Definition of Romantic (from the Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed.)
Also 7 romantique, 7-8 romantick. [ad. F. romantique, f. romant, older form of roman romance, novel.]

A. Adjective.

1. a. Of the nature of, having the qualities of, romance in respect of form or content.
2. a. Having no real existence; imaginary; purely ideal.
3. b. Having no foundation in fact.
4. a. Having a bent or tendency towards romance; readily influenced by the imagination.

b. Tending towards, characterized by, romance as a basis or principle of literature or art. (Opposed to classical.) Also of ballet (see quot. 1857). Hence used of persons connected with, or things relating to, literature, art, etc. of this kind.

1812 H. C. R. O'BINSON J.rnl. 19 May in E. J. Morley Henry Crab Robinson on Bks. (1938) 1. 84 We proceeded to Coleridge's first lecture... He spoke of religion, the spirit of chivalry,... and a classification of poetry into ancient and romantic. 1813 Edin. Rev. Oct. 206 The poetry of the Spanish peninsula seems to have been more romantic and less subject to classical bondage than that of any other part of Europe. 1814 W. T. AYLOR in Monthly Rev. Apr. 364 The eleventh [chapter] divides European poetry into two schools, the classical, and the romantic. 1819 [see CLASSICAL a. 6]. 1833 W. M. AGINN in Fraser's Mag. VIII 64 'The noticeable man [i.e. Coleridge] with large grey eyes' the worthy old Platonist the founder of the romantic school of poetry. 1841 EMERSON Ess., History Wks. (Bohn) I. 11 The vaunted distinction between Classic and Romantic schools, seems superficial and pedantic. 1851 GALLENGA Italy II. 65 That new school of literature to which the vague denomination of Romantic had been generally applied. 1878 DOWDEN Stud. Lit. 25 A leader of the Romantic movement. 1908 P. E. M. ORE Sheldrue Ess. 5th Ser. 119 Like Friedrich Schlegel, he indulges in the romantic irony of smiling down upon himself and walking through life like a Doppelgänger. 1928 [see CLASSICAL a. 6d]. 1930 W. E. MIPSON Seven Types of Ambiguity i. 27 Before the Romantic Revival the possibilities of not growing up had never been exploited so far as to become a subject for popular anxiety. 1937 D. B. USH Mythology & Romantic Trad. in Eng. Poetry p. xiii. The effect of both the romantic and the industrial movements was to make the artist, not an anti-social figure, but an isolated one. 1938 Oxfo. Compan. Mus. 810/1 By the 'Romantic School' in music is meant the group of active spirits in that movement which began in Germany with Weber (born 1786) or Orff it can be carried back as far as Schubert (born 1797) and Beethoven (born 1770). 1951 F. K. ERMOYE Romantic Image vii. 132 The next step forward in Romantic aesthetic depended upon a new theory of language. 1857 G. B. L. W. ILSON Penguin Dict. Ballet 230 Romantic ballet, used, somewhat narrowly, to describe the ballets produced during the period of the Romantic revival in literature in the early nineteenth century, or roughly from 1830-1850, taking as their theme the odyssey of mortal man in love with some female spirit of the air or water or with some maiden risen from her tomb. The dividing line is a slender one, i.e. in the romantic ballet the
accent is on colour or mood rather than form and design which is predominant in the classical ballet. 1959 F. G ADAN et al. Dict. Med. Ballet 329/1 Several other great Romantic dancers appeared as La Sylphide. 1960 BECKSON &GANZ Reader's Guide Lit. Terms (1961) 108 Romantic irony occurs when a writer builds up a serious emotional tone and then deliberately breaks it and laughs at his own solemnity. 1977 J. A C UD DON Dict. Lit. Terms 573 Romantic revival, a term loosely applied to a movement in European literature (and other arts) during the last quarter of the 18th c. and the first twenty or thirty years of the 19th c.

5. a. Characterized or marked by, invested or environed with, romance or imaginative appeal. The examples given here illustrating the collocation of the adjective with love love love love love love ...

b. Of places: Redolent or suggestive of romance; appealing to the imagination and feelings. 1705 ADDISON Italy 2It is so Romantic a Scene, that it has always probably given occasion to such Chimerical Relations. 1748 ANSON’S Voy. III v. 337 An Island, which may in all these views be truly stiled romantic. 1816 PEACOCK Headlong Hall iii. To put his romantic pleasure-gardens under a process of improvement. 1864 SKEAT tr. Uhland’s Poems 57 Still my heart no quiet knows: With him Tow‘rds romantic isles it goes.

Confl. 1828 Sporting Mag. XXI. 224 The hunting events of the romantic-scened county. 1849 J. F. ORBES Physician’s Holiday xii. (1850) 123 It is a romantic-looking spot.

c. Similarly of persons, their character, etc.

1846 GROTE Greece Ivi. (1862) I. 395 The exploits of many of these romantic heroes. 1856 STANLEY Sinai & T. (1858) 328 The grandest and most romantic character that Israel ever produced, Elijah the Tishbite.

Confl. 1847 H. M. ELVILLE Ixviii. He was a sunburnt, romantic-looking European.

B. noun.

1. A feature, characteristic, idea, etc., belonging to, or suggestive of, romance.

1679 V. A LSOP Melius Inquirendum ii. vi. 324 Some Legendary Fabler, that has stufet a Farce with Romantics. 1816 A. R. ODGER Poems. Let me little (1897) 12 Quat your romantics, your airs, and your antics, Tak’ truth’s honest track, and ye’ll seldom gae wrang.

2. A romantic person; esp. an adherent of romanticism in literature; a romanticist. Also, a composer of romantic music.

1827 CARLYLE in C. N. E. NORTON Two Notebks. of T. Carlyle (1898) 111 Grossi has written a new Epic... Grossi is a Romantic. 1865 READER 3 June 619/1 This enthusiasm for enthusiasm was natural to the whole race of romantics of that day. 1882 STEVENSON in Langman’s Mag. I. 77 Walter Scott is out and away the king of the romantics.

329/1 Nineteenth-century romantics deliberately

1866 SCOTT T. Ins. Lxxviii, He was a sunburnt, romantic-looking European.

1898 L. STEPHEN Stu. ii. iv. 142 The same view...made him dislike Carlyle and Froude as romantics, if not charlatans.


left out all the features which the admirers of classical painting were accustomed to regard as indispensable to art. 1932 W. B. Y EATS Words for Music 11 We were the last romantics, chose for them Traditional sanctity and loveliness.

1933 A. D. AVIDSON tr. Praë’s Romantic Agony 4 They thirst for the infinite...animates the lines of the Romantics. 1938 Oxf. Compan. Mus. 113/1 Despite their sheer musical sanctity, their [ sic. Brahms’] compositions are strongly charged with what may be called an extra-musical emotion; hence the classification of their composer as a romantic.

1960 A. O. I. O. LOVEJOY in M. H. ABRAMS Eng. Romantic Poets 15 To be unsophisticated, to revert to the mental state of ‘simple Indian swains’, was the least of the ambitions of a German Romantic... The greatness of Shakespeare, in the eyes of these Romantics, lay in his Universalität. 1961 C. C. LUFTTON in A. BAINES Mus. Instruments ii. 66 The [organ] works of Liszt and Franck...and of such late romantics as Reger, Jongen, and Elgar, rely upon a very large instrument.