

THE PERIOD OF AMERICAN ROMANTICISM

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***Abstract.** This article provides history of American Romanticism, the literary styles of American Romanticism, the literary styles of American writers, and the impact of European Romanticism on American literature. Lastly, the paper will present arguments that explore the idea of American Romanticism and prominent examples of this genre during that time.*

***Key words.** American Romanticism, writers, literary styles.*

American Romanticism, like other literary movements, developed on the heels of romantic movements in Europe. Its beginnings can be traced back to the eighteenth century there. In America, it dominated the literary scene from around 1820 to the end of the Civil War and the rise of Realism. Like other terms describing literary movements, the term Romanticism defies simple definition for a number of reasons. It was a movement that arose gradually, evolved in many ways from where it began, went through so many phases and was practiced by so many disparate writers that any simple definition is "slippery" at best. In addition, the terms we use to describe literary movements are really terms that are much broader and vaster, reflecting large scale thinking in the arts, in general, philosophy, religion, politics. After the Civil War The Civil War changed America irrevocably Formerly it had seemed as if the United States could accommodate an infinity of warring sects and tendencies , as if an expanding America could have no limits either spatial or spiritual , as if the saturnalia of the spirit announced by Emerson would have no end. Now the Union itself had been placed in mortal jeopardy . With immediate retrospective hindsight it seemed that this crisis had always been looming up menacingly on the horizon as an inevitable consequence of the extremism of the age. Henceforth, despite lip - service to a pluralist ideal, diversity

would always be laden with implications of division. As the Star - Spangled Banner was called upon to envelop a body in rags and tatters, Americans would be the more censorious about possible infamies beneath. The Civil War also put in question the cherished assumption that the United States as a democratic society was destined to occupy a uniquely privileged place amongst nations, since it would therefore be spared the violence generated by the monarchies and hierarchies of Europe. The model of a confident, progressive America symbolically pitted against the Old World had the effect of symbolically unifying the United States itself . Now it had to be faced that the nation was deeply divided , that it had not been spared the ravages of war, that faith in the United States as a source of unequivocal , unimpeachable values was imperiled, that the land of democracy could itself be unjust . The erection of the Statue of Liberty in 1884 was something more than a simple reaffirmation of America; it was an attempt to put back all that the Civil War had taken away. After the Civil War America faced the future in a sober and chastened mood, which many bitternesses and resentments still rankled. An Age of Dramatic Change With the end of the British-American War of 1812, a new era of American life began, shaped by dramatic transformations in almost all spheres of society and culture. A nascent industrialization began to replace household production, setting family members free to migrate to big cities or join the westward movement driving a relentless expansion of the nation. Both processes, intensified by increased immigration, profited from a transportation revolution that included railroads, canals, steamboats, and a growing network of roads. The transportation revolution emerged in tandem with a communications revolution created by new printing technologies, the telegraph, a mass-circulation Penny Press, and new, popular cultural forms that anticipated the modern media. One consequence of these changes was the differentiation of classes, including the emergence of a middle class, and of forms of frontier life that were far removed from the influence and control of East Coast America. What is the best term to describe this period? It depends on the disciplinary perspective from which we are approaching the age. "Antebellum America" is by now the term most often used by

historians, because it is the most neutral one. But it fails to give any hint of the intense dramas of the period. In contrast, the "Jacksonian Period," formerly the long-established term, draws attention to the main political figure of the age Andrew Jackson, a highly influential President from 1829-1837 - and narrows the significance of the period to his larger-than-life figure. "The Age of Egalitarianism," at times proposed as an alternate definition of Jacksonianism, refers to the central ideological promise of the period which was, however, more rhetorical than real. Romanticism has remained the preferred term in literary and cultural history because of its focus on fundamental changes in cultural orientation. Alexis de Tocqueville's seminal study *Democracy in America* can help provide answer. In 1831, Tocqueville started a nine-month tour of America. He had come to America to see, as he put it, the contours of a new political system called democracy that he considered to be the political system of the future, and which would eventually also reach and transform his native France. In the years after gaining independence from England, the dominant American political self-description had still been that of a "republic," whereas the term "democracy" raised associations of mob-rule. Tocqueville's use of the term "democracy" in the title of his book can be taken as an unmistakable sign that a significant terminological shift had taken place, but also that America was now considered the exemplary model of this new political system. If there is a common denominator in the many discussions of the period, it is the claim that American society began to unfold its democratic promise in the transition from the early republic to antebellum America.

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