

Romanticism

Lecture 5: Revisions

1) Romanticism vs. Romanticisms

2) The Romantic Ideology Revisited

3) Romanticism and Gender

a) The Exclusive Masculinity of Romanticism

b) Female Romanticism?

Definition

In the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, → **Wordsworth's definition of poetry** reads as follows:

"[A]ll good Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; but though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced [...] but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. [...] I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origins from emotion recollected in tranquillity; the emotion is then contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind."

(Reinfandt 2012, 49)

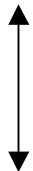
1) Romanticism vs. Romanticisms

Lovejoy 1924:

- different versions of age and lineage
- diversity of descriptions
- diversity of effects
- “The word ‘romantic’ has come to mean so many things that, by itself, it means nothing. It has ceased to perform the function of a verbal sign.” (232)
- “[W]e should learn to use the word ‘Romanticism’ in the plural [...] [A]ny study of the subject should begin with a recognition of a *prima-facie* plurality of Romanticisms, of possibly quite distinct thought-complexes, a number of which may appear in one country.” (235)
- regional/national differences; temporal differences (early vs. late); political differences (progressive vs. conservative); aesthetic differences (naturalism vs. anti-naturalism)

Ferguson 1991:

Lovejoy 1924:



Wellek 1949:

Romantic naturalism
vs.
Romantic aestheticism
vs.
Romantic Christianity

agreement of Romantic artists all over Europe in “all essential points”: “imagination for the view of poetry, nature for the view of the world, and symbol and myth for poetic style”

- ▶ the accommodation of differences in unity as a key Romantic feature which can be found both in Romantic works and in literary criticism > the continuity of the Romantic ideology in theory and criticism (cf. Wheeler 1993, Bowie 1997)
- ▶ ‘Romanticism’ as a retrospective construction (cf. Perkins 1990)

► the term loses its descriptive value

e.g. handbooks:

Stuart Curran, ed.,

The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism (1993)

vs.

Iain McCalman, ed.,

An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age (1999)

e.g. anthologies:

Duncan Wu, ed.,

Romanticism: An Anthology (1994)

vs.

Anne Mellor & Richard Matlak, eds,

British Literature 1780-1830 (1996)

(cf. Bode 2000)

► Revisions:

a) strictly historicised perspective

b) broadening of the canon (esp. female writers)

► Need for a precise definition of the term 'Romanticism'

2) The Romantic Ideology Revisited

The major achievement of Romantic studies in the last twenty years is to have transferred to 'history' that glamour that was once routinely attached to the word 'imagination' [...] [A]fter a brief regency in which the realm was governed by Paul de Man, Jerome McGann has succeeded M.H. Abrams as the most influential critic of Romanticism, and *The Romantic Ideology* is his most influential book.

(Cronin 2000, 2/5)

McGann's challenge:

How can the a-historical claims of the Romantic Ideology be historicised without surrendering the potential of the aesthetic realm which is inextricably bound up with Romanticism to this day?

(cf. McGann 1983)

► The Historicity of the Aesthetic

- A functional view of Romanticism can be formulated against the backdrop of modernisation.
- Under modern conditions, both 'the aesthetic' and 'culture' are inextricably bound up with notions of subjectivity, individuality, authenticity and originality on the one hand and the problem of cultural authority/validity on the other. The 'Lyric Turn' (Siskin 1988) as "the turn by which the self is established at the centre of the text" (Cronin 2000, 9) is not a one-way street in which a pre-existing self usurps the text. Rather, the modern self comes into existence within the parameters of the complex cultural network of media-related and institutional factors (writing/printing; literature) at the heart of Romanticism. Just like Romanticism, it is only in retrospect that it appears as a more or less stable entity and the origin of all meaning.
- All these factors can only be negotiated in a larger evolutionary framework spanning the trajectory from 'early' to 'postmodern'.

(cf. Reinfandt 2003a, 18-20, see also Reinfandt 2003b, 2008)

3) Romanticism and Gender

a) The Exclusive Masculinity of Romanticism (Schabert 1997)

William Wordsworth, 'Tintern Abbey' (1798)

These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me,
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration [...]
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee
O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer through the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!
(ll. 23-31/56-58)

And now [...]

The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was, when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all. –

(ll. 59-76)

I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye. – That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense.

(ll. 76-89)

For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity.
[...]

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,
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

(ll. 89-92/94-104)

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

(ll. 104-112)

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her [...]

(ll. 112-124)

[L]et the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations!

(ll. 135-147)

Nor, perchance -
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence - wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather say

With warmer love - oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!
(ll. 147-160)

Keats:

“the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; which is a thing per se and stands alone”

(Letter to Richard Woodhouse, Oct 27, 1818)

William Wordsworth, “Nutting” (1798/1800)

It seems a day,
(I speak of one from many singled out)
One of those heavenly days which cannot die,
When forth I sallied from our cottage-door,
And with a wallet o'er my shoulder slung, 5
A nutting crook in hand, I turned my steps
Towards the distant woods, a figure quaint,
Tricked out in proud disguise of beggar's weeds
Put on for the occasion, by advice 10
And exhortation of my frugal Dame.
Motley accoutrement! of power to smile
At thorns, and brakes, and brambles, and, in truth,
More ragged than need was. Among the woods,
And o'er the pathless rocks, I forced my way
Until, at length, I came to one dear nook 15
Unvisited, where not a broken bough
Drooped with its withered leaves, ungracious sign
Of devastation, but the hazels rose
Tall and erect, with milk-white clusters hung,
A virgin scene!—A little while I stood, 20
Breathing with such suppression of the heart
As joy delights in; and with wise restraint
Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed
The banquet, or beneath the tree I sate
Among the flowers, and with the flowers I played; 25
A temper known to those, who, after long
And weary expectation, have been blessed
With sudden happiness beyond all hope.
Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves
The violets of five seasons re-appear 30
And fade, unseen by any human eye;
Where fairy water-breaks do murmur on
For ever, and I saw the sparkling foam,

And with my cheek on one of those green stones
That, fleeced with moss, beneath the shady trees, 35
Lay round me, scattered like a flock of sheep,
I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,
In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
Tribute to ease; and, of its joy secure,
The heart luxuriates with indifferent things, 40
Wasting its kindness on stocks and stones,
And on the vacant air. Then up I rose
And dragged to earth both branch and bough, with crash
And merciless ravage; and the shady nook
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower, 45
Deformed and sullied, patiently gave up
Their quiet being; and, unless I now
Confound my present feelings with the past,
Even then, when from the bower I turned away
Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings, 50
I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees and the intruding sky.—

Then, dearest maiden! move along these shades
In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand
Touch—for there is a Spirit in the woods. 55

b) Female Romanticism?

Joanna Baillie (1762-1851):	<i>Poems</i> (1790)
Anna Letitia Barbauld (1743-1825):	<i>Eighteen Hundred and Eleven</i> (1812)
Felicia Dorothea Hemans (1793-1835):	<i>The Domestic Affections</i> (1812)
Maria Jane Jewsbury (1800-1833):	<i>Phantasmagoria</i> (1825)
Letitia Elizabeth Landon (1802-1838)	
Mary Robinson (1758-1800):	<i>Lyrical Tales</i> (1800)
Anna Seward (1742-1809):	<i>Louisa: A Poetical Novel</i> (1784)
Charlotte Smith (1749-1806):	<i>Elegiac Sonnets</i> (1784-95), <i>Beachy Head, and Other Poems</i> (1807)
Mary Tighe (1772-1810):	<i>Psyche</i> (1805)
Helen Maria Williams (1762-1824):	<i>Poems</i> (1786)

(cf. Schabert 1997, 446-469; for anthologies cf. Bode 2000)

Mary Robinson, *A Letter to the Women of England on the Injustice of Mental Subordination* (1799)

Poetry has unquestionably risen high in British literature from the production of female pens; for many English women have produced such original and beautiful compositions, that the first critics and scholars of the age have wondered, while they applauded.

(quoted in Schabert 1997, 448)

Questions:

Are all these texts 'romantic'? Is there a 'female' Romanticism?

(cf. Fay 1998)

Wordsworth looking back in 1833:

Charlotte Smith as a poet "to whom English verse is under greater obligations than are likely to be either acknowledged or remembered"

Charlotte Turner Smith, 'Beachy Head' (1806/07)

On thy stupendous summit, rock sublime!
That o'er the channel rear'd, half way at sea
The mariner at early morning hails,
I would recline; while Fancy should go forth,
And represent the strange and awful hour
Of vast concussion; when the Omnipotent
Stretch'd forth his arm, and rent the solid hills,
Bidding the impetuous flood rush between
The rifted shores, and from the continent
Eternally divided this green isle.

(ll. 1-10)

From thy projecting head-land I would mark
Far in the east the shades of night disperse,
Melting and thinned, as from the dark blue wave
Emerging, brilliant rays of arrowy light
Dart from the horizon; when the glorious sun
Just lifts above it his resplendent orb.

[...]

And thy rough hollows echo to the voice
Of the gray choughs, and ever restless daws,
With clamour, not unlike the chiding hounds,
While the lone shepherd, and his baying dog,
Drive to thy turfy crest his bleating flock.

(ll. 12-17/24-28)

Afar off,
And just emerging from the arch immense
Where seem to part the elements, a fleet
Of fishing vessels stretch their lesser sails;
While more remote, and like a dubious spot
Just hanging in the horizon, laden deep,
The ship of commerce richly freighted, makes
Her slower progress, on her distant voyage,
Bound to the orient climes [...]
[→ for spice, silk, diamonds] and the round pearl
Enchased in rugged covering; which the slave,
With perilous and breathless toil, tears off
From the rough sea-rock, deep beneath the waves.
(ll. 36-44/51-54)

These are the toys of Nature; and her sport
Of little estimate in Reason's eye:
And they who reason, with abhorrence see
Man, for such gaudes and baubles, violate
The sacred freedom of his fellow man –
Erroneous estimate! As Heaven's pure air,
Fresh as it blows on this aerial height,
Or sound of seas upon the stony strand,
Or inland, the gay harmony of birds,
And winds that wander in the leafy woods;
Are to the unadulterate taste more worth
Than the elaborate harmony, brought out
From fretted stop, or modulated airs
Of vocal science.
(ll. 56-68)

Contemplation here,
High on her throne of rock, aloof may sit,
And bid recording Memory unfold
Her scroll voluminous – [...] [→English history]
From even the proudest roll by glory fill'd,
How gladly the reflecting mind returns
To simple scenes of peace and industry,
Where, bosom'd in some valley of the hills
Stands the lone farm [...]
(ll. 117-120/167-171)

and not far removed
The hut of sea-flints built; the humble home
Of one, who sometimes watches on the heights,
[...]
Watches the bark that for his signal waits
To land its merchandize: - Quitting for this
Clandestine traffic his more honest toil,
The crook abandoning, he braves himself

The heaviest snow-storm of December's night [...]

Well it were for him,
If no such commerce of destruction known,
He were content with what the earth affords
To human labour; even where she seems
Reluctant most. More happy is the hind,
Who, with his own hands rears on some black moor,
Or turbary, his independent hut.

(ll. 174-176/181-185/189-195)

Rude, and but just removed from savage life
Is the rough dweller among scenes like these,
(Scenes all unlike the poet's fabling dreams
Describing Arcady) – But he is free;
The dread that follows on illegal acts
He never feels; and his industrious mate
Shares in his labour.

(ll. 207-213)

and all this toil

They patiently encounter; well content [...]
Beneath the smoky roof they call their own.
Oh! little knows the sturdy hind, who stands
Gazing, with looks where envy and contempt
are often strangely mingled, on the car
Where prosperous Fortune sits; what secret care
Or sick satiety is often hid
Beneath the splendid outside [...]

(ll. 235-244)

Ah! who *is* happy? Happiness! a word
That like false fire, from marsh effluvia born,
Misleads the wanderer, destin'd to contend
In the worlds wilderness, with want or woe –
Yet *they* are happy, who have never ask'd
What good or evil means [...]

I once was happy, when while yet a child,
I learn'd to love these upland solitudes [...]

Haunts of my youth!

Scenes of fond day dreams, I behold ye yet! [...]

Ah! hills so early loved! in fancy still
I breathe your pure keen air; and still behold
Those widely spreading views, mocking alike
The Poet and the Painter's utmost art.
And still, observing objects more minute,
Wondering remark the strange and foreign forms
Of sea-shells; with the pale calcareous soil
Mingled, and seeming of resembling substance.

(ll. 255-260/282f./297f./368-375)

Ah! very vain is Science' proudest boast,
And but a little light its flame yet lends [...]
While to his daily task the peasant goes,
Unheeding such inquiry; with no care
But that the kindly change of sun and shower,
Fit for his toil the earth he cultivates.
(ll. 390-398)

Hither, Ambition come!
Come and behold the nothingness of all
For which you carry thro' the oppressed Earth,
War, and its train of horrors [...]
But from thoughts like these,
By human crimes suggested, let us turn
to where more attractive study courts
The wanderer of the hills [...]
(ll. 419-422/439-442)

[→ nature, landscape (incl. "the mart/Of English capital, its domes and spires" 484f.)
→ the stranger singing songs]

Just beneath the rock
Where Beachy overpeers the channel wave,
Within a cavern mined by wintry tides
Dwelt one, who long disgusted with the world
And all its ways, appear'd to suffer life
Rather than live [...]
And nothing marked for him the season's change [...]
[Still] his heart
Was feelingly alive to all that breath'd;
And outraged as he was, in sanguine youth,
By human crimes, he still acutely felt
For human misery.
Wandering on the beach,
He learn'd to augur from the clouds of heaven [...]
When tempests were approaching [...]
(ll. 671-674/687-692/697)

Often he had snatch'd
From the wild billows, some unhappy man
Who liv'd to bless the hermit of the rocks. [...]
One dark night
The equinoctial wind blew south by west,
Fierce on the shore [...]
At day break, anxious for the lonely man,
His cave the mountain shepherds visited,
Tho' sand and banks of weeds had choak'd their way –
He was not in it; but his drowned cor'se
By the waves wafted, near his former home
Receiv'd the rites of burial. Those who read

Chisel'd within the rock, these mournful lines,
Memorials of his sufferings, did not grieve,
That dying in the course of charity
His spirit, from its earthly bondage freed,
Has to some better region fled for ever.
(ll. 707-709/716-718/721-732)

The Poet

(26 pages in original edition)

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Part I (pp. 1-9; ll. 1-117): | masculinized 'I' |
| Part II (pp. 9-12; ll. 117-166): | feminine Contemplation |
| Part III (pp. 12-19; ll. 167-281): | gender-neutral 'mind' |
| Part IV (pp. 20-27; ll. 282-389): | lyrical 'I' (C.S. > W.W.) |

The Narrator

(25 pages in original edition, incl. 8 ½ pages quotations of stranger's poems)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Part V (pp. 27-51; ll. 390-731): | disembodied descriptive narrator
(lone antiquary vs. peasants;
the stranger vs. the hermit) |
|----------------------------------|---|

The Historian

(35 pages in original edition)

63 endnotes (pp. 143-179), some of them lengthy

Fig. 2: *Beachy Head* and Its Constructions of Authoritative Voice in Print

(cf. Reinfandt 2013, 107)

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