

Neoclassical Poetry

First of all, it is mandatory to know about the etymology of the word Neoclassicism. The term Neoclassicism is a combination of two words: Neo and Classic. The word neo has been derived from a Greek word neos, which means young or new, while the word classic, according to the Webster Dictionary, refers to the style and works of the ancient authors of Greece and Rome. To combine these words, we get the meaning of Neoclassicism as the rebirth and restoration of Classicism. Hence, Neoclassicism is the movement in the history of English literature, which laid immense emphasis on revival of the classical spirit during the period between 1680 and 1750 in the age of Pope and Dryden. It is a prototype of Classicism. Writers of this period immensely endeavoured to follow the footpaths of the writers of the period of Augustus, emperor of Rome, which produced unparalleled writers as Horace, Virgil and Ovid. That is the reason; the age of Pope and Dryden is also called Augustan Age.

Neoclassical Poetry is a type of poetry, which follows the pattern of poetry authored by the poets of ancient time i.e., Greek and Rome. Pope and Dryden were the leading writers, who deviated from the traditional schools of poetry and sought guidance in the works of ancient Greek and Roman writers. They tried to follow the writers of the antiquity in letter and spirit in the Augustan Age.

Rationalism is the most essential feature of neoclassical poetry. Neoclassical poets viewed reason as the mainspring of learning, knowledge and inspiration for their poetry. Neoclassical poetry is a reaction against the renaissance style of poetry. It is a unique outcome of intellect, not fancy and imagination. Unlike romantic poetry, which is entirely the result of sentiments of the poet, neoclassical poetry is a simulated, fabricated and stereotypical type of poetry. In romantic poetry, sentiments play a vital role in writing of poetry, while in neoclassical poetry; reason and intellect are dominant elements. You might have heard about Coleridge and Wordsworth, who wrote poetry thoroughly at the impulse of their imagination. They didn't lay emphasis on reason to compose poetry. The neoclassical poets made an effort to disregard imagination, emotion and feelings, while composing their poetry. That is the reason; their poetry may be branded as artificial and synthetic.

The neoclassical poets always loved to make use of scholarly allusions in their poetry. As they were all highly educated and well-versed in various fields of studies, they knew a lot about religious, biblical and classical literature. Allusions helped them to convey their message to their readers effectively and easily. That is why; their poetry is brimming with plentiful allusions to classical writers i.e., Virgil, Horace and Homer. They desired to write in the manner of their classical masters.

Neoclassical poets rebelled against the romantic nature of poetry of the Renaissance Period. Romantic poets loved to compose poetry just for the sake of poetry like John Keats. They tried hard to sidestep morality and didacticism in their poetry. Their foremost purpose was to give vent to their feelings. On the other hand, the neoclassical poets laid stress significantly on the didactic purpose of poetry. They endeavoured hard to fix the teething troubles of humanity through the magical power of poetry. The neoclassical poets were chiefly concerned with the

didactic aspects of their poetry. That is the reason; most of the neoclassical poetry is replete with didacticism to a great deal.

Realism is the hallmark of neoclassical poetry. The neoclassical poets, unlike romantic poets, were not living in their own world of imagination. They were hard realists and they presented the true picture of their society. They didn't turn their eyes from the harsh realities of life. They were keen observers and dwelled upon what they experienced with their open eyes in their poetry. These poets were not escapists like romantic poets, who turned their back to the harsh realities of life and tried to escape from them with the help of flight of imagination. Neoclassical poets were men of action and practically lived in the midst of people. That is why; they had a very keen observation of their society. They avoided abstract ideas, imaginative thoughts and idealism in their poetry.

The neoclassical poets were undoubtedly great adherents of classical rules. They went all-out to revive the Classicism in their poetry by following each and every rule of Classicism. Their highest concern was to adhere to the classical rules and employ them in their poetry as much as possible. That is the reason; neoclassical poetry is also labeled as Pseudo Classical Poetry. They respected the classical rules a great deal.