



The romantic movement on European arts: a brief tutorial review

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ABSTRACT

The movement of romanticism in art (18th-19th c) is briefly reviewed. This artistic movement institutionalized freedom of personal expression of the artist and presented various art styles, which were rooted mainly in topics of the past. One of the manifestations of the romantic spirit was Neoclassicism which was based on copies of works of Greek and Roman antiquities. Romantic painters, musicians and architects have left as heritage an amazing wealth of art works.

KEYWORDS: *art, architecture, music, romance, artistic movement, neoclassicism.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The period from the second half of the 18th century until the first half of the 19th century in western Europe was of a multidimensional character both in art and in other fields of intellectual life, expressed by the romance, the first great movement of ideas of that era e.g. architecture, music, literature (Blayney Brown 2001). Originally it was developed in Great Britain and Germany, to spread later mainly in France and Spain. First was a literary trend, however, been extended to both visual arts and music. It followed historically the *Enlightenment* period and opposed the aristocracy of the time, being linked strongly with the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The main characteristic of romanticism is the emphasis to the challenge of strong emotion through art as well as greater freedom in form, relative to the more classical conceptions. In romance, the dominant element is the emotion instead of logic. Romanticism was the beginning connected with the old "Romance", the stories of knights, adventures and romances, that the feature was the high sense, the improbable, the excessive, the unreal, contradict the serious and rational view of life. That is why the word "romantic" appears in sentences with the meaning of fake, counterfeit, fictitious (Furst, 1969). In the age of rationalism (17th c.) and in a world dominated by class and absolute truth, the word romance means *chimera*, the bombast, the ridiculous (Hampshire, 1961). The term "romantic" is not so from the beginning a term of art criticism. Indicates basically a way of thinking that is directed towards the fantastic and emotional. Here we unfold in a brief manner the most significant stages of this period and present characteristic works of art discussed in the frame of that era. Historical context, architecture, paintings and music are touched on a summary of tutorial style that critically describes the motives and reasoning behind those.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first and most critical historical events of the period was the conquest of American independence in 1776 and the French Revolution in 1789 (Weiner, 2005). In these two events a desire for freedom and social equality was dominated that led to an utopia. While democratic America - despite the existence of colored slaves - was exhibited in Europe as a beacon of freedom and democracy, hopes for an ideal society in France vanished. The revolution initially degenerated by terrorism which led to confrontations opposing factions and many people in guillotine. Napoleon Bonaparte then appeared first as a hero who would restore order and then as a great tyrant who drew in warfare all the European powers, since

his vision was a European empire with its capital Paris. The economic downturn that led to wars and social changes created by the *Industrial Revolution*, made Europeans to feel trapped by events that exceeded the control, which could not be explained by rational perception. Even Napoleon's career was for many a supernatural power and his defeat, a divine judgment (Fig.1). Another factor which determined the character of the second half of the 18th century. was the great colonial expansion -especially the British in America and India- and seafood exploratory trips. Missions accompanying artists and scientists as shown by the many illustrations (Bazin, 1964).



Figure 1. Francisco Goya, *The 2nd of May 1808*, oil in canvas, 1814, 266X345 cm., Prada Museum Madrid

3. IDEAS AND TRENDS OF ROMANCE

Romanticism as a philosophical and literary movement was created as response to the intellectual movement of enlightenment and classicism of the 18th century. Main manifestations -which will be discussed more here- was the subjective mentality, and individual freedom.

The expression of dreams, imagination and emotion become an institution in the art of romance. For romantics, the imagination was the most precious gift of the artist, a substantial gift, but ultimately inexplicable, and could cause not only ecstatic joy, but nightmares and despair. Often fantastic visions are inspired by the divine.

In romance nature was celebrated, as well as, instinct and heroism (individual and collective) and general human struggle against all forms of oppression. From the mid-18th century in Germany, literary work does not only imitate nature, but also the recording of the creative power of man and his reflections over this power (Preisendanz, 1977). So the work of art, according to Goethe, is a creation of the human spirit that does not imitate anything, but creates "a little world in itself", organized according to

their own laws. On the one hand completely frees art from any imitation of nature and the other considers this small world according to its own laws (Fig.2) He argues that "*the perfect work of art is the work of the human spirit*" and in this sense is also the work of nature. Many times it is not recommended the natural order, but the artificial confusion, not the illusion of necessity, but the semblance of chance, not harmony, but the discord, not the whole, but the quote, not imagination for the truth of the real, but unlimited arbitrariness and confusion that has organized structure and symmetry, as chaos distinguished by art (Preisendanz, 1977).



Figure 2. Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Marat*, 1793. Oil on canvas, 165x128 cm., Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels

The cult of the hero stereotype associated with romance, leads to the greatest of all romantic paradoxes, which is the main cause of frustration and failure sentiment felt by so many of the Romantics. Another feature of romantic is the desire for the distant and exotic. The descriptions of artists and invented nostalgia of the authors illustrate in the best possible way the extremes which could reach their imagination on this subject.

So, distant places changed, like the distant past, to destinations of romantic getaway, facing similar experiences as trips to the discovery of our inner self. The meetings (real or imagined) with distant peoples, cultures and places, symbolized the renewal sought for their project and the escapism and freedom seeking in their life.

They believed that through the acquaintance with these civilizations it would give birth to a pluralist culture, where the classical tradition would dominate.

They sought from distant people not only new styles and themes, but a purer and honest lifestyle. Under the influence of the ideas of this movement a

nostalgia for the past was created and came to light old acquaintances and unknown treasures of human history, monuments mentioned in mythology, history, religion, legends and folk poetry (Fig.3, 4).



Figure 3. Francisco Goya, *La maja desnuda*, 1798-1800, Oil on canvas, 97x190 cm., Prado Museum, Madrid



Figure 4. Francisco Goya, *The dressed Maha*, 1798-1805, Oil on canvas, 95x190 cm., Prado Museum, Madrid

4. ROMANTICISM IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARTS

In art the romance was not expressed in a single style. The emphasis on subjective mentality resulted in freedom of artistic expression i.e. pluralism. This pluralism of expression included both modern features, and manifestations of previous epochs. Great source of inspiration is the Greek and Roman antiquity. So, techniques of the past were studied, such as the Romanesque and Gothic art, painting of Michelangelo, the Mannerism and the Baroque painting of Rubens.

By turning to classical antiquity neoclassicism was developed, which fits into the broader context of the romantic spirit. This movement reflected the return to architectural types in the forms of other artistic expressions, but also the lifestyle of Greek and Roman antiquity (Turner, 1996; Hamilton, 1970). The superiority of the ancient remains strong and we all want to follow their example. Their influence emerg-

es particularly in France, where the monarchical regime imposed autocracy in politics and literature. Unlike in England, the political organization and literary tastes were more ingenuity and showed some disdain in neoclassical rules and general belief in logic shaken from their pre-romantics (Furst, 2003).

Pre-Romantics looked natural and spontaneous as the innermost emotions, and the outside world. The flow of sad feelings, the expression of emotion, shady, full of mysterious landscapes, the magnificent expressions innate melancholy, herald the romantic style. Furthermore, they were interested in fields quite unlike false urban and especially luminal life, as the nature and simple, primitive society. The observation of nature leads to the identification of its potential and organic character and the unremitting and core changes that are so diverse

Specifically, the philosophy of nature in the German romanticism is an important chapter in the history of Western esotericism because philosophers of nature are all Theosophists (Gardiner 1969). The romantic movement is the continuation of pre-romanticism, but presents a new element: the evaluation of the imagination. Simultaneously, the artists were seeking creative solutions to replace the dominant forms of the classical tradition. Below are examples of features romantic works.

5. PAINTING

The revelation of the ego is the heart of romantic art. the seascape of Turner entitled the *Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*, proclaims his own vision of nature (Fig.5).

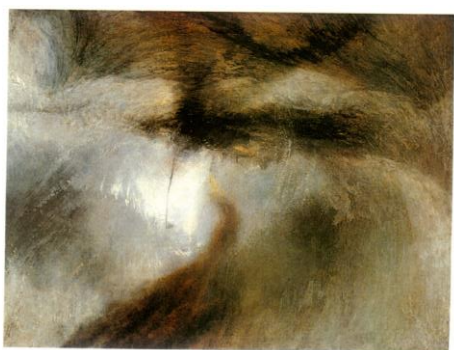


Figure 5. Turner J.M.W, *Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*, 1842. Oil on canvas, 91.5x122 cm., Tate Gallery, London

The image surprised with sweeping twirling sea, sky and snow showing. The turner placed between the spectacle and the spectator becomes the interpreter who reached the limits of human endurance, seeking the truth.

Many romantics shared belief in the divine inspiration and the gift of vision. This feeling led Philipp Otto Runge to create a completely original landscape painting, in which the natural world is broken into symbolic components. He was a great painter and theorist of colour, representing the traditional theosophy and mysticism (Littlejohns, 2003). He agreed with turner that it was not necessary artistic language always understood by everyone else. for Blake, imagination was a gift of substantial and unexplained, who painted visions inspired also by his devine, like other romantics, understood faith as a living force, were released from the precepts of the church and the concept of punishment in christianity, as incompatible with the romantic element of personal fulfillment. The brutish state had made man after original sin expressed vigorously by the rampant attitude and sullen gaze hero *Nempouchant-nezar* (Fig.6).



Fig 6. William Blake, *the two forms of Los with Enitharmon*, plate 100, Jerusalem, 1804-1820. Copper engraving plate, water colours and gold 14.6Cx22.2 cm. Center British Art Yale University, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven.

Goya was a dreamer surrendered to the imagination, explorer of the subconscious and strict judge of insanity and superstitions of the time was equivalent of Blake. Characteristic works are the *Pilgrimage to St. Isidore's Hermitage*, the *Saturn eating his children* (Fig 7), *the bedlam*, and his last self-portrait. the satirical etchings titled *whim* was absurd questions which were designed to expose to the public the wealth of the follies and errors are common in every society sensational is the work of *the 3rd may 1808* (Fig.8) that records the execution of innocent by the troops of Napoleon.



Figure 7. Francisco Goya, *Saturn*, 1820-1823, oil on canvas, 146x83 cm, Prado Museum, Madrid)



Figure 8. Francisco Goya, *The May 2, 1808*, Oil on canvas, 1814, 266x345 cm., Prado Museum, Madrid

It was designed to perpetuate (with paintbrush) the most notable and heroic actions against the tyrant of Europe. The central figure in place of Goya, that the white shirt looks parody allegiance, pinning fearful eyes of a faceless military detachment who shoots and ready to add to the bloodied heap lying in front of her. It expresses the ultimate frustration for the ideals that had failed and the impoverishment of the people. At this point, we could not omit Géricault and the *Raft of the Medusa* that also shocked the audience of his time. Other works inspired by historical events are *the massacre at Chios* (Fig 9) by Delacroix and *Liberty leading the people* (Fig.10).

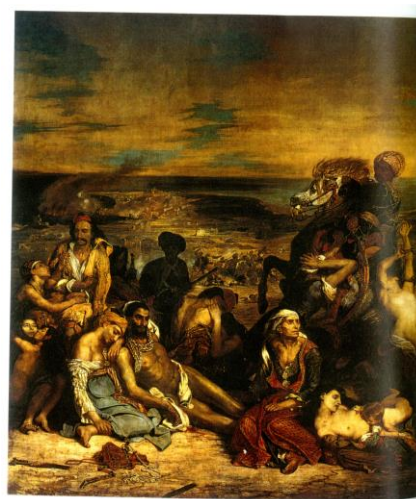


Figure 9. Eugène Delacroix, *Scenes from the Massacre of Chios*, 1824. Oil on canvas, 419x354 cm., Louvre, Paris



Figure 10. Eugène Delacroix, *The July 28, 1830: Liberty Leading the People*, 1830. Oil on canvas, 260x325 cm., Louvre Museum, Paris.

The latter shows a wild, inspired action featuring topless freedom, who is not the absolute leader. It is charming how mixed is the idealized and allegorical element with the true.

However, Delacroix's *Sardanapalus*, is the most romantic work ever painted. It is pounding the senses with the violence and brutality that characterizes the work. The absurd composition and excessive colours dazzle the viewer. All are freely (and uncontrolled) gliding and spinning and colour flows like blood. All artistic rules have been removed.

6. ARCHITECTURE

The ideas of romance created problems for architects, since the dependence on customer requirements but also stylistic dictates of the time were great. The values of Romanesque and Gothic architecture were studied and began to compete with those of the classic. Beside the neoclassical is pre-

sented the neo-Gothic, the neo-Renaissance, the neo-Byzantine and neo-Egyptian style. Each of these styles could be used for a specific category of buildings, without this rule to be absolute. The churches usually were built in Gothic style, because it was the pace of the times considered as the "age of faith". For theatres and operas were using usually the baroque style, while for the palaces, mansions, academic buildings were built in majestic rhythm of the Italian Renaissance and neoclassical styles (Fig.11).

For example, the architecture of the churches, the architects of the time chose between early Christian, Byzantine and Western medieval standards. *The Cathedral of Marseilles Saint-Vincent-de-Paul (1855)*, a work of Léon Vaudoyer's, combines with the Byzantine elements, Gothic and Renaissance (Lejeune & Sabatino, 2010).



Figure 11. Academy of Athens. The building was designed in 1859 by the Danish architect Theophil Hansen. Funds had been provided by the magnate Simon Sinas. Construction, Sculptures and paintings were executed by famous artists (Ernst Ziller, Leonidas Drosis, Piccarelli, Franz Melnitzky, Christian Griepenkerl)

The High Court of Justice built by the architect G E Street in 1882, with strict gothic elements shows the mood of the architect to integrate the middle Ages to modern social structures. Charles Robert Cockerell (1788–1863 uses Greek, Roman, Baroque and Renaissance elements in the *Asmolean museum* at Oxford. Luigi Canina builds a New Egyptian gate at villa Borghese in Rome in 1828, in order to mark the boundary between the new and the old grounds, in 1831 architect and archaeologist Luigi Canina devised and built a scenographic gate in Egyptian style, consisting of a short porch with rather stout columns on each side of the way, with an obelisk standing in front; the latter bears hieroglyphs inscribed only on its front side (see, <http://roma.andreapollett.com/S3/roma-co4.htm>). G.Sember (1803-1879) builds the new-Renaissance opera in Dresden (Loffler, 2006; <http://www.sights-and-culture.com/Germany/dresden-semper-opera.html>). K.f. Sheinkel (1781-1841) used occasionally items from various architectural orders (styles) of the past, all his works are distinguished by a very

personal sense of volume, balance, proportions, accuracy in details. One of his works *The Gendarmenmarkt* in Berlin Theatre (<http://gendarmenmarkt.de/history-gendarmenmarkt-berlin-mitte-english.htm>) is a combination of rectangular forms, ensuring perfect visual effect of any point someone observes. Ionic antis dominate the entrance and the other classic architectural elements have a simple geometry. Noteworthy is that for the construction of public buildings architects remained mostly faithful to the standards of classicism, while for farmhouses (cottages) oriental architectural elements were used. The Gothic revival was soon adopted as a dominant trend in the architecture of the English-speaking world and to a lesser extent in France and Germany. A typical example is the building of the *English House of Commons (parliament) 1835* in London by Sir Charles Barry (1775-1860) and A.W.N Pugin (1812-1852) (Gombrich, 1995) (Fig.12)



Figure 12. the Houses of Parliament, or the Palace, lies on the Middlesex bank of the River Thames in the City of Westminster, in central London. Present status is a (re)Construction made by architect Charles Barry in the Perpendicular Gothic style, in 1840 and lasted for thirty years.

The new-Gothic architecture is associated with romance and searching national traditions, by contrasting the uniqueness of the classic, the reaction to the dominance of industrial production in the art, with the restoration of medieval ruins, with the desire the building to reveal the construction of structure and not the outer lining with elements foreign to it

7. MUSIC

In the early 19th century the German romantic opera is developed. The material is folklore, fairy tales and the dramatized story. The nature (forest, sea) plays a central role, as well as the supernatural element with spirits and demonic forces. Typical is the idea of redemption of man who has been involved with sin and destiny. Elements of this type

are the prelude, the vernacular dialogue, scene and aria, rich orchestration, the reminding patterns and the vocal choirs. At the same time the comic opera (operetta) develops influenced by the French Opera comique, mixing of frolics up comedy jokes and emotions that meet tastes of the German Biedermeier movement (Michels, 1977). August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767- 1845), one of the founders of the German Romantic Movement, as well as one of the most prominent disseminators of its philosophy, not only in Germany but also abroad and, most notably, in Britain, believes that music is the highest of all the arts, is the general art: "Every art is governed by music and is the same great music". Music is not a means of referring to something else beyond, such as language. It is autonomous, pure and not related to imitation and reflection. It affects on us without conquering the imagination through a fixed object (Preisendanz, 1990). Romanticism in music is inaugurated by Beethoven. With his nine symphonies, the mental conditions, the joys and sorrows of the composer are disclosed in an intense expression. The sensitivity reveals the innermost feelings. While the old forms continue and expand, at same time new forms are born, like a symphonic poem, the declaratory pattern of Weber and Wagner, and the constant contemplation of Berlioz (in fact Berlioz's own passionate feelings, and his behaviour, as recurrence in all the movements of the symphonies, but embedded in the romantic style of the era) (Holomon, 1989).

The *Der Freischütz* of Carl Maria von Weber (1821) finds broad response as the first great German romantic opera with references to popular characters, the full nature forests, superstitions and miracles (Warrack, 1982).

A typical example of a free piece for piano is also *the Invitation to the Waltz* of Weber. This work, like the scintillating study *Concerto in F minor* has the form and dramatic tone that distinguish generally all his compositions. Songs by Schubert express the poetic spirit of this era fully completed as much as his instrumental music too. Although Schubert in his symphonies *Symphony in C minor* and *Symphony in D major* follows the classic spirit and form of Beethoven's *Symphony*, the style is romantic, "modernist" as Schumann already called. For example, the melody of the horn from the beginning of the *Symphony in C*, with the romantic style, the swing of between major and minor way, is not a simple introduction, as it would require the classical form of the agreement, but an integrated independent image. Also, the allegro and the following sections and these are a series of such images separately (Nef, 1935). In pithy music of Beethoven contrasts playful, artificial and conservative music of Rossini.

The Fantastic Berlioz Symphony reflects the general spirit of the age. Unrivalled however is the virtuosity of Liszt and Paganini. Chopin is magical, the Mendelssohn classic-romantic love with the fantastic element and Schumann poetic. The Mendelssohn lived carefree in his own fantasy world, so he wrote the masterly introduction to the *Midsummer Night* attaches so faithfully the fantastic element of the poetry of Shakespeare. The other imports of Felix Mendelssohn, *The Hebrides*, the *Fingal's Cave* (1832), *the Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*, Opus 27, are lively and orchestral colourful richness. Romantic opera writes Wagner and Verdi. A typical example of oriental inspiration is *Nabucco*. The *Ring Cycle* of Wagner is the ultimate expression of romantic total work of art, and his work *Meistersinger* proclaims the freedom and independence of romantic art. Finally the late romanticism, expressed formalistic and expressionist aesthetics, historicism, naturalism and nationalism, represented by Brahms, Franck and Bruckner.

8. AESTHETIC AND IDEOLOGICAL REQUEST POSED BY ROMANCE

As we have seen, the romance was a subversive response to classicism and the existing order of things in general. It did not propose a systematic program and was a mix of views that defend freedom of expression and encouraged the artist to be addressed directly to the feelings of the public. The new generation has chosen to explore the capabilities of emotion and instinct more than the conscious mind and focused mainly on dignity, pain, sadness, fear, joy, humble, natural and idiosyncratic element and not in obedience and refined ideal models. Victor Hugo argued that "the richness and variety of expression and experience more effectively reflect the complexity of the world and of us from the cold formalism of classical drama." He recognized more the ability of ugly or grotesque to stimulate the senses, in lieu the ability of beauty to win admiration (Bleiny Brown, 2001). The pioneers of German romanticism Herder and Schlegel, supported a world view, according to which every culture and every society should be judged on its own terms, and not in relation to the standards of an alleged superior race. They were calling people to broaden their horizons. Furthermore, the certainty of the spiritual texture of nature, the reality of the world, embraces the view that all knowledge and science is not a depiction of an actual world subjected to laws. The creation of the world is an endless path of the spirit which is depicted by the "global mind". People are even created through the unity of all consciousness, that is actually part of a process

with the interdependence of all spirits (Preisendanz, 1977).

Supplement of these considerations is the belief that the creative imagination is the central spiritual potential and therefore the beginning of each cosmic creation. This is because the imagination is the basic skill of consciousness and this ability is a universal objective power of the human spirit.

9. CONCLUSION

With the amazing wealth of art works, with the wide geographical and historical spread, with the variety of the topics, the romance is an inexhaustible capital. But the rooted cause of its eternal charm lies in its same essential purpose. Leaving the confidence of rationalism, romanticism opened wide the gates of reviewing the reconsideration of each field: the aesthetic, metaphysical, religious, and political. It is a movement that poses questions that often remain unanswered.

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