

PERCEPTION OF ROMANTICISM AND TRANSCENDENTALISM IN EMILY DICKINSON'S POETRY

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ABSTRACT

Romanticism, the special term in literature has been used to refer to certain artists, poets, writers, musicians, as well as political, philosophical, and social thinkers of the XVIII and early to mid XIX centuries. It has equally been used to refer to various artistic, intellectual, and social trend of the era. A precise characterization and specific definition of Romanticism has been the subject of debate in the fields of intellectual history and literary history throughout the XX century, without any great measure of consensus emerging. The romantic impulse played a major role in the mid-nineteenth century blossoming of American literature and art that has been called the American Renaissance.

Introduction. Romanticism in English literature had little connection with nationalism, the related term, Transcendentalism, intellectualism etc. The major figures in the movement of Transcendentalism were Ralph Waldo Emerson and romantic realism of Walt Whitman. The poetry of Emily Dickinson can be taken as epitomes of American Romantic literature. By the 1880s, however, psychological and social realism was competing with romanticism in the novels too. Through this paper we can innovate many new ideas and philosophies of the age of Romanticism.

The books and journals of English literature are enriched by plenty of papers on Romanticism which give us enough opportunities to review and research on this topic.[2]

Basically the term “Romanticism” has been used to refer to certain artists, poets, writers, musicians, as well as political, philosophical, and social thinkers of the XVII and early to mid 19th centuries. It has equally been used to refer to various artistic, intellectual, and social trend of the era. Despite of this common usage of the term, a precise characterization and specific definition of Romanticism has been the subject of debate in the fields of intellectual history and literary history throughout the 20th century, without any great measure of consensus emerging.

It was a movement originated in the 2nd half of the XVIII century in Europe and strengthened in reaction to the Industrial Revolution. Partially it was 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 natural history. The movement validated strong emotion as an authentic source of aesthetic experience, placing new emphasis on such emotions as trepidation, horror and terror, and especially that which is experienced in confronting the sublimity of untamed nature and its picturesque qualities, both new aesthetic categories. It elevated folk art and ancient custom to something noble, made spontaneity a desirable characteristic, and argued for a “natural” epistemology of human activities as conditioned by nature in the form of language and customary usage.[3]

It focuses on Nature: a place free from society’s judgment and restrictions. Romanticism blossomed after the age of Rationalism, a time that focus on scientific reasoning’s. In literature, Romanticism found recurrent themes in the evocation or criticism of the past, the cult of “sensibility” with its emphasis on women and children, the heroic isolation of the artist or narrator, and respect for a new, wilder, untrammelled and “pure” nature.

Main part. Actually Romantic literature displayed a number of recurrent motifs: the theme of the individual in rebellion; the symbolic interpretation of the historic past; subjects from myth and folklore; the glorification of nature; faraway settings; sentimentalism; the nobility of the uncivilized man (the Native American, for example); admiration for the simple life; the elevation of the common man; a fascination with Gothic themes, with the supernatural and mysterious, with introspection, melancholy, and horror; and a humanitarian political and social outlook. The romantic impulse played a major role in the mid-nineteenth century blossoming of American literature and art that has been called the American Renaissance. (Cliff notes) In English literature, the group of poets now considered the key figures of the Romantic movement includes William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Percy B. Shelley, and the much older William Blake, followed later by the isolated figure of John Clare.[4]

The publication in 1798 of *Lyrical Ballads*, with many of the finest poems by Wordsworth and Coleridge, is often held to mark the start of the movement. However in the period when they were writing they were widely regarded as a marginal group of radicals, though they were supported by the critic and writer William Hazlitt and others. Romanticism in English literature had little connection with nationalism, and the Romantics were often regarded with suspicion for the sympathy many felt for the ideals of the French Revolution, whose collapse and replacement with the dictatorship of Napoleon was, as elsewhere in Europe, a shock to the movement. François-René de Chateaubriand is often called the “Father of French Romanticism”. [7]

In France, the movement is associated with the XIX century, the plays, poems and novels of Victor Hugo, Spanish Romanticism also influenced regional literatures. A very strong aspect of Polish Romanticism was its relation to and inspiration from Polish history. Brazilian Romanticism is characterized and divided

in three different periods. The first one is basically focused in the creation of a sense of national identity, using the ideal of the heroic India. [5]

The related term, Transcendentalism is a philosophical movement that developed in the 1830s and 1840s in the New England region of the United States as a protest to the general state of culture and society, and in particular, the state of intellectualism at Harvard University and the doctrine of the Unitarian church taught at Harvard Divinity School. Among the transcendentalists' core beliefs was the inherent goodness of both man and nature. Transcendentalists believed that society and its institutions - particularly organized religion and political parties - ultimately corrupted the purity of the individual. They had faith that man is at his best when truly "self-reliant" and independent. It is only from such real individuals that true community could be formed.[6]

Conclusion. To conclude, Romanticism became popular in American politics, philosophy and art. American Romanticism embraced the individual and rebelled against the confinement of neoclassicism and religious tradition. The Romantic movements in America created a new literary genre that continues to influence American writers. Novels, short stories, and poems replaced the sermons and manifestos of former times. Romantic literature was personal, intense, and portrayed more emotion than ever seen in neoclassical literature.

It is very difficult to analyze the special qualities of these three American Romantic poets, and the limited usefulness of the term Romanticism we have nevertheless to agree that the term has some justification in the light of poetic theory and practice to realize that there was a significant shift in taste and attitude taking place throughout Europe and America in the latter part of the XVIII century literature. Through this paper we can innovate many new ideas and philosophies of the age of Romanticism. The books and journals of English literature are enriched by plenty of papers on Romanticism which give us enough opportunities to review and research on this topic.

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