

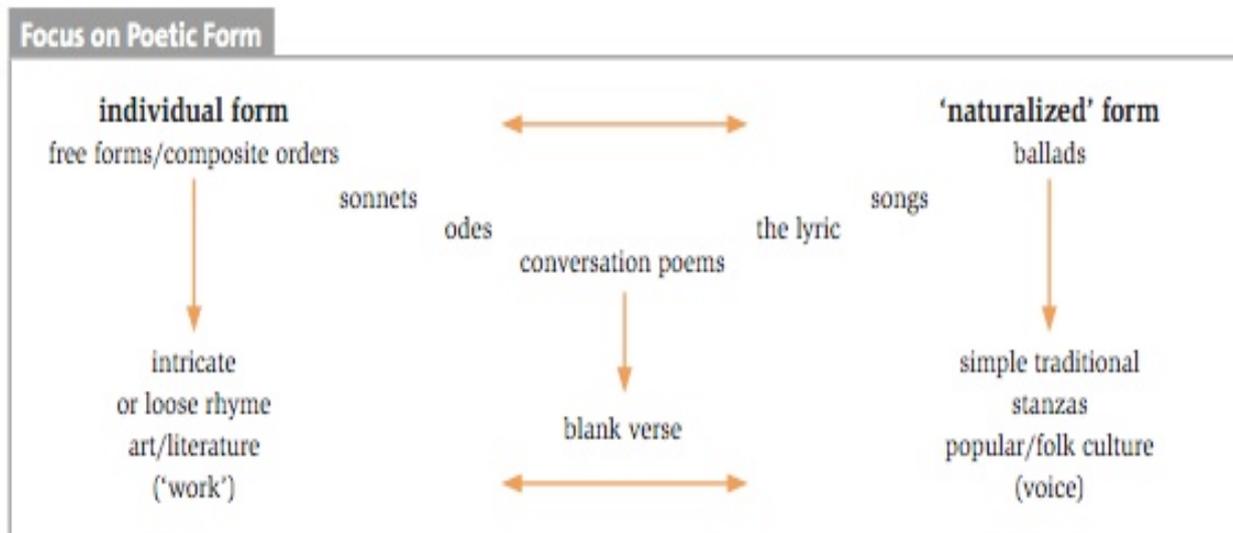
Romanticism

Lecture 7: Romantic Poetry II: Sonnets, Odes and 'Composite Orders'

1) Sonnets

2) Odes

3) 'Composite Orders'



(Reinfandt 2012, 52)

1) Sonnets

Defining Features:

14 lines, frequently iambic pentameter, a 'turn' (*)

Rhyme Schemes:

Italian/Petrarchan Sonnet: abba abba * cde cde
(cdc cdc)

English Sonnet: abab cdcd efef * gg

Nick Laird, "In Small Packages"

The sonnet has many things going for it. It is concise enough to allow memorability, prescriptive enough to interest both the amateur and the professional poet, not so stringent as to be tedious [...], and it looks solidly, comfortingly square on the page. Its turn [...] seems to match our need to blink, have second thoughts, and come again, or askance, or unstuck. You know where you are with a sonnet, though not necessarily where you are going [...]

Nick Laird, "In Small Packages" [Rev. of *The Oxford Book of Sonnets*]. *Times Literary Supplement* May 18th (2001): 24.

Charlotte Smith, *Elegiac Sonnets*

(ten constantly growing editions, 1784-1811)

XII Written on the sea shore.--October, 1784

On some rude fragment of the rocky shore,	a
Where on the fractured cliff the billows break,	b
Musing, my solitary seat I take,	b
And listen to the deep and solemn roar.	a
O'er the dark waves the winds tempestuous howl;	c
The screaming sea-bird quits the troubled sea:	d
But the wild gloomy scene has charms for me,	d
And suits the mournful temper of my soul.	(c)
Already shipwreck'd by the storms of Fate,	e
Like the poor mariner, methinks, I stand,	f
Cast on a rock; who sees the distant land	f
From whence no succour comes--or comes too late.	e
Faint and more faint are heard his feeble cries,	g
'Till in the rising tide the exhausted sufferer dies.	g

**William Wordsworth:
Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802**

Earth has not anything to show more fair:	a
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by	b
A sight so touching in its majesty:	(b)
This City now doth, like a garment, wear	a
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,	a
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie	b
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;	b
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.	a
Never did sun more beautifully steep	c
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;	d
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!	c
The river glideth at his own sweet will:	d
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;	c
And all that mighty heart is lying still!	d

John Keats (1819):

If by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd,	a
And, like Andromeda, the sonnet sweet	b
Fetter'd, in spite of pained loveliness;	c
Let us find out, if we must be constrain'd,	a
Sandals more interwoven and complete	b
To fit the naked foot of Poesy;	d
Let us inspect the lyre, and weigh the stress	c
Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd	a
By ear industrious, and attention meet;	b
Misers of sound and syllable, no less	c
Than Midas of his coinage, let us be	d
Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath crown;	e
So, if we may not let the muse be free,	d
She will be bound with garlands of her own.	e

Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias" (1817/18)

I met a traveller from an antique land	a
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone	b
Stand in the desert ... Near them, on the sand,	a
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,	(b)
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,	a
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read	c
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,	d
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:	c
And on the pedestal these words appear:	e
»My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:	d
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!«	↑(e↓
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay	f
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare	e
The lone and level sands stretch far away.	f

2) Odes

Ode:

- a long lyric poem that is serious in subject and treatment, elevated in style, and elaborate in its stanzaic structure
- encomiastic Pindaric odes vs. meditative Horatian odes
- regular vs. irregular odes
- the 'Greater Romantic Lyric' (Abrams 1984): personal odes of description and passionate meditation, which is stimulated by an aspect of the outer scene and turns on the attempt to solve either a personal emotional problem or a generally human one

(cf. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge:

Hymn

Before Sun-Rise, in the Vale of Chamouni (1802)

Besides the Rivers, Arve and Arveiron, which have their sources in the foot of Mont Blanc, five conspicuous torrents rush down its sides; and within a few paces of the Glaciers, the Gentiana Major grows in immense numbers, with its 'flowers of loveliest blue.'

Hast thou a charm to stay the morning-star
In his steep course? So long he seems to pause
On thy bald awful head, O sovran Blanc!
The Arve and Arveiron at thy base
Rave ceaselessly; but thou, most awful Form!
Risest from forth thy silent sea of pines,
How silently! Around thee and above
Deep is the air and dark, substantial, black,
An ebon mass: methinks thou piercest it,

As with a wedge! But when I look again,
It is thine own calm home, thy crystal shrine,
Thy habitation from eternity!
O dread and silent Mount! I gazed upon thee,
Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,
Didst vanish from my thought: entranced in prayer
I worshipped the Invisible alone.

Yet, like some sweet beguiling melody,
So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,
Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my thought,
Yea, with my life and life's own secret joy:
Till the dilating Soul, enrapt, transfused,
Into the mighty vision passing - there
As in her natural form, swelled vast to Heaven!
[...] (ll. 1-24)

Thou too, hoar Mount! with thy sky-pointing peaks,
Oft from whose feet the avalanche, unheard,
Shoots downward, glittering through the pure serene
Into the depth of clouds, that veil thy breast -
Thou too again, stupendous Mountain! thou
That as I raise my head, awhile bowed low
In adoration, upward from thy base
Slow travelling with dim eyes suffused with tears,
Solemnly seemest, like a vapoury cloud,
To rise before me - Rise, O ever rise,
Rise like a cloud of incense, from the Earth!

Thou kingly Spirit throned among the hills,
Thou dread ambassador from Earth to Heaven,
Great hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God.
(ll. 70-85)

**Percy Bysshe Shelley:
Mont Blanc
Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni (1816)**

I

The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark - now glittering - now reflecting gloom -
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters, - with a sound but half its own,
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume
In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,
Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.
(ll. 1-11)

II

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve - dark, deep Ravine -
Thou many-coloured, many-voiced vale [...]
Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
To muse on my own separate fantasy,
My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receives fast influencings,
Holding an unremitting interchange
With the clear universe of things around;
One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
In the still cave of the witch Poesy,
Seeking among the shadows that pass by
Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
From which they fled recalls them, thou art there!
(ll. 12f./34-48)

III

[...]
Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,
Mont Blanc appears, - still, snowy, and serene -
Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
And wind among the accumulated steeps;
A desert peopled by the storms alone,
Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
And the wolf tracks her there - how hideously
Its shapes are heaped around! rude, bare, and high,
Ghastly, and scarred, and riven. - Is this the scene
Where the old Earthquake-daemon taught her young
Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
Of fire envelop once this silent snow?

None can reply - all seems eternal now.
The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
So solemn, so serene, that man may be,
But for such faith, with nature reconciled;
Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

(ll. 60-84)

IV

[...]
Power dwells apart in its tranquillity,
Remote, serene, and inaccessible:
And this, the naked countenance of earth,
On which I gaze, even these primaeval mountains
Teach the adverting mind.

[...]

(ll. 96-100)

V

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high: - the power is there,
The still and solemn power of many sights,
And many sounds, and much of life and death.
In the calm darkness of the moonless nights,
In the lone glare of day, the snows descend
Upon that Mountain; none beholds them there,
Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,
Or the star-beams dart through them: - Winds contend
Silently there, and heap the snow with breath
Rapid and strong, but silently! Its home
The voiceless lightning in these solitudes
Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods
Over the snow. The secret Strength of things
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
Of Heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy? (ll. 127-144)

John Keats: Ode on a Grecian Urn (1819)

1

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,	a
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,	b
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express	a
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:	b
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape	c
Of deities or mortals, or of both,	d
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?	e
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?	d
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?	c
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?	e

2

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard	a
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;	b
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,	a
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:	b
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave	c
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;	d
Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,	e
Though winning near the goal - yet, do not grieve;	c
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,	e
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!	d

3

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed	a
Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu;	b
And, happy melodist, unwearied,	a
For ever piping songs for ever new;	b
More happy love! more happy, happy love!	c
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,	d
For ever panting, and for ever young;	e
All breathing human passion far above,	c
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,	d
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.	e

4

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?	a
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,	b
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,	a
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?	b
What little town by river or sea shore,	c
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,	d
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?	e
And, little town, thy streets for evermore	c
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell	d
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.	(e)

5

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede	a
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,	b
With forest branches and the trodden weed;	a
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought	b
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!	c
When old age shall this generation waste,	d
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe	e
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,	d
»Beauty is truth, truth beauty,« - that is all	c
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.	e

3) 'Composite Orders' (Curran)

- **combinations of poetic genres/forms**
e.g. Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" (1819; terza rima + sonnet > ode)
- **generic combinations of poetry and drama**
e.g. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts* (1820)
- **generic combinations of poetry and narrative with epic aspirations**
e.g. Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1798-1850)
Byron's *Don Juan* (1819-1824)

Epic:

- a long narrative poem on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style, and centred on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or (in the instance of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*) the human race
- traditional vs. literary epics

Lyric:

- a fairly short poem, consisting of the utterance by a single speaker, who expresses a state of mind or a process of perception, thought, and feeling

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*

Textual History

- 1798** first programmatic sketch “Was it for this...”
(first published in 1995)
- 1799** untitled blank verse poem in two parts addressed to Coleridge who called it Wordsworth’s “divine Self-biography”
(first published in 1973 and today known as ‘**the two-part *Prelude***’)

[intermediary stages in 5 and 8 books]

- 1805** “Poem / Title not yet fixed upon / by / William Wordsworth /
Addressed to / S.T. Coleridge”
(first published as a parallel text to the 1850 version in 1926 and today known as ‘**the thirteen-book *Prelude***’)

[ongoing revision, leading to new fair copy manuscripts in 1819, 1829
(dividing Book X in two), and 1839 (final manuscript)]

- 1850** posthumous publication of
***The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet’s Mind;
An Autobiographical Poem***
(today known as ‘**the fourteen-book *Prelude***’)

Overview (1850):

- Book 1: Introduction – Childhood and School-Time
Book 2: School-Time (Continued)
Book 3: Residence at Cambridge
Book 4: Summer Vacation
Book 5: Books
Book 6: Cambridge and the Alps
Book 7: Residence in London
Book 8: Retrospect
Book 9: Residence in France
Book 10: Residence in France (Continued)
Book 11: France (Concluded)
Book 12: Imagination and Taste – How Impaired and Restored
Book 13: Imagination and Taste – How Impaired and Restored (Concluded)
Book 14: Conclusion

There are in our existence spots of time
Which with distinct preeminence retain
A fructifying virtue, whence, depressed
By trivial occupations and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds -
Especially the imaginative power -
Are nourished and invisibly repaired;
Such moments chiefly seem to have their date
In our first childhood.

(1799, Part I, ll. 288-296)

There are in our existence spots of time,
Which with distinct preeminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence, depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight
In trivial occupations and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired -
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life in which
We have had deepest feeling that the mind
Is lord and master, and that outward sense
Is but the obedient servant of her will.
Such moments, worthy of all gratitude,
Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
From our first childhood - in our childhood even
Perhaps are most conspicuous. Life with me,
As far as memory can look back, is full
Of this beneficent influence.

(1805, XI, 257-278; cf. 1850, XII, 208-225)

Spots of Time in *The Prelude* (1850):

woodcock-snaring/bird-nesting	I	306ff.	ca. 1779 (autumn/winter/spring)
boat-stealing	I	356ff.	? (summer)
ice-skating	I	425ff.	? (winter)
boating on Lake Windermere	II	55ff.	? (summer)
discharged soldier	IV	370ff	[1788] (autumn)
dream of the Arab-Quixote	V	50ff.	?
the boy of Winander	V	364ff.	?
the drowned man	V	426ff.	ca. 1778
crossing the Alps	VI	557ff.	[1790]
blind beggar in London	VII	630ff.	[1791]
shepherd	VIII	256ff.	school days
the gibbet	XII	226ff.	?
death of father	XII	287ff.	[1783]
the climbing of Snowdon	XIV	1ff.	[1791]

George Gordon Lord Byron, *Don Juan* (1819-24)

From the 'Dedication':

4

And Wordsworth, in a rather long »Excursion«
 (I think the quarto holds five hundred pages),
 Has given a sample from the vasty version
 Of his new system to perplex the sages;
 'Tis poetry - at least by his assertion,
 And may appear so when the dog-star rages -
 And he who understands it would be able
 To add a story to the Tower of Babel.

Canto I

1

I want a hero: an uncommon want,
When every year and month sends forth a new one,
Till, after cloying the gazettes with cant,
The age discovers he is not the true one;
Of such as these I should not care to vaunt,
I'll therefore take our ancient friend Don Juan,
We all have seen him in the Pantomime
Sent to the devil, somewhat ere his time.

6

Most epic poets plunge in 'medias res,'
(Horace makes this the heroic turnpike road)
And then your hero tells, whene'er you please,
What went before - by way of episode,
While seated after dinner at his ease,
Beside his mistress in some soft abode,
Palace, or garden, paradise, or cavern,
Which serves the happy couple for a tavern.

7

That is the usual method, but not mine -
My way is to begin with the beginning;
The regularity of my design
Forbids all wandering as the worst of sinning,
And therefore I shall open with a line
(Although it cost me half an hour in spinning)
Narrating somewhat of Don Juan's father,
And also of his mother, if you'd rather.

Bibliography Lecture 7:

- Abrams, M.H., "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric." *The Correspondent Breeze: Essays on English Romanticism*. New York: Norton, 1984: 76-108.
- Bode, Christoph, "'Look on My Works, ye Mighty, and Despair!': Notes on the Non-Teachability of Poetry." In: Manfred Pfister, ed., *Teachable Poems from Sting to Shelley (anglistik & englischunterricht 53)*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1994: 139-153.
- Bode, Christoph, "Das Subjekt in der Englischen Romantik." In: Reto Luzius Fetz et al., Hrsg., *Geschichte und Vorgeschichte der modernen Subjektivität*. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1998: 872-900.
- Bode, Christoph, *Selbst-Begründungen: Diskursive Konstruktion von Identität in der britischen Romantik. I. Subjektive Identität*. Trier: WVT, 2008.
- Curran, Stuart, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*. New York/ Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986.
- Gurr, Jens, and Berit Michels, eds., *Romantic Cityscapes*. Trier: WVT, 2013.
- Jeffreys, Mark, "Ideologies of Lyric: A Problem of Genre in Contemporary Poetics." *PMLA* 110.2 (1995): 196-205.
- Müller, Wolfgang G., "Das Problem der Subjektivität in der Lyrik der englischen Romantik." In: Ansgar Nünning, Hrsg., *Eine andere Geschichte der englischen Literatur*. 2. Aufl. Trier: WVT, 1998: 127-149.
- Reinfandt, Christoph, "Word and Voice: Alpine Experiences and the Romantic Resistance to Subjectivism." In: Christoph Bode, Katharina Rennhak, eds., *Romantic Voices, Romantic Poetics*. Trier: WVT, 2005: 69-84.
- Reinfandt, Christoph, *Englische Romantik: Eine Einführung*. Berlin: E. Schmidt, 2008: 102-130.
- Reinfandt, Christoph, "Romanticism." In: Martin Middeke et al., eds., *English and American Studies: Theory and Practice*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2012: 46-55.