



**ANGLO-AMERICAN ENCOUNTERS AND THE EVOLUTION
OF CULTURAL INDEPENDENCE IN 19TH-CENTURY AMERICAN
LITERATURE**

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ABSTRACT :This article explores the complex process through which American literature achieved cultural independence during the 19th century, focusing on the dynamic interplay known as Anglo-American encounters. Although the United States secured political independence in 1776, its literary culture remained heavily influenced by British traditions well into the early 19th century. The study aims to investigate how American writers gradually moved from imitation to innovation, ultimately establishing a distinct national literary identity.

The research employs a qualitative methodological framework, including comparative literary analysis of British Romanticism and American Transcendentalism, historical contextualization of key events such as the War



of 1812, and intertextual analysis of genre adaptation. Authors such as Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and Ralph Waldo Emerson are examined as representative figures in this transition.

The findings identify three major stages in this evolution: (1) imitation of British literary forms, (2) adaptation of these forms to American themes such as the frontier and democratic ideals, and (3) the emergence of intellectual independence during the American Renaissance. The results further demonstrate that American writers did not simply reject British influence but actively reinterpreted and transformed it to reflect their unique socio-cultural environment.

The discussion emphasizes that Anglo-American encounters functioned as both a constraint and a catalyst, fostering a creative tension that ultimately led to the development of a distinct literary voice. The study concludes that the 19th century represents a crucial turning point in which American literature achieved cultural sovereignty, contributing significantly to global literary discourse.

KEYWORDS ; Anglo-American Encounters, Cultural Independence, American Renaissance, British Influence, National Identity, Romanticism, Transcendentalism, Literary Development.

INRTODUCTION:

The 19th century represents a formative period in the development of American literature, characterized by an ongoing struggle for cultural and intellectual independence from Great Britain. Although the United States achieved political sovereignty following the American Revolution in 1776, its literary and cultural institutions remained deeply rooted in British traditions.



This condition created a complex dynamic often described as “Anglo-American encounters,” in which influence, imitation, resistance, and transformation coexisted.

In the early decades of the 19th century, American writers relied heavily on established British literary models. The dominance of authors such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in Romantic poetry, as well as Sir Walter Scott in historical fiction, shaped the stylistic and thematic orientation of emerging American literature. As a result, American literary production was frequently perceived as derivative, lacking a distinct national voice.

However, this dependence gradually gave way to a conscious effort to establish cultural autonomy. As noted by literary historian Richard Gray, American writers were engaged in a process of “inventing” a national identity by adapting inherited European forms to the social realities of the New World. This transformation was closely linked to broader historical and ideological developments, including the War of 1812, the rise of nationalism, westward expansion, and the growth of democratic ideals.

A critical turning point in this evolution was the emergence of Transcendentalism, led by thinkers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. This intellectual movement emphasized individualism, self-reliance, and a direct relationship with nature, marking a significant departure from European literary traditions. Emerson’s seminal address, *The American Scholar* (1837), is often regarded as an intellectual declaration of independence, urging American writers to reject passive imitation and to cultivate an original voice grounded in their own cultural experience.

Furthermore, the concept of the “American Renaissance” (approximately 1830–1865) highlights the period in which American literature



achieved maturity and global recognition. Writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman produced works that were not only distinctly American in subject matter but also innovative in form and philosophical depth. These authors demonstrated that American literature could transcend its colonial origins and contribute meaningfully to world literature.

This study aims to examine the evolution of cultural independence in 19th-century American literature through the lens of Anglo-American encounters. Specifically, it seeks to analyze how American writers moved from imitation of British models to the creation of a unique literary identity. By exploring key authors, movements, and historical contexts, the article argues that Anglo-American interactions were not merely a process of influence but a dynamic and reciprocal exchange that ultimately facilitated the emergence of a sovereign American literary tradition.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine the evolution of cultural independence in 19th-century American literature within the framework of Anglo-American encounters. The research is based on an interdisciplinary approach, combining literary analysis with historical and cultural interpretation.

First, a comparative literary analysis is employed to examine the relationship between British Romanticism and American Transcendentalism. The works of authors such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge are compared with those of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau to identify both continuities and divergences in themes, style, and philosophical outlook.



Second, the study utilizes historical contextualization to situate literary developments within key socio-political events, including the War of 1812, the expansion of the American frontier, and the rise of national consciousness. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how historical conditions influenced literary production and the search for cultural identity.

Third, an intertextual analysis is conducted to explore how American writers adapted and transformed British literary genres, such as the Gothic novel and the historical romance. Texts by Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and Edgar Allan Poe are examined to reveal how inherited forms were reshaped to reflect American themes and experiences.

Finally, the study incorporates elements of critical discourse analysis to interpret key essays and speeches, particularly Emerson's *The American Scholar* (1837), as foundational texts in articulating literary independence. Through these combined methods, the research aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Anglo-American literary interactions.

RESULTS

The analysis reveals that the evolution of cultural independence in 19th-century American literature occurred through a gradual, multi-stage process shaped by both external influence and internal innovation.

The first stage, imitation, is characterized by a strong reliance on British literary traditions. Early American writers adopted established forms, genres, and stylistic conventions, often reproducing the themes and structures of British Romanticism. However, even within this phase, subtle adaptations



began to emerge, particularly in the incorporation of American settings and folklore.

The second stage, adaptation, marks a transitional period in which American authors began to modify inherited literary forms to reflect the unique realities of the United States. Writers such as Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper played a crucial role in this process by integrating elements of the American landscape, frontier life, and national mythology into their works. This stage demonstrates a growing awareness of the need for a distinct literary identity.

The third stage, intellectual and cultural independence, is most clearly expressed during the American Renaissance (approximately 1830–1865). During this period, writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman developed innovative literary forms and themes that were deeply rooted in American experience. The emergence of Transcendentalism further reinforced the emphasis on individualism, self-reliance, and originality.

Overall, the findings indicate that American literature did not simply reject British influence but transformed it into a foundation for creative and intellectual independence.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlight the complex and dynamic nature of Anglo-American literary encounters. Rather than representing a linear progression from dependence to independence, this process was characterized by tension, negotiation, and reinterpretation.

One of the key findings is the paradoxical relationship between influence and resistance. While British literature initially served as a dominant



model, it also provided the tools necessary for American writers to develop their own voice. This “creative tension” functioned as a catalyst for innovation, enabling authors to move beyond imitation toward originality.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that cultural independence was closely linked to broader ideological shifts, particularly the rise of democratic values and individualism in American society. The emphasis on self-reliance in Transcendentalist thought reflects not only a literary transformation but also a broader cultural redefinition of identity.

Another important aspect is the role of space and geography. The American frontier, as depicted in the works of James Fenimore Cooper and others, became a powerful symbol of freedom, possibility, and national distinctiveness. This spatial dimension further distinguished American literature from its British counterpart, which was often rooted in established social hierarchies and historical traditions.

Additionally, the adaptation of literary genres, such as the Gothic and the historical novel, illustrates the creative appropriation of European forms. Writers like Edgar Allan Poe transformed the Gothic into a psychological and introspective mode, thereby contributing to the development of a uniquely American literary aesthetic.

In this context, the American Renaissance can be understood not merely as a period of literary achievement but as the culmination of a long process of cultural negotiation. It represents the moment at which American literature asserted its independence while simultaneously engaging in a global literary dialogue.

In conclusion, the Anglo-American encounter should be viewed as a reciprocal and evolving relationship that played a fundamental role in



shaping the trajectory of American literature. Through adaptation, resistance, and innovation, American writers were able to construct a distinct

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