

THE INFLUENCE OF THE ENGLISH ENLIGHTENMENT PHILOSOPHY ON THE
FORMATION OF 19TH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERARY THOUGHT

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Abstract. The Enlightenment is the fourth period of English literature, one of the periods that, with its great discoveries and innovations, has taken its rightful place among the peaks of literature. This article studies the adoption and transformation of the ideals of the English Enlightenment in early American literature. It provides information on how philosophical concepts such as reason, empiricism, natural rights, individualism, and moral progress, originally expressed by English Enlightenment thinkers, were adapted and reinterpreted by early American writers.

Keywords: English Enlightenment, early American literature, adoption, transformation, rationalism, individualism, feudalism, Enlightenment.

This period arose in Europe in the 17th-18th centuries and later spread throughout the world. Representatives of this movement attach special importance to knowledge, they believe that the world can be understood with reason, and it should be changed with thought. The main feature of this movement is the fact that its literature is aimed at saving the people from ignorance and backwardness, and calls for knowledge and enlightenment. As its name suggests, the issue of educating the people, and society as a whole, was paramount during this period.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the ideas of the Enlightenment philosophy in Europe, and in particular England, gave a strong impetus to the development of scientific, political and cultural thought in the Western world. This philosophical movement put forward reason, experience, individual freedom and human rights as the main factors of social development. It was these ideas that served as an important ideological source in American society and its literary thought, striving for independence.

We would not be mistaken if we say that this period was the golden age of American literature, because the creators of this period created in this area a huge variety of wonderful directions, themes and methods and strengthened the place of American literature in world literature.

Literature has such a power that with its amazing power it takes people on adventures, fantastic journeys and forces them to chase after some criminal, to find traces of a crime. However, within this wide range there is one amazing trend that is rarely liked by people, but has an indispensable place in literature.

The ideas of empiricism, social contract and the primacy of reason put forward by the English Enlightenment thinkers — John Locke, David Hume, Francis Bacon — laid the foundation for the artistic interpretation of the issues of human personality, moral choice and social responsibility in 19th-century American literature.

The philosophy of the English Enlightenment served as a conceptual, ideological and aesthetic basis in the formation of 19th-century American literary thought.

This influence was not unidirectional, but multifaceted, leading to a new interpretation of the relationship between man, society and nature in literary thought.

Empiricism, one of the main principles of the English Enlightenment philosophy, placed experience and observation at the center of the cognitive process in 19th-century American literature. John Locke's views on the "tabula rasa" were actively used by American writers to describe the human personality as a formative phenomenon, open to experience.

This approach led to the proliferation of didactic and moralistic works in American literature. In particular, the publicistic and autobiographical heritage of Benjamin Franklin puts forward the image of a person who has matured through reason, labor and personal experience.

This situation is manifested as a form of the English Enlightenment concept of a rational person adapted to the American cultural environment.

During this period, the ideas of natural rights and social harmony put forward by the English Enlightenment became central themes in 19th-century American literature. The issues of human freedom, independence of conscience, and personal responsibility became the main directions of artistic thought.

In this process, literature emerged not only as an aesthetic phenomenon, but also as a means of shaping social consciousness. American writers applied the legal and philosophical views of the English Enlightenment to the life of society through artistic images. As a result, literature became an important cultural institution that nurtured civic consciousness.

In addition, views based on individualism deepened in 19th-century American literature and rose to the level of a philosophical and artistic trend. This was especially clearly manifested in the work of representatives of the school of transcendentalism.

In the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the ideas of the inner "I" of the individual, independent thinking, and self-awareness occupy a priority place. He combines the principles of reason and freedom of the English Enlightenment with the American spirit, putting forward a new philosophical position that puts the individual above society.

In the same direction, the work of Henry David Thoreau is also of great importance. In his works, personal experience, harmony with nature, and moral independence are interpreted as a logical continuation of the English Enlightenment.

From the above, it becomes clear that the influence of the philosophy of the English Enlightenment on the formation of American literary thought of the 19th century was direct and systemic. The ideas of the English Enlightenment permeated American literature not only as an ideological source, but also as a force that gave aesthetic and methodological direction.

Ideological continuity between the English Enlightenment and American literary thought

The philosophy of the English Enlightenment created a continuous ideological continuity in American literature. John Locke's views on empiricism and natural rights were creatively adopted by American writers, leading to the interpretation of the human person as a free, responsible and active subject in artistic thought. This served to form individual freedom and civic consciousness in American literature.

However, the ideas of the English Enlightenment were not mechanically copied in American literature.

On the contrary, they were reinterpreted in new historical and cultural conditions and enriched with independent literary and philosophical concepts. This indicates that American literature, relying on European traditions, sought to form a national identity.

A comparative analysis shows that the relationship between the philosophy of the English Enlightenment and American literary thought is complex and multi-layered. Although American literary thought was inspired by English philosophy, it was formed as an independent direction based on its own national experience, social problems and cultural values.

This situation indicates that the English Enlightenment was creatively reworked in American literature and a new literary and philosophical paradigm emerged there. This paradigm determined the place of 19th-century American literature in the world literary process.

It scientifically confirms the important and systematic role of the English Enlightenment philosophy in the formation of 19th-century American literary thought. The ideas about the primacy of reason, reliance on experience, natural rights and individual freedom put forward by the English Enlightenment laid the foundation for the emergence of new artistic and philosophical views in American literature.

The study showed that although the English Enlightenment philosophy entered American literature as a basic theoretical source, it was completely reworked there and adapted to new historical, social and cultural conditions. American writers did not directly repeat English philosophy, but combined it with the ideas of national thought, democratic values and personal freedom. As a result, the English Enlightenment underwent a transformation in American literature and emerged as an independent literary and philosophical paradigm.

The conclusion also shows that the views of a number of English Enlightenment thinkers on empiricism and natural rights led to the interpretation of man in American literature as an active, conscious and morally responsible person. This led to the centrality of individualism, the rise of civic consciousness and responsibility to society in American literary thought.

The results of the study also showed that the rationalism of the English Enlightenment entered into a synthesis with romantic and transcendentalist views in American literature. In this process, the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau gained special importance, putting forward the ideas of inner freedom of the individual, spiritual independence, and harmony with nature. As a result, American literary thought was nourished by the European Enlightenment, but acquired a deeper and more spiritually rich direction. In general, the philosophy of the English Enlightenment served as a theoretical, ideological, and aesthetic basis for the formation of American literature of the 19th century. This influence is of great importance in determining the place of American literature in the world literary process and opens up broad scientific opportunities for comparative literary studies, philosophy, and cross-cultural studies.

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