

## EL 306.02: The English Romantics

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Boğaziçi University

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**Schedule:** Tuesday 13:00-14:50; Thursday 13:00-13:50

**Office Hours:** by appointment

### Written on the Sea-Shore

How awful, how sublime this view,  
Each day presenting something new;  
Hark! now the seas majestic roar,  
And now the birds warblings pour;  
Now yonder lark's sweet notes resound,  
And now an awful stillness reigns around.

### Felicia Dorothea Hemans (age 10)

Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
And never brought to mind?

### Robert Burns, "Auld Lang Syne"

Welcome to our course on the Romantic Period. This is an essential course not only for literary studies but also for anyone interested in receiving a rigorous liberal arts education. Why? Well, on a simple level, some of the most beautiful works in history were produced in this relatively short period. But also, the Romantics really transformed some of the central concepts of human experience. The way we think about concepts like beauty, emotions, solitude, nature, childhood, death, politics, and freedom owe so much to the way the Romantics shaped them in their poetic and philosophical works. You will quickly see that the Romantics are very much poets of *our* time.

The Romantics also changed the way we *meditate*. What does it mean to reflect? How much space do we need for our thoughts to grow? How much distance from politics? How much distance from society? How much solitude? How explicitly ought we to invite politics into our private meditations and into art? What does it mean to create something beautiful? To look at something beautiful? Can beauty be universal? What is the philosophical virtue in arguing that it *can* be? Inevitably, we will spend considerable time thinking about *style*. Romantics were able to transform the world because each of them cultivated a unique style. To that end, we shall pay attention to writers' essays and treatises on poetics: How should one create art? Write poetry? Should poets aspire to use plain and accessible language? What is the virtue in arguing that they *should*?

Though relatively short, the Romantic era was a transformative one on social and political levels. This was the Age of Revolutions: The American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and a tumultuous political climate in England. We will think about how poets lived in and responded to their turbulent political contexts. Finally, it is impossible to do justice to the Romantic period without stepping into the world of philosophy. Our readings will be supplemented with references to philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke. In particular, we will be interested in questions of aesthetic philosophy.

By the end of the course, you should be able to talk about the writers on our syllabus with a keen grasp of their individual styles. Therefore, each time we return to a poet, I ask that you please remind yourself to meditate on their style. "Ha! Shelley, again." "Oh, we've read Baillie before." What is their language like? What poetic forms do they often use? How do they relate to the world? What themes do they typically explore? This exercise will help you in the final exam.

### Course Policies:

- Your regular **attendance** and **participation** are expected. Skipping classes will obviously lower your contribution score.
- You have to **read assigned texts marked in red carefully** and digest them **before coming to class**. What does "read before coming to class" mean? It means you have to read and understand the text, analyze the language to get a strong sense of the author's style, and, if you see the need, make additional research to fill possible gaps in your comprehension of the text. This is necessary to follow the lectures and the class discussion successfully. I will assume that you have done this in preparation for each class. You should expect in-class quizzes and to be called upon to contribute to discussion.
- There will be a **midterm** (45%) and a **final** (45%). The midterm will be on during class time, the final will be scheduled by the university.
- There will be a two-hour midterm during Week 4. This midterm will test your knowledge of the history of the Romantic Period, the relevant concepts discussed in class, Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, and William Blake's poetry. Yes, you need to know your history and the texts we study like the back of your hand. And yes, I *will* ask you "knowledge questions." Surprise, surprise: Knowledge *is* a part of learning? Who knew!
- **Contribution** (10%) to the course requires consistently attending all sessions and actively engaging in class discussions with a sense of responsibility.
- **Plagiarism** is not acceptable. You can review the department's website [here](#) for more information. The smallest case of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the entire course and be reported to the administration.

### Evaluation:

Early midterm	45%
Final exam	45%
Contribution	10%

## Supplementary Readings

On Moodle, you will find a historical introduction. Please make sure to read this **before the course begins**. I will assume that you will come to our first class meeting familiar with the history of the Romantic Era. Expect questions about this history in the midterm.

In addition, you will find the following readings which you should read as we go along if you want to (you should want to) get a strong grasp of the intellectual, cultural and political dynamics of the period. I will try to bring excerpts from these to class from time to time. Ideally, after we refer to these texts in class, you will explode with enthusiasm to go and read the entire text on Moodle.

### Precursors to the Romantics; Pre-Romanticism

- Graveyard Poetry: Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751)
- Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759)
- Frances Burney, *Evelina* (1778)
- William Cowper, *The Task* (1785)

### On Aesthetics and the Sublime

- Edmund Burke, from *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757)
- Immanuel Kant, from *The Critique of Judgement* (1790)
- Sir Uvedale Price, *On the Picturesque, as compared with the sublime and the beautiful* (1794)

### Revolutionary Politics

- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790)
- Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (1791)
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790)
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

### On Literary Style

- William Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1802)
- Dorothy Wordsworth, from *The Alfoxden Journal* and *The Grasmere Journals* (1800)
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (1817)
- Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry" (1821)
- Selections from John Keats's letters (one of the best gifts you can give yourself)

## Reading schedule:

<p><b>Week 1</b></p> <p>February 15</p>	<p><b>Introduction:</b> You have taken a course on the Restoration. As you prepare for our first class meeting, get over your undergraduate amnesia and try to contextualize the Romantic period in history. After all the talk of rationality, enlightenment, decorum, and wit in the Restoration Era, we get a brief episode in literary history called Pre-Romanticism. You must master this period if you intend to work on the Romantics down the line. Though we don't have time to analyze works from this period in this course, you should know that many terms and attitudes we will be using (sentimentality, emotionality, the sublime, the picturesque, melancholy) have their roots in this transitional period. During our first class, I will give you a brief introduction to the Romantics by situating them in historical context. During the second half, we will discuss two texts on the sublime, an aesthetic and philosophical concept which will keep returning in our discussions throughout the semester. How do we feel in the presence of vastness, greatness, of awe-inspiring objects, experiences? Why are moved by a landscape? Why do we look at the Bosphorus when we feel melancholy? How much control do we have in such moments, how much do we lose? Are these moments related to how we view or experience an artwork? How? Are they solitary experiences, or do they open us up to society in different ways? For example, let's say you listen to a mind-blowing symphony by Beethoven which leaves you speechless. You don't exactly know what it is about the music that made you feel this way but you know it pushed the right buttons. Then you feel a powerful urge to share it with your friends, thus socializing your individual judgement: "OMG, did you listen to that symphony?" Your unexcited friend responds, "Nah, it was rather dull. I didn't care for it" <i>What? Didn't care for it? I can't believe we are breathing the same air.</i> Or as Jane Austen's Marianne Dashwood says of her sister's crush, Edward, "Oh! Mama, how spiritless, how tame was Edward's manner in reading to us last night!... To hear those beautiful lines which have frequently almost driven me wild, pronounced with such impenetrable calmness, such dreadful indifference!" What is Marianne assuming here about other people? What is the virtue of her assuming so? What is the cost?</p>
	<p><b>Anna Laetitia Barbauld and John Aikin, "On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror" (1773); William Hazlitt, "Why Distant Objects Please" (1821)</b></p>
<p><b>Week 2</b></p> <p>February 20 &amp; 22</p>	<p><b>Sense and Sensibility:</b> Very well, I admit that it is rather unorthodox to teach Jane Austen at the beginning of a course on the Romantics. Normally, if at all, she is taught at the end of these courses since her work is really sandwiched between the Romantic and the Victorian periods. But in my defense, there is a virtue in viewing a historical period through a later lens, which we kind of always do anyway. Plus, by now you should know the golden rule: Any opportunity to read Austen, you take it. Back to business: <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> is Austen's first published novel (not her best). While Austen is similar to the Romantic poets we will be reading in the course with her deft portraits of individual experience, interest in <i>bildung</i>, solitary reflection, and nature, Austen also edges us closer to the realist novel tradition which will flourish in the Victorian Era. Austen performs a balancing act between passion and reason not only in her choice of characters, but also, often, in her sentences. You could write <i>any</i> sentence by Austen on the board and spend hours studying how it modulates different emotions and voices. This is partly thanks to her masterful use of free indirect discourse. Pay attention to how the narrator waltzes in and out of characters' voices. This balancing act also means that Austen often parodies the Romantic tradition. We find many of her characters reading works by the Romantics, being moved, and allowing their passionate reading</p>

	<p>experiences to determine their expectations of life. In <i>Sense and Sensibility</i>, we find two timeless characters Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. Elinor embodies sense, reason, and “cool judgement,” while Marianne, a lover of nature, melancholy, and Romantic poetry, embodies sensibility, passion and idealism. As we move through the Romantic period, these two characters will stay in our minds as representatives of two different kinds of responsiveness to life. Having just talked about the sublime during our first class, Marianne’s passionate responses to landscape and art ought to interest you. Do her aesthetic judgments stay on an individual level? Or do they allow her to bond with others and enable a constructive sociality? Are we to read Marianne as Austen’s cautionary parody of a too passionate character who lacks her sister’s “cool judgement”? Or can we push against this conventional reading and see some virtue in Marianne’s histrionics? You may consider watching the 1996 film which is pretty good (outstanding cast) but I will expect you to have read the first volume carefully.</p> <p><b>Jane Austen, <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> Volume 1 (1811)</b>  Ang Lee &amp; Emma Thompson, <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> (1996)</p>
<p><b>Week 3</b>  February 27 &amp; 29</p>	<p><b>Blake’s Illuminated Books:</b> We are spending two weeks on William Blake. During our first class, we will look at two very short texts which capture Blake’s complex and dialectical attitude toward religion. To appreciate Blake, we first have to understand his meticulous process as the publisher and engraver of his own works. Therefore, during our first class, I will also give you a short introduction to his extraordinary techniques of engraving and “illumination.” During our second class, we will look at selections from two poetry collections, <i>Songs of Innocence</i> and <i>Songs of Experience</i>. You will see that most poems in the second volume were written to accompany / as a response to the poems in the first volume. Reading these comparatively allows us to appreciate Blake’s dialectical weltanschauung. Please try to observe how Blake deconstructs traditional concepts and notions. Finally, please also consult the illuminated manuscripts online to truly appreciate the dialogues Blake stages between text and image (<a href="http://www.blakearchive.org">http://www.blakearchive.org</a>). Be careful, they are not always complementary. In fact, they are almost never complementary: You will find unexpected and exciting windows into Blake’s dialectical process while comparing the texts and the illuminated images.</p>
<p>February 27</p>	<p><b>“All Religions Are One,” “There Is No Natural Religion” (1788)</b></p>
<p>February 29</p>	<p><b><i>Songs of Innocence</i> (1789): “Introduction,” “The Echoing Green,” “The Lamb,” “Holy Thursday,” “Nurse’s Song”</b>  <b><i>Songs of Experience</i> (1794): “Introduction,” “Holy Thursday,” “Nurse’s Song,” “The Tyger,” “London,” “A Poison Tree”</b></p>
<p><b>Week 4</b>  March 5 &amp; 8</p>	<p><b>Blake’s Illuminated Books:</b> During our second week on Blake, we will see the other side of him, the visionary poet, the writer of prophetic works who creates his own mythology to reflect on the revolutions taking place in the world, and perhaps more importantly, to create entirely new archetypes which can revolutionize human perception and imagination. Blake believed that relying too heavily on old myths and stories would imprison us in received wisdom, prejudice, and ideology. So, he creates his own myths. As you read <i>America</i>, observe the process by which Blake creates his own mythological figures and contexts. Who are the prominent figures? What images, gestures, motifs are they associated with? Like last week, make sure to consult the illuminated manuscripts online to think about the relationship between text and image. Finally, notice the poetic form. Unlike last week, we are now seeing Blake’s masterful execution of long-line poetry. What kind of rhythm and energy do these long-lines provide? Does Blake’s style here remind you of other</p>

	texts? Any modern poets perhaps? During our final class on Blake, we shall close-read three poems from <i>The Pickering Manuscript</i> to recap his worldview. These poems may look simple on the surface but they are rather dense. You will want to take home some of Blake's delicious epigrammatic genius.
March 5	<i>America: A Prophecy</i> (1793)
March 8	"The Crystal Cabinet," "The Grey Monk," "Auguries of Innocence" (1800-1804)

<b>Week 5</b>	
March 12	<b>Midterm</b>
March 14	<p><b>Sleep / Death:</b> Why were Romantic poets so obsessed with sleep, sleeplessness, and insomnia? Was it because it serves as a rehearsal for death? Was it because this state of tranquility is an antithesis to the anxious meditations of a wakeful consciousness? Was it because they believed dreams could provide glimpses of other worlds? Because returning to reality after exciting dreams can transform our vision of the world, the way reading a poem might? Since virtually all Romantic poets wrote about sleep, I recommend that you take a look at all of the poems in your textbook. This way, you will get a glimpse of the unique styles of the many poets we will be encountering throughout the semester. During class, we will look a few poems. 1- Keats's and Smith's sonnets to sleep will allow us to think about the relationship between sleeping and art, as well as the way Romantics used the sonnet form. 2- Coleridge is interested in dream-states. In his daemonic poem "Kubla Khan," what he manages to recollect from his oriental dream serves a bit like a celebration of the artistic imagination. As you read the poem, think about what imagination means to the Romantics. Also think about the "daemonic" style. Why might a poet add such threatening and uncanny (tekinsiz) details to a dreamscape? How do these uncanny details arouse the imagination and keep it in a dynamic state? In the course packet, you will find a poem addressed to Coleridge by Mary Robinson. Do consider reading it because the literary friendship between Coleridge and Robinson will keep returning throughout our course. Robinson's poem is a celebration of Coleridge's style, so it might allow you to better appreciate Coleridge as well. If you are interested in the intoxicating dream states which invigorate the imagination, you may consider taking a peek at Thomas De Quincey's autobiographical <i>Confessions of an English Opium-Eater</i> (1821), or at Byron's "Darkness," which is characteristically gloomy and apocalyptic. This short poem by Byron would be a good trailer for the prototype of the "Byronic hero" we will encounter in Week 8. 3- Finally we turn to "A slumber did my spirit seal," one of Wordsworth's famous "Lucy poems" which is rather enigmatic in the way it responds to Lucy's death. One of my favorite scholars of Romanticism, Marjorie Levinson, has a wonderful article where she reads this poem from a Spinozian angle. The philosophically-minded among you might enjoy it. In any case, this tender Lucy poem raises important questions about some uncomfortable gendered Romantic notions. For example, think about this: On one hand, Romantic poets, as we have seen, often describe the sublime in masculine terms, even when it stems from nature: God, grandeur, power, vastness. On the other hand, they tend to associate nature with feminine traits. Judith W. Page argues that "in Romantic poetry nature is depicted in female terms in opposition to male powers of imagination.... Individual women in Wordsworth's poetry often become subsumed in nature and its processes so that they have no voice, no identity apart from the male poet's perception of nature." The Lucy poems give us a good opportunity to start thinking more critically about the gendered aspects of the Romantic imagination. For those of you interested in pursuing comparative</p>

	<p>avenues, I have included some poems by Felicia Hemans. "The Painter's Last Work – A Scene" was inspired by the industrious William Blake. Even though she celebrates the male artist here as a disciplined and passionate craftsman, a gendered reading of this dramatic scene – a painter making one final drawing of his wife before dying - raises interesting questions that might allow you to rethink the uncomfortable Romantic associations between death and femininity. Hemans is an incredible writer of dramatic monologues. We will read more of her work throughout the course. So, if you read it, please think about how a dramatic monologue differs from a lyric poem. What opportunities does it bring to poetry? How does Hemans dramatize and psychologize her characters? Finally, I have included two ekphrastic poems that Hemans wrote after seeing Sir Francis Chantrey's marble sculpture "Sleeping Children." This sculpture was commissioned by Ellen-Jane Robinson after losing her two daughters. Hemans was moved by it and wrote two poems about it: "The Child's Last Sleep" (1826) and "The Sculpted Children" (1828). Scholar Stephen C. Behrendt characterizes these poems as "curiously impersonal and formulaic" and "emotionally detached." What do you think? Do you agree? What about Hemans's powerful enjambments? Her poignant depictions of physical or bodily features? And most importantly her voice? Does she subdue this sculpture into a philosophical formula or does she manage to find a way of keeping the stirred emotionality of the speaker alive? How is the elegiac mode here different from the one you have seen in Wordsworth's Lucy poems?</p>
	<p><b>John Keats, "Sonnet to Sleep" (1819)</b>  <b>Charlotte Smith, "Sonnet XI: To Sleep" (1786)</b>  <b>Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan" (1797/1816)</b>  <b>William Wordsworth, "A slumber did my spirit seal" (1798/1800)</b>  William Wordsworth, "She dwelt among the untrodden ways" (1798/1800)  John Keats, "When I have fears that I may cease to be" (1818/1848)  John Keats, "Why did I laugh tonight" (1818/1848)  Lord Byron, "Darkness" (1816)  Percy Shelley, "To Night" (1821)  Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Pains of Sleep" (1803)  Mary Robinson, "To Coleridge" (1800)  Felicia Hemans, "The Painter's Last Work – A Scene" (1832)  Felicia Hemans, "The Child's Last Sleep" (1826)  Felicia Hemans, "The Sculpted Children" (1828)</p>
<p><b>Week 6</b>   March 19 &amp; 21</p>	<p><b>Childhood:</b> Childhood as a concept was revolutionized during the Romantic Era. Rather than being naïve and uncultured entities in need of education, children were increasingly regarded as teachers to the adult mind. A return to childhood meant recovering a state of freedom and creativity that the adult mind tends to lose as it gets shaped by the ideological apparatuses of culture. We have already seen this in Blake. Those of you interested in a full liberal arts education should consult J. J. Rousseau's influential work on this subject, <i>Émile, or On Education</i> (1762). We will flex our poetic muscles with a tiny, pretty poem by Charles Lamb on childhood. Afterwards, we shall devote our entire time to Wordsworth, indisputably the most rigorous philosopher of childhood among the British Romantics. So far in the course, we have seen short lyrics by Wordsworth. Now we will see longer poems by him: Odes and narrative poems. In both "Tintern Abbey" and the selection from the <i>Prelude</i>, Wordsworth returns to childhood settings and memories. How do these "spots of time" from the past and images of childhood return to us? What do they do to us? What meaning and power do they carry? As you think about recollection, please notice that Wordsworth's conceptions of childhood and latent memories are</p>

	<p>very close to modern psychology. Study Wordsworth's use of blank verse (iambic pentameter, no rhymes) in both poems. What effect does it have? How does it dramatize the process of contemplation? Think about Wordsworth's language. How would you characterize it? Is it plain? Is it eloquent? Is it colloquial? We will look at a few passages from Wordsworth's introduction to the <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> to appreciate the revolution he created in poetic language. Finally, notice Wordsworth's turn to his sister at the end of "Tintern Abbey" or "Nutting." Why does he need this turn? How would you characterize the turn? Is it sincere? To what extent does this turn socialize an otherwise-introspective lyric voice?</p> <p><b>Charles Lamb, "Childhood" (1796)</b>  <b>William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey" (1798)</b>  <b>William Wordsworth, The Prelude, Book Twelfth ["Spots of Time"] (1805)</b>  William Wordsworth, "Nutting" (1799)  William Wordsworth, "Immortality Ode" (1804/1807)</p>
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<p><b>Week 7</b>   March 26 &amp; 28</p>	<p><b>Children Sleeping:</b> As we continue to think about childhood in Romantic poetry, we are going to combine two themes that we have already explored: Childhood and sleep. In particular, we will be interested in dramatic scenes where parents address their children as they are sleeping or as they are about to wake. Parents often "project" their desires onto their children. Romantic parents are no different. As we read these poems, we will think about the way the child comes to embody the kind of aesthetic expectations these poets have of their own works. Does the bond between the parent and the child give us any clue about the kind of relationship Romantic poets intend to forge with their readers? How do they apostrophize and address their children? We have read Coleridge's daemonic "Kubla Khan" together. Now we will see a different side of him, the writer of mellow "conversation poems." Here, the style is much more sincere and intimate. But, perhaps a bit like the daemonic poems, we continue to see a poet who uses mysterious sounds and images to synchronize the mind to the unpredictable and uncanny activity of nature. In the course packet, you have Mary Robinson's response to Coleridge's poem, also addressed to Coleridge's baby. We have talked about this literary friendship during Week 4 and will continue to talk about it down the line. So, you might be interested in taking a peek. Afterwards, we will think about the different potential that the maternal voice brings to poetic language through a gendered reading: How do these poems imagine the intimacy between a mother and a child? How might this maternal intimacy decouple childhood from its patriarchal constructions? How do these poems subvert male idealizations of motherhood? To answer such questions, we will return to Hemans with another one of her dramatic monologues, <i>Madeline</i>. Then we will read Joanna Baillie's "A Mother to Her Waking Infant" and Dorothy Wordsworth's "To My Niece Dorothy, A Sleepless Baby." Dorothy Wordsworth's poem was published by her brother, William Wordsworth in his 1815 collection, so it was tucked into a collection authored by a male poet. Think about how the voice dramatized in this poem might interrupt or subvert some of Wordsworth's conceptualization of childhood.</p> <p><b>Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight" (1798)</b>  <b>Felicia Hemans, "Madeline: A Domestic Tale" from <i>Records of Woman</i> (1828)</b>  <b>Joanna Baillie, "A Mother to Her Waking Infant" (1790)</b>  <b>Dorothy Wordsworth, "To My Niece Dorothy, a Sleepless Baby" (1815)</b>  Mary Robinson, "Ode Inscribed to the Infant Son of S. T. Coleridge, Esq." (1800)  Dorothy Wordsworth, "An Address to a Child in a High Wind" (1815)</p>
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<p><b>Week 8</b></p> <p>April 2 &amp; 4</p>	<p><b>Family and Domestic Life:</b> As we continue with the family theme, we start with a delightful poem by Elizabeth Hands which makes the eighteenth-century look very much like ours, only without the computers and the smart phones. Hands was often an ironic writer of domestic and rural scenes. We do not read much of her work in this course. If you like her voice, check out “A Poem, On the Supposition of an Advertisement appearing in a Morning Paper, of the Publication of a Volume of Poems, by a Servant-Maid.” As you read “On an Unsociable Family,” think about how Hands’ depiction of social life within a family differs from the more lyric and introspective accounts you read last week. You can continue to think about this question as you turn to Joanna Baillie and Anna Laetitia Barbauld, whose works also offer more realistic (and critical) portraits of family life. In addition, Baillie, along with Robert (Robbie) Burns, is a Scottish poet, whose works was influenced by Scottish songs and dialect. You must have heard Burns’s beautiful “Auld Lang Syne” before. As you read Burns’s sweet song please consider checking out YouTube to appreciate the musical dimension of his work. What happens to Burns’s plain language when it is set to music? When it is sung? Though the Burns poems on our syllabus do not carry overt political content at first sight, his work is very much enmeshed in the politics of his time, in particular, in Scottish patriotism, class warfare, and industrialization. Can we perhaps attempt at a social or even political reading of the poem dedicated to his father? To accompany Burns’s song about old acquaintances, there is in your packet a delightful and moving poem by Charles Lamb, “The Old Familiar Faces,” which makes some exciting use of the poetic refrain. Pay attention to the effect of repetition.</p> <p><b>Elizabeth Hands, “On an Unsociable Family” (1789)</b>  <b>Anna Laetitia Barbauld, “To a Little Invisible Being Who is Expected Soon to Become Visible” (1795/1825)</b>  <b>Joanna Baillie, “A Child to His Sick Grandfather” (1790)</b>  <b>Robert Burns, “Auld Lang Syne” (1788)</b>  Robert Burns, “My father was a farmer upon the Carrickborder O” (1784)  Charles Lamb, “The Old Familiar Faces” (1797)  Anna Laetitia Barbauld, “Washing Day” (1797)  Anna Laetitia Barbauld, “The Baby-House” (1818/1825)  Joanna Baillie, “Song: Woo’d and Married and a’ (1822)</p>
<p><b>Week 9</b></p> <p>April 8 &amp; 14</p> <p><b>SPRING BREAK</b></p>	<p><b>SPRING BREAK: London Poems:</b> While enjoying your Spring Break, you might take a peek at these London poems. We spent so much time with nature poems in the course, and yes, the Romantics obviously had a thing for nature. But London also features prominently in their works. How could it not? It is a period of rapid commercialization, urbanization and industrialization. So, as Romantic poets write about London, they often approach it with a bit of skepticism, noticing how the city can erode the pleasures of solitude, reflection, and nature. Yet, they also seem to recognize that the kind of pastoral existence celebrated in their poems has become precarious. It is perhaps wiser to approach these poems as poems not of juxtaposition but of mediation. The essayists of the era also had much to say about urban life. You may consider checking out William Hazlitt’s “On Londoners and Country People” (1823) and Charles Lamb’s “The Londoner” (1802). I love the following excerpt from Lamb’s essay: “This passion for crowds is nowhere feasted so full as in London. The man must have a rare <i>recipe</i> for melancholy who can be dull in Fleet Street. I am naturally inclined to hypochondria, but in London it vanishes, like all other ills. Often, when I have felt a weariness or distaste at home, have I rushed out into her crowded Strand, and fed my humor, till tears have wetted my cheek for unutterable sympathies with the multitudinous moving picture,</p>

	which she never fails to present at all hours, like the scenes of a shifting pantomime.”
	Joanna Baillie, “Address to a Steam-vessel” (1823) Mary Robinson “London’s Summer Morning” (1795) William Wordsworth, “Composed upon Westminster Bridge” (1802/1807) William Wordsworth, “London, 1802” (1802/1807) William Wordsworth, “Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways” (1833)

<p><b>Week 10</b></p> <p>April 16 &amp; 18</p>	<p><b>Gothic and Medievalism:</b> This is a crucial week because we will be witnessing the development of the dramatic monologue, which is often taught as an invention of the Victorian period. It is not. We see its powerful roots in the Romantic Era. I hope that when you take Victorian Poetry next academic year, these precursors to the dramatic monologue tradition will be on your mind. Beyond the genre of these poems, their content also carries into the Victorian period, in particular, the interest in the medieval times, the gothic, and the femme fatale. Our first poem is Keats’s ballad, “La Belle Dame sans Merci.” As you read it out loud, think about Keats’s use of the ballad form, the rhythm, and the rhyme scheme. How does Keats create a sense of dramatic immediacy? How is this different from a lyric poem or from Keats’s more contemplative poems and odes? Why might Keats be working with medieval material here? Finally, why is Keats’s speaker submitting to a tyrant-like female figure who is capable of inflicting great pain <i>and</i> pleasure on the speaker? Next up, we have two women who were arguably the best writers of the dramatic monologue in the era: Felicia Hemans and Mary Robinson. By allowing poets to impersonate a historical character, dramatic monologues gave women considerable degree of freedom. They could voice criticisms of eighteenth-century England by displacing their material onto other historical periods. Hemans’s <i>Records of Women</i> is a truly impressive work and I have made more dramatic portraits from it available to you on Moodle. Mary Robinson, who will be our primary focus, wrote incredible dramatic monologues which were clearly informed by her prolific career as an actress (she played many Shakespeare characters and was often called “Perdita” for her remarkable performance in <i>The Winter’s Tale</i>, or the “English Sappho” after her Petrarchan sonnet sequence on, well, the Greek poet Sappho). The title of Mary Robinson’s <i>Lyrical Tales</i> was influenced by Wordsworth’s <i>Lyrical Ballads</i>, which was enough to make Wordsworth consider changing the title of his work for the second publication! We will pay close attention to “The Poor Singing Dame” which, like all Robinson poems, performs wonders with meter and musicality. When Coleridge read her work, he said: “the Metre – ay! That Woman has an Ear.” So please read her out loud and experience her captivating rhythms. Also remember that we got to know her in this course through her literary friendship with and admiration for Coleridge. As you read this late work by Robinson, think about how she had found her own style as a poet after wondering through Coleridgean forests. Finally, we will end by considering an excerpt from Canto 3 of Lord Byron’s “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage” which also uses medieval archaisms and transitions us smoothly to our topic for next week: Melancholy. This narrative poem chronicles the thoughts of a moody, melancholy, restless, and rebellious character, who, exhausted with the world, turns to travel and aesthetic contemplation. This characterization offers a prototype for the Byronic hero: Charismatic, brooding, melancholy, rebellious, cynical, but also deeply scarred and passionate. Think about Byron’s cultivation of this character type in relation to the exhausting political upheavals and uncertainty of the period. Byron at first distances himself from the fictional hero, using archaisms and medievalisms, as evidenced by his diction and formal choices (the Spenserian stanza). However, the public quickly registers the autobiographical and</p>
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	<p>confessional impulse behind the work. Hence, with the third Canto, Byron stops pretending. We are reading an excerpt from the third canto. Byron begins the canto by apostrophizing his daughter, Ada, as the muse for this section. Then he offers a European travelogue: Harold travels to the site of the Battle of Waterloo, contemplating Napoleon's complex legacy, then to Germany, then to Switzerland and Lake Geneva, celebrating Jean-Jacques Rousseau's philosophy. The section you are reading is from the very end where Byron celebrates the sublimity of nature and closes by addressing his daughter Ada once more. Notice the differences in Byron's and Wordsworth's views of nature. Alas, we cannot do justice to the Romantic interest in gothic horror in one class. If you are interested, you may spend some time with Coleridge's longer poem, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." If you wish to explore prose works in this mode, you may take a look at Horace Walpole's <i>The Castle of Otranto</i> (1764), Ann Radcliffe's <i>The Mysteries of Udolpho</i>, Matthew Lewis's <i>The Monk</i> (1796), or Mary Shelley's <i>Frankenstein</i> (1818).</p> <p><b>John Keats, "La Belle Dame sans Merci" (1819)</b>  <b>Mary Robinson, "The Poor Singing Dame" from <i>Lyrical Tales</i> (1800)</b>  <b>Lord Byron, "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" (1812-1818)</b>  Felicia Hemans, "Troubadour Song" (1824)  Felicia Hemans, "Properzia Rossi" from <i>Records of Woman</i> (1828)  Mary Robinson, "The Lady of the Black Tower" (1804)  Mary Robinson, "The Haunted Beach" from <i>Lyrical Tales</i> (1800)</p>
<p><b>Weeks 11 &amp; 12</b></p> <p>April 25, 30, May 2</p>	<p><b>Melancholy:</b> Melancholy! For some, a negative emotion associated with depressive states. For others, a milder disposition, a generative state characteristic of the artistic mind. We will think about this complicated mode with several Romantic poets. Why were the Romantics obsessed with melancholy? What makes melancholy so appealing or central to an artistic mind? We will begin by comparing Coleridge and Wordsworth, who had vastly different notions of melancholy. You can probably anticipate the differences from what you have read of them so far in the course. We have an exciting pairing. Coleridge wrote his poem "Dejection" in response to Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (included in your course packet). Coleridge was in a desperate state resulting from his unhappy marriage and hopeless love for Sara Hutchinson. "Dejection" first came into existence in a letter to Sara written on the night of April 4, 1802. The poem conveys Coleridge's despair and ends by wishing the "Lady" [Hutchinson] that, unlike the speaker, she may find some peace of mind. The persuasive grip of melancholy on the poet is in many ways antithetical to Wordsworth's sensibility, which often finds ways of recovering from such moments of despondency. As a kind of response to this poem, Wordsworth wrote "Resolution and Independence." It has similar moments of despair; however, the speaker's final encounter with the leech-gatherer in the Lake District allows a Wordsworthian celebration of the human spirit and a way out of despair. Coleridge then revised "Dejection" to the version of in your course packet and gave it as a gift to Wordsworth on his wedding day, October 4, 1802. This revised version is much shorter and milder than the original version found in Coleridge's letter to Sara Hutchinson. You can find the longer original version on Moodle, with the edited-out lines marked in bold. Though Coleridge does not finally embrace a Wordsworthian release or assurance, it is interesting to think about what happens to his "dejection" with time and reflection. It is also interesting to think about what happens to the poem when the personal aspects in the letter are edited out. Does the final version retain the sense of intimacy and sincerity that we find in the letter? Where do we see it? How? As you compare Wordsworth and Coleridge, consider their use of meter and poetic form. I will bring to class brief excerpts from</p>

	<p>Coleridge's critical assessment of Wordsworth's poetry in <i>Biographia Literaria</i> to help us get a better grasp of the differences between the two poets. Finally, think about melancholy by considering the balance between action and contemplation. In a poem, Alexander Pope uses the phrase, "ever-musing melancholy." Why associate melancholy with contemplation? Charlotte Smith's wonderful sonnet to melancholy would be a great way to think about this question. Those of you interested in historical poetics will devour Charlotte Smith: Not only was she a master of the sonnet form but she also translated Petrarch. To fully appreciate her experimental use of the sonnet, one would need to spend some time evaluating her translations. I have provided some of these in these course packet for your reference. Notice her playful rhyming operation in the melancholy sonnet. I have also included Hemans' "Despondency and Aspiration" in your course packet which was inspired, as you can infer from its title, by Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence."</p>
	<p><b>Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Dejection" (1802)</b>  <b>William Wordsworth, "Resolution and Independence" (1802/1807)</b>  <b>Charlotte Smith, "Sonnet XXXII: To Melancholy" (1785)</b>  Charlotte Smith, "Sonnets 13-16" [Translations from Petrarch]  Felicia Hemans, "Despondency and Aspiration" (1834/1839)  Percy Shelley, "Stanzas Written in Dejection" (1818/1824)  Mary Robinson, "Stanzas Written after Successive Nights of Melancholy Dreams" (1793)</p>

<p><b>Week 13</b>  May 7 &amp; 9</p>	<p><b>Winds of Change:</b> We continue with melancholy by staying with the question on the balance between action and contemplation. In Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Smith, we have perhaps seen a more contemplative and introspective account, though the feeling <i>was</i> admittedly socialized to some degree: e.g., the address to Sara or the "Lady" in Coleridge and the encounter with the leech-gatherer in Wordsworth. But with Keats, we will begin to observe an entirely different mode of engaging with the other. Keats will call this mode of aesthetic engagement "negative capability": "... when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." Rather than seeking certainties, assurances or contemplative relief, Keats's poetry realizes a state of aesthetic responsiveness through an almost radical immersion in the other. Think about how this is different from what Keats calls Wordsworth's "egotistical sublime." We are also now turning to Keats's famous odes, all written in 1819, shortly before his death. (Those of you interested in poetry criticism should immediately get a hold of Helen Vendler's extraordinary book on Keats's Odes. It is one of the best books written on poetry.) To facilitate a smooth transition from the previous week, we will briefly look at Keats's very different take on melancholy. His speaker starts by cataloguing alternative ways of responding to melancholy and rejects each of them. He then proposes giving ourselves wholly to Beauty, even though Beauty "must die." This meditation on <i>beauty</i> and <i>death</i> circles us back to one of our themes from early in the course. Wallace Stevens famously says: "Death is the mother of beauty." What is the relationship between beauty and death? How does Keats think about this relationship? What happens in that moment when we give ourselves over to an artwork? When we suspend our existence and exist in the work of art, albeit for a moment, before returning to the physical world? What knowledge is possible in that state of immersion or absorption in an aesthetic object, in a sublime object, in a landscape? These questions will lead us to our primary texts for the week – both written in 1819, a tumultuous year in English history. Though neither poem refers explicitly to the Peterloo Massacre, it is important to remember the political background. One way to think about these poems together is their mutual</p>
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	<p>avoidance of the “I.” In Keats’s “To Autumn,” in keeping with his negative capability, the speaker immerses himself in the songs of autumn. The language <i>listens</i> as much as it speaks. Try to feel it. Kristina S. Santilli asks: “In the end, isn't this how we read poetry? We listen for the poem's listening to distant music as if what it hears means everything, within the 'essence of the real,' death deferred, beaming with mind.” I am frankly jealous of you. I wish I were reading Keats’s “To Autumn” for the first time. Is there a more perfect poem in the English language? Think about why Keats might have picked Autumn as a metaphor for aesthetic creation or experience. Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” is another poem of radical immersion. Shelley, in fact, engaged with English politics vocally. Find his sonnet, “England in 1819,” written almost around the same time, to see what he sounds like when he explicitly demands political revolution. In “Ode to the West Wind,” the wind serves as a kind of metaphor for the revolution, as well as for the work of poetic creation. Think about Shelley’s insistent use of the apostrophe, how it psychologizes the wind, and how and when the “I” appears and disappears in the poem.</p>
	<p><b>John Keats, “Ode on Melancholy” (1819)</b>  <b>John Keats, “To Autumn” (1819)</b>  <b>Percy Shelley, “Ode to the West Wind” (1819)</b>  Joanna Baillie, “Wind” (1790)</p>

<p><b>Week 14</b>  May 14 &amp; 16</p>	<p><b>Odes and Objects:</b> As we turn to the final stretch of the course, we will continue to think about the relationship between self and other, between I and Thou. All the Romantics have written odes and poems addressed to other people, objects, seasons, things... When a poet apostrophizes or addresses another entity, what is the manner of their interest in the other? To what extent are they pointing at an object? To what extent are they trying to become more audible or transparent to themselves? To what extent are they trying to solve their own issues or “projecting,” as we might say today? The selections for this week include a combination of odes and sonnets, both used to praise, describe, apostrophize another entity. Study how poets employ these formal structures. First, we have Charlotte Smith’s nightingale sonnets. We have already talked about her manipulation of the Petrarchan sonnet form while discussing her sonnets to sleep and melancholy. Now we see her using the sonnet to write about a poetic bird often associated with melancholy: The nightingale. Poets are envious of the melodious song of the melancholy bird. Smith’s masterful handling of the self-other dynamic in this sonnet will help us refine our conceptual hold of this dynamic. Afterwards, we will turn to ekphrastic odes addressed to two stationary objects. Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn” contemplates death, beauty, and truth while studying figures depicted on a Grecian Urn, <i>frozen in time on a timeless artwork</i>. Ha! Next up, we have Joanna Baillie’s “Lines to a Teapot,” which is addressed to a more commercial object, a Chinese porcelain to serve tea in a household. The poem inevitably carries underlying concerns about the imperial culture, domesticity, gender, and class. For your pleasure, I have also selected poems by different poets which are addressed to the same entity: Snow-drops (flower) and nightingales. The snow-drop poems by Coleridge and Robinson allow us to consider the literary friendship for one final time before the end of our course. Coleridge wrote his snow-drop poem in direct response to Robinson’s. There is an exciting triangle here. Robinson’s poem is often read as the poet voicing her anxieties about the reception of her “scandalous” reputation, and Coleridge’s as working the same image into a poem of consolation. I think there is much more to it and the differences in attitude between the two poets are quite interesting. The nightingale poems are breathtaking: Coleridge’s poem gives us a chance to</p>
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remember the delightful "Frost at Midnight" since, here too, he speaks to his child about nature. More specifically, he offers a corrective to the conventional literary association of nightingales with melancholy "A melancholy bird? Oh! Idle thought! / In Nature there is nothing melancholy." What a pity, Coleridge thinks, that many have failed to hear the song of this bird for what it is, always associating it with their own internal state, thus reducing the song to what they want to hear. Like in "Frost at Midnight," Coleridge teaches us to hark! –his and Robinson's favorite command - and to learn to *listen* with keener ears. Mary Robinson's poem also recycles a literary nightingale in an effort to make its song come to life. Here is what Yopie Prins says about Robinson's poem: "Translated from *The Birds* of Aristophanes, this exquisite lyric can be read as Robinson's palinode to the escape odes of Euripidean tragedy. Instead of flying away with the birds to a distant shore... Robinson invites the nightingale to come near... The poem performs the song of the nightingale in the very act of addressing it: the music is made visible by marking and naming anapests that are 'seen' in the song of the bird: 'thou art come, thou art come, thou art seen!' Through this repetition of anapests the trilling sounds of the nightingale are figured as revelation of lyric song, and the very word 'nightingale' is transfigured into anapests in the syncopated final line." Both Coleridge and Robinson, with their inventive meters and rhythms, teach us to synchronize our senses as demanded by being in the presence of another being. They also prepare us for the more radical experiments in poetic form and prosody that we shall see next year in the Victorian Literature course.

**Charlotte Smith, "Sonnet III: To a Nightingale" (1784)**

**John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1819)**

**Joanna Baillie, "Lines to a Teapot" (1790s/1840)**

Charlotte Smith, "Sonnet VII: On the Departure of the Nightingale" (1784)

William Wordsworth, "To a Snowdrop" (1819)

Mary Robinson, "Ode to the Snow-drop" (1791)

Mary Robinson, "Ode to the Nightingale" (1791)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Apotheosis, or the Snow Drop" (1797)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Nightingale" (1795)

John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale" (1819)

