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The Influence of the Modernist and Romantic Movements on Literature: Convergence and Opposition

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Abstract

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, several movements appeared. One of those critical movements was the Modernist movement, which is different from the old known concepts; it came with new opinions and methods that aroused the anger of other old movements. At first, it faced strong opposition from the pioneers of different movements and their audiences, such as the Romantic movement, because modernism came loaded with Realism, psychological study, individual subjectivity, etc. (Charles, 1999). Therefore, since the previous movements did not interfere with psychological factors and rise to the subjectivity of individuals, but they were characterized by imagination, especially for the Romantic movement, imagination took ample space from it and dominated most of its parts, so Romanticism as a foreign body entered into this entity, it indeed became confusing at first, which made the pioneers of other movements rejecting modernism and its new style because it contradicts their methods in several opinions, especially for the classical and Romantic movement. Therefore, this research aims to clarify the points of convergence that combine the Romantic movement and the Modernist movement on the one hand, as well as the points of contradiction or divergence between the two movements on the other hand; so the question is: What is the nature of the differences and similarities in the scope of the two movements?

Keywords: imagination, Modernist, psychological, Romantic, subjectivity

1. Introduction

The dispute over the meaning, or lack of meaning, of the word "Romanticism" has increased in intensity during the past few years. On the one hand, we have Northrop Frye and Rene Wellek, in *Romanticism, Reconsidered* (New York and London, ~1963), declaring that a stabilization of opinion has at last been achieved and that the existence of a Romantic Movement with clearly defined features is now generally admitted; and a well-known journal styles itself *Studies in Romanticism*. At the same time, the recent *Oxford History of English Literature*, wary of periodization, tries to avoid the term. W. L. Renwick says, in *Volume IX, English Literature 1789-1815* (Oxford, 1963), that the expression "'pre-Romanticism' is a positive hindrance" to the study of English literary history; and Ian Jack, in *Volume X, English Literature 1815-1832* (Oxford, 1963), devotes fifteen pages to an attack on the word "Romanticism" itself. The day threatens to dawn when computers will be enlisted in the quarrel, and Josephine Miles, with her pioneering statistical tables, will



be held responsible for the dehumanization of literary history. (Massey, 1965) Romanticism, an academic and artistic movement that emerged in the late 18th century and extended into the 19th century, has left an indelible mark on literature. Characterized by emphasizing emotion, imagination, individualism, and the sublime, Romanticism reshaped how authors expressed themselves and readers engaged with their works. (Farzand, 2023).

Meanwhile, the Modernist movement was a literary and cultural movement that began in the late nineteenth century and lasted until the second half of the twentieth century. The modernist movement was a reaction against the traditional values and formalities of the Victorian era and sought to create new forms of expression reflecting the changing world around it. One of the defining features of the modernist movement was its rejection of the usual classical, traditional narrative structures and the standard linear storytelling. Modern writers experimented with fragmentary novels and were imitated by writers from other countries, writing in the stream of consciousness, non-linear plots as we have already described, often incorporating multiple points of view and opinions into their works. Another of the main features of modernist literature and the modernist movement is its emphasis on individuality and subjective experience. The writers sought to explore the inner workings of the human mind, often delving into topics such as psychology, sex, and the subconscious to explore the nature of the human psyche and not rely on fiction and metaphysics in literary work, which in turn addresses a range of human issues even outstanding ones on a psychological level and so on. Unlike the previous Classical Movements, the modernist movement was also characterized by rejecting traditional morals and social norms. Many modern writers portrayed characters who were isolated from society, disappointed with the world around them, or struggling to find their place in a rapidly changing society, which made it a productive movement in English literature and its increasing acceptance due to the popularity of the community of readers and critics towards it and the ability of the movement's pioneers and their academic potential. (Michael, 1999).

2. Discussion

- Most Influential Writers of the Modernist Movement:

The most influential writers in the Modernist movement are James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, and William Faulkner. These writers pushed the boundaries of literary expression and created difficult, complex, and significant works. In many ways, the modernist movement revolutionized literature, paved the way for new forms of expression,



and inspired generations of future writers. Her influence can still be felt in contemporary literature today as writers continue to explore the complexities of human experience in new and innovative ways. The modernist movement responded to the early twentieth century's turbulent social, political, and cultural changes. During that period, social, political, and economic changes changed the way individuals think and the nature of their taking science and literature. Therefore, it became necessary to change this aspect. The modernist movement came at the right time to explore the newly born society and put its sufferings and issues in various directions, such as theatre, novels, stories, etc. The movement reflected the disillusionment and fragmentation felt by many people in the aftermath of the First World War, the collapse of traditional social structures, the absence of morality, and the spread of moral, human, and functional corruption. (Marjorie, 2003)

Modern writers often experimented with language, using syntax, grammar, and unconventional vocabulary to create new forms of expression in the sense that these modernists wanted to skin society from what is old and out of the ordinary, so the audience treated them with great acceptance because they were looking for some rescue to remedy the situation. They also incorporated elements of popular culture and mass media into their works to be closer to the public, reflecting the growing influence of technology and mass media on society. Many modernist writers were deeply interested in questions of identity and subjectivity, often exploring the psychological complexities of human experience. They were also interested in the relationship between the individual and society and how individuals navigate social structures and cultural norms. Also, the modernist movement significantly impacted other artistic and cultural spheres, including visual art, music, and films. Many modernist writers collaborated with artists in other fields and sought to break the boundaries between different forms of expression. Although the modernist movement is of a revolutionary nature, it was not free from its critics, and this is the case of all the movements; even if they are completely integrated, the audience of the rest of the movements, especially the classics, remains free to criticism. Some critics have accused modernist writers of being elitist, pretentious, and overly intellectual, while others have charged the movement's rejection of traditional narrative structures and emphasis on subjectivity.

In general, the modernist movement in literature was a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that reflected the changing cultural landscape of the early twentieth century. It was characterized by experimentation, innovation, and rejection of traditional values, and its legacy can still be felt in literature and other forms of expression today. Many modern writers were deeply influenced by the philosophy of existentialism, which



emphasized the individual's struggle to find meaning and purpose in a seemingly meaningless world. This philosophy is reflected in the works of such writers as Samuel Beckett and Albert Camus. The modernist movement is also characterized by rejecting traditional gender roles and increasing interest in feminist perspectives; they believe that the departure from the classical form supports feminism, as it is considered one of the priorities of modernity in various fields, especially in modern literature.

Writers such as Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, and Bill Hawkes challenged traditional notions of femininity and explored women's experiences in a male-dominated world. Also, the Modernist movement was not limited to one country or language. Still, it was a global phenomenon that included writers from Europe, North America, Latin America, the Middle East, Arab countries, and beyond. Among the most important modernist writers outside Europe and North America are Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Therefore, the modernist movement was not homogeneous but was characterized by various styles, techniques, points of view, intellectual changes, and cultural diversities. While there were some common themes and interests that United modernist writers, there was also a great deal of diversity and experimentation within the movement. While there are some similarities between the modernist movement and Romanticism, they are generally considered distinct literary and cultural movements. (Raymond, 1961)

- **The Romantic Movement**

Romanticism was a literary and artistic movement that emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; that is, it is much older than modernism and is at the level of a literary theory or hypothesis, and emphasizes passion, individuality, fascination with nature, and the supernatural, all embodied in Romanticism. She believes in metaphysics and fantasy in her work immensely. Romantic writers often stand out the individual's imagination and subjective experience, rejecting the Enlightenment's rationalism and conformity. On the other hand, the modernist movement appeared in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; somewhat opposite to this trend, it believes in existentialism, individual experiences, and the psychological factor of individuals, not forgetting that both movements (Modernism and Romanticism) emphasized individuality and subjective experience, the Romantic movement tended to be more emotional and ideological, that is, it works in a platonic sphere. In contrast, the modernist movement was often more sceptical and fragmented in its approach to human experience.

In addition, the Romantic movement was more focused on nature and the supernatural, which it adopted at the beginning of its emergence and until now. In contrast,



the modernist movement was more interested in exploring the intricacies of modern society and the human psyche. While the modernist movement is generally considered different from Romanticism, some writers have been influenced by romantic themes and ideas. For example, Eliot's poem "Waste Land" references Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth and John Keats and echoes romantic themes such as the search for meaning and the role of the individual in society. Some critics have argued that modernism can be seen as a reaction against Romanticism, as modernist writers rejected the idealization and sentimentality of Romanticism in favor of a more complex and fragmented view of the world. Modernist writers often sought to expose the contradictions and ambiguities of modern life, rejecting the romantic idea that said: (art and literature can provide an escape from reality). Despite these differences, there are also some similarities between modernism and Romanticism. Both movements focused heavily on the individual and his subjective experience and were characterized by a rejection of traditional values and norms. In addition, both movements significantly impacted subsequent literary and cultural movements and continue to influence writers and artists today. (Mark, 1999).

Romanticism was characterized by its emphasis on emotion and individualism and glorifying all the past and nature, preferring the medieval rather than the classical. It was partly a reaction to the Industrial Revolution, the aristocratic social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment, and the scientific rationalization of nature, all components of modernity. It was embodied most strongly in the visual arts, music, and literature but significantly impacted historiography, education, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. It had a substantial and complex effect on politics, with romantic thinkers influencing liberalism, radicalism, conservatism and nationalism. The movement emphasized intense emotion as an authentic source of aesthetic experience, placing new emphasis on such emotions as apprehension, horror, terror, and awe, especially that experienced in confronting the new aesthetic categories of the sublimity and beauty of nature. It elevated folk art and ancient custom to something noble, but also spontaneity as a desirable characteristic (as in the musical impromptu).

In contrast to the Rationalism and Classicism of the Enlightenment, Romanticism revived medievalism and elements of art and narrative perceived as authentically medieval to escape population growth, early urban sprawl, and industrialism. Although the movement was rooted in the German Sturm und Drang movement, which preferred intuition and emotion to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, the events and ideologies of the French Revolution were also proximate factors. Romanticism assigned a high value to the achievements of "heroic" individualists and artists, whose examples, it maintained,



would raise the quality of society. It also promoted the individual imagination as a critical authority that allows freedom from classical notions of form in art. There was a strong recourse to historical and natural inevitability, a *Zeitgeist*, in the representation of its ideas. In the second half of the 19th century, Realism was offered as a polar opposite to Romanticism. The decline of Romanticism during this time was associated with multiple processes, including social and political changes and the spread of nationalism. (Shihada, 2019).

3. Conclusion and Results

In this work that emerged through the research process, we arrived at the reality that is most acceptable for the two movements on the part of modernism. As we pointed out, the modernist method of constructing language in terms of the sentence, grammatical aspects, and new vocabulary in the world of literature requires addressing what is traditional and prevailing, adopted by this movement. Unique creativity, meaning that the foundation of the work is done based on modern uses that are commensurate with the modernity taking place in the literary world as a whole, and they created that strange mixture between lived reality and popular culture mixed in the academic method with rhetorical language, as well as having an existential dimension that takes root in the individual's psyche and supports the individual. Alone, in addition to believing in reality to a large extent, the modernists have a prominent realistic aspect and convey the natural movement and social influences, in contrast to Romanticism, which is permeated with a lot of fantasy, as the romantics supported irrationality and devoid of rationality, as this movement derives its strength from the supernatural aspects, feelings, and contradictions, unlike modernism. Therefore, modernism and Romanticism occurred at a crossroads after the Age of Enlightenment because the modernists supported the innovations that came after the Age of Enlightenment, unlike the Romantics, who remained stuck to what preceded the Age of Enlightenment.

On the other hand, modernism and Romanticism agreed on the unity of the individual and the entity of the personality and supported the individual alone. On the other hand, Romanticism helped the individual's sentimentality in himself and kept the individual's imaginative feeling. This means that it gave the individual emotional experience a considerable aspect, in addition to the supernatural and the intangible (sensible things). As for modernism, it supports the unity of the individual and works to develop the individual from the inside to confront the outside and to build the individual realistically and rationally according to rules that qualify him for self-building.



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In addition, the two sides (Romanticism and modernism) have one stance towards customs, traditions, and legacies, and both of them influenced the lives of literature and writers and created that division according to which they compete. Both parties create a competition, which in turn provides excellent and significant benefits to the literary processes in development.



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