

The group of words with the root "Roman" in the various European languages, such as "romance" and "Romanesque", has a complicated history, but by the middle of the 18th century "romantic" in English and romantique in French were both in common use as adjectives of praise for natural phenomena such as views and sunsets, in a sense close to modern English usage but without the sexual connotation. The application of the term to literature first became common in Germany, where the circle around the Schlegel brothers, critics August and Friedrich, began to speak of romantische Poesie ("romantic poetry") in the 1790s, contrasting it with "classic" but in terms of spirit rather than merely dating.