**Classicism**

**Aesthetic attitudes and principles based on the culture, art and literature of ancient Greece and Rome, and characterized by emphasis on form, simplicity, proportion, and restrained emotion.**

Classicism and Neoclassicism, in the arts, historical tradition or aesthetic attitudes based on the art of Greece and Rome in antiquity. In the context of the tradition, Classicism refers either to the art produced in antiquity or to later art inspired by that of antiquity; Neoclassicism always refers to the art produced later but inspired by antiquity. Thus the terms Classicism and Neoclassicism are often used interchangeably.

Term that, with the related words `classic' and `Classical', is used in various (and often confusing) ways in the history and criticism of the arts. In its broadest sense, Classicism is used as the opposite of Romanticism, characterizing art in which adherence to recognized aesthetic ideals is accorded greater importance that individuality of expression. The word often implies direct inspiration from antique art, but this is not a necessary part of the concept, and according to context the word might be intended to convey little more than the idea of clarity of expression, or alternatively of conservatism. In the context of Greek art, the term `Classical' has a more precise meaning, referring to the period between the Archaic and Hellenistic periods, when Greek culture is thought to have attained its greatest splendor. The term `classic' is used to refer to the best or most representative example of its kind in any field or period. This is what Wölfflin meant when he gave the title Classic Art to his book on the Italian High Renaissance. Thus, in this sense, it would be legitimate, if wilfully confusing, to refer to Delacroix as the classic Romantic artist. The three terms `classic', `Classical' and `Classicism' are, then, often not used with discrimination or exactness, the conflation of historical term and value judgement reflecting the idea (dominant for centuries) that the art of the Greeks and Romans set a standard for all future achievement. To clear up (or perhaps add to) the confusion, the rather ungainly word `classicistic' has also entered the lists--it conveys the idea of dependance on ancient models but without any sense of qualitative judgement.

1825 (opposé à romantisme) Doctrine des partisans exclusifs de la tradition classique dans la littérature et dans l'art.

Il y a ici une recrudescence de classicisme, de siècle de Louis XIV, de goût pour Esther et de dilettantisme académique.

-- SainteBeuve, Correspondance, t. II.

Et si l'on a pu dire enfin que le romantisme avait pris en tout le contrepied du classicisme, la grande raison en est que le classicisme avait fait de l'impersonnalité de l'oeuvre d'art l'une des conditions de sa perfection.

-- Brunetière, Manuel de l'histoire de la littérature française, III.

Ensemble des caractères propres aux oeuvres littéraires et artistiques de l'antiquité et du XVIIe siècle, telles qu'elles ont été définies, jugées par les théoriciens de la fin du XVIIe siècle (en France). L'union «du cartésianisme et de l'art dans le classicisme» (Lanson).

C'est par ce rationalisme (en littérature) que se définit essentiellement, selon nous, le classicisme français. [...] Dans la littérature et l'art le classicisme, qui a donné ses plus beaux fruits, se prolonge encore (vers 1680). Véritable «Père de l'Église», Bossuet oppose aux ennemis du catholicisme la pure doctrine de la tradition. Racine fait jouer Esther (1689) et Athalie (1691). La Fontaine publie son XIIe livre de Fables (1694).

R. Jasinski, Histoire de la littérature française.