

Sinko, A. Zgorzelski). Students' other obligations severely delimit the number of the further reading suggestions; the choice of the interpretative propositions is governed here more strictly by the methodological precepts.

In light of the above, the proposed functions of the LECTURES are, first, that of a *chronologically oriented guide* to a systematic inquiry into primary texts and secondary sources, and, second, that of a *brief conspectus of the studied material*, to help the student to memorize it before a colloquy or an examination.

The SURVEY is a compilation of citations. It was not feasible to acknowledge all sources (especially when they were numerous handbooks) or even to determine what is an abstract and what a word-by-word quotation. Only in the case of some monograph topics, major writers and more significant titles was it possible to mark the pertinent passages on the margin with the initials of the author from whose work the abstract/quotation is taken (see in each case the *Bibliography*). The responsibility for any alterations of the idea or in the drift of the argument is, of course, that of the compiler.

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## General view of neoclassicism. The Augustan Age (1700-1740)

Neoclassicism is a long and fruitful epoch in the history of British literature and culture. Its most characteristic features began to mould intellectual trends and artistic phenomena in the Restoration - more influentially at the end of the period - to dominate fully the culture of the country in the 18th century.

Most generally speaking, neoclassicism may be viewed as a kind of continuation of the Renaissance tradition. First, it worshipped antiquity, tried to model its achievements on classical examples, and attempted to follow classical standards. The first neoclassical-period, the Augustan Age, was so called by analogy to the Golden Age of Roman letters, the age of Emperor Augustus, which was well remembered due to such names as Virgil, Ovid, and Horace.

Second, neoclassicism was also characterized by intellectual curiosity concerning details of the surrounding world. The drive towards the acquisition and spread of knowledge was so powerful that the epoch is often called the Enlightenment (cf. the Polish term for the corresponding period). This general thirst for knowledge immediately influenced literature: its aesthetic function rapidly diminished and literature was considered primarily as a means of education, becoming mostly didactic and moral. Here neoclassicism loses its similarity to the Renaissance, manifesting additionally the further shift of emphasis from the heavenly, the philosophic and the abstract towards the worldly, the phenomenal and the concrete. This shift - generated, among others, by JOHN LOCKE's "An Essay Concerning **Human** Understanding" (1690) and by its stress on direct experience as the source of all knowledge (cf. "Lectures on British Literature", part I, p. 107) - is best observed in two dominant intellectual trends of the epoch.

One of the trends was rationalism. The people of those years were chiefly interested in human beings and in the observation of human activities. They thought that man's greatness lies primarily in his being a rational entity. Rationalism - the belief in reason and experiment - led to the observation of life as it was, to "the contemplation of things themselves". Imagination was controlled - it was enclosed in the frame of

probability and verisimilitude; a sober air of attempted objectivism dominated the works of Defoe and Pope, Fielding and Smollett, and even those of Swift. Neoclassical literature was, as a whole, rational and mimetic - if by mimetic we understand the acceptance of the model of phenomenal reality as the dominating design of the fictional universe.

In time, this tendency underwent slight modification: The imposed burden of didactic duties not only made the authors strive for clarity of thought and elegance of style in order to be better understood and enjoyed, but also forced them to look for new ways to interest and move their readers: in the course of time more and more works began to temper strict rationalism smuggling in a substitute for the expression of feelings in the form of sentiment.

Observation of reality - even with restrained emotion under the discipline of reason - often led to a critical view of individuals and to critical attitudes towards society: in truth, criticism of life became one of the most popular sources of literary inspiration. In effect, the neoclassical poetry continued the Restoration emphasis on satiric and argumentative genres - the lyrical most died out. But prose appeared a still better instrument of reason: among the literati of the period we meet a number of journalists, diarists, letter writers, essayists, and then, novelists.

The other trend - deism - manifested the shift towards the wordly in the religious sphere, also bearing the stamp of rational scepticism. Generally distrustful of emotions, people started to abhor the quality of enthusiasm in religion and began to suspect the fanatic Puritan attitudes. Many had troubles even with the belief in the divine nature of Christ and in Providence; they thought that God was the Creator, the Constructor of Nature neither interested nor intervening directly in human affairs. It was a belief in a kind of an "originator of natural law" who was, of course, benevolent and great - and hence, necessarily, everything created by Him had the same values. No wonder that the German philosopher Leibnitz came to the conclusion that the existing universe was the best of all possible worlds. The same conclusion one can meet in Alexander Pope's "Essay on Man" (1733-1734); his famous statement "whatever is, is right" summarizes best the rationalistic complacency of the epoch.

Third, when we compare neoclassicism to the Renaissance, we see that it is far more standardized and conventional. It is a colder and more restrained period, the epoch of the fixing of habits, marked by the strict

following of the worked out rules of behaviour and writing, preoccupied mainly with manners and accepted standards which were defined predominantly by detachment and moderation. - the writers try to reach "the golden mean" and attempt to achieve the classical model of orderliness and balance in the development of an argument, in style and diction. In short, the two periods of the neoclassical epoch, the Augustan Age and the Age of Johnson, are perhaps best characterized by the key notions of imitation, rationalism, and convention.

The forty years of the Augustan Age (1700-1740) - in spite of the War of the Spanish Succession and the Jacobite risings - seemed to be rather settled and prosperous. The country acquired firm control of the seas, stimulating assurance in the safety of trade and strengthening the patriotic self-confidence of the nation, especially after the completed union between Scotland and England; the people appeared to be generally pleased with the existing state of things.

The decisive factor in political and social life was the middle class which absorbed landowners and started to decide not only in politics. The new class was ambitious, and although the main motive in its activities was the accumulation of wealth, it wanted to know what to do with the gathered riches, how to spend money. A young bourgeois admired intellect, reason, logical thought; he needed and demanded a new explanation of the universe, demanded new knowledge and new education not only in matters of science and art, but also in human conduct, in polish and elegance of social behaviour. Rising to political power and social dominance, the middle class wanted to be monitored primarily as far as moral standards were concerned, it wanted its own social norms and conventions established.

Since the court as a focus of literary, cultural and artistic influences became relatively unimportant, the middle class worked out its own centres of public life, its own centres of culture. Particular local groups of people began to meet in coffee-houses which took the function of both lunch or refreshment rooms and meeting places, evolving into regional city clubs in which people discussed the most varied topics: they commented upon political events, talked on party strategies, re-told the news and town gossip, decided trade and insurance matters, exchanged opinions on cultural, artistic and literary events of the day. The institution of coffee-houses developed cliques and parties, taught people the art of

conversation, became the breeding place of the 18th century standards and tastes as well as started two important cultural innovations. The coffee-house gave birth to the typically British institution of a club, and constituted the direct stimulus for the rise and development of the modern British and European journalism.

The existence of only local centres of public information created - in a natural way - the demand for the broader exchange of news and views. This demand was met by the rapid development of newspapers and periodicals. Newspapers appeared in England as early as the Renaissance, periodicals - at the close of the 17th century. But the Augustan Age brought a sudden rise in the number of both newspapers and periodicals published. This development of English journalism owed much to the activity of SIR RICHARD STEELE (1672-1729) and JOSEPH ADDISON (1672-1719), the writers, editors and literary personages of the epoch.

Sir Richard Steele wrote and edited at least seven periodicals, and his major journalistic contribution was the tri-weekly "The Tatler" (April 1709-January 1711). Joseph Addison edited and worked on five periodicals, but his main and most famous daily was "The Spectator" (March 1711-December 1712; June 1714-December 1714). Besides passing information about the political affairs of the day and on social matters - as in the first issues of "The Tatler" - the periodicals evolved in time to an essay an issue, trying to teach the middle class new morals or to ridicule manners in order to reform social behaviour and the prevalent mode of thinking. Main policy of "The Tatler" was "to recommend truth, honour and virtue as the chief ornaments of life", while the purpose of "The Spectator" was "to enliven morality with wit and to temper wit with morality" as well as "to bring philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at the tea-tables and in the coffee-houses". In a short time the periodicals became the exquisite means of teaching the new class the most important virtues of a new type of a gentleman, not neglecting the matters of philosophy, among others the most essential statements of Locke.

The periodicals educated the literary taste of the new class, too. The essays not only ridiculed snobbery of men and weaknesses of women, but also - applying classical rules for literature - popularized the taste for wit and humour, and taught to appreciate the appropriate kinds of literature, reminding the reader, for instance, about the requirements that should be

met in an epic poem. It was in the periodicals that the old folklore ballads were brought to the attention of the reading public; the neoclassical critics admired in them the power of the primitive, although not elegant and not literary, genius.

274 essays by Addison and 236 essays by Steele in "The Spectator" presented a series of gentlemanly conversations by a group of fictitious persons, each member of the group representing a different class of society. The conversations developed as free talks on various matters of social intercourse, on the duties and joys of family life, on the rules of elegant behaviour and manners, on the role of women in society, on social amusements and reading. Presenting a club of individual figures, the essays are usually known as the famous "Sir Roger de Coverley papers", and need only a love plot to be resolved into a novel..

The majority of literary personages of the period either wrote for periodicals or edited them. The most famous were "The Review..." (February 1704-June 1713) and "Mercurius Politicus" (1716-1720); edited by Daniel Defoe. Alexander Pope published the weekly satirical review "The Grub-street Journal" in the years 1730-1737.

## Augustan prose

The interests and techniques of prose writers in the Augustan period were strongly defined by the expectations of their public: merchants, shopkeepers, artisans. Hence, Augustan non-fictional prose was centred on the topical issues of the times. and its tone was mostly satiric, in a manner typically neoclassical.

The pamphlets of JONATHAN SWIFT (1667-1745), written in the beginning of the epoch, undertook religious topics - then still important. His satire "A Tale of a Tub" (1704) tried to demonstrate the superiority of the Church of England over the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches, but Swiftian criticism of church quarrels served here to ridicule the Church of England, too. In other religious pamphlets Swift attacked the approaching deism and discussed the relations between government, religion and morals, often displaying his own type of ironic humour, based upon double-edged proposals and statements, like - for instance - that of

governmental control over the morality of the people or the argument for the superiority of hypocrisy over cynicism.

At the same time religious topics were also taken up by DANIEL DEFOE (c. 1659-1731) whose ironic pamphlet "The Shortest Way with Dissenters" (1702) proposed to hang all the nonconformist preachers and exterminate their congregations. The town authorities took the project seriously and it earned its author a line, an imprisonment and three days of pillory.

In the 1720's, while Daniel Defoe was writing a practical manual on business and trade principles ("The Compleat English Tradesman", I - 1725; II - 1727) and persuading the middle class to give their children a better education ("The Compleat English Gentleman", wr. c. 1729, publ. 1890), Jonathan Swift was publishing a number of pamphlets concerning Irish problems, of which the most influential was "The Drapier's Letters" (1724) directed against the project of the Whig government to coin poor copper money for Ireland. The project served Swift as an example of English political corruption. Another famous Irish pamphlet by Swift was his "Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland from Being a Burden to their Parent or Country, and for Making them Beneficial to the Public" (1729), in which he offered a morbid and disgusting suggestion that the Irish should fatten and eat their own children in order to diminish both the famine and the number of people in the country.

Besides the above-mentioned topics, both Swift and Defoe discussed many other social, political and even literary questions. It was Daniel Defoe, who - as early as 1697 - advocated the foundation of an English Academy, the endowment of an asylum for the mentally ill, the abolition of the press gangs, the accessibility of higher education for women and the building of national poor relief. Jonathan Swift took part in the literary and educational discussion on the importance of the ancient and modern writers, which was an echo of the controversy between some well known French authors (Charles Perrault, Nicolas Boileau, Jean de La Fontaine). In a mock epic "The Battle of Books" (publ. 1704) Swift satirized pedantry and fake erudition of the "moderns", but he did not accord victory to either side.

The fiction of the age, comprising the mimetic prose of adventure of Daniel Defoe and the satirical romance of Jonathan Swift, owed much to

the flowering of journalism and to the essay and pamphlet writings. The technique of this kind of prose was markedly journalistic; it was written for common people, and attempts were made to use the speech of them which would prefer simple syntax and short, non-abstract words of Germanic origin. The moral purpose of the narratives and the necessity to broaden the reading public's knowledge made the authors pretend that they were telling a true story about real facts and that they were not producing fictitious works. This tendency may be observed in the titles themselves which abound in expressions like "a true history", "a memoir", "a true relation", "the life and adventures", "journal" - stressing the probability and verisimilitude of the events told about by the first person narrator. Moreover, the authors accumulated painstakingly all the small details concerning time, place, aims, characters - all the pieces of circumstantial evidence that were not truly needed for the course of action, but which were gathered in order to enhance the impression of the true nature of the narrated events. Traditional Puritan preaching, still influential in the times when the illustrious example of Bunyan was not too distant yet, profited much from fictitiousness in moral allegory - Augustan prose appeared generally hostile to a story of imagination unless it functioned as a satirical metaphor.

The best example of both the journalistic techniques and the moral overtones combined with an adventurous plot is the most famous text of Daniel Defoe, "The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner" (1710-1720) - a story based upon a true episode in the life-story of one Alexander Selkirk, who spent four and a half years in solitude as castaway on the desert island of Juan Fernandez. Defoe himself suggested that "the story, though Allegorical, is also Historical", explaining in this way the principles of its construction. The contradictory terms used in the explanation seem to stress both the mimetic truthfulness of the story ("historical") and the importance of the religious and moral inference that may be drawn from it ("allegorical").

The message of "Robinson Crusoe" has usually been understood in political and social categories and interpreted in the light of the further development of the British Empire. Critics have suggested that the protagonist was shaped as a typical member of the middle class who did not seek honour or an object made valuable by some ideals - as would happen traditionally in a romance - but instead explored good opportunities for

trade and sought comfort and safety. Although he was left alone on an island, he remained a member of his society and was supported by various products of the community. Additionally he stubbornly kept to social conventions, although in practice they were not needed in the desert place. Being the representative of the civilized order, Robinson introduced into the primitive world of Friday the middle-class hierarchy and the bourgeois values: religion, work, morality. In other words, his adventures exemplify - the critics suggest - the middle-class formula for success: being patient, honest, and industrious, Robinson can expand the middle-class world of orderliness by piety and endeavour. As a result he founds a colony and gets rewarded by being able to return to his own community.

These critical suggestions seem to prompt the understanding not of what the book means, but rather of what it testifies to. We would be inclined to prefer more literary historical perspective of the interpretation.

AB- It seems important that the combination of the adventurous mimetic and the moral in "Robinson Crusoe" entailed the usage of both fictional and non-fictional genre, conventions. On the one hand Defoe employed here the conventions of the tale of adventure, with the picaresque tradition behind it and enriched by some elements of the travel narrative. On the other hand, his sources appear to include the spiritual autobiography and the Providence books (texts illustrating the interventions of Providence in the life of the protagonist as a kind of *exemplum* story). The two traditions prompt two different, although not mutually exclusive, ways of reading the text: as a report of sensational events (reading for entertainment) or as a record of spiritual experience (reading for instruction). Of course, both traditions function in the text as complementary ones: the former organizes the fictional world and action, the latter defines the interpretation of events by the narrator.

A double perspective on the course of the story is offered as a result. First, the immediacy of individual experience is achieved here, by the foregrounding of the point of view of the protagonist, involved in the events. Hence the usage of many devices of oral discourse, the method of circumstantial evidence, the introduction of texts-within-a-text (Robinson's journal), the use of prolepsis. Second, the generalized view of individual experience makes it exemplary, which is accomplished mainly through the divergence of the narrator's and the protagonist's judgement of events both in spatio-temporal categories and in psychological terms.

This generalized view is also created by the parallel analogies between the situations of the protagonist and those of the Bible. In effect the plot organization is such that a series of events typical of the tale of adventure become subordinate to the superimposed pattern of moral sense in which these events are interpreted as the series of offences and punishment. In this way, by combining various conventions, Defoe created a new genre variant: an adventurous parable. It is different from allegory since the events of Robinson's life do not become signs of biblical situations - those incidents are only interpreted by the narrator in the light of the biblical pattern of human life.

This new genre structure will become the starting point for a new genre: for the English robinsonade. In its evolution, however, the genre will quickly relinquish the religious and moral meanings and will finally adopt - towards the end of the century - the pattern of the tale of adventure as the dominant design, falling down in the genre hierarchy until it becomes juvenile fiction.

This later development of the robinsonade does not allow us to forget that the story of Robinson Crusoe is not only a moral message itself (or a social document!), but also a story of adventure, born from a feeling for the exotic, for far-off lands, for surprising happenings. All other fictitious narratives by Defoe - although devoid of such obvious characteristics of the manual of survival - share this feeling for the unexpected, whether they are the first-person narrated life story of a pirate ("...Captain Singleton", 1722) or a fictional autobiography of a pickpocket ("The History and Remarkable Life of...Colonel Jack", 1722). Defoe's interest in low life, in illegal and non-conventional activities, even in criminal exploits, may be confirmed by his two other books. ("The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders" (1722) is a story of a prostitute and a thief who is deported to Virginia together with her companion, a highwayman, and there spends her last years in penitence and prosperity. "Roxana" (1724), in turn, tells about the career of a prosperous courtesan, who - made rich by her protectors from England, France, and Holland - nevertheless finally gets imprisoned for debts.

Among two hundred books and pamphlets which were written by Defoe, one may also find some historical narratives. "A Journal of the Plague Year" (1722) described London in the year 1664-1665. The vivid account of the growing terror, of the developing disease, of the burials, of

the people's escape from the city, is put down by the fictitious eyewitness who signs his report with the letters "H. F." - a typical example of Defoe's care for verisimilitude. Another text, a semi-historical romance, "Memoirs of a Cavalier" (1724) is attributed to Defoe and describes in detail a number of adventures, battles, sieges, and engagements in which the fictitious author of the memoirs took part first on the side of the Austrian Emperor, then in the Swedish army of Gustavus Adolphus, and finally in the service of Charles I.

The exemplary narratives of Daniel Defoe - owing to their mimetic detail and care for verisimilitude - might have served as "modest mirrors of Augustan society, offering to the public a slightly crooked but homely picture which was often tinted with moral suggestions. The image emerging from satiric romance appeared far more critical, sarcastic, and bitter.

"Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World by Lemuel Gulliver" (1726) by Jonathan Swift is only on the surface a book of travels and a story of adventures. Its openly imaginary "remote nations" serve as extended metaphors with the help of which the human race in general and the English society in particular are satirized. The country of the Lilliputs of the first book, with their factions of the wearers of high and low heels, and with their disputes on the question of whether eggs should be broken at the big or small end are simply a mockery of English political parties and religious controversies, while their diminutive size of six inches makes a ridiculous caricature of their official ceremonies and even of their wars, suggesting the general insignificance of the human race. In the country of the giants (the second book) Gulliver himself - as a representative of human beings - becomes insignificant. His own viewpoint of a small pet in a giant lady's boudoir allows him to discover all the most unpleasant aspects of human animality. The diminishing or magnifying of the world around the protagonist often has simple comic effects, but in the third part, devoted to the visit to Laputa, the island of the scientists, humour changes into sarcasm, when Gulliver observes absurd quasi-scientific experiments, listens to futile philosophical speculations, or uncovers the deceptions of historians. The stay in the country of the clever, virtuous, and simple horses, which is a kind of animal utopia, takes Swift's morbid misanthropy and bitterness to an extreme measured best by Gulliver's disgust of his own family after his return, since the family remind him of the Yahoos, beasts similar to men.

i. This almost passionate outburst of disappointment with mankind seems to transgress the restrictions which the neoclassical age put on the expression of feeling. The conclusions drawn by Gulliver about human society and about bestiality in man are a condemnation of reality, which falls into sharp contrast with Pope's statement that "whatever is, is right".

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### Poetry in the Augustan Age

Rationalism, the dominating intellectual trend of the Augustan Age, appeared most influential in moulding the poetry of the period. It freed the poet from superstitions, taught him to think steadily, and demanded of him a careful planning of a poem, a strict control of imagination and fancy. Poetry was still thought to be a social activity: it was written for readers of a certain standard and hence should possess all the qualities of good, gentlemanly conversation. A poet was conceived no longer as someone specially gifted, but as an artisan, and in effect no spontaneous associations of ideas could be put into a poem. The art of poetry depended on the poet's knowledge of the rules of the craft. The rules not only prescribed the choice of themes and appropriate diction, but also differentiated every form, kind, and genre of poetry, ascribing particular value to each of them and ordering the whole genre spectrum into a hierarchy of established conventions.

All these rules were collected and explained in didactic versified treatises on the literary canons of taste and style. Such treatises, following and imitating Horace's classical "Ars Poetica" or Vida's medieval "De Arte Poetica", became popular in all European countries, the most important of them and the most influential being the French normative poetics of Nicolas Boileau, "L'Art Poétique" (adapted freely into Polish by Franciszek Dmochowski as "Sztuka rymotwórcza"), based upon the poetics of Aristotle and Quintilian. Boileau's work also became the source for the

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English treatise, written by ALEXANDER POPE (1688-1744), entitled "Essay on Criticism" (1711).

JS- One of the most general rules prescribed the poet's attitude to tradition. The common standards of reference were Greek and Roman letters and it was these that were an ideal to be imitated. Poetry should deal, then, with the recurring thoughts and feelings of the human race. Hence the popularity of the translations from Greek and Latin, not only the most known and the most famous translations of Homer's "Iliad" (1717-1720) and "Odyssey" (1725-1726) by Pope, but also - for instance - Swift's translation of Ovid's "Baucis and Philemon".

As the business of the poet was imitation, a source of pleasure in poetry must have been a recognition of something already experienced. It was suggested that a poet should put old things in a new way and originality could be expected only in treatment and not in subject. The poets and the critics dreaded innovation and disliked the peculiar and the abnormal.

JS- Another rule prescribed the subject most suitable for poetry: "the proper study of mankind is Man". Man was thought to be the measure of all things; since he was placed at the very top of the hierarchy of all the world's creatures, he was also viewed as the master of the world and Nature. Hence it seemed especially important to educate him and to explain to him his high, exceptional status. Alexander Pope attempted to fulfil this task in his "Essay on Man" (1733-1734) which comprised four didactic epistles dealing with Man's relation to the universe, to himself, to society, and to happiness, expressing optimism and peaceful agreement with the existing order of the world. In "Moral Essays" (1731-1735) - the epistles treating, among other things, of the character of women and the use of riches - Pope used the most versatile tool of didacticism, the satire, confirming the critical impression that neoclassicism was primarily the age of satirical poems, verse pamphlets, and the mock-heroic epic.

As early as 1701 Daniel Defoe wrote a satirical poem "The True-born Englishman", trying to prove that the English are a mongrel race and mocking at their feeling of racial superiority. The mocking tone also appeared in Defoe's Pindaric ode "Hymn to the Pillory" (1703) which pointed out that pillory is in truth quite an honourable place to stand at. Alexander Pope himself preferred personal attacks, full of invectives, abuses and irony, especially in his satire on literary hacks (similar to Dryden's "Mac Flecknoe"), entitled "The Dunciad" (compl. ed. 1743) as

well as in a group of his satires, portraying contemporary manners and characters, under the title "Imitations of Horace" (1733-c. 1739).

GB- But Pope's most interesting poem in this vein was the slight satire on the trivialities of life in the age, on mannerisms, card-playing, lap-dogs, tea-parties. The work followed the tradition of the mock-heroic epic - a genre which in the years of convention and strict rules left perhaps most freedom to the author as it was a parody of the top-hierarchy genre: the epic: The mock-heroic poem used the language and poetic devices of the parodied epic: it began with an invocation; used hyperbole and exaggeration; quoted, alluded to, and adapted freely classical examples; operated with refined diction - all this in order to present small matters, trivial events and everyday incidents happening to unheroic persons in a manner suggesting they were grand and noble heroes. Pope's mock-heroic epic, "The Rape of the Lock" (1712-1714) told about Lord Petre's cutting in j6t a lock of hair from the head of Miss Arabella Fermor, a well known beauty of the society. The satire in the poem was slight: the primary object of the poet was not to criticize, but to amuse. Hence the substitution of heavy allegorical personages or ancient mythological gods of the traditional epic by the world of small and airy sylphs which guard the characters, take part in action, and constitute a separate, individual universe of the fictional world. The sylphs break the monotony of neoclassical dignity, conventionality, stylized elegance; they also are the source of making fun of old and automatized conventions of the epic. Together with the varying narrative distance to the incidents and their significance, the sylphs make the poem, in the words of De Quincey, "the most exquisite monument of playful fancy that universal literature offers".

The fictional world of Pope's mock-heroic poem is the universe of rococo beauty, the world of small objects of luxury, of powder boxes, fans, porcelain bibelots, snuff boxes. It is the world of salon, where the main character is a woman, and the main action is the erotic game, flirting and courting. Such a game was treated as a kind of art, and - as in each art of the period - the players of it should conform to certain rules. In other words, conventionality is still present here, but it acquires a lighter mood, the atmosphere of gold and silver and glitter, of changing colours and transparent forms.

So, the neoclassical interest in "the study of Man" was not necessarily and not always connected with serious didactic and moral purposes. It

often acquired the characteristics of occasional poetry or even of the poetry of the salon. The latter could be exemplified by the poems of MATTHEW PRIOR (1664-1721), full of classical references and Augustan clichés like "Venus's doves" and "Cupid arrows"; the former comprises Pope's "Ode for Music on St. Cecilia's Day" (1717), as well as Jonathan Swift's "Cadenus and Vanessa" (1726), an apology for the poet's conduct to his lover.

-JS- Of course, the most suitable subject for neoclassical poetry was a man who arrived at a certain cultural standard, namely, a gentleman. In those times there was no feeling of common humanity with the poor, or with the peasants who were thought vulgar, who constituted subjects fit only for comedy and were treated similarly to the fauna of the place. Even in pastorals the figures of peasants and shepherds were idealized and could be easily recognized as disguised gentlemen. This was an obvious effect of the imitation of Virgil, as in Pope's "Pastorals". (1709) or in JOHN GAY's (1685-1732) "The Shepherd's Week" (1714). The latter was professedly meant to ridicule the artificial bucolic poems of the age, but the traces of some crude rustic manners were still suggested in conventional diction and style, this time imitative of Spenser.

One of the key notions of the neoclassical normative poetics was the notion of Nature. Nature constituted the primary object which poets were advised to imitate. But, as it seems, the term itself had two distinct meanings in those times.

-JS- First, the word was understood primarily as the inborn abilities of Man. Thus, to imitate Nature meant - in the first place - to imitate human nature. As all the creation reveals the same underlying order and similar ordering principles; human nature appears to be an example of those general laws and may be viewed as a particular realization of them. On the other hand, the elements of the surrounding reality can easily serve as an analogy to the processes in Man or vice versa and they seem to be strictly bound together. Hence in poetry the setting - rivers, mountains, trees - appears only when it is connected with the activities of people. When Pope wrote a descriptive poem in the tradition of a topographical verse, following Sir John Denham's, "Cooper's Hill" (1642), he combined the descriptions of the countryside, suggested in the title "Windsor Forest" (1713), with historical, political and literary allusions. Similarly JOHN DYER (1699-1758), when writing his "Grongar Hill" (1726) remembered that

the described landscape should be always joined with the signs of man's occupations. John Gay in his "Rural Sports" (3713) followed in the steps of Pope and put together the descriptions of Nature and various sports, while in "Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets" (1716) he created a descriptive poem about London, offering as a result a witty and ironic tourist guide in verse.

-JS- Second, the term "Nature" could also mean in those times the order of the universe itself; this order that might be observed in all phenomena of the world. Due to this orderliness Nature resembled Art, and only in this respect was it interesting for writers. In effect, the aspects of a landscape that most attracted their notice were those which gave it the appearance of artificiality, like - for instance - trees in snow or winter panorama in frost. The descriptions of similar sights and views could be done most conveniently in similes and comparisons to people clad in white coats or clothed in gems and jewels, introducing the human factor into the landscape as well as stressing its resemblance to an artistic artefact. -JS-

This was one of the obvious results of the stubborn attempts of the age to reach the polish and elegance of the imitated classical literature. The striving for rhetoric and refinement led not only to an effusion of tenth-rate poets, but also to the build-up of a poetic vocabulary full of clichés and words too vague and general - such words as "swain", "dale" or "steed". Pope himself spoke in his letters about many troubles in translating Homer, when he attempted, for instance, to render in the dignified English language the Homeric expression about "hunger pinching bellies" or tried to find an elegant substitute for the word "bitch". According to the neoclassical rules, poetic vocabulary should be elevated and grand, and especially when Pope started a religious poem, a sacred verse eclogue on the messianic prophesies of Isaiah in "Messiah" (1712), he had to remember about the rule of decorum which stated that a high religious theme should be deliberately stately in diction and movement.

These neoclassical attempts at reaching a dignity and decorum in diction close to those of Horace or Cicero resulted in a particular liking for resounding words of Latin origin and for an elegant phrase. As Samuel Johnson put it later - "the business of the poet is to present the general rather than the specific". It led straight to the over-use of a general adjective qualifying an equally general noun, and such a phrase was usually used

instead of a concrete single word. Poetic diction became heavily marked with the epithet mannerism.

Moreover, dignity could not be reached without a certain smoothness and finish of expression. Hence the neatly rounded closed couplet came to be the favourite metre. Traditionally it was rarely closed: Chaucer, Ben Jonson, Denham often did not complete the thought in the second line of the couplet. But since the normative poetics of Boileau and Pope, the heroic couplet was always closed, and - being clear, symmetrical, and neat - became an admirable vehicle for epigrams and a favourite instrument for the satirists. In this way the poets achieved the highest standard of elegance - symmetry, "the proportion just and due".

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## The Age of Johnson (1740-1770). Towards pre-Romanticism (1770-1798)

The Age of Johnson and pre-Romanticism, although multifarious in both political and cultural respects, still form a changing whole which may be best described in its developing dynamics illustrating the transitional character of the years.

Politically the first thirty years witness England still expanding the Empire, notably in India (with the seizure of Bengal and Madras) and in Canada, fully conquered from the French in 1759. The taking of Australia in 1770 enabled sending the first settlers there eighteen years later. But these successes ended with the loss of English colonies in America in 1783, while the war with France in 1793, which lasted until 1815, put the enormous stress on the British military and economic resources.

Socially and economically the years were more united although not less dynamic. The inventions of new machines (the flying shuttle, the spinning jenny, the power loom, the double action steam engine) gave rise to the factory system and started changes in production which gravely influenced social conditions for a whole century to come. In the country large farms destroyed small yeoman holdings and the pauperized people emigrated to towns where the rise of industry, stimulated by the doctrine of laissez faire - the free market - helped the division of society into classes of capital and labour.

In culture, the reign of convention and rationalism began to be weakened first by the turn to sentiment and feeling, especially when growing sympathy for the poor changed into a strong trend of humanitarianism. The spirit of revolt against neoclassical rules started slowly to alter an interest in society to an interest in the individual and in the freedom of expression. Already at the very beginning of the Augustan Age - round about 1711 - the philosophy of Shaftesbury emphasized the emotional rather than the rational (and at the same time Sir Richard Steele, for instance, showed the interest in the feelings of an individual both in his essays and dramas). Shaftesbury believed that between good Nature and a good man there exists moral and spiritual harmony. Thus, the closer man is to Nature, the closer he is to goodness, since Nature is a manifestation of God. These beliefs were later, after 1762, developed by J.J. Rousseau, and - in the second half of the 18th century - the strict rule of reason grew mild enough to admit the opinion that spontaneous emotions, being natural ones, are essentially good. Reason and convention, the key notions of neoclassicism, were slowly being substituted by the notions of spontaneity and sensibility.

The placid neoclassical acceptance of the existing state of things received a shattering blow in the American (1775) and French (1789) Revolutions. New ideas began spreading - the revolutionary ideas of the equality of men and of the rights of men "to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" ("American Declaration of Independence"). A major change of attitudes was impending.

But neoclassicism was dying hard and slow. The first thirty years of the period were called after the greatest champion of the declining neoclassicism, who is important perhaps not so much for his literary achievements,

as for his personality and his attempts to maintain the intellectual and critical standards of the preceding period.

SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709-1784) ruled the taste of the period as Dryden and Pope ruled before him. Himself a religious man of strong moral principles, he had a deep concern for his fellow men's morals, too, and since he thought that "the men more frequently require to be reminded than informed", he tried to remind them of most essential neo-classical truths. For instance, as a literary critic he believed that the old ideas should be continually represented in fresh and agreeable forms. In effect, his critical praise was reserved not to novelty but to "what oft was thought but nevers so well expressed". He held to the neoclassical opinion that it was the thought, the idea, the concept which were of universal human interest, and, in order to persuade quickly the widest possible audience, they should be put in such a way as to produce the pleasing shock of surprised recognition.

Samuel Johnson published his literary beliefs in four volumes of critical prose, "The Lives of the English Poets" (1779-1781). Moralistic, didactic dissertations put within a romance-like frame, entitled "Rasselas" (1759), and written in the vein of Voltaire's philosophical tale "Candide", presented virtue as the only thing in life which can ensure quietness of conscience, although it cannot bring happiness. Essays on moral truths, some character sketches and allegories were published in a number of journals and magazines, of which the most important were two periodicals, following the example of "The Spectator", almost entirely written by Johnson: "The Rambler", whose 208 issues appeared on Tuesdays and Saturdays between March 1750 and March 1752, and "The Idler", a weekly (100 issues from April 1758 till April 1760).

The works of Johnson were written in a typically neoclassical style, in long periodic sentences with great Latin words for little things and haters, using the vocabulary of experimental sciences and empirical philosophy of the 17th century - a style so tedious and exaggerated that it acquired the derisive name of "Johnsonese".

But the main achievement of Samuel Johnson was "A Dictionary of the English Language" (1755) which undertook a similar task to that of Diderot and the Encyclopaedists - the task of collecting, classifying and putting information in a readily comprehensible form. It was a typical Enlightenment work, arising from the belief in the spread of knowledge,

in the work for future generations, in the significance of arts and crafts. But although Johnson was close in his opinions to the representatives of the French Enlightenment, and he also accepted the empiricism of Locke, he never became an atheist and a materialist as the later writers of this intellectual movement.

The importance of Samuel Johnson as a literary figure, his position as a centre of both literary and moral opinion, his common sense, erudition and intellect were best delineated in the two volumes of his biography, "The Life of Samuel Johnson L. L. D." (1791), written by JAMES BOSWELL (1740-1795), one of the members of "The Club" (founded c. 1764), among whose nine original members were Edmund Burke, Oliver Goldsmith, Sir Joshua Reynolds and David Garrick. Boswell's biography is the most famous English biography ever written - presents not only Dr Johnson's personality and the merits of his table-talk, but also introduces the reader to the whole Johnsonian circle.

## The rise and development of the novel

Prose fiction that appeared after 1740 did not differ much from various stories and romances of the preceding years. It had its sources in the 17th century character studies: allegories, picaresque tales, in the later "confession" stories, anecdotes, journal essays, sketches of underworld characters and setting, and in the narrative prose of Bunyan, Defoe, Swift. The new genre structure was born slowly, in elements changing from one work to another. Those changes gave rise to a new literary awareness differentiating between two main kinds of fictitious narratives: an old kind which comprised various types of romance, and a new one which justified calling it the novel. This differentiation in its most important elements appeared as early as 1692, in the writings of William Congreve, and acquired its full shape in the statement of Clara Reeve in 1785, who suggested that "the Romance is an heroic fable which treats of fabulous persons and things. The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the time in which it is written".

It seems, then, that the novel was recognized as a new genre somewhere between 1692 and 1785 and was understood - in opposition to romance -

as fiction presenting the mimetic model of everyday reality. Instead of the romance "past", it told of "the present", its unheroic protagonists differed from the heroic figures of the romance, and it offered a panorama of life and manners instead of a romance story of individual efforts and deeds. Other features which we are perhaps inclined to associate with the novel seem to have been accumulated in the later course of the historical development of particular novelistic variants. This evolution already started in the Age of Johnson with the formation of the first variant: the sentimental novel.

The tasks of the new genre structure were didactic and moral, similar to the aims of other literary genres of the neoclassical period. The first novels were supposed to present examples of moral behaviour, and - in order to teach effectively - they needed to be able to move the readers, they had to appeal to feelings, although it was not in vogue to analyze, to describe and scrutinize the psyche of the protagonist. Of course, the morality that the novels preached was superficial, sententious, utilitarian, but from the very beginning the novel attempted to awake emotions in its readers, even to move them to tears in order to persuade them about the necessity of following the presented examples of worthy and noble life.

The first English novel of sentiment was written by SAMUEL RICHARDSON (1689-1761) who, before his first attempt at a fictitious narrative, was a writer; and a compiler of model letters for various occasions. The skill thereby acquired found its use in Richardson's novelistic accomplishment: his first novel, "Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded" (1740-1742) was written as a series of letters. The epistolary method gave the writer good opportunity to express the thoughts of the protagonist in a more intimate way, opened possibilities for introducing suspense, gave an excellent excuse to present the private moral doubts and choices of the characters, and offered many chances for moral digressions and descriptions of petty details. Those descriptions and the delineation of manners slowed the pace of events - the novel became a lengthy story. The epistolary method also resulted - rather unexpectedly - in the exposure of the fictitious nature of the narrative (in direct opposition to the techniques of Defoe): all characters appeared to have equal facility with pen and used similar, if not identical, language.

In his first novel, Richardson created two literary types: a pure gentleman (in the figure of Squire B., who tries to seduce Pamela), and a type

of a chaste woman (Pamela herself, who is a maid employed by Squire B.'s mother). The plot illustrates how the resistance of the girl - who all the time loves and admires the young gentleman - succeeds in turning his lust to love: reformed by her virtue, Squire B. offers her a marriage at the end. Critics suggest that in spite of the moral tone - and contrary perhaps to the expectations of Richardson himself - Pamela appears rather a vulgar and calculating type. She can obviously think clearly and cleverly about her plans and she seems to attract her master on purpose. Sometimes her aggressive and provoking feminine tricks do not agree with her Puritan temperament and her aim is disclosed as a utilitarian one: she simply wants the squire to marry her. This over-conventional display of common-place morals must have been evident, since "Pamela" almost immediately became the target of parody in one of the novels by Henry Fielding (he is also generally assumed to be the author of "An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews", a parody of the Richardson's novel, which appeared under the name of Conny Keyber in 1741).

In his second famous novel, "Clarissa" (1748), Richardson created another pair of types: a polished rake and a Protestant martyr. The book is once more a series of letters, written by the title protagonist to her friend. They show the unhappy fate of a girl from a wealthy family who is manipulated by a number of incidents to the point of being rejected by public opinion. In effect the protagonist becomes almost a Christian figure of a suffering human being. Spiritually virtuous, she finds herself drugged and violated in a brothel by a rake, Lovelace. Public opinion; which at first condemns her, changes after her death and the circulation of her copied letters. In this way the moral of the story is made clear: it is supposed to show that virtue not always goes together with respectability in society, since society understands chastity only technically. But the virtuous always find their reward, if only in heaven and after death! Such was the story which was meant to move its readers to tears.

The prose of this type proved immediately immensely popular; Diderot praised "Clarissa", both Rousseau and Goethe looked to it for inspiration. But it did not produce direct imitations; the closest to the Richardsonian structure and sentiment is perhaps the epistolary novel "Julia de Roubigné" (1777), written by HENRY MACKENZIE (1745-1831), a Scottish writer. His other novel, "The Man of Feeling" (1771) resembles Richard-

son in combining sentiment with didacticism, but its loose and fragmentary construction also shows the influence of Sterne.

The post-Richardsonian novel of sentiment undertook themes of more domestic range, presenting simple, everyday life, frequently idyllic, and describing family and home affairs. The best known of these is perhaps the novel written by **OLIVER GOLDSMITH** (1728-1774) under the title "**The Vicar of Wakefield**" (1766). It tells the story of a certain Dr Primrose, a learned man, happy in his domestic hearth, who in the course of action is drawn to misfortune, poverty, jail and dishonour both by a series of accidents and by the machinations of the wordly and vicious characters. The idealistic Dr Primrose bears all his misfortunes with gentle resignation, attaining almost resilient **chivalric heroism** in face of his fate. Using the motif of a hidden identity, the author **somehow manoeuvres** the plots of the novel towards a happy end, and restores the protagonist to his family and quiet life.

Many characteristics of this type of the sentimental novel may be found in a later novel written by **HENRY FIELDING** (1707-1754), "**Amelia**" (1751), mainly due to the shaping of the title protagonist, a virtuous **woman** who bears stoically both the poverty and the follies and infidelities of her husband.

Later the censoring of the excessive sentimentalism and the influence of the techniques worked out by Fielding in his other novels will pave the road for the structuring of another novelistic variant - the novel of manners.

While the sentimental novel was heavily burdened with sentiment and moral purpose, the other variant which was born in the same age - usually called the "realistic" novel - was marked by rationalism and satiric purposes. It originated as an individual reaction of a journalist and a writer of burlesque plays, Henry Fielding, to the exemplary, conventional and utilitarian morals of Richardson's Pamela. Fielding began a kind of parody of "Pamela", entitled "**The History and Adventures of Joseph Andrews**" (1742), shaping his protagonist as a fictitious brother of Pamela, who is subjected to sexual temptation in a situation similar to that of his sister. The parody thins out when Joseph **Andrews** - together with his friend, Parson Adams - **sets** out from his village to travel by the English roads and begins to meet all kinds of adventures. The motif of travel - taken from the picaresque tradition - provides here much opportunity to

describe various characters and social or economic aspects of life together with the **panorama** of the English country and town settings and manners.

Begun as a parody, "**Joseph Andrews**" bears the subtitle "Comic Epic poem in Prose", which suggests its similarity to the mock-heroic epics. It mocks primarily hypocrisy - for Fielding, virtue does not depend on public demonstration (as was the case with Richardson's Pamela): virtue is a matter of inborn disposition and intention. The main example of it in the novel is Parson Adams, who always misinterprets conventions for truth, and who believes everybody, taking a beating because of his innocence and ignorance. Like **Don Quixote** he lacks knowledge of the world, and it is this inexperience that results most often in trouble, adventures and comic situations. Not only the farcical incidents of the plot, but also the narrator's attitude to the characters and their predicaments - an attitude full of humour - disclose here the combination of satirical purposes with the rationalistic stress on the necessity of knowledge, especially the knowledge of the human nature.

In a similar vein Fielding wrote his masterpiece, "**The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling**" (1749), in which once more his debt to the tradition of Daniel Defoe and the picaresque romance was revealed. As the author himself suggested, he intended to give a picture of "the plain, simple workings of honest nature" and "to recommend goodness and innocence has been [his] sincere endeavour in this history". The professed aims were typically neoclassical: belief in the "poor nature" of Man dominated the book. Contrary to Puritan opinions and conventions, Fielding did not connect morality with sexual control, hence the rather loose conduct of his protagonist (one should remember these were - more or less - **the same** years in which Diderot wrote his "**Jacques le Fataliste**"). Nevertheless, **Fielding** was a moralist. Although he treated the sins of flesh as less important than **the sins** against **the generosity** of feeling, Fielding present-

ed a development of his protagonist from a passionate youth to a thoughtful adult - and this development took place on the road of prudence.

Besides, the novel was one more attempt at achieving the status of the **epic**, an attempt to elevate the craft of fiction and the dignity of the genre, although this attempt seems to us today foreign to novelistic techniques: the typical 18th century discursiveness is revealed in the short essays on art and philosophy preceding particular **chapters** as well as in the digressions that abound in the text. The intrusive narrator functions here as a

kind of omniscient teller who comments not only upon the action but also upon the strategy of narrative choices themselves. In this way he introduces a certain distance to the events of the story and to its protagonists, he foregrounds the stance and attitudes of the speaker revealing his interest in characters as examples only of some general social laws, and constantly nullifies the illusion of the created fiction. As a result the novel gets the characteristics of a detached and relaxed yarn, it acquires the traits of a comparatively intimate social intercourse - it might well be a leisurely tale told to one's companions in the free and easy atmosphere of a wayside inn.

But, as always, Fielding tells a good story, with comedy inherent in it - comedy strengthened by irony, exaggeration; contrasts and caricature.

Daniel Defoe's influence married to the purposes of satiric romance and to the picaresque tradition were even more pronounced in the novel written between "Joseph Andrews" and "Tom Jones", under the title "The Life of Mr Jonathan Wild the Great" (1743), in which Fielding shows his first hand knowledge of the criminal class and its jargon. The book illustrates well the lack of difference between the low and the high classes in feeling, virtue or vice - a theme that will reappear in "Tom Jones". The picaresque interest in roguery is here a simultaneous satirical attack on political schemes, on the pretended virtues and real vices of mankind.

The same type of novelistic production, dominated by the influence of the picaresque, but with a still greater stress put onto the documentary value of the observations, was represented by TOBIAS SMOLLETT (1721-1771), the author who inaugurated the nautical novel, presenting the brutal aspects of life on board the ship. His first book, entitled "The Adventures of Roderick Random" (1748), operated with autobiographical material and told the story of a young Scot who goes to London, is pressed aboard there and meets many adventures in different parts of the world. The protagonist is a typical picaresque hero, selfish and unprincipled, so the story often concentrates on examples of various kinds of roguery and unpleasanties of life,

In the same vein he also wrote "The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle" (1751), the story of a swashbuckler and a scoundrel. Here some amusing characters were introduced, among them a type of a salty sailor, Commodore Trunnion, whose language is far worse than his heart. The book contains satire on the social, political and literary conditions of the day

and is said to have influenced a number of novels by Sterne, Scott and Dickens.

Continuing the interest of the age in low life and in the underworld, Smollett wrote "The Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom" (1753), the life history of an indecent and dishonourable villain, which showed the predilection towards episodes evoking terror. The description of a sensational visit to a graveyard in the blackness of midnight as the owls hoot and white figures appear foreshadows the approaching epoch of the Gothic novel.

The novels of Tobias Smollett are perhaps the closest to the tradition of romance (even the titles seem to suggest it). Only "The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker!" (1771), with its use of the epistolary method as well as the choice of a more domestic theme connected with a peaceful motif of travel for recreation and health, comes closer to the novel of sentiment, while the delineation of amusing characters shows some affinity to Fielding.

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### Laurence Sterne (1713-1768)

The development of the novel in the age was extremely rapid and resulted in the growth of not only a number of genre variants but also in the appearance of individual accomplishments which did not start an immediate evolution of different genre conventions. It seems that the fiction of the period discloses its greatest possibilities in the new novel of sentiment written by Laurence Sterne.

At first glance his most famous book displays many features which can be found in the majority of fictional writings of the age. Its loose construction and the narrator's fondness of digressions remind the reader of

Fielding's techniques; its humorous intention joins it with both Fielding and Smollett and even with Swift, at the same time answering the expectations of the reading public who enjoyed some indecent suggestions on the condition that they did not become too obvious and vulgar. Even the title of the novel is built according to a certain recognizable neoclassical convention - 'The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gent?' (1759-1767) suggests both the division into two different kinds of material and their expected effects: the "life" story is told by the narrator for the readers' amusement (although the story itself does not consist of too many incidents), "the opinions" (of the narrator, not of the protagonist, in spite of the suggestion of the title) are proposed in digressions for the readers' instruction.

WC- The technique of 'close observation, which critics name "the petty realism" of Sterne, is a legacy of neoclassical perspectives as well. In the novel the narrator's attention is usually focused on little events: in one of the most famous passages the narrator describes a retired soldier freeing a fly out of feelings of benevolence, although the soldier has previously been presented as spending most of his time in building mock fortifications, conducting sieges and planning military slaughters on his strategic maps. Such detailed observation of petty incidents, in which some truths are revealed - here the truth of a character - is in full agreement with the neoclassical belief that one can discover the most essential principles of the universe and the truth about Man by observing the smallest atoms of reality. It is obviously the viewpoint of a neoclassical wise man, of a rationalist, of a naturalist of the epoch. Swift had to go to unknown islands to find the exotic - for Sterne, it is enough to change the scale of his observations, to observe a fly, or tin soldiers, in order to reach both the exotic and the truth, not losing contact with the closest reality at the same time.

But in other respects Sterne is no longer neoclassical. The change is to be seen mainly in his marked interest in the individual, which first and foremost influences the modifications in the time concept. The time which is important in the novel is no longer the clock time, but the time of human experience - the time as it appears to human consciousness. Any moment is felt by people as joining the experience of the present both with past remembrances and with the hopes and expectations of the future - in our perception time is not truly linear. Besides, the same moment may pass quickly in joy or linger in sorrow. The narration in Sterne's novel strives to follow these dictates of experience: a moment of joy may be described

in a single sentence, while a moment of sorrow can fill up a whole page; And since the past and the future colour and condition the consciousness of the present in the same way, the chronological order of narration must be broken as well, and the narration should follow the individual's whimsical shifts from the expectations and plans to the remembrances, from the remembrances to the here-and-now. Such a technique of narration appears in Sterne's text for the first time in the development of the novel, and it will be forgotten in the next stage of its evolution to be reborn only in the beginning of the 20th century: in the "stream of consciousness" technique of modernistic fiction.

The interest in the individual makes Sterne a sentimental writer, but "sentiment" here is to be understood differently than in Richardson. Sentimentality for Sterne means the ability to respond to the slightest emotional stimulus, to relish every sensation and feeling. According to him, a private trend of associations constitutes for everybody his own world, his own cosmos; everybody is a prisoner of his consciousness. Hence there is an enormous difficulty in making contact with other human beings. Sensibility - the power of feeling - is the only means of escape from this prison, the only means of communication with others, the only hope for understanding. From such a perspective "sentiment" becomes an end in itself, and is at last liberated from morals.

The altered concepts of time and sensibility immediately change the task of the narrator. Instead of attempting to do justice to the world around, he tries to create a subjective model of individual experience. In other words, instead of giving precedence to the referential function of his message, he chooses the emotive one as the dominant. This results, in turn, in some novelties in the use of language. Being aware of the difficulties in rendering impressions, the narrator always looks for the most accurate word; trying to render all the niceties of impression, he looks for the most delicate shades of meaning: first he chooses a word, then clarifies it with synonyms, contrasts it with antonyms, adds new clauses, defines the word and clarifies it once more, corrects himself and negates the previously chosen expressions. He does everything to depict the labouring thought, achieving at the same time a complete freedom of the pen. His sentences, although long and complicated, create an easy, flowing, gossiping style. Not everything can be expressed - but the idea itself of the impossibility may be suggested, so some sentences stop in the middle

undergo unexpected inversion, reveal peculiar punctuation; there appears a number of dashes, asterisks, blanks, even black or blank pages.

The same happens with the construction of the book. Sometimes the narrator stops in the middle of the chapter, because he remembered something worth telling that had happened before. At other times he omits certain chapters altogether as they seem to him either too good or too bad to be introduced into the novel. 'Sometimes a chapter consists of several pages, sometimes of only a short sentence.

Such a technique is in direct opposition to neoclassical precepts of neatness and clear development. This is not planned order - it is the disorder of a developing and changing thought process. To render such a process, the author must possess a high awareness of his own choices, of his material, of his instruments - a high awareness of language which is no longer only the means of imitation, but is used freely in creation. And to create means here to struggle with linguistic conventions, it means breaching language rules and establishing new principles for this immediate need, for this unique usage. In our terminology, creation here demands a conscious build-up of the supercode.

And thus a revolution is achieved: in "Tristram Shandy" there dies a journalistic tendency to present a mimetic story, to pretend that the book is a piece, a fragment of true history. This "death" was already prepared by Fielding's novels, where the commentaries to particular chapters suggested openly that it was he - the implied author in the guise of the intrusive narrator - who was responsible for the shape of action, the fates of characters, and the construction of the story. But Fielding's feeling of authorial omnipotence was still bound by didactic and moralistic tasks, it was still limited by the demands of readers accustomed to particular conventions: he felt himself to be the master of the fictional world and a constructor of the novel, but seemed less interested in the autotelic issues, in foregrounding the very problems of writing. Only in Sterne does the awareness of language resistance, of the multiple choices hidden in the system itself, of the intricacies of literary expression, become the dominant autothematic preoccupation inscribed in the text of the novel.

The new understanding of "sentiment" which brought such spectacular results in the field of the novel, could also produce major changes in

another popular genre of the neoclassical epoch: the travel journal. The neoclassical thirst for knowledge gave direct stimulus, of course, to the growth of this genre of non-fictional prose: here the rationalistic love for vivid detail and reliable information on the geographical, social, and economic aspects of reality found perhaps its best nourishment. Such journals were written, for instance, by Daniel Defoe, who between the years 1724 and 1727 published three volumes of "A Tour thro' the whole Island of Great Britain", by Samuel Johnson, who wrote about "A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland" (1775), or by the biographer of Johnson, James Boswell, who gave to the world "An Account of Corsica. The Journal of a Tour to That Island..." (1768) and "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson" (wr. 1773, p. 1785). All these journals became in later centuries admirable sources of information for historians.

No wonder that Laurence Sterne also tried his pen in this popular genre. But "A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy" (1768) was not a book containing simply the impressions of a traveller in a geographical sense. Permeated by Sterne's understanding of sentiment and sensibility, it did not offer much topographical information or many picturesque scenes. It was primarily a journey through characters and emotion, undertaken in the quest for more knowledge about oneself: the narrative situation dominated over scant incidents. The narrator's viewpoint was that of a man of feeling - a man blessed with the ability to feel himself into someone else's situation and emotions. While the journey of the protagonist was motivated by his search for contact with other people, the mirror-like technique of linking parallel situations and analogous characters foregrounded the process of the search itself, irrespective of its aims and results. The string of individual scenes, loosely connected by the identity of the protagonist-narrator, in all its strata and aspects governed by the organizing principle of a modified similarity (unity in variety), directs the reader's attention towards textual strategies and enlivens his sense of a literary game. "A Sentimental Journey" discloses readily its play with conventions: the title itself suggests the change of the adopted genre structure and its cross-breeding with novelistic techniques; the preface is to be found - contrary to obvious expectations - as late as in chapter VII; the convention of the "found manuscript" becomes parodied when a fragment of a story is discovered on a piece of paper used as a wrapping for butter; some chapters - and the whole text as well - are left unfinished;

many erotic allusions demand the reader's clever cooperation in their deciphering. In effect the journal of travel loses its documentary function and the text acquires the features of novelistic prose.

"A Sentimental Journey" not only won great popularity in the late 18th century, but also proved more influential than "Tristram Shandy" in the period to come.

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### Drama of the neoclassical period

The drama of these years seems to be of little interest to the historian of literature. Firstly, it was no longer one of the dominant kinds of literature, and, secondly, it was heavily influenced by the conditions in theatrical production. The theatre of the times was dominated by the star system, and the plays were often written so as to give maximum opportunity for famous actors to show off their abilities and not much attention was paid to the coherence of the whole text.

The "reform" of comedy, started by the pamphlet of Jeremy Collier, brought to this genre greater moral responsibility and introduced didacticism. Following the main tendencies of the epoch, comedy began to instruct people, instead of making them laugh. When instruction was helped by the intrusion of sensibility, comedy displayed a slow disappearance of humour and began mingling laughter, if there still was any, with sentimental tears, although the prominent moral purpose sometimes encouraged the manifestation of slight satire. But, according to the intellectual trends of the age and contrary to the immanent tendencies of the genre, comedy suggests a rather determined belief in the essential goodness of the human heart.

Perhaps the best examples of this dull, didactic, and sentimental kind of dramatic production are the comedies written by Sir Richard Steeie:

"The Tender Husband" (1705), whose very title suggests the characteristics mentioned above, or "The Conscious Lovers", a typical *comédie larmoyante*.

The times witnessed not only the great popularity of pantomime, of various masques, performances of commedia dell'arte, dances, dance operas, and dance interludes which were usually played as afterpieces, but also the influence of the Italian opera, which might have stimulated the appearance of an original English ballad opera, written by John Gay under the title "The Beggar's Opera" (1725). Its plot concerned a highwayman and his mistress, and it gave a vivid picture of the London underworld, documenting the neoclassical interest in low life, which was so marked in the prose of the epoch. The opera tried successfully to suggest the inherent sameness of gentlemen and rogues.

A return to the traditional tasks of comedy could be observed in the 70's, after the appearance of Oliver Goldsmith's play, "She Stoops to Conquer" (1771). As the author himself suggested, "it was meant to provide entertainment, to cheer [the] heart and give [...] muscles motion", to act "as a kind of magic charm". The play was a farical comedy of incident with a plot taken from Farquhar, and it tried to make fun "among other things - of the humourless *comédie larmoyante* of the times. From this time on the audience could once more expect laughter in the theatre provoked by what happened on the stage.

Criticism of sentimental comedy was also a feature of some plays, written by RICHARD BRINSLEY BUTLER SHERIDAN (1751-1816), for instance "The Critic" (1779) and "The Rivals" (1775), a comedy with the memorable Mrs. Malaprop, whose incessant mispronunciation of difficult words prompted a new term for this type of mistake: "the malapropism". Sheridan's masterpiece "The School for Scandal" (1777) also proved to be the best comedy of the neoclassical times. It offered a satire on the tittle-tattle of fashionable societies and combined witty epigrammatical conversation with a quick and interesting plot.

The tragedy of the times followed rather closely the tradition of the Restoration: it was stilted and dull, written in a wooden blank verse, often aiming at political réclame. The best known examples of it are Joseph Addison's "Cato" (1713), James Thomson's "Sophonisba" (1730), Samuel Johnson's "Irene" (1749). The attempt at a parody of the genre is

more interesting: it is the best of the 22 plays of Henry Fielding, "Tom Thumb the Great" (1730).

The mimetic ambitions of the age favoured the development of domestic tragedy, with ordinary non-heroic characters and with emphasized morality for the topic. The most representative example of it was written by GEORGE LILLO (1693-1739) under the title "The London Merchant" (1731), presenting a story in which a good apprentice is seduced by a wicked woman to robbery and murder.

Changes in the intellectual tendencies of the period were perhaps responsible for the introduction of a supernatural element into various plays. The atmosphere of terror, horror, and mystery was combined with scenes of haunting, while the setting of a graveyard or some ruins at midnight foreshadowed the appearance of the Gothic trend which will be felt most strongly in the pre-Romantic poetry and novel.

## Sentimental leanings in poetry

The departures from neoclassical conventions that occurred in some poetic texts of the period might be first signalled by a quotation:

"See, winter comes to rule the varied year,  
Sullen and sad, with all his rising train -  
Vapours, and clouds, and storms. Be these my theme;..."

The passage comes from Augustan times, from a poem contemporary with Swift and Pope; and it heralds a major change in neoclassical versifying habits. The roots of the change, then, seem to lie deep in the very heart of the period, in the work of JAMES THOMSON (1700-1748) whose departure from neoclassical conventions mainly concerned the choice of subject. As the quoted passage suggests, he undertook to describe outdoor nature, in its grand, impressive aspects. He did it in a four-book poem about rural life entitled "The Seasons" (1726-1730), describing in turn Winter, Summer, Spring, and Autumn. The Preface to the second edition of the poem showed that it was a conscious effort to "revive poetry". Thomson was not satisfied in describing life in towns, and Nature for him was not only the background for man's activities, but was often presented

for its own sake. He paid special attention to the observation of its various aspects, particularly to the sights and sounds associated with the progress of the year, and offered detailed descriptions of colourful contrasts of light and shadow. Such passages showed Thomson's sensuousness (he felt a direct appeal to all five senses), and it was evidently a kind of an opposition against rationalism. But, on the other hand, his concept of Nature as a perfectly constructed mechanism of universe is typically neoclassical.

Thomson departed from neoclassical conventions in two other respects: he came back to Milonic blank verse, rejecting the traditional closed couplet, and - more than once in his treatment of rural life - he showed sympathy for the poor rustics, in this way joining the humanitarian attitude with the beginnings of nature poetry in this epoch.

But still in his conventional, latinized diction, in the choice of vocabulary and style Thomson was a neoclassical poet. He often spoke about young men as "youthful swains", and instead speaking about "poultry" or "the wind" he mentioned "household feathery people" and "ethereal force". His verse was neoclassically regular and ordered, he used stock elements of scenery, introduced compliments to patrons and did not escape a moral tendency in his observations.

Similar tensions between neoclassical leanings and new attitudes marked the production of the majority of nature and humanitarian poets of the age. WILLIAM COWPER (1731-1800), when writing his poem "The Task" (1785) dedicated it to the theme that "God made the country and man made the town"; and although he showed an affection for nature, it was still treated as a setting for human occupations. In spite of its close observation of rural scenes - of hay-casting, of a country postman, of a waggoner breasting the storm, of a snowfall - the poem developed into a kind of discourse about social, domestic country life, adorned with moral topics and didactic passages. GEORGE CRABBE (1754-1832) - one of the belated Augustans, a transitional poet who also wrote in the Romantic period - showed a humanitarian attitude in his poem "The Village" (1783), offering a sordid picture of the 18th-century rustic life, but putting it into the neoclassical metre of heroic couplets. WILLIAM SHENSTONE (1714-1763) expressed in his rural poems his love of natural beauty and his desire for simplicity, but in his short poems could not escape from the weight of conventions in diction, endowing the places he described with many artificial ornaments. RICHARD JAGO (1715-1781) was similarly conven-

tional, although he followed Thomson in his choice of blank verse and topic in the poem "Edge Hill" (1767), a description in four books of the same hill-top, as it appeared at four successive periods of the day.

It was Oliver Goldsmith, who - although equally neoclassical - joined his humanitarian interests with other new features of approaching pre-Romanticism: the melancholic mood and elegiac tone, as might be best observed in the poem "The Deserted Village" (1769) which presented the destructive influence of the industrial order on a happy and peaceful rural community.

The pensive, gentle, idyllic tone, and the fleeting mood, which is usually experienced at sunset and provoked by sylvan scenery appeared in the poems of WILLIAM COLLINS (1721-1759), a poet combining Thomsonian sensuousness with an elegiac atmosphere. The best example of his accomplishment is "Ode to Evening" (1746), praised for the most skilful use of musical assonance and onomatopoeia, which expresses the enjoyment of nature in solitude at the twilight hour. Other odes, published in the same volume, voiced his protest against the artificiality and ornateness of 18th-century poetry, although his practical striving for simplicity and naturalness was not always successful.

The same atmosphere, combined with neoclassical neatness, aphoristic diction, and orderliness on the one hand, and on the other, with the feeling for nature and the sympathy for lowly folk has been noticed in the poetry of THOMAS GRAY (1716-1771), by training a classicist and an academic, who also wrote moralizing, didactic, neoclassical hymns and odes. The pre-Romantic topics appeared in his most famous poem, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751).

Of course, many of these interests and attempts to introduce some changes were merely sentimental. Sentimental also were a few attempts to undertake the theme of love, either in prose by Jonathan Swift in his "Journal to Stella" (1710-1713), a collection of letters, or in verse, as in "Eloisa to Abelard" (1717) by Alexander Pope, a heroic epistle about Eloisa's renunciation of love for the service of God. But it was among the "nature" poets that some of the most important tendencies were born.

The introduction of the melancholy mood into neoclassical poetry seems to be one of the major steps towards a complete change of attitude. In neoclassical descriptive poems the stress fell traditionally on the observed object. This tradition suffered a decisive break: the expression of

the mood shifted the stress onto the observing subject. The neoclassical WHAT was being slowly substituted by the pre-Romantic WHO and HOW. Objective distance and precision in rendering images of the world became less important than emotional, subjective intensity of a poetic vision. The rationalistic ambition of understanding and depicting changed into the pre-Romantic longing to feel and in effect objective and rationalized description changed into a poetic confession. The importance of the poet, the man who feels in a unique way, began to grow. Edward Young in his "Conjectures on Original Composition" (1759), a prose essay, rejected the ancients as models, because it was originality that became important. Poets should rely upon inspiration, he suggested; they should be creative, not imitative.

So, from the change of topic, through the introduction of mood, the development of neoclassical poetry into the pre-Romantic one was marked primarily by a great step from the descriptive poem to the personal lyric. And this step was taken first by the poets of the so-called "graveyard school".

## Poetry of pre-Romanticism

Both William Collins and Thomas Gray are usually ascribed to the "graveyard school" of poetry by virtue of their melancholic attitude. But they were not the most typical of the school.

The popularity of the pensive mood and melancholic reverie led straight to the contemplation of death and of the grave. Such contemplation was often stimulated by the observation of a gloomy landscape or a graveyard at a particular time: in the evening or at night. The meditation was usually a pessimistic one, and even if not, it had an intensely personal and subjective overtone. The lyrical ego presented his own inmost thoughts and feelings which were restless and changing, no longer neatly arranged and rationally ordered. In the years 1742-1745 there appeared a long poem in nine parts which was destined to have an enormous influence on Romantic writers in the whole of Europe. Its author was EDWARD YOUNG (1683-1765), and it was written in blank verse under the title "Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality". Reflective, full of grief

and feeling for mystery, sweet in despair, it was a typical poem of the "graveyard school", breaking the rules of order and measure, following the dictates and needs of self-expression. If melancholy was of a religious kind, but although it followed the tradition of Christian meditations, Christian and Greek ideas were often confused there.

An immediate echo of the "Night Thoughts" was to be heard in the writing of ROBERT BLAIR (1699-1746), in whose poem "The Grave" (1743) we can meet a meditation on death which sometimes borders on macabre and funereal horrors. Identical emotions and thoughts were given expression - this time not in verse, but in a kind of declamatory prose - by JAMES HERVEY (1714-1758), whose work's title speaks for itself: "Meditations among the Tombs" (1745-1747).

The humanitarian interests of the sentimental writers - an interest in the people of the county not only because they were closer to nature, but also because they seemed to be socially oppressed - heralded the approach of the Romantic attitudes which towards the close of the century were to change into revolutionary ideas feeding greedily upon the topic of social oppression. But the sentimental writer admired primarily the simplicity and naturalness of the "primitive" people who were close to the land. In pre-Romanticism this admiration was shifted from the people themselves to their culture.

In effect there arose an extremely strong interest in folklore, in primitive ballads, folk songs, folk lyrics. As a reaction against neoclassicism this was also combined with a renunciation of ancient classical models - the poets began to look for models in their own national past. Hence the revival of Miltonic blank verse instead of heroic couplets in the writings of sentimental authors; hence also the return to Spenser and the Spenserian stanza by James Thomson in his poem "The Castle of Indolence" (1748), which was a sentimental allegory, dreamy in its vision of the castles in a lotus-land, where the magician and enchanter Indolence lures pilgrims and drains them of energy and free will.

The general yearning for the remote and the interest in folklore, combined with the inclination for the gathering of knowledge (still, in its origin, a neoclassical tendency), were direct stimuli for a revival of curiosity not only about the nation's past, but also about the remnants of its old culture. The revival was called the antiquarian movement.

When Thomas Gray wrote his odes, he followed the Greek Pindaric model, dividing them into three parts, each of which was further divided into three sections. Yet in one of the odes, "The Progress of Poesy" (1757), he tried to express his love for old English poetry, and in another, "The Bard" (1757) he took up a subject from Welsh medieval legend. Later, through thorough scholarship he tried to explore the origins of romance, looking for material in old Norse and Celtic legends. His two odes, "The Fatal Sisters" (1761) and "The Descent of Odin" (1761) stimulated the literary interest of the years in the Scandinavian tradition.

In the year 1760 a historian and writer, JAMES MACPHERSON (1736-1796) published a collection of folk poetry under the long but explanatory title: "Fragments of ancient poetry, collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and translated from the Gaelic or Erse language". The publication aroused the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh to finance Macpherson on a trip through the Highlands and Ireland for the purpose of extending his research. As a result of this trip he brought back enough material to produce in a few years the so called "Ossianic poems", collected as "The Works of Ossian" (1765) and presented as prose translations from a legendary, 3rd century Gaelic bard, Ossian, a traditional Highland hero. Many people believed they were true translations, many others accused them of being forgeries. In fact they seem to be based in part on ancient fragments, but the translation is not a genuine transcription from old originals. "The Works" created a great sensation in Europe: they were translated into French by Turgot, into Italian by Cesarotti; they gave impetus to the Romantic movement in Germany and were admired by Goethe; they became famous among the Polish Romantic writers, too.

"Ossianic poems", written in rhythmical prose, offered minute descriptions of landscape - which are Romantic, but foreign to early Scottish poetry. They were sentimental, presenting a world of heroic simplicity, set in a landscape of mountains and mist, evidently influenced by the graveyard tradition in their melancholy and gloomy mood. Their underlying pattern of an epic conforming to the canons of Aristotle, the solemn meditative tone of their prose sentences, resembling biblical language, their glorious imagery of bygone days stirring the national feeling, their use of mysterious, cloudy, desolate landscapes as a setting for romantic love - all these features explain the best-seller popularity of the "Ossianic poems" in their times.

The most exemplary accomplishment of the antiquarian movement was the work of THOMAS PERCY (1729-1811), who edited a collection of about 180 old English and Scottish ballads, historical songs, merical romances and sonnets, taken from an old folio manuscript. It appeared under the title "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry" (1765) and became a landmark both in English balladry and in pre-Romantic striving for naturalness of diction and approach, although the editor more than once rather freely adapted his ancient sources.

Adaptation changed into forgery under the pen of THOMAS CHATTERTON (1752-1770), a tragic young poet of intense medieval sympathies, who compiled "Poems, supposed to have been written at Bristol, By Thomas Rowley, And Others, in the Fifteenth Century" (wr. 1765-1770; ed. 1777). The "Poems" were written in counterfeit Middle English, echoing Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and... Macpherson (sic!), but they disclosed a rare talent and were much admired by many Romantic poets.

More scholarly interest within the antiquarian movement was represented by two brothers: JOSEPH WARTON (1722-1800) and THOMAS WARTON (1728-1790). They both underlook research an older literature but Thomas also attempted to write poems on Arthurian romance material.

The interest in folk songs, ballad, and folk lyrics found perhaps its best expression in the poems of ROBERT BURNS (1759-1796), the greatest of Scottish poets, and, maybe, the most famous song writer in the world. His poems appeared in three editions, in 1786, 1787, and 1793. This last collection was entitled "Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect". Besides his own collections of poetry, he contributed almost 200 songs (adaptations and original texts) to the six volumes of James Johnson's anthology "Scots Musical Museum", and about 60 songs to James Thomson's five volumes of "Select Scottish Airs".

The poetry of Robert Burns may suggest how pre-Romantic writings combined the few elements of approaching Romanticism with the old conventions of neoclassicism. Burns was decisively a poet of nature and sentiment which may be exemplified by a number of his poems, for instance, "To a Mountain Daisy", or "To a Mouse", which offers the lyrical ego's reflections on a mouse turned up with her nest by a plough, with a typically neoclassical tendency to moralize. From this poem comes the famous line: "the best laid schemes of mice and men go often awry" (which later gave the title to one of the best known novels of John Steinbeck).

Burns also was a poet of democracy and revolution, together with the approaching Romanticism voicing his cry for liberty, equality, and fraternity, and a poet proud of his own nation, glorifying Scotland and defending her right for independence, as might be seen in "Scots, Wha Hae", a war song about the battle of Bannockburn. But at the same time he is often over-rhetorical and neoclassically bombastic, as in his democratic poem on the dignity of the individual, "A Man's a Man for A' That".

In a humanitarian way, showing his sentiment towards lowly folk, he wrote "The Cotter's Saturday Night", describing an evening in the life of a Scottish peasant family, but adorning it with ornate neoclassical diction. Perhaps the most Romantic of such poems - but at the same time full of humour - is a tale from Scottish folklore, a kind of a witch and ghost story, entitled "Tom O'Shanter". Burns's intense love of humanity takes sometimes an almost Swiftian turn when he adopts one of the most popular neoclassical genres: the satiric poem, as in "The Holy Fair", a personal and social satire, or in "Holy Willie's Prayer", an ironical satire against the religious hypocrites.

But Burns is primarily - as a pre-Romantic - a writer of lyrical songs and personal lyrics, the poems of love, of good fellowship and of enduring friendship. Such topics are undertaken in his best known and most famous poems and songs, for instance in "John Anderson", "Bonnie Wee Thing", "Auld Lang Syne".

Pre-Romanticism brings with itself still one more change in poetical interests: a concern for the supernatural and a revival of religious poetry.

Besides William Cowper's "Olney Hymns" (1779) whose 68 texts form a collection which is still most favoured by the Church hymnody, the times witnessed the appearance of two religious poets, unexpectedly individual ones. CHRISTOPHER SMART (1722-1770) combined unusual imagery and intensity of short, rapid lines with slightly naive diction and vocabulary, modelling perhaps his "Jubilate Agno" (1759-1763) and "A Song to David" (1763) on the Latin poetry of Horace. But his primary source of inspiration was the Old Testament and - his main topic being the praise and celebration of the divine presence - he seemed to create his poems mostly as a kind of a prayer.

The most outstanding achievement was that of another mystic, a poet, painter and engraver, half pre-Romantic, half Romantic writer (as both

the characteristics of his writing and the chronology of his books suggest). The poet in question is, of course, WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827). While showing the influences of the Elizabethans, Milton and the pre-Romantics, Blake seems to be indebted more to non-literary sources: to Swedenborg, Boehme, the Kabbala and the Bible. But from the very beginning his poetry was marked by distinct personality and original poetic expression. Even in his first published volume, "Poetical Sketches" (1783), written when the author was still in his teens, Blake departed from neoclassical conventions and modelled his poems on Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton. He experimented here with new rhythms and metre: wrote a sonnet without rhymes ("To the Evening Star") and tried various stanzas in the construction of a song. In this early volume he also showed his talent for an astonishing metaphor and for the accomplishing of rich symbolic meanings.

These characteristics were further strengthened in his other collections and books, which appeared to be a masterly combination of two arts: poetry and engraving. The poet himself engraved the text and the illustrations to it onto copper plates, and tinted the engravings with his own hand after printing. The process of engraving, water-colouring the prints and binding each volume was extremely laborious and time consuming. All of Blake's works were first produced by his own hand (except "Poetical Sketches"), and there are few surviving copies of the original editions (27 of "Songs of Innocence and Experience" - some incomplete; 15 of "The Book of Thel"; 9 of "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell"; 5 of "Jerusalem").

"Songs of Innocence" were etched in 1789 and in 1794 they were put together with "Songs of Experience" and some other poems under the joint title. As Blake himself suggested, the two collections were to present the contrasting viewpoints of man: a child-like innocence, displaying ignorance of the surrounding reality and belief in everything the child is told, and a grown-up awareness of all the bad sides of life. Such a contrast - helped here with some of the poems paired in matched counterparts ("The Lamb" : "The Tyger") - seems to suggest the way of reaching true maturity, the joining of both states, a stage which comprehends and transcends both viewpoints: the complete understanding of reality - "organized innocence".

Blake's symbolic thinking about Man, History and God was slowly elaborated into a full-scale mythology presented in a series of tests called

"the prophetic books": "The Book of Thel" (1789), "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" (1790), a prose text with a poem as a prologue and a song as an epilogue, "The Four Zoas" (1797), "Milton" and "Jerusalem" (both 1804). Putting Blake's opinions and beliefs into simpler terms, one might suggest perhaps that - according to him - man's fall is essentially a problem in psychology. Man alienated himself from the world and from his fellows and as a result all the universe appeared to him as chaotic and society as a multitude of isolated individuals. Blake viewed man's history as a cycle of approaches to and departures from redemption: it is the history of constant attempts to restore a unified vision of the universe and Man.

These ideas - and other more complicated ones - were presented as a story with symbolic characters in a symbolic setting, a story which changes in each successive book, although the essential vision remains the same. Each work develops slightly different aspects of the vision; the characters, elements of the setting and their significance may alter; the concrete, sensuous images may change; nevertheless the "story" which underlies them seems to remain constant. But the alterations and modifications make interpretation of a single text most difficult, while a paraphrase of the "story" must of necessity become a simplification of it.

This epic story starts in Eden. I-Ire the Universal Man - who is himself God and Cosmos at the same time - undergoes a division. This break-up is equivalent to the biblical Call of man, but this time not away from God: instead, it is the falling apart of primary Unity into isolated parts - Blake calls this Selfhood: the attempt of a single part, separated from whole, to be self-sufficient. This moment of division is the moment of creation, too: of man, and of nature, and of the distorted, divided vision of the universe. It is the moment in which the Universal Man - the Human Form Divine - divides into Four Mighty Ones, the Zoas, the chief powers and components of Man, who, in their respective male and female aspects, pass into being in three lower states of existence (lower than Eden): Beulah (a child-like, pastoral and idyllic condition of innocence), Generation (the condition of human suffering, contraries and painful experience), and Llullu (the lowest hell, the condition of utter rationality, tyranny, oppression; the state of utter negation, division, alienation and selfhood).

This vision also has its future aspect. Blake suggests that we can achieve redemption by liberating and intensifying the bodily senses with the help

of imagination in order to transfigure the divided vision, to recover the lost mode of vision, to reunite with Jerusalem. According to him, the history of humanity leads to an imaginative apocalypse, to a revolution of imagination which will enable all people to see Nature (since it will be humanized) as a place where individuals, united in Universal Brotherhood, will feel at home and become a new unity in a new Eden.

The idea of revolution, the desire for communion with Nature, the mystic vision of an era of brotherhood and love, the stress put on the imagination - all these features seem to constitute the characteristics that make William Blake a Romantic writer.

## The pre-Romantic novel

When all the variants of the neoclassical novel entered the period of pre-Romanticism, they met with a reaction against their evident standards of rationalism. The reaction was incited by those intellectual tendencies of the epoch which stimulated an interest in the past, in the primitive, in the wild aspects of nature, in the various revelations of the supernatural. Such interests promoted the revival of romance tradition rather than favoured any further development of true novelistic prose.

First, an interest in the past provoked the writers to choose the Middle Ages as the setting for the action of their stories. And as their knowledge of those times was rather superficial, they stressed the barbaric elements and concentrated on medieval superstitions. The essence of the Middle Ages was connected for them with the image of the Gothic cathedral or of the forlorn ruins of a medieval castle grown over with ivy, situated preferably in an isolated place, in the wild woods or on a high cliff at a stormy sea.

Second, such images evoked feelings of the mysterious and of the unknown, and they agreed with contemporary opinions about what is beautiful and sublime. The philosopher EDMUND BURKE (1729-1797), in his treatise "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful" (1757), suggested that the sublime emotions are based on terror and on the astonishment and amazement that accompany terror. Among the qualities that evoke the sublime he listed

vacuity, darkness, solitude, silence, profusion and disorder. No wonder that the wild and stormy aspects of nature were thought to cause the appearance of the sublime, especially when they were associated with the strongest emotion, that of distress - particularly the distress of a weak and beautiful woman in need of help.

All those characteristics can be found in the kind of pre-Romantic fiction that is called "the Gothic romance". Certain Gothic motifs had already appeared in the poem of Alexander Pope "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady" (1717) which told about a suicide from a hopeless love, about a non-Christian burial and a ghost haunting the valley. Some other motifs - like a nocturnal visit to a graveyard - may be found in Tobias Smollett's "Ferdinand, Count Fathom".

But the first true Gothic romance was a book by HORACE WALPOLE (1717-1797), entitled "The Castle of Otranto" (1764), a pseudo-medieval tale, masked as a translation from Italian, with the action set in the imagined 12th- or 13th-century Italy, full of the ghastly machinations of the villain, with a distressed heroine, mysterious strangers, visiting knights, moving portraits and supernatural manifestations. The book quickly won enormous popularity, while the author transformed his own residence into a Gothic castle with secret passages and dark staircases and - following the example of his characters - tried to live in those pseudo-medieval surroundings.

Many other writers followed in his steps, especially women, who combined Gothic atmosphere and sensationalism with the cult of sentimental feelings. One of the first distinguished followers of Walpole was CLARA REEVE (1729-1807), who in her romance "The Old English Baron" (1777) combined the usual Gothic stock motifs with a truer historical setting, producing an amalgam of the Gothic romance and a semi-historical novel. Another writer, WILLIAM BECKFORD (1759-1844) wrote in French his romance "Vathek" (1786) where the Gothic mood was joined with an exotic, oriental setting in a story about a young caliph who sold his soul to the devil - a story much indebted to the "Arabian Nights".

However, the most famous, and the most prolific, was Mrs ANNE RADCLIFFE (1764-1823), who established the great popularity of the Gothic romance with her various titles, one of which is "The Mysteries of Udolpho" (1794) making much of the usual motifs of distant and unexplainable cries, sliding panels, secret chambers and passages, moonlit

casements, hooded figures, clanking chains, etc. All the characters here are, of course, types, but the action keeps the reader in constant suspense about what will happen next. Additionally, almost all the novels of Anne Radcliffe bear one characteristic feature: the apparent element of the supernatural is usually explained at the end of each romance by natural causes.

In another romance, "The Italian..." (1797), Mrs Radcliffe presented a type of villainous monk, Schedoni, who bears many characteristics of a Byronic hero. This type became later one of the stock figures of the Gothic romance and, among others, reappeared transformed in the work of MATTHEW GREGORY LEWIS (1775-1818), entitled "The Monk" (1797). "The Monk" showed the heavy influence of different variants of the sensational literature that flourished in England after the publication of Walpole's romance. Written by the author when he was barely twenty, it tells the story of a satanic monk led away from his vocation by the thrills of eroticism to the most vicious deeds. The romance often focuses on the straightforward description of horrors and terrors, sometimes bordering melodramatic effects. Critical and public opinion forced some revisions before the second edition, which strengthened the guise of a superficial didactic intent of the whole story, evident especially in the repulsive end of the protagonist. There is much historical irony in the fact that a Romantic tendency to revive romance in this age lapsed into scenes of lust and tortures thinly disguised by neoclassical moral didacticism.

But in pre-Romanticism the development of prose fiction is not only connected with the reaction against the novel. The novel itself underwent some slight changes - mainly the sentimental novel of the Richardsonian type. It slowly began to lose its tendency to instruct and tempered its over-played sentimentalism. Instead teaching morals, it acquired more ambition to describe, concentrating the efforts of the author on the creation of the mimetic model itself.

These changes may be observed in the best novels of FRANCES BURNEY (1752-1840), who wrote books of family life, starting with an epistolary domestic novel entitled "Evelina" (1778). In her two other novels, "Cecilia" (1782) and "Camilla" (1796) she combined pictures of 18th-century life with farcical but quiet comedy.

In her fiction a new variant of the novel was slowly born, to be fully developed in Romanticism: the English novel of manners.

#### FURTHER READING:

Z. Sinko, "Wstęp" [in:] M.G. Lewis, "Mnich"; Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków 1964, Ossolineum, BN II 138.

## Romanticism (1800-1832) as an intellectual trend

Not many domains of public life signalled changes profound enough to justify viewing the first years of the 19th century as the start of a new epoch. The beginning of the century brought continuation rather than alteration. King George III was insane for the last ten years of his life and the country was ruled by the Regent who, after the King's death in 1820 succeeded to the throne and reigned almost to the end of the period. The war with Napoleonic France, started in the 18th century, continued for the first fifteen years of the new age; the internal troubles with Ireland, culminating in the rebellion of 1798, led straight to the union of the Irish and British parliaments in 1801 and to the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, which allowed Catholics to sit in Parliament.

New inventions, like for instance the safety lamp for miners in 1815, and the progress in transport (the first railway lines built between 1825 and 1830) stimulated the further growth of industry; in spite of the wars and the abolition of slave trade in 1807, business was not bad, but wealth was accumulated in the hands of comparatively few, while the conditions of work in factories were still bad, the living in poorhouses was on the verge of social degradation, working children were treated inhumanely, education for the majority was poor and conditions in prisons abominable. After the war the situation grew worse, aggravated by war debts, bad harvests, and disregard of the rights of labour.

All this provoked radical social thinking. Tom Paine published his "Rights of Man" (1791-1792), defending the French Revolution and advocating a democratic rebellion; William Godwin in his "Inquiry Concerning Political Justice" (1793) prophesied the evolution of society to a