

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
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Lectures on Literary Texts

Oriented to Third Year Students

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Part One: British Literature

**1-Middle English Period (1066–1500): Chaucer's
*Canterbury Tales***

**2-The Renaissance (1500–1660): The Renaissance
Features in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*?**

**3-The Romantic Period (1785–1832) in British Literature:
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**4-The Victorian Period (1832–1901)
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**5-Modernism in British Literature: The Modernist
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Part Two: American Literature

1-American Literature during the Age of Reason and the Revolutionary Period (1750-1800)

2-American Romanticism: The First Seeds of American Nationalism and the Birth of American Novel: Michel Crevecoeur, Washington Irving, and James Fennimore Cooper

3-The Emergence of Transcendentalism and its prominent writers

4-Walt Whitman's Romantic Poetry

5-Romanticism in the literature of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville.

Objectives:

1-Studying the different literary periods of British and American Literature

2-Acquiring enough information about the writers of each period

3-Studying the themes of some literary works of each period

Prerequisites:

1-The students must have enough idea about the historical context of each literary period

2-The students must be well experienced in literary and rhetorical analysis of texts

Introduction

British literature has passed through different periods. Each period has its characteristic features, writers, themes and style. In this first part, there will be a detailed study of five different literary periods: Middle English Period (1066–1500), The Renaissance (1500–1660) The Romantic Period (1785–1832) The Victorian Period (1832–1901) and finally Modernism.

1-Middle English Period (1066–1500): Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

The Middle Ages refers to the period between 500-1500 AD. These dates correspond roughly with the fall of the Roman Empire (the end of the Classical period) and the Renaissance, or the early modern period¹. The thousand years in between were referred to by Italian thinkers of the Renaissance as the Middle Ages, or *medio evo*, from which we get our adjective form “medieval”. The study of the literature of the Middle Ages is thus the study of medieval literature.²

The Middle English period saw a huge transition in the language, culture, and lifestyle of England and resulted in what we can recognize today as a form of “modern” (recognizable) English. The era extends to around 1500. As with the Old English period, much of the Middle English writings were religious in nature; however, from about 1350 onward, secular literature began to rise.

¹ *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), p.23

² *Language and Literature*, Ian Short, in *A Companion to the Anglo-Norman World*, edited Christopher Harper-Bill and Elisabeth van Houts, Woodbridge 2003, ISBN 0-85115- 673-8

This period is home to the likes of Chaucer, Thomas Malory, and Robert Henryson.³ Notable works include "Piers Plowman" and "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight."

There is no doubt that Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1340-1400) was the major poet of England in the late Middle Ages and the most significant writer before Shakespeare. Born and educated in London, Chaucer served in the court and the army and went abroad on diplomatic missions. His oeuvre can be divided into three periods, an early one based on French models, such as the *Roman de la Rose*, and which contains the allegorical *Book of the Duchess* (1369). The second period lasted to about 1387 and is characterized by his use of Italian models above all Dante and Boccaccio. The main works of this period are *The House of Fame*, which concerns the adventures of Aeneas after the fall of Troy, *The Parliament of Fowls*, a story about the mating of birds on St. Valentine's Day, *The Legend of Good Women*.

It is certain that the third period was characterized by the greatest maturity and contained his masterpiece, *The Canterbury tales*, an unfinished work of approximately 17,000 lines because he died before finishing it. It tells the story of a group of pilgrims travelling to their patron saint and who pass the time of day by telling each other stories. A number of literary genres are represented such as the light-hearted fabliau or the more serious homily. Chaucer also offers much insight into medieval social attitudes to love, marriage and religion. The linguistic importance of Chaucer is that he established the dialect of London as the input form for the standard in the late Middle English period.⁴ Later

³ Robert DeMaria (2001), *British Literature 1640–1789: An Anthology*, Blackwell Publishing, ISBN 0-631-21769- X

⁴ Richard Cumberland", *Encyclopædia Britannica* Eleventh Edition p.265.

modifications of this language took place with the introduction of printing in the 15th century.

1.1-Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

It is agreed among critics that *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1345–1400) was enormously popular in medieval England, with over 90 copies in existence from the 1400s. In fact, its popularity may be due to the fact that the tales were written in Middle English, a language that developed after the Norman invasion, after which those in power would have spoken French. Continuous publication of *The Canterbury Tales* since Chaucer's death, and the inspiration it has provided for other writers and artists are testimony to the enduring appeal of his characters and their stories.

1.2-*The Canterbury Tales*

Chaucer's long poem follows the journey of a group of pilgrims, 31 including Chaucer himself, from the Tabard Inn in Southwark to St Thomas à Becket's shrine at Canterbury Cathedral. The host at the inn suggests each pilgrim tell two tales on the way out and two on the way home to help while away their time on the road. The best storyteller is to be rewarded with a free supper on their return.

It is obvious that this literary device gives Chaucer the opportunity to paint a series of vivid word portraits of a cross-section of his society, from a knight and prioress, to a carpenter and cook; a much-married wife of Bath, to a bawdy miller – an occupation regarded in Chaucer's day as shifty and dishonest.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that Chaucer mixes satire and realism in lively characterizations of his pilgrims. The tone of their tales ranges from pious to comic, with humor veering between erudite wit and good honest vulgarity. Taken together, the tales offer a fascinating insight into English life during the late 14th century.⁵ Chaucer's original plan was for over 100 stories, but only 24 were completed, some of which had already been written for earlier works.

1.3-Themes in *the Canterbury Tales*

Through *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer tries to convey a number of important messages which can be useful lessons to his readers'. Among them, one can cite:

1-Religion in the Medieval Society

The reader of the *The Canterbury Tales* can observe the thematic significance of Christianity can be marked by the fact that the tales take place in a religious setting where everyone is going on a religious pilgrimage. Most of the notable figures of the church; the Monk, the Nun, the Parson, and the Friar are detailed in the general prologue, representing distinct areas of the church of that time. Some of them are true worshipers of Christ, while the others are corrupt. Therefore, Chaucer has artistically painted the picture of the custodians of the church having spoiled the true spirit of Christianity.

⁵ *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. Margaret Drabble. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.265.

2-Social Satire the Medieval Literature

It must be stressed that social satire is the major theme of *The Canterbury Tales*. The medieval society was set on three foundations: the nobility, the church, and the peasantry. One should note that Chaucer's satire targets all segments of the medieval social issues, human immorality, and depraved heart. For example, he exposes each social class of his pilgrims and beautifully illustrates how they fail to fulfill their actual duties. He further shows the theme of social satire in "The Nun's Priest's Tale" that satirizes courtly love and sets aside standard of dignity. "The Wife of Bath's Tale" mocks the religious logic as the wife interprets the Bible verses in her own way to support her argument.

3-Corruption in the Medieval Church

Undoubtedly, the idea of corruption also upholds thematic significance in *The Canterbury Tales*, because most of the characters associated with the church are not religious, pious or dutiful as they must be. Perhaps, "The Pardoner's Tale" is the best example of corruption. He is a medieval preacher assigned with the duty to collect money for holy purposes. He performs this duty and walks in the town with holy relics, preaches about the dangers of greed and raises money. However, the collection is not for a religious purpose; instead, he fills his own pocket. While narrating the tale, he does not seem to have any regret and displays pride for his actions.

4-Competition in Love and Story Telling

Competition is another major theme in *The Canterbury Tales*. It is explicitly stated in tales as well as present among the pilgrims. The Knight's Tale is set on the theme of competition where two prisoners fall in love with the same girl. Both are at good terms, but the lady becomes the bone of contention and makes them opponent of each other. The desire of love makes them bloodthirsty. At last, one is killed, and the other wins the hand of that lady. Out of these tales, the pilgrims also set the competition of storytelling. They seem to be impatient as well, as Miller jumps in to tell his tale after the Knight without waiting for his turn. Everyone tries to tell the best story continuing the competition, even though most of the stories are the versions of the stories already told.

5- Love and Sexual Desire as Features of Medieval Society

It is known that courtly love and sexual desire are common features of medieval society that is why it was discussed by Chaucer. In reality, Courtly love in the medieval setup is something noble and spiritual that does not mean to be achieved physically. "The Knight's Tale", in the general prologue, is an obvious example of courtly love where two knights fight for the hand of a fair lady. The intensity of love makes them forget oaths and duties toward the state. Furthermore, the insightful description of the squire, a young knight, possesses all the ornaments of courtly love. He sings, writes, plays flutes, maintains his physical appearance, and burns with a passion that keeps him awake. Apart from courtly love and sexual desire, lust also plays a major role in *The*

Canterbury Tales. For examples, “The Miler’s Tale” is based on sexual desire and “The Wife of Bath’s Tale” represents the lust and sexual desire of the lady..

6-Class Disparity in the British Medieval Society

It is remarkable that Class or status is another notable theme in *The Canterbury Tales*. This theme is explored through the comparison of the people who belong to a better class with those who attempt to appear as an upper class. Chaucer has presented two diverse characters, the Prioress and the Parson in the prologue. It is through these characters; he foreshadows the importance of status in medieval society. The Prioress, a nun by profession, is seen as an up-to-date woman, concerned with her manner and behavior. In contrast, the Parson, a clergyman, acts and behaves keeping in mind his class and duties. Despite knowing her duties, the Nun tries to look wealthy, whereas the Parson is not obsessed to maintain his class. This class and class consciousness run deep into the tales told by different characters.

2-The Renaissance (1500–1660): The Renaissance

Features in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*?

It is worth mentioning that the word *renaissance* literally means "rebirth⁶." In the context of the English Renaissance, this rebirth refers to a renewal of learning, especially in terms of new beliefs and ways of doing things differently from the Middle Ages. Characteristics of the Renaissance include a renewed interest in classical antiquity; a rise in humanist philosophy (a

⁶ *The Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature* (1990), p.93

belief in self, human worth, and individual dignity); and radical changes in ideas about religion, politics, and science. Recently, critics and literary historians have begun to call this the “Early Modern” period, but here we retain the historically familiar term “Renaissance.” This period is often subdivided into four parts, including the Elizabethan Age (1558–1603), the Jacobean Age (1603–1625), the Caroline Age (1625–1649), and the Commonwealth Period (1649–1660).

One should emphasize the idea that The Elizabethan Age was the golden age of English drama. Some of its noteworthy figures include Christopher Marlowe, Francis Bacon, Edmund Spenser, Sir Walter Raleigh, and, of course, William Shakespeare. The Jacobean Age is named for the reign of James I. It includes the works of John Donne, Shakespeare, Michael Drayton, John Webster, Elizabeth Cary, Ben Jonson, and Lady Mary Wroth. The King James translation of the Bible also appeared during the Jacobean Age. The Caroline Age covers the reign of Charles I (“Carolus”). John Milton, Robert Burton, and George Herbert are some of the notable figures.

It is no secret that the English playwright, poet, and actor William Shakespeare was a popular dramatist. He was born six years after Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603) ascended the throne, in the height of the English Renaissance. He found in the theater of London a medium just coming into its own and an audience eager to reward talents of the sort he possessed. He is generally acknowledged to be the greatest of English writers and one of the most extraordinary creators in human history.

2.1-William Shakespeare’s Early life

The biography of William Shakespeare tells that he was born on April 23, 1564, in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. His mother, Mary Arden, was the

daughter of a wealthy landowner from a neighboring village. His father, John, was a maker of gloves and a trader in farm produce. John also held a number of responsible positions in Stratford's government and served as mayor in 1569.

One should highlight the fact that though no personal documents survive from Shakespeare's school years, he probably attended the Stratford grammar school and studied the classics, Latin grammar and literature. It is believed that he had to discontinue his education at about thirteen in order to financially help his father. At eighteen he married Ann Hathaway. They had three children, Susanna, Hamnet, and Judith.⁷

Because there are no records of Shakespeare's activities between 1585 and 1592, some have speculated that he was a traveling actor or a country schoolmaster. It is important to note here that the earliest surviving mention of his career in London, England, is a jealous attack by Robert Greene, a playwright, which indicates that Shakespeare had already established himself in the capital. It is hard to believe that even Shakespeare could have shown the mastery evident in his plays without several years of apprenticeship.

2.2-Early Comedies of Shakespeare

Shakespearean critics observed and agreed that three early comedies demonstrate that Shakespeare had learned to fuse conventional characters with convincing representations of the human life he knew. Shakespeare's first play is probably *The Comedy of Errors* (1590). Most acknowledge it as a brilliant and intricate farce (a humorous piece of work with a story unlikely to happen in real life) involving two sets of identical twins. The plot of his next comedy, *The Two*

⁷ De Grazia, Margreta, and Stanley Wells, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Gentlemen of Verona (1591) revolves around a faithful girl who educates her inconsistent lover. It has romantic woods, a girl dressed as a boy, sudden changes, music, and happy marriages at the end. The last of the first comedies, *Love's Labour's Lost* (1593), deals with three young men who attempt to withdraw from the world and women for three years to study in their king's school. They quickly surrender to a group of young ladies who come to live nearby.

2.3-Early History Plays and First Tragedy

Shakespeare excelled also in writing history plays which can be considered as socio historical account of the Elizabethan Age. In line with this, one should equally add that though little read and performed today, Shakespeare's first plays in the popular history genre are equally ambitious and impressive. *Henry VI* (1592), which is performed in three parts and *Richard III* (1594) form an epic (story of heroic figures). They deal with the tumultuous (disorderly, agitating) events of English history between the death of Henry V (1387–1422) in 1422 and Henry VII (1457–1509) assuming the throne in 1485, which began the period of stability maintained by Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603).⁸ Nothing so ambitious as this monumental sequence had ever before been attempted in an English play. Shakespeare's first tragedy, *Titus Andronicus* (1593), reveals similar ambition. It is recognized as a brilliant and successful piece in the tradition of the revenge play where someone tries to punish someone for a wrong that was done.

⁸ Ibid

2.4-The Poetry of Shakespeare

Because of plague (a bacteria-caused disease that spreads quickly and can cause death), the theaters were closed during much of 1593 and 1594. At this time Shakespeare wrote two narrative poems for the Earl of Southampton. Both the seriocomic (both happy and sad) *Venus and Adonis* and the tragic *Rape of Lucrece* are based on the Renaissance traditions of myth and symbolism.⁹

In fact, Shakespeare's most famous poems are the 154 sonnets. They were probably composed in this period but were not published until 1609. Sonnets are fourteen-line poems with a fixed rhyme scheme. Though they often suggest autobiographical revelation, the sonnets cannot be proved to be any less fictional than the plays.

In 1594 Shakespeare became principal writer for the successful Lord Chamberlain's Men in London. This was one of the two leading companies of actors. He also became a regular actor in the company and a partner in the group of artist-managers who ran it. The company performed regularly in unroofed but elaborate theaters that seated up to three thousand people. The actors performed on a huge platform stage equipped with additional levels for performances. The audience sat on three sides or stood on the ground in front of the stage. In 1599 this group had the Globe Theater built on the south bank of the Thames River.¹⁰

As a gifted playwright, Shakespeare produced many plays for the company. They include the comedies *The Taming of the Shrew* (1594) about the taming of an ill-tempered, scolding woman and *A Midsummer Night's*

⁹ Gollob, Herman. *Me and Shakespeare: Adventure with the Bard*. New York: Doubleday, 2002.

¹⁰ Schoenbaum, S. *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life*. Rev. ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Dream (1595), in which fairies and magic potions in moonlit woods become entangled with young lovers who escape from a cruel society. These were followed by *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Much Ado about Nothing* (1598), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1599), and *As You Like It* (1600).

Shakespeare's tragedies of the period are among his most familiar plays: *Romeo and Juliet* (1596), *Julius Caesar* (1599), and *Hamlet* (1601). Although very different from each other, they share the setting of intense personal tragedy in a large world vividly populated by what seems like the whole range of humanity. Like most of his contemporaries in the theater, Shakespeare used the same techniques in writing comedies as tragedies. Politics are constantly present, and what is best in the protagonist (hero) is what does him in when he finds himself in conflict with the world.

Shakespeare, continuing his interest in the historical play, wrote *King John* (1596). Despite its one strong character a number of critics considered it as a relatively weak play. His other epics range from *Richard II* (1595), through the two parts of *Henry IV* (1597), to *Henry V* (1599). These four plays pose disturbing questions about politics, particularly the difference between the man capable of ruling and the man worthy of doing so. They are not optimistic about man as a political animal.¹¹

2.5-Shakespeare's Problem Plays

Several plays produced at the end of Elizabeth's reign are often grouped as Shakespeare's "problem plays." They are not easily categorized as either tragedies or comedies. *All's Well That Ends Well* (1602) is a romantic comedy

¹¹ Southworth, John. *Shakespeare, The Player: A Life in the Theatre*. Stroud, Gloucestershire, England: Sutton, 2000.

with qualities that seem bitter to many critics because it presents romantic relations between men and women in a harsh light. *Troilus and Cressida* (1602), is a brilliant, sardonic (skeptically humorous), and disillusioned piece on the Trojan War. *Measure for Measure* (1604) focuses on the link between political power and romantic desire¹².

2.6-King's Men and the late tragedies

Upon ascending to the throne in 1603, King James I (1566–1625) bestowed his patronage upon the Lord Chamberlain's Men, so that the flag of the King's Men now flew over the Globe. During his last decade in the theater Shakespeare was to write fewer but perhaps even finer plays. Almost all the greatest tragedies belong to this period, and they share several qualities. The heroes are dominated by passions that make their moral status increasingly ambiguous and their freedom increasingly constricted. In the end, what destroys the hero is what is best about him. Like the histories, the late tragedies continue to be felt as intensely relevant to the concerns of modern men.

Othello (1604) is concerned with trust and betrayal. The protagonist, Othello is a moor, a black military man who despite his rank suffers from racism. In *King Lear* (1605) an aged king foolishly deprives his only loving daughter of her heritage in order to leave everything to her hypocritical (only pretending to have morals) and vicious sisters. *Macbeth* (1606) concentrates on the problems of evil and freedom and destructive ambition. It mingles the supernatural with history, and makes a sympathetic hero of a murderer who sins against family and a whole country.

¹² Ibid.

Antony and Cleopatra and *Coriolanus* (both written in 1607 and 1608) embody Shakespeare's bitterest images of political life. *Antony and Cleopatra* sets the temptation of romantic desire against the call to Roman duty. *Coriolanus* pits a protagonist (hero) who cannot live with hypocrisy against a society built on it. Both of these tragedies present ancient history with intensity that makes it seem contemporary.

2.7-Shakespearean Romances

A final group of plays takes a turn in a new direction and can be described as Shakespearean romances¹³. *Pericles* (1607), *Cymbeline* (1609), *The Winter's Tale* (1611), and *The Tempest* (1611) have a unique power to move and are in the realm of the highest art. *The Tempest* is the most popular and perhaps the finest of the group. In it Prospero and his daughter are shipwrecked on an island inhabited by supernatural creatures. Prospero rules the island with magic, but renounces magic at the end.¹⁴ After the composition of *The Tempest* Shakespeare retired to Stratford. He returned to London to compose *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* in 1613. Neither seems to have fired his imagination. He died in Stratford-upon-Avon on April 23, 1616, at the age of fifty-two.

¹³ The term "romance" should never be capitalised, except in titles or at the beginning of a sentence. When referring to medieval literature don't use the terms "romantic" and "Romantic". The former refers to romance in the modern sense relating to affairs of love (a sense that developed in the nineteenth century). "Romantic" refers to a literary and cultural movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although both have origins in associations with the content of medieval romances, they do not refer today to the medieval literary genre. When discussing medieval romances, call them "romance literature", not "romantic literature".

¹⁴ Southworth, John. *Shakespeare, The Player: A Life in the Theatre*. Stroud, Gloucestershire, England: Sutton, 2000.

One should note that Shakespeare's work has continued to seem to each generation like its own most precious discovery. His value to his own age is suggested by the fact that two fellow actors performed the virtually unprecedented act in 1623 of gathering his plays together and publishing them in the Folio edition. Without their efforts, since Shakespeare was apparently not interested in publication, many of the plays would not have survived.

2.8-The Renaissance features in *Hamlet*

The reader of *Hamlet* can observe the following Renaissance characteristics:

1. **Purgatory:** In Hamlet's most famous soliloquy, which begins, "To be or not to be...", he alludes to an unknown afterlife, "The undiscovered country...", which is a stark departure from Medieval religious ideas rooted in a strict belief that people either go to heaven or hell when they die. In *Hamlet*, King Hamlet's spirit seems to be in purgatory which is a stage or a place between heaven and hell in which the spirit, according to the Christian religion, is supposed to be purified from all sins before entering paradise
2. **Political power:** There were big political changes taking place during the time that Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*. This is reflected in the play by Hamlet's questioning of Claudius's right to ascend to the throne in his father's place. It was a new idea to question anything having to do with the "natural" hierarchical structures that maintained political power.
3. **Humanism:** In Act II, Scene 2, Line 311, Hamlet asks: "What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties..." In this speech, you can see a clear assertion of humanist ideas about the

uniqueness and extraordinary abilities of the human mind. This idea was linked to the Renaissance.

4. **The Play-within-the Play:** This point is illustrated by Shakespeare's use of the play-within-the play in *Hamlet*. Here, Prince Hamlet's play, *The Mousetrap*, is presented to the court supposedly as entertainment, but Hamlet's intent is to gather obvious evidence of Claudius's guilt for the murder of his father. Says Hamlet: "...the play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king." This can refer to the Age of Reason because Hamlet needed sufficient and concrete proof that his uncle was the real murder of his father.

3-The Romantic Period (1785–1832) in British Literature: The Analysis of “Daffodils” by William Wordsworth

The beginning date for the Romantic period is often debated. Some claim it is 1785, immediately following the Age of Sensibility. Others say it began in 1789 with the start of the French Revolution, and still others believe that 1798, the publication year for William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's book *Lyrical Ballads* is its true beginning. The time period ends with the passage of the Reform Bill (which signaled the Victorian Era) and with the death of Sir Walter Scott. American literature has its own Romantic period, but

typically when one speaks of Romanticism, one is referring to this great and diverse age of British literature, perhaps the most popular and well-known of all literary ages¹⁵.

This era includes the works of such poets as Wordsworth, Coleridge, William Blake, Lord Byron, John Keats, Charles Lamb, Mary Wollstonecraft, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Thomas De Quincey, Jane Austen, and Mary Shelley.¹⁶ There is also a minor period, also quite popular during the period between 1786–1800, called the Gothic era¹⁷. Writers of note for this period include Matthew Lewis, Anne Radcliffe, and William Beckford.¹⁸

3.1-“I wandered lonely as Cloud” or the Daffodils

The poem was written in the year 1802. It was first published in *Poems in Two Volumes*, in 1807. The very starting line of the poem “I wandered lonely as a cloud” informs the poet’s profound sentiments of being left alone. It was actually the death of his brother John that led him to “loneliness”. We should remind the readers that this poem was not a result of imagination. Dorothy, Wordsworth’s sister provides us with an explanation of the occasion which inspired Wordsworth to produce this masterpiece:—
“When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow park, we saw a few daffodils

15 Richard Maxwell and Katie Trumpener, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Fiction in the Romantic Period* (2008). [65] J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (1999), p. 809.

16 Encyclopædia Britannica. “Romanticism”. Retrieved 30 January 2008, from Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Britannica.com. Retrieved 24 August 2010.

17 Ibid,

18 Abrams, M.H., et al. (Eds.) “Elizabeth Gaskell, 1810– 1865”. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, The Major Authors: The Romantic Period through the Twentieth Century*, 7th ed., Vol. B. New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.

close to the waterside.” Thus the poem is a result of actual visualization rather than imagery”.

3.2-The Analysis of Daffodils by William Wordsworth

Insights

In the beginning lines, Wordsworth describes himself as a ‘cloud’ that floats over the hills. This presents an idea of seclusion. The idea of being alone is contradicted by the phrase “crowd” (line 3). This is actually the ‘setting of the poem’.¹⁹ As human form Wordsworth prefers seclusion but the ‘crowd’ of daffodils bewilders his senses. The feeling of ecstasy suddenly makes a dive.

1-The setting of the Poem

Wordsworth may be at discomfort in human multitude but not amidst the objects (crowd) of Nature. Nature permeates the entire poem. Phrases like a crowd, a host, continuous as the stars, they stretched in never-ending lines,

“ten thousands saw eye at a glance“

presents deep implications. The poet says:

“I wandered lonely as a cloud that floats on the high o’er Wales and hills”.

Daffodils, an everyday found flower has been portrayed in magical verses and blended with transcendental romanticism. Even the daffodils outdid the sparkling waves in glee and left an everlasting mark in the mind of the readers of this poem.

¹⁹ *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, p824. [89] *The Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature* (1990), p.904.

2-Authorial Information

Wordsworth stands supreme as a nature poet. Born at Cockermouth in the year 1770, he spent his childhood amidst nature and grew up to believe in the essential goodness of humanity²⁰. He was sent to St. John's College, Cambridge, 1787. After his return from France, he stayed with his sister and Coleridge. He got married in 1802.

“Daffodils”

By William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they

²⁰ *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (1996), p. 886.

Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not be but gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed'and gazed'but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

3-Summary of Daffodils

Once the poet was wandering pointlessly beside a lake, he was all alone to wander freely akin to a patch of clouds floating in the sky, over the valleys and the hill. Suddenly he could view a large number of daffodils gathered by the side of the lake. They were sheltered under a growing tree. The Daffodils resembles the color of gold and the airy breeze made them wave and dance, rejoice and play. The poet, however, could not estimate their number as they spread along extensive sides of the lake.

(1)Daffodil is a commonly grown flower. The line: ‘A host, of golden daffodils;’ needs a special mention since it unveils the poet’s thoughts. Wordsworth associated the color of richness: Gold; to his common flower.

They resemble akin to innumerable shining stars that one could see in the night sky in the form of Milky Way. As the poet made an instant glance, he could see myriad of daffodils waving their heads, as if they were rejoicing and dancing out of alacrity. Seeing this, the waves of the lake accompanied dancing along with these daffodils, but their lustrous dance was in no way comparable to the delight and gaiety of the flowers the poets seems to have frenzied with; an ecstasy of delight.

He realized that a poet who was susceptible to natural grace could not help but feels happy in the presence of such gay and beautiful flowers. He gazed at them, hardly knowing what enormous treasure he was accumulating in his mind. That vista was impregnated in the poet's mind for an everlasting time. In future, when the poet lied down on his couch, either in a lonely or a pensive mood, the entire panorama that he saw in the woods beyond the Gowbarrow Park appeared before his mind's eye. In solitude, when his mind is unrestrained by disturbing elements of the real world, he revives the memories of the daffodils. When the memory of that sight comes into view of the poet, he was able to derive ecstatic pleasure which he had enjoyed actually.

4-Analysis of "Daffodils" by William Wordsworth

"I wandered lonely as a cloud that floats on high o'er vales and hills

For oft, when on my couch I lie, in vacant...with pleasures fills".

In the above first lines of the poem, one can easily observe that the poet was floating high but was morally low. As we come to the end of the poem, the poet, in spite being on the couch (low) was morally high.

5-The Mood of the Poem Daffodils

Obviously, the poem goes through a gradual shift from “wandered lonely” (line 1) to “but be gay” (line 15) and pleasures fill (line 23). This in actual reflects Wordsworth’s life. The feeling of loneliness was marked by the death of his brother John. Dorothy had been a great sister to Wordsworth and also Wordsworth got married in the same year 1802.undoubtedly; these life events were actually responsible for Wordsworth’s actually happiness in his life and thus correlate with Daffodils.

6-Wordsworth’s Style

Of course, Daffodils analysis will be incomplete without illustrating the tone of the poem. This poem is typically Wordsworthian. Like any romantic poem, its portray Nature at its best and encompasses her grace to the pinnacle which every poet cannot reach. It projects Wordsworth’s extraordinary delight in understanding and exploring commonplace things. Emotions recollected in tranquility are the distinguishing factor which differentiates Wordsworth from other poets²¹. The emotions associated with Wordsworth in this poem, Daffodils is not ephemeral but rather permanent and everlasting. The poet derives the same bliss from his thoughts about the daffodil when he actually saw them.

“They flashed upon the inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude:
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dance with the daffodils.”

²¹ *The Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature* (1990), p80

4-The Victorian Period (1832–1901) The Objective Representation of Reality: Charles Dickens: the British prominent Victorian Novelist

Historically speaking, this period is named for the reign of Queen Victoria, who ascended to the throne in 1837, and it lasts until her death in 1901. It was a time of great social, religious, intellectual, and economic issues, heralded by the passage of the Reform Bill, which expanded voting rights. The period has often been divided into “Early” (1832–1848), “Mid” (1848–1870) and “Late” (1870–1901) periods or into two phases, that of the Pre-Raphaelites (1848–1860) and that of Aestheticism and Decadence (1880–1901).²²

Important is the idea that the Victorian period is in strong contention with the Romantic period for being the most popular, influential, and prolific period in all of English literature. Poets of this time include Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and Matthew Arnold, among others. Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and Walter Pater were advancing the essay form at this time. Finally, prose fiction truly found its place under the auspices of Charles Dickens, Charlotte and Emily Bronte, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, Thomas Hardy, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Samuel Butler.

1-The Characteristics of the Victorian Era

Historically speaking, it is worth mentioning that the Victorian era was a period of dramatic change that brought England to its highest point of

²² *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol.2 (2000), p.67.

development as a world power. The early Victorian period (1830–48) saw the opening of Britain’s first railway and its first Reform Parliament, but it was also a time of economic distress. Although the mid-Victorian period (1848–70) was not free of harassing problems, it was a time of prosperity, optimism, and stability. In the later period (1870–1901) the costs of Empire became increasingly apparent, and England was confronted with growing threats to its military and economic preeminence. In addition to this, the extreme inequities between men and women stimulated a debate about women’s roles known as “The Woman Question.” The most significant development in publishing was the growth of the periodical.

Undoubtedly, the Victorian era was a period of dramatic change that brought England to its highest point of development as a world power. The rapid growth of London, from a population of 2 million when Victoria came to the throne to one of 6.5 million by the time of Victoria's death, indicates the dramatic transition from a way of life based on the ownership of land to a modern urban economy²³. England experienced an enormous increase in wealth, but rapid and unregulated industrialization brought a host of social and economic problems. Some writers such as Thomas Babington Macauley applauded England’s progress, while others such as Mathew Arnold felt the abandonment of traditional rhythms of life exacted a terrible price in human happiness.

From the economic point of view, the early Victorian period (1830–48) saw the opening of Britain’s first railway and its first Reform Parliament, but it

²³ Carol T. Christ, *Victorian and Modern Poetics*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); “Robert Browning”, *The Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature*. (New York: Prentice Hall, 1990), p.373.

was also a time of economic distress. The Reform Bill of 1832 extended voting privileges to men of the lower middle classes and redistributing parliamentary representation more fairly. Yet the economic and social difficulties associated with industrialization made the 1830s and 1840s a “Time of Troubles,” characterized by unemployment, desperate poverty, and rioting. The Chartists, an organization of workers, helped create an atmosphere open to further reform. The “condition of England” became a central topic for novelists including Charles Kingsley, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Benjamin Disraeli in the 1840s and early 1850s.

In line with this, one needs to stress the fact that although the mid-Victorian period (1848–70) was not free of harassing problems, it was a time of prosperity, optimism, and stability. The achievements of modern industry and science were celebrated at the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park (1851). Enormous investments of people, money, and technology created the British Empire. Many English people saw the expansion of empire as a moral responsibility, and missionary societies flourished. At the same time, however, there was increasing debate about religious belief. The Church of England had evolved into three major divisions, with conflicting beliefs about religious practice. There were also rationalist challenges to religion from philosophy²⁴ and science

²⁵,? Both the infallibility of the Bible and the stature of the human species in the universe were increasingly called into question.

As far as the British social life is concerned, one needs to note that in the later period (1870–1901) the costs of Empire became increasingly apparent, and

²⁴ especially Utilitarianism

²⁵ especially biology and geology.

England was confronted with growing threats to its military and economic preeminence. From a sociologist point of view, a variety of socialist movements gained force, some influenced by the revolutionary theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The literature of the 1890s is characterized by self-conscious melancholy and aestheticism, but also saw the beginnings of the modernist movement.

Important is the idea that the extreme inequities between men and women stimulated a debate about women's roles known as "The Woman Question." Women were denied the right to vote or hold political office throughout the period, but gradually won significant rights such as custody of minor children and the ownership of property in marriage. By the end of Victoria's reign, women could take degrees at twelve universities. Hundreds of thousands of working-class women labored at factory jobs under appalling conditions, and many were driven into prostitution. While John Stuart Mill argued that the "nature of women" was an artificial thing, most male authors preferred to claim that women had a special nature fitting them for domestic duties.

One needs to draw attention to the important fact that the period was also characterized by the remarkable increase in publishing, and publishers could bring out more material more cheaply than ever before²⁶. The most significant development in publishing was the growth of the periodical. Novels and long works of non-fiction were published in serial form, fostering a distinctive sense of a community of readers. Interesting is the idea that the majority of the Victorian novels seek to represent a large and comprehensive social world, constructing a tension between social conditions and the aspirations of the hero

²⁶ *The Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature* (1990), p.93

or heroine. Writing in the shadow of Romanticism, the Victorians developed a poetry of mood and character. In this context, one should note that Victorian poetry tends to be pictorial, and often uses sound to convey meaning. The theater, a flourishing and popular institution throughout the period, was transformed in the 1890s by the comic masterpieces of George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde.

2-Charles Dickens: the British prominent Victorian Novelist

For his part, the English author and journalist, Charles Dickens continues to be one of the most widely read Victorian (nineteenth-century) novelists. *Scrooge*, *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Nicholas Nickelby* remain familiar characters today. His novels describe the life and conditions of the poor and working class in the Victorian era of England, when people lived by strict rules.

2.1-Dickens ‘Childhood and Schooling

The full name of Dickens is Charles John Huffam Dickens. He was born on February 7, 1812, at Portsea on the southern coast of England, to John and Elizabeth Dickens. Charles was the second born of eight children. His father was a pay clerk in the navy office. Because of financial difficulties, the family moved about until they settled in Camden Town, a poor neighborhood in London, England. At the age of twelve Charles worked with working-class men and boys in a factory that handled "blacking," or shoe polish. While his father was in debtor's prison, the rest of the family moved to live near the prison, leaving Charles to live alone. This experience of lonely hardship was the most

significant event of his life. It colored his view of the world and would later be described in a number of his novels.²⁷

Dickens returned to school when his father received an inheritance and was able to repay his debts. But in 1827, at age fifteen, he was again forced leave school and work as an office boy. In the following year he became a freelance reporter and stenographer at the law courts of London. By 1832 he had become a reporter for two London newspapers and, in the following year, began to contribute a series of impressions and sketches to other newspapers and magazines, signing some of them "Boz." These scenes of London life went far to establish his reputation and were published in 1836 as *Sketches by Boz*, his first book. On the strength of this success, Charles married Catherine Hogarth. Together they had ten children.

2.2-Early works of Dickens

In 1836 Dickens also began to publish *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* in monthly installments, a form of serial publication that became a standard method of writing and producing fiction in the Victorian period. So great was Dickens's success with the procedure that *Pickwick* became one of the most popular works of the time, and continued to be so after it was published in book form in 1837.

After *Pickwick*'s success, Dickens began publishing his new novel, *Oliver Twist*. He was also now editor of *Bentley's Miscellany*, a new monthly magazine. He continued publishing his novel in his later magazines, *Household*

²⁷ *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol.1* 2000 and *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (1996),

Worlds and *All the Year Round*. *Oliver Twist* expressed Dickens's interest in the life of the slums to the fullest, as it traced the fortunes of an innocent orphan through the London streets²⁸. Though Dickens's career was successful, for the next decade his books did not achieve the standard of his early successes. These works include: *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838–1839), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840–1841), and *Barnaby Rudge* (1841).

It is worth mentioning that in 1842 Dickens, who was as popular in America as he was in England, went on a five-month lecture tour of the United States, speaking out strongly against slavery and in support of other reforms. On his return he wrote *American Notes*, a book that criticizes American life as being culturally backward and materialistic (characterized by the desire for wealth and material goods). His next novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–1844), describes the hero finding that survival on the American frontier is more difficult than making his way in England. During the years in which *Chuzzlewit* appeared, Dickens also published two Christmas stories, *A Christmas Carol* and *The Chimes*.²⁹

2.3-Dickens's First major novels

After a year abroad in Italy and writing *Pictures from Italy* (1846), Dickens published installments of *Dombey and Son*, which continued till 1848. This completed novel established a new standard in the Dickensian novel and marked the turning point in his career. As its full title indicates, *Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son* is a study of the influence of the values of a business society on the personal fortunes of a family and those with whom the

²⁸ *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. Margaret Drabble (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.80.

²⁹ Kevin J. H. Dettmar "Modernism". David Scott Kastan, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*. Oxford University Press 2005. <http://www.oxfordreference.com> 27 October 2011

family meets. It takes a somber view of England at mid-century, and its tone becomes characteristic of Dickens's future novels.

In reality, Dickens's next novel, *David Copperfield* (1849–1850), is the first complete record of the typical course of a young man's life in Victorian England. This autobiographical novel fictionalized elements of Dickens's childhood, his pursuit of a journalism career, and his love life. Though *Copperfield* is not Dickens's greatest novel, it was his personal favorite.

It is worth mentioning that in 1850 Dickens began a new magazine, *Household Words*. His editorials and articles touched upon English politics, social institutions, and family life. They also spoke to the fictional treatment of these subjects in Dickens's novels. The weekly magazine ran to 1859, when Dickens began to conduct a new weekly, *All the Year Round*. In both these periodicals he published some of his major novels.

2.4-Dickens's Dark novels

Undoubtedly, according to Dickens' biography, the 1850s were a sad and dark time for Dickens. In 1851, within a two-week period, Dickens's father and one of his daughters died. In 1858, a year after he fell in love with an actress, he separated from his wife. Partly in response to the deaths, Dickens's next series of works were called his "dark" novels, though they rank among the greatest triumphs of the art of fiction. In *Bleak House* (1852–1853), perhaps the most complicated plot of any English novel, the narrative served to create a sense of the interrelationship of all segments of English society. In *Hard Times* (1854), Dickens describes an English industrial town during the height of economic expansion, and details an up-close view of the limitations of both employers and reformers.

Significantly enough, Little *Dorrit* (1855–1857) may be regarded as Dickens's greatest novel. In it he portrays the conditions of England as he saw it, and the conflict between the world's harshness and human values in its most impressive artistic form.

2.5-Dickens' Later works

Interesting is the idea that in this period Dickens also began to give public readings from his novels, which became even more popular than his lectures. In 1859 Dickens published *A Tale of Two Cities*, a historical novel of the French Revolution. Besides publishing this novel in the newly founded *All the Year Round*, Dickens also published seventeen articles, which appeared as a book in 1860 entitled *The Uncommercial Traveller*.

One should note that Dickens's next novel, *Great Expectations* (1860–1861), is regarded by some as his most perfectly executed work of art. It is a story of a young man's moral development from childhood to adult life³⁰. Three years later he produced *Our Mutual Friend*, which provides an insight of how he viewed London.

Dickens biography tells that for several years his health declined. He never fully recovered from a railroad accident in 1865. He tired himself out by continuing to travel throughout the British Isles and America to read before audiences. He gave a final series of readings in London that began in 1870. Dickens died of a fatal stroke on June 9, 1870, leaving the novel, *The Mystery of*

³⁰ *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol.1* 2000 and *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (1996),

Edwin Drood, unfinished. The day of his burial was made a day of national mourning in England.

5-Modernism in British Literature: The Modernist Reaction against the Victorian Culture and Aesthetic

Modernism, in the fine arts, is a break with the past and the concurrent search for new forms of expression. Modernism fostered a period of experimentation in the arts from the late 19th to the mid-20th century, particularly in the years following World War I.³¹

In an era characterized by industrialization, rapid social change, and advances in science and the social sciences (e.g., Freudian theory), Modernists felt a growing alienation incompatible with Victorian morality, optimism, and convention. New ideas in psychology, philosophy, and political theory kindled a search for new modes of expression.

1-Modernism in Literature

It is undeniable that the Modernist impulse is fueled in various literatures by industrialization and urbanization and by the search for an authentic response to a much-changed world. Although prewar works by Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and other writers are considered Modernist, Modernism as a literary movement is typically associated with the period after World War I. The enormity of the war had undermined humankind's faith in the foundations of

³¹ *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), p.85

Western society and culture, and postwar Modernist literature reflected a sense of disillusionment and fragmentation³². A primary theme of T.S. Eliot's long poem *The Waste Land* (1922), a seminal Modernist work, is the search for redemption and renewal in a sterile and spiritually empty landscape. With its fragmentary images and obscure allusions, the poem is typical of Modernism in requiring the reader to take an active role in interpreting the text.³³

It is important to refer to the important fact that the publication of the Irish writer James Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1922 was a landmark event in the development of Modernist literature. Dense, lengthy, and controversial, the novel details the events of one day in the life of three Dubliners through a technique known as stream of consciousness, which commonly ignores orderly sentence structure and incorporates fragments of thought in an attempt to capture the flow of characters' mental processes. Portions of the book were considered obscene, and *Ulysses* was banned for many years in English-speaking countries. Other European and American Modernist authors whose works rejected chronological and narrative continuity include Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, Gertrude Stein, and William Faulkner.

In fact, the term Modernism is also used to refer to literary movements other than the European and American movement of the early to mid-20th century.³⁴ In Latin American literature, Modernismo arose in the late 19th century in the works of Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera and José Martí. The movement, which continued into the early 20th century, reached its peak in the poetry of Rubén Darío.

³² "modernism", *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Edited by Dinah Birch. Oxford University Press Inc. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. 27 October 2011

³³ *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, p.506.

³⁴ J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (1999), p. 809.

One needs to note that the Modernist Period in English Literature occupied the years from shortly after the beginning of the twentieth century through roughly 1965. In broad terms, the period was marked by sudden and unexpected breaks with traditional ways of viewing and interacting with the world. Experimentation and individualism became virtues, where in the past they were often heartily discouraged. It was obvious that Modernism was set in motion, in one sense, through a series of cultural shocks³⁵. The first of these great shocks was the Great War, which ravaged Europe from 1914 through 1918, known now as World War One. At the time, this “War to End All Wars” was looked upon with such ghastly horror that many people simply could not imagine what the world seemed to be plunging towards. The first hints of that particular way of thinking called Modernism stretch back into the nineteenth century.

2-The Characteristic Features of the Modernist Period

As literary periods go, Modernism displays a relatively strong sense of cohesion and similarity across genres and locales. Furthermore, writers who adopted the Modern point of view often did so quite deliberately and self-consciously. Indeed, a central preoccupation of Modernism is with the inner self and consciousness. In contrast to the Romantic world view, the Modernist cares rather little for Nature, Being, or the overarching structures of history. Instead of progress and growth, the Modernist intelligentsia sees decay and a growing alienation of the individual. The machinery of modern society is perceived as

³⁵ *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. Margaret Drabble (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.80.

impersonal, capitalist, and antagonistic to the artistic impulse. War most certainly had a great deal of influence on such ways of approaching the world. Two World Wars in the span of a generation effectively shell-shocked all of Western civilization.

3-The Modernist Reaction against the Victorian Culture and Aesthetic

It is worth mentioning that the Modernist Period in English literature was first and foremost a visceral reaction against the Victorian culture and aesthetic, which had prevailed for most of the nineteenth century. Indeed, a break with traditions is one of the fundamental constants of the Modernist stance. Intellectuals and artists at the turn of the twentieth century believed the previous generation's way of doing things was a cultural dead end. They could foresee that world events were spiraling into unknown territory. Indeed, the stability and quietude of Victorian civilization were rapidly becoming outdated. The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria was essentially the triggering event of the First World War³⁶, a conflict that swept away all preconceived notions about the nature of so-called modern warfare.

As far as the world of art is concerned, one can note that Modernism was the beginning of the distinction between “high” art and “low” art. The educational reforms of the Victorian Age had led to a rapid increase in literacy rates, and therefore a greater demand for literature of all sorts. A popular press quickly developed to supply that demand. The sophisticated literati looked upon this new popular literature with scorn. Writers who refused to bow to the popular tastes found themselves in a state of alienation from the mainstream of

³⁶ *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, p.89.

society.³⁷ To some extent, this alienation fed into the stereotype of the aloof artist, producing nothing of commercial value for the market.

It is worth mentioning that this alienation worked both ways, as the reading public largely turned their backs on many “elitist” artists. The academic world became something of a refuge for disaffected artists, as they could rub elbows with fellow disenfranchised intellectuals. Still, the most effective poets and novelists did manage to make profound statements that were absorbed by the whole of society and not just the writer’s inner circles. In the later years of the Modernist period, a form of populism returned to the literary mainstream, as regionalism and identity politics became significant influences on the purpose and direction of artistic endeavor

It is undeniable that the nineteenth century, like the several centuries before it, was a time of privilege for wealthy Caucasian males. Women, minorities, and the poor were marginalized to the point of utter silence and inconsequence. The twentieth century witnessed the beginnings of a new paradigm between first the sexes, and later between different cultural groups. Class distinction remains arguably the most difficult bridge to cross in terms of forming a truly equitable society. Some would argue that class has become a euphemism for race, but that’s another discussion³⁸. The point is that as the twentieth century moved forward, a greater variety of literary voices won the struggle to be heard.

No wonder that In Modernist literature, it was the poets who took fullest advantage of the new spirit of the times, and stretched the possibilities of their

³⁷ *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. Margaret Drabble (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 90.

³⁸ Ibid

craft to lengths not previously imagined. In general, there was a disdain for most of the literary production of the last century.

The exceptions to this disdain were the French Symbolist poets like Charles Beaudelaire, and the work of Irishman Gerard Manley Hopkins. The French Symbolists were admired for the sophistication of their imagery³⁹. In comparison to much of what was produced in England and America, the French were ahead of their time. They were similarly unafraid to delve into subject matter that had usually been taboo for such a refined art form. Hopkins, for his part, brought a fresh way to look at rhythm and word usage. He more or less invented his own poetic rhythms, just as he coined his own words for things which had, for him, no suitable descriptor.

Important is the idea that Leading up to the First World War, Imagist poetry was dominating the scene, and sweeping previous aesthetic points of view under the rug. The Imagists, among them Ezra Pound, sought to boil language down to its absolute essence. They wanted poetry to concentrate entirely upon “the thing itself,” in the words of critic-poet T. E. Hulme. To achieve that effect required minimalist language, a lessening of structural rules and a kind of directness that Victorian and Romantic poetry seriously lacked.

In line with the foregoing ,one should note that dreaminess or Pastoral poetry were utterly abandoned in favor of this new, cold, some might say mechanized poetics. Imagist poetry was almost always short, unrhymed, and noticeably sparse in terms of adjectives and adverbs. At some points, the line between poetry and natural language became blurred. This was a sharp departure

³⁹ *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. Margaret Drabble (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.143.

from the ornamental, verbose style of the Victorian era. Gone also were the preoccupations with beauty and nature. Potential subjects for poetry were now limitless, and poets took full advantage of this new freedom.

Critics agree that it is undeniable that no Modernist poet has garnered more praise and attention than Thomas Stearns Eliot. Born in Missouri, T. S. Eliot would eventually settle in England, where he would produce some of the greatest poetry and criticism of the last century. Eliot picked up where the Imagists left off, while adding some of his own peculiar aesthetics to the mix. His principal contribution to twentieth century verse was a return to highly intellectual, allusive poetry. He looked backwards for inspiration, but he was not nostalgic or romantic about the past. Eliot's productions were entirely in the modern style, even if his blueprints were seventeenth century metaphysical poets.

Perhaps, one of the distinguishing and remarkable characteristics of Eliot's work is the manner in which he seamlessly moves from very high, formal verse into a more conversational and easy style. Yet even when his poetic voice sounds very colloquial, there is a current underneath, which hides secondary meanings. It is this layering of meanings and contrasting of styles that mark Modernist poetry in general and T. S. Eliot in particular⁴⁰. It is no overstatement to say that Eliot was the pioneer of the ironic mode in poetry; that is, deceptive appearances hiding difficult truths.

It was quite obvious that in American Literature, the group of writers and thinkers known as the Lost Generation has become synonymous with

40 *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. I* 2000 and *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (1996), p.234.

Modernism. In the wake of the First World War, several American artists chose to live abroad as they pursued their creative impulses⁴¹. These included the intellectual Gertrude Stein, the novelists Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald, and the painter Waldo Pierce, among others. The term itself refers to the spiritual and existential hangover left by four years of unimaginably destructive warfare. The artists of the Lost Generation struggled to find some meaning in the world in the wake of chaos.

In fact, as with much of Modernist literature, this was achieved by turning the mind's eye inward and attempting to record the workings of consciousness. For Hemingway, this meant the abandonment of all ornamental language. His novels are famous for their extremely spare, blunt, simple sentences and emotions that play out right on the surface of things⁴². There is an irony to this bluntness, however, as his characters often have hidden agendas, hidden sometimes even from themselves, which serve to guide their actions. The Lost Generation, like other "High Modernists," gave up on the idea that anything was truly knowable. All truth became relative, conditional, and in flux. The War demonstrated that no guiding spirit rules the events of the world, and that absolute destruction was kept in check by only the tiniest of margins.

In this context, one should note that the novel was by no means immune from the self-conscious, reflective impulses of the new century. Modernism introduced a new kind of narration to the novel, one that would fundamentally change the entire essence of novel writing. The "unreliable" narrator supplanted the omniscient, trustworthy narrator of preceding centuries, and readers were

⁴¹ *ibid*

⁴² modernism", *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Edited by Dinah Birch. Oxford University Press Inc. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. 27 October 2011

forced to question even the most basic assumptions about how the novel should operate.

It is important to draw attention to the important fact that James Joyce's *Ulysses* 43 is the prime example of a novel whose events are really the happenings of the mind, the goal of which is to translate as well as possible the strange pathways of human consciousness⁴⁴. A whole new perspective came into being known as "stream of consciousness." Rather than looking out into the world, the great novelists of the early twentieth century surveyed the inner space of the human mind. At the same time, the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud had come into mainstream acceptance. These two forces worked together to alter people's basic understanding of what constituted truth and reality.

Interesting is the idea that experimentation with genre and form was yet another defining characteristic of Modernist literature. Perhaps the most representative example of this experimental mode is T. S. Eliot's long poem *The Waste Land*. Literary critics often single out *The Waste Land* as the definitive sample of Modernist literature. In it, biblical-sounding verse forms, quasi-conversational interludes, dense, confront one and frequent references that frustrate even the most well read readers, and sections that resemble prose more than poetry. At the same time, Eliot fully displays all the conventions that one expects in Modernist literature. There is the occupation with self and inwardness, the loss of traditional structures to buttress the ego against shocking realities, and a fluid nature to truth and knowledge.

43 Joyce's *Ulysses* and his short story "The Dead" are considered as the best examples of modernist writing in both themes and styles.

44] Robinson (2003) *The historical Presence of Ulster-Scots in Ireland, in The Languages of Ireland*, ed. Cronin, Michael & Ó Cuilleánáin, Cormac; Dublin: Four Courts Press ISBN 1-85182-698-X

It must be highlighted that the cynicism and alienation of the first flowering of Modernist literature could not persist. By mid-century, indeed by the Second World War, there was already a strong reaction against the pretensions of the Moderns.⁴⁵ Artists of this newer generation pursued a more democratic, pluralistic mode for poetry and the novel. There was optimism for the first time in a long time. Commercialism, publicity, and the popular audience were finally embraced, not shunned. Alienation became boring. True, the influence of Modernist literature continues to be quite astonishing. The Modern poet-critics changed the way people think about artists and creative pursuits. The Modern novelists changed the way many people perceive truth and reality. These changes are indeed profound, and cannot easily be replaced by new schemas.

⁴⁵ “English literature.” *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online Academic Edition. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc.*, 2012. Web. 15 Nov 2012. .

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Part Two: American Literature

Introduction

When the English critic Sydney Smith (1818) declared his famous saying: "Literature the Americans have none...In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?" he ignited a reaction from the Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson, who wrote in "The American Scholar" in 1837,

"We have listened too long to the courtly uses of Europe... The mind of this country, taught to aim at low objects, eats upon itself.... We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds."⁴⁶

This is the reason that led critics to consider American literature, as a whole, as a literature that depicts the diverse and revolutionary forthcoming of a new nation to what it is today. In reality the history of America is gifted with making itself from nothing, building on new and radical expectations, and rivalling the rest of the world for respect and independence and even exceptionalism. In these lectures, there is an attempt to demonstrate how American literature did come into existence and how did it contribute to the shaping of American reality throughout the revolutionary and romantic periods as two important literary movements in American literature.

46 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar".

1-American Literature during the Age of Reason and the Revolutionary Period (1750-1800)

Introduction

By the end of the 1700s, the Puritan influence on America began to wane. In Europe of the Dark Age, everything was interpreted by faith and emotion because of the dominance of religion and the church. Even poverty was considered as god's wrath that is why one cannot talk about humanitarianism at that time. The church together with the king with his divine right maintained their strong hold on the people's social and political life. In addition to this, it is worth adding that during that era the bible was the people's sole source of knowledge and laws.

After 1650 due to the development of science, Europe saw a real revolution in thought and there was a radical change in the Europeans' world vision. The emergence of scientists like Isaac Newton contributed to the flourishing of the scientific revolution and led to a remarkable shift in the way the truth is perceived. In fact, there was a real departure from the traditional ways of searching for truth. Soon faith and revelation were replaced by reason because the Scientific Revolution consolidated the use of reason in interpreting the mechanism of the universe. Scientists such as Newton could argue that there were natural laws that governed the universe. This, in fact, could put an end to the traditional idea of God's interference in everything in man's life. About this shift from the emotion to reason Jonathan I. Israel writes:

During the later Middle Ages and the early modern age down to 1650, everything was based on a largely

shared core of faith, tradition, and authority, by contrast, after 1650, every thing no matter how fundamental or deeply rooted was questioned in the light of philosophical reason and frequently challenged or replaced by startling different concepts generated by the New Philosophy and what may still usefully be termed as Scientific Revolution⁴⁷.

Spurred by the work of many seventeenth-century thinkers—scientists such as Galileo and Newton, philosophers like Voltaire and Rousseau, and political theorist John Locke—the writers and thinkers of the Enlightenment valued reason over faith.

Unlike the Puritans, they had little interest in the hereafter, believing instead in the power of reason and science to further human progress.

They believed that people are by nature good, not evil

In contrast to the private soul-searching of the Puritans of New England, much of what was produced during the Revolutionary period was public writing.

This period of the American literature took place in the most important part of the history of the U.S.A because in that period was their independence. All the works were inspired by political things; puritan's belief had been forgotten.

47 Jonathan I. Israel *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, (2002).p.56.

The 18th-century American enlightenment as a movement marked by an emphasis on:

1. Rationality rather than tradition
2. Scientific inquiry instead of unquestioning religious doctrine
3. Representative government in place of monarchy.

Important writers: Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, Patrick Henry, James Madison, and any other of the so-called “Founding Fathers.”

Enlightenment thinkers and writers, such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine, were devoted to the ideals of justice, liberty, and equality as the natural rights of man.

Genre/Style :Political Pamphlets, Travel Writing, and highly ornate persuasive writing.

Effect/Aspects :Patriotism and pride grows, creates unity about issues, and creates American character.

Historical Context :Encouraged Revolutionary War support.

1- Rationality

By the end of the 1700s, the Puritan influence on America began to decrease.

Writers used reason and logic –instead of the teachings of the Bible –to support their arguments.

People had come from all over Europe to the American colonies.

Of Course the colonists were NOT happy, overall, with the situation they were in

1. 1765 Parliament passes the Stamp Act, which taxes newspapers, almanacs, and legal documents in the colonies.
2. 1770 Boston Massacre (5 civilians die at the hands of British soldiers).
3. December 1773 The Boston Tea Party.
4. 1774 Intolerable Acts passed by King George III.
5. April 19, 1775 Revolutionary War begins.
6. July 4, 1776 Declaration of Independence approved by Second Continental Congress.
7. 1783 United States wins its independence.

The most important pieces of literature during the AGE OF REASON, were political documents, speeches, and pamphlets(short, concise works that usually argue for or against a political cause.) and

non-fiction was dominant (such as the forms mentioned above) was far more influential than fiction.

2- Literary Production during the Revolutionary Age

1. The Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson (political document).
2. Patrick Henry's Speech to the Virginia Convention

3. Thomas Paine's *The Crisis* (pamphlet).
4. Works of Benjamin Franklin (aphorisms printed in *Poor Richard's Almanack*).

3- Revolution in Language

1. Writing was less private and religiously based
2. Writing came away from the Plain Style and became full of flourish and colorful language
3. Writing was influenced by the Revolutionary War and the growing American spirit of individualism and self-reliance.

The early essays of the period, Paine's *Common Sense* and the *Declaration of Independence*, are products of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, is the name given to the period in Europe and America during the 1700s when mankind was emerging from centuries of ignorance into a new age enlightened by reason, science, and respect for humanity. People of the Enlightenment were convinced that human reason could (1) discover the natural laws of the universe and (2) determine the natural rights of mankind; (3) thereby unending progress in knowledge, technical achievement, and moral values would be realized.

This new way of thinking led to the development of a new religious thought known as (4) Deism. Deists believed in God as a great inventor or architect who had created the universe then allowed it to function like a machine or clock without divine intervention. Although Deists believed in a hereafter, they believed human achievement and happiness should be the focus of this life rather than the life to come.

Benevolence toward less fortunate people, (5) humanitarianism, resulted. Difficult though it is for us to realize, the idea that people who are more fortunate should assist those who are less fortunate was, in fact, a new concept during the Enlightenment. Prior to this, religious beliefs perceived assistance to the unfortunate as interference with God because people thought if someone were unfortunate, it was God's will and was punishment for wrongdoing.

4- Major Changes in Europe: Political, Social, Economic, and Religious

Economically speaking , new trade between countries generated new wealth. The newly wealthy tradesman and merchant class demanded a share of the social and political power formally held only by the nobility. As a result of the political and economic changes during the eighteenth century, there were major social changes as well. The former rigid class system based on inherited positions of nobility and wealth became far less secure.

There were also major religious changes during the 1700s. There was a significant decline in church power and prestige, which resulted primarily from people's no longer believing in God's daily involvement in their human affairs. Prior to the Enlightenment, before the discovery of natural laws, people had believed that every event that occurred, no matter how major or minor, was a direct result of God's intervention. Once scientists discovered that natural laws caused these occurrences, mankind feared God less, and as a result, religious obligations were no longer the primary concern of many people.

Politically speaking, wars during the 1700s were most often fought within countries over secession to a throne rather than between countries. Monarchies still often ruled during the 1700s, but with less security than in earlier

times. The English executed their king in 1642, France executed their king and queen (in 1793 and 1794 respectively) during the French Revolution, and other European monarchies soon fell. Royal instability suggested insecurity of the social order over which aristocracies had ruled.

Rather than focusing on God and the church, people of the Enlightenment focused on man. Alexander Pope, a famous English poet, wrote a rhyming couplet (two consecutive lines of poetry that rhyme) that describes well the attitude of the time: “Know then thyself; presume not God to scan. / The proper study of mankind is man.”

The eighteenth century recognized the interdependence of men on each other. Rather than the agricultural society prevalent during the previous feudal period, the 1700s saw the development of cosmopolitan society. People lived in clusters and depended upon each other rather than living alone and being independent of one another. The importance of cooperation and mutual respect became obvious.

As a matter of fact, this scientific spirit led to the emergence of deism which is the belief that God has created the universe and let it work by its own . In fact, deists are those who do not believe in god 's interference in man's life. In light of this fact , it is worth emphasizing that the Enlightenment was then an era during which the church felt insecure because of the spread of deism. That is the reason why the Bible became no longer the source of inspiration for people who became interested in political life more than any period before . Moreover, with the passing of time, political views on the philosophy of government gradually emerged. Despite their differences, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, became the

most influential political theorists in the world⁴⁸. Their ideas and philosophies spread all over the world influencing the creation of many new governments. In fact, they could set forth the basis of republicanism that would be adopted as the official political system of the independent United States.

It is worth noting that the belief in natural rights made of egalitarianism and freedom the primary concerns of the era. Consequently, people started to be aware that changing the political system is a must to achieve the natural right of equality. As a matter of fact, due to the transatlantic circulation of ideology, those radical ideas did not find difficulty to creep to the American mind which was looking for a change and innovation especially when Puritanism as a philosophy of life was waning and people ceased to take everything for granted in an age depending on reason for the interpretation of everything.

Since they suffered from monarchy and its injustice, the Americans displayed the desire and the willingness to fight against its perpetuation. To reach their goal, the Americans needed a philosophy that would help them establish a regime that would be different from the then prevailing monarchical system in that it should protect the individuals' natural rights. They learnt from Old World philosophers especially from Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau theories on human nature and on how men should govern themselves.

⁴⁸ Video: *Jonathan Israel and Philipp Blom Discuss Radical Enlightenment*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Y4M8w8B3FM>. Accessed June 5, 2013.

Broadly speaking, the Americans had to depend on different and various philosophical trends in order to be able to finally form their own philosophy of life which would be embodied in the principle of republicanism. It is therefore, important to search in the roots of republicanism as an integral part of the American philosophy of life and as one of the prevailing radical ideologies from which all the appeals of freedom, justice, equality, and democracy were inspired.

What is certain is that in their construction of their political and social thought, the American founding fathers, who were highly intellectual, borrowed from the Old World's thought and ideologies .In a more important sense, they were not aloof from the then prevailing philosophical ideas that revolutionized the European mind and public opinion during the Age of Reason and then the Enlightenment. It seems clear that the Americans, in a way or another, were influenced by the radical ideas that circulated during the radical Enlightenment. Among the thinkers whose philosophy contributed to shaping the American radical ideology, we can mention Thomas Hobbes, James Harrington, John Locke, and Rousseau.

Assuredly ,many thinkers , politicians, and even writers have influenced the founding fathers' thoughts and ideas. Voltaire⁴⁹, along with Locke and Rousseau, wrote books dealing with social injustice, religious superstition, and ignorance by which they could challenge the unjust systems in

⁴⁹ Voltaire is a French radical who was persecuted by the French authorities because of his revolutionary ideas and his hostility to all that hindered the fulfillment of man's freedom in France .In fact ,it is widely agreed among scholars that Voltaire's ideas about the freedom of speech had a great impact on the American founding fathers who stressed this democratic principle .Voltaire's famous saying is "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it" Burdette Kinne, *Voltaire Never Said it!* Modern Language Notes ,Vol. 58, No. 7 (Nov., 1943), pp. 534-535.

the Old World that were all based on the myth of the king's divine right.⁵⁰ The ideas of those thinkers and others had a major impact on those who wrote the Declaration of Independence and later the American constitution. Confessing the impact of the Enlightenment philosophers on him and on the founding fathers, in fact, Jefferson declares:

I will put off till my return from America all of them except Bacon, Locke, and Newton, whose pictures I will trouble you to have copied for me: and as I consider them as the three greatest men that have ever lived, without any exception, and as having laid the foundation of those superstructures which have been raised in the Physical and Moral sciences, I would wish to form them into a knot on the same canvas, that they may not be confounded at all with the herd of other great men...⁵¹

What is noticeable is that these words by Jefferson, which significantly and straightforwardly demonstrate the European philosophical presence in the American radical attitude, can be sufficient proof that the American elite were aware of the intellectual change that was brought by the radical Enlightenment. This therefore, can be an interesting starting point for demonstrating that the founding fathers were not only aware of the ideological change in the Old World but deeply influenced by the Enlightenment philosophers thanks to whom a new and a sound conception of government was born.

50 2012 Annual Meeting: Session 134: *Radical Enlightenment: A Session in Honor of Margaret Jacob*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXh7fHfDL9U>. Accessed June 15, 2013.

51 Jefferson to Trumbull, Paris, February 15, 1789.

5- Revolution in Beliefs

The Revolutionary Period was characterized by:

1. Faith in natural goodness - a human is born without taint or sin; the concept of tabula rasa or blank slate.
2. Perfectibility of a human being - it is possible to improve situations of birth, economy, society, and religion.
3. The sovereignty of reason - echoes of Rene Descartes' cogito ergo sum or I think, therefore, I am (as the first certitude in resolving universal doubt.)
4. Universal benevolence - the attitude of helping everyone.
5. Outdated social institutions cause unsociable behaviour - religious, social, economic, and political institutions, which have not modernized, force individuals into unacceptable behaviour.

6- The Characteristics of the Literature of the Period

1. Optimism - experiments in utopian communities
2. Sense of a person's duty to succeed.
3. Constant search of the self - emphasis on individualism in: a. personal religion. b. study of the Bible for personal interpretation.
4. A searching inquiry in all aspects of the world around.
5. Interest in the classics as well as in the Bible.
6. Interest in nature - the "absentee landlord" phenomenon.
7. Interest in science and scientific experiments.

Most literature of the period was described as nonfiction or informative literature, which means it was based on fact rather than being made up by the author's imagination. The literature of this period was realistic. Its aims were to instruct, to enlighten, and to make people think. These people believed reason shows life as it is; whereas, the imagination shows life as people wish it were or fear it may be. The people of the Enlightenment revered the power of the mind to reason and to determine realities. They deprecated passions and emotions. They saw reason as the ruling principle of life and the key to progress and perfection. This was an optimistic, self-confident period of time in Europe. People felt they knew all the answers; they were content, and they were smug!

- a. There is a stable, coherent, knowable self. This self is conscious, rational, autonomous, and universal—no physical conditions or differences substantially affect how this self operates.
- b. This self knows itself and the world through reason, or rationality, posited as the highest form of mental functioning, and the only objective form.
- c. The mode of knowing produced by the objective rational self is “science,” which can provide universal truths about the world, regardless of the individual status of the knower.
- d. Reason is the ultimate judge of what is true, and therefore of what is right, and what is good (what is legal and what is ethical). Freedom consists of obedience to the laws that conform to the knowledge discovered by reason.

- e. In a world governed by reason, the true will always be the same as the good and the right (and the beautiful); there can be no conflict between what is true and what is right (etc.).
- f. Science thus stands as the paradigm for any and all socially useful forms of knowledge. Science is neutral and objective; scientists, those who produce scientific knowledge through their unbiased rational capacities, must be free to follow the laws of reason, and not be motivated by other concerns (such as money or power).
- g. The knowledge produced by science is “truth,” and is eternal.
- h. The knowledge/truth produced by science (by the rational objective knowing self) will always lead toward progress and perfection. All human institutions and practices can be analyzed by science (reason/objectivity) and improved.

Broadly speaking, the Americans had to depend on different and various philosophical trends in order to be able to finally form their own philosophy of life which would be embodied in the principle of republicanism. It is therefore, important to search in the roots of republicanism as an integral part of the American philosophy of life and as one of the prevailing radical ideologies from which all the appeals of freedom, justice, equality, and democracy were inspired.

What is certain is that in their construction of their political and social thought, the American founding fathers, who were highly intellectual, have borrowed from the Old World's thought and ideologies. In a more important sense, they were not aloof from the then prevailing philosophical ideas that revolutionized the European mind and public opinion during the age of reason and then the Enlightenment. It seems clear that the Americans, in a way or

another, were influenced by the radical ideas that circulated during the radical Enlightenment. Among the thinkers whose philosophy contributed to shaping the American radical ideology, we can mention Thomas Hobbes, James Harrington, John Locke, and Rousseau.

It is worth emphasizing that the Enlightenment was then an era during which the church felt insecure because of the spread of deism. That is the reason why the Bible became no longer the source of inspiration for people who became interested in political life more than any period before. Egalitarianism started to be a central issue during the era, and people started to be aware that changing the political system is a must to achieve the natural right of equality. Because of the transatlantic circulation of ideology, those radical ideas did not find difficulty to creep to the American mind which was looking for a change and innovation especially when Puritanism as a philosophy of life was waning and people ceased to take everything for granted in an age depending on reason for the interpretation of every thing.

Since they suffered from monarchy and its injustice, the Americans displayed the desire and the willingness to fight against its perpetuation. To reach their goal, the Americans needed a philosophy that would help them establish a regime that would be different from the then prevailing monarchical system in that it should protect the individuals' natural rights. They learnt from Old World philosophers especially from Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau theories on human nature and on how men should govern themselves.

With the passing of time, political views on the philosophy of government gradually changed. Despite their differences, Hobbes and Rousseau,

both became two of the most influential political theorists in the world⁵². Their ideas and philosophies spread all over the world influencing the creation of many new governments. And they could set forth the basis of republicanism that would be adopted as the official political system of the independent United States.

There is no denying that many thinkers and politicians have influenced the founding fathers' thoughts and ideas. Voltaire, along with Locke and Rousseau, wrote books dealing with social injustice, religious superstition, and ignorance by which they could challenge the unjust systems in the Old World that were all based on the myth of the king's divine right.⁵³ The ideas of those thinkers and others had a major impact on those who wrote the Declaration of Independence and later the American constitution. Confessing the impact of the Enlightenment philosophers on him and on the founding fathers, in fact, Jefferson declares:

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52 Video: *Jonathan Israel and Philipp Blom Discuss Radical Enlightenment*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Y4M8w8B3FM>. Accessed June 5, 2013.

53 2012 Annual Meeting: Session 134: *Radical Enlightenment: A Session in Honor of Margaret Jacob*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXh7fHfDL9U>. Accessed June 15, 2013.

54 Jefferson to Trumbull, Paris, February 15, 1789.

What is noticeable is that these words by Jefferson, which significantly and straightforwardly demonstrate the European philosophical presence in the American radical attitude, can be a sufficient proof that the American elite were aware of the intellectual change that was brought by the radical Enlightenment. This therefore, can be an interesting starting point for demonstrating that the founding fathers were not only aware of the ideological change in the old world but deeply influenced by the Enlightenment philosophers who thanks to them a new and a sound conception of government was born.

7- Thomas Paine's literature

It is agreed among the historians of the colonial period that no person of the American Revolution is more associated with the history of American radicalism, or “reflects more clearly its complex intellectual roots, than Thomas Paine⁵⁵”. In fact, Paine won fame as the author of *Common Sense*, the famous pamphlet that implied the first call for American independence. About the tight link between Paine and the American radical thought John Karitansky notes:

The importance of Paine's writing for us today can be indicated with reasonable precision by describing him as the American radical. In other words it is as if Paine is attempting to demonstrate what sort of radicalism is consistent with American principles and even why what is really fundamental about America is radical.⁵⁶

55 Eric Foner, "Radical Individualism in America: Revolution to Civil War" *Literature of liberty: A Review of Contemporary Liberal Thought*, vol. 1, no. 3 July/September 1978 <http://www.oll.libertyfund.org>. Accessed July 12, 2015.

56 Bryan-Paul Frost, Jeffrey Sikkenga, *History of American Political Thought*, "Tomas Paine ,The American Radical" ,chapter 3(Lexington Books,. 2003),p. 63.

Important is the idea that Paine's radicalism might be the result of his deist convictions. Indeed, Paine was known to be a deist. His deism, it needs to be stressed, probably sprung from his Quaker origins. Despite the fact that the Quakers were not deists, according to Paine, they were “the nearest religious group to true deism in the moral part”.⁵⁷ In essence, Deism as an a religious ideology “stands for the rejection of the tyranny of the priest and his word over the ordinary man and it was the priesthood that for long had provided the strongest support to monarchical despotism”.⁵⁸

It is quite interesting in this regard to observe that in his writings, Paine really succeeded in expressing every theme which would be tightly linked to the nineteenth-century radical tradition⁵⁹. This enabled him to be one of the major sources from which the Americans were provided with strong ideas concerning utopian political and social reform or radicalism. The founding fathers might have adopted Paine's belief that the best republic is the one established on the basis of a constitution which obtains the consent of all the members of society.

In addition to this, Paine insisted that “it is the duty of the state to effectively uphold the rights of citizens including the right to a minimum standard of wealth and social security.”⁶⁰ However, one cannot fail to notice that through Paine’s text, there is a clear “sense of urgency and millennialism that does indeed reflect utopianism”⁶¹ and even universalism. For instance, in justifying the call of independence ,he considers the geographical distance

57 Jason Edward op.cit., p.121.

58 Ibid.

59 See Cf .Bailyn,*The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*.

60 Jason Edward op.cit., p.121.

61 Ibid.

between the New World and Britain as part of a divine plan⁶². In *Common Sense*, he notes:

Even the distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America, is a strong and natural proof, that the authority of the one, over the other, was never the design of Heaven. The time likewise at which the continent was discovered, adds weight to the

argument, and the manner in which it was peopled increases the force of it. The reformation was preceded by the discovery of America, as if the Almighty graciously meant to open a sanctuary to the persecuted in future years, when home should afford neither

friendship nor safety⁶³.

Obviously this millennial belief might explain his stiff opposition to monarchy and his advocacy of republicanism. By this, Paine could really initiate to the American mind the new revolutionary thought that the new nation should cut all ties with the mother country. At this point, it must be important to confirm that Paine was the radical who could build the American political identity.

7.1- America in the Literature of Paine

Indeed, Paine could skillfully articulate the strong argument of the American Revolution and the complete rejection of the Old World. In other words, he was the one who could convince the American people of the

62 Elise Marienstras, *Les mythes fondateurs de nation américaine*, (Paris, 1976), p.75.

63 *Common Sense* "Works", p.23-24.

possibility of creating a better society in the New World, a society that would be happier and more just than the one left behind .

It is also noticeable that taken from another perspective, *Common Sense*, as a political document, not only called for the American independence, but bitterly criticized and denounced the inequality and corruption which characterized the Old World as well. One can observe that in it, there is a direct criticism and even rejection of all kinds of power such as monarchy, artificial aristocracy, and hereditary privilege. In other words ,Paine ,probably, wanted his text be a strong basis for an authentic departure from the then prevailing traditional social and political norms . "We have it in our power to begin the world over again," he wrote; "The birthday of a new world is at hand."⁶⁴One can understand from this that he sought to institute a universal radical thought by which humanity would be emancipated from all kinds of power and subjection. It is obvious here that for Paine, the American War of Independence was just a step towards a universal revolt that would mark the beginning of a new history of humanity. ⁶⁵In this regard ,he notes:

The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances have, and will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which the principles of all Lovers of Mankind are affected, and in the Event of which, their Affections are interested. The laying of a Country desolate with Fire and Sword, declaring War against the natural rights of all Mankind, and extirpating the Defenders thereof from the Face of the Earth, is the Concern of

⁶⁴ Steve Berges,*Charters of Liberty: The Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights*(American Liberty Press, 2010), p. 102.

⁶⁵ Elise Mariastrass,op.cit.108.

every Man to whom Nature hath given the Power of feeling; of which Class, regardless of Party Censure, is

66

Most significantly, one can observe that Paine succeeded to a great extent in giving a universal dimension to the Revolution as a radical action. One can observe too that his universal revolutionary ideas aimed at transforming the American struggle for liberty from a mere struggle over the rights of Englishmen, into a universal revolt to free all mankind in the entire world from all types of tyranny and unjust rule. In this context, Arieli observes that Paine's vision of America "could only be created by a man who knew Europe well enough to hate its society and who longed desperately enough for salvation to visualize the destiny of the New World as liberation from the Old."⁶⁷

It is also worth stressing that this strong belief in the necessity of altering or overthrowing the monarchical system was also the fundamental theme and the central issue discussed in his *The Rights of Man*. Written as a reaction to the British statesman ,Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), this book argued that France should have reformed its existing government instead of undergoing a revolutionary upheaval. Paine who was a member in the French assembly saw the French Revolution as an opportunity to establish a new European government that should be democratic exactly as it happened in the United States.

Still, in his *The Rights of Man*, Paine affirms that the more perfect a society becomes, the less government is needed to protect the rights to which

66 Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*

67 Philip .S.Foner,ed., *The Life and the Major Writings of Thomas Paine* (Secaucus,NJ:Citadel Press,1948), p. 46.

each individual is naturally entitled. In fact, he seems to consider government responsible for the plight of the citizens:

If we look back to the riots and tumults, which at various times have happened in England, we shall find, that they did not proceed from the want of a government, but that government was itself the generating cause; instead of consolidating society it divided it; it deprived it of its natural cohesion, and engendered discontents and disorders, which otherwise would not have existed.⁶⁸

Properly understood, these words by Paine implies his total rejection of the European political systems. They express a clear condemnation of all governments and all kinds of authority. Perhaps, this was the reason why the radical Paine has sometimes been claimed as the father of the nineteenth-century anarchism⁶⁹.

7.2- American Future in Paine's Writings

Moreover, Paine's political intelligence and maturity allowed him even to speculate the future of American democracy. This obviously appears in the last lines of *Common Sense*, in which Paine insists that the crown should be replaced by the new nation's charter of laws. This is how he puts it:

Let a day be solemnly set apart for proclaiming the charter; let it be brought forth placed on the divine law, the word of God; let a crown be placed thereon, by

68 Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, in Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Life and the Major Writings of Thomas Paine* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1948), p. 358.

69 Bryan-Paul Frost, Jeffrey Sikkenga, op.cit. p. 63.

which the world may know [that so far as we approve of monarchy], that in America, THE LAW IS KING. For as in absolute governments the king is law, so in free countries the law ought to be king; and there ought to be no other.⁷⁰

8- The Declaration of Independence: An Expression of the American Man

When drafting the Declaration of Independence, the founding fathers, Jefferson being one of them , wanted it to be expressive of the new nation's nature and ambitions .That is why Jefferson had to justify the originality of the document .In other words ,as a paper of a state ,the Declaration of Independence ought to be original. About the primary purpose of the document, Jefferson notes:

[T]he object of “the Declaration” was [not] to find out new principles or new argument, never before thought of, not merely to say things that had never been said before; but to place to mankind the common sense of subject...Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied it from any particular and previous document or writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American man by his own admission.⁷¹

One can understand ,thus, that Jefferson considers the Declaration as an expression of the American man .The founding fathers then sought to give the

70 Thomas Paine , *Common Sense*, in philip .S.FONER,ed.,*The Life and the Major Writings of Thomas Paine* (Secaucus,NJ:Citadel Press,1948), p.290.

71 Ibid., p. 103.

American individual a particular status in the future political system of the new nation. Without doubt, influenced by the radical Enlightenment, the founding elite were aware of the important fact that man cannot live correctly in his society without having his natural rights protected. This is the reason why Jefferson and his colleagues wanted the Declaration of Independence to be the classic statement of the American radical natural right philosophy. At this point, it must be stressed that The Declaration of Independence is sufficient proof of the success of the perpetuation and consolidation of this legacy in America. In the Declaration, one can read:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness⁷².

Obviously, the new nation's founding elite knew well that the natural rights theory was not a new theory. Probably, this was the reason why they had to use the expression "self evident truths". In fact, a self evident truth is more than a natural right. In other words, the writers of the documents wanted to give the natural right philosophy an American touch. In addition to this, it is certain that The *Declaration's* claim that "whenever government injures these rights the people can alter or abolish it and institute a new Government" clearly addresses the goal of independence.

As said before, the American philosophy, as Jefferson wanted it to be, gives a great importance to the individual and his natural rights that is the reason

⁷² The Declaration of Independence.

why it teaches that since man is endowed at birth with rights which are unalienable because they are given by his Creator, the government must have as a primary concern the protection of these rights .In other words ,the government ,in Jefferson's belief, is a server and not a master. In line with this, Jefferson adds:

The prime purpose of government is to protect the rights of the individual. For the first time, it is the society that is paramount, and the success of government is to be measured not by how well society is regulated, but by how free the individual is free from the government.⁷³

One can consider this Jeffersonian governmental philosophy as uniquely American. It is worth mentioning that the concept of Man's rights being unalienable is based solely upon the belief in their Divine origin since ,to use Jefferson's words, "they are endowed by their Creator"⁷⁴. Because those God-given rights are the gift of God, man has no right to alienate or surrender them. This is the real meaning of *unalienable* as used by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence.

In fact, there is a need ,here, to refer to the important fact that Jefferson's strong radical belief in man's natural rights, birthright freedom being one of them, made him show contempt for slavery as a social institution in the new nation . Because it is a kind of violation of the individual's natural right of self owning , Jefferson viewed it as a “moral depravity”⁷⁵.He also repeatedly insisted that maintaining slavery inside the American society was like holding “a wolf

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ The Declaration of Independence.

⁷⁵ Bear, James A., Jr. *Jefferson at Monticello*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967.

by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go.”⁷⁶ But despite Jefferson's firm conviction that slavery ought to be ended ,one can observe that in the Declaration of Independence ,Jefferson did not make it clear whether "man" includes the barks or not .

As regards the link between Jefferson and Locke, one might easily observe that Jefferson’s remarkable achievement was adding to Locke’s theory of human rights the principle that the progress of an elite or a group of people in society should be based on natural ability and talent rather than on class privilege or wealth. In other words , Jefferson was, like Paine, a believer in natural aristocracy . It is this very principle that later became one of the ideals of American democracy. What is interesting is that from this ideal spring the two fundamental themes of the American War of Independence. The first was the primacy of individual freedom as a natural right: ‘The God, who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time.’⁷⁷ Secondly, and more importantly, popular sovereignty a principle that Jefferson always defended: "From the nature of things, every society must at all times possess within itself the sovereign powers of legislation."⁷⁸.

More adequately, as concerns Jefferson’s ideology, it is widely held among scholars that there is a quite clear and intelligent linking between popular sovereignty and liberty. But what is interesting is that both are deeply rooted in the American divine plan, and further legitimized by ancient practice and the

76 Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820, *The Thomas Jefferson Papers*, Special Collections,(University of Virginia Library) Transcription available at Founders Online

77 Ronald J. Pestritto, Thomas G. West , *The American Founding and the Social Compact* (Lexington Books, 2003), p .110.

78 Thomas Jefferson,*Memoirs, Correspondence and Private Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Late President of the United States*, Volume 1, p.116.
Colburn and Bentley, 1829 [https://www.books.google.fr/books?id,\(1858\), p.96](https://www.books.google.fr/books?id,(1858), p.96).

Anglo-Saxon tradition⁷⁹. At this point ,it must be stressed that Jefferson's celebration of the American pastoral and his desire to establish a society different from the British one led him to show contempt to "the city ,industrialisation ,and commerce"⁸⁰ which characterized the mercantile Old World. All that gave the American colonists a remarkably solid, clear, and unique, conceptual basis for their radical attitude of fighting the War of Independence. This leads me to open the discussion of Jefferson's reasonable and persuasive arguments for the American radical theory of empire that ignited the tension between the nation and the mother country.

⁷⁹ See Elise Marienstras, *Les mythes fondateurs de nation américaine*,(Paris:1976).p.81-85.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.85.

2-American Romanticism :the First Seeds of American Nationalism and the Birth of American Novel: Michel Crevecoeur, Washington Irving , and James Fennimore Cooper

As pointed out before, the puritans who immigrated to the newly settled land ,had always believed that they were the chosen people who had left Britain in order to settle in the promised land; the latter that was the appropriate place for establishing a godly and a utopian society. This belief was deeply rooted in the minds of the puritan settlers and was, in fact ,a solid background for the American project of having a completely independent identity from any other part of the world .Winthrop the governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony has always insisted on the belief that America was the promised and the Americans were the chosen people so they their nation should be a city on the hill all people should look upon them .This extremely positive ,optimistic and ambitious belief has always been behind the American feeling of national pride and became one of the fundamental causes of the American endless search for international leadership .

Concerning literature ,there is a need to clarify that literary calls for intellectual and cultural detachment from the mother country had been heard far long before the calls of political independence were heard .Perhaps, one of those who first discussed and wrote about the uniqueness of the American way of life and personality was Michel Crevecoeur. This French man who immigrated to the newly settled land .Having suffered from the confining feudal system and the monopoly of land by the landed gentry in the old world, it was

easy for him to notice the difference between the agrarian life in the old world and the one in the new world .In his *Letters from an American Farmer*, Crèvecoeur insisted that land possession in America is possible for all Americans who work it .This agrarian theory marked a real departure from the Old World's agrarian system as it put the basis for the belief that the newly settled land is a garden .In this line, Crèvecoeur affirms :

It [America] is not composed, as in Europe, of great lords who possess everything and of a herd of people who have nothing. Here are no aristocratic families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclesiastic dominion, no invisible power giving to very visible one; no great manufacturers employing thousands, no great refinements of luxury. The rich and poor are not as far removed from each other as in Europe. (Crèvecoeur,2008 ,431)

Interesting , however is the idea that Crèvecoeur was among the first writers to criticise the Old World and to sow contempt to life in Europe .Moreover ,he went beyond that to describe the upper class there as manipulating and ruling over the poor, while he considered America as a new society with a vacuum that will be filled with equality, tolerance, and freedom. One can understand from the passage above that, according to him, the poor in Europe had no freedom because they had to farm the lands of their feudal overlords, without being able to keep anything for themselves.

As regards the uniqueness of the American personality, Crèvecoeur insisted that the American character was far from being British or European, but rather it is the result of a mixture of blood that gave a completely new race. The American for Crèvecoeur is of a new origin; it is a hybrid race. This hybridity that gave uniqueness to the American man is the result of America being a melting pot. In line with this he explicates :

What then is the American, this new man? He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He has become an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here individuals of all races are melted into a new race of man, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims. (Ibid., 123)

From the foregoing analysis, it seems obvious that Crèvecoeur had a firm belief that in America, however, immigrants could use the cultural and intellectual tools they brought from Europe while serving their masters to create their own freedom. This new American principle is based on the individual's self-interested ownership of land and its resources. He puts the idea as follows :

The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions. . . . Here individuals of all nations

are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. . . . An immigrant when he first arrives . . . no sooner breathes our air than he forms new schemes, and embarks in designs he never would have thought of in his own country. . . . He begins to feel the effects of a sort of resurrection; hitherto he had not lived, but simply vegetated; he now feels himself a man . . . Judge what an alteration there must arise in the mind and thoughts of this man; . . . his heart involuntarily swells and glows; this first swell inspires him with those new thoughts which constitute an American. (Ibid.)

For his part ,Washington Irving thoroughly felt the necessity of getting the American literary and cultural independence. In his attempt to contribute to this national mission he tended in his literary productions to depend on purely American ideas and myths that are directly linked to the American setting and environment .In addition to that ,he deliberately used some German folklore and cultural ideas in an attempt to strengthen Crèvecoeur's theory of America being a melting pot .The reader of *Rip Van Winkle* ,for instance ; the short story written by Irving , can easily feel the variety of the American culture; as he can perceive the versatile nature of the American people . He writes :

His historical researches, however, did not lie so much among books as among men; for the former are lamentably scanty on his favorite topics; whereas he found the old burghers, and still more their wives, rich in that legendary lore, so invaluable to true history. Whenever, therefore, he happened upon a

genuine Dutch family, snugly shut up in its low-roofed farmhouse, under a spreading sycamore, he looked upon it as a little clasped volume of black-letter,' and studied it with the zeal of a book-worm. (Irving , 1994, 1-2)

There is no denying that the reader of the story often finds himself far from the traditional British context and cultural scene ;he rather finds himself in totally different culture in an American setting :

His mind now misgave him; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village which he had left but the day before. There stood the Kaatskill mountains--there ran the silver Hudson at a distance--there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been--Rip was sorely perplexed—‘That flagon last night,’ thought he, ‘has addled my poor head sadly! (“Ibid.)

For his part, James Fennimore Cooper went in his search for the uniqueness of the American identity to insisting on the Indian culture in the American life. In unprecedented attempt to draw the reader's attention to the cultural differences that could intermingle in the American society ,Cooper saw that the quest for an American unique and independent identity would not be successful without introducing the Indian culture and people in his literary works as an integral part of the American life and as one of the important American cultural elements that might strengthen the difference between the

American society and the British one . “The pale-faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the red-men has not yet come again.”Tamenund, the Delaware patriarch, speaking at the end of the novel .⁸¹

In addition to this ,one cannot fail to notice that in his masterpiece *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper emphasises the hybrid nature of the American society through referring to the possible mixture between the Indian blood and the American one. This appears in his using of a hybrid character " Cooper also renounced racism against the Indians ."and throughout the novel, he tended to use statements that serve this goal . For instance , one can read : "There is reason in an Indian, though nature has made him with a red-skin!"Hawkeye speaking to Chingachgook.⁸²

Interesting is the idea that Cooper’s work was the first work that draw attention to the Indian presence in the American cultural scene .This legacy was for Cooper one of the most important arguments of the uniqueness of the American identity.It is worth noting that Cooper was the first American man of letters to attack racism and to call for the fair treatment of the natives in America . This radical attitude is quite obvious in his *The Last of the Mohicans* : “Should we distrust the man because his manners are not our manners, and that his skin is dark?”Cora speaking of Magua. ⁸³

Despite all the previously discussed literary achievements in the American literary life ,Sidney Smith, a British critic once wrote “the Americans literature have none” those words by Smith was so humiliating and insulting not only to the American men of letters but to all the American people .Literature is

81 (Cooper, Chapter XXXIII).

82 (Ibid.,Chapter III).

83 (Ibid.,Chapter I).

part of culture and the culture is a direct reflection of the nation's identity to deny the existence of an American literature was to deny the existence of an American identity. This was the reason why the Americans had to respond to Smith. Literarily speaking, they had to stop imitating the British way of writings and to adopt a completely new ideas, styles, and even themes.

3-The Emergence of Transcendentalism and its prominent writers

Transcendentalism was a movement for religious renewal, literary innovation, and social transformation. Its ideas were grounded in the claim that divine truth could be known intuitively. Based in New England and existing in various forms from the 1830s to the 1880s, transcendentalism is usually considered the principal expression of romanticism in America. Many prominent ministers, reformers, and writers of the era were associated with it, including Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), Margaret Fuller (1810–1850), Theodore Parker (1810–1860), Bronson Alcott (1799–1888), and Orestes Brownson (1803–1876). But it is worth mentioning that transcendentalism was and still is difficult to categorize since it could be viewed as a spiritual, philosophical, and cultural movement. Emerson himself provided a fairly open definition in his 1842 essay “The Transcendentalist”:

The Transcendentalist adopts the whole connection of spiritual doctrine. He believes in miracle, in the perpetual openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power; he believes in inspiration, and in ecstasy. He wishes that the spiritual principle should be

suffered to demonstrate itself to the end, in all possible applications to the state of man.⁸⁴

Various organizations and periodicals gave the movement shape. The earliest was the so-called "Transcendental Club" (1836–1840), an informal group that met to discuss intellectual and religious topics; also important was the "Saturday Club," organized much later (1854). Many transcendentalists participated in the utopian communities of Brook Farm (1841–1848; located in West Roxbury, Massachusetts), founded by George Ripley (1802–1880) and his wife, Sophia Dana Ripley (1803–1861), and the short-lived Fruitlands (1843–1844; located in Harvard, Massachusetts), founded by Alcott. A number of transcendentalist ministers established experimental churches to give their religious ideas institutional form. The most important of these churches were three in Boston: Orestes Brownson's Society for Christian Union and Progress (1836–1841); the Church of the Disciples (founded 1841), pastored by James Freeman Clarke (1810–1888); and Theodore Parker's Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society (founded 1845–1846). The most famous transcendentalist magazine was the *Dial* (1840–1844), edited by Fuller and then by Emerson; other major periodicals associated with the movement included the *Boston Quarterly Review* (1838–1842), edited by Brownson, and the *Massachusetts Quarterly Review* (1847–1850), edited by Parker.

Transcendentalism emerged from Unitarianism, or "liberal Christianity"—an anti-Calvinist, anti-Trinitarian, anticreedal off shoot of Puritanism that had taken hold among the middle and upper classes of eastern Massachusetts. The founders of transcendentalism were Unitarian intellectuals who came of age, or

84 Ralf Emerson «The Transcendentalist». See RWE.org - *The Complete Guide to the Life and Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. See also *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*: English traits (Harvard 1994).

became Unitarians, in the 1820s and 1830s. From Unitarianism the transcendentalists took a concern for self-culture, a sense of moral seriousness, a neo-Platonic concept of piety, a tendency toward individualism, a belief in the importance of literature, and an interest in moral reform. They looked to certain Unitarians as mentors, especially the great Boston preacher William Ellery Channing. Yet transcendentalists came to reject key aspects of the Unitarian worldview, starting with their rational, historical Christian apologetic.

The Unitarian apologetic took as its starting point the thesis of the British philosopher John Locke that all knowledge, including religious knowledge, was based on sense data. The Unitarians were not strict Lockians; under the influence of the Scottish "Common Sense" philosophers, notably Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart, they held that some fundamental knowledge could be known intuitively—for example, that certain things were morally right and wrong, and that the world that human senses perceive in fact exists. Nonetheless, Unitarians held that only "objective" evidence could prove Jesus had delivered an authoritative revelation from God. They believed they had found such evidence in the testimony, provided in the Gospels, of Jesus' miracles. The Unitarians valued the historical study of Gospel accounts, in order to prove them "genuine" and therefore credible.

Transcendentalists rejected as "sensual" and "materialistic" Unitarianism's Lockian assumptions about the mind, and were inspired instead by German philosophical idealism. Its seminal figure, Immanuel Kant, argued that sense data were structured by the mind according to certain "transcendental" categories (such as space, time, and cause and effect), which did not inhere in the data, but in the mind itself. The transcendentalists liked the Kantian approach, which gave the mind, not matter, ultimate control over the shape of

human experience. The name of their movement was derived from Kant's philosophical term. Yet the transcendentalists, unlike Kant but like other Romantics (and, to an extent, the Common Sense philosophers), held that religious knowledge itself could be intuitively known. According to this view, people could tell "subjectively" that Jesus had given a revelation from God, because his doctrine was self-evidently true and his life self-evidently good.

The transcendentalist apologetic turned out to have radical implications. Because transcendentalists believed religious truth could be known naturally, like any other truth, they tended to reject the idea of miraculous inspiration as unnecessary and to dismiss as false the claim made for the Bible that it had unique miraculous authority. Transcendentalists still respected Jesus, but the more radical of them, like Emerson in his Divinity School Address (1838), and Parker in *Discourse on the Transient and Permanent in Christianity* (1841), attacked the miracle stories in the Gospels as pious myths. Such attacks were highly controversial; theologically conservative Unitarians accused the transcendentalists of being infidels and atheists. Meanwhile, the transcendentalists began to see religious value in sacred writings beyond the Bible, including those of Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims. The transcendentalists became pioneers in the American study of comparative religion.

Another implication of intuitionism had to do with the role of the artist. The transcendentalists believed all human inspiration, whether biblical or not, drew from the same divine source. They did not hold religious inspiration to be mundane, like artistic and intellectual inspiration; rather, they held that artistic and intellectual inspiration, like religious inspiration, were divine. The artist, in particular the poet, gained new importance to the transcendentalists as a

potential prophet figure, and poetry as a potential source of divine revelation. Emerson was being characteristically transcendentalist when in his first book, *Nature* (1836), he sought to achieve wholly honest, beautiful, and original forms of expression. In his address "American Scholar" (1837), meanwhile, he called on American writers to stop imitating foreign models; actually, the transcendentalists promoted American interest in foreign Romantic writers, especially Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832).

3.1- The Values and tenets of Transcendentalism and its impact on America

In the nineteenth century, the American radicals continued to foster social change through what can be described as “transcendentalist radicalism”. The latter is an American philosophical movement that emphasized the importance of the individual and was a break from the formalized religion. It flourished from roughly the mid-1830s to the 1860s, and was often viewed as a move toward the spiritual, and thus a real departure from the increasing materialism of American society at the time. As a philosophy, it emphasizes idealism rather than materialism.

It is worth mentioning that transcendentalism was and still is difficult to categorize since it could be viewed as a spiritual, philosophical, and cultural movement. Emerson himself provided a fairly open definition in his 1842 essay “The Transcendentalist”:

The Transcendentalist adopts the whole connection of spiritual doctrine. He believes in miracle, in the perpetual openness of the human mind to new influx of

light and power; he believes in inspiration, and in ecstasy. He wishes that the spiritual principle should be suffered to demonstrate itself to the end, in all possible applications to the state of man.⁸⁵

As has already been pointed out the movement cannot be considered radical unless it works to free the generations from the past traditions that might hinder the freedom of the individual. Transcendentalism, as a radical movement, cannot be properly understood outside the context of Unitarianism, the dominant religion in Boston during the early nineteenth century.

3.2- Innate Goodness: the Rejection of the Original Sin

Unitarianism had developed during the late eighteenth century as a liberal branch of Christianity which had been separated from Orthodox Christianity during the First Great Awakening of the 1740s. That Awakening age centered on the questions of divine election and original sin, and saw a brief period of revivalism. Unitarians focused mainly on stability, rational thought, progressive morality, classical learning, and other distinctive features of Enlightenment Christianity instead of the basic principles of Calvinism. Transcendentalism then as a movement is deeply rooted in the American religious history. Their insistence on intuition reminds us of the Puritan and the Quaker "doctrine of divine light." However, this concept assumes acts of God, whereas intuition is an act of an individual.

85 Ralf Emerson «The Transcendentalist». See RWE.org - *The Complete Guide to the Life and Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. See also *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*: English traits (Harvard 1994).

In light of this ,one can understand that the roots of the Transcendentalists' religious philosophy go back to the American religious history. In exploring their radical departures from Calvinism, one can assume that the Transcendentalists took their radical ideas from some radical branches of American Puritanism. What is certain then is that, in shaping their radical thought, they took a lot of reformist ideas from the Calvinist religious dimensions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Broadly speaking, the Transcendentalist movement took a more radical approach to the issue of the divinity of the natural world than the Unitarian church held. In addition to that, it totally rejected the tenets of empiricism, as put forth by Enlightenment thinkers, such as John Locke and David Hume. That is the reason why their radical philosophy is often interpreted as a reaction to the materialism and rationalism of the 18th. In fact, it can be considered as a model of the general Humanitarian thought of 19th century thought. This opposition to materialism and the confining religious doctrines one of which being the traditional concept of the original sin might explain the special importance attributed by the Transcendentalists to intuition, spirit, and the individual. In explaining the nature of the Transcendentalist humanitarian thought, Francis E Skipp observes that:

The Transcendentalists rejected materialism with its emphasis on facts, history, the force of circumstance and the animal wants of man"... they adopted a utopian vision of humans as able to transcend all that

by means of the God-given spiritual powers of the human mind.⁸⁶

By holding that “finding God depended neither on orthodox Puritanism nor on the Unitarians' sensible exercise of virtue, but on the individual's inner striving toward spiritual communion with the divine spirit”⁸⁷, the transcendentalists not only wanted to reform religion but to reform all the aspects of life; one of which was the political one.

Perhaps, one of the major transcendentalists' political productions was “Civil Disobedience” , an essay written by Henry David Thoreau in which he analyzes the individual's relationship to the state and focuses more on why should men obey governmental law when they believe it to be unjust? In fact, the importance of this document lies in that it could summarize the transcendentalists' radical attitude and clarify their conception of the state.

3.3- Henry David Thoreau

Henry David Thoreau, (born July 12, 1817, Concord, Massachusetts, U.S.—died May 6, 1862, Concord), American essayist, poet, and practical philosopher, renowned for having lived the doctrines of Transcendentalism as recorded in his masterwork, *Walden* (1854), and for having been a vigorous

⁸⁶ Francis E Skipp, *American Literature*, Barron's Educational Series, Inc., New York, the USA., 1992), p. 92-93.

⁸⁷ Mahbub Murad “About American Transcendentalism “
<http://mahbubmurad.blog.com/2011/10/07/about-american-transcendentalism/>. Accessed July 08, 2015.

advocate of civil liberties, as evidenced in the essay “Civil Disobedience” (1849).

Thoreau was born in 1817 in Concord, Massachusetts. Though his family moved the following year, they returned in 1823. Even when he grew ambivalent about the village after reaching manhood, it remained his world, for he never grew ambivalent about its lovely setting of woodlands, streams, and meadows. Little distinguished his family. He was the third child of a feckless small businessman named John Thoreau and his bustling, talkative wife, Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau. His parents sent him in 1828 to Concord Academy, where he impressed his teachers and so was permitted to prepare for college. Upon graduating from the academy, he entered Harvard University in 1833. There he was a good student, but he was indifferent to the rank system and preferred to use the school library for his own purposes. Graduating in the middle ranks of the class of 1837, Thoreau searched for a teaching job and secured one at his old grammar school in Concord. But he was no disciplinarian, and he resigned after two shaky weeks, after which he worked for his father in the family pencil-making business. In June 1838 he started a small school with the help of his brother John. Despite its progressive nature, it lasted for three years, until John fell ill.

A canoe trip that he and John took along the Concord and Merrimack rivers in 1839 confirmed in him the opinion that he ought to be not a schoolmaster but a poet of nature. As the 1840s began, Thoreau took up the profession of poet. He struggled to stay in it and succeeded throughout the decade, only to falter in the 1850s.

3.4- Thoreau: Emerson's Student

Sheer chance made his entrance to writing easier, for he came under the benign influence of the essayist and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, who had settled in Concord during Thoreau's sophomore year at Harvard. By the autumn of 1837, they were becoming friends. Emerson sensed in Thoreau a true disciple—that is, one with so much Emersonian self-reliance that he would still be his own man. Thoreau saw in Emerson a guide, a father, and a friend.

With his magnetism Emerson attracted others to Concord. Out of their heady speculations and affirmatives came New England Transcendentalism. In retrospect it was one of the most significant literary movements of 19th-century America, with at least two authors of world stature, Thoreau and Emerson, to its credit. Essentially it combined romanticism with reform. It celebrated the individual rather than the masses, emotion rather than reason, nature rather than man. Transcendentalism conceded that there were two ways of knowing, through the senses and through intuition, but asserted that intuition transcended tuition. Similarly, the movement acknowledged that matter and spirit both existed. It claimed, however, that the reality of spirit transcended the reality of matter. Transcendentalism strove for reform yet insisted that reform begin with the individual, not the group or organization.

3.5- Major Works

The most significant and enduring works by Thoreau are listed here in order of original publication; when he made substantial revisions, especially in the essays, the volumes in which the revised versions first appeared are likewise noted:

3.6- Walden Pond

Back in Concord Thoreau rejoined his family's business, making pencils and grinding graphite. By early 1845 he felt more restless than ever, until he decided to take up an idea of a Harvard classmate who had once built a waterside hut in which one could loaf or read. In the spring Thoreau picked a spot by Walden Pond, a small glacial lake located 2 miles (3 km) south of Concord on land Emerson owned.

3.7- Analysis of Thoreau's " Civil Disobedience"

Indeed, "Civil Disobedience" is Thoreau's extremely personal and radical response to being imprisoned for his non conformist beliefs that were considered as a breaking of the law. Opposing slavery ,and because tax revenues contributed to the support of it, Thoreau refused to pay them, an action that was described as a radical challenge to the authorities that nobody had dared to do before him. The basic radical idea of Thoreau that might have been original and then typically American was that the government should recognize that each person in society has his own higher, independent power from which the government in turn receives its power. Thoreau notes "Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it"⁸⁸. And added . "The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right"⁸⁹.

Thoreau believed that paying taxes for those acts was an indirect contribution to injustice on his part. He says:

⁸⁸ Henry David Thoreau,"Civil Disobedience", *Walden and Other Writings by Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Joseph Wood Krutch (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), p. 342

⁸⁹ Ibid.

For my own part, I should not like to think that I ever rely on the protection of the State. But, if I deny the authority of the State when it presents its tax-bill, it will soon take and waste all my property, and so harass me and my children without end. This is hard. This makes it impossible for a man to live honestly,⁹⁰

Although he spent only one night in jail, this experience led him to discuss the government in a thorough and honest manner and then write an essay that would be extremely influential not only to future civil rights leaders but to all the radicals all over the world among whom we can cite Mahatma Gandhi the famous Indian radical .

One can easily observe that Thoreau had a firm belief that the duty of every citizen is to act against the state whenever he feels that the state is morally wrong. He even claims that: "under a government which imprisons any man unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison"⁹¹. Thoreau does not reject politics in general, but he demands of the state to act better than the way it was acting. He claims: "I ask for, not at once no government, but at once a better government."⁹²It is obvious then that the question of the good government and the personal independence of the governed became Thoreau's major practical concern.

Interesting is the idea that like Paine and Jefferson before him, Thoreau in his "Civil Disobedience" insisted on the idea of the individual's right to resist the state. It goes without saying that Thoreau in his essay, like John Locke, denies the right of any government to automatic and unthinking obedience. He

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.p345.

⁹² Ibid.p.346.

insists that the only political duty of a man is to correct any injustice he directly causes and to deny his cooperation to other injustice. This is the conclusion at which “Civil Disobedience” arrives:

If I have unjustly wrested a plank from a drowning man, I must restore it to him though I drown myself..... If I devote myself to other pursuits and contemplations, I must first see, at least, that I do not pursue them sitting upon another man's shoulders. I must get off him first, that he may pursue his contemplations too.⁹³

It is ,then, quite obvious that Thoreau was convinced that the real democratic society was to be established in a way that that the state should never have the right to violate the individual freedom. In case the state asks the subject to violate his conscience and participate in an injustice, the person should disobey or resist the system by removing his cooperation. It is important here to stress that Thoreau has never encouraged people to be violent in their reactions against their leaders; but rather, he insisted that resistance must be peaceful. One can understand from this that according to Thoreau, the radical attitude is not always revolutionary and violent. Social and political change can be achieved in a very peaceful way. Thoreau notes :

If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible. If the tax-gatherer, or any other public officer, asks me, as one has done, "But what shall I

93 Ibid.

do?" my answer is, "If you really wish to do anything, resign your office." When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished.⁹⁴

Perhaps, what is striking about the radical thought of Thoreau is that his philosophy of life seems a continuation of the American radical project. A simple comparison between his radical thought and that of Thomas Paine may demonstrate this truth. Both exhibit a kind of what we can call an exaggerated sense of Americanism because both seek to find a fundamental principle for the right human life and the best social order and both called for the primacy of the individual's freedom over government not only as a requirement for the legitimacy of political authority but also as the sign that distinguishes good government and good society. For Paine, to be successful and therefore powerful, the government must first aim at achieving the individual's happiness. In this direction, Thoreau believed that the citizen must be involved in the political life of his society, and this happens only when the government takes into consideration the individual's will especially in all that concerns legal issues.

But one can easily observe that Thoreau goes further in this direction than Paine when asserting that the real meaning and the full implication of the American freedom would be fully achieved when government ceases to have the authority to govern society and control the individual's conscience. In other words, as said earlier he supported the belief "that government is best which governs the least, because its people discipline themselves"⁹⁵In fact, this very idea is the result of his belief in the innate goodness of man as well as his

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

freedom . Seen from another perspective, it seems here that Thoreau's radical thought is a call for anarchy, which Thoreau believes would be a civilized anarchy once the real meaning of the American conception of freedom is achieved. Obviously, Thoreau seems to go further than Paine in idealizing the American conception of freedom. This might be the result of his different vision of democracy and of what prevents it to be a living reality.

It is quite interesting in this regard to stress then that the transcendentalists and all the civil disobedience activists have much in common with Jefferson and Paine's tradition and radical legacy . It is not surprising then that "they invoke the Declaration and the spirit of 76" ⁹⁶. In fact, the transcendentalists' call for rebelling against the American system of politics as well as their transformative and radical ideas in religion, philosophy, and politics was, in part, a real and a clear reaffirmation of Paine's revolutionary philosophy and Jefferson's individualism. If the Declaration of Independence had articulated the colonists' grievances against the British monarch in order to legitimate their right to overthrow the government that violated the social contract, the transcendentalists, just like Paine and Jefferson before them, saw the continuation of tyranny and injustice in centralized government and strict control.

Unsurprisingly, the radical beliefs and ideas of Thoreau had a great impact on many modern American radicals especially those concerned with peace as a radical issue . It is undeniable that the great bulk of the leading members of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's and Vietnam War protestors were indebted to his essay on "Resistance to Civil Government", as it

96 Luther S. Luedtke, *Making America: The Society & Culture of the United States* (UNC Press Books, 1992), p. 457.

is not surprising to read that Martin Luther King, Jr., for instance, must have learnt from Thoreau the strategy of the non-violent protest. Protestors of the Vietnam War and recently the Iraq War must have read and well understood such passages in *Walden* as: "Only the defeated and deserters go to the wars, cowards that run away and enlist." Or: "Patriotism is a maggot in their heads."⁹⁷ Moreover and in a more important sense, just like Paine before him, Thoreau has been associated with universal radical politics because his ideas are universally applicable over time. In other words, he could anticipate many radical projects that would be at stake during the twentieth century one of which was environmentalism.

3.8- Environmentalism in *Walden*

In this regard too, it is worth adding that getting back to the rights of nature was another major transcendentalist radical idea and one of the fundamental themes of Thoreau's autobiographical account, *Walden*. In his text, Thoreau repeatedly insisted that the individual should focus less on what he has and what he can buy, and therefore he should return to his roots which lie in nature. Environmentalism, as was demonstrated previously is nowadays a pretty popular theme in the United States in which environment has become a more frequent topic of discussion and education. Long years before, Thoreau in *Walden* raised the issue of environment and reminded his readers of the important fact that nature is the right and original place for human life; in this context, he writes:

97 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings by Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Joseph Wood Krutch (New York: Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The American as Reformer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950) 33.; Bantam Books, 1986), p. 342.

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms..⁹⁸

As a matter of fact, this transcendentalist and particular vision to nature as described in Thoreau's text well explains why today, Thoreau; like the Diggers before him, is regularly associated with environmentalism as a modern radical movement. Certainly it was easy for the Americans to understand Thoreau's message in *Walden* through which he directly called for the rejection of all that might hurt nature. In this autobiographical account, Thoreau repeatedly shows how it is exiting to leave society behind and go back to the root which is nature.

Reading *Walden* ,the reader can easily realize that in Walden Pond, animals became Thoreau's sole companions and best intimate friends. In this regard, it is worth noting that his life among animals really symbolizes his retreat from human society and closer intimacy with the environment and its fauna and flora. In the woods, Thoreau had the golden opportunity to devote much attention to the behavior of the animals around him like partridges, loons, and mice, and the like. The reader of *Walden* cannot fail to notice that Thoreau

98 Henry David Thoreau. *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*. (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1854). P. 72.

tends to personalize environment too much through stressing the animals' human characteristics. For example, Thoreau's description of the partridge and its young walking along his windowsill can be considered as an assertion of the animals' motherhood and their natural maternal desire and readiness to protect their offspring. He writes :

In June the partridge, (*Tetrao umbellus*), which is so shy a bird, led her brood past my windows, from the woods in the rear to the front of my house, clucking and calling to them like a hen, and in all her behavior proving herself the hen of the woods. The young suddenly disperse on your approach, at a signal from the mother, as if a whirlwind had swept them away and they so exactly resemble the dried leaves and twigs that many a traveler has placed his foot in the midst of a brood, and heard the whir of the old bird as she flew off, and her anxious calls and mewing, or seen her trail her wings to attract his attention, without suspecting their neighborhood ⁹⁹.

Here , one needs to draw attention to the important fact that as an early environmentalist, Thoreau went further in stressing the resemblance between animals and humans even in the way of organizing life inside their communities. For instance, Thoreau describes two armies of ants of different races in a battle and he shows how they fight with ferocity exactly as human beings do in wars; Thoreau observes:

One day, when I went out to my wood-pile, or rather my pile of stumps, I observed two large ants, the one red, the other much larger, nearly half an inch long,

⁹⁹ Ibid. 169.

and black, fiercely contending with one another. Having once got hold they never let go, but struggled and wrestled and rolled on the chips incessantly. Looking farther, I was surprised to find that the chips were covered with such combatants, that it was not a duellum, but a bellum, a war between two races of ants, the red always pitted against the black, and frequently two red ones to one black ¹⁰⁰

What is really striking in *Walden* is the idea that Thoreau's experience of living among animals led him to conclude that nature is a living entity that is why it should be protected and respected. In other words, Thoreau argues persuasively that environment should enjoy its natural rights when he demonstrates that the fauna and the flora are, just like human kind, endowed by nature with certain natural rights among which the right of life. In addition to this, it was possible for him to observe that the animals around him had their own way of life. More than that, he discovered that they were living in organized communities. It is not surprising, in light of this that Thoreau went further to consider both fishing and hunting as criminal actions and eating animal meat a kind of cannibalism. That is the reason why he called human beings to leave off eating animal meat. "Whatever my own practice may be," he says, "I have no doubt that it is a part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals"¹⁰¹ and he adds:

I believe that every man who has ever been earnest to preserve his higher or poetic faculties in the best condition has been particularly inclined to abstain from animal food, and from much food of any kind . . . The

100 Ibid.166.

101 Ibid .263.

fruits eaten temperately need not make us ashamed of our appetites, nor interrupt the worthiest pursuits.¹⁰²

Little wonder then that while living in Walden pond, Thoreau became convinced that he ought to criminalize all that might hurt nature. That is why he decided to stop hunting and fishing since these two activities threaten animals' lives. In line with this, he says, "At present, I am no fisherman at all."¹⁰³ And adds:

No humane being [he writes], past the thoughtless age of boyhood, will wantonly murder any creature, which holds its life by the same tenure that he does. The hare in its extremity cries like a child. I warn you, mothers, that my sympathies do not always make the usual philanthropic distinctions.¹⁰⁴

These words of Thoreau can be understood as a direct call for the necessity of protecting environment through ceasing to kill animals simply because, according to him, they have the natural right to live. In this respect, I can therefore, sustain that the modern radical tendency of personalizing nature through considering it as a living entity is a concrete proof of the strong presence of Thoreau's legacy in the modern radical thought that calls for the protection of nature.

What the above analysis suggests, then, is that the transcendentalist vision of nature became indeed a strong background for environmentalism as one of the modern radical movements in the American society. In light of this, one needs to add that the American radicals not only struggled to have an ideal

¹⁰² Ibid. 262.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 261.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 260.

environment in which both animals and plants can live peacefully , but also worked hard to secure an international and ideal status for their nation so that other nations view it as the land of dreams and opportunities . Let us, therefore move to another debate still linked to American radicalism and its utopian vision to the American life ; it is the American exceptionalist self-image that made every American feel the exceptionalism of his nation .

4-Walt Whitman's Romantic Poetry

Introduction

In recent years, a throng of thinkers working in a remarkable array of ideology, history, and politics have taken an intense interest in questions concerning the role played by America in the modern world. Many American authors and poets wrote about this topic and attempted to clarify the American point of view that always considers America as the centre of the entire world and as an exceptional nation. This lecture undertakes the image of America in Walt Whitman's poetry. In fact, critics have often evinced that American exceptional self image is one of the most important themes in Whitman's poetry.

Important is the idea that Whitman has long considered himself as a spokesman for the Americans and his *Leaves of Grass* as a new Bible which celebrates equality, freedom and democracy as fundamental social values often associated with his new nation. In connection with this, one can equally add that his transcendentalist philosophy of life which is known to be thoroughly based on the idea of the over soul that is the belief that God is found in all men and even in nature helped him to a great extent shape this very specific world view. In this context, V. A. Shahane (1972) confirms that Whitman believes that 'all men are divine and possess powers of revelation equal to any god's power. Simply put, the poet denies significance to old gods because, according to him, God is to be found in all men. He maintains that

“The supernatural is of no account, meaning that the Divine is here on Earth for all men, who must only become ready to accept this divinity”¹⁰⁵.

Interestingly, the reader of Whitman's poetry may easily observe that the new philosophy that Whitman's poetry has attempted to consolidate is principally based on freedom and equality among all the members of the one society. One can further note that Whitman went beyond that to consider democracy as a new religion not only for the Americans but rather for the entire humanity. According to him, this would guarantee that all human beings would be equal and enjoy their natural rights. As far as his religious thought is concerned, one should stress that like Jefferson before him, the poet believes that church and the state should be separated. In other words, he sustained the principle that religious life should be separated from civil life. For him, since God is present everywhere and inside every individual, mankind should be free to worship God without mediators ..

Perhaps, this is the reason why many critics agree that Whitman's ideas had a great impact on American presidents whose policies served the marginalized minorities in the American society among whom, one can cite: Abraham Lincoln and Barak Obama who like Whitman, believed that they should build an exceptional American society in which there should be no space for poverty and injustice, so to speak. But before delving into analyzing the theme of the American self image in Whitman's *passage to India*, it might be useful at the outset to have a thorough idea about the meaning as well as the history of American exceptional self image as one of the fundamental concepts in the America culture and which can be considered as one of Whitman's preferred and fundamental themes.

105 Ibid.

4.1-America in the Americans' Eyes

As stated earlier, America has long been seen by the Americans as an exceptional nation and as "the beacon on the mountain so that people around the world can see its warm light of salvation." Important is the idea that since the colonial period ,the puritans claimed the newly settled land as the promised land. Interestingly enough ,this idea has continued to shape the Americans ' self image till now . To start with ,*American exceptionalism* is a phrase that is often used to summarize the Americans' belief that their country is an exceptional nation, with a special people and special role to play in human history. Indeed, American exceptionalism is a theological concept .It is remarkable that before the foundation of the modern United States of America ,the New World was viewed as God's sacred land ¹⁰⁶.

In line with this, Thomas B. Byers argues that American exceptionalism is not only the claim that America is different, but that it is unique, one of a superior nature and which must have a unique moral value and responsibility' ¹⁰⁷ One can ,therefore, assume that American exceptionalism is an ideology that refers to the ways in which the United States is different from the rest of the world.

One should note that , indeed ,as an American myth, American exceptionalism started during the Puritan period far before the 19th Century. One can further note that its first seeds appeared with the first settlers ,the Puritans who had completely believed in the idea that they were the chosen people and the newly settled land was the promised land which John Winthrop later on described as a City upon a Hill.

106 Steven Calabresi, G. *A Shining City On A Hill : American Exceptionalism And The Supreme Court's Practice Of Relying On Foreign Law*. Boston University Law Review, 2006. Vol. 86 p: 86

107 *ibid*.

It is not surprising that this idea of exceptional nature of both America and the Americans continued to shape the American self image especially with the founding generation whose nationalistic beliefs and convictions had a great role in building the new nation which they wanted to be remarkably different from the other nations. In other words, American exceptionalism was first launched by the Puritans as a religious idea and continued to develop and to finally acquire a secular form during the Age of Enlightenment and the nineteenth century.

For his part, the French thinker, Alexis de Tocqueville, supports the idea that "the position of the American people is, therefore, quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will be placed in a similar one"¹⁰⁸ Others believe that the idea is deeply rooted in American history, and that it appeared even before the birth of the United States as an independent nation. Jack P. Green, for instance, a leading colonial historian, persuasively argues that the intellectual construction of America as an exceptional place began in Europe, and thus American exceptionalism is originally a European idea'

Indeed, it goes almost without saying that the first settlers of the newly settled land were European radicals who came to see America as a land that offered a golden opportunity for them as persecuted religious groups to establish godly Communities especially in Plymouth Plantation and Massachusetts Bay Colony. Moreover, seen from another perspective, the New World was also seen as a space that provided "exceptional opportunities for the mass conversion of souls to Christianity"(ibid). In fact, this European conception of America as being an exceptional land has been discussed and constituted a wide space of debate

108 Dow, Donald W. *Internal Differences : Secularism, Religion, and Poetic Form in Nineteenth Century American Poetry*. New Jersey U. New Brunswick, New Jersey, p108

among English thinkers and men of letters . For this reason, many historians trace the idea of America as an exceptional nation to the colonial period when the Puritan settlers declared themselves as chosen people and the North American continent as a promised land .

At this point ,it is important to draw attention to the important fact that the Puritans were a radical religious faction who emerged during the Reformation Age . They insisted that it was their duty to purify the corrupted church . Moreover ,they thought that they were the Elect or God's sheep.¹⁰⁹ In line with this, James W. Ceaser claims that for the Puritans , "the idea of being a selected agent was more than a theological possibility; it was a lived experience, formed in their exodus and errand in the wilderness"¹¹⁰

Still ,in connection with this ,one can further observe that the Puritans as a religious radical group , basically depended on religion to justify the special and extraordinary image they attempted to draw to their godly ,new nation . Simply put , they saw God in themselves, and they insisted that they were God's chosen people or God's sheep who were supposed to lead the entire world.

There is a need to stress the fact that the Puritans came to America to create a thoroughly godly society that conforms to the Puritan beliefs and which suits their reformist aspirations. Stephenson went beyond that to maintain that the New World for the Puritans was the location of the millennium-a "place for the end...of history"¹¹¹.Indeed, the idea of dealing with America as a new promised land attracted early colonial leaders. William Bradford, the leader of Plymouth colony, for instance, through his work *Of Plymouth Plantation*,

109 James Ceaser W. *The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism*. American Political Thought. The Jack Miller Center, 2012. Vol. 1p.67

110 Ibid.

111 Calabresi,op.cit.

attempted to persuasively argue that God has chosen America to be a new promised land and a home to a special people, those who were saved in the Mayflower (ibid).

It should be clear from the foregoing that the very origins of American exceptionalism can partly be traced back to 1630, in which John Winthrop, a Puritan leader and the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, delivered his famous sermon entitled *A Model of Christian Charity* to Puritan settlers on the *Arabella*. (Bathke, 2012: 2). Historians and all those interested in American studies often agree that John Winthrop's sermon was a landmark in the history of American exceptionalism and it is widely considered as cornerstone of American identity'¹¹². In fact, John Winthrop's image of America, as a city upon a hill, is inspired from the Bible. In the same context, anticipating the blossoming future of his country Winthrop insists that "[s]he's still a beacon, still a magnet for all who must have freedom, for all the pilgrims from all the lost places who are hurtling through the darkness, toward home."¹¹³

Simply put, convinced that they were chosen by God to settle in his promised land which they called New Jerusalem, the Puritans spared no effort to evince that both the American land and people were absolutely the best on Earth. In short, they backed the idea that 'America was thus going to be a New Jerusalem-a Godly light to all the nations of the world.'¹¹⁴

Unsurprisingly, most of the Puritan leaders and theologians justified the exceptional nature of America by several passages from the Bible, especially the one which is found in the 'Second Book of Samuel, which reads as follows :

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

“[a]nd I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed”¹¹⁵ According to Steven G. Calabresi, there is another passage that was more important in supporting the Puritans’ evidence that America is the chosen land, is the one from Mathew, in which Jesus encouraged his followers to do exactly what Bradford and Winthrop were trying to achieve for the sake of making America a real city on a hill . The passage is as follows :

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.¹¹⁶

Interesting is the idea that the Puritans had a firm belief that they were protected and assisted by the hands of God which according to them were everywhere. In reality , their firm conviction in their choosiness strengthened their responsibility and readiness to fight against all that may go against the idea that they were God’s elected people. Perhaps ,because of this belief that even modern American politicians often assert that the United States must be vigilant in its “witch-hunts to fight an enemy that might endanger the American polity and its allies”¹¹⁷.

Accordingly, even the future American generations or the Puritans' successors continued to believe in those ideas. But during the founding era ,the idea of American exceptionalism began to acquire secular ideals .This was

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Benjamin Bathke. *American Exceptionalism*. Linden Wood University, 2012., p.:2

mainly due to the remarkable spread of deism as well as the strong European philosophical influences on the colonies . For his part ,Bercovitch comprehensively treated the secular aspects of the American philosophy of life:

[I]n fleeing the Old World, the [Puritan] emigrants were abandoning a bankrupt monarchical order to establish a new way of life, civic and economic as well as religious. It was to *their* cause of liberty, rather than to some Old World despot, that filial allegiance was due. . . . [W]hat the fathers began, the sons were bound to complete.¹¹⁸

In this respect ,it is worth noting that the Americans' conviction that they should eradicate all that might corrupt life in the New World is the main reason that led to the change in the way the idea of American exceptionalism was conceived by the Americans . In other words ,with the passage of time the Americans felt the necessity of secularizing their political and social thought. Perhaps ,that is why after being a religious issue; American exceptionalism became a secular and ideological project especially since the Revolutionary period.

In addition to this ,it might be important in this regard , to note that America at that time was the only place in which every man could own a land, ‘As Jack Greene notes, “[w]idespread possession of landed property . . . turned the colonies into societies in which virtually ‘every [free] Male Inhabitant became a Freeholder, and by consequence entitled to a share in the Government of the Province’”(Op.cit),an idea that has been clearly explained by Crèvecoeur in his *Letters from an American Farmer* .In anticipating the blossoming future of the New World, Crèvecoeur explicates: .

118 Ibid.

Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims, who are carrying along with them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigour, and industry which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle. The Americans were once scattered all over Europe; here they are incorporated into one of the finest systems of population which has ever appeared, and which will hereafter become distinct by the power of the different climates they inhabit.¹¹⁹

Part of the exceptional nature of the Americans ,according to them, of course ,lies in their firm belief in the principles of freedom and equality as well as in their conviction that the American individual should stand against all that precludes or stifles these two social values in the American community .

To understand the development of the American political and social thought it is important to recognize that since the Age of Enlightenment ,the Americans started to think logically ,and they became aware of the necessity of rejecting all that was logicless .Consequently , they started to question their relation with their mother country, and strongly opposed the harsh treatment of the monarch who deprived them from enjoying the same rights as their brothers, the British men . The fact of being harshly taxed without being represented in the British parliament forced the colonists to call for their independence and to declare a revolution against their mother land . their aim was then to establish a

119 J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur *Letters from an American Farmer* .letter III p.55

democratic government that would respect human rights In other words ,they sought to build a nation that all people around the world should strive for . In stressing the religious and the secular roots of the American Revolution , James W. Ceaser affirms that " [S]ome thinkers beginning to draw a connection between God's divine plan for history, which now involved putting an end to tyranny in the world, and the achievement of an independent and free republic in America".¹²⁰

No wonder that even Thomas Paine ,though a deist, could not get rid of nor rise above the idea of the divine nature of the New World . In his *Common Sense*, for instance , Paine insists that "it is the duty of the state to effectively uphold the rights of citizens including the right to a minimum standard of wealth and social security"¹²¹ However, one cannot fail to notice that through Paine's same text, there is a clear "sense of urgency and millennialism that does indeed reflect utopianism"¹²² and even universalism. For instance, in justifying the call of independence ,he considers the geographical distance between the New World and Britain as part of a divine plan. In *Common Sense* ,he notes:

Even the distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America, is a strong and natural proof, that the authority of the one, over the other, was never the design of Heaven. The time likewise at which the continent was discovered, adds weight to the argument, and the manner in which it was peopled increases the

120 James W Ceaser,. *The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism*. American Political Thought. The Jack Miller Center, 2012. Vol. 1p. 12

121 Jason Edward .*The Radical Attitude in Modern Political Thought*. Macmillan, 2007,p. 121

122 Elise Marienstras ,. *Les mythes fondateurs de nation américaine*.(Paris ,1976)p. 75

force of it. The reformation was preceded by the discovery of America, as if the Almighty graciously meant to open a sanctuary to the persecuted in future years, when home should afford neither friendship nor safety.¹²³

For his part, Herman Melville also stresses the exceptional nature of the American nation ; he proudly notes:

We Americans, are the peculiar, chosen people—the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world. God has predestined, mankind expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls. The rest of the nations must soon be in our rear. Long enough have we been skeptics with regard to ourselves, and doubted whether, indeed, the political Messiah had come. But he has come in us.¹²⁴

It should be clear from the foregoing passage that the original cause that led the great bulk of the modern American thinkers and authors to export the idea that America is an exceptional nation is their conviction of the divinity of the Old World .One of them was Whitman ;this romantic poet who ,through his poetry, has always attempted to celebrate American exceptionalism.

123 Paine, *Common Sense*.

124 Herman Melville. Op.cit. p. 56.

4.2- Modern America through Whitman's *Passage to India*.

Undoubtedly, one of Whitman's most famous and successful poems is *Passage to India*. This poem is characterized by a throng of critics as the most important poem in the 1871 edition of *Leaves of Grass* and as the last of Whitman's significant poems. In this poem, Whitman obviously and directly expresses his great admiration to the scientific achievements of his time such as the opening of the Suez Canal, the laying of the transatlantic cable, and the joining of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads at Utah ; the latter that was established in order to produce the nation's first transcontinental railway. About the image of America in *Passage to India* Wiggins states that" *Passage to India* appears to be the fulfillment of a larger, spiritual plan that leads to the settlement and establishment of the American nation as history moved towards this point in time and around the globe".¹²⁵

As a matter of fact, ,it is worth noting that unlike the other poems of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, *Passage to India* has not received considerable appreciation during the first years of its publication. But with the passage of time , it started to be viewed by many of Whitman's readers and critics as one of his 's greatest achievements. This might be attributed to the fact that they realized that it thoroughly embodied Whitman's philosophy of life as well as his world vision . Backing Wiggins' idea ,Harsharan Singh Ahluwalia in his 1983's *A Reading of Whitman's Passage to India* argues that

the thematic coherence and richness of imagery argue for its inclusion among Whitman's successful works. The form of the

poem is that of a rhapsody in which images and motifs are repeated to lead the reader in one fairly clear direction.¹²⁶

It is obvious, then, that *Passage to India* has a great importance in Whitman's literary career. Undoubtedly, it proves that Whitman is a strong believer in the idea that America has a special mission to achieve, and that he is a staunch supporter of the concept of Manifest Destiny that is the Westward Expansion. This certainly leads me to open the discussion over Whitman's idea that America is part of God's divine plan on Earth

As a matter of fact, it is important to understand that Whitman's *Passage to India*, like all his poems of *Leaves of Grass*, is very representative of the poet's vision of his nation. In addition to this, Whitman often tries to state the reasons that justify the uniqueness and the exceptional nature of the new nation. In *Passage to India*, Whitman went beyond singing and celebrating his mother country, he transcended the United States' position as a leading nation. According to Wiggins, "American" in this sense is not a political or locational identity, but more of a sensibility and spirituality

Because Whitman wrote before the United States becomes a world power and before the age of the modern great technological revolution, one can consider that his depiction of his country is a sort of an anticipation of the American blossoming future. In other words, like Crèvecoeur before him, Whitman was so confident that his country would lead the entire world one day. Commenting on *Passage to India*, Whitman wrote in his iconic book, *Democratic Vistas* that "the Pacific will be ours, and the Atlantic mainly ours.

126 Harasharan S. Ahluwalia, *A Reading of Whitman's Passage to India* p.9

There will be daily electric communication with every part of the globe. What an age! What a land! Where, elsewhere, one so great?"¹²⁷ In line with this , Wiggins notes "if America is simply a fulfillment of the world's destiny, then all the people of the world are a part of this community" In the light of this , one can further understand that Whitman's *Passage to India* was more than a passage to India, it is the way by which America can move towards modernity and universal leadership.

It is worth noting that Whitman wrote *Passage to India* in the period known as the Gilded Age, the 1870's and 1880's. This period was a time of great economic and industrial growth. It was during that period, the United States had changed from an agrarian society to an urban one. Big business, corporations, manufactories, and transportation mainly railroads started to develop. all this enhanced America's Westward expansion and placed the new nation among the first producing and industrial countries in the world.

In this regard ,one needs to emphasize the fact that the city in which Whitman spent most of his life, New York, played a great role in Whitman's shaping the extremely specific image about the modern United States which ,according to him, should lead the entire world . This might be attributed to the fact that New York was more developed than any other city in America. Indeed ,Whitman's biography tells that New York for him was a representative of the industrial, scientific, and economic progress in the United States .

It is no secret that the era in which Whitman wrote *Leaves of Grass* was remarkably characterized by a rapid industrial and scientific development. Many important inventions were carried out at that time such as the telegraph and

¹²⁷ Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*. P.45.

railroads which connected the different nations with each other and made the world smaller for mankind. It was thanks to the tremendous development in the means of global communication and transportation, people became more informed about America and the world outside its borders. During the composition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman was living in New York city. This undoubtedly helped him be in a direct contact with people of different professions, social classes, and races. For Whitman, New York became a small representative of America's diversity and progress.

In this context, one needs to stress the fact that one of the fundamental themes that Whitman treats in his *Passage to India* is the celebration of the three great engineering achievements: the opening of the Suez Canal, the building of the transcontinental railroads, and the laying of telegraph cables across the oceans. He puts it this way:

Singing my days,
Singing the great achievements of the present,
Singing the strong light works of engineers,
Our modern wonders, (the antique ponderous Seven
outvied,)
In the Old World the east the Suez canal,
The New by its mighty railroad spann'd,
The seas inlaid with eloquent gentle wires; (Whitman

467)

Still in the same context, Whitman writes :

Passage to India!

Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose from the first?

The earth to be spann'd, connected by network,

The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage,

The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,

The lands to be welded together. (Whitman 468)

From these lines, one can understand that the industrial and scientific inventions Whitman celebrates in his poem are just a step towards America's divine path. Properly understood, Whitman could predict and anticipate America's Westward expansion. In other words , he could anticipate the mythic idea of the Manifest Destiny which according to him would be part of the accomplishment of God's desire.

Indeed, in *Passage to India* ;Whitman straightforwardly presents America as predestined to move Westward. In other words , according to Whitman , it is God who preordained that the New World would expand its territories Westward. Accepting this idea ,one can understand that according to Whitman and all those who support the idea of American exceptionalism ,America is not created for nothing but for specific purpose and a special role to play in the world .Perhaps ,this is the reason why in his book, *Whitman and the Earth*, M. Jimmie Killingsworth says that *Passage to India* "invites the soul to

realize the animating possibilities implied in technological progress, justified as a natural outcome of the divine plan" ¹²⁸

Still, according to many critics, Whitman's considers the three scientific and technological achievements as part of the divine plan to connect people with each other. Thus, the poet sees the passage to India as more than physical journey, it is a spiritual one. In *Passage to India*, Whitman seems to sing a new religion in which the modern industrial and scientific achievements will be combined with the spiritual achievements of the past. After the physical connection of the world's nations, it was easy for America to accomplish her divine plan to join all the people of the world together for the millennium or the Judgment Day. In line with this, Whitman states :

Year at whose wide-flung door I sing!

Year of the purpose accomplish'd!

Year of the marriage of continents, climates and oceans!

(No mere doge of Venice now wedding the Adriatic,)

I see O year in you the vast terraqueous globe given and giving
all,

Europe to Asia, Africa join'd, and they to the New World,

The lands, geographies, dancing before you, holding a festival
garland,

As brides and bridegrooms hand in hand. (Whitman, 2007 :
471)

128 M. Jimmie Killingsworth, *Whitman and the Earth*. P.61.

Undoubtedly, the journey presented in Whitman's *Passage to India* is more than a mere passage to India. It is obvious that according to Whitman it is God who preordained that America should move towards India and even beyond far East. It seems that Whitman believes that America has a divine plan to go beyond its territories in order to export democracy, peace, and happiness to the whole world. Stressing this very idea, Harsharan Sing Ahluwalia argues that Whitman

discerns God's purpose in the evolution of the universe toward harmony and unity. In furthering this goal, the explorers, engineers, and the architects have played a major part. They have geographically connected the Old World with the new "not for trade or transportation only, I But in God's name"¹²⁹.

From the passage above, one can thus understand that, according to Whitman, it should be America's mission to melt the diversity of the world's people, and it is America which will lead the other nations to live in peace and harmony. From Whitman's point of view, it is God who chose America and the Americans to fulfill his divine plan. Whitman proclaims:

A worship new, I sing;

You captains, voyagers, explorers, yours!

You engineers! You architects, machinists, yours!

You, not for trade or transportation only,

¹²⁹ Ahluwalia, op.cit 111.

But in God's name, and for thy sake, O soul(Whitman)

It is not surprising that Whitman became one of the staunch defenders of the common people as well as one of the strong critics of discrimination and injustice in politics and even in other fields like art and culture. In reality, one should not undermine the fact that Whitman lived during a period during which the Jacksonian democracy emerged and ordinary people became the center of the governmental interest and focus . Therefore, as a supporter of human rights and as a defender of the poor and minorities in his society ,Whitman must have been influenced the Jacksonianism as an ideology that calls for deep political, social ,and economic reforms . For Whitman, the difference between America and democracy is very subtle . No wonder then that in one of the most important poem in *Leaves of Grass, Song of Myself* ,he describes America as the mother of democracy, and as the predestined land to be the land of freedom ,equality, justice ,and democracy. He writes:

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,

By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms.¹³⁰

As stated earlier , the transcendentalist movement had a great impact on Whitman's beliefs, ideas and even philosophy of life . His optimistic view of the individual and his transcendentalist belief that all men and women are

130 (Whitman, 34)

created equal strengthened his belief in democracy. In addition ,transcendentalism as a philosophy of life was built upon self-reliance as a fundamental principle. For that reason, Whitman's celebration of democracy was due to the American democracy's consolidation of the individual's self-reliance , self respect ,and freedom According to Tarr Dàniel,Whitman is "a missionary for humanity, to bring the new Testament of "democracy", of equality, tolerance, self-respect, and freedom open to all".¹³¹

It becomes obvious that it is this strong belief in the distinctiveness of American democracy that made him deserve the title of " the poet of American democracy" .One can also perceive his belief in the divine nature of America .

Conclusion

After a deep and comprehensive analysis of the image of America in Whitman's eye and poetry , it becomes obvious that as an American, Whitman is a strong believer in the exceptional nature of his nation and as a poet, he is a staunch defender of this myth . When one examines what Whitman says about America, it becomes obvious that he is strong believer in the greatness of his nation .Simply put, if in his *Song of Myself* he stresses that America is the mother of democracy , in his *Passage to India's* he evinces that part of the divine plan is the great role that the modern United States should play in order achieve a universal union between people in all over the globe and ,therefore, help them live in peace, harmony, and democracy . Moreover, he insists that the United States ,as an economically powerful country is assisted by God to achieve the divine plan and to fulfill its sacred mission . Accordingly, one can

131 Tarr. Dàniel, *The New Era of America : Walt Whitman*. American Literature Seminar, 1994.p.8

establish the fact that Whitman's belief in the exceptional nature of his nation enabled him not only to portray America as an exceptional nation but even to anticipate the future of the American modern power and international role in the current globalized world . In light of this ,it is not surprising that in this age of globalization, the U.S. President Barak Obama has also clearly proclaimed that " The United States will always speak for those who are voiceless, defend those who are oppressed, and bear witness to those who want nothing more than to exercise their universal human rights".

5-Romanticism in the literature of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville.

Introduction

It is no secret that the role of literature in shaping reality constitutes a wide space of debate in recent years. Critics all around the world have shown a special interest to this important topic. The present paper is an attempt to trace the contribution of American literature to the consolidation of some myths that later became a fundamental part in the American culture. In this regard, it is important to emphasize that the half century of American history from the close of the Civil War to the outbreak of the Industrial Revolution was a period during which industry, which had already flourished in Britain and other parts of the world, began to alter the American social and economic climate. At first, the implications of the changes brought about by industrialization were not fully realized by the young American generation which came of age about 1870. However, a handful of thoughtful writers started to write their interpretation of the era.

Interesting is the idea that literature, as the literary critic Raymond Williams affirms , is part of the general process which creates institutions in which the meanings that are valued by the community are shared and made active. It is not surprising that this fundamental role of literature made of it a basic cultural path for the acceptance of new philosophies and ways of life. So literature does not only reflect the reality of society, but it contributes to the shaping of this reality. ¹³²

In this section, it will be shown how American literature responded to industrialization .This will be of course with reference to two literary works. The first is a short story by the romantic writer Nathaniel Hawthorne while the second is another short story by Herman Melville.

5.1- The British and the American Reactions to Industrialism

Probably, it would be useful at the outset to point at the difference between the response of the Americans to industry and that of the British .The British, to whom industry had first made itself felt, rejected industrial life and considered it as a source of evil. This British attitude to industrialization

132 James D.Hart, ,*The Oxford Companion to American Literature*.
Oxford University Press, 1995 .

manifests itself in the writing of Matthew Arnold who emphasized the demoralizing and devastating effects of industry on the British society.

In fact, the majority of critics observed that the desire to transcend the limitations of the modern world constitutes Arnold's most common theme . Throughout Arnold's writings ,one can observe that he was clearly opposed to modern industrialization; moreover, he believed that it created a laborious work ethic, and that the individual in the modern world ended up wasting his life away on mundane tasks. He referred to such a life as a "jail." This is the reason why it is not surprising that many of his poems incorporate this viewpoint. For example, in "The Scholar-Gipsy," he shows and supports the way the scholar-gipsy seeks to break away from this unbearable modern type of lifestyle. Still one can note that in his "A Summer Night," he condemns how the modern industrialized world transforms the individuals into either enslaved laborers or those who are willing to be considered "madmen" by breaking away. No wonder then that Arnold poses nature as a contrast to this industrialized life..

In this regard ,one can equally add that some observers even consider that the writings of the British writer , Arnold made the industrial spirit decline in Britain .Indeed ,he advocated a return to the culture of the Middle Ages as a therapy to the industrial fever .In other words, Arnold managed to work out a purely new British ideology which was a replica of the aristocratic class of the

time, an ideology that emphasized the agrarian aspect of the British society and totally rejected industrialization.

The same thing could not be said about the American men of letters who did not reject industrialization as a modern phenomenon in the American society. Surprisingly enough ,the American writers did not consider that their role was to express the American people's reaction to industrialization, but they were convinced that they should help the Americans adapt to the changes in their lives and to the adjustment caused by the industrial boom.

Significantly enough , what was striking about the American response to industrialization was that they accepted it because it would give them the opportunity to build a new culture far from the European influence and far from the Indian past as well. The American industrial culture is generally based on myths.

5.2- The Machine in the Garden: an American Myth

There is a need to note here that the term *myth* from the New Latin *mthus*, from Late Latin *mthos*, from Greek *muthos* is often used to refer to a story often describing the adventures of superhuman beings that attempts to describe the origin of a people's customs or beliefs or to explain mysterious

events (as the changing of the seasons) for example, a person or thing that exists only in the imagination: the dragon is a *myth*.¹³³

The myth is also defined as a popular belief that is false or unsupported. it is then A traditional, typically ancient story dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serves as a fundamental type in the worldview of a people, as by explaining aspects of the natural world or delineating the psychology, customs, or ideals of society: *the myth of Eros and Psyche; a creation myth* ¹³⁴.

Still, it is worth noting that the myth can also be a popular belief or story that has become associated with a person, institution, or occurrence, especially one considered .

To illustrate a cultural ideal: *a star whose fame turned her into a myth; the pioneer myth of suburbia*. ¹³⁵ At this point, it is important to draw attention to the fact that sometimes the term myth is used to refer to any fiction or half-truth, especially one that forms part of an ideology. It is often a fictitious story, person, or thing: "*German artillery superiority on the Western Front was a myth*"

.¹³⁶

133 *Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition, 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Updated in 2009. Houghton Mifflin Company.

134 Ibid

135 Ibid

136 Ibid

In this regard, one needs equally to add that the newly settled land was a world that revealed new truths and was considered as a world of freedom and liberties even for those who wanted to invent new myths .In fact the settlers of the New World felt the need to invent new myths to be used as the cultural foundation for them as Americans .For this reason, American history was full of mythic interpretations of the American reality.

It is no secret that it was through the invention of cultural myths that the Americans could justify their acceptance of industry and it was, of course ,thanks to literature that new myths were invented and old ones were refurbished .So ,one characteristic feature of the American cultural response to industry was its mythic dimension .another characteristic feature of this response was its nonextremism because the Americans when they accepted industry they did not reject agriculture which is part of their traditional life and one of the features of New Jerusalem or the American Utopia as it was described in the Puritan literature .

As a matter of fact, the American adoption of industry did not mean that the pastoral view of America should get out of the scene. That is why in American films or pictures painted by Americans, one often finds the image of the industrial areas surrounded by trees. In fact this mixture of the industrial and

the agrarian aspects of America reached its height during the Cold War when the American writers did their best to portray America as a peaceful and unpolluted country by hiding the ugly industrial America behind the beautiful and smiling agrarian and pastoral America.

5.3- Nathaniel Hawthorne's Attitude to Industrialization

As one of the American major fiction writers who took upon themselves the project of defining American identity, Nathaniel Hawthorne's attitude to industrialization was a purely mythic because Hawthorne as a man of a system – he was a democrat –and the Democratic Party has always advocated agriculture and provincialism and he was a Yankee who was educated in the advanced industrial environment of Massachusetts and who could not have a hostile view about industry .So he had to accept industry without rejecting the pastoral view of America . This Hawthornian attitude to industry can be clearly realized through his short story “Rappacini's Daughter” which was written as half of Hawthorne's tales in Concord and was published in *The Democratic Review* ,a journal committed to women's issues ¹³⁷

There is a need here to emphasize the fact that the story of "Rappaccini's Daughter" occurs in Rappaccini's botanical garden. This beautiful and lush

137 Millington 87

place can easily be compared to the Garden of Eden, whereby Beatrice plays Eve, and Giovanni is Adam who is introduced and subsequently induces the fall from grace. Although Beatrice's life was lonely, she did not know the extent of her role in her father's experiment. Like the case in other very similar plots in the works of Hawthorne, when Giovanni decides to breach her space, he is infected as well; however, it is his heartlessness that causes Beatrice to take the supposed antidote that leads to her death.

It is remarkable that in "Rappacini's Daughter", Nathaniel Hawthorne clearly integrated industry into the pastoral. So he created a myth out of an old one. In this short story Hawthorne shows how good and evil can coexist and industry which is represented in the story by the industry of medicine by distilling poisonous shrugs cohabitates with nature; the latter which is represented by the garden. Dr Rappacini, the emblematic figure of the modern industrial era, is a doctor who is able to rescue people from death as well as he can kill them with the use of his scientific knowledge:

Nothing could exceed the intentness with which this scientific gardener examined every shrub which grew in his path; it seemed as if he was looking into their innermost nature, making observations in regard to their creative essence, and discovering why one leaf grew in this shape, and another in that, and wherefore

such and such flowers differed among themselves in hue and perfume.¹³⁸

In this very quote, one can observe that Hawthorne probably wants to suggest that science is a double edged weapon ;just as it can cause the happiness and cure to people, it can cause their wretchedness and even their death:

But now, unless Giovanni's draughts of wine had bewildered his senses, a singular incident occurred...a drop or two of moisture from the broken stem of the flower descended upon the lizard's head. For an instant, the reptile contorted itself violently, and then lay motionless in the sunshine. Beatrice observed this remarkable phenomenon, and crossed herself, sadly, but without surprise; nor did she therefore hesitate to arrange the fatal flower in her bosom.¹³⁹

In reality, Rappacini is portrayed as a doctor who can cure the patients but in the meantime, he has a terrible power for destructing people as he did intentionally with his daughter Beatrice and her lover Giovanni.

There is no denying that the major theme of the story seems to be the reconciliation between industry and agriculture and the coexistence of innocence (Beatrice) and danger .So industry as it is described in Hawthorne 's short story is not all that destructive; the botanic garden shows that it can coexist with

138 Hawthorne 649

139 Ibid.P-53

nature and innocence .Another argument that defends industrialization is the fact that evil is not only found inside the garden which can be taken as a microcosm of the industrial era since it is the artifact or a manmade botanic garden. One can easily observe that evil in “Rappacini’s Daughter” seems to exist everywhere inside the garden as well as outside it. Although the spiritual death of Beatrice is caused by her father, the industrialist, her physical death is caused by Giovanni who lives outside the garden and who opposes Rappacini’s scientific experiments and achievements.¹⁴⁰

5.4 -Herman Melville’s Attitude to Industrialization

The reader of Herman Melville's short story “The Tartarus of Maids”, may find it seemingly different from that of Hawthorne in terms of the reaction to industrialization .Unlike Hawthorne, Melville seems to attack and severely criticize industrialization and by the standards of the time, the story seems to express an anticipated indictment of the industrial life in the United States .Moreover ,in this brilliant story, Melville shows that one of the dangerous effects of the colossal industrial development of the time is the disruption of the family and the disappearance of the social ties inherited from the puritan tradition.

140 Millington op.cit 123

In this respect ,it is important to draw attention to the important fact that throughout the story Melville's fundamental aim has been to provide a detailed description of the hellish atmosphere and the unhealthy conditions in which the girls work in the paper factory. The female workers are unmarried women ,or to use Melville's words , “maids” who seem to be doomed to live individually without family because married women cannot be recruited. In this context , Melville writes:

"Then these are all maids," said I, while some pained homage to their pale virginity made me involuntarily bow.

"All maids."

“The girls,” echoed I, glancing round at their silent forms. “ Why is it, Sir, that in most factories, female operatives, of whatever age, are indiscriminately called girls, never women?”¹⁴¹

In addition to this , these girls are described as slaves who are obliged to feed the iron animal or the machine that provides paper:

... "This is the rag-room," coughed the boy.

"You find it rather stifling here," coughed I, in answer; " but the girls don't cough."

"Oh, they are used to it."¹⁴²

141 Ibid

142 Ibid .p24

Little wonder then that, one can observe that the narrator of the story seems surprised by the bad working conditions in this factory. He seems also to cast a disapproving eye to the dangerous social changes brought by the industrial boom .However; for the surprise of the readers he did not provide a solution to the dilemma caused by the development of industrialization. He rather goes back to resume his business since he is a businessman. Surprisingly enough, he states:

“Ah, yes; the winter air in valleys, or gorges, or any sunken place, is far colder and more bitter than elsewhere. You would hardly believe it now, but it is colder here than at the top of Woe dolor Mountain.” I dare say "it is, Sir. But time presses me; I must depart.” With that, remuffling myself in dreadnaught and tippet, thrusting my hands into my huge sealskin mittens, I sallied out into the nipping air, and found poor Black, my horse, all cringing and doubled up with the cold. Soon, wrapped in furs and meditations, I ascended from the Devil's Dungeon. At the Black Notch I paused, and once more bethought me of Temple-Bar. Then, shooting through the pass, all alone with inscrutable nature, I exclaimed—Oh! Paradise of Bachelors! and oh! Tartarus of Maids!¹⁴³

143 Melville.p.74

At this point ,one must emphasize the important fact that the return of the narrator to his ordinary industrial society probably means his acceptance of industrialization as a lived reality though it is at least for him, is unpleasant .In other words ,Melville seems to suggest that industrialization is a necessary and needed evil for the American society and is part of the modern American life that no one can ignore or fight against. In fact, the reader of this story may feel that Melville had prophesied that America would be the most powerful industrial country in the world. In short, Melville and through this story seems to be working out an ideology that consider industrialization as part of the American identity.

Conclusion

The conclusion that can be drawn from the study of the American literary reaction to industrialism is that, indeed, American literature has played and is still playing an important role in helping the Americans adopt themselves to the presence of industrialization in their daily life. In fact, the American writers contributed in a way or another to the invention and the refurbishing of cultural myths that justified the double nature of the American nation which is the possibility of the successful coexistence of agriculture and industry. It was thanks to this that the Americans could impose their cultural hegemony on the

West simply because the Europeans were unable to invent myths the way the Americans did.

Undoubtedly, the Americans with their acceptance of industrialization and their faithfulness to the pastoral managed to work out a totally new and original culture which is different from the European one and more original if compared to the puritan culture that had European roots .all the American writers have contributed to the working out of the myth once invented by John Winthrop who once stated: "...we shall consider that we are a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us". This myth came true in modern America which is really a city (industry) upon a hill (pastoral).¹⁴⁴ In the light of this, one can thus confirm the idea that American literature has not only played its role in expressing the American response to industrialization but more than that, it has contributed to a great extent to the consolidation of the industrial culture in the American way of life.

144 Leo Marx. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Paperback, 2000.).p.67.

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