

## Week 4: Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Ode to the West Wind' and William Blake, 'Auguries of Innocence'



### 1) The relationship(s) between Romanticism and modernity:

'Romanticism is the art of presenting to the peoples literary works which, in the view of present-day state of their customs and beliefs, affords them the utmost possible pleasure. *Classicism*, on the contrary, presents them with the literature that used to give the utmost pleasure to their great-grandfathers. [...] To imitate Sophocles and Euripides today, and to pretend that these imitations will not cause the nineteenth-century Frenchman to yawn, is to be a classicist'.

- Stendhal, quoted in Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity* (1987; Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006)

### 2) Definition of an 'Ode':

'From its origins in classical antiquity, the ode was a solemn, heroic, and elevated form. It elevated the person, the object, the occasion. In ancient times, in the Pindaric ode, athletes were praised, statesman were applauded. Therefore the early examples of the ode are full of flatteries, exaggerations, and claims for the excellence and high standing of the subject.'

- Mark Strand and Eavan Boland (eds), *The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms* (2000; New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2001), p. 240.

### 3) 'Conservative modernity'?:

'Conservative modernity' is a form of modernity that is seemingly 'Janus faced': 'it could simultaneously look backwards and forwards; it could accommodate the past in new forms of the present.'

- Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 10.

#### 4) Some overarching motifs and themes of Romanticism

**Nature** – a love of nature and natural things and a rejection of urban life. Nature presented as an idyllic state free from the artificial.

**Anti-establishmentism** – seeming opposition towards established institutions of power such as the monarchy, the church and the state. A sense that individuals must forge their own, unmediated relationship with the world around them.

**Exoticism** – A fascination with other, geographically distant cultures, particularly the Eastern and the Oriental.

**The Supernatural** – an attraction to the supernatural, the bizarre and the nightmarish. Embracing of the unknown, not everything can be explained by post-Enlightenment rationality.

#### Week 4 Suggestions for Further Secondary Reading

James Chandler and Maureen N. McLane, *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

- Lib: PR 590.C34

Paul Hamilton, *Percy Bysshe Shelley* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2000)

- Lib: PR 5438.H2

I.J. Kapstein, 'The Symbolism of the Wind and the Leaves in Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind"', *PMLA* 51, 4 (December 1936), pp. 1069-1079.

- Lib: Online Access

Paul O'Flinn, *How to Study Romantic Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001)

- Lib: 821.609145

Robert W. Rix, 'Blake, "Auguries of Innocence", The French Revolution, and "London"', *Explicator* 64, 1 (Fall 2005), pp. 23-25.

- Lib: Online Access

Jonathan Roberts, *William Blake's Poetry* (London: Continuum, 2007)

- Lib: PR 4147.R6