

Poetry
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Neo-Classical and Pre-Romantic Poetry

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Neoclassical and Pre-Romantic Poetry



- A vast period of time from 1600 to 1798
- Three distinct stages
- Terminological Problems and Uses
- 'Restoration' (1600-1700) – Rochester and Dryden
- 'Neoclassicism' (1700-1740) – Pope and Dr Johnson
- 'Pre-Romanticism' (1740-1798) – Gray and Collins
- Features, Poets, Poems, and Samples
- A Tabular Comparison



How are you doing with poetry so far? This lecture we will discuss neoclassical and pre-romantic poetry in general. And then in the subsequent lectures, we will discuss the poets like Dryden, Pope, Gray, Collins, Blake. To begin with, we will understand the whole scenario of this neoclassical period from 1600 to 1798 which we can divide into three distinct stages for convenience. Although, we must be aware of the fact that there are problems with terms like restoration, neoclassicism and pre-romanticism.

Restoration starts in 1600 and ends with the death of Dryden in 1700. Here we have two major poets like Rochester and Dryden. In the neoclassical period begins from 1700 and ends around 1740, we have two dominant figures like Pope and Dr. Johnson. And the next one is pre-romantic period from 1740 to 1798. Actually, this is called the Age of Sensibility and even Age of Johnson but we would like to give prominence to Gray and Collins and other pre-romantic poets, although this term pre-romantic is problematic. We will look into their features, certain poets and their poems and some samples also we will read to understand the difference among

these three stages of what is known as neoclassical period in English literature. We will also have at the end a tabular comparison among all these three.

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Historical Context

Political Restoration in 1660 – Poetic Revolution in 1798

- Restoration of monarchy in 1660 with King Charles II
- Great Plague (1665) Great Fire (1666), Popish plot (1678)
- Ascension of James II in 1685 and his abdication in 1688
- The Glorious Revolution (1688)
- William III and Mary II (1689-1702), Act of Settlement (1701)
- Queen Anne (1702-1714)
- United Kingdom of England, Scotland and Wales in 1707
- King George I (1714-1727)
- King George II (1727-1760) →
- King George III (1760-1820)
- American Revolution (1775-1783)
- French Revolution (1789-1799)



Let us begin with the historical context. That means a lot of political events that took place during this period. As we observed earlier, this is a vast period from the political restoration in 1600 and ends around the poetic revolution that happened in 1798 with the publication of Lyrical Ballads by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

During this period, we have these political happenings. First, we notice this restoration of monarchy in England with the arrival of King Charles II as a king of England. Then we have certain social events like, the Great Plague in 1665 and the Great Fire in 1666 and also a kind of rumoured Popish plot to create problems in society, particularly to remove the king that is in 1678. We also have the ascension of James the second in 1685 and his abdication in 1688. Because of this glorious revolution, which brought William III and Mary II in 1689 to be the king and queen of England. We have an act of settlement to solve the problem of who would become the king, next king after William III and Mary II. We have next to Queen Anne's period from 1702 to 1714. In this period, we have one act which unites the three areas in England, that is England, Scotland and Wales in 1707. With this act of union, England becomes United Kingdom. And we have the first king of United Kingdom from King George I, 1714 to 1727. Next, we have King George II from 1727 to 1760, which runs into our third period, that is pre-

romantic period with King George III, and whose period starts from 1760 and ends in 1820, well into the romantic period. In between, we have the American Revolution promoting the idea of liberty, independence from England. We have this idea of French Revolution from 1789 to 1799, promoting the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity.

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Literary Context



- Restoration of theater (1660)
- French cultural influence
- Predominance of satire and heroic couplet
- Rise of the periodical essay and novel
- Popularity of diaries and travel writings
- Developments in literary criticism and practice
- Turn to reflective, gloomy, rural, and natural subjects
- The gothic novel



We also have to look into the literary context. Because of this restoration of monarchy, we have reopening of theatre in 1660. We also have, along with this influence of French culture in English society. During this period, we notice the predominance of satire and along with that the form of heroic couplet, that is, the rhymed iambic pentameter.

In addition, we have the rise of the periodical essay and also the novel form. And during the same period, we have a number of diaries and travel writings by various writers. Similarly, it is in this period, we find developments in literary criticism and practice, particularly with the writings of Dryden and Johnson.

We also have their reflective, gloomy, rural and natural subjects taken by some poets like Thomas Gray, William Collins, to deal with a new kind of awareness of life in this period. And along with this, we have the Gothic novel, obsession with terror and the kind of strange phenomenon in life.

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Restoration (1600-1700)



- Restoration of the Stuart King Charles II
- A licentious and witty courtly atmosphere
- Theaters were reopened mainly to upper classes
- Comedy of Manners was the order of the day.
- Congreve's *The Way of the World* is a play.
- John Dryden practiced various forms of art.
- Prose, poetry, criticism, drama, diary, religious tracts, political satire, etc., flourished



Now, we will examine this Restoration period. This is the period that brought King Charles III to England. Along with him, it brought this French culture, plus a notoriously distinct characteristic of this period that is a licentious and witty, courtly atmosphere. Theatres were reopened, and this time we have a kind of restriction of class identity. This was primarily open to upper class people. And in this courtly atmosphere, restoration theatre ‘Comedy of Manners’ was much more prominent and this was the order of the day.

The best example of this comedy of manners we have is from William Congreve, whose ‘The Way of the World’ is a play. A play, a sexual play, an economic play, a psychological play, a play in every sense with that licentiousness together. We have John Dryden, a poet, dramatist, critic, practicing various forms of literary art; prose, poetry, criticism, drama and many other kinds like diary religious tracts, political satire, everything flourished during this restoration period.

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Features of Restoration Poetry



- Continuation of the classical revival from Jonson
- Preoccupation with the contemporary and the topical
- Self-conscious making of history and canonicity
- The heroic (mock) sublime
- Grand and impressive style
- Scholarly allusions and mythological references
- The right to correct vices in a society



There are certain features of restoration poetry which we need to understand for appreciating Dryden, the poet we have chosen for representing this period. Although this period is called restoration, it is actually a continuation of the Renaissance, in the sense of, this continuation of classical revival from, right from Ben Johnson. In this period, we have a peculiar preoccupation with the contemporary events and particularly topical events.

The poets and writers were becoming more self-conscious about their participation in the making of history and also making what is great, what is canonical literature. And this period is marked by this concept called heroic sublime. This heroic sublime is otherwise known as mock sublime. This is not the sublime of Longinus. It is a sublime of Horace.

And this period is marked by grand and impressive style, which we can see in Milton's 'Paradise Lost' as well. We also have scholarly allusions, mythological references, and the main motive is to correct the vices in society.

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Representative Poets



- **Edmund Waller** (1606-1687); Heroic couplet
 - John Milton (1608-1674)
 - Andrew Marvell (1621-1678)
- **Samuel Butler** (1613-1680) - *Hudibras* (1663-1684)
- **John Wilmot**, Earl of Rochester (1647-1680)
 - A notorious Wit, English satiric poetry
- **John Oldham** (1653-1683)
 - A pioneer of the imitation of classical satire
- **John Dryden** (1631-1700)
 - A precursor to the Augustan mode of literature



A number of poets we can see in this period. Edmund Waller, from 1606 to 1687 used heroic couplet. He published a number of poems. In fact, he was more popular than Milton in his own lifetime. Then we have John Milton and Andrew Marvell, but we do not bring them under this umbrella of restoration poetry, although they were part of the whole scenario. Samuel Butler was another poet known for this *Hudibras*, a satirical poem. A satirical poem, which attacked the Protestants and Nonconformists of this period. He was a royalist, actually.

Then we have John Wilmot often called the Earl of Rochester. He was a notorious wit and he was writing satiric poetry in English. He was the typical rake and roue of this period. At the end of his life, he regretted that he lived an uncontrolled, self-indulgent life.

Then we have John Oldham. He is considered to be a pioneer of the imitation of classical satire. And these two writers were actually, the contemporaries of John Dryden, who was able to pick up that tradition of heroic couplet from Edmund Waller passed on to him by Wilmot, Oldham. And he was able to establish heroic couplet as the most suitable form of literature of this period. And so, Dryden is considered a precursor to the Augustan mode of literature.

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Representative Poems



- Waller: "To the King on His Navy"
- Rochester: "A Satyr against Reason and Mankind"
- Butler: "The Elephant on the Moon"
- Oldham: "A Satire Upon a Woman Who by Her Falsehood and Scorn Was the Death of My Friend"
- Dryden: *Mac Flecknoe* (written in 1676–77)
Absalom and Achitophel (1681)



We have a number of poems which are representative of Restoration Poetry. First, we have Edmund Waller's poem 'To the King on His Navy. Next, we have John Wilmot, that is, Rochester's poem 'A Satire against Reason and Mankind.' Third, we have Samuel Butler's poem 'The Elephant on the Moon.' The title itself is indicative of the kind of inventive mind that this period had. Then we have Oldham whose again long title is indicative of the spirit of the age, 'A Satire Upon a Woman Who by Her Falsehood and Scorn Was the Death of My Friend.' Lastly, we have John Dryden, whose poem 'Mac Flecknoe,' we will study in this course. Dryden is also known for his satirical poem 'Absalom and Achitophel.' Mac Flecknoe is a personal satire, whereas Absalom and Achitophel is a political satire.

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Waller's "To the King on His Navy"
(Opening lines) [Kaminski]

Where'er thy navy spreads her canvas wings,
Homage to thee, || and peace to all | she brings;
The French and Spaniard, || when thy flags appear,
Forget their hatred, || and consent to fear.
So Jove | from Ida || did both hosts survey,
And when he pleased to thunder || part the fray.
Ships heretofore || in seas | like fishes | sped,
The mightiest still || upon the smallest | fed;
Thou | on the deep || imposest nobler laws,
And by that justice || hast removed the cause
Of those rude tempests, || which | for rapine sent,
Too oft, | alas! || involved the innocent.



We have a sample poem for this period from Edmund Waller. His poem is "To the king on his Navy." These are the opening lines the idea I have taken from Kaminski. So, the reference is there. And also, the reference will be useful for us to understand how Edmund Waller contributed to heroic couplet in English poetry.

"Where'er thy navy spreads her canvas wings

Homage to thee, and peace to all she brings;

The French and Spaniard, when they flags appear,

Forget their hatred, and consent to fear.

So Jove from Ida did both hosts survey,

And when he pleased to thunder part the fray.

Ships heretofore in seas like fishes sped,

The mightiest still upon the smallest Fed;

Thou on the deep, imposest nobler laws,

And by that justice hast removed the cause
Of those rude tempests, which for rapine sent,
Too oft, alas! involved the innocent.”

It is about the expansion of the sea through this naval power of England.

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Neoclassicism (1700-1740)

- Respect for ancient Greek and Roman authors
- A classic is an example of excellence
- Literature was majorly an art.
- Neoclassical authors honed their skills by study and practice to achieve specific artistic purposes
- The key texts were Horace's *Ars Poetica* and Aristotle's *Poetics*.
- Key principles: **wit**, rationality and decorum
- Decorum: an elegant harmony of style and content
- True Wit for Pope: *An Essay on Criticism*, (299-300)
 - "True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd,
What oft was thought but ne'er so well express'd"



Next to discuss this Neoclassical Idea. This is a central part of this neoclassical period. First restoration then neoclassical and the third pre-romantic period. This is roughly about 40, 50 years from 1700 to 1740 or 1750s, as some other critics may say. Neoclassicism gives importance to respect for the ancient Greek and Roman authors. A classic is defined as an example of excellence. So, literature was considered primarily as an art and artifice.

These neoclassical authors honed their skills by study and practice to achieve specific artistic purposes in their writings. Two key texts were used by many of these authors. One is, Horace's 'Ars Poetica' and the other is Aristotle's 'Poetics.' You can notice three key principles of this neoclassicism. One is wit, second is rationality, and the third is decorum. Wit means ingenuity, intelligence, acuteness of the mind or sharpness of the mind. Rationality refers to use of reason and decorum is actually an elegant harmony of style and content. In this period, wit was given so

much importance. An accomplished writer is known for his genuine true wit. So, Pope defines true wit in his poem, 'An Essay on Criticism,'

“True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd,

What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed”

Probably this is a basic idea of this communication. Whoever is able to communicate well is a fantastic person. But then we often think, but do not express so well. So, the ability to express what we think clearly, and express clearly, the same thought very clearly to others is considered to be the mark of wit or mark of genius.

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Features of Neoclassical Poetry



- Poetry: an imitation of life, a mirror held up to nature
- Poetry: to give instruction and aesthetic pleasure
- Abundance of rhetorical figures like paradox and antithesis, anaphora, **tricolon**, litotes/hyperbole
- **Poor Cornus sees his frantic wife elope,
And curses wit, and poetry, and Pope.**
- A neoclassic humanist ideal
- To give fresh and exquisite expression to common human experiences and uphold truth
- Limits to humanity; hence, satire on pride



There are certain Features of Neoclassical Poetry. If we remember them, that will be useful for us. In this period, poetry was considered an imitation of life. A mirror held up to nature. The purpose of poetry was considered to be giving instruction and also aesthetic pleasure. This period marked rhetorical features like paradox, antithesis, anaphora, tricolon, litotes or hyperbole. We have an example of this tricolon here. This is from 'Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot.' We will study this also in this course,

“Poor Cornus sees his frantic wife elope,
And curses wit, and poetry, and Pope.”

What does Pope have to do with the elopement of a wife of a person called Cornus? Pope is unable to understand, but Pope is held responsible for everything. So, he writes like this. The neoclassical humanistic ideal was to give fresh and exquisite expression to common human experiences and uphold truth. At the same time, these authors understood that there were limits to humanity. Hence, they use the satire to attack or dress down human weaknesses, particularly focusing on the pride of the ego of individuals, which actually enables people to quarrel with each other.

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The Augustan Mode (1660-1750)

- Satire and the Georgic descriptive poem (Ref. Cohen)
- Composition by accretion with revisions as additions by observation
- Prospect views, spatial imagery, figures of extension
- Organizational strategy with varied tones, speakers, poetic features, political and social attitudes
- Unity by translation, imitation, and parody
- Principle of modification in adjectives, adverbial words, phrases and clauses
- Heroic couplet and blank verse
- Man, nature, and god; limited knowledge
- The art of imitative imagination, not equal to real



The Augustan Mode has been studied by many critics. Here is one Cohen who has given certain features of this Augustan mode. It will be good to remember many of these features, as we study the neoclassical poems. Satire and georgic descriptive poem were the two kinds of poetry in the Augustan Mode. The composition of poetry was done mainly through accretion, that is, addition or accumulation, again revisions as additions, primarily by observation.

Augustan Mode had this prospect views. From a vantage point, you look at certain things and describe. And Augustan Mode also encourage the use of spatial imagery moving from high to

low or from side to side. And many figures of extension, that is, rhetorical figures were used in this kind of Augustan Mode.

Poets used the organizational strategy with varied tones, different kinds of speakers and poetic features, plus political and social attitudes. They were attempted to give different perspectives on the same problem. They were also using certain principles of modification when it comes to language, in terms of adjectives, adverbial words, phrases and clauses. Two primary forms of poetry in this period were one heroic couplet and blank verse. It means we have to understand that blank verse which was started in Elizabethan period, continued. But heroic couplet happened to be the very predominant form.

Most of these authors were concerned with Man, Nature and God, and also the kind of limited knowledge that they were aware of. Finally, as we noted earlier, the art form of this period is imitation. So, we have this idea of the art of imitative imagination, which is not exactly equal to real life. That is where pre-romantic poetry came into picture to touch upon real life situations.

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Representative Poets



- Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)
- John Gay (1685-1732)
- **Alexander Pope** (1688-1741)
- Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)
- Anne Finch (1661-1720)
- Elizabeth Thomas (1675-1731)
- Lady Mary Montagu (1689-1762)
- Mary Leapor (1722-1746)



It is surprising to see that, there are many poets, but the chief position of Alexander Pope can be easily understood. Look at any anthology or look at any history of English poetry, you will find not many poets during this period writing using this Augustan Mode. They will be involved in many other kinds. But when it comes to poetry, it is difficult to see. Even Jonathan Swift is

primarily known as a novelist. John Gay is more of a dramatist. He used the songs in his drama, 'The Beggar's Opera.' Samuel Johnson is a poet, but he is known primarily for his criticism and dictionary. And all other poets are quite surprisingly women that we have noted: Anne Finch, Elizabeth Thomas, Lady Mary Montagu. Who is this lady Mary Montagu? was incidentally a friend of Alexander Pope, later on she became an enemy of Pope. So, we will find Pope attacking Lady Mary Montagu in his Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot. The last one is Mary Leapor who is from a lower-class society background, but she was equally popular during this period.

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Representative Poems



- Swift: "A Description of a City Shower"
- Gay: *Trivia: Or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London* (1716)
- Pope: *The Rape of the Lock* (1712-1714)
Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot (1735)
The Dunciad (1726, 1743)
- Johnson: "The Vanity of Human Wishes" (1749)



We also have some representative poems, one from Swift, 'A Description of a City Shower,' Thomas Gay's poem 'Trivia: Or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London.' Pope, of course, numbers of poems we have just we have mentioned two here. Both of them are Mock Heroic poems. And in addition to Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot, that is, 'The Rape of the Lock' and 'The Dunciad.' The Rape of the Lock is considered to be the best mock epic poem in English. We also have Johnson's poem, well known poem, 'The Vanity of Human Wishes,' and of course, we have 'London' by Johnson. We have a sample poem from Pope for us. It deals with Man, God, Everything. This particular essay, he deals with the question of man. Here it goes,

"Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;

The proper study of Mankind is Man.

Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
With too much knowledge for the Sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest,
In doubt deem himself a God, or beast;
In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer,
Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;”

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Pope's *An Essay on Man*

Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confus'd;
Still by himself abus'd, or disabuse'd;
Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of Truth, in endless Error hurl'd:
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

• Robert Browning (1812-1889)

“And thus we half-men struggle.”

• Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana*



We Continue.

“Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little, or too much:

Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confus'd;
Still by himself abus'd, or disabuse'd
Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all,
Sole judge of Truth, in endless Error hurl'd:
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

This is what Pope has conceived of human beings in his 'Essay on Man.' All these ideas are beautifully captured in half line by Robert Browning, "And thus we half-men struggle." And this idea, very idea is again dramatized by this Indian dramatist, Girish Karnad in Hayavadana, "Half Men we, Half Men struggle."

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'Pre-Romanticism' (1740-1798)



- The fall of Robert Walpole in 1742 – corruption
- The rise of William Pitt, the Elder – patriotism
- King George III (1760-1820)
- Emergence of Britain as a colonial power
- The Peace of Paris in 1763 for rule in Canada and India
- Unequal distribution of wealth from industrialism and trade
- The Gordon Riots in 1780 – mob rule in London
- British reaction against the French Revolution
- Rise of writers from middle classes and rural areas



From here we move to pre-romanticism or pre-romantic period, starting from 1740 ending in 1798. The dates vary from accounts to account, but we will follow one order. In this period, we find this fall of Robert Walpole, considered to be the first Prime Minister of England. He fell out

of favour in 1742 not because of corruption, though he was known for corruption, but because of his unwillingness to wage war.

Then we find William Pitt, the elder coming in, in the place of Robert Walpole based on the idea of patriotism. And then we have this King George third during this period from 1760 to 1820. At this time, we notice that Britain was emerging as a colonial power. This colonial power was strengthened with this treaty or the peace treaty known as the Peace of Paris, signed in 1763, and this meant Britain could rule Canada and India.

And because of these colonial activities and trade with many of the countries, wealth was flowing into the country, but this wealth was not equally distributed. That led to social unrest, political unrest in England leading to one great riot known as 'The Gordon Riots' in 1780. There was a huge chaos and mob rule was there in London for some time. And this kind of unrest is reflected in other places like France, where we have this French Revolution; in America, where we have this American Revolution; and during this time, we find a number of writers coming from this middle class and also rural areas.

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Features of Pre-Romantic Poetry

- A transitional movement from the 1740s
- Goodbye to wit, satire, and humor
- Shift toward simple, sincere, and natural way of life
- Projection of the virtues of middle class life
- Rousseau's influence
- Interest in imagination, innocence, childhood
- To express emotions freely rather than with control
- To follow the heart, not mind
- Open to the beauties of nature, not classical books
- Sites of poetry: the garden, the graveyard, nature
- Northrop Frye's suggestion to use the term "the a sensibility" for 'pre-romantic' or 'post-Augustan'



Certain Features of Pre-Romantic Poetry are listed here for us to understand the writers that we are going to discuss. This is generally known as a transitional movement from the 1740s to the

romantic period. These writers said goodbye to wit, satire and humour. That does not mean that they do not have intelligence, but they do use it in imaginative way.

There is a shift toward simple, sincere and natural way of life, not artificial way of life, as was seen in restoration and neoclassical period. In political terms, it meant a projection of different kind of values away from this aristocratic society to middle class values. Philosophically, we find Rousseau's influence in this period with his interest in imagination, innocence and childhood, it meant to express emotions freely rather than with control, as neo-classicists did.

It means simply to follow the heart and not the mind. These writers were open to the beauties of nature, not just the classical books; or nature, as described in the books, classical books particularly. For pre-romantic poets, the sites of poetry where the Gordon, the graveyard and nature. You may recall Andrew Marvell has a poem called 'The Garden.'

And many of the writers were now and then writing, but because of this power of new neoclassicism restoration that was not given that much importance. The terminological problem of pre-romantic or post-Augustan was discussed by Northrop Frye. And he came up with a new alternative, that is, the age of sensibility because of this interesting emotion or feeling of many writers.

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Representative Poets

Edward Young (1683-1765)

James Thomson (1700-1748)

Thomas Gray (1716-1771)

Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774)

William Cowper (1731-1800)

William Collins (1721-1759)

Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770)

George Crabbe (1754-1832)

William Blake (1757-1827)

Robert Burns (1759-1796)

➤ "Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds"

➤ "God made the country, and man made the town"



As supposed to neoclassical period, we find a large number of pre-romantic poets. Unless we pay special attention like this, neoclassical period means only Dryden, Johnson and Pope. But remember, we have a large number of poets. We have listed only a few: Edward Young, James Thomson, Thomas Gray, Oliver Goldsmith, William Cowper, William Collins, Thomas Chatterton, George Crabbe, William Blake, Robert Burns.

The writers highlighted, like Thomas Gray, William Collins and William Blake, we will discuss in this course. We have two quotations here, very interesting ones indicating the shift towards nature or romantic period. “Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds.” The second sentence is interesting, please find out. Check and find out the source of these two sentences. That is an interesting exercise for you. “God made the country and manmade the town.”

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Representative Poems



- Thomson: *The Seasons*
- Parnell: “Night Piece on Death” (1721)
- Young: *Night Thoughts* (1742)
- Blair: *The Grave* (1743)
- Akenside: *The Pleasures of Imagination* (1744)
- Gray: “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751)
- Collins: “Ode to Evening”
- Burns: “A Red Red Rose”
- Goldsmith: “The Deserted Village”
- Clare: “Autumn”
- Blake: *Songs of Innocence & Experience* (1789, 1796)



We have a number of representative poems from these poets and many others like the ‘Seasons’ from Thomson, ‘Night Piece on death’ by Parnell, ‘Night thoughts’ by Edward Young, ‘The Grave’ by Robert Blair, Mark Akenside’s, the title itself is very interesting, ‘The Pleasures of Imagination.’ Thomas Gray who is known for this ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.’ Collins ‘Ode to Evening,’ Burns, ‘A Red Rose.’ Goldsmith, ‘The Deserted Village.’ John Clare, ‘Autumn’ and lastly, Blake, among many other poems we have just mentioned ‘Songs of Innocence and Experience.’ As we said earlier, a number of pre-romantic poets are there. But

these poets do not get that much importance because of this brilliance of Dryden and of course Pope.

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Qualities of Individual Poets (Bronson)



- Thomson's spaciousness
- Collins's incorporeality
- The Whartons's bipartisanship
- Young's commiseration
- Akenside's reasonableness
- Burns's pride and passion
- Churchill's unmannerliness
- Gray's eclecticism
- Smart's enthusiasm
- Shenstone's placidity
- Macpherson's rant
- Goldsmith's amenity
- Chatterton's atavism
- Cowper's humanity
- Crabbe's sobriety
- Blake's extravagance



One particular critic called Bronson has identified one key feature of each of these poets. It is very interesting to see Thomson is characterized by 'Spaciousness,' Collins by 'Incorporeality,' the Wharton's two brothers, actually, James and Thomson Wharton's 'Bipartisanship.' Young by 'Commiseration,' Akenside by 'Reasonableness.'

Robert Burns by 'Pride and Passion,' Churchill 'Unmannerliness.' Thomas Grey by 'Eclecticism.' Smart by 'Enthusiasm.' Shenstone by 'Placidity.' MacPherson by 'Grant,' Goldsmith by 'Amenity,' Chatterton by 'Atavism.' Cowper by 'Humanity.' Crabbe by 'Sobriety' and finally William Blake by 'Extravagance;' Extravagance of imagination.

Black is not really a pre-romantic poet, though he was considered to be so, he is, actually now considered to be proper romantic poet. But for the sake of discussion, for a sake of accommodating him, we have brought him here.

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Cowper's *The Task*, Book I, The Sofa



190. Nor less composure waits upon the roar
Of distant floods, or on the softer voice
Of neighb'ring fountain, or of rills that slip
Through the cleft rock, and chiming as they fall
Upon loose pebbles, lose themselves at length
195. In matted grass, that with a livelier green
Betrays the secret of their silent course.
Nature inanimate employs sweet sounds,
But animated Nature sweeter still
199. To sooth and satisfy the human ear.



We have a sample poem by William Cowper. This is called 'The Task.' There are three books. The first book is called the Sofa. Here we have some lines.

190. "Nor less composure waits upon the roar
Of distant floods, or on the softer voice
Of neighb'ring fountain or of rills that slip
Through the cleft rock, and chiming as they fall
Upon the pebbles, lose themselves at length
195. In matted grass, that with a livelier green,
Betrays the secret of their silent course.
Nature inanimate employs sweet sounds
But animated Nature sweeter still
199. To soothe and satisfy the human ear.

We can see the crux of this moment from neoclassical to pre-romantic with these two words: 'Nature inanimate' to 'animated nature.' Nature becomes alive in the poetry of pre-romantics and later romantic poets.

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A Tabular Comparison



Restoration	Neo-Classical	Pre-Romantic
Dryden	Pope	Gray
(Catholic)	(Catholic)	Collins
Rochester	Johnson	Blake
Public Satire	Personal Satire	Melancholy
Heroic Couplet	Heroic Couplet	Blank verse
Public criticism	Private criticism	Meditation
Correctness	Elegance	Vision
Antithesis	Wit	Metaphor
<i>MacFlecknoe</i>	<i>Dr. Arbuthnot</i>	<i>Ode to Evening</i>



As we indicated earlier, we have a tabular comparison, restoration period, neoclassical period and pre-romantic period represented by three different groups of poets.

Restoration	Neo-Classical	Pre-Romantic
Dryden	Pope	Gray
(Catholic)	(Catholic)	Collins
Rochester	Johnson	Blake
Public Satire	Personal Satire	Melancholy
Heroic Couplet	Heroic Couplet	Blank Verse
Public Criticism	Private Criticism	Meditation
Correctness	Elegance	Vision

Antithesis

Wit

Metaphor

Mac Flecknoe

Dr Arbuthnot

Ode to Evening

Dryden, Rochester, Pope, Johnson, Gray Collins, Blake. These three periods focus on certain key art forms like public satire, personal satire and melancholy in these three different periods.

Heroic couplet in restoration period, Heroic couplet in neoclassical period, but distinctly blank verse in pre-romantic period. Similarly, we have public criticism and private criticism in these two periods known as restoration and neoclassical, whereas there is no criticism of anything but reflection meditation in pre-romantic periods.

Further, we have notion of correctness in restoration and elegance, neoclassical period and vision in pre-romantic period. Further, we notice certain key features like antithesis being dominant in restoration, along with antithesis which being much more serious in neoclassical period.

And finally, metaphor or sight related to vision connecting different thoughts in pre-romantic period. Three key texts that we are chosen to represent these three periods, Mac Flecknoe for restoration, epistle to Dr Arbuthnot for neoclassical period and William Collins ode to evening for pre-romantic period.

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Summary

- A vast period of time from 1660 to 1798
- Three distinct stages
- Terminological Problems and Uses
- Restoration (1600-1700) – Rochester and Dryden
- Neoclassicism (1700-1740) – Pope and Dr Johnson
- Pre-Romanticism (1740-1798) – Gray and Collins
- Features, Poets, Poems, and Samples
- A Tabular Comparison
- Blake's "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" (1793)
 - "Without contraries is no progression"
 - "Opposition is true friendship"



Now let us summarize this vast period of neoclassical age from 1660 to 1798 with three distinct stages called restoration, neoclassicism and pre-romantic period. Although we have this terminological problem and uses of these terms, we still use them for convenience. Restoration Period is represented by Rochester and Dryden.

Similarly, neoclassical period is represented by Pope and Dr Johnson and the third one, pre-romantic period we represent it by Gray and Collins. Although Dr Johnson can be equally brought in here with that name, Age of Sensibility or Age of Dr Johnson. We observed several features of these different stages of neoclassical period and had represented poets and poems, and also, we looked at three samples of these three different stages of neoclassical period to understand how all are similar at the same time, how one is different from another.

We finally showed this tabular comparison to understand all these features much better. And to indicate the next period, that is romantic period, we have a quotation from Blake's poem, 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,' and this actually characterizes, I think all human beings of all ages. 'without contraries is no progression.' 'Opposition is true friendship.'

(Refer Slide Time: 33:21)

References



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If you want to explore these topics in more detail, please refer to these articles. I found them useful. I believe you will also find them extremely useful to you. Thank you.