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RISE OF CLOSET PLAYS IN THE NINETENTH CENTURY

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Introduction : In the literary atmosphere of the nineteenth century age there was much that led to the growth of the closet play.

The Romantic Movement was marked by dilation of the human spirit, to reach out to new subjects and fresh forms of expressions.

Among the various manifestations of the Romantic spirit were an increasing interest in metaphysics, psychology, love of nature and country life, development of imagination and sensibility and the attractions exercised by the medieval, the Greek, the Gothic, the Oriental and the exotic in general. One of these forms which the Romantic seized and treat to mould in their own way was drama.

The closet plays heralded in the works of some of the authors of the late 18th century, but it invaded the field of literature in full force in the closing years of the century. Their appearance was sudden and swift.

The closet drama reads better than it acts and it communicates its full and characteristics pleasure in reading and not in theatrical performance. It is like a bird which flies with difficulty but walks immeasurably better. A brief mention of the works of Wordsworth, Keats, Southey, Byron, Coleridge and Shelley.

Wordsworth: While the basic features of Wordsworth character, temperament and work are hardly conducive to the writing of drama, he reveals a critical understanding of the dramatic and theatrical.

In his late twenties he was drawn to write his only play *Borderers* which shows that Wordsworth had a sure sense of wearing a dramatic plot.

Byron: Byron occupies an important place among the poetic dramatist of the English Romantic Revival both as regards to the number of plays he wrote and the degree of theatrical success he attained *Manfred*, *Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus* had great theatrical potentialities and were highly dramatic in essence.

Southey: The two plays he composed were *Wat Tyler* and *The Fall of Robespierre*. Although the conception of drama was unexceptionally, still he contented himself with only two plays, representing the major trends of the closet drama.

Coleridge: Coleridge love of drama, a continuing, feature of his life manifested itself in his conversations, his habit of oral compositions, graphic way of lecturing, his writings. He never confused drama with poetry. His dramatic output includes- *The Fall of Robespierre*, *Remorse* and *Lapolya* .

Keats: Keats dramatic talent was more as a promise than an achievement and his actual dramatic career is only the might have been of literature *Gripus Fragment*, *Otho the Great* and *King Stephen* were his major poetic works

Shelley: Shelley was an ardent lover of music and drama. He was particularly sensitive to the imaginative interpolators of dramatic characters. Though Godwin and Rousseau contributed much to Shelley's thought, they did not fully met the demands of his temperament.

The ultimate satisfaction come from his study of Plato whose influence is seen throughout his work. Shelley wrote *Prometheus Unbound*, *The Cenci*, *Hellas*, *Qedipus Tyranny* and *Fragments of an Unfinished*

Drama. Shelley's imagery supports the structure and theme of his plays rather than they interpenetrate each other in the same way as imagery and passion should.

Conclusion: The 'Closet Drama' may have been written to be read rather than staged, but today the traditional concepts of theatre are fast losing their significance.

The cinema goer with the miracles of photography and the use of scientific devices and its com-

mand can present almost any scene or situation.

Radio plays which are read rather than performed prove the supremacy of the spoken word over everything else in the realm of drama.

Through television play even acted drama has reached the closet and the coming into existence of these new mediums is a reminder of the patent that good drama not only affects a hydra-headed crowd in an auditorium but also touches deepest chords in the hearts of a sensitive person in his closet.

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