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Epic Element in Poetry During the Renaissance and Neo - Classical Periods

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Abstract:

Epic is a long narrative poem in both theme and style. Epics deal with legendary or historical events of national or universal significance involving action of broad sweep and grandeur. Most epics deal with the exploits of single individual, thereby giving unity to the composition. The Greeks distinguished epic from lyric poetry, by its nature and delivery. The characteristics of the hero of an epic are national, not individual. The Devine Comedy by the Italian poet, Dante, expresses the faith of Medieval Christianity. Faerie Queene by the English poet, Edmund Spenser represents the renaissance in England and Paradise Lost by the English poet, John Milton, represents the ideals of Christian humanism.

Epics are further classified into folk and literary forms. Both the forms, folk epics and literary epics deal with the traditions, mythical and historical of a nation. The next form of the epic is Mock Epic which burlesques the serious epic.

Keywords: synthesize, Renaissance, mythical, neo-classical

Epic Element in Poetry During the Renaissance and Neo - Classical Periods

Epic is a long narrative poem in both theme and style.Epics deal with legendary or historical events of national or universal significance,involving action of broad sweep and grandeur.Most epics deal with the exploits of a single individual,thereby giving unity to the composition. Typically,an epic includes several features like the introduction of supernatural forces that shape the action and conflict in the form of battles or other physical combat; and stylistic conventions,such as, innovation to the muse, formal statements of the theme,long lists of the protagonists involved,and set speeches couched in elevated language.Commonplace details of

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everyday life may appear,but they serve as background for the story and are described in the same lofy style as the rest of the poem.

The Greeks distinguished epic from lyric poetry, both by its nature and manner of delivery. Lyric poetry expressed more personal emotion than epic poetry and was sung, whereas epic poetry was recited. Epic poems are not merely entertaining stories of legendary or historical heroes but they summarize and express the nature or ideals of an entire nation at a significant or crucial period of its history. Ancient Greek epics by the poet Homer, the Iliad and the Odyssey are the best examples. The characteristics of the hero of an epic are national rather than individual. Epics may synthesize the ideals of a great religious or cultural movement. The Divine Comedy by the Italian poet Dante (1307 -1321) expresses the faith of medieval Christianity. The Faerie Queene (1590-1609) by the English poet Edmund Spenser represents the Renaissance in England, and Paradise Lost (1667) by the English poet John Milton, represents the ideals of Christian humanism.

Epics are further classified into folk and literary forms. Folk epics are believed to have developed from the orally transmitted folk poetry of tribal bards or other authors. They were eventually transcribed by anonymous poets, Anglo Saxon Beowulf of Eight century, the German Nibelungenlied of thirteenth century and the Indian epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, are the best examples for folk epics. The characters and episodes that appear in many folk epics had been treated in folk songs before the epic was composed. In some cultures the popular epic material has never actually been gathered together into an epic. Literary epics like Iliad and Odyssey are the creation of known poets who consciously employ a long – established form. Like folk epics, literary epics deal with the traditions, mythical or historical, of a nation.

Next is the Mock-Epic which is a type of epic derived from the serious epic and it satirizes contemporary ideas or conditions in a form and style burlesquing the serious epic. Noted Mock-Epics include The Rape of the lock (1712) by the English poet Alexander Rope. In the last two hindered years. This view of epic poetry has changed radically, following the emergence and endless discussion on the Homeric Epic poetry. Neo – classical period which is equally important after the restoration period is well examined for the study of epic poetry for the next generations. During this period only Matthew Arnold is regarded as the best epic poet because of his master-piece, Sohrab and Rustum. All the elements of epic poetry including the style,

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grandeur, heroic stature and conventional methods do appear in the long narrative story and his poem is thoroughly Homeric in manner and substance.

For the epic culture in English Literature, John Milton would be regarded as a complete poet in narrating the epic, Paradise Lost. A full understanding of the metaphors and images that Milton uses, however, would take more than knowledge of his contemporary history or religious background. He is the central figure in English epic, comparable to Virgil in Latin. The epic poetry is a genre of poetry and a major form of narrative literature. Another important issue that is given much priority is the importance and purpose of epic poetry, and the need for it. The mythological stories of different nations tell us about the importance of their respective cultures. The best example in the Indian mythology is the doctrine of reincarnation in the Bhagavad – Gita and the epic battle in Ramayana. So it is simplified that the purpose of the epic is mainly to form the themes of the heroic virtue and deeds, and the warfare between good and evil, and the epics are used to establish the cosmogony and sacrificial mythologies, chronicles of kings and nobles. The method of writing epic poetry is examined as conventional method and unconventional method based on the ancient times and modern times. Homer established in eight century BC in media- res convention for the opening of the narrative enables the epic poet to concise his action into a short time although the plot involves a longer time because the poet himself is usually separated by centuries from the action of his work. The style is elevated to such an extent that the actions of the quasi divine figure and whose actions depend on the fate of the nation or human race. Finally, after Shakespeare; Milton is the greatest English poet.

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