

Lecture 7: Romanticism and Modernism

1) Romantic Authorship

2) Authorship and Autography: Into Modernism

3) Modern Authorship: The Author as Nobody

Functions of Literature

modernization: ↻ Renaissance ↻ Romanticism ↻ Postmodernism
re-traditionalization: ↻ Neo-Classicism ↻ Modernism
-----1500-----1750-----1800-----1900-----2000----->

Modernization	vs.	[Re-Traditionalization]
the influx of subjectivity resulting in/counterbalanced by poetic form	vs.	the persistence of a longing for objectivity resulting in the emergence of prose
a) as imported from (oral) trad. b) as 'liberated' by writing/printing (innovation, defamiliarization)		as a flexible, open-form signifying practice which seemingly maintains the clarity and control of direct interaction in writing
leading to reflexivity/intransparency		leading to an evasion of reflexivity/ the illusion of transparency

1) Romantic Authorship

**[Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822):
Posthumous Portrait of Shelley Writing *Prometheus Unbound*.
Artist: Joseph Severn]**

Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry” (1821)

The human mind could never, except by the intervention of these excitements [of poetry and art], have been awakened to the invention of the grosser sciences, and that application of analytical reasoning to the aberrations of society, which it is now attempted to exalt over the direct expression of the inventive and creative faculty itself.

The cultivation of those sciences which have enlarged the limits of the empire of man over the external world, has, for want of the poetical faculty, proportionally circumscribed those of the internal world; and man, having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave.

A man cannot say, “I will compose poetry.” The greatest poet even cannot say it: for the mind in creation is like a fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness: this power arises from within [...] Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline.

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

Poetry, and the principle of the Self, of which money is the visible incarnation, are the God and the Mammon of the world.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias"

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

(1817; 1818)

[Ozymandias cartoon]

2) Authorship and Autography

- “photography confronts authorship with autography” (North 2001, 1379)
 - “‘the image’ – or, more accurately, a differential system thereof – supplanted writing as the grounding of fiction” in a process in which “realism and photography [were] partners in the same cultural project” (Armstrong 1999, 3/26)
- subjectivity is confronted with the possibility of reality seemingly representing (writing/painting) itself, as it were, which opens up an unprecedented recourse to ‘objectivity’
- the emphatic subjectivity of Romanticism is counterbalanced by the impersonal/objective programmes of realism and modernism

[T]he documentary effect is only one result of the collaboration between fiction and photography. By ‘realism,’ I mean the entire problematic in which a shared set of visual codes operates as an abstract standard by which to measure one representation against another. I believe it is accurate to situate not only works of romance and fantasy within this problematic, but literary modernism as well. No less dependent on a visual definition of the real than Victorian realism, modernism nevertheless located whatever it considered authentic in nature or culture within an invisible domain on the other side of the surfaces one ordinarily sees.

(Armstrong 1999, 11)

romanticism	authorship
realism	reality inscribes itself (into a medium)
modernism	autography

The photograph collapses all time into the *now* of looking. This, like most other modernist experiments, plays with the immediacy of being and the ways available to us to represent that situation.

(Hansom 2002, xiv-xv)

Like the photographer, the [modernist] author does little more than initiate the process by which phenomena register themselves in permanent form. The authorial function thus becomes merely mechanical, or chemical, and the agency once so necessary to the prestige of authorship is reduced almost to vanishing.

(North 2001, 1379)

[Portrait of T.S. Eliot]

T.S. Eliot, “Hamlet” (1919)

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding and ‘objective correlative’; in other words, *a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events* which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.

T.S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919)

The analogy was that of the catalyst. When [...] two gases [...] are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected: has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.



experience/passions → “*significant* emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet”

3) Modern Authorship: The Author as Nobody

It is commonplace now to understand that all texts produced by authors are not products of individual creators. Rather, they are the result of any number of discourses that take place among the writer, the political and social environment in which the writing occurs, the aesthetic and economic pressures that encourage the process, the psychological and emotional state of the writer, and the reader who is expected to receive or consume the end product when it reaches print. Even if not intended for an audience or the publishing marketplace, a piece of writing cannot escape the numerous influences that produce it. All discourse is socially constructed. Yet we continue to maintain the traditional image of the author as an individualist up against a materialistic world, trying to create something pure and unsullied by the rank commercialism of society despite the interference of the system of publication, which requires mediation and compromise.

(Inge 2001, 623)

[Shakespeare cartoon 1] [book cover]

Holland on Ackroyd:

Presumption, supposition and speculation in a series of passive or abstracted sentences lead directly to expectation [...] [T]he route Ackroyd takes to prove his case is peopled with stereotypes, filled with illogical leaps and curiously disjunct from the materials of early modern texts [...] Ackroyd's Shakespeare is very ordinary, not only he is a man whose ambitions stretch no further than a large house in his home town and a series of safe investments, but because his mind is not all that interesting either.

(Holland 2005: 24)

Bode on Greenblatt:

[A] reduction to the quotidian is [...] presented as an 'explanation' of the greatness of the plays.

(Bode 2006, 378)

[The] error [...] to presuppose that anything in Shakespeare's works must have a factual, experiential, 'biographical' basis in his life [is] unpardonable in a scholar of Greenblatt's stature [but] forgivable in *Shakespeare in Love*.

(Bode 2006, 377)

[Scene from *Shakespeare In Love* (1998)]

[Shakespeare cartoon 2]

Brendan Kennelly, "Front Gate", in *Poetry My Arse* (1995)

I met Ace de Horner at the Front Gate
of Trinity College. He was looking out
for Kennelly. 'Why are you looking for him?'
I asked. 'Because the bastard makes me dumb
with anger at times,' said Ace, 'and I'd like
to give him a bloody good piece o'me mind.
I'm in the right mood for that. It's time to strike
a blow.' 'Why bother?' I said, 'sure he's only a fat
bollocks at the best o'times.

[...]

Don't work yourself up.
A major poet like you
should have nothing to do
with a venal wretch like Kennelly.
It's better to calm down and go your way.'

Between Burke and Goldsmith, Ace
stood, statue-like, all passion, honour and grace.
'Yes,' he said, 'yes, how right you are.
A true poet must follow his own star
though it lure him
into the damned heart of eternity.
I think I'll walk out to Sandymount strand
and stroll by the buttock-loosening sea.
Yes. To ease my soul, that's what I'll do.'

He started to move, halted, turned.

'By the way,' he asked, 'who are you?'

'Me?' I replied. 'Nobody. I'm just passing through.'

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