

18th Century Poetry

Third Stage

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First Lecture: Romantic Poetry

The Romantic Movement (1789-1830)

Romanticism appeared in the very late of the eighteenth century as a reaction against the formality and classicism of the age of Pope and Dryden. The notions behind revolutions in America and France also began increasingly occupy the thoughts of the English men at that time. In their hearts they breathed the hope of freedom, justice, and revolt. Consequently, we can observe in romantic poetry this revolt against traditions and attitudes.

Romantic poetry shows a rebellious spirit against the growing industrial spirit that began to turn England into manufacturing nation whose values took the shapes of marketplace in which everything has a value, human beings included.

Romanticism is usually regarded as the opposite of **Classical** because it is associated with vitality, powerful emotions, liberal and dreamlike threads. While classical is connected with order, common sense, and controlled reason; which reason is everything in classic works while romantic works probe into the secret nooks of passion. This leads to the subjectivity of romanticism and objectivity if classicism. The term “**Romanticism**” is hard to define and any attempt to find a comprehensive definition would be difficult. Originally the word is derived from “Romance” which is a tale of imaginary characters and events. And the spirit follows the term.

Among the other elements a romantic work are:

- 1- Imaginative
- 2- Beauty
- 3- Nature
- 4- Melancholy
- 5- Emotional
- 6- Loneliness
- 7- Isolation
- 8- Inspiration
- 9- Childhood
- 10- Remoteness of time and place

Personification: this is one of the figures of speech that occurs when inanimate objects are given a human form or when they are made to speak.

Chronologically, English romantic poets are classified into clusters:

1- The first generation

- **William Blake (1757-1827)**
- William Wordsworth (1770-1834)
- **Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)**

2- The second generation

- Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)
- John Keats (1795-1821)
- **George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824)**