

Aula 6

THE NEOCLASSICAL POETRY

META

Apresentar ao estudante as principais características da poesia neoclássica inglesa, bem como suas condições de produção, circulação e recepção.

OBJETIVOS

Ao final desta aula, o aluno deverá:
Compreender o modo como o contexto sócio-político do século XVIII afetou sua produção literária.
Familiarizar o estudante com fragmentos da obra de Pope.

PRÉ-REQUISITOS

History of English literature until the eighteenth century.

Luiz Eduardo Oliveira

INTRODUÇÃO

The eighteenth century in England is sometimes called The Augustan Age, and sometimes The Age of Reason. Augustan literature (sometimes referred to misleadingly as Georgian literature) is a style of British literature produced during the reigns of Queen Anne, King George I, and George II in the first half of the 18th century and ending in the 1740s, with the deaths of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift, in 1744 and 1745, respectively. It was a literary epoch that featured the rapid development of the novel, the explosion of satire, the mutation of drama from political satire into melodrama and an evolution toward poetry of personal exploration. In philosophy, it was an age increasingly dominated by empiricism, while in the writings of political economy, it marked the evolution of mercantilism as a formal philosophy, the development of capitalism and the triumph of trade.

As for the Age of Reason, it was an eighteenth-century movement which followed hard after the mysticism, religion, and superstition of the Middle Ages. The Age of Reason represented a genesis in the way man viewed himself, the pursuit of knowledge, and the universe. In this time period, man's previously held concepts of conduct and thought could now be challenged verbally and in written form; fears of being labeled a heretic or being burned at the stake were done away with. Politically and socially, the imperial concepts of the medieval world were abandoned. The Age of Reason included the shorter time period described as the Age of Enlightenment. During this time, great changes occurred in scientific thought and exploration.

Fonte: <http://www.allabouthistory.org/age-of-reason.htm>

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY LITERATURE

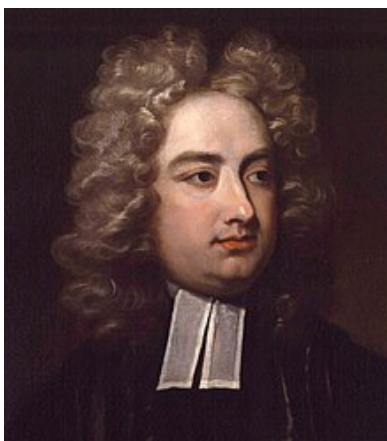
The 18th century in Europe is held as The Age of Enlightenment, or The Age of Reason. The literature produced in Europe during this time explored themes of social upheaval, reversals of personal status, political satire, geographical exploration and the comparison between the supposed natural state of man and the supposed civilized state of man. In other words, the conflict between nature and culture.

In prose, the 18th century saw the development of the modern novel as a new literary genre, for it was during this period that Daniel Defoe (c. 1660-1731) wrote his *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) published his *Gulliver's Travels* (1726, amended 1735). Subgenres of the novel during the 18th century were the epistolary novel, like *Pamela Or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), by Samuel Richardson (1689-1761); the sentimental novel, like *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768), by Laurence Sterne

(1713-1768); histories, like *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788), by Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) and the gothic novel, like *The Castle of Otrante* (1764), by Horatio Walpole (1717-1797) and the libertine novel.



Daniel Defoe (1660-1731), born Daniel Foe, was an English trader, writer, journalist, pamphleteer, and spy, most famous for his novel *Robinson Crusoe*. Defoe is noted for being one of the earliest proponents of the novel, as he helped to popularise the form in Britain with others such as Samuel Richardson, and is among the founders of the English novel. He was a prolific and versatile writer, producing more than five hundred books, pamphlets, and journals on various topics, including politics, crime, religion, marriage, psychology, and the supernatural. He was also a pioneer of economic journalism. Fonte: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Defoe



Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was an Anglo-Irish satirist, essayist, political pamphleteer (first for the Whigs, then for the Tories), poet and cleric who became Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. Fonte: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Swift



Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) was an 18th-century English writer and printer. He is best known for his three epistolary novels: *Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), *Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady* (1748) and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753). Richardson was an established printer and publisher for most of his life and printed almost 500 different works, including journals and magazines. He was also known to collaborate closely with the London bookseller Andrew Millar on several occasions. Fonte: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Richardson



Laurence Sterne (1713-1768) was an Irish novelist and an Anglican clergyman. He wrote the novels *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* and *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*, and also published many sermons, wrote memoirs, and was involved in local politics. Sterne died in London after years of fighting consumption. Fonte: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurence_Sterne

One interesting innovation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are the English coffeehouses, which were public social places where people would meet for conversation and commerce while drinking coffee. Coffeehouses also played an important role in the development of financial markets and newspapers, for the topics discussed included politics, political scandals, daily gossip, fashion, current events and general debates on philosophy and literature. Thus, the English coffeehouses of the 17th and 18th centuries are associated with the cultural history of the Age of Enlightenment.

The periodical which illustrates best the atmosphere of the period was *The Spectator*. It was a daily publication founded by Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and Richard Steele (1672-1729) which lasted from 1711 to 1712. Each “paper”, or “number” was approximately 2.500 words long and the original run consisted of 555 numbers. The numbers were then collected into seven volumes. In 1714, the paper reappeared without Steele. Its aim, according to its number 10, was “to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality”. The editor – Mr. Spectator – recommends that the readers of the paper read it each morning, once it sought to provide readers with topics for discussion, in order to equip them – especially those who belonged to the new bourgeoisie and didn’t have the refinement of the aristocracy – to carry on conversations and engage in social interactions in a polite manner. Thus, the editors of the paper wanted to promote family, marriage and courtly life



Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729) was an Irish writer and politician, remembered as co-founder, with his friend Joseph Addison, of the magazine *The Tatler*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Steele



Joseph Addison (1672-1719) was an English essayist, poet, playwright, and politician. He was the eldest son of The Reverend Lancelot Addison. His name is usually remembered alongside that of his long-standing friend, Richard Steele, with whom he founded *The Spectator* magazine. Fonte: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Addison

There were other newspapers during the period, such as: *Vetusta Monumenta* (1718-1906), an illustrated antiquarian paper published by the Society of Antiquaries of London; *The London Magazine* (1732-1785); *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1731-1907); *The Rambler* (1750-1752); *The Tatler* (1709) and many others.

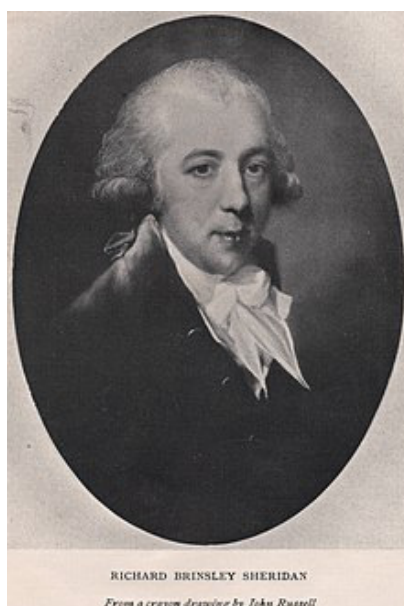
The dramatic literature of the eighteenth century was not so good as the Elizabethan or even the Restoration drama. One of the reasons of the decline of drama during the eighteenth century was certainly the Licensing Act of 1737, which curtailed the freedom of expression of dramatists. It may have caused a migration of the dramatists to the novel. In the field of tragedy there were two opposing traditions: Romantic and Classical. The Romantic tradition was the Elizabethan way of writing tragedy, with intricate plots and violent scenes on the stage. The Classical tradition, on the other hand, was mainly the French tradition of writing tragedy, characterised by the unfolding of a single action and long declamatory speeches. The traditional English pattern of drama was exemplified by *Venice Preserved* (1680), by Thomas Otway (1652-1685), while the Classical tradition can be represented by Addison's *Cato* (1713), written in an unemotional but correct style and with a pronounced moralising tone. Though a very large number of tragedies were written during the eighteenth century, they no dramatic value, according to the critics.

Steele was the first exponent of the sentimental comedy in the eighteenth century. In his plays, such as *The Funeral*, *The Lying Lover*, *The Tender Husband*, *The Conscious Lovers*, Steele extolled the domestic virtues. His object was didactic, and he tried to prove that morality and sharpness of intelligence can go together. Other dramatists who wrote sentimental comedies were Colley Cibber, Hugh Kelley and Richard Cumberland. In their hands comedy was so much drenched in emotions and sentiments that the genuine human issues were completely submerged in them. Thus there was a need to rescue the drama from such depths to which it had fallen.

The two great dramatists of the eighteenth century, however, were Oliver Goldsmith (1730-1774) and Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1861). Though in his novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), and in his poem, *The Deserted Village* (1770), Goldsmith showed marks of a sentimental attitude to life, in his *Good-Natured Man* (1768), he is ironic when he portrays the character of Honeywood as unadulterated 'good-nature'. His next play, *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), his masterpiece, was a great success. The play went a long way in restoring comedy to its lost quality. Sheridan, in turn, is best known for his two comedies — *The Rivals* (1775) and *The School for Scandal* (1777), which are even nowadays performed. In both these plays Sheridan reversed the trend of sentimentalism by introducing realism tinged with the geniality of romance.



Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) was an Irish novelist, playwright and poet, who is best known for his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), his pastoral poem *The Deserted Village* (1770), and his plays *The Good-Natur'd Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771, first performed in 1773). He is thought to have written the classic children's tale *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* (1765). Fonte: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver_Goldsmith



Richard Brinsley Butler Sheridan (1751-1816) was an Irish satirist; a playwright and poet, and long-term owner of the London Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. He is known for his plays such as *The Rivals*, *The School for Scandal*, *The Duenna* and *A Trip to Scarborough*. For thirty-two years he was also a Whig MP in the British House of Commons for Stafford (1780–1806), Westminster (1806–1807) and Ilchester (1807–1812). He is buried at Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. His plays remain a central part of the canon, and are regularly performed worldwide. Fonte: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Brinsley_Sheridan

Among the prominent poets of the 18th century were James Thomson (1700-1748), who wrote the very successful collection of poems *The Seasons* (1726), and Edward Young (1683-1765), whose *Night Thoughts* (1742) combined melancholy and religion. Anticipations of romanticism can be seen in poets like William Collins (1721-1759), Thomas Gray (1716-1771) and Robert Burns (1759-1796). William Blake (1757-1827) emerges like a transitional poet, although his unique poetic and pictoric production position him as not only a poet, but also an artist, an artisan, a revolutionary and, most of all, a kind of visionary prophet.



James Thomson (1700-1748) was a Scottish poet and playwright, known for his masterpiece *The Seasons* and the lyrics of "Rule, Britannia!".



William Blake (1757-1827) was an English poet, painter, and printmaker. Largely unrecognised during his lifetime, Blake is now considered a seminal figure in the history of the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. His prophetic works have been said to form "what is in proportion to its merits the least read body of poetry in the English language". His visual artistry led one contemporary art critic to proclaim him "far and away the greatest artist Britain has ever produced". Fonte: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Blake

ALEXANDER POPE

One author who is very paradigmatic when we talk about the eighteenth century in England, especially in its first half, is Alexander Pope (1688-1744). Best known for his satirical verse, as well as a translator of Homer, he is responsible for introducing the fashion of using the heroic couplet as his favorite form, being the second-most quoted writer in The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations after Shakespeare.

Since he was 12, he suffered from a lot of health problems, such as Pott's disease, which deformed his body and stunted his growth, leaving him with a hunchback. His tuberculosis infection caused respiratory difficulties, high fevers, inflamed eyes, and abdominal pain. He grew only to a height of only 1.37m and was already removed from society because he was catholic. Although he never married, he had many female friends to whom he wrote frequently. According to his biographers, his friend Martha Blount (1690-1762) was his lover.

In 1709, his *Pastorals* was published in the sixth part of Tonson's *Poetical Miscellanies*. This publication brought him fame, something which was followed by *An Essay on Criticism*, published in 1711, which became an international success, being translated into many languages. In the same year, he made friends with Tory writers like John Gay (1685-1732) and Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), who, among others, formed the satirical **Scriblerus Club**. He also made friends with Whig writers Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and Richard Steele (1672-1729). Due to his friendship with Joseph Addison, he contributed to the play *Cato*, as well as writing for *The Guardian* and *The Spectator*. The money made from his translation of Homer allowed him to move in 1719 to Twickenham, where he created his now famous grotto and gardens.

An Essay on Criticism was first published anonymously in 1711. When it was published, the heroic couplet style in which it was written was a new genre of poetry. In general, it was an attempt to identify and refine his own positions as a poet and critic. It is said it was a response to a debate on the question of whether poetry should be natural or written according to predetermined artificial rules inherited from the classical past. As a neoclassical poet, Pope defended this second position.

His most famous poem, however, is *The Rape of the Lock*, first published in 1712. A mock-epic, it satirises a high-society quarrel between Arabella Fermor (the "Belinda" of the poem) and Lord Petre, who had stolen a lock of hair from her head without her permission. It shows also an interest in the fashionable world of 18th-century English aristocratic and bourgeois society. There was a revised and extended version of the poem published in 1714. Though the *Dunciad* was first published anonymously in Dublin, nobody doubted it was written by Pope. Together with John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, *Dunciad* was part of a propaganda

against Walpole's Whig. Although he was a keen participant in the stock and money markets, Pope never missed an opportunity to satirise the personal, social and political effects of the new scheme of things

His *Essay on Man*, a philosophical poem, is also written in heroic couplets and was published between 1732 and 1734. It was a piece of work that Pope intended to make it larger, he didn't live enough to complete it. The poem is an attempt to "vindicate the ways of God to Man", in a clear reference to Milton in *Paradise Lost*: "justify the ways of God to Man". It consists of four epistles that are addressed to Lord Bolingbroke (1678-1751). In Pope's world, God exists and is the center of the Universe.



Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was an 18th-century English poet. He is best known for his satirical verse, as well as for his translation of Homer. Famous for his use of the heroic couplet, he is the second-most frequently quoted writer in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* after Shakespeare. Fonte: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Pope

CONCLUSÃO

By the mid-18th century new fashions in poetry emerged. A decade after Pope's death, Pope's style of poetry was not the most praised form of the art. The Romantic movement that rose to prominence in early 19th-century England was more ambivalent towards his work. Though Lord Byron identified Pope as one of his chief influences, William Wordsworth found Pope's style fundamentally too decadent a representation of the human condition.

In the 20th century, Pope's reputation was revived. Pope's work was found to be full of references to the people and places of his time, and these aided people's understanding of the past. The postwar period stressed the power of Pope's poetry, recognising that Pope's immersion in Christian and Biblical culture lent depth to his poetry. In the years 1953-1967, the production of the definitive Twickenham edition of Pope's poems was published in ten volumes.



RESUMO

The 18th century was the age of town life with its coffeehouses and clubs. One of the most famous of the latter was the Scriblerus Club, whose members included Pope, Swift, and John Gay (author of *The Beggar's Opera*). Its purpose was to defend and uphold high literary standards against the rising tide of middle-class values and tastes. Letters were a popular form of polite literature. Pope, Swift, Horace Walpole, and Thomas Gray were masters of the form, and letters make up the chief literary output of *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* and *Lord Chesterfield*. The novels of Samuel Richardson, including the influential *Clarissa* (1747), were written in epistolary form. With the work of Richardson, Fanny Burney, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, and Laurence Sterne the English novel flourished.

Fonte: <http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/entertainment/english-literature-the-eighteenth-century.html>



ATIVIDADES

Leia atentamente o poema abaixo:

ODE ON SOLITUDE

Happy the man, whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air,
In his own ground.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,
Whose flocks supply him with attire,
Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
In winter fire.

Blest! who can unconcern'dly find
Hours, days, and years slide soft away,
In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day,

Sound sleep by night; study and ease
Together mix'd; sweet recreation,
And innocence, which most does please,
With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
Thus unlamented let me dye;
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lye.

* Faça uma interpretação do poema baseado(a) no que você estudou nessa aula, buscando identificar até que ponto o poeta Alexander Pope, nesse poema, apresenta elementos e características da poesia neoclássica.

The intention of the activity is to develop in the students a critical sense of interpretation of the poem, relating its internal elements with its conditions of production, circulation and reception of the poem. Always use a good dictionary, printed or online.



PRÓXIMA AULA

As Histórias Literárias e as Literaturas Comparadas no Século XIX

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