

From Neoclassicism to Romanticism



Short overview of the 18th century main literary trends



The Eighteenth century



Remember,
Romanticism was
a literary trend of
the end of the
XVIIIth century!

We refer to this century mostly as:

- The Augustan Age
- The Age of Reason
/ Enlightenment
- Neoclassicism

William Wordsworth

The Augustan Age



- ❧ The 18th century is known as the Augustan Age because of the Roman **emperor Augustus**.
- ❧ The period is named after him due to the **inspiration that poets in the 18th century took from this period in Roman history**.
- ❧ The main features were a dominant tone, allusions to Roman and Greek mythology as well as contemporary social and political issues.



The Age of Reason



- ∞ Use of **reason** and **individualism** instead of tradition and established doctrine
- ∞ No dogmatism
- ∞ Reason as means to discover truth and shape society
- ∞ Scientific empiricism



Neoclassicism



- ∞ Reaction to the opulence of baroque
- ∞ Artist are inspired by Greek and Roman aesthetics
- ∞ **Classic canons** were regarded as perfect, hence, to be **imitated**
- ∞ Art → Beautiful → Objective
- ∞ Art is **cerebral** rather than **sensual** ← Subjective

Steering towards Emotions



- ❧ The new emphasis on genuine emotion can be seen in a whole range of Pre-Romantic trends.
- ❧ The graveyard school of English poetry of the 1740s
- ❧ Samuel Richardson's Pamela (1740) and other sentimental novels that exploited the reader's capacity for tenderness and compassion
- ❧ "The Poems of Ossian" by James Macpherson (ballads)
- ❧ The Sturm und Drang movement in Germany (1770–80)
- ❧ The English Gothic novel of terror

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

Thomas Gray 1751



Passing of
time/ death

∞ The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,

∞ The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,

∞ The plowman homeward plods his wearry way,

∞ And leaves the world to darkness and to me

subjective

∞ Now fades the glimm'ring landscape on the sight,

∞ And all the air a solemn stillness holds,

∞ Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,

∞ And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

What Romanticism rejected



- ❧ Rejection of the precepts of order, calm, harmony, balance, idealization, and rationality that typified late 18th-century Neoclassicism in particular.
- ❧ Reaction against the Enlightenment and 18th-century rationalism and physical materialism in general.
- ❧ Emphasis on the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental.

What Romanticism appreciated



- ❧ The beauties of nature
- ❧ Emotion over reason
- ❧ The senses over intellect
- ❧ Passions
- ❧ The artist as a supremely individual creator
- ❧ **Imagination** as a gateway to **trascendent** experience and spiritual truth
- ❧ Sublime



The focus of Romantic poets was mostly on the power of Imagination

Imagination was more powerful and precious than reason, to be sure!



William Wordsworth



My good
friend William
is right!



Imagination is:

- The pillar of the spirit
- An essential part of being human
- An endless source of beauty
- The means through man can know the world

Children and **poets** enjoy the
«Divine power» of Imagination.



William Blake



- Imagination belongs to poets
- It turns the ordinary into extraordinary
- With « a certain colouring of imagination» I meant that Imagination colours, namely, makes things look better so that you feel better
- A kind of perception into the heart of things



The Manifesto of Romanticism



∞ The poet is a **common man** endowed with a superior sensibility. God chosen.

∞ It is his task to **communicate** what he feels through means of poetry.

∞ On this purpose the **language** must be **simple**

∞ **Common** topics

∞ **Nature is** the privileged one

WHY?

∞ Nature is a **spiritual purifying force**



To sum up... ..



NEO-CLASSICISM

ROMANTICISM

POET/ SCHOLAR

YES

NO

POET /TEACHER

NO

YES

ART/OBJECTIVE

YES

NO

ART/IMITATION

YES

NO

IMAGINATION

NO

YES

SIMPLE
LANGUAGE

NO

YES

EMOTIONS


NO

YES

REASON

YES

NO



All these
emotions
have given me
a headache !!

The End