

A Glimps at Romanticism in English Literature

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to focus on the concept of Romanticism which is a movement in art and literature that originated in the late 18th century. In this research we critically analyze the term, its period, the literature and author who contributed to this movement.

1. Introduction

Romanticism was an artistic, literary and intellectual movement that originated in Europe toward the end of the 18th century and in most areas was at its peak in the approximate period from 1800 to 1850. Partly a reaction to the industrial Revolution, it was also a revolt against aristocratic social and political norms of the age of Enlightenment and a reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature. It was embodied most strongly in the visual arts, music and literature but had a major impact on historiography, education and the natural sciences.

2. Defining Romanticism

Defining the nature of Romanticism may be approached from the starting point of the primary importance of the free expression of the feelings of the artist. The importance of the Romantics placed on untrammelled feeling is summed up in the remark of the German painter Caspar David Friedrich that "the artists feeling is his law". To William Wordsworth poetry should be "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". In order to truly express these feelings, the content of the art must come from the imagination of the artist, with as little interference as possible from "artificial" rules that acting what a work should consist of.

Not essential to Romanticism, but so widespread as to be normative, was a strong belief and interest in the importance of nature. However, this is particularly in the effect of nature upon the artist when he is surrounded by it, preferably alone. In contrast to the usually very social art of the Enlightenment, Romantics were distrustful of the human world, and tended to believe that a close connection with the nature was mentally and morally healthy. Romantic art addressed its audiences directly and personally with what was intended to be felt as the personal voice of the artist. So in literature "much of romantic poetry invited the reader to identify the protagonists with the poets themselves".

3. The Term

The group of words with the root "Roman" in the various European languages such as romance and romantique in French were both in common use as adjectives of praise for natural phenomena such as views and sunsets, in a sense close to modern English usage but without the implied sexual element. The application of the term to literature first became common in Germany, where the circle around the Schlegel brothers, critics August and Friedrich, began to speak of romantische Poesie in the 1790s, contrasting it with "classic" but in terms of spirit rather than merely dating.

4. The period

Unsurprisingly, given its rejection on principle of rules, Romanticism is not easily defined, and the period typically called romantic varies greatly between different countries and different artistic media or areas of thought. Margaret Drabble described it in literature as taking place "roughly between 1770 and 1848" and few dates much earlier than 1770 will be found. In English literature, M.H. Abrams placed it between 1789 or 1798, this latter a very typical view, and about 1830, perhaps a little later than some other critics. However in most fields the Romantic period is said to be over by about 1850, or earlier.

The early period of the Romantic era was a time of war, with the French Revolution (1789-1799) followed by the Napoleonic wars until 1815. These wars along with the political and social turmoil that went along with them searched as the background for Romanticism.

5. Romantic Literature

The precursors of Romanticism in English poetry go back to the middle of the 18th century, including figures such as Joseph Warton and his brother, Thomas Warton, professor of poetry at Oxford University. Thomas Chatterton is generally considered to be the first Romantic poet in English.

The Scottish poet James Macpherson's work involved elements of fraud, as what they claimed to be earlier literature that they had discovered or compiled was in fact entirely their own work.

5.1 Romantic Authors

- William Wordsworth
- P.B.Shelly
- Jane Austane
- Robert Burns
- S.t.Coleridge
- Victor Hugo
- John Keats
- Thoms Carlyle
- William blake
- Lord Byron

5.2 Romantic Societies

- British Association for Romantic Studies (BARS)
- International Conference on Romanticism(ICR)
- NASSR

6. Objectives

- To understand the meaning of Romanticism
- To know the eminent creators of Romanticism.

7. Conclusion

Romanticism is a movement which was initiated to break the rules, reason, decorum, regularity of Enlightened Neoclassicism. It remained successful by the contribution of above mentioned authors. It has established a new theory and wings to English literature.

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