

**DEVELOPMENT OF CLASSICISM IN EUROPEAN LITERATURE****To'rayeva Orasta**

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In this article reflects the history of English literature, the Restoration period occupies a significant place due to its remarkable transformations in literary genres, aesthetic principles, and artistic expression. One of the most influential literary figures of this period is John Dryden, whose works greatly contributed to the development of English drama, poetry, and literary criticism. Dryden's heroic dramas, characterized by elevated language, heroic themes, and complex emotional conflicts, represent an important stage in the evolution of English classical literature.

**Key words**

Classicism, literature, restoration period, classical aesthetics, dramatic theory, heroic drama, literary criticism, humanism, drama, unities theory.

**INTRODUCTION.** Classicism occupies a significant place in the development of European literary thought. As a cultural and artistic movement, it emphasized order, balance, clarity, and rationality in artistic expression. The origins of classicism are closely connected with the intellectual revival that occurred in Europe during the Renaissance, when scholars and writers rediscovered the literary and philosophical heritage of ancient Greece and Rome. Classical antiquity was regarded as a model of artistic perfection and intellectual discipline, and its principles became an important foundation for the literary culture of early modern Europe.

**METHODOLOGY.** During the Renaissance, humanist scholars devoted considerable attention to studying ancient texts and restoring the aesthetic ideals of classical literature. The works of ancient philosophers and poets, including Aristotle, Horace, and Virgil, were interpreted as authoritative guides to artistic creativity. Renaissance writers believed that the achievements of ancient civilization represented a universal standard of beauty and harmony that could serve as a model for contemporary literature. As a result, many literary works produced during the seventeenth century were deeply influenced by classical traditions and aesthetic principles.

The emergence of classicism in European literature was closely related to the intellectual atmosphere of the seventeenth century, which was strongly influenced by rationalist philosophy. Thinkers of this period emphasized the importance of reason, order, and logical structure in understanding both nature and human society. These philosophical ideas also influenced literary theory, encouraging writers to approach artistic creation with discipline and intellectual clarity. Literature was expected to follow certain aesthetic principles that would ensure harmony and coherence in artistic form.

Among the ancient texts that shaped classical literary theory, Aristotle's *Poetics* played a particularly important role. In this work, Aristotle examined the principles of dramatic composition and proposed ideas that later became fundamental to classical aesthetics. He emphasized the importance of plot structure, character development, and the unity of action in dramatic works. Although Aristotle did not explicitly formulate rigid rules for drama, later critics interpreted his ideas as guidelines for creating well-structured literary works. The rediscovery and interpretation of *Poetics* during the Renaissance and the seventeenth century greatly influenced the development of classical drama in Europe.

**DISCUSSION.** Classicism reached its highest development in France during the seventeenth century. French literary culture, supported by royal patronage and intellectual institutions such as the French Academy, became a central force in establishing classical aesthetic principles. French writers and critics systematized the ideas derived from ancient literature and transformed them into a coherent literary doctrine. These principles emphasized harmony, proportion, and clarity as essential qualities of literary works.

One of the fundamental principles of classical literature was the concept of imitation of nature. Classical writers believed that literature should imitate reality, but this imitation was not meant to reproduce everyday life in a purely realistic way. Instead, it was intended to present an idealized and harmonious representation of human behavior. According to classical theory, artistic representation had to be guided by reason and controlled by aesthetic discipline. Writers were expected to avoid excessive emotional expression and maintain balance and moderation in their works.

Another important concept within classical aesthetics was decorum, which referred to the appropriateness of style, character, and subject matter. According to this principle, characters in literary works should behave in ways consistent with their social status and moral character. Kings and heroes were expected to speak in elevated language, while ordinary characters used simpler forms of expression. This principle helped maintain stylistic harmony and reinforced the hierarchical structure of classical drama.

Classical literature also emphasized the educational and moral function of artistic works. Writers believed that literature should not only entertain readers but also instruct them by presenting examples of virtue and moral responsibility. This idea was strongly influenced by ancient Roman literary theory, particularly the well-known statement by Horace that poetry should both “delight and instruct.” As a result, classical works often contained clear moral lessons and explored themes related to honor, duty, justice, and social order.

The development of classical drama was closely connected with the formulation of structural principles that governed dramatic composition. One of the most influential concepts was the theory of the three unities: unity of time, unity of place, and unity of action. According to this theory, a dramatic work should present a single central conflict that occurs within a limited time and space. The purpose of these rules was to create a sense of coherence and concentration within the dramatic narrative. Although these principles were inspired by interpretations of Aristotle’s ideas, they were further elaborated by later critics who believed that strict structural discipline would enhance the clarity and effectiveness of dramatic works.

French playwrights such as Pierre Corneille, Jean Racine, and Molière played a major role in the practical realization of classical dramatic principles. Their works demonstrated how classical rules could be combined with psychological depth and emotional intensity. Corneille’s tragedies emphasized heroic virtue and moral conflict, while Racine’s plays explored the destructive power of human passion within a carefully structured dramatic framework. Molière, on the other hand, applied classical principles to comedy, creating works that satirized social hypocrisy and moral weakness.

The influence of French classicism extended far beyond France and had a significant impact on the development of English literature. After the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, English writers became increasingly interested in French literary models. The Restoration period marked a new stage in English cultural life, characterized by renewed interest in classical artistic ideals and the development of new dramatic forms.

English playwrights and critics adopted many elements of French classical theory, including the emphasis on rhetorical elegance, structural order, and elevated themes. However, English writers did not follow classical rules as strictly as their French counterparts. Instead, they adapted classical principles in ways that allowed greater flexibility and creative experimentation. This combination of classical discipline and imaginative freedom became one of the defining characteristics of Restoration drama.

**RESULTS.** Within this cultural environment, John Dryden emerged as one of the most influential literary figures of the Restoration period. Dryden was not only a dramatist and poet but also an important literary critic who actively participated in debates about the nature of dramatic art. In his famous critical essay *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, Dryden discussed the relative merits of classical and modern drama and argued for a balanced approach that combined respect for classical tradition with recognition of the creative possibilities of modern literature.

Dryden believed that classical principles provided an essential foundation for artistic discipline, but he also emphasized that dramatic art should reflect the emotional complexity and imaginative vitality of human experience. His own dramatic works illustrate this synthesis of classical ideals and creative innovation. Through his heroic dramas, Dryden sought to present noble characters, intense emotional conflicts, and elevated moral themes, while also experimenting with poetic form and rhetorical style.

Thus, the development of classicism in European literature reflects a complex interaction between ancient cultural traditions, Renaissance humanism, and the intellectual climate of the seventeenth century. Classical principles helped shape the aesthetic foundations of European drama by emphasizing order, harmony, and moral purpose in artistic creation. At the same time, writers such as John Dryden adapted these principles in innovative ways, contributing to the evolution of dramatic literature and establishing new possibilities for artistic expression.

**CONCLUSION.** The analysis presented in this article demonstrates that the development of English classical drama was closely connected with the broader evolution of classicism in European literature. Classical aesthetic principles, which emphasized harmony, rationality, order, and moral purpose, originated from the literary heritage of ancient Greece and Rome and were later revived during the Renaissance. These principles significantly influenced seventeenth-century European literary culture and created the intellectual foundation upon which classical drama developed. French classicism, in particular, played a crucial role in systematizing these aesthetic ideas and transforming them into a coherent literary doctrine that shaped dramatic theory and practice across Europe.

Thus, the examination of the development of classicism in Europe, Dryden's role in the evolution of English drama, and the artistic features of his works demonstrates the lasting significance of his contribution to the history of English literature. The achievements of John Dryden laid an important foundation for later developments in dramatic art and remain an essential subject of literary scholarship.

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