

The development of fiction

The theory of sublime influenced also the novel. The Gothic novel was born. The new genre was filled of suspense and fearful elements. This genre was very popular and was initiated by Ann Radcliffe. The protagonist is a girl pursued by a villain in a dark atmosphere that conveys horror and arouses fear in the reader. The ending is happy.

Many people liked reading: middle-class women and also people from lower classes borrowed books from libraries. Since a lot of fiction works were required to satisfy the public's necessities some works were not very good. The genre of fiction split into "good" and "bad" literature.

The new writers were now professional ones: they lived with what they earned from their works.

The Gothic novel is also present in Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein", but the scientific experiment made by the protagonist makes the work the first example of "science fiction".

Sir Walter Scott is the founder of the historical novel. History is not only the background of the story, but it's the protagonist itself of it. His favourite historical period is the Middle Ages because its dark atmosphere well fits the theory of sublime.

Finally there is Jane Austen. He's not really a romantic writer because his novels are more similar to Richardson's ones. The society represented is the one of the country gentry. He is an omniscient non-obtrusive narrator who tells the story of a female character that succeeds in marrying the man she loves. Jane Austen has strong moral purposes in her novels (opposed to the impulsive behaviour). Her heroines develop throughout the story and have very deep feelings. The society is very well-represented.

The development of poetry
Reason dominated the eighteenth century.
Poetry, which needs emotions and imagination, couldn't develop.

Poetry in eighteenth century is called "poetic diction": it's complex in style, difficult in language and has lack of originality in theme (impersonal and traditional themes).

In opposition of this unoriginal poetry we have the birth of a new form: the romantic one. It presents a simple style, an everyday (or simple) language and personal new themes (the author speaks about himself).

In the poetic diction the poet doesn't appear while in the romantic poetry the poet is often the protagonist. The rationalism (given by Enlightenment) is substituted by the stress on the poet's emotions. The poet considers nature as a living structure.

that reflects his feelings. In fact there are many descriptions of nature in the poems of this period.

Nature is often the protagonist. Connected to nature is the "state of nature" in which man is at his birth. So childhood is celebrated. Imagination is important to use nature to represent feelings.

Since the difficult "poetic diction" is abandoned in favour of a simpler language, also the forms change. Romantic poets revived the lyric, which is the best form to represent feelings through nature, and ballad. But ballad was modified in the literary ballad, which is more polished and artful. Sonnet was also popular (the model was Petrarch).