

Relationship between Individual and Society in American Literature

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Abstract: this article discusses the impact of transcendentalist writers on American society and personal relationships. The mention of the American Enlightenment and the pre-Young Republic suggests a historical context for the influence of transcendentalism. The emphasis on the writers' active participation in social and political life, as well as their direct impact on the country, highlights the significance of their work. Additionally, the focus on the themes of human existence, the relationship between individuals and society, and moral self-improvement aligns with the core principles of transcendentalism.

Keywords: Transcendentalism, romantics, realism, philosophy, individual.

Introduction. Transcendentalism was indeed a significant force during the mature American romanticism period, and the writers associated with this movement, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, made substantial contributions to American literature and philosophy.

Transcendentalism emphasized the importance of individual intuition, the connection between humanity and nature, and the potential for spiritual growth. Writers and thinkers associated with transcendentalism sought to address fundamental questions about human existence and the individual's relationship to society and the natural world. They critiqued the materialism and industrialization of American society while advocating for a deeper, more spiritual connection to nature and a more authentic way of living.

The transcendentalists' ideas had a lasting impact on American philosophical thinking and played a role in shaping the national character and individual identity. Their emphasis on self-reliance, nonconformity, and the pursuit of higher truths resonated with many Americans and contributed to the development of a distinct American intellectual tradition.

Methodology: Certainly, the transition from romanticism to realism in American literature was marked by a significant shift in themes, styles, and perspectives. The mature American romanticism of the 19th century, as exemplified by writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and Herman Melville, was characterized by dramatic and tragic tones. These authors often explored the imperfections of the world and human existence, infusing their works with a sense of sadness, longing, and awareness of the tragedy of life.

Edgar Allan Poe, in particular, occupies a prominent place in American literature due to his significant contributions to the development of the literary tradition. His early collection of poems and stories, such as "Tamerlane and Other Poems," reflects his initial forays into writing during his childhood and adolescence. Poe's works often celebrated emotions and exhibited a festive mood, with his poems and later prose showcasing his literary prowess.

Poe's short stories, including those featured in his two-volume book "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," demonstrated his skill in weaving scientific, fantastical, and adventurous narratives while delving into the complexities of human psychology through vivid imagery. Notably, Poe's story "The Gold Bug" earned him a substantial pen fee, highlighting his impact on the literary scene.

During this period, American romanticism grappled with universal human and worldly issues within the national context, incorporating symbolic elements that added depth and impact to the works of authors like Poe, Melville, and Hawthorne. As late American romanticism emerged in the 1860s, writers faced creative crises amid changing social and political landscapes. The movement continued to reflect a close connection with the country's social and political life, expressing dissatisfaction with bourgeois development and showcasing a deep respect for Native American themes.

Overall, the evolution from romanticism to realism in American literature was a complex process, influenced by social, political, and cultural shifts that shaped the literary landscape of the time.

Analysis. The transition from romanticism to realism in American literature was indeed a gradual process, and the two styles often coexisted and merged. Walt Whitman's poetry, for example, embodies a blend of romantic and realistic elements, capturing the spirit of both movements. Similarly, authors such as F. Brett Hart, Mark Twain, A. Beers, and Jack London incorporated romantic motifs into their works while also embracing realism.

The emergence of realism in American literature was further exemplified by writers like Rebecca Harding Davis, who presented the living conditions of American workers in a detailed, documentary-like manner in her story "Life in the Iron Mills" (1861). This marked a departure from romantic idealization, offering a more accurate portrayal of everyday life.

The late 19th century also saw the rise of historical novels and short stories, with authors like D. Kabel, Smith, and Page delving into the genre. However, it's noted that the development of historical novels had negative implications for American literature at the time. Many of these novels tended to idealize the past and promote nationalistic and racist sentiments, often lacking historical accuracy. In the 19th century, the short story genre gained prominence in American literature, with Bret Harte even asserting it as "the national genre of American literature." While the realist social novel was dominant in European literary development during this period, it faced challenges finding a foothold in American literature due to social and cultural conditions. Nonetheless, voluminous critical-realist novels eventually emerged in the early 20th century in the United States. The "magazine style" of American literature and the fast-paced nature of life at the time also influenced the prevalence of short, captivating stories as a characteristic genre of American literature. This period gave rise to influential writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, and Jack London, who continue to serve as role models for subsequent generations.

Below, we will discuss the contribution of Mark Twain to the development of American literature.

Mark Twain, whose real name was Samuel Clemens, was born in Missouri and spent his childhood working on a steamboat traveling along the Mississippi River. His experiences on the river inspired much of his later writing, and his nickname "Mark Twain" is related to this period of his life. Twain began his career in journalism, and his satirical stories were published in the "Enterprise" newspaper. He later traveled around Europe and Asia Minor, and these experiences influenced several of his famous works, including "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," "Life on the Mississippi" (1883), "The American Claimant" (1892), and "Pudd'nhead Wilson" (1894).

Twain's works are known for their truthful representation of American life and their sympathy for African Americans, advocating for the protection of their rights. Even in his fantastical

works, Twain's writing is filled with the light of truth and justice. In "The New Adventures of Tom Sawyer," he expresses children's character traits such as courage, bravery, and naivety, and dreams of a world free from evil and vices, especially for the sake of children.

During Twain's time, many African countries were under colonial rule, and the people there were treated without mercy by the colonialists. Twain portrayed these events in "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," focusing on the lives of children in America. He indicated his intention to continue Tom's adventures and explore the lives of the children described in the book, reflecting on what kind of people they had grown up to be.

Twain's novellas, often infused with humor, depict the painful and cruel treatment inflicted on marginalized people by dominant forces in society. Works such as "The Diary of Adam and Eve," "Agreement with the Devil," "Is He Alive or Dead," and "The Mysterious Stranger" address these issues. In one of his works, Twain condemns American society, expressing regret at the constant focus on work and lack of recreation compared to Europe.

Overall, Mark Twain's writings reflect his deep concern for social justice and his desire for a world free from oppression and cruelty. His works continue to be celebrated for their insightful portrayal of American life and their advocacy for the rights of marginalized communities.

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