



Romanticism.

But the central weakness of romanticism is the cult of the secondariness that traverses the substance of all its manifestations. The romantics are constantly writing about trivial, secondary and.....

The point is not, as it has been observed, that the romantics are subjective; the point is that they are subjective about unimportant things of their subjectivity. The point is not, as they have been posthumously told, that no one cares for what they feel; the fact is simply that no one cares for the unimportant things they feel.

Whether, like the very best of them, they consider their love-affairs to be things transcendently decreed by God to happen to them; whether they elevate their most trivial debauchery into a terrible catastrophe happening to the world; whether they proclaim themselves high-priests of a cult which they never explain clearly enough; whether they declare to us in terrible words the sorrows that move them, when those sorrows are simply ennui - in all these manifestations of their disease the point is not that they are subjective, it is that they are foolishly subjective. Verlaine is more subjective than the romantics proper; but he is often far more sound than they. For he knows the vileness of his taedium vitae, and he does not consider it a peculiarly noble or transcendent thing; he considers it merely a psychic discomfort and regrets his suffering. In the celebrated lyric "Il pleure dans mon Coeur" he is nearer the gods than the Victor Hugo of Olympio's sadness, and the Musset of Rolla.

I can give my sympathy to a fool's sorrow, because it is sorrow; but it is too much to ask me to give it to that sorrow because it is a fool's. I can weep over a fool's sorrow, but I cannot weep over the foolish sorrows of a man who is not a fool except in his sorrows, because the folly and the sorrow are in that case intermixed and inextricable. I can feel sad for a child that wants the moon; even if it tells me in very precise words that it wants the moon and can't get it. But it is too much to ask me to be sad with a man who tells me the same thing in the same words. He must make himself a little less fool if I am to take him a little ~~more~~ less like one.

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