

Lecture 4

Romanticism



- 1. The historical background at the end of the 18th – the beginning of the 19th century.**
- 2. Characteristic features of the trend.**
- 3. William Blake – the founder of Romanticism in English literature.**
- 4. ‘Lake School’ poets.**
- 5. Revolutionary romanticism of G. G. Byron.**
- 6. The revolutionary poetry of P. B. Shelley.**
- 7. London romanticists.**
- 8. W. Scott – the creator of the historical novel.**



Main reasons

- **The formation of Romanticism took place before and after the French Revolution in 1789-1794.**
- **The change in the social and political situation.**
- **Literature- reflection of the dissatisfaction of the results of the French Revolution; disappointment caused by the bourgeois civilization and scientific progress.**

2. Characteristic features

- **Bringing emotions and introspection to English literature; a new concentration on the individual – W. Wordsworth, S. T. Coleridge.**
- **The reaction to urbanism and industrialization – a prompt to explore nature (the Lake Poets).**



2. Characteristic features

- **Construction of highly idiosyncratic poetic creations - W. Blake.**
- **Collection and adaptation of folk songs into a body of national poetry – R. Burns.**
- **‘Second generation’ Romantic Poets flouted social convention and used poetry as a political voice – G. G. Byron, P. B. Shelley, J. Keats.**

Peculiarities

- A reflection of the process of the personality's deviating from society;
- The human being is isolated from the social system;
- Living in the unique inner world, creating an ideal world according to wishes of the subjective soul;
- The contradiction with the cruel reality of modern society;

The psychology of a personality

- Expecting some changes;
- Wishing something new;
- Doubting about the transition from the old to the new;
- The inner world results in the lyrical character of the Romanticism.



Estheticism

- **A lot of attention is paid to beauty;**
- **The reality of life is recreated as something fine with the help of poetic fantasy;**
- **Poetry – is a great means of influence;**
- **Emotions and imagination – are the main things in poetic creativity;**



Estheticism

- **Writers referred to symbols, allegory, grotesque;**
- **Imagination – is the highest form of cognition; it penetrates into the mysterious world of beauty;**
- **Art – is a source of spiritual self-development and the strength leading to revolutionary actions.**

Main trends

- ‘Lake School Poets’ – W. Wordsworth, S. T. Coleridge
- Revolutionary Romanticism – G. G. Byron, P. B. Shelley
- London Romanticism – J. Keats, W. Hazlitt



Fiction - novels of fantasy

- Sensibility – is a highlight in a novel;
- A new world of ‘romances’- heroines are women, prone to imagining worlds beyond their appointed one;
- ‘Gothic novels’ – stories in distant times and places;
- A different style of writing – the ‘comedy of manners’

‘Gothic novels’

- **A favourite setting – is Renaissance Italy;**
- **Ann Radcliff’s “The Mysteries of Udolpho” – the classic gothic novel;**
- **The notion of the sublime is central;**
- **The sublime and the beautiful are juxtaposed: awful and terrifying vs. calm and reassuring;**
- **Heroines are susceptible to supernatural elements – hypersensibility.**

The comedy of manners

- Jane Austin's "Northanger Abbey" – a parody to the gothic novel;
- Sensibility is less valued;
- Novels are scathingly critical of the restrictive rural culture;
- "Pride and Prejudice" – is a blueprint for much subsequent romantic fiction .

3. William Blake

- **Creative activity is connected with enlightening literature (the influence of ideas on the human mind);**
- **Humanism is based on the support of the French Revolution: symbolic images reflect revolutionary mood of people;**
- **Depiction of the human sufferings and inevitability of social changes;**
- **“Songs of Innocence” and “Songs of Experience” – depiction of two contradictory conditions of a human soul.**

4. Lake School Poets

- **William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey – lived in Cumberland, The Lake Region;**
- **Expression of rebellious mood, praise of the French Revolution – disappointment by its results, loss of belief in active struggle;**



4. Lake School Poets

- **W. Wordsworth – beauty and harmony in the soul of a simple human being; contradiction between a watching attitude to life and a sympathetic attitude to people;**
- **S. T. Coleridge – a fantastic element, something strange, fearful and superior; the concept of imagination.**

5. George Gordon Byron's Revolutionary Romanticism

- Poetic works are the reflection of rebellious mood of people;
- Worshipping of enlightening ideals and classicism esthetics;
- A thought about senseless modern reality;
- Dream is about a human liberty, but the ideal of freedom is deprived of social concrete direction;
- He contributed to form the modern stereotype of Scottish culture;
- He was the highest earning and most popular author.

Creative activity

- **‘Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage’ – a broad critical survey of contemporary life that mirrors the poet’s own feelings;**
- **Childe Harold – is a dreamer, leaving the hypocritical society for remote countries;**



Creative activity

- **‘Don Juan’ contains satirical motive, lyricism and philosophic thoughts;**
- **The contrast of ‘Don Juan’ is based on deeper economic sides of the society and is expressed in the form of contradiction between appearance and essence**



6. Percy Bysshe Shelley

- **Pointed out actual problems of time;**
- **Complex symbols, bright metaphors, associations of images are peculiar to Shelley's poetry;**
- **Belief in happy future and depiction of joyful pictures of free humankind;**
- **Political rhymes are based on rhetorical devices;**
- **'Song to the Men of England' – is an appeal to the people depending on the bourgeois regime.**

7. London Romanticism

- **John Keats, William Hazlitt criticized bourgeois orders, the politics of English Tory;**
- **The trend takes a middle position between different branches of Romanticism;**
- **Radical reformations, defending human rights; progressive ethical and esthetic ideas;**

7. London Romanticism

- **Poets are not revolutionary;**
- **John Keats – is a master of sonnets and odes – ‘On Peace’, ‘Ode to a Nightingale’;**
- **William Hazlitt writes outstanding critical studies of Elizabethan drama**



8. Walter Scott

- **His creative activity is an important stage in the development of a literary process in England – it reflects transition from Romanticism to Realism;**
- **W. Scott – is a creator of historical novel (reflection of life of different epochs);**
- **He improves the composition of a novel and the way of depicting characters;**



8. Walter Scott

- **Romanticism in writing combines with realistic devices;**
- **The ‘Waverley’ novels – are the first truly historical novels in English literature;**
- **‘Ivanhoe’, ‘Rob Roy’, ‘Quentin Durward’ – the study of history combines with philosophic reflection;**
- **Scott’s death in 1832 marks the end of the romantic period.**