

## ROMANTICISM

1798 - William Wordsworth writes in the Preface to his LYRICAL BALLADS (poems by Wordsworth and Coleridge):

The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems, was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men ... For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings ... it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity ...

From this and other sources are derived the basic tenets of Romanticism in poetry and literature and art, as follows:

1. REVERENCE FOR NATURE and a contempt for cities and city living, contempt for the Industrial Revolution, and contempt for exploitation of women and children
2. REVERENCE FOR THE CHILD, who is "nature's priest", and reverence for innocence and primal consciousness which is unconditioned by civilization, and a contempt for rationalism; reverence for pure intuition
3. REVERENCE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL, since his unique impulses lead naturally to God, and therefore the individual self is more important than Church or State or any Tradition
4. SOCIAL CRITICISM - approval of the American (1776) and the French (1789) Revolutions: "we hold these truths to be self-evident" that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; or for the French, "liberty, equality, fraternity"

The Romantics were opposed to the development of the Industrial Revolution, which was growing since the 15th and 16th centuries opened up world trade routes; capitalism began in 17th century (cf ADAM SMITH: THE WEALTH OF NATIONS, doctrine of laissez-faire and free enterprise)(cf KARL MARX: DAS KAPITAL, economic view of history). Industrial Revolution centers in England: Newton and Herschel in astronomy, Boyle and Davy in chemistry, Faraday in electricity; 1765, James Watt develops steam engine; 1769 Arkwright develops spinning frame; 1785 Cartwright develops power loom. 19th century develops railroads and steamboats. 20th century develops electricity, gasoline engine, air travel, nuclear power. Industrial Revolution parallels evolutionary theories (cf DARWIN: ORIGIN OF SPECIES, 1859). Industrial Revolution raises a new business class, raises working class, creates middle class, promotes idea of democracy.



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