

# THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

ca. 1785 - 1832



# romance (adj. *romantic*)

- Chivalric romance (or medieval romance) is a type of narrative that developed in 12<sup>th</sup>-century France and spread to the literatures of other countries.
- “Romance” originally signified a work written in the French language, which evolved from a dialect of the Roman language, Latin.
- It represents a chivalric age, often one of highly developed manners and civility.
- Its standard plot is that of a quest undertaken by a single knight in order to gain a lady’s favor; frequently its central interest is *courtly love*, together with tournaments fought and dragons and monsters slain for the damsel’s sake.

# romance

- Romance stresses the chivalric ideals of courage, loyalty, honor, mercifulness to an opponent, and elaborate manners; and it delights in wonders and marvels.

# Why is this period termed *Romantic*?

- Recovery of the medieval romances
- Re-evaluation of the tales of adventure, chivalry, and love
- Lauding the room for visionary imagination that romance had afforded premodern writers
- Proposing that *modern* literature should follow suit and become, in one sense, more romantic

# Romanticism: the rehabilitation of romance

Writers working in this period 1785-1832 did not think of themselves as constituting a group of "Romantic" authors.

It was Victorian critics who first wrote of the previous generations as the Romantics.

# Meaning of *Literature*

- A term formerly synonymous with learning in general
- Only in the Romantic period did *literature* begin to settle down into that modern meaning that confines it exclusively to artistic expression, works of the imagination particularly.

# Romantic Period

In general, writers associated with the Romantic period valued imagination and feelings as highly as reason and intellect;

believed that humans are by nature good;

felt that Nature is the source of sublime feeling, divine inspiration, and even moral action;

celebrated the individual rather than the social order;

and critiqued oppressive, class-based political regimes and social forms.

# First Reform Bill (1832): Terminus of the Romantic period

- Parliament passed a Reform Bill in 1832 that transformed England's class structure.
- The Reform Bill of 1832 extended the right to vote to all males owning property worth £10 or more in annual rent.
- In effect the voting public thereafter included the lower middle classes.



# 선거법개정

산업혁명으로 성장한 자본가와 노동자계급의 요구를 반영하여 19세기 영국에서는 3차례의 선거법 개정이 이루어졌다. 그 결과 중산층을 비롯하여 노동자·농민 등 대부분의 성인남자가 선거권을 획득하였고, 인구비례에 의한 소선거구제가 실시되었다. 그후 **점진적인 개혁을 통하여 20세기 초에는 비로소 남녀평등의 보통선거제가 실시되었다.**

1689년 명예혁명 이래 영국 의회는 지주·자유직업인·대(大)상인·금융가 등 소수계층으로 구성되었고, 유권자 수는 성인남자의 1/6도 안 되었다. 산업혁명으로 **농촌인구가 신흥공업도시로 대거 이동하고, 자본가와 노동자계급이 성장함에 따라 선거법 개정이 불가피해졌다.**

기존 선거구제도에 따르면 농업 중심의 남부는 인구 300만 명에 236명의 의원을 선출할 수 있는 반면, 공업 중심의 북부는 인구 400만 명에 단지 68명의 의원만을 선출할 수 있었다. 그 결과 **어떤 지역에서는 50명도 안 되는 유권자가 2명의 의원을 선출하는 선거구가 생겨났고, 맨체스터·버밍엄 등의 신흥공업도시에는 1명의 의원도 선출하지 못하는 불합리한 현상이 나타났다.** 이에 중산층에 기반을 둔 휘그당은 18세기 말부터 선거법 개정을 요구하였다.

출처: <두산백과>

# 제1차 선거법개정

주요 내용은 50개 이상의 불합리한 선거구를 없애고 그 의석을 신흥공업도시에 배정하며, 선거자격을 완화하여 모든 중산층이 선거권을 갖도록 하는 것이었다. 이런 점에서 제1차 선거법 개정은 **농업세력에 대한 공업세력의 승리이며, 귀족세력에 대한 중산층의 승리**라고 할 수 있다.

그러나 제1차 선거법 개정은 노동자계급에게 선거권을 부여하지 않았기 때문에 그들의 불만을 샀다.

출처: <두산백과>

# Sources

- M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 10th ed., Wadsworth, 2011. (Slides 2, 3)
- Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, 3rd ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009. (Slide 7)
- Stephen Greenblatt, general editor, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 2, 9th ed., W. W. Norton & Company, 2012. (Slides 4, 5, 6, 8)

Not this the robe in Enna's vale she wore,  
When Ceres' daughter fill'd her lap with flowers.<sup>1</sup>

20

Clouds behind clouds in long succession rise,  
And heavy snows oppress the springing green;  
The dazzling waste fatigues the aching eyes,  
And fancy droops beneath th' unvaried scene.

Indulgent nature, loose this frozen zone;<sup>2</sup>  
Thro' opening skies let genial sun-beams play;  
Dissolving snows shall their glad impulse own,  
And melt upon the bosom of the May.

25

### THE MOUSE'S PETITION<sup>3</sup>

[When Barbauld visited Joseph Priestley at Leeds in the summer of 1771 he was experimenting with noxious gases, using live mice for the purpose. According to anecdote, one night a mouse "was brought in after supper, too late for any experiment to be made with it that night, and the servant was desired to set it by till next morning. Next morning it was brought in after breakfast, with its petition twisted among the wires of its cage" (Turner, "Mrs. Barbauld," p. 184)—the petition being this poem. When the poem was published in *Poems* (1773), reviewers berated Priestley for inhumanity to animals. Barbauld responded by inserting a footnote in ed. 3 of *Poems*: "The Author is concerned to find, that what was intended as the petition of mercy against justice, has been construed as the plea of humanity against cruelty. She is certain that cruelty could never be apprehended from the Gentleman to whom this is addressed; and the poor animal would have suffered more as the victim of domestic economy [i.e., in a mouse trap], than of philosophical [scientific] curiosity."

1 Lines 19-20 allude to the story of Proserpina, daughter of Ceres (a fertility goddess in Classical myth), who gathered flowers in the Sicilian valley of Enna.

2 Belt or girdle.

3 Found in the trap where he had been confined all night by Dr. Priestley, for the sake of making experiments with different kinds of air [Barbauld's note, *P* 1792].

## Review Copy

However intended, the poem has indeed been read as a plea of humanity against cruelty, and also as a political statement. "Petition," as Marlon Ross has noticed, signifies "the most radical version of a political letter, which targets the heart of established power by directly addressing the monarch and parliament" (Ross, "Configurations," p. 98)—as the electors of the County of Middlesex had lately been doing on behalf of John Wilkes. Barbauld's full awareness of its meaning and use is manifest in her whimsical "Epitaph on a Goldfinch": "Though born with the most ... unbounded love of freedom, he was closely confined in a grated prison, and scarcely permitted to view those fields, to the possession of which he had a natural and undoubted charter. Deeply sensible of this infringement of his native and inalienable rights, he was often heard to petition for redress" (*Legacy*, p. 183). Moreover, Mitzi Myers has argued that the poem encodes feminist concerns within its humanitarian ones: "The animal victim was widely deployed by humanitarian writers for the young, ... but it was especially adaptable to women's concerns and their critique of masculine values. The gender-coded animal is everywhere in Georgian female writing, for adults as well as for children" ("Of Mice and Mothers," p. 275).

"The Mouse's Petition" became one of Barbauld's most popular poems. Mary Wollstonecraft reprinted it in her *Female Reader* (1789), and its many imitations include Mary Robinson's "The Linnet's Petition" (1775). And perhaps Samuel Taylor Coleridge's dislike of trapping mice, noted by his biographer Richard Holmes (*Early Visions*, pp. 138–39), may be traced to this poem's influence.]

*Parcere subjectis, & debellare superbos.*

Virgil.<sup>1</sup>

Oh! hear a pensive prisoner's prayer,  
For liberty that sighs;

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1 *Aeneid*, 6:853. To spare the humbled, and to tame in war the proud! (Loeb translation).

And never let thine heart be shut  
Against the wretch's cries.

For here forlorn and sad I sit, 5  
Within the wiry grate;  
And tremble at th' approaching morn,  
Which brings impending fate.

If e'er thy breast with freedom glow'd,  
And spurn'd a tyrant's chain,<sup>1</sup> 10  
Let not thy strong oppressive force  
A free-born mouse<sup>2</sup> detain.

Oh! do not stain with guiltless blood  
Thy hospitable hearth;  
Nor triumph that thy wiles betray'd 15  
A prize so little worth.

The scatter'd gleanings of a feast  
My frugal meals supply;  
But if thine unrelenting heart  
That slender boon deny, 20

The chearful light, the vital air,  
Are blessings widely given;  
Let nature's commoners enjoy  
The common gifts of heaven.

The well taught philosophic mind 25  
To all compassion gives;  
Casts round the world an equal eye,  
And feels for all that lives.

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1 In *The Present State of Liberty in Great Britain and her Colonies* (1769), Priestley had argued for "a just idea of natural and civil rights" and denounced the government for attempting to "enslave" the American colonists (Schofield, *Enlightenment of Joseph Priestley*, pp. 212-13).

2 Alluding to a cant phrase, "free-born Englishman," used by political liberals, as in poet James Thomson's indignant line, "The free-born Briton to the dungeon chain'd" (*The Seasons*: "Winter," l. 371).

## Review Copy

30 If mind, as ancient sages taught,  
A never dying flame,  
Still shifts thro' matter's varying forms,  
In every form the same,<sup>1</sup>

Beware, lest in the worm you crush  
A brother's soul you find;  
35 And tremble lest thy luckless hand  
Dislodge a kindred mind.

Or, if this transient gleam of day  
Be *all* of life we share,  
Let pity plead within thy breast  
40 That little *all* to spare.

So may thy hospitable board  
With health and peace be crown'd;  
And every charm of heartfelt ease  
Beneath thy roof be found.

45 So, when destruction lurks unseen,  
Which men, like mice, may share,  
May some kind angel clear thy path,  
And break the hidden snare.

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1 If mind ... same: Alluding probably to James Thomson's plea for "animal rights" in *Liberty* (1735), 3:63-68: "He [Pythagoras] taught that Life's indissoluble Flame, / From Brute to Man, and Man to Brute again, / For ever shifting, runs th' eternal round; / Thence try'd against the blood-polluted Meal ... To turn the human Heart." But Priestley did not believe the doctrine of transmigration of souls; he had just cited it as a reason for rejecting the idea that Christ's soul was created before his body (Schofield, *Enlightenment*, pp. 199-200).