

THE NEO – CLASSICAL POETRY

THE ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

In the history the period from 1680 to 1750 is called Augustan Age or the Neo-classical Age. This Age was called Augustan because the literary men of that period thought their work was as rich as the work of Roman writers in the age of King Augustus was. They also thought the poetry of the Augustan Age was of the same quality what they produced. They were trying to follow the ancient rules, but could not acquire the same spirit of classical antiquity. The literature, according to Hudson, produced by neo-classical poets was thoroughly artificial. It was not a free creative inspiration but a deliberate art. It was purely poetry of argument. It was a kind of reaction against enthusiastic Renaissance. Denham and Waller's name we see in the beginning. But it was flourished in the hands of Dryden and later perfectly used by Pope. Both Dryden and Pope used this lucid and concrete form of poetry for satiric poetry.

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Introduction:

The Term:

The Term Neo-Classicism was the classical treatment and style of literature. It was a revival of classical and style in art.

Historical Canvas:

According to Hudson the period between 1680 and 1750 was the time when neo classical poetry was at its fall swing. This period also called Augustan age due to the literary impulse of England was compared to the impulse of Rome in the reign of Emperor Augustus. In that period in Rome, the greatest poets of all time such as Virgil, Ovid, Horace, and many other produce remarkable literature.

Dr. Johnson is the opinion that what Augustus did for his state is done by Dryden for English poetry. "He found the raw material and made a master piece.

Another remarkable name of this age is Alexander Pope, who flourished this kind of poetry. Dryden and Pope bought inspiration and guidance form the Roman and Greek classics. They rejected the prevailed metaphysical trend and established another kind of poetry which was called neo – classical school of English poetry. This type of poetry was found in the world Denham and Waller. Dryden adopted it and Pope furnished it.

This neo- classicism was not only a new trend; it also represented the essence of age. The true spirit of Elizabethan age, that was extravagance of past, creative imagination, passion for beauty, etc were totally neglected in the age of reason where a new phase of science, based on experimental method was established. The essence of age was not synthetic. It was rather inquisitive and scrutinizing. It put great stress on intellect rather than imagination.

ARTICLE REVIEW

The author regards Neoclassical poetry as the complete change in the literature. The neoclassical poet focused on imitating the ancient Roman and Greek poets. That change came in English

poetry due to the contemporary French poets who looked upon classical work for their guidance.
William Wordsworth and The Romantic Era by

Susan Huebert 2010

English neoclassical poetry was the combination of prevailing French models and classical antiquity. The ideals that neoclassicists followed, such as accuracy, logic, reason, restraint, order and so on, could never express the real human feelings. No one's inner is ever restricted. The article divides the period into three ages i-e, Restoration, Augustan and the age of Johnson.

Neo-classical: An Introduction

Web July 2000

According to Ian, classicism referred to the work of ancient Greek and Latin poets. The period from later seventeenth century to the later eighteenth century was neoclassical. Ian puts the label of 'short hand' on the writing of this period.

Neoclassicism by

Ian Gordon 11th April, 2005.

The author named the neoclassical age as the Augustan as well as the age of Reason. He mentioned the work of different neoclassical poets including Pope and Dryden and talked about all the merits and demerits of the works of the authors. The author did not give the conclusive view.

The Augustan Age by

Ruth Nestvold, 2001.

Edwin took pain in defining the term in his own style. He also referred this term to a dominant European culture of 1700. According to him there is a literary pragmatism in literary method which means not merely understanding but taking over any culture's appraisal of itself.

The Neo-classical Period in English Literature by

Edwin Berry Burgur

The article is rich in providing the background of Romanticism. It also throws a detail light on Neoclassicism. According to the author, the poets of 17th and 18th century revived the artistic

ideals of the Greece and Rome. That work was characterized by the restriction of emotions, order, balance, clarity of language, stress on form rather than theme and decorum. Blank verse was the most popular form.

The Romanticism by

Morner, Kathleen and Ralph Rausch 1997

The author called this movement as the true international aesthetic movement of Europe. He, like Morner, puts forward the characteristics of the age. He called the style of the neoclassical poet as progressive extolling aesthetic virtue and reform. According to him, the neoclassical approach was against dictatorship and luxury. He said that neoclassicism was rich source for modern artists.

Neo-classicism by

Johns, Christopher, 2004

In this article the author tells in detail the major differences between the Romantic school of poetry and the neoclassical school of poetry. The neoclassical period, Aron marked, from Restoration (1660) to 1785. The neoclassical poets showed less or no interest on the importance of emotions and self-experience. They showed keen interest in reason and logic. He also talked about the language used by the neoclassicists, which according to him was unambiguous.

The Differences between Neoclassicism and Romanticism by

Aron. 20th Sep, 2011

Emile believes the period after the death of John Dryden, that is 1700 to the publication of lyrical ballads 1798 was the flourishing time of classical age. He divides this period in different phases and each phase had its own distinguish characteristics. According to him the classicism brought by the poet of this period is nothing but their own created doctrine, effort and faith. They told classical approach was what they believed. He also named it the period of intellectual phase of rhythm that was moral.

A history of English literature by

Donald Davie & Pierre legouis (1930)

These historians give detail description of the period. They think the classicism in England was actually not the absolute one. The poet of this period or neo-classical poets were not "in the state of absolute purity". They did not show aesthetic sense or a good psychological point of view. They believe that lyricism, imagination and emotion could not be brought in certain limit. The spontaneous emotions which are the real representation of one's inner self found no place in neo-classical school of poetry.

Modern Times by

Louis Cazamian & Raymond (1926)

Henry Hudson, one of the greatest historians describes neoclassical poetry in a comprehensive way. Neoclassical poets, he believes, did not follow the real essence of the classical poets. They just copied the rules and the order made by the classics. The neoclassical poetry is also a reflection of its age. The age is distinguished due to the scientific attitude of the mind. It was the age of logic and reason. That is why; this was also called the age of Reason. Neoclassical poetry lacks the true romantic spirit.

An outline History of The English Literature by

W. H. Hudson.

Respect for the Ancient:

According to Cazamian, the change that occurred from the spirit or Renaissance to the Restoration is the progressive moment of a spirit of freedom. The neo – classicists stressed on reason and common sense. According to the pope the poet must follow nature. It was a phrase, first used by Rousseau and all the romantic poets laid stress on the same slogan. But “Nature” for neo – classicists such as Dryden and Pope, was totally different from romantics. According to neo- classicists, it was merely to imitate the ancients and strictly following the rules set by them. On the other hand, romantics believed that the “Nature” means simplicity and the world of imagination. The Neo- classical poets showed high respect for ancients translated their works. Pope translated Homer’s work and Dryden of Virgil. The true spirit of ancients could not be represented by this translation.

The effect of French Neo-Classicists:

The age when Louis XIV ruled France was called in history as the “Golden age”, was marked by neo-classical spirit and this neo-classical spirit of French poets impressed the neo-classical spirit of pope and Dryden. The theory of genres was an important feature of French neo-classical criticism. The critics of the Restoration age and the age of pope were following the same kind for the traditional criticism which was derived from the ancients by French critics. The criticism of Aristotle dealt only two kinds this is, epic and tragedy. But many genres were found before the end of seventeenth century. John Dennis in 1704 gave a master piece on criticism. Dennis divided all kinds into groups. In first group, he placed tragedy, lyrics and epic. In the low group, we find ode, pastoral poems, comedy and satire. These new kinds of genres of French neo-classicists opened new doors for English poets. The use of this important genre we find in Garth’s the Dispensary in Dryden’s Mac Flecknoe and in Pope’s Dunciad

Didactic, realistic and Satiric Elements:

The romantic poetry is the poetry of imagination and much of it lacks realistic approach. On the other hand, classical poetry laid stress on realism and tries to bring improvement in reader. For this reason, neo-classical poetry is marked by didacticism, realism and satire. Classical poets forced man to act energetically in life. They did not believe in the phrase art of the art sake rather they used art for didactic purpose. Their style was lucid and concrete. Some time the satire is political, religious and even personnel. We find political satire in Dryden’s the Madel and in Absalom and Achitophel and in his Mac Flecknoe we find personnel satire. The great works of Pope, such as the Dunciad and the Rape of the lock is Satire. Most of these didactic and satiric works do not entertain the readers of present era for they possess the personalities present at that time, unknown today. On the contrary, romantic poetry can be contemporary reference.

A true Picture of society:

The romantic poetry sometimes contains abstract ideas and objects and the way, the romantic poets express their feelings is quite complicated. On the other hand, the neo – classical poetry is easy, clear and is like a common man is speaking to other common man. The work of

neo-classicists was praised by every one at every place. Their purpose was not expressing their inner but to argue and convince with the help of logic. The neo- classical poets wrote poems on public occasions such as festive, the coronation, a national victory etc. Dryden's many poems such Annus Mirabilis, Astraea Redux and The Medal present the picture Great fire 1666 and defeat, coronation of King and a reaction against the Whigs respectively. In the same way, the Allies victory is presented by Addison in his the Campaign. Pope presents real events in his Rape of the lock and in some other poems. Jonathan swift in his poetry shows some occasions.

According to W. J. Hudson., it was purely town poetry for the interest of society. No humble aspects of nature are seen in it. No love for imagination. No love for country life and people no love for natural beauty.

Lacks Emotions & Imagination in Lyrics:

All the neo-classicists took passion as something uncultured and primitive. That is why very few good lyrics were produce in neo – classical age and lyrics tended to decline. Whatever lyrics are produced, are classical in approach. For those are fully objective. We find intellect and wit rather than passion. The neo-classical poets showed their art and with rather than deep inspiration and poetic passion in their work. They loved to use such artistic skills as puns, anagrams, puzzles, acrostics and so on.

The Heroic Couplet:

The two Iambic pentameter lines rhyming together are called The Heroic Couplet. It was first used in epic poetry. Chaucer used it in English poetry. Waller and Denham then showed their expression using it in good way. However, it was polished by Pope and Dryden. It was used fluently for satiric and narrative poetry. Pope applied it in all kinds of poetry and made its used perfect

Conclusion:

The Neo- classical poetry was actually a reaction against the fanatics of the metaphysics. There are also other factors involve in it such as the study of classics and their admiration, French writer's influence, and the intellectual approach all worked together. In fact, neo –

classical poetry did not contain the true classical spirit. It also did not follow the original classical rules. Much attention is given to the form rather than the substance or matter. Hence, the age is rightly named as Neo-classical rather classical.

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From [The Times History of London](#). London: Times Books, 1999. Courtesy of [The Millwall History Files](#) website.

