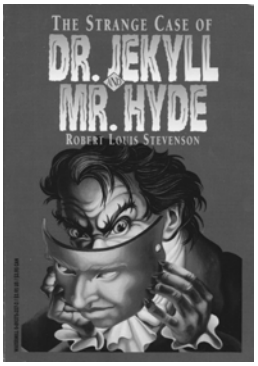
Gothic tropes used in 18th century frightening fiction – Ann Radcliff's *Mysteries of Udolpho* or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* – were interwoven in Victorian fantasy novels. These tropes included **psychological and physical terror**, encounters with mysterious or supernatural phenomena, the fear of insanity, hereditary curses, invasive other worldly powers, doublings, mad scientists, monstrous shapeshifters, evil enchantresses. Gothic components were often transferred into an urban, modern setting. (Think of the gloomy, melodramatic atmospheres of many of Dickens' novels.) Hence the **uncanny** effect was heightened

through the combination of the familiar (recognisable London setting) and the unfamiliar (monstrosity invading homely spaces). Shilling shockers, penny dreadfuls, "fine bogey tales" often referred to as crawlers enjoyed a tremendous popularity. A growing number of readers were avid fans of these sensational tales of supernatural, scary incidents which were designed to produce **pleasurable chills** through the fictionalisation of the **era's anxieties**.

R.L. STEVENSON: THE STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE (1886)



- *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, set in a recognisable yet eerie version of present day London, is an **urban gothic** novel that explores the strange, shameful shadow world within the heart of a civilised metropolis.
- The novella by the Scottish author can be interpreted within the framework of a variety of genres, religious allegory, fable, detective fiction, sensation novel, Doppelgänger literature, Scottish devil tales, and gothic novel.
- The **ambiguity** – a trademark feature of the genre responsible for causing cognitive dissonance & affective confusion in the reader – is already present in the **title**. While "strange" refers to unusual, surprising, and incomprehensible, the word "case" has more down-to-earth legal, medical, rational connotations.



- The protagonist embodies the stock character of the **overreacher mad scientist** who aims to reach beyond the boundaries of human knowledge and usurp divine privileges of creation with the help of morally dubious scientific technological discoveries. Dr Jekyll is pursuing experiments on himself in his secret laboratory, behind the blue door of his London domicile. As a doctor he enjoys a prestigious, respected social position but under the influence of a potion he creates and tests on himself, his inner demons are released and he is transformed into the evil, bestial, remorseless, monstrously hideous creature.

- The **double/doppelganger** figure – the clandestine bestial self that is hiding within an intelligent, respected doctor – illustrates the duplicity of the human being. Jekyll and Hyde's **pair fuses in one** the positionalities of physician and patient, abnormal hysteric and skilled health-care professional, corrupted criminal and respectable citizen.
- The **city and society are also doubled** into a lighter & darker version.
- Hyde's "troglodytic," "ape-like," "hardly human" figure represent the **fear of Darwinian degeneration** and the anxieties related to Evolutionary theory's contention that humankind descends from lesser species. Hyde's looks match Victorian criminologist Lombroso's depiction of the atavistic criminal type.
- Doublings stage the **unspeakable horror of the other taking over the self-same**. It is all the more disturbing since Jekyll's horrific looks have an indescribable quality: "There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable." His air of deformity bears an unnameable monstrosity, a **"je ne sais quoi"** quality. His sight – and the recognition that a murderous beast exists within a respectable scientist – contributes to the premature death of Dr Lanyon.
- The novella can be interpreted as a **cautionary tale** warning readers that one should **never trust appearances**. The aura of **suspicion** permeates the entire text. Utterson is a **strange detective** because he is a man of reason but he does not work to reveal a crime and serve justice, but to cover it, to save the reputation of his friend, Dr Jekyll, and assists him in keeping secret his sins. His behaviour illustrates the **hypocrisy of bourgeoisie** and the **uncanniness of pretence**. Speculations concerning the curious relationship of Jekyll and Hyde suspect a hideous, unspeakable sin/ crime (an illegitimate son? a homosexual lover? a dishonest business partner?) for which Utterson believes Jekyll is being blackmailed.
- The story abounds in mysterious incidents and ominous signs, but – in line with the sensation novel tradition – it aims at **authenticity**.

BRAM STOKER: *DRACULA* (1897)

- **Bram Stoker's *Dracula*** combines Gothic **horror romance** and the **invasion fantasy** genre in the most popular vampire story of the Victorian era. Count Dracula, endowed with supernatural powers and diabolical ambition, moves from Transylvania to England so that he may find new blood and spread the undead curse. He is fought by Dr Van Helsing and a group of monster hunters.

- Literary predecessors to the novel include **Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*** (about a lesbian vampire) and **Dr Polidori's *The Vampyre*** (authored by Lord Byron's secretary at the same horror fiction writing competition where Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*).

- Dracula is a highly **ambiguous** figure, a **metamorphic shapeshifter**: he oscillates between incompatible states and **breaks boundaries** between life and death, humanity and animal bestiality (he can turn into bat, rat, wolf), civilisation and barbarism, reason and madness, home and abroad, reason and madness. A complicated creature, the vampire is both **horrifying and fascinating**; a deadly predator with an irresistible erotic lure; "a repellent blood-sucking creature crawling from the grave, and a strangely alluring embodiment of nocturnal glamour and potent sexuality."

- The vampire embodies the **anxieties haunting 19th century society bourgeois frame of mind**: fears of immigration, sexual promiscuity, moral degeneration, sexual licentiousness, venereal disease (syphilis also referred to as the French disease), new formations of femininity and masculinity (the New Woman, the dandy, homosexual decadence).
- Dracula represents **ultimate otherness**: ethnic, genetic, moral, religious, gender difference. He can also be interpreted as an inverted, profane Christ figure if we think of the symbolical significance of blood in the story. He sucks the blood of his victims, but by making them drink from his own blood, he can also transform them into vampires.
- The **vampire hunters** – Dutch professor, Dr Van Helsing, "a philosopher and metaphysician, and one of the most advanced scientists of his day," lawyer Jonathan Harker, and psychiatrist John Stewart, among others – mostly use rational means to defeat the unknowable supernatural beast. However, the variety of the weapons they use illustrate the **co-existing conflicting Victorian belief systems**. They fight the vampire with a combination of cross/ holy water, garlic, and blood transfusions: this shows how religious, superstitious, and scientific views of paranormal powers converge.
- Dracula's victims, Lucy and Mina represent mirror images/ doubles of each other as embodiments of **opposing stereotypes of Victorian femininity**. Lucy falls under Dracula's spell, and becomes a vampire, a horrid beast who feeds on children's blood, a dark grotesque alter ego of the mother ideal, who is killed by a stake driven into her heart. Schoolmistress, smart, virginal Mina preserves her virtues despite her suffering at the vampire's hands. She stays alive, marries, and becomes a mother in the end.
- The credibility of this fantastic story is enhanced by the **epistolary form**, the letters, diaries, newspaper cuttings, and ship logs nested within the narrative.
- The ending shows how **cultural memory** works, and how societies commemorate traumatic events: as the vampire hunt is retold as a story by the survivors, the gothic horror is tamed into **adventure story**.

SENSATION NOVEL

- The *Sensation novel* genre reached the peak of its popularity in the 1860s–1870s' Britain.

- Its literary predecessors were the **melodrama** (fusing romance w dramatic action), **Newgate novels** (glamorised biographies of famous criminals), **crime mysteries**, and **gothic fiction**
- "the quintessential novel with a secret," traces a mystery that must be solved by the reader
- "complicated, mysterious plots, involving crime, bigamy, adultery, arson, & arsenic" (Pykett)
- **Themes**: loss of identity (common social anxiety), adultery, theft, kidnapping, insanity, bigamy, forgery, seduction, murder, vengeance
- **Leitmotifs**: disclose hypocrisy of society, misdirected letters, romantic triangles, drugs, potions, coincidences, suspense, "feeds on fear that one's respectable neighbour might be concealing an awful secret"
- **Stock characters**: dangerous beauty adept at disguise and deception, endangered virgins, aristocratic villains, madmen
- **Embodied reading experience**: design to grip, shock, and haunt the reader: "extremely provocative of that sensation in the palate and throat which is a premonitory symptom of nausea.„" "preaches to the nerves instead of judgment," according to the satirists of *Punch* humour magazine, was conceived for 'Harrowing the Mind, Making the Flesh Creep, Causing the Hair to Stand on End, Giving Shocks to the Nervous System, Destroying Conventional Moralities, and generally Unfitting the Public for the Prosaic Avocations of Life'
- **Reasons of genre's popularity**: notorious trials (Poisoner Palmer, Jack the Ripper), tabloid journalism, reforms in divorce procedures, public education, increase of journals and readers, constitutes counterpoint to domestic novels and conduct books (safety valve, a release of psychic energies necessary for repression by well-behaved, self-disciplining bourgeoisie), escapism from monotony of the age
- Heavily **criticised** for discussion of improper, taboo topics: "called into existence to supply the cravings of a diseased appetite," novels were "creeping upwards from the gutter into the drawing room."


Most popular texts:

Wilkie Collins: ***The Woman in White*** (1860): detective mystery, Gothic horror, psychological realism, secrets, mistaken identities, surprise revelations, amnesia, locked rooms, asylums, an unorthodox villain, damsel in distress

Wilkie Collins: ***The Moonstone*** (1868): mystical, supernatural, crime fiction, horror, romance, the theft of an enormous diamond originally stolen from an Indian shrine

Charles Dickens. ***The Mystery of Edwin Drood*** (1870): final, unfinished novel: mysterious disappearance of opium addict cantor choir master

Georges du Maurier. ***Trilby*** (1896): Paris bohemian setting, tone-deaf working class girl hypnotised by demonic musician Svengali becomes a diva, a talented singer performing in a trance-like state, launches fashion trend Trilby-mania, inspired *Phantom of the Opera*

Typical sensation novel quote:
"In one moment, every drop of blood in my body was brought to a stop by the touch of a hand laid lightly and suddenly on my shoulder from behind me. I turned on the instant, with my fingers tightening round the handle of my stick. There, in the middle of the broad, bright high-road – there, as if it had that moment sprung out of the earth or dropped from the heaven – stood the figure of a solitary woman, dressed from head to foot in white garments, her face bent in grave inquiry on mine, her hand pointing to the dark cloud over London, as I faced her. I was far too seriously startled by the suddenness with which this extraordinary apparition stood before me, in the dead of night and in that lonely place, to ask what she wanted. The strange woman spoke first. 'Is that the road to London?'" (Collins: The Woman in White)

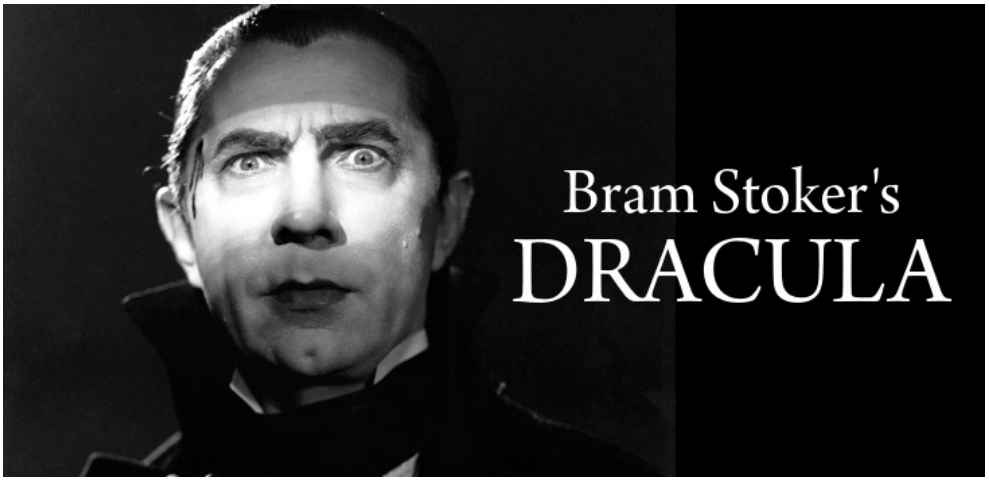
→ CHECK The British Library's website to learn more on (http://explore.bl.uk)
- the sensation novel
- the rise of detective fiction
- Dracula & its critical discussion
- Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde & its critical discussion
- Dorian Gray

DETECTIVE FICTION

Detective fiction centres on the investigation of a crime case or a mystery. The early fictional detectives in English literature include **Edgar Allan Poe**'s eccentric and brilliant **Dupin** whose name is a pun on duping, deception (he features in three stories "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Roget," "The Purloined Letter," (1841–1846), followed by the Charles Dickens' **Bucket** in *Bleak House* (1852–1853) and Wilkie Collins' **Cuff** in *The Moonstone* (1868), and culminating in the appearance of **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**'s **Sherlock Holmes** in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887).

Between 1887–1927 Conan Doyle wrote 4 novels, 56 stories about Sherlock Holmes, the London-based brilliant consulting detective with abilities bordering on the fantastic (astute observation, deductive reasoning, forensic skills) which aid him in solving difficult cases). Holmes is a scientific detective, a man of reason and technology, as well as a gentleman, the epitome of Victorian imperial values. Most of the stories are narrated by Dr John H Watson Holmes's sidekick friend and biographer, who assists him during his investigations, and often stays with him at 221 Baker Street, London, where many of the stories begin. The famous line, "It's elementary my dear Watson." was never actually said by Holmes in any of the novels, but it reappears in numerous film adaptations as Holmes is explaining the deductions he made to his assistant. Conan Doyle tried to kill Sherlock Holmes in the Reichenbach Falls episode in his fight with Professor Moriarty, but had to revive him because of public demand.

→ VISUAL EXTRAS
→ WATCH Bram Stoker's Dracula film, directed by Francis Ford Coppola, 1992
→ WATCH Dracula directed by Tod Browning, starring Bela Lugosi, 1931
→ WATCH CBC film adaptation of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde
→ WATCH BBC adaptation of Sherlock Holmes



→ COMPARE the screenshot from Coppola's Dracula film with Fuseli's Nightmare picture. Think about why Coppola pays tribute to the Gothic painting in his cinematic portrayal of the monstrous seducer. How is the Gothic revived and modified in Victorian fantasy?

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH A QUIZ

https://forms.gle/CKoCm4KM4Z9DqMgB9

1. Pick the statement that is NOT true.

   A. Symbolism turned against realism.
   B. Symbolism was more interested in the Ideal than the Ordinary.
   C. Symbolism condemned imaginativeness as a moral flaw.
   D. Symbolism was fond of powerful visual imagery

2. What is a major difference between Symbolism and the Decadent movement?

   A. Symbolism used natural imagery to transcend banal reality while Decadents belittled nature in the name of artistry
   B. Decadents used natural imagery to transcend banal reality while Symbolism belittled nature in the name of artistry
   C. Symbolism used realistic imagery to resist the unreliability of dreams while Decadents belittled realism in the name of artistry
   D. There were no differences between Symbolism and Decadence.

3. Symbolism was an intellectual and artistic movement interested in

   A. the cult of signs
   B. the cult of the child
   C. the cult of duty
   D. the cult of beauty

4. The moral philosophical question tackled by Dorian Gray is

   A. Is free will real or just an illusion?
   B. What is the meaning of life if you are a sinner?
   C. How long will you be remembered after you die?
   D. Is suffering a necessary part of the human condition?

5. Why was Oscar Wilde imprisoned?

   A. arson
   B. forgery
   C. homosexuality
   D. plagiarism
   E. murder

6. Why is Dorian Gray similar to Mr Hyde?

   A. They are both decadent artists.
   B. They are both mad scientists.
   C. They are both embodying the bourgeois dream of social mobility.
   D. They are both double figures.

7. Ekphrasis means

A. a rhetorical device that offers a verbal description of a visual artwork.
B. a rhetorical device that makes an understatement by using a negative to emphasise a positive
C. a rhetorical device that compares two things by stating one is the other
D. a rhetorical device that describes one sense impression in terms of another

8. What are the 19th century anxieties the figure of the vampire embodies? (multiple answers are possible)

A. fear of immigration
B. fear of moral degeneration
C. fear of nuclear radiation
D. fear of economic crisis
E. fear of sexually transmitted diseases
F. fear of cholera

9. Mark the one genre that is not a predecessor of the sensation novel.

A. the Newgate novel
B. melodrama
C. historical horror
D. crime mystery
E. Gothic fiction

10. 221B Baker Street is the address of

A. Miss Marple
B. Detective Dupin
C. Sherlock Holmes
D. Conan Doyle

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Unit 13
VICTORIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE FOR ALL AGES

AIM OF THIS UNIT: The unit explores the changing notions of childhood and the significance of children's literature in the Victorian era through a brief overview of a variety of subgenres ranging from nonsense fantasy through revisionary Christian myth to evolutionary fairy tale.

KEY FIGURES: Lewis Carroll, George McDonald, Charles Kingsley, RL Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, John Ruskin

COMPULSORY READING: Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

KEY WORDS & TOPICS: cult of the child, literary nonsense, portal quest fantasy, boys' adventure story, scientific fairy tale, religious fantasy

VICTORIAN PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDHOOD

Millais. Bubbles

While the previous era's religious **Puritan beliefs posited childhood as a perilous**, ignorant, bestial period of the humankind born sinful as a result of the Biblical Fall, the **Victorians regarded children as innocent** beings celebrated for their **freedom, creativity, and inherent goodness.** The philosopher **Rousseau**'s ideas on children's natural goodness (that should be allowed to develop freely towards its fullest potential, educationally and morally) and the **Romantic poets'** idealisation of **untamed infantile imagination, spiritual sensitivity, and instinctive affinity with Nature** were largely influential of Victorian notions of childhood. For the 19th century bourgeoisie children represented **hope, free-thinking, and purity**. For most artists of the times, childhood was a cherished memory, a lost Edenic phase **nostalgically yearned** for throughout one's entire life.

The cult of childhood had its odd **classist** aspects: **children of the poor** had to work from a very young age under miserable conditions to help their families, and a stunning number of street children roamed the streets of London struggling for survival.

Millais. Cherry Ripe

Poor children were often portrayed sentimentally in Victorian art as **martyrs, sacrificial victims** of civilisation, too good for this world, who were rewarded for their kindness in Heaven. (see Andersen's Little Match Girl) Further clichés of fictional representation of children were often **gendered**: girlishness meant the **idealised innocence** of mysterious, angelic, asexual, aerial beings (see Ruskin's *Of Queen's Gardens*), while boys were often associated with the character of the **good bad child**, the **orphan ingénue**, criminalised by its social circumstances (see Dickens' Artful Dodger). Even middle-class youngsters were strictly disciplined by **codes of politeness** of conduct books advising that "children should be seen not heard in the company of adults." Still, children were very much in the focus of attention both as symbolical, metaphorical entities representing adults' abstract ideals and as embodied subjects with individual lived experiences.

It was a time when **public schools**, **children's journals and literary products**, and the **toy industry** began to rise. Adults felt a responsibility to educate and entertain the succeeding generation, beholders of their future, embodying the promise of social mobility, too. From the 1830s several laws and slowly progressing reforms were introduced to protect the wellbeing of children at work, school, and home.

Childhood was regarded as a period of dependence and development in need of protection and surveillance, as a transient state of worshipped and other worldly innocence. Contemplating the pure simplicity of children offered a healthy corrective to the scepticism of modern life. The introduction of Darwin's evolutionary theory gave rise to religious scepticism, so some cultural critics suggest that for the Victorians the child replaced God as an object of worship.

VICTORIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

The Victorian era is commonly referred to as the **golden age** of children's literature. Due to a national education reform, a **large new readership** emerged that demanded less didactic and more entertainment contents, as well as believable child characters they could identify with. Children's literature prospered in a rich variety of subgenres. Some of these books were initially not designed for children but because of their featuring child protagonists and their tracing coming-of-age narratives, they later came to be canonised as juvenile literature (Eg. Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*) Others were originally in-

tended for a specific child muse and/or child-like readers of all ages, but because of their complex layers of meaning – which combined social criticism, metafictional commentaries, and voicing of specifically Victorian cultural anxieties – they became popular among adult readers, mature artistic repurposings, and scholarly analysis. (Eg. the surrealists' obsession with Lewis Carroll's Alice books). Many had **dual audiences** in mind from the beginnings (Eg Cristina Rossetti's "Goblin Market"). The rich diversity is Victorian children's literature is illustrated by the chart below.

Some popular subgenres of Victorian children's literature

Boarding school novel (Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School-days* (1857))
Social problem novel/Bildungsroman 1st targeting adult readers (Dickens' *Oliver Twist*)
Adventure novel (RL Stevenson's *Treasure Island*)
Revived fairy-tale tradition (Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*)
Animal tales (Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, Aesop's fables illustrated by Sir John Tenniel)
Nonsense fantasy (Edward Lear's limericks, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland)*
Scientific /evolutionary fantasy (Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies*)
Christian, moralizing tale (John Ruskin's "The King of the Golden River")
Sentimental didactic tales (Dinah Mullock Craig's *The little lame prince and his travelling cloak*)
Symbolical fairy-tale fantasy (George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin*)
Nursery rhymes, lullabies
Children's magazines and periodicals (Merry and Wise: a Magazine for Young People, Little Folks)

NONSENSE FAIRY-TALE FANTASY

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865) authored by Lewis Carroll (pen-name of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) is a unique text because it is one of the first non-didactic, non-moralizing pieces of children's literature that employed wordplay, puns, and riddles to amuse children instead of educating them. It playfully invited child readers to envision impossibilities of a topsy-turvy world and dare to "think for themselves."

- The story was **initially improvised as an oral narrative** on 1862 July the 4th by Dodgson – a professor of mathematics at Oxford University – at a rowing trip to entertain his child friends, the daughters of the dean of Christ Church College Oxford: Lorina, Edith, and Alice Liddell. Alice was Carroll's favourite "child friend." July the 4th is still celebrated over the UK as "Alice Day."

- The book and its sequel, ***Through the Looking Glass and what Alice Found There*** (1872) are **portal quest fantasies**: the little heroine enters the curious world of the fantasy realms through openings – a rabbit hole, then a mirror – which connect and separate each fantasy realm from the mundane consensus reality without allowing magic to leak over into everyday ordinary existence.

- Talking animals, magical shapeshiftings, and enchanted journey themes **evoke the fairy tale genre**, but the stories are **closer to anti-tales** as they lack moral guidelines, good/bad oppositions, magic helpers, the conventional happily ever after scenario.

- This pair of **girl's adventure stories celebrated infantile imagination**. The magical realms were brought into being in Alice's dreams. (The **episodic structure** of the tales resonated with the associative **illogic of dreams** and made the stories popular among surrealist artists

of the 1920s.) Alice hopes (and in the end her sister confirms) that after waking up and returning to reality from this curious journey, **she will grow up to be a storyteller**, who will entertain children of future generations with tales of her Wonderland adventures.

- The books are **ludic narratives**. Although the Cheshire Cat claims that "We are all mad here." chaos coexists with rules: the stories' structural organising principles are **cards and chess games**. Several other playful activities feature in the text (caucus race, Queen's croquet game, lobster quadrille, hide-and-seek, origami). The oral quality of the **tales enhance interactivity** by addressing readers to playfully invite them to take part in the construction and deconstruction of meanings.
- The perplexing, topsy-turvy worlds of Wonderland and Looking Glass realm hold a **humorous carnivalesque** quality that performs **social-cultural criticism** by poking fun of bourgeois social conventions and codes of conduct (the Mad Tea Party is a parodic version of the ceremonious British 5 o'clock tea, nonsensical conversations ridicule the superficial small talk of Victorian drawing rooms, the croquet game played with flamingos as mallets and hedgehogs as balls is an absurd replica of popular 19th century sports activities).
- The poems embedded in the novels' prose narrative are **parodies of well-known didactic poems** taught at schools. ("How does the little crocodile?" mocks "How does the little busy bee?": the diligent bee praised for its hard work in the original is turned into an aggressive, rebellious, little beast who is not held responsible for his wrongdoings.)
- The stories combine black humour and death jokes with nonsensical laughter for laughter's sake.
- The **body horror** involved in Alice's unpredictable shrinkings and growings is counterpointed by her **innocent, empathic attitude** to the oddities she comes across, her tolerantly getting used to impossibilities in a delightfully/disturbingly curious realm.
- **Metamorphosis** is a major leitmotif of the text.
- The books fulfil an **egalitarian agenda** by unsettling hierarchies. The Red Queen obsessed with the beheading of her subjects ("Off with their head!") pokes fun of the monarchy's tyrannical authoritarian government. The **subversion of conventional modes of meaning formation** by polysemic nonsensical word-games challenges adult wisdom. Alice is mocked by adult figures but she is eventually gifted with the potential to become a Queen.

- The Alice tales embrace the paradoxical genre of a **science fantasy in an age of epistemological crisis**, fictionalizing anxieties related to Darwin's emerging evolutionary theory, and new technological inventions such as photography or the railways.
- They **mingle real life references with mathematical abstraction and pure fabulation**: a private story to a particular child is full of public allusions to life at Oxford University & Victorian Britain.
- The Alice tales belong to the genre of **literary nonsense** fantasies. **Language games** challenge common sense, and toy with the elusiveness of meanings, they celebrate polysemy and ambiguity. Like Alice facing the mirror-written nonsense poem "Jabberwocky," readers recognise that "language is taking place but there is something wrong with it." Literary nonsense places sound over sense, and foregrounds the vocal, acoustic, **sonoric, transverbal qualities of language**, while it also offers **metalinguistic commentary** on the malfunctioning of meaning formation. Carrollian wordplay offers **language philosophical insights** on the **necessity of misunderstanding** and the **impossibility of meaninglessness**. Language emerges both as an instrument of discipline/power and of rebellion/play. The point of Carrollian puns is that they do not have a definite answer and rather propagate the proliferation of meanings, like the Mad Hatter's unanswerable riddle: "Why is the raven like a writing desk?"
- *Alice*'s iconic scenes, characters, and sayings have entered popular cultural imagination.





The story performs a simultaneous **repetition & subversive challenging of a variety of genres:**

fairy tale (talking animals, magic shapeshifting, enchanted journey)	↔	anti-tale (no moral guidelines, no good/bad distinction, no happily ever after)
Bildungsroman (trials and tribulations, getting used to strange things happening, growing up)	↔	no linear development of coming-of-age story, multiple metamorphosis, interchangeable dream fragments, growing up AND shrinking
Künstlerroman (Alice dreams adventures, will become a storyteller on her own right)	↔	Dreamchild dreamt into being by Carroll, adult male voice disrupts w ironic remarks the girl's sleeptalking
Portal quest fantasy	↔	Alice has no real appetite for quest
Children's book (infantile play w sounds, lulling nursery rhymes, visual humour of picture book)	↔	Adult text (Gothic death jokes, social-critical commentaries, existential-/ language- philosophy) → dual audience address
Non-didactic narrative	↔	Offers pedagogical lesson in praise of curiosity and empathy
Social criticism (mimetic, referential)	↔	Dream vision (metaphorical)

Carroll realised the **adaptogenic quality** of his story & revisited Wonderland on multiple media platforms

1862 July 4: Oral performance of tale on rowing trip

1863 Christmas: *Alice's Adventures Underground*, „A Christmas Gift to a Dear Child in Memory of a Summer's Day, giftbook manuscript illustrated by author Carroll

1865: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, with John Tenniel's illustrations, published by MacMillan

1870: "Puzzles from Wonderland" in *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, appetiser for impending sequel
1871 William Boyd set to music some verses of *Looking-Glass*
1872: sequel: *Through the Looking-Glass and what Alice Found There*
1872, theatrical play: *Alice in Wonderland: A Musical Dream Play* dir. Henry Savile Clark
1887, "Alice on the Stage," Carroll's commentary on origins of the story
1890: *Nursery Alice*, abridged w colour illustrations for pre-readers
Looking Glass biscuit tin, Wonderland postage stamp case (tie-in products designed by Carroll)

Examples for **literary nonsense's play with language**

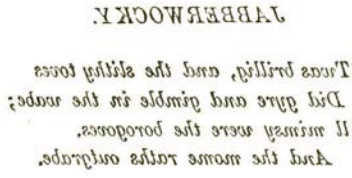
- Neological word coinage, referentless signifier, ("Name without a thing" (Bandersnatch))
- Literalised metaphors, figures of speech inspire characters (Mad Hatter, Cheshire Cat)
- Portmanteaux (slithy: slimy+lithe, chortle: chuckle+snort)
- Sudden decontextualisation, that's not what I meant ("One cannot help growing old. One can't, but two can.")
- Semantic/syntactic impossibilities ("A rose is a rose is a rose.")
- Logical twist ("Can you have more tea, if you haven't had any?")
- Homophones are synonyms ("We called him tortoise because he taught us")
- Homonyms are synonyms (the tree barks Boughwough!)
- Antonyms are synonyms (hills are valleys)
- Category mistakes naturalised ("I see nobody on the road. You must have terribly good eyes to be able to see Nobody from such distance.")
- Any word arbitrarily defined at whim (Humpty Dumpty makes words mean whatever he wants

- Semantically opaque categories (mock turtle soup)
- Hyperlogic (I beg your pardon. It isn't respectable to beg.)

Literary nonsense defamiliarises conventional (linguistic and pictorial) representation

Verbal & visual nonsense simultaneously challenge the boundaries of the Imaginable & the Speakable. The Jabberwock/y emerges as a specimen of **imagetextual monstrosity.**

John Tenniel's illustration to Looking Glass1872



Mirror written picture-poem of „Jabberwocky"

> "'It seems very pretty,'[…]'but it's rather hard to understand!'[…] 'Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas–only I don't exactly know what they are!'"
>
> (Alice's reaction on reading the poem)

Jabberwocky

Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson)

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought--
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One two! One two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

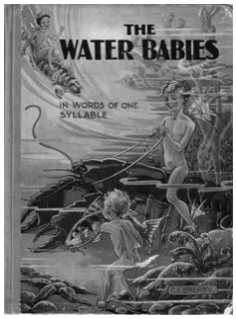
'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

→ VISUAL EXTRAS

→ COMPARE Lewis Carroll's and John Tenniel's illustrations to Alice http://ieas-szeged.hu/downtherabbithole

- WATCH Jan Svankmajer's surrealist films: Something from Alice & Jabberwocky

SCIENTIFIC FAIRY TALE



Charles Kingsley's ***The Water Babies, a Fairy Tale for a Land Baby*** **(1862–3)** was a popular children's book first published serialised in Macmillan's magazine. It is a didactic moral fable permeated by the author's views on faith, morality, and education, while criticising unjust Victorian socio-cultural practices, like child labour, dark pedagogy, classism. (The book is credited for the passing of the Chimney Sweeper's Act that outlawed the employment of climbing boys.) The book integrated moralizing within a faerial biology lesson: as an evolutionary fairy tale it supported Darwinian theory and mocked the era's pseudosciences. The author was a Reverend, university professor, social reformer, associated with Christian socialism. In his book he combined his scientific views with his belief in wonder and religious faith.

The story centres on **magical transformation**: a brutish, ape-like, ignorant chimney sweep, little Tom falls into a lake, and becomes a water baby. He familiarises himself with various animal species during his **picaresque underwater journey** to the end of the world that resembles a fairy tale quest, just as much as a religious pilgrimage, or a scientific expedition. Finally, as a reward of his good deeds, with the assistance of water fairies, he regains a human form. Eventually he grows up to become a great man of science who can "plan railways, and steam engines, and electric telegraphs, and rifled guns, and so forth."

Tom's **metamorphosis** after his falling into water becomes meaningful on multiple levels.

- as a **Christian allegory**: Water symbolises cleansing, purification, baptism, the journey through purgatory, redemption. The story is ambigu-

ous, Tom might die after his fall, and the whole story can be just a dream.

- **as a Defence of Darwinism** & satire on outraged reaction to evolutionary theory: amphibians are transitional beings, aquatic environment resembles intra-uteral development, evolution and degeneration coexist
- **as a Bildunsgroman layer**: story about Tom's moral education, reformation, from chimneysweep he becomes a man of science, believes in possibility of social ascension by virtue of knowledge.

Kingsley's novel offers a **commentary on various belief systems**: scientific hypothesis seems just as much grounded in proofs invisible to the naked eye as religious faith or belief in fairies. The fact that we have never seen the human soul or water babies, does not entail that they do not exist. The commonsensical assumption of "seeing is believing" is challenged. In line with the era's **popular scientific fairy tales**, the world imperceptible to the naked eye, but discoverable through the lenses of microscope emerges as Wonderland. The biological realities of natural creatures (newts, fish, crabs) seem just as miraculous as the make-believe water fairies Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid, and Mother Carey. Kingsley contrasts Victorian pseudo-scientists' false confidence and short sighted prejudice with the **wisdom, faith, and imaginativeness of the innocent child**.

→ READ the extracts below. How does Kingsley offer a metaimaginative commentary on various belief systems? What are his rational logical arguments in favour of faith and imagination?

„How do you know that? Have you been there to see? And if you had been there to see, and had seen none, that would not prove that there were none… And no one has a right to say that no water babies exist till they have seen no water babies existing, which is quite a different thing, mind, from not seeing water babies." (from The Water Babies)

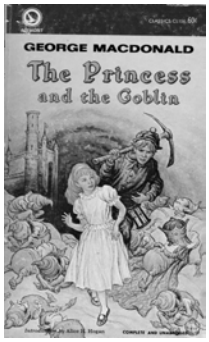
I have tried, in all sorts of queer ways, to make children and grown folks understand that there is a quite miraculous and divine element underlying all physical nature, and nobody knows anything about anything, in the sense in which they may know God in Christ, and right and wrong. And if I have wrapped up my parable in seeming Tomfooleries, it is because so only could I get the pill swallowed by a generation who are not believing with anything like their whole heart, in the living God. (Kingsley on The Water Babies)

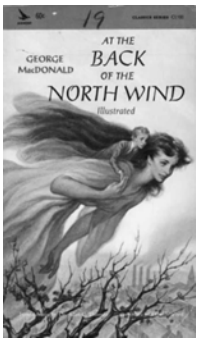
RELIGIOUS FANTASY

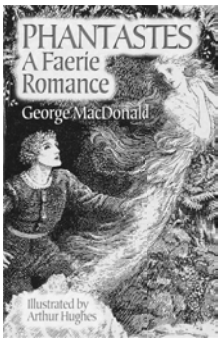
George MacDonald (1824–1905) was a Scottish author, poet, Christian minister, a pioneering figure of modern fantasy literature, a mentor of Lewis Carroll, and an inspiration for later generations of fantasy writers, among them CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien. His most famous books include children's fantasies ***At the back of the North Wind*** (1871), ***The Princess and the Goblin*** (1872) and its sequel ***The Princess and Curdie*** (1883), ***The Light Princess and other Fairy Stories*** (1890), as well as fantasies for adults like ***Phantastes***: ***A Faerie Romance for Men and Women*** (1858) a tale inspired by German Romanticism about a young man seeking for ideal beauty in a dream world, and ***Lilith. A Romance*** (1895), a darker story tackling questions of life, death, and universal redemption, featuring Adam's demonic first wife, Lilith.

MacDonald excelled in reproducing the strange atmosphere of dreams, and in creating fictional universes "hovering between the allegorical and the mythopoetic." His Christian religious fantasies used Biblical tropes like the Fall, the figures of Adam and Eve, angels, and Satan, the descent to Hell, a glimpse of Heaven as a road to awakening. He gained inspiration from children's imaginative faculties while attributing to fantasy an intergenerational appeal. He famously claimed: "I write not for children but for the childlike whether they be of five, or fifty, or seventy-five."

The Princess and the Goblin is set in a fairy-tale world inspired by medieval times. The once-human, evil race of **Goblins** try to undermine the royal castle, but Princess Irene saves the Kingdom with the help of a miner boy Curdie, the ghost of her fairy great great grandmother, and the **magical powers of song**. The book **revives fairy tale, mythical, and Biblical traditions**: the Magna Mater guides the youngsters out of the subterranean labyrinthine caverns of the castle onto the right path with the help of her magical silk thread. (She fuses figures of the Fairy Godmother, Ariadne, and the Virgin Mother.) Irene can see her because she believes in her.







The **Goblins** embody anxieties related to the Victorian evolutionary theory of **degeneration** (propagated by Morel, Lamarck, Nordau, and Lombroso, among others) that suggested that physical, psychic, and moral deterioration coexist, and multiply crippled creatures cause hindrances to social progress. The extremely vulnerable feet of the goblins also refer to their being stuck on a transitory evolutionary stage between humanity (walking on hind limbs) and bestiality (crawling on all fours). It is the **in-betweenness of their deformed humanity** that turns goblins truly monstrous. Like cobs creatures, expulsed from the kingdom, their pathologisation can also be traced back to a mysterious ancestral grudge. Hence, MacDonald introduced **moral ambiguity** in the story to raise the empathy and mercy of the readers by showing that villains are not always to be blamed for their monstrosity.

The **subterranean world** where Princess Irene and the miner boy Curdie struggle to find their way represents the **repressed other side of consciousness**, but its darkness can also be related to the **fear of working classes, and even racial difference**. Nevertheless, MacDonald communicates an **egalitarian, democratic message**. Irene is not a princess because she was born so, but because she behaves like one (--she is brave and trusts her grandmother). **Shared values of courage, faith, hope, and solidarity** do away with the class distinctions between the two child protagonists, and make them equal partners on their mission to save the Kingdom.

→ VISUAL EXTRAS

→ WATCH the Hungarian-British-Japanese animation adaptation of *The Princess and the Goblin.* directed by József Gémes, 1991

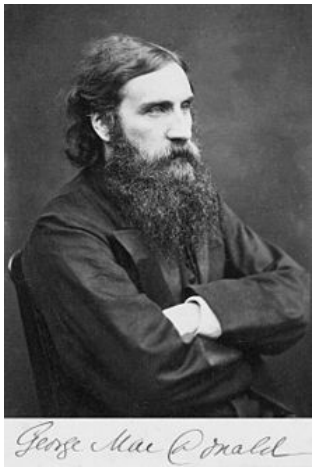
ADVENTURE NOVEL

Scottish author **Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*** was initially published serialised in the children's magazine *Young Folks* (1881-2) under the title ***The Sea Cook. A Story for Boys.*** The "rip-roaring tale of treachery, swordfight, and murder" tells Jim Hawkins' **boyhood adventure** on a quest for treasure buried on Skeleton Island. The novel's characters had a considerable impact on the representation of the figure of the pirate in popular

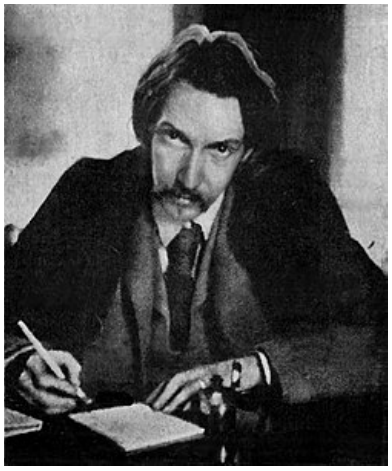
culture, commonly visualised as a one-legged buccaneer with an eye-patch and a parrot on his shoulder, who hides his gold on a distant tropical island, and marks the spot on the treasure map with an X. The book combined **pirate lore**, with **coming of age story** (Jim navigates life-and-death situations and learns moral lessons), as well as popular genres of **sea novels, the navy yarn** (tells the adventures of capable navy officer in a more realistic, historical context), and the **desert island romance** (a fantasy story in which a shipwrecked person is threatened by savage natives or pirates, as in the literary predecessor: Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* 1791, and RM Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, 1857).

Lewis Carroll
(Charles Lutwidge Dodgson)
(1832–1898)

Charles Kingsley
(1819–1875)



George MacDonald
(1824–1905)



Robert Louis Stevenson
(1850–1894)

→ READ a fragment of the conversation from the Mad Tea Par-

ty below.

→ THINK: Identify narrative strategies of nonsensical word-play. How do they subvert logic?

The Hatter opened his eyes very wide on hearing this; but all he *said* was, "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?"

"Come, we shall have some fun now!" thought Alice. "I'm glad they've begun asking riddles.—I believe I can guess that," she added aloud.

"Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?" said the March Hare.

"Exactly so," said Alice.

"Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.

"I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least—at least I mean what I say—that's the same thing, you know."

"Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "You might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see'!"

"You might just as well say," added the March Hare, "that 'I like what I get' is the same thing as 'I get what I like'!"

"You might just as well say," added the Dormouse, who seemed to be talking in his sleep, "that 'I breathe when I sleep' is the same thing as 'I sleep when I breathe'!"

"It *is* the same thing with you," said the Hatter, and here the conversation dropped, and the party sat silent for a minute, while Alice thought over all she could remember about ravens and writing-desks, which wasn't much.

The Hatter was the first to break the silence. "What day of the month is it?" he said, turning to Alice: he had taken his watch out of his pocket, and was looking at it uneasily, shaking it every now and then, and holding it to his ear.

Alice considered a little, and then said "The fourth."

"Two days wrong!" sighed the Hatter. "I told you butter wouldn't suit the works!" he added looking angrily at the March Hare.

"It was the *best* butter," the March Hare meekly replied.

→ READ more about Victorian children's literature at The Victorian Web and The British Library.

→ LISTEN to a few musical adaptations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Tom Waits, David del Tradici, Jefferson Airplane, The Royal Ballet, Avril Lavigne, Tom Petty

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH A QUIZ

https://forms.gle/2vRFzopFQKPwQajRA

1. For the Victorians children represented

A. curiosity and corruption
B. innocence and imagination
C. purity and perversion

2. Which sentence is true?

A. For the Victorians the child replaced God as an object of worship.
B. For the Victorians Art replaced God as an object of worship.
C. For the Victorians spirituality replaced science as an object of worship.

3. Who is NOT a portal quest fantasy protagonist?

A. Alice falling down the rabbit hole into Wonderland
B. Peter Pan flying out of the nursery window towards Neverland
C. The Pevensie children entering the magic Kingdom of Narnia through a cupboard
D. Frodo leaving the Shire to embark on a mission to the land of Mordor to destroy the ring

4. The Alice books are ludic narratives organised by the rules of

A. chess and chinese checkers
B. chess and card games
C. poker and hide-and-seek
D. snakes and ladders

5. Which is NOT true? Literary nonsense in the Victorian era…

A. comments on the malfunctioning of language
B. displays the impossibility of meaninglessness
C. displays the necessity of misunderstanding
D. annihilates meaning into pure gibberish

6. The Alice tales perform a simultaneous repetition and challenging of the following genre

A. historical fantasy
B. legend
C. fairy tale
D. fantasy romance

7. In Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, the Mad Hatter embodies a literalised metaphor.

A. True
B. False

8. Charles Kingsley's The Water Babies is a combination of the following genres.

A. literary nonsense
B. evolutionary fairy tale
C. gothic romance
D. Christian parable
E. picaresque novel
F. desert island adventure

9. Princess Irene and Curdie the miner's boy use the following instruments to fight the goblins in George MacDonald's children's book.

A. song
B. poetry
C. the great great grandmother's help
D. magic wands
E. animal helper figures
F. faith
G. fibbing

10. RL Stevenson influenced the pirate lore still prevailing in popular cultural with his novel:

A. Robinson Crusoe
B. Treasure Island
C. X Marks the Spot
D. Pirates of the Caribbean
E. Knives and Daggers

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The objective of this coursebook is to provide a survey of English literature in the Romantic (1798–1832) and the Victorian (1832–1901) periods. Focusing on the most significant concepts, themes and genres, as well as the key texts both in verse and prose by the major writers of the Romantic period (Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Austen, Mary Shelley) and the Victorian era (including Tennyson, Robert and Elizabeth B Browning, the Rossettis and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Dickens, Thackeray, the Brontës, Eliot, Hardy, Wilde, MacDonald and Carroll) the course aims at an understanding of the cultural terms 'Romanticism' and 'Victorianism' within the larger context of British literature and culture.

ISBN 978 963 306 886 1