

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

ENGLISH LITERATURE – 19th Century

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19th CENTURY

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19th century

The divisions of a national literature by periods is arbitrary, yet after the periodization occurs it seems to have defined a fact of nature. Such is the case with English literature. As one sees from the pre Romantic poets, like Cowper, there was already by the mid-18th century a marked softening of sensibility in some popular poetry, and something like a rediscovery of the power of nature. The same changes were visible in the landscape painting of the time. At any rate the period we call Romantic was on the horizon, and it was to acquire sharper definition with the political and social awakening provoked by the Napoleonic Wars, and the defeat of that autocratic Empire on the battlefield at Waterloo. It has become a convention to define the Romantic period from 1798, when Wordsworth and Coleridge published *The Lyrical Ballads*, to 1832, the year of the death of the great Romantic historical novelist Walter Scott. By this latter date, the British government had passed Reform Legislation which sanctified the privileges of the Middle Class, and changed England from a rural nation to a semi industrialized urban one.

Revolution and Society. We have seen the power of poetry throughout English literature; from *Beowulf* to the *Canterbury Tales* to Shakespeare to Pope—to create a very mixed bag—dominant expressions in poetry were formative for the whole tenor of a literary age. With the advent of the Romantic Period this feature of English literature is marked: passionate and powerful poetry—in Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and many more—assumes the leading role in defining the art tone of the period. At the same time there is a strong sense that the shape of culture and society is changing. Revolutions—American in 1776, French in 1798—are convulsing the pattern of Western history, and the Industrial Revolution is beginning to modify the social life of Western Europe and especially England.

The Revolutionary Spirit: All the major Romantic poets, with the exception of John Keats, were enthusiasts for the new spirit of Revolution in Europe and America. All that was liberating in these movements seemed to want expression in the spirit of poetry. Wordsworth thought it was bliss to be born at the time of the French Revolution, while Shelley and Byron were particularly moved by the self-liberation of the Greeks from the Ottoman occupation. Everywhere human rights were being promoted as sacred—just at the Industrial Revolution was rendering those rights endangered.

New conception of literary language: Wordsworth and Coleridge, in *The Lyrical Ballads* (1798) promoted the speech of common men and women, as they heard it in the Lake Country which was home to them. This speech seemed to be the richest source for poetic creation, and it was a source totally different from that privileged by a Neoclassicist like Alexander Pope. (Remember the Latinate sophistication of Pope's rhymed couplets.) There is an unmistakable correlation between Wordsworth's poetic language and the movement toward popular democracy in the Revolutions of the time.

A New Model of the Past. The Romantic Movement saw a turning away from the model of the ancient Greek and Latin classics, and from the historical setting those Classics emerged from. (The trend was reflected in educational practice, too, for from early in the 19th century the study of Greek and Latin gradually began its decline.) In place of the classical model the Middle Ages—a period of grail quests, faith and idealism; at least if you saw it that way—began to dominate the imagination.

Discussion questions

1. You will notice that Pope and Swift died only a few years before the birth of William Blake, in 1757. In with the new! If you were to mix up the works of these three writers in a pile, with no author identification tags on them, would you be able to tell which of the works were by Blake, and which by the other two? How would you tell?
2. Review Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*, and the *Preface* to them. Do you find in the early Wordsworth lyrics that simplicity of diction, that general hostility to poetic high style, which will be profoundly different from the ornate language of such as Dryden and Pope? Are Wordsworth's lyrics themselves simple, in language or thought?
3. When you look at the poetry of Byron (d. 1824), Keats (d. 1821), and Hopkins (d. 1899) can you see some unifying factor(s) which marks the group as 19th century? Please take this question back into our earlier entries, and consider whether centuries seem useful categories for literary history, or whether perhaps generations seem more useful benchmarks, for understanding groups of writers?

William Wordsworth

The significance of William Wordsworth. William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was an English poet and critic, who was instrumental in creating the Romantic movement in poetry and criticism. His *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*, and the long poem, *The Prelude*, opened totally new vistas to the western poetic tradition.

The Earlier Life of William Wordsworth. William Wordsworth was shaped by the Wye Valley and the Lake District of Northwest England; in the village of Cockermouth, in today's Cumbria. There he grew up freely in a classically beautiful landscape, the second of five children, comfortable enough in his family life; his father had a large mansion in the small town where the children were born, and worked as the legal representative of the First Earl of Lonsdale. While William's relation to his father was not close, his father nonetheless imposed on his son a thorough regime of poetry memorization; Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser. William went briefly to the local Hawkshead Grammar School in Lancashire, then was sent to Penrith School, and in 1787 enrolled in St. John's College, Cambridge.

Wordsworth in Mid Life. After University, in 1790, Wordsworth set off on a walking tour through Europe. His constant companions, at this time, were his sister Dorothy, and for a long time, during his most creative period, his fellow collaborator Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He also fell in love, while walking in France; in love both with the growing spirit of the French Revolution, for which Wordsworth became a powerful advocate, and with a French woman, with whom he had a child, and whom he supported—despite the fact that the two never married. While he was in early life a passionate supporter of the French Revolution, like the fiery Mary Wollstonecraft, and while he was close to France for romantic and cultural reasons, Wordsworth grew more nearly mainline and conventional of philosophy, as he aged. In 1798, he began to move into his full creative powers. In that year he (with his friend Coleridge) created the *Preface to The Lyrical Ballads*, and in the same year Wordsworth began writing *The Prelude*, his life's greatest work, and one on which he would remain busy until his death.

The Work of William Wordsworth. In the renowned *Preface to The Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth makes clear that he wants to break with the formal language and formal metrical conventions of the poetic tradition, and address commonplace daily life through language appropriate to it, rather than through the kinds of language, say, we encounter in Pope and Dryden. He puts it this way, in describing the nature of poetry: 'all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings...' and thereby he makes clear that true poetry will create its own formal conditions.

*A pleasant loitering journey, through three days
Continued, brought me to my hermitage.
I spare to tell of what ensued, the life
In common things--the endless store of things,
Rare, or at least so seeming, every day*

Found all about me in one neighbourhood--

In these characteristic lines from *The Prelude* Wordsworth introduces the kind of modest, but meditatively fertile setting from which he lets his poetry rise. 'The life in common things,' deeply experienced as part of his own spiritual journey, is itself as rich as the subtlest classical mythology. The limber and conversational iambic lines, in which Wordsworth inscribes his testimony to 'the life in common things,' build a consistent pattern, but do so with the flexibility of 'the speech of common men.' Of such modest care is poetic revolution made.

Reading

Primary source reading

William Wordsworth: The Major Works, ed. Gill, Oxford, 2008.

Secondary source reading

Baron, Michael, *Language and Relationship in Wordsworth's Writing*, London, 1995.

Further reading

Gill, Stephen, *William Wordsworth: A Life*, Oxford, 1989.

Suggested paper topics

1. When *The Lyrical Ballads* was published, in 1800, the seemingly extreme simplicity of these poems appeared silly, unworthy of the great traditions of poetry. The fact is that Wordsworth and Coleridge were both in rebellion against the concept of the poem in the 18th century and earlier. (Think back to Dryden and Pope, for examples of that earlier poetry at its best. It is full of poetic diction, personified virtues with capital letters, a vocabulary level which belongs to educated speech, instead of to the voices of common people, as Wordsworth understood it.) In the end which tradition prevailed, that of Wordsworth or that of Pope?

2. Wordsworth's place in the shaping of literary history is decisive. His views of the common voice, of the power of imagination, of the omnipotence of memory, of the impending threats of industrialism and vulgarity, all fall into line with perceptions and cultural developments which dominate Wordsworth's own time. From the Napoleonic Wars, to the French Revolution, to the mid-19th century growth of the middle class in Europe: all these events coincide with the powerful growth of Wordsworth's sensibility. I suggest you take a look at Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (1944), for a broad survey of the cultural landscape in which Wordsworth lived. Geoffrey Hartman's *Wordsworth's Poetry* (1964) is a guide to the simple mysteries of Wordsworth's early lyrics. Devote some thought and writing to the relation of Wordsworth the poet to Wordsworth as political consciousness.

Excerpt <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-complaint/>

*There is a change--and I am poor;
Your love hath been, nor long ago,
A fountain at my fond heart's door,
Whose only business was to flow;
And flow it did; not taking heed
Of its own bounty, or my need.*

*What happy moments did I count!
Blest was I then all bliss above!
Now, for that consecrated fount
Of murmuring, sparkling, living love,
What have I? Shall I dare to tell?
A comfortless and hidden well.*

*A well of love--it may be deep--
I trust it is,--and never dry:
What matter? If the waters sleep
In silence and obscurity.
--Such change, and at the very door
Of my fond heart, hath made me poor.*

John Keats

The Significance of John Keats. John Keats (1795-1821), though only partially appreciated during his short life, was by the end of the nineteenth century viewed as one of the greatest English poets, especially wondrous for his sonnets and odes, and for the critical thinking he revealed in his Letters. The English Romantic poets seldom lived long, and Keats led them all in early death, at age 26. It is a widely held belief that had Keats lived a full life he would have excelled such as Chaucer and Shakespeare in achievement. Yet rather than mourn we may better suppose that the brevity of this life was the price of Keats' distinctive brilliance, intermixed as it is with the premonition of death.

The Life of John Keats. Keats was born in London, Moorgate, the eldest of four surviving children. His father was an ostler in the stables of the Swan and Hoop Inn, which he later managed. Keats was baptized at St. Botolph-without-Bishopsgate, then sent to the local 'dame's school.' In 1803—his parents lacked the funds to send John to Harrow or Oxford—Keats was sent to John Clarke's School in Enfield, where he developed his rapidly growing interest in history and classics—his attention being particularly drawn to the readings of Torquato Tasso and Spenser, and to the renowned Chapman translations of Homer. In 1804, Keats' father died of a skull fracture, after a horseback voyage to visit two of his sons at school. This tragedy left Keats in a precarious financial and personal situation, which was rendered worse by the death of Keats' mother a few years later. Accordingly Keats recognized the importance of gaining a regular income, and went into training as an apothecary-surgeon. Keats exercised his medical career for a brief period, then found his way into a lively circuit of London poets and before long had decided to devote himself to poetry. His own brilliant activity as a poet was frenetic, dominated by his premonition of death, and in fact fate proved him right, for in 1820 he began to cough up blood, a result of tuberculosis, and a year later he was dead. He had been a known and published poet only during the last four years of his life.

The Work of John Keats. Keats was a brilliant master of the verse forms of the Ode and Sonnet, and works of his like his 'Ode to the West Wind,' 'Ode to a Nightingale,' 'The Eve of St. Agnes,' 'Endymion,' 'Ode to a Grecian Urn' have taken their places among the most effective, formal and passionate both, works of English poetry. Keats' brilliance is equally stunning in his letters, among which the most noteworthy is that in which he describes the nature of the poet:

A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity – he is continually in for – and filling some other Body – The Sun, the Moon, the Sea-- and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute – the poet has none; no identity – he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's Creatures.

The creative power Keats attributes to the poet is 'negative capability,' which, paradoxically, is the condition in which the poet finds his way to the inside of everything in the world.

Reading

Primary source reading

John Keats: *The Complete Poems*, ed. Barnard, 1988.

Secondary source reading

Roe, Nicholas, ed., *Keats and History*, Cambridge, 1995).

Further reading

Gittings, Robert, *John Keats*, London, 1968.

Suggested paper topics

1. Keats' *aesthetic perspective* is uniquely pervasive, and finds exquisite expression in his work. It is not that Keats is arty, or superficially caught up in the details of beautiful things, but that he finds truth, as he said, in beauty. That is not all he finds in beauty, either, for in the evanescent, shimmering will o the wisp of the aesthetic he finds his own deepest human environment, the proximity of sleep, narcosis, and that kind of loveable death toward which the Nightingale draws him. Discuss this aesthetic perspective more fully, and relate it to later theories of the meaningfulness of beauty.

2. How is literature related to music? You might want to compare Keats to other poets whose work seems to border on the musical. (I think of Whitman in America, Paul Verlaine in France, Heine in Germany; you can supply other and better examples.) Does pure sound have significance by itself, in poetry, or must sound be allied to meaning in order to constitute poetry? You might apply this subtle question to a poem like the 'Ode to a Nightingale,' which is about the music of the bird's call, as it ultimately narcotizes rational (or perhaps any) meaning. Keats is forever working the borders between music, as topic and as part *of* his poetry, and music as thematic material *in* his poetry.

Excerpt

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-complaint/>

*Pensive they sit, and roll their languid eyes,
Nibble their toast, and cool their tea with sighs,
Or else forget the purpose of the night,
Forget their tea -- forget their appetite.
See with cross'd arms they sit -- ah! happy crew,
The fire is going out and no one rings
For coals, and therefore no coals Betty brings.
A fly is in the milk-pot -- must he die
By a humane society?
No, no; there Mr. Werter takes his spoon,
Inserts it, dips the handle, and lo! soon
The little straggler, sav'd from perils dark,
Across the teaboard draws a long wet mark.
Arise! take snuffers by the handle,
There's a large cauliflower in each candle.
A winding-sheet, ah me! I must away
To No. 7, just beyond the circus gay.
'Alas, my friend! your coat sits very well;
Where may your tailor live?' 'I may not tell.
O pardon me -- I'm absent now and then.
Where might my tailor live? I say again
I cannot tell, let me no more be teaz'd --
He lives in Wapping, might live where he pleas'd.'*

Gerard Manley Hopkins

The Life of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1899) was born in Stratford, Essex. He was the first of nine children. His father was the founder of a marine insurance firm, and had earlier served as British Vice-Consul in Hawaii, while later he worked as a Church Warden. (Hopkins' grandfather was a physician, and friend of John Keats.) That is, however, to say far too little about the remarkable family from which young Hopkins emerged. Hopkins' father was a poet and novelist, while Hopkins' siblings were distinguished as writers, musicians, poets, and scholars. (It should be added that his parents were ardent High Anglican members of the Church of England, and thus would be deeply disapproving when their son took his eventual path to Rome.) Stimulated by these surrounding skills, Hopkins himself became a very proficient draughtsman. His natural talents were enhanced by a fine education. At ten the family moved to Hampstead Heath, not far from where John Keats had lived; and in the same year Gerard Manley entered the distinguished Highgate School, where he was to remain for almost ten years (1854-63). From 1863-67 Hopkins studied at Balliol College Oxford, where he absorbed the world of great intellectual figures. Matthew Arnold, poet and humanist, was among the great figures, but the particular inspirations for Hopkins were two: Walter Pater, essayist and aesthete, a thinker for whom the artistic was always close to the moral; John Henry Newman, whose conversion to Roman Catholicism had much to do with Hopkins' own similar move. (Hopkins entered the Catholic Church in 1866, and ultimately joined the Society of Jesuits in 1868, and became a Jesuit priest.) In 1884 Hopkins was appointed Professor of Classics at University College in Dublin, Ireland, and there completed his professional work life, excelling as a classical scholar, as well as a poet. Or rather, to put it more carefully, perfecting a rare poetic talent, but in the end suppressing it, lest it conflict with the submissiveness required of his Jesuit asceticism.

The Work of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Hopkins was brought up in an intensely artistic and urbane family, and wrote poetry early in life, but upon deciding to join the Jesuit Order he burned most of his earlier work. It was not until he was a member of the order that he followed his Superior's suggestion, to write a long poem about the wreck of a German ship in the River Thames, and the subsequent drowning of many, including five Franciscan nuns. The poem that emerged from this request, in 1875, was 'The Wreck of the Deutschland,' and it heralded Hopkins' entry into his most mature writing phase. He was closing in on his mature style, which was strongly shaped by his reading and learning in Old English and Old Welsh poetries. The new prosody he forged, using poetic units of a widely varying number of syllables, can be read off a good hearing of the following master lyric, 'God's Grandeur':

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge |&| shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.*

Reading

Primary source reading

Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Digireads, 2010.

Secondary source reading

Martin, Robert Barnard, *Gerard Manley Hopkins—A Very Private Life*, New York, 1992.

Further reading

White, Norman, *Hopkins—A Literary Biography*, Oxford, 1992.

Suggested paper topics

1. You will have noticed that Hopkins—with his sprung rhythm and inscape and instress theories—puts heavy stress on the manipulation of the oral/sensuous presentational side of poetry. (In his youth, Hopkins wrote in the vein of Keats, and you can see the aestheticism of, say, *Sleep and Poetry*, in Hopkins.) In addition Hopkins viewed the instress of inscape as a form of address to the created identity of the object of the poem, and thus a fairly direct

access to Christ, the emblem and Lord of the created world for Hopkins. If you follow this issue of confrontation with Christ through its embodiment in a poem you will come on the source of conflict, for Hopkins, between his religious vocation and his artistic creativity. Inside himself he doubted that he should substitute an artistic simulation of the Christ encounter for the direct encounter in the Mass, the central act of his priesthood. In the latter part of his life, Hopkins abandoned poetry. Discuss your understanding of Hopkins' reasons for abandoning poetry.

2. To read Hopkins' lyrics—think of 'God's Grandeur' or 'As Kingfishers catch Fire'—is to pay close attention to the prosody that drives his thought, (Is Hopkins' prosody itself a kind of embodied thought?) Take 'The Windhover.' Notice the effect of sprung rhythm, as Hopkins called it, in which there is a regular number of stressed syllables, but a highly variable number of unstressed, and some consequent breathless linking of one line to another. Do you see this pattern creating a novelty in English lyric? Or is Hopkins simply varying familiar patterns with a slight tweak?

Excerpt

*And he said, If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress?
2 Kings VI: 27*

*Thou that on sin's wages starvest,
Behold we have the joy in harvest:
For us was gather'd the first fruits,
For us was lifted from the roots,
Sheaved in cruel bands, bruised sore,
Scourged upon the threshing-floor;
Where the upper mill-stone roof'd His head,
At morn we found the heavenly Bread,
And, on a thousand altars laid,
Christ our Sacrifice is made!*

*Thou whose dry plot for moisture gapes,
We shout with them that tread the grapes:
For us the Vine was fenced with thorn,
Five ways the precious branches torn;
Terrible fruit was on the tree
In the acre of Gethsemane;
For us by Calvary's distress
The wine was racked from the press;
Now in our altar-vessels stored
Is the sweet Vintage of our Lord.*

*In Joseph's garden they threw by
The riv'n Vine, leafless, lifeless, dry:
On Easter morn the Tree was forth,
In forty days reach'd heaven from earth;
Soon the whole world is overspread;
Ye weary, come into the shade.*

William Blake

The Importance of William Blake. William Blake (1757-1827) was a British engraver, painter, and poet whose powerful expressions of artistic emotion and visionary awareness rendered him a moving symbol of Romantic imagination.

The life of William Blake. William Blake was born in Broad Street, in the Soho region of London. He was the third of seven children. His father was a hosier, of medium wealth. Young William went briefly to the local school, where he learned reading and writing, but left school by the age of ten. From that point on he was home schooled by his mother, baptized at the local St. John's Church, although both his parents were Dissenters, refusers of the Anglican Communion. Then in 1772, having given evidence of native brilliance as a draughtsman, he was sent out as apprentice to an engraver. By the age of twenty one he qualified as a professional engraver—he was a master of original techniques of intaglio engraving, which forever bore his trademark skill—and in 1779 he became a student in the Royal Academy, which was under the Directorship of Sir Joshua Reynolds, the most eminent British portrait painter of the day. In 1782 Blake married Catherine Boucher—his great love, to whom he would remain united all his life—and in 1800 the pair moved to Sussex, where Blake lived and created for the remainder of his life. It should be noted that Catherine was, at the time of marriage, illiterate, but that Blake taught her to be his assistant, and that she played an instrumental role in the technical development of his later art. By his mature years, Blake earned a good living producing engravings, setting type, and giving drawing/engraving lessons.

The Spiritual Setting of Blake's World. In the sixteenth century, under the reign of Henry VIII, Britain instituted a national church, the Anglican Church, and did its best to extirpate other forms of communion—most notably Roman Catholicism—in the British Isles. Dissidents of all sorts, and that included the family of William Blake, were marginalized. Blake himself drew his spiritual energies largely from the Bible and Milton—himself a dissident—from the hymns of the reformer, John Wesley, and from the visionary theology of Johannes Swedenborg (1688-1772), a brilliant Swedish scientist and visionary, who like Blake was granted many direct visions of the heavenly kingdom.

The Work of William Blake. Blake's technique of engraving, and illustrating his own voluminous text, ensured an intimacy of imagination so close, that one can hardly speak of a difference between his visual and his verbal arts. For instance his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794) are poems accompanied by engravings. They are meant to represent what Blake refers to as 'two contrary states of the human soul.' The contrast is this evident:

'The Shepherd'

How sweet is the shepherd's sweet lot!
From the morn to the evening he strays;
He shall follow his sheep all the day,
And his tongue shall be filled with praise.

For he hears the lambs' innocent call,
And he hears the ewes' tender reply;
He is watchful while they are in peace,
For they know when their shepherd is nigh

'My Pretty Rose Tree'

A flower was offered to me,
Such a flower as May never bore;
But I said, 'I've a pretty rose tree,'
And I passed the sweet flower o'er.

Then I went to my pretty rose tree,
To tend her by day and by night;
But my rose turned away with jealousy,
And her thorns were my only delight.

Reading

Primary source reading

The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. Erdman, Bloom, Golding, New York, 1997.

Secondary source reading

Ackroyd, Peter, *Blake*, London, 1996.

Further reading

Frye, Northrop, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake*, Princeton, 1947.

Suggested paper topics

1. For Blake, who developed an elaborate poetic mythology to frame his visions, the same single fallen world can be viewed either as a source of joy or of gloom and despair. To pick a simple example, Blake's Tyger and his Lamb represent the opposed perspectives. Do you see such a joy/gloom opposition playing out through the poems of *Innocence and Experience*? Is this opposition readable with delight and fascination today? Is this material in our present grain? Is it too simplistic? Or too allegorical—almost in the vein of *Piers Plowman*?
2. Scholarship is a fine form of our effort to understand cultural products, and among the literary byproducts of a great writer, like Blake, count the scholarly works he/she has brought into existence. You might want to look at Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (1968), a now classic work of criticism, which contains copious and insightful references to Blake, while constructing a schema of literature which shares many traits with the vision of Blake himself. Write an essay on the relation of Frye's visions to those of Blake.

Excerpt

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-cradle-song/>

*Sweet dreams form a shade,
O'er my lovely infants head.
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams,
By happy silent moony beams*

*Sweet sleep with soft down.
Weave thy brows an infant crown.
Sweet sleep Angel mild,
Hover o'er my happy child.*

*Sweet smiles in the night,
Hover over my delight.
Sweet smiles Mothers smiles,
All the livelong night beguiles.*

*Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,
Chase not slumber from thy eyes,
Sweet moans, sweeter smiles,
All the dovelike moans beguiles.*

*Sleep sleep happy child,
All creation slept and smil'd.
Sleep sleep, happy sleep.
While o'er thee thy mother weep*

*Sweet babe in thy face,
Holy image I can trace.
Sweet babe once like thee.
Thy maker lay and wept for me*

*Wept for me for thee for all,
When he was an infant small.
Thou his image ever see.
Heavenly face that smiles on thee,*

Lord Byron

The significance of Lord Byron. Lord Byron (1788-1824) represents the dissolute genius in the fullest expression of what was to be the Romantic spirit. How appropriate that, after a life of erotic expenditure, passionate friendship—as with the poet Shelley and his wife—Byron ultimately met his death fighting for Greek Independence in the War against the Turks. This cause, of real and symbolic power throughout Europe, was widely seen in the West as a Battle to release the imprisoned spirit of Ancient Hellenism. Byron was heroic to the end, as well as a superb narrative poet, known throughout Europe.

The Life of Lord Byron. George Gordon, Lord Byron was born in London, in Holles Street. He was the child of aristocracy on both sides. His father, Mad Jack Byron, was a flamboyant seducer, who had acquired, then lost, two fortunes by means of seduction, while his mother, a descendant of Cardinal Beaton, was an alternately indulgent and draconian supervisor of the young man. From these parents Byron inherited both extreme handsomeness and a club foot, for which he would throughout his life compensate by unusual bouts of exercise. Byron spent his childhood at the family home in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, and was sent to Aberdeen Grammar School for his primary education. In 1801 he was enrolled at Harrow, where his homosexual tendencies first came into full play, and where he first found true same sex passion. From Harrow Byron went up to Trinity College Cambridge, from which he did not graduate, and where he did too much besides study. In 1809-1811 he went to Europe on the Grand Tour expected of British gentlemen of class, and there he gave way to his passion for travel; for a life which would take him eventually to many corners of Europe—the Ottoman Empire, Persia, Armenia, as well as throughout Western Europe, and that would ultimately, in 1823, lead him to Greece, where he ardently and effectively supported the Greek War of Independence, and where he died of malaria in 1824.

The Work of Lord Byron. Byron was a prolific poet, drawn to long epic or mock epic lines, frequently embodying his own experience, though in an inflated and dramatized form. Two of his greatest works are *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*—the publication of which began in 1812, and *Don Juan*, arguably the strongest epic written in English since Milton's *Paradise Lost*. While the two poems share many motifs, and represent different facets of their author, they are, perhaps thanks to the broader canvas and world view of the latter, of different ambition. *Childe Harold*—'childe' is the Middle English word for a young man who is a candidate for knighthood—is a world weary wanderer, whose malaise clearly reflects the European sense of exhaustion from the aftermath of the Revolutionary Era and the Napoleonic Wars—think Europe and American after Depression, Two World Wars, social dislocations of every kind—and who travels throughout Europe in search of new sources of value. *Don Juan* picks up the same thematic—which is pervasive throughout all of Byron's poetry—but extends the range of considerations, in the mind of this cynical, world weary, but life loving hero, who strongly resembles Byron himself. The epic ranges over world history and the whole range of human hopes, and does so with often jaunty and stinging, sometimes deeply passionate, metrical verve. Byron's power, in both these poems, derives from his deep—and always ironic—grasp of the nature of the world he lives in.

Reading

Primary source reading

Secondary source reading

Lansdown, Richard, *Byron's Historical Dramas*, Oxford, 1992.

Further reading

MacCarthy, Fiona, *Byron: Life and Legend*, London, 2002.

Suggested paper topics

1. Byron took the *ottava rima* form of *Don Juan* from a strong tradition in Italian verse. (The scheme is *abababcc*; with an alternation of four and five stress syllables in the rhyming lines. One would say a bouncy, jocose and impish scheme, and so it is.) So what is the secret of Byron's placing a set of tales of romance into the rollicking onward advance of this meter? He never pauses, he presses forward without unnecessary commentary, he mocks himself regularly, he mocks Don Juan regularly, he keeps his own person flittingly intrusive throughout the tale; and above all, of course, he is a master of the erotic tease, as Chaucer had been. *Are we getting close to Byron's secret? What do you think?*

2. Byron's *Don Juan* is his masterpiece. Refresh yourself on the libretto of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, which was completed in 1788. In that opera, with a noted libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte, Don Giovanni, Don Juan, comes off as a charming and obsessed sexual predator, attracted to an endless series of women, whom he loves to enumerate. By making this comparison between poetry and opera you will, among other things, double your awareness of Byron's passive Don Juan, to whom women just happen. You will also be asking yourself about the difference of music from narrative poetry, as a medium for constructing character. What difference do you see?

Excerpt <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/my-soul-is-dark-2/>

*My soul is dark - Oh! quickly string
The harp I yet can brook to hear;
And let thy gentle fingers fling
Its melting murmurs o'er mine ear.
If in this heart a hope be dear,
That sound shall charm it forth again:
If in these eyes there lurk a tear,
'Twill flow, and cease to burn my brain.*

*But bid the strain be wild and deep,
Nor let thy notes of joy be first:
I tell thee, minstrel, I must weep,
Or else this heavy heart will burst;
For it hath been by sorrow nursed,
And ached in sleepless silence, long;
And now 'tis doomed to know the worst,
And break at once - or yield to song.*

S. T. Coleridge

The significance of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) was an English poet, theorist and critic, and intimate friend of William Wordsworth, with whom he collaborated closely in creating the seminal works of the Romantic movement in literature.

The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born in Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire. His father was a respected local vicar, and headmaster of the town school. In his second marriage, Coleridge's father had ten children, of whom Samuel Taylor was the second youngest. This studious child—Samuel was interested only in reading, and early read all the classics of English literature. At the age of eight he was sent to Christ's Hospital, where he struck up a creative friendship with Charles Lamb. From 1791-94, Coleridge was educated at Cambridge, Jesus College, but proved a wayward student, too much the scholar to fit comfortably with his classes, addicted to high living, and eventually to crippling debt. (His only significant friendship from this period was the future literary figure Robert Southey.) Having proven himself an indifferent scholar, in the University context, his only recourse was the military, in which he was even more a failure. Back at Cambridge again, Coleridge paired up not only with the poet Robert Southey, but soon with William Wordsworth, who (with his sister Dorothy) was to be the great intellectual mate of Coleridge throughout much of his life—though a bitter quarrel estranged them for some years—and for decades Coleridge shared with Wordsworth the distinction of being the leading British poet and thinker. 1797-8 were the most fruitful years of Coleridge's life, for in 1798 Coleridge published (with Wordsworth) *The Lyrical Ballads*, with its epoch changing Preface, and also his most famous long poem, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.' It should be mentioned, because it sharply distinguished Coleridge from Wordsworth, that the former spent considerable time studying German philosophy of the day, and came away from that experience, at the University of Goettingen, far more the speculative thinker than Wordsworth. It is unfortunate for the world that Coleridge's lifetime poor health, treated over that lifetime with laudanum, left him in his later years a pretty miserable victim of opium addiction.

The Work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Coleridge was active both as a poet and as a critic/philosopher. In fact, besides his major poetry, of which 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' was an early and huge success, as the star piece of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and besides the extraordinary critical daring he deployed in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817), in which he transposed into English a basically German conception of *Einbildungskraft* (imagination), which revolutionized critical thinking for the Romantic Movement, Coleridge was immensely influential in interpreting German philosophy and higher culture for England. At the time of publication of *The Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge took an extended trip to Germany, in which he made the acquaintance of many of the leading thinkers of the burgeoning new German Humanism. He left a strong impression wherever he traveled, and came home with a particularly strong impression of the thinking of Herder and especially Immanuel Kant, whose three *Kritiks* were at the time virtually unknown outside Germany. This introduction, of the outlines of a profound system of aesthetics and ethics, was to prove hugely nourishing to the still fairly parochial literary thinking of turn of the century England.

Reading

Primary source reading

Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Major Works, ed. Jackson, Oxford, 2009

Secondary source reading

Holmes, Richard, *Coleridge: Early Visions*, London, 1989.

Further reading

Leask, Nigel, *The Politics of Imagination in Coleridge's Thought*, Basingstoke, 1988.

Suggested paper topics

1. In his *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge observes that in the *Lyrical Ballads*, which bear the authorship of both himself and of Wordsworth, he (Coleridge) created poems of the supernatural, while Wordsworth, as he insisted, wrote poems bearing the real speech of real men in daily life. Do you find this distinction born out in the poems you have read, and if so what is the *supernatural* element in Coleridge's work? Take 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,' 'Christabel,' and 'The Eolian Harp.' What is supernatural about those poems? Why would Coleridge have used that

term about those works?

2. Coleridge's definition of imagination, as given in the *Biographia Literaria* (Chapter 13), claims that that faculty is 'the living power and prime agent of all human perception.' Do some reading in the thought of those German contemporaries of Coleridge, from whom he drew the foundations of this radical new aesthetic. (Think how totally this aesthetic differs from that of Dryden and Pope, hardly a century earlier.) Good starting point (with a commentary): the German philosopher Schelling's contemporary *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), which gives the priority to the aesthetic, in the human construction of reality.

Excerpt <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-soliloquy-of-the-full-moon-she-being-in-a-mad/>

*Now as Heaven is my Lot, they're the Pests of the Nation!
Wherever they can come
With clankum and blankum
'Tis all Bothereation, & Hell & Damnation,
With fun, jeering
Conjuring
Sky-staring,
Loungerin g,
And still to the tune of Transmogrification--
Those muttering
Spluttering
Ventriloquogusty
Poets
With no Hats
Or Hats that are rusty.
They're my Torment and Curse
And harass me worse
And bait me and bay me, far sorer I vow
Than the Screech of the Owl
Or the witch-wolf's long howl,
Or sheep-killing Butcher-dog's inward Bow wow
For me they all spite--an unfortunate Wight.
And the very first moment that I came to Light
A Rascal call'd Voss the more to his scandal,
Turn'd me into a sickle with never a handle.
A Night or two after a worse Rogue there came,
The head of the Gang, one Wordsworth by name--
'Ho! What's in the wind?' 'Tis the voice of a Wizzard!
I saw him look at me most terribly blue !
He was hunting for witch-rhymes from great A to Izzard,
And soon as he'd found them made no more ado
But chang'd me at once to a little Canoe.
From this strange Enchantment uncharm'd by degrees
I began to take courage & hop'd for some Ease,
When one Coleridge, a Raff of the self-same Banditti
Past by--& intending no doubt to be witty,
Because I'd th' ill-fortune his taste to displease,
He turn'd up his nose,
And in pitiful Prose
Made me into the half of a small Cheshire Cheese.
Well, a night or two past--it was wind, rain & hail--*

Walter Pater

The Life of Walter Pater. Walter Pater (1839-1894) was born in Stepney, in London's East End. His father was a doctor who had moved to London, early in the nineteenth century, to practice medicine among the poor. Upon the father's death, when Walter was still young, the family moved to Enfield. Walter was sent for a while to Enfield Grammar School, then, in 1883, to King's School in Canterbury, where the beauty of the Cathedral impressed him deeply. (He was at the time reading Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, a book that strongly reinforced these first aesthetic impressions.) In 1858 Pater enrolled at Queen's College, Oxford; during his stay there he made a journey to Europe, especially Germany, where he immersed himself in the reading of Hegel. (It was around this time that Pater lost his faith in Christianity.) In 1864 he was offered a classics fellowship at Brasenose College, but at this point implications of his homosexuality began to surface, and he was turned down at the last minute. (This issue would continue to plague his academic life.) In 1865 he visited the Continent again, and at this point began writing those essays—one on Winckelmann was among the first—which would be included in his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873); his long meditation on Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* is one of the cameo pieces of that text. (It was in that volume that Pater wrote that 'all art constantly aspires toward the condition of music.' In his later years, at Oxford, Pater went on to write considerable fiction, in which he gave various forms to the basic aestheticism of his earlier work, and clarified his 'metaphysic,' in which first place was given to grasping the fleeting beauty of the moment.

The Work of Walter Pater. Walter Pater was an aesthete and metaphysician (in a literary sense) who distinguished himself for the brilliance of his word portraits of great works of Renaissance art, and in his highly imaginative fiction. The works of his which most shaped opinion in his reading public were the *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), and *Imaginary Portraits* (1887). Throughout this body of work, expressed in an exquisite and often highly nuanced style, runs a theme of *carpe diem* prose:

every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive for us, – for that moment only.

Behind this perspective lies the highly developed notion that the world is essentially flux, and that man's role in it is to grasp the sensually significant instant. It can be imagined that this perspective, which Pater carried through to the first beginnings of a genuine art history, aroused concern among the guardians of public morals. The original Conclusion of *The Renaissance*, which appeared to invite unrestricted hedonism, had to be removed from later editions of the book, because of the outcry of conservatives like the novelist George Eliot. *Marius the Epicurean* transposes this set of concerns, about the values of sense experience and morality, onto a larger canvas, the conflict between developing Christianity and the pagan culture of late antiquity, as it played out in the spiritual world of a young man, Marius, who is open both to the power of the new Christian view of the world, and to the subtle, life-affirming values of the pagans in the countryside.

Reading

Primary source reading

Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in the Art of Poetry*, Kindle Edition, Amazon Digital Services, 2012.

Secondary source reading

Seiler, R.M., *Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage*, London, 1980.

Further reading

Donoghue, Dennis, *Walter Pater, Lover of Strange Souls*, New York, 1995.

Suggested paper topics

1. Does Pater's novel, *Marius the Epicurean*, throw light on the kind of view he has of Renaissance Art? Does Pater put his ideas across effectively in fiction?

2. Discuss the relation between Pater's Lucretian metaphysics, his poetically scientific view of the flux of life, and his art criticism. Is there a close relation? Is Pater a genuine philosopher?

Excerpt <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/4060/pg4060.html>

The various forms of intellectual activity which together make up the culture of an age, move for the most part from different starting-points, and by unconnected roads. As products of the same generation they partake indeed of a common character, and unconsciously illustrate each other; but of the producers themselves, each group is solitary, gaining what advantage or disadvantage there may be in intellectual isolation. Art and poetry, philosophy and the religious life, and that other life of refined pleasure and action in the conspicuous places of the world, are each of them confined to its own circle of ideas, and those who prosecute either of them are generally little [xiv] curious of the thoughts of others. There come, however, from time to time, eras of more favourable conditions, in which the thoughts of men draw nearer together than is their wont, and the many interests of the intellectual world combine in one complete type of general culture. The fifteenth century in Italy is one of these happier eras, and what is sometimes said of the age of Pericles is true of that of Lorenzo:—it is an age productive in personalities, many-sided, centralised, complete. Here, artists and philosophers and those whom the action of the world has elevated and made keen, do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts. There is a spirit of general elevation and enlightenment in which all alike communicate. The unity of this spirit gives unity to all the various products of the Renaissance; and it is to this intimate alliance with the mind, this participation in the best thoughts which that age produced, that the art of Italy in the fifteenth century owes much of its grave dignity and influence.

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Charles Dickens

The Importance of Charles Dickens. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was the best known, and most popular, English novelist of the nineteenth century. That means, in fact, that he was at the center of British culture, for in that century of the novel the entire nature of the new urban society of Britain was mirrored back to the world.

Life of Charles Dickens. Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth, as the second of eight children of John and Elizabeth Dickens. His father was a clerk in a Navy pay office, but not long after Charles' birth the family removed to a house in Chatham, Kent, where they remained until Charles reached the age of eleven. Though Charles was not yet enjoying a formal education, he was reading passionately on his own, especially in the eighteenth century English novelists, Smollet and Fielding. The modest peace of the family, however, was soon to be broken. Charles' father overspent himself, and was put in debtors' prison. As a consequence, Charles was obliged to enter the workforce, first of all in a blacking warehouse, where he earned six shillings a week pasting labels on pots of boot blacking. (The observations Dickens made, on this job and others, and in the boarding house where he found himself in his father's absence, went into his later fictions, as did all the major experiences, grimy as well as stimulating, he encountered in his later life. It was, incidentally, the practice of the time for the entire family to join the imprisoned debtor, and Dickens had thus ample opportunity to see the British prison system up close.) Upon his father's release from prison, thanks to an unexpected inheritance, Dickens was sent to Wellington House Academy, a modest educational establishment. From 1827-28 he worked as a law clerk, then as an editor of a law journal. All this time, as can be imagined, Dickens was actively writing, although essentially on the sketches he would later turn into his novels and short stories. In 1836 Dickens married, a happy commitment that would lead to ten children. In 1842 he made the first of two trips to the United States, then not long after returning he fell in love with a much younger woman—she eighteen, he forty five—and separated from his wife. The last years of Dickens' life, we can say simply, were devoted consistently to fiction.

The Work of Charles Dickens. It should be noted, from the start, that most of Dickens' publications were serialized in magazines and journals, so that even some of his most ambitious and extensive fiction was being presented in an incremental form which we might compare to TV serial reception today. Largely out of that system of production—and Dickens wrote with furious energy, like his contemporary Balzac in France—emerged a sequence of often comic, often sociologically bitter, frequently (and darkly) autobiographical fictions, which serve as a depiction of the whole socially underdeveloped middle class and poverty level of nineteenth century England. The greatest works to emerge from that creative effort are still quite familiar to the English reading public: *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-7), *Oliver Twist* (1837-8), *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *David Copperfield* (1849-50), *Bleak House* (1852). The list as such is woefully incomplete, for Dickens had immense creative energy, and wrote as though his life blood depended on it.

Reading

Primary source reading

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, ed. Maxwell, London, 2003. Penguin edition

Secondary source reading

Carey, John, *The Violent Effigy: A Study of Dickens' Imagination*, London, 1991.

Further reading

Sanders, Andrew, *Dickens and the Spirit of the Age*, Oxford, 1999.

Suggested paper topics

1. Compare Defoe, arguably the first journalist/novelist in English literature, with Charles Dickens the novelist. Does Dickens, like Defoe, provide a sociology of his time, while creating tales of it? Or is Dickens imaginative, in a sense which puts him into a more clearly fictional realm?
2. What effect do you suppose serial publication had on Dickens' creative achievement? Do you suppose he was excessively governed by popular taste? Or was he able to shape that taste by his own force?

Excerpt <http://www.literature.org/authors/dickens-charles/two-cities/book-02/chapter-01.html>

TELLSON'S BANK by Temple Bar was an old-fashioned place, even in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty. It was very small, very dark, very ugly, very incommodious. It was an old-fashioned place, moreover, in the moral attribute that the partners in the House were proud of its smallness, proud of its darkness, proud of its ugliness, proud of its incommodiousness. They were even boastful of its eminence in those particulars, and were fired by an express conviction that, if it were less objectionable, it would be less respectable. This was no passive belief, but an active weapon which they flashed at more convenient places of business. Tellson's (they said) wanted no elbow-room, Tellson's wanted no light, Tellson's wanted no embellishment. Noakes and Co.'s might, or Snooks Brothers' might; but Tellson's, thank Heaven!--

Any one of these partners would have disinherited his son on the question of rebuilding Tellson's. In this respect the House was much on a par with the Country; which did very often disinherit its sons for suggesting improvements in laws and customs that had long been highly objectionable, but were only the more respectable.

Thus it had come to pass, that Tellson's was the triumphant perfection of inconvenience. After bursting open a door of idiotic obstinacy with a weak rattle in its throat, you fell into Tellson's down two steps, and came to your senses in a miserable little shop, with two little counters, where the oldest of men made your cheque shake as if the wind rustled it, while they examined the signature by the dingiest of windows, which were always under a shower-bath of mud from Fleet-street, and which were made the dingier by their own iron bars proper, and the heavy shadow of Temple Bar. If your business necessitated your seeing "the House," you were put into a species of Condemned Hold at the back, where you meditated on a misspent life, until the House came with its hands in its pockets, and you could hardly bunk at it in the dismal twilight. Your money came out of, or went into, wormy old wooden drawers, particles of which flew up your nose and down your throat when they were opened and shut. Your bank-notes had a musty odour, as if they were fast decomposing into rags again. Your plate was stowed away among the neighbouring cesspools, and evil communications corrupted its good polish in a day or two. Your deeds got into extemporised strong-rooms made of kitchens and sculleries, and fretted all the fat out of their parchments into the banking-house air. Your lighter boxes of family papers went up-stairs into a Barmecide room, that always had a great dining-table in it and never had a dinner, and where, even in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty, the first letters written to you by your old love, or by your little children, were but newly released from the horror of being ogled through the windows, by the heads exposed on Temple Bar with an insensate brutality and ferocity worthy of Abyssinia or Ashantee.

Jane Austen

The greatness of Jane Austen. Jane Austen (1775-1817) (and Charles Dickens) brought the new nineteenth century form of the novel to its greatest power, finding their ways to depict the essences of a new society, which was palpably different from the cultural world even of late eighteenth century England. Jane Austen's fame grows constantly, in our own century hungry for the careful moral thinking of an earlier age.

The Life of Jane Austen. Jane Austen was born in 1775 in the Steventon Rectory, in Hampshire; she had six brothers and one sister—unmarried as was Jane. Jane Austen's parents were substantial gentry, on the lower fringes of the aristocratic class. Her father was from a family of prosperous woolen merchants, and worked in the family business, later serving as Rector at Steventon Rectory. Both Jane's father and her brothers were instrumental in directing her early education, which was in fact primarily reading. (For that purpose she was favored with a huge library composed of her father's books and those of a widely read uncle.) We should think of her childhood as on the whole peaceful and creative, set as it was in charming country landscape, and among enthusiastic readers and thinkers. The dominant tone of the family, from which Jane Austen gained so much of her own confidence and brilliance, and in which she observed a small but intense cross section of her own culture, was one of creative collegiality. The family performed plays, read to each other—as Jane got older—from Jane's own work, which turns out to be, even in its most mature phases, subtly intertwined with her juvenilia. The life that Jane Austen led, inside this sociable and educated home, was very different, in educational background and public exposure, from that led by almost all the male authors in this syllabus. One tends to think, for a parallel to Jane's Austen's cultural upbringing, of the life development of Emily Dickinson, in the United States. It is even relevant to this comparison that Jane Austen, like Emily Dickinson, never married; Jane Austen had one 'love affair'—in the style of her times-- and turned down one proposal of marriage.

The Work of Jane Austen. Jane Austen wrote many youthful stories and essays, which played into her later work, but the three novels for which she is chiefly remembered were all published within a short time: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811); *Pride and Prejudice* (1813); and *Emma* (1815). The intrigue of these novels, which are largely set in upper class country house interiors, and subtly intertwine with all the dramas of contemporary life—marriage negotiations, intra-family jealousies, the fine texture of joy, innocence, and malignity in the daily—forming what we might think of as an indispensable sociology of a class in action, a class, in fact, which was not to survive for long. (The industrial world, poverty and commerce, in which Dickens' texts plunge, was on its way to rewriting the history of nineteenth century culture.) The kinds of events which trigger the decisions and denouement of Austen's fictions is evident in *Pride and Prejudice*. The theme turns around marriage choices and negotiations, as the competing sisters, in a country squire family, attempt both to evaluate suitors and to play out their own rivalries in the marriage game. Happiness is achieved, on at least one front, when Elizabeth Bennett overcomes her prejudice, and Mr. Darcy his pride, and union is complete.

Reading

Primary source reading

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Jones, London, 2009. Penguin edition

Secondary source reading

Nokes, David, *Jane Austen: A Life*, London, 1997.

Further reading

Mason, Michael, *The Making of Victorian Sexual Attitudes*, Oxford, 1994.

Suggested paper topics

1. Jane Austen is by and large considered a comic novelist. Does that term seem to apply well? Does 'comic,' here connote domestic, and subtly ironic? Is Austen distinctively different from Charles Dickens, in regard to these traits?
2. Does the social world Austen depicts, and satirizes, belong to the elite of society? If so, does she write about universal human values? If so what are they, and how does she extract them from the behavior of her characters and settings?

Excerpt http://gutenberg.readingroo.ms/2/1/8/3/21839/21839-h/21839-h.htm#CHAPTER_VIII

Mrs. Jennings was a widow with an ample jointure. She had only two daughters, both of whom she had lived to see respectably married, and she had now therefore nothing to do but to marry all the rest of the world. In the promotion of this object she was zealously active, as far as her ability reached; and missed no opportunity of projecting weddings among all the young people of her acquaintance. She was remarkably quick in the discovery of attachments, and had enjoyed the advantage of raising the blushes and the vanity of many a young lady by insinuations of her power over such a young man; and this kind of discernment enabled her soon after her arrival at Barton decisively to pronounce that Colonel Brandon was very much in love with Marianne Dashwood. She rather suspected it to be so, on the very first evening of their being together, from his listening so attentively while she sang to them; and when the visit was returned by the Middletons' dining at the cottage, the fact was ascertained by his listening to her again. It must be so. She was perfectly convinced of it. It would be an excellent match, for he was rich, and she was handsome. Mrs. Jennings had been anxious to see Colonel Brandon well married, ever since her connection with Sir John first brought him to her knowledge; and she was always anxious to get a good husband for every pretty girl.

The immediate advantage to herself was by no means inconsiderable, for it supplied her with endless jokes against them both. At the park she laughed at the colonel, and in the cottage at Marianne. To the former her raillery was probably, as far as it regarded only himself, perfectly indifferent; but to the latter it was at first incomprehensible; and when its object was understood, she hardly knew whether most to laugh at its absurdity, or censure its impertinence, for she considered it as an unfeeling reflection on the colonel's advanced years, and on his forlorn condition as an old bachelor.

Mrs. Dashwood, who could not think a man five years younger than herself, so exceedingly ancient as he appeared to[32] the youthful fancy of her daughter, ventured to clear Mrs. Jennings from the probability of wishing to throw ridicule on his age.

"But at least, Mamma, you cannot deny the absurdity of the accusation, though you may not think it intentionally ill-natured. Colonel Brandon is certainly younger than Mrs. Jennings, but he is old enough to be my father; and if he were ever animated enough to be in love, must have long outlived every sensation of the kind. It is too ridiculous! When is a man to be safe from such wit, if age and infirmity will not protect him?"