



The Triumph of Imperfection: The Silver Age of Sociocultural Moderation in Europe, 1815-1848

Virgil Nemoianu

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European Romanticism inverted and reassessed, with an eye to contemporary debates. In this sequel to his Harry Levin Prize - winning *The Taming of Romanticism*, Virgil Nemoianu expands his survey of the intellectual and literary movement that swept Europe in the early and middle decades of the nineteenth century to include rarely studied paraliterary texts in historiography, travel writing, and religious exposition. With "The Triumph of Imperfection", Nemoianu traverses literary terrain beyond the canon to gauge the impact of late romanticism's moderate tone on the upheaval, revolution, and agitation associated with the advent of the modern era. He suggests that writers and scholars of the period 1815-1848 wielded tools of discourse in such a way as to integrate the new ideals of modernity peacefully and calmly into the normal evolution of society. Subverting the conventional approach to romanticism, Nemoianu argues for a balance between works composed in Western and Central Europe. From this fresh starting point, he analyzes texts from authors both remembered and forgotten, including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Francois Auguste-Rene de Chateaubriand, and Robert Southey. He considers their approach to educational techniques, the aesthetics of religion, and the interplay of history writing with fiction and contends that, in dealing with the radical changes of their day, thinkers, writers, statesmen, and reformers of the period sought a practical accommodation between the avalanche of revolutionary ideas and the intellectual history that had shaped the past millennia. Nemoianu suggests that at the center of this reconciliation was an acceptance of the notion of imperfection, of partial victories, and of a deliberate search for moderation and balance. Sure to spark scholarly debate, Nemoianu underscores the value and relevance of the moderating influences he finds in romanticism for the intellectual and social questions facing the current century.

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