

Literary analysis, frank norris zola as a romantic writer

Literature



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July 09, Literary Analysis, Frank Norris's Zola as a Romantic Frank Norris (1870-1902) is recognized as one of the prominent proponents of American Literary Naturalism. However, he does not remain a consistent participant in one particular literary movement, rather, he enjoys all kinds of writing that provide a tangible reading experience, whether Romantic, Realistic or Naturalistic. As a member of the cultural establishment, The Wave, he presents literary effects that project truths of the human condition. In his essay, 'Zola as a Romantic Writer,' the author tries to explain that the renowned French author Emile Zola, who was an important figure in the French Literary Naturalism, is not just a radical realist but a realist with the halo of romanticism who makes use of images which could be proved romantic in nature thereby making him a true Romantic Writer.

People internalize the meaning of Naturalism in a vague sense. Naturalism is a part of Realism and it represents matters in fiction as they are in reality.

Norris in his essay 'Zola as a Romantic writer' says that the writings of Zola are a part of Romanticism, as Romanticism is just the opposite of Realism.

Realistic works cannot be complete with the representation of dull imaginable things. To present it in the art form, a realistic writer should also make use of some romantic characteristics to bring it up from the status of commonplace to a more artistic position. Norris in his essay, points out that this style of naturalism is found in the writings of Zola. His writings synthesize the qualities of both realistic and romantic elements. Frank Norris tries to prove Zola as a Romantic writer by comparing his works with the novels of Mr. Howells. He says the characters of Howells are from that of every day life. They may be common and the setting may also be familiar to

us. But the difference in his characters is that they lack the Romantic charm. Howells could be considered as a Realist but not a Romanticist. Whereas, Zola's writings could be categorized under Realist writings and also Romantic, as they appear strange to the readers. In the essay he praises Howells but he also wants to clear the misconception of the people about Zola as realistic writer. Norris makes use of the critical theory of Naturalism to prove Zola as a romantic writer. Naturalism is described as a type of literature that applies scientific principles to the study of human nature. Apart from Realism, Naturalism focuses on the philosophical aspects of life in connection with the surroundings. Frank Norris describes Naturalism as an abstract of Realism and Romanticism. According to him Realism is the literature of the normal life. It represents "the smaller details of everyday life, things that are likely to happen between lunch and supper" (Reuben para. 7). On the other hand, he describes Romanticism as a variation from the normal life. He says Naturalism is an abstract of the best from Realism and Romanticism, being a detailed account of the accurate things and the philosophical ideas in depth. Lars Ahnebrink says that a Naturalistic writer believes that a character is basically an animal without any freewill. He says "Naturalism is a manner and method of composition by which the author portrays 'life as it is' in accordance with the philosophic theory of determinism" (Reuben para. 12). The subject matter of Naturalism is the unpleasant experience extracted from the people of the lower class. They are poor, unsophisticated and uneducated. The theme revolves around descriptions of the commonplace along with the so-called adventures of the people of the lower strata of the society. But the naturalistic writers

associate these events with adventures and heroic attributes as the life of the people of the lower classes are not simple and easygoing as is the common notion. Hence many of the critics fail to make a distinction between realism and naturalism as the naturalist writers also make use of animal images to promote the feeling that human urges cannot be controlled. Using these images they distort the life presented in their work as the romantic writers did.

Norris starts the essay ' Zola as a Romantic writer by saying " It is curious to notice how persistently M. Zola is misunderstood" (Norris and Pizer 1106). Here he makes the readers aware of their mistake regarding their conception about the writer Zola. The readers consider him as a realistic writer whose writings are not identified as romantic. Norris through his essay proves to the readers that even though Zola is claimed to be a realist, he could be identified as " the very head of the Romanticism" (Bell 118) because Realism is just the notification of the surface matters of life as it is, but Romanticism deals with the matters in depth, considering even the minutest of elements. The essayist is of the opinion that Emile Zola can be identified as a romantic writer as his writings explore " the unplumbed depths of the human heart, and the mystery sex, and the problems of life and the black, unsearched penetralia of the soul of man" (Bell 118). To be more precise, Frank Norris in another essay ' A Plea for Romantic Fiction' (1901) points out that since the writings of Zola dealt with the life of the people of the lower strata or classes, his works are not just romantic and realistic but that they also possess the unique power of naturalism. Hence, he could be rightly considered as a romantic writer unlike the other naturalistic writers.

Works Cited

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