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## ROMANTICISM IN LITERATURE

Dr. Anupama Jena

Assistant Professor

Department of Humanities

Regional College of Management, Bhubaneswar, India

**Abstract:** The term "Romantic" is derived from the old French 'Romans' and is denoted as a vernacular language derived from the Latin word that provides us the expression "the Romance languages", but it came to mean more than a language. It not only meant an imaginative story and a courtly romance but also implies the quality and preoccupations of literature written in "the Romance languages", especially romances and stories. However, day by day, it came to mean so many other things also. By the seventeenth century in English, the French word "romantic" had come to mean anything which is from imaginative or fictitious, fabulous or extravagant, fanciful or bizarre, exaggerated and fanciful. The adjective "roman-tic" was also used with the connotation of disapproval. In the eighteenth century, it was increasingly used with various connotations of approval, especially in the descriptions of pleasing qualities in the landscape. To elaborate on the poetry of the Romantic period (about 1780-1830) the term "romantic" has all these and other meanings and connotations behind it, which reflects the complexity and multiplicity of the European Romanticism

**Index Terms:** Romantic, civilization, society, particular, century, common, spontaneous, personal

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Romanticism was one of the literary movements that began in the late 18th century and ended around the middle of the 19th century—although its influence continues to date. It is marked by focusing on the individual (the unique perspective of a person that is often guided by irrational and emotional impulses), a respect for nature as a whole, and a celebration of the common man. Romanticism is visible clearly as a reaction to the drastic changes in the society that occurred during this period, including the revolutions that spread like wildfire through the countries like France and the United States, ushering in the grand experiments in democracy.

Romanticism, its attitude or intellectual orientation has characterized many works of literature, art, music, architecture, criticism, historiography, and the other fields of the Western civilization over a period from the late 18th to the mid 19th century. Romanticism can be seen as a rejection of the precepts of order, calm, harmony, balance, idealization, and rationality that typified classicism in general and late 18th-century Neoclassicism in particular. It was also to some extent a reaction against the Enlightenment and 18th-century

rationalism and physical materialism in general. Romanticism emphasized the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental.

## 2. ROMANTICISM DEFINITION:

The term Romanticism has not been directly shared from the concept of love but rather derived from the French word 'romant' (a romantic story told in verse). Romanticism that is focused on emotions and the inner feelings of the writer, and is often used as an autobiographical asset to inform about the work or even to provide a template for it, which is not like the traditional literature at the time.

Romanticism is celebrated as the primitive and elevated "regular people" as deserving of celebration, which was an innovation at the time. Romanticism is also fixated on nature as a primordial force and encouraged the concept of loneliness as necessary for spiritual and artistic development. Among the characteristic attitudes of Romanticism were the following: a deepened appreciation of the beauties of nature; a general exaltation of emotion over reason and of the senses over intellect; a turning in upon the self and a heightened examination of human personality and its moods and mental potentialities; a preoccupation with the genius, the hero, and the exceptional figure in general and a focus on his or her passions and inner struggles; a new view of the artist as a supremely individual creator, whose creative spirit is more important than strict adherence to formal rules and traditional procedures; an emphasis upon imagination as a gateway to transcendent experience and spiritual truth; an obsessive interest in folk culture, national and ethnic cultural origins, and the medieval era; and a predilection for the exotic, the remote, the mysterious, the weird, the occult, the monstrous, the diseased, and even the satanic.

Several developments were being followed by the Romanticism proper from the mid-18th century and that can be defined as Pre-Romanticism. Among such trends, Medieval Romance had its arrival, from which the Romantic Movement has derived its name. The romance, as a whole, was a tale or ballad of chivalric adventure. It was focused on the non-native and the individual heroism; and the mysterious was in clear contrast to the elegant formality and artificiality of prevailing Classical forms of literature, such as the French Neoclassical tragedy or the English heroic couplet in poetry. This new interest in relatively callow but overtly emotional literary expressions of the past were to be a dominant note in Romanticism.

The publication of the Lyrical Ballads by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge helped Romanticism to step into English Literature in the 1790s. Wordsworth's "Preface" to the second edition (1800) of the Lyrical Ballads in which he described poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," became the manifesto of the English Romantic movement in poetry. William Blake was the third important poet of this Romantic Movement's early phase in England. The first phase of the Romantic Movement in Germany was completely focused on the innovations in both literary style and content; and by a preoccupation with the supernatural, the mystical, and the subconscious. A flock of talents, including Friedrich Hölderlin, Novalis, the early Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, August Wilhelm Jean Paul, Ludwig Tieck, and Friedrich von Schlegel, Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, and Friedrich Schelling belong to this first phase. In Revolutionary France, François-Auguste-René, Vicomte de Chateaubriand, and Madame de Staël were some of the chief initiators of Romanticism by virtue of their influential historical and theoretical writings.

The second phase of Romanticism, starting from the period 1805 to the 1830s was marked by a fast-growing cultural nationalism and a new center of attraction towards the national origins, along with the collection and imitation of native folklore, folk ballads and poetry, folk dance and music and even previously ignored medieval and the Renaissance works. The revived historical acknowledgment was translated into imaginative writing by Sir Walter Scott, who is very often accepted to have invented the historical novel. At about this same time English Romantic poetry had reached its pinnacle in the works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, and Lord Byron.

A notable by-product of the Romantic interest in the emotions were works dealing with the supernatural, the weird, and the horrible, as in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and works by Charles Robert Maturin, the Marquis de Sade, and E.T.A. Hoffmann. The second phase of Romanticism in Germany was dominated by Achim von Arnim, Clemens Brentano, Joseph von Görres, and Joseph von Eichendorff.

By the 1820s Romanticism had broadened its area to embrace the literature of entire Europe. Later in the second phase, the movement was less universal in approach and concentrated more on exploring each nation's cultural and historical inheritance and on examining the passions and struggles of exceptional individuals. A brief survey of Romantic influenced writers would include Thomas De Quincey, William Hazlitt, and Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë in England; Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny, Alphonse de Lamartine, Alfred de Musset, Stendhal, Prosper Mérimée, Alexandre Dumas and Théophile Gautier in France; Alessandro Manzoni and Giacomo Leopardi in Italy; Aleksandr Pushkin and Mikhail Lermontov in Russia; José de Espronceda and Ángel de Saavedra in Spain; Adam Mickiewicz in Poland and almost all of the important writers in pre-Civil War America.

### **3. CHARACTERISTICS OF ROMANTICISM:**

Romantic literature is marked by six basic characteristics: giving importance to nature, focusing on the individual and spirituality, a celebration of loneliness and melancholy, emphasizing the common man, idealization of women, personification, and the pathetic fallacy.

#### **3.1. CELEBRATION OF NATURE:**

Romantic writers found nature to be a teacher and a source of infinite beauty. One of the most famous works of John Keats- 'To Autumn' (1820) where he has emphasized Romanticism...

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—

While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,

And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn

Among the river shallows, borne aloft

Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

Keats, in the above stanza, has personified the season and followed its progression from the arrival of summer, through the harvest season and finally till autumn's end as winter takes its place.

#### **3.2. FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL AND SPIRITUALITY:**

Above all the Romantic writers used to turn inward by valuing the individual experience. This in turn led to heighten the sense of spirituality in Romantic work and the addition of occult and supernatural elements.

The work of Edgar Allan Poe is a bright example of this aspect of the movement; the Raven tells the story of a man who mourns for his dead love (idealizing woman in the Romantic tradition) when it seemed sentient Raven arrived and tormented him, which could be interpreted literally or manifested his mental instability.

### 3.3 CELEBRATION OF ISOLATION AND MELANCHOLY:

Ralph Waldo Emerson was one of the very influential writers in the Romantic era; his books of essays has brought out many of the themes of the literary movement and codified them. His essay, 'Self-Reliance' in 1841 is a seminal work of Romantic writing in which he encourages the value of looking oneself and determining our own path, and relying on only our own resources.

Related to emphasising on isolation, melancholy is an important feature of many Romantic works, usually seen as a reaction to inevitable failure—writers wished to elaborate the pure beauty they discern and the failure to do so adequately resulted in hopelessness like the one expressed by Percy Bysshe Shelley in A Lament:

O world! O life! O time!

On whose last steps I climb.

Trembling at that where I had stood before;

When will return the glory of your prime?

No more—Oh, never more!

### 3.4. INTEREST IN THE COMMON MAN:

William Wordsworth was one of the first poets to take up the concept of writing that could be read, enjoyed, understood, analyse and interpret by anyone. Instead of using stylized language, Wordsworth used and referred to classical works in favour of emotional imagery, that was conveyed in simple and elegant language, as in his most famous poem, 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud':

I wandered lonely as a Cloud

That floats on high o'er vales and Hills,

When all at once I saw a crowd,

A host, of golden Daffodils;

Beside the Lake, beneath the trees,

Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

### 3.5. IDEALIZATION OF WOMEN:

In the works such as Poe's, 'The Raven', women were always presented as idealized love interests, that is pure and beautiful, but usually without anything else to offer. Ironically, the most notable novels of the Romantic period were written by women for example Jane Austen, Mary Shelley and Charlotte Bronte, but that had to be published initially under male pseudonyms because of these attitudes. Much Romantic literature is marinated with the concept of women being perfect innocent beings to be adored, mourned and respected—but never touched or relied upon.

### 3.6. PERSONIFICATION AND PATHETIC FALLACY:

Romantic literature's focus on nature is characterized by using of both personification and pathetic fallacy heavily. Mary Shelley used these techniques in order to get effect in Frankenstein:

Its fair lake reflects the blue and gentle sky; and when it is troubled by the winds, their tumult is but as the play of a lively infant, when compared to the blaring of the giant ocean.

Romanticism has been influencing literature till today; Stephenie Meyers' Twilight novels are brighter examples of the movement, incorporating most of the characteristics of classical Romanticism in spite of being published a century and half after the end of the active life of the movement.

#### 4. VISUAL ARTS:

In the 1760s and 1770s a number of British artists at home and in Rome, began to paint on those subjects that were very unique with strict decorum and having mythological, classical and historical subject matter of conventional figurative art, which includes James Barry, Henry Fuseli, John Hamilton Mortimer, and John Flaxman, These artists' were in favour of themes that were queer, miserable or extravagantly heroic and they described their images with tensely linear drawing and bold contrasts of light and shade. William Blake, the other principal early Romantic poet as well as painter in England, generated his own powerful and special visionary images.

In the next generation the great differentiation of English Romantic skeletal painting emerged in the works of J.M.W. Turner and John Constable. These artists aimed on impermanent and dramatic effects of light, atmosphere, and colour to exhibit a dynamic natural world capable of evoking awe and grandeur.

In France the chief early Romantic painters were Baron Antoine Gros, who painted the dramatic representation of contemporary incidents of Napoleonic Wars and Théodore Géricault, whose depiction of individual heroism and suffering in *The Raft of the Medusa* and in his portraits of the insane truly inaugurated the movement around 1820. The greatest French Romantic painter was Eugène Delacroix, who is considered to be outstanding for his free and expressive brushwork, his rich and pleasurable use of colour, his dynamic compositions, and his unnaturalized and unique subject matter, ranging from North African Arab life to revolutionary politics at home, Paul Delaroche, Théodore Chassériau, and occasionally, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres represented the last, more academic phase of Romantic painting in France. Germany Romantic painting took on symbolic and metaphorical overtones as in the works of Philipp Otto Runge. Caspar David Friedrich, the greatest German Romantic artist, painted supernaturally silent and stark sceneries that can lead the beholder a sense of puzzle and religious astonishment.

Romanticism conveyed itself in architecture are basically through imitating older architectural styles and through eccentric buildings are known as "follies." Medieval Gothic architecture was fascinated to the Romantic imagination in England and Germany and this renewed interest has led to the Gothic Revival.

Musical Romanticism was marked by the emphasis on originality and personal emotional expression of an individual; and freedom and experimentation of form. Ludwig van Beethoven and Franz Schubert bridged the Classical and Romantic periods since their formal musical techniques were basically Classical. Their music had intensely personal feeling and their use of programmatic elements provided an important model for 19th century Romantic composers.

The possibilities for a considerable expressiveness in music were engraved both by the expansion and perfection of the instrumental repertoire and by the creation of new musical forms, such as the lied, prelude, intermezzo, capriccio, nocturne, and mazurka. The Romantic spirit was often found as an inspiration in poetic texts, legends, and folk tales and the linking of words and music either programmatically or through such forms as the concert overture and incidental music is another distinguishing feature of Romantic music. The principal composers of the first phase of Romanticism were Hector Berlioz, Franz Liszt Frédéric Chopin, and Felix Mendelssohn. These composers expanded the harmonic vocabulary to exploit the full range of the chromatic scale, pushed orchestral instruments to

their limits of expressiveness, and explored the linking of instrumentation and the human voice. The middle phase of musical Romanticism is represented by such figures as Antonín Dvořák, Edvard Grieg, and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Romantic efforts to express a particular nation's uniqueness through music were manifested in the works of the Czechs Antonín Dvořák and Bedřich Smetana and various others like Russian, French, and Scandinavian composers.

Romantic opera in Italy was developed by the symphonist Gaetano Donizetti, Vincenzo Bellini, and Gioachino Rossini, whereas Romantic opera in Germany began with the works of Carl Maria von Weber. The Italian Romantic opera was brought which reached its pinnacle of success by Giuseppe Verdi. The Romantic opera in Germany reached its height in the works of Richard Wagner, who combined and integrated such diverse strands of Romanticism as an ardent nationalism; the cult of the hero; exotic sets and costumes; expressive music; and the display of virtuosity in orchestral and vocal settings. The final phase of musical Romanticism is represented by late 19th century and early 20th century composers such as Gustav Mahler, Edward Elgar, Richard Strauss and Jean Sibelius.

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