

The romanticism

Romanticism is a vast and complex cultural, philosophical and artistic movement that was born in England and Great Britain at the turn of the late 1700s and early 1800s. . English Romanticism officially exploded in 1798 with the publication of the Lyrical Ballads by W. WORDSWORTH and S. T. COLERIDGE, two young poets who met in Bristol in the autumn of 1795. The second edition of the "Lyrical Ballads" contained a preface by Wordsworth which was considered the Manifesto of English Romantic Poetry. " The term "Romanticism" derives from the English "romantic" which in the mid-seventeenth century indicated those literary genres, such as the novels of chivalry, which represented fantastic events within a more or less accurate historical setting. The word "romantic" first appears in England and refers to the fabulous, the extravagant and the unreal. Instead this term in the 18th century was used to describe picturesque landscapes. Over time, the term was linked to the emotions of the observer in front of these landscapes. During the Romantic period, poetry became the most vital form of literary expression. Romantic poetry marked a profound change in the sensitivity of Great Britain and Europe. Intellectually, romanticism threatened the spirit of the Enlightenment. Politically, romanticism was influenced by the American and French revolutions. Emotionally, it affirmed the individual experience. One of the main themes of English Romanticism, in fact, is the primacy of individualism: according to the Romantics, every man obeys not only the principles of reason but also his passions and feelings. Other themes of English Romanticism are:

- **Historicism:** Romanticism re-evaluates the national traditions and cultural heritage of each people, thus enhancing all the historical periods that previously fell into oblivion;
- **The feeling and the pain:** for the Romantics nothing was really possessed and therefore an indefinite nostalgia developed for something that has never been completely possessed;

- Loneliness and titanism: the Romantic man is not in harmony with the world around him for this reason he is enveloped on one side by loneliness on the other by titanism or the voluntary rebellion against forces so great and superior that the inevitable defeat becomes a sign of courage and indomitable spirit;
- Love and Nature: love and Nature are two great themes for the romantic hero that often intertwine against the backdrop of romantic natural landscapes that characterized the romantic scene of those years; The romantic artist feels he is an integral part of nature, he is deeply immersed in it. Nature with its beauty gives rise to strong feelings and emotions in man.

The most important English Romantic poets are grouped into two generations: the first generation is characterized by authors such as Wordsworth and Coleridge; while the second generation poets are Byron, Shelley and Keats. The poets of the first generation tried to theorize about poetry also describing the beauty of nature and everyday life to make the reader passionate. The poets of the second generation all died young and in the Mediterranean countries. Their poetry reveals a political disappointment that underlines the clash between the ideal and the real. The role of romantic poets is to be, for those who follow them, a model to follow, a teacher to listen to and imitate. With romanticism, therefore, many things change in English literature. These changes are especially noticeable in the poems and works of the poets of the time.

William Wordsworth

The first romantic poet we are going to discover will be: William Wordsworth.

Born in Cumberland. In 1790 he went on tour passing through France and the Alps. In contact with revolutionary France he embraced democratic

ideals hoping that they could lead to a new and just social order. In France he falls in love with Annette Vallon and they have a daughter. But the Revolution takes on a destructive turn and he is on the verge of a nervous breakdown. The desperation and disillusionment of these years are resolved with the contact with nature, which he rediscovers in the cited of Dorset, where he goes to live with his sister Dorothy: this is his dearest friend and always supports his poetry, even writing in the his Journals their life. Also this year (1795) he moved to Somerset to be close to Coleridge, a friendship crucial for the development of English romantic poetry: they wrote a collection of poems, Lyrical Ballads, published anonymously in 1798. The second edition of 1800 also contains Wordsworth's Preface which will become the Manifesto of English Romanticism. In 1802 he married a childhood friend, Mary Hutchinson and had five children by her. In the following years Wordsworth wrote his best poems, published in two volumes in 1807. In 1805 he finished his main work, The Prelude, a very long and autobiographical poem in 14 books, subtitled Growth of a Poet's Mind, published only after the his death. In recent years, the conservative political vision has been accentuated. He dies at eighty.

... The Manifesto of English Romanticism

He proposes poetry as a radically solitary act, which does not originate from the extraordinary, but from the ordinary. He belongs to the first generation of romantic poets, characterized by an attempt to theorize poetry.

His greatest criticism of 1700's poetry is the lofty and artificial language, which he calls “poetic diction”. In this sense Joyce will be very close to his conception of literature (even if Wordsworth writes poetry), simple, everyday, with ordinary people. The language must be simple. The poet is not a man in his ivory tower, but a man among men, who writes about human things that are of interest to humanity.

... Man and nature

•• He shares the Rousseauian love for nature, as well as for the child. He believes that good comes if we cultivate the child's senses and feelings. He is interested in the relationship between the natural world and human consciousness. In his poetics, man often appears in relationship with nature: he believes that man and nature are inseparable; man does not exist outside the natural world but as an active participant within it. His vision is pantheistic, similar to that of Quasimodo and Bruno, and for him nature is something that includes all reality, both inanimate things and human nature, part of the same whole. Nature then comforts man, is a source of joy and pleasure and teaches man to love and to act in a moral way.

••• The senses and memory

•• Nature also means the world of sensory perceptions. From nature and the senses we receive the sound of wind or water or the silence of some places. He believes that the philosopher Hartley is right when he says that moral characters in a person develop during childhood as a result of pleasures and fears caused by physical experiences. At the base of the ideas there are the sensations that form and organize them. In fact, in his childhood Wordsworth was very attached to nature and was influenced by it: memory therefore plays a crucial role in the growth process of the poet's mind and its moral characters.

Wordsworth believes that imagination is the supreme gift, but imagination understood as "accurate, faithful and loving observation of nature". For him, "imagination" is synonymous with "intuition", "seeing-inside" and also through reality. All genuine poetry originates from the emotion felt in tranquility: in this sense, the present is connected to the past at the time of writing.

••• The role of the poet and his style

The poet has great sensitivity and the ability to penetrate the heart of things. With his imagination he communicates his knowledge, so he becomes a teacher who shows men how to understand their feelings and improve their morale. He abandons the heroic poem of 1700 also using the white verse, although he is very good at using many poetic forms, from the sonnet to the ode.