

From Regionalism to Nationalism and Universalism: The Poetry of Robert Frost

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الخلاصة

يعنى هذا البحث باستكشاف ما إذا كان الشاعر الأمريكي المعاصر (روبرت فروست) (١٨٧٤ - ١٩٦٣) محلي أو عالمي النزعة بشعره. حيث تعرف النزعة المحلية (regionalism) بأنها توظيف لعناصر مكانية محددة ببيئة جغرافية، وهو ما يمكن أن يكون مؤشرًا لنزعة قومية من جهة، أو انتقاداً ملائم أو مواقف محلية من جهة أخرى. لقد كتب فروست بشكل رئيسي قصائد تصور أماكن أو شخصيات ريفية، وهذا مما قد يوهم القارئ العابر بأنه شاعر طبعة. ونظراً لآرائه وبيئة (نيو إنجلنด) التي تتجلى في قصائده، وعلى الرغم من ميله لأن يتتجاوز برؤياه إلى ما هو وراء المحلية، فإنه يعبر عن تلك الآراء بطريقة تجعل أبناء جلدته يرون فيه شاعراً قومياً، نظراً للعناصر المحلية التي يوظفها من مكان وأسلوب وشخصيات، بينما يلمس قراء آخرين النزعة الموضوعية الإنسانية والعالمية التوجّه في شعره.

يستهل البحث بمقدمة يناقش فيها الباحث تعريف النزعة المحلية بالإشارة إلى المضامين الأدبية للمصطلح. والمناقشة مدعاومة بأمثلة متعددة من الأدباء العالمي بشكل عام والأمريكي بشكل خاص. ثم يتم توضيح الخصائص المحلية في قصائد الشاعر وتشمل على سبيل المثال: الخصائص المكانية لمنطقة (نيو إنجلند)، الإرث الثقافي المتمثل بالفلسفة التطهيرية (Puritanism)، وتأثير بعض المواقف التاريخية الأمريكية على آراء وخصوصاً مسألة الهسود الأمريكيين ومحنتهم. ويختهي البحث بخاتمة تلخص أهم النتائج التي خلصت إليها الدراسة.

Abstract

This paper aims at exploring whether the American poet laureate Robert Lee Frost (1874 - 1963) was a regional poet, regionalism being the inclination to employ local colors and elements that focus on a certain locality which could be an indication of ethnic or local pride on one hand, or a criticism of certain regional features or situations on the other.

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Frost mainly wrote poems of rural settings and characters, this could mislead the casual reader to take him as a nature poet. Through his American voice, New-England setting, and tendency to extend his vision beyond the local, he expresses an attitude that let his natives see him as a national poet; in spite of the regionality of his setting, style, and characters, while others could touch the humanitarian and universal tendencies in his poetry.

The paper opens with an introduction in which the definition of regionalism is discussed with reference to the literary implications of the term; the discussion is supported by various literary examples from world literature in general and American literature in particular. Then the regional features of the poet's writings are explained; they include, but are not limited to, the regional setting of New-England, the Puritan heritage, and the influences of American historical events on his attitude; especially the indictment of the Native American-Indian. The paper ends with a conclusion that summarizes the final findings of the paper.

Introduction:

The word "region" came into English usage in the 14th century via French, who took the word from the Latin "region" which signified "boundary" or "district" and literally it meant "area that is ruled" ("regere" to rule).² The adjective "regional" designates the sense of belonging to or characteristic of a geographic area of a country. Furthermore, the term signifies the association with the distinct speech and usage of a particular area.

Regional literature emphasizes then the setting, speech, customs and events of a specific region or area. And in order to be considered a regional piece of writing, the aforementioned should influence the nature of the characters and the way they feel, think, and interact with the world. The moors in Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights, "Wessex" in Thomas Hardy's novels, and Mississippi in Faulkner's, for instance, all have effects on the characters' attitudes and dispositions.³

The term "regionalism" denotes also prejudice in favor of a particular region. It is the local flavor and color that makes a particular piece of writing a cherished legacy of a specific culture. When these celebrated characteristics are nationwide regionalism then melts in the pot of

2- "Region", Microsoft Student with Encarta Premium Dictionary, 2009 DVD.

3- M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, A Glossary of Literary Terms. (Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005) p. 202

nationalism; that is pride in the nation as a whole regardless of the variable ethnicities, religions and customs; it turns to be a celebration of the mosaic cultural structure of the nation. In spite of the fact that regional features could be found in numerous examples of world literature (Arabic, British, Indian, African, and European) the term regionalism associated with American culture, often referred to as "Americanism". For example; Philip Freneau in "The Indian Burying Ground" (1788) celebrates the joys of life and the Native American spiritual communication between the living, the dead, and the natural world.⁴

Regionalism in America gained momentum in the last decades of the 19th century; writers became more interested in exploring the cultural, social, and literary characteristics of many regions of the United States. The war of 1812 increased the tendency to produce American literature and enhance local culture as a further stress of American independence.⁵ A number of significant literary names appeared like: Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant and James Fenimore Cooper, in fiction important writers wrote books that dealt with specific aspects of American culture. Mark Twain in Huckleberry Finn and Harriet Beecher Stowe in Uncle Tom's Cabin exemplify Southern and African-American issues. The diversity and vastness of post-Civil War America deepened the sense in local differences. Small rural communities became subjects of literary interest with the increasing urbanization and the advance of mass transportation. Local dialects, proverbs, and spellings were used for humorous effects, or to create a vivid and realistic characterization.⁶

Edgar Allan Poe and George Washington Harris wrote on the American frontier, George Cooper wrote Leatherstocking Tales, Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter explored the drama of a New England lady committing adultery, F. Scott Fitzgerald captured the mood of the "roaring twenties" and the American dream in The Great Gatsby, and so on.

However, American drama, which began in 17th century American colonies, remained dependant on British models; Ronald Wainscott, Professor of Theater and Drama in Indiana University observes that " no

4- The misconception that Regionalism is an American "invention" should be corrected. As it can be found in writings other than American writings. For example; the Egyptian set of place and customs enriches Toufiq Al-Hakim's novels; the same applies to Leilah Nadir's The Orange Trees of Baghdad in which the events of violence in Iraq and the local social structure shape the dramatic development of the book.

5- The United States entered the War of 1812 to defend its western settlements, and its maritime rights against the British.

6- Termaine McDowell, "Regionalism in American Literature". Minnesota History Magazine, (Minnesota: Minnesota Historical Society Press). Volume 20, No. 2, June, 1939. pp. 115 - 116.

New York City theater season presented more American plays than British plays until 1910." This was mainly due to the common language and the ready availability of British plays and British actors.⁷ However, American playwrights adapted that British output to American themes such as immigration and westward expansion. Characters like the "Yankee", the "Negro", and the "Indian" appeared in these adaptations.⁸

American regionalists often depict scenes and settings of rural America, country musicians, farmers, cowboys, rural Midwestern life, outlaws and gangsters, and later in the modern age the individual's isolation in modern metropolitans. Certain concepts and values came to be associated with American culture; for instance, Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass celebrates American individuality. Carl Sandburg in his impressionistic, unrhymed poetry writes on industrialization and American prospects, Langston Hughes' "Harlem" (1951) is concerned with racism and its impact on American society represented by alienating blacks from the American Dream and the possible burst of their feelings of indignation and frustration.⁹

New England: A Regional Setting, a Universal Mood of Thinking:

New England nature and people provide a major portion of Frost's literary raw material. Archibald MacLeish in Encyclopedia Britannica calls Frost "the poet of New England"; as he (Frost) lived in New Hampshire, wrote "North of Boston", had a southern accent, and the peculiar natural environment of his region is often depicted in his poetry. For these reasons understanding his relationship to New England is necessary for deciding whether he is a regional poet. However, Frost's poems are not pastorals; as the focus in them is on human concerns rather than on rural elements. New England setting and local culture inspired him to write poems that portray the local culture, yet, he often expresses opposing standpoints toward certain prevailing regional attitudes.¹⁰

Frost's images are drawn from the New England countryside, his language and style from the people of the region, yet, his observations

7- Ronald Wainscott, "American Literature: Drama".. Microsoft Student with Encarta Premium Dictionary. 2009 DVD.

8- "American Literature", [www.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American-Literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American-Literature), Retrieved on (25th August, 2011).

9- Archibald MacLeish, "Robert Frost and New England". Encyclopedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite. (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica), 2009.

10- Ed Folsom, "American Literature: Poetry", Microsoft Student with Encarta Premium Dictionary, 2009 DVD.

have an edge of skepticism and irony. So he's traditional and skeptical, regional and anti-regional.¹¹ He explores the lives of New Englanders through his dramatic monologues. His poems can be read both as regional and anti-regional. His poetry explores modern psychological dimensions in the New England character without losing focus on the universal scene.

Frost's Attitude to Nature:

Robert Frost often writes about hills, woods, lakes, fields, and animals that some critics view him as a nature poet. However, Frost's concern is man rather than nature; in an interview Frost says "I guess I'm not a nature poet."¹²

The poet's interest in nature, obsession with the life of ordinary people, and the use of colloquialism remind us of William Wordsworth. Yet, the "Wordsworthian" pantheism is not reflected in Frost's poetry, instead of oneness with nature the reader detects otherness in which nature is looked at realistically rather than ideally:

Now close the windows and hush all the fields;
If the trees must, let them silently toss;
No bird is singing now and if there is,
Be it my loss.
It will be long ere the marshes resume
It will be long ere the earliest bird:
So close the window and not hear the wind
But see all wind-stirred.

Nature for Frost in general, unlike the Romantic conviction, does not hold benevolent divinity; the poet keeps man and the natural world distinct and though it sometimes appears to be benevolent, is, more than often, hostile, unresponsive and threatening to man's emotional demands:

When the wind works against us in the dark,
And pelts with snow
The lowest chamber window on the east,
And whispers with a sort of stifled bark,
The beast,
"Come out! Come out!"—

11- Burt Feintuch and David H. Watters, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New England: The Culture and History of An American Region.* (New Hampshire: Yale University Press). P. 944. 2005.

12- Quoted in Marian Montgomery, "Robert Frost and his Use of Barriers: Man Vs. Nature Toward God" in Robert Frost: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. James M. Cox (N.J.: Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, Inc.) 1962. p. 138.

.....
And my heart owns a doubt
Whether 'tis in us to arise with day
And save ourselves unaided.

As in "Rose Pogonias", it may have beauty and peace on the surface but deep down lurks danger and transience, a fact that could lead man to acknowledge his own limitations:

A saturated meadow,
Sun shaped and jewel-small,

.....
And the air was stifling sweet
With the breath of many flowers,...
We raised a simple prayer

.....
That none should mow the grass there
While so confused with flowers.

However, it is this acknowledgment that transcends man onto a stage where he accepts his fate stoically. Nature then works in Frost's world with a different mechanism from that of the Romantics. This stoicism, often associated with Puritan agrarian thought, makes life more bearable for his speakers.¹³ In "After Apple Picking" there is the sense of the inevitability of loss. The speaker, though deeply rooted in the life style of his region, is owed by its hardships:

"For I have had too much
Of apple-picking:
I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired."

Frost wrote this poem when he was 39 years old while living in England, critic Jay Parini suggests that he (Frost) was stimulated to write of New England partly out of homesickness.¹⁴

It becomes clear, then, that the New England natural setting is almost excluded from any poetic expressions of feelings of preference or bias. The poet writes about a regional setting but retains an objective, sometimes pragmatic attitude.

13- Zainab Mohammed Abbass, "Robert Frost's Vision of Life". Unpublished thesis. (Baghdad: University of Baghdad, College of Languages, Department of English). September, 2006. PP. 101 – 102.

14- Jay Parini, Robert Frost: A Life. (London: Fitzhenry & Whiteside Ltd.). 1999. PP. 133 – 134.

Frost and Puritanism:

In America, Puritan moralism and its sense of an elect people in covenant with God deeply affected the national character.¹⁵ The Puritan belief that communities were formed by covenants helped to shape the cultural identity of the American people, resulting ultimately in producing America's democratic institution.¹⁶

Frost's pride in American Puritanism is clearly evident in his poem "The Generations of Men" (1913), which puts him at the opposite camp of critics of English Puritanism. The poem explores the modern Yankee Puritan "pride in ancestry" exemplified by a young man and woman, they are distant relatives who meet at a family reunion. They note that their original Calvinist heritage is still alive. However, they are liberal toward waves of immigrants that flocked to America "one mustn't bear too hard on the newcomers". In this poem the young couple pronounce Frost's view which is expressed also in a 1919 letter to Louis Untermeyer (1885-1977), an American anthologist and poet: "Half of me has been here nine generations, the other half one generation, which makes me more representative I think than if I was altogether of old stock."¹⁷ The young man in the poem reflects Frost's attitude on how to regard Puritanism:

But don't you think we sometimes make
Too much
Of the old stock? What counts is the ideals,
And these will bear some keeping still
About.

Reminding the public of New England Puritan "ideals" represents an important endeavor for Robert Frost particularly during the 1930's. However, his defense of New England Puritanism was combined by a liberal rejection of narrow mindedness and strictness of moral code of behavior "They read secular poetry, played musical instruments, cracked jokes, and drank alcoholic beverages" so he comments.¹⁸

Frost was aware of the radicalism of his attitudes on Puritanism. The critics of New England Puritanism, he holds, take certain kind of people

15- Puritanism reached North America with the English settlers who founded Plymouth Colony in 1620. It remained the dominant religious force in New England throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. W. A. Redmond, "Puritanism", Microsoft Student with Encarta Premium Dictionary, 2009 DVD.

16- Peter J. Stanlis, "Robert Frost and Creative Evolution" in Modern Age: A Quarterly Review, Spring, 2012. (Chicago: Intercollegiate Studies Institute). P. 115.

17- Ibid, p. 121.

18- Peter J. Stanlis, " Robert Frost: The Conversationalist as Poet". Modern Age: A quarterly Review, Fall, 1990. p. 327.

who came to America as representatives of Puritanism. Those opponents to Puritanism like to talk about witchcraft and Salem ignoring the significant intellectual, political, and cultural achievements of the best of New England Puritans who burst through a long age of repression into establishing the first American civil institutions and universities and who pioneered woman's education. Critics, who reviewed Frost's collection North of Boston praising his skill in picturing "a tradition in decline", were objected to by the poet. For him the tradition was not and should not decline, it is the public perception of it that should change.

Frost's political poem "The Gift Outright", recited in John F. Kennedy's inauguration, portrays his national pride of the United State's ascension from a dependent English settlement and colony made up of versatile races to an independent American nation; moreover, it discusses the growth of the bond between America and its people:

The land was ours before we were the land's.

She was our land more than a hundred years

Before we were her people.

Personifying the American land by using the words "she" and "her" makes it an equal partner with the citizens, a thing revealed through the "we" and "our" of the poem. The "gift" mentioned in the title is the sense of spiritual belonging as well as material possession which had to be earned by both partners. The land gave itself to its settlers while America was still a British colony; they did not "possess" it but merely settled in it:

She was ours

In Massachusetts, in Virginia,

But we were England's, still colonials,

The reference to Massachusetts and Virginia sets the speaker's geographical location, whereas the phrase "we were still colonials" sets the time; thus bringing the regional features of the poem into full circle.

The second half of the poem explains how the early Americans became "her people" or how the land "possessed" them:

Until we found out that it was ourselves

We were withholding from our land of living,

And forthwith found salvation in surrender.

The bond becomes mutual once the people make sacrifices and contribute labor to the land. So while the citizens possess the land they must be committed to its growth and prosperity "deed of gift was many deeds of war". The "surrender" mentioned in the poem is not an act of "giving in"; instead, it signifies a change of attitude: we no longer belong to

England, we belong to this land. The sense of Americanism and distinction in the poem relates to the concept of regionalism in that it emphasizes a specific place and time. The relationship between Americans and America goes beyond the geographical implications of place to include time; while the poem emphasizes the past it connects this past in a direct relationship with the future "Such as we, such as she would become."¹⁹

Though "The Gift Outright" does not mention the indictment of Native Americans which accompanied the formation of the United States, Frost's "A Cabin in the Clearing", "The Vanishing Red" and "The Sachem of the Clouds" are dedicated to this issue. The speaker in "A Cabin in the Clearing" states that "knowing who and where one is" is important as it reflects awareness of one's geographical belonging. The memory of the violence that accompanied the formation of the American nation sometimes hinders the confident expression of patriotism in Frost's poetry.

"The Sachem of the Clouds" reflects one of Frost's boyhood passions that is "angry sympathy with the American Indians"²⁰. The poem portrays a gothic imaginary revenge on behalf of the American aborigines. The speaker of the poem, the sachem (chief of Native Americans), mourns the defeat of his kinsmen at the hands of the white settlers.²¹ He invokes the natural elements to revenge for his people:

Come, O come, with storm, come darkness!
Speed my clouds on
Winter's breath.
All my race is gone before me, all my race is low in death.
Ever, as I ruled a people, shall this smoke arise in cloud;
Ever shall it freight the tempest for the ocean of the proud.
'Thanks!' I hear their cities thanking that
My race is low in death.
Come, O come, with storm, come darkness! Speed
My clouds on
Winter's breath!"

19- Albert J. Von Frank, "Modern American Poetry: On "The Gift Outright""
http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a_f/frost/gift.htm. Retrieved on (29th December, 2012).

20- Jeff Westover, "National Forgetting and Remembering in the Poetry of Robert Frost". June 2004. Texas Studies in Literature & Language; Summer 2004, Vol. 46 Issue 2, p. 207.

21- Karen L. Kilcup, ed. Robert Frost and Feminine Literary Tradition, 1999. (Iowa: University of Iowa Press). P 147.

The apocalyptic tone of the poem envisions an ill-omened scene of racial conflict where winter represents the Sachem's revenging powers.²² The voice of the Indian chief haunts the ghastly poem distressing the satisfaction of the white usurpers' victory. The poem's sympathy with the Native American case brings into light the point that, For Frost, nationality and individual personality were parallel terms. In "Education by Poetry," he explains what he means:

Look! First I want to be a person. And I want you to be a person, and then we can be as interpersonal as you please. We can pull each other's noses--do all sorts of things. But, first of all, you have got to have the personality. First of all, you have got to have the nations and then they can be as international as they please with each other. (Collected Poems, Prose, and Plays, 727)

Similarly, in a letter to Regis Michaud, Frost wrote that:

I am as sure that the colloquial is the root of every good poem as I am that the national is the root of all thought and art. It may shoot up as high as you please and flourish as widely abroad in the air, if only the roots are what and where they should be (Selected Letters, 228).

Such comments suggest that the matter of knowing one's national connection and position, knowing who and where one is, as "A Cabin in the Clearing" puts it, is essential for the practice of self-expression or poetry writing. This knowledge emerges from the dialectic between remembering and forgetting the circumstances of the country evolution; you should forget to be able to live peacefully with the others and you should remember to keep your own sense of identity and belonging. In Frost's poetry, remembering becomes a way of both pronouncing national responsibilities and reviewing forms of ethnic fanaticism.

Conclusion:

Regional literature emphasizes the setting, speech, customs and events of a specific region or area. And in order to be considered a regional piece of writing, the aforementioned should influence the attitudes expressed in the work and the stand points adopted by the speaker. And when certain regional issues are constructively criticized regionalism, then, melts in the

22- Jeff Westover, p. 213.

pot of universal humanism; or, to a lesser extent, pride in the nation as a whole regardless of the variable ethnicities, religions and customs; it turns to be a celebration of the mosaic cultural structure of the nation; and this happens more than often, with Robert Frost.

New England nature and people provide a major portion of Frost's literary raw material. His local setting and culture inspired him to write poems that portray his local culture, yet, he expresses opposing standpoints toward certain regional attitudes or situations. His images and subjects are drawn from the New England countryside, his language and style from the people of the region; yet, his observations have an edge of skepticism and irony producing at the end a literature that inclines to break the regional boundaries. He explores the lives of New Englanders through his dramatic monologues investigating modern psychological dimensions in the local and specific New England character retaining an objective and sometimes pragmatic attitude shifting the focus, thus, onto the universal scene. New England nature and people provide a major portion of Frost's literary raw material. They inspired him to write poems, yet, he often expresses opposing standpoints toward certain regional attitudes or situations.

In his early juvenile poem "The Sachem of the Clouds", written in 1891, Frost discusses the issue of the Native Americans. He adopts a sympathetic attitude toward their indictment; the memory of the violent history of the formation of his country prevails over a confidant expression of patriotism.

His three poems "After Apple Picking", "Birches", and "Mending Wall" belong to the same period, they were likely to have been written around 1912 and 1913 when the poet was living as an expatriate in England. Critic Jay Parini suggests that Frost was incited to write of New England by homesickness. These poems reflect a universal rather than a regionalist view since they have a clear tendency and openness to accept the other. Such receptiveness is similarly reflected in "The Generations of Men" published in 1913. Although the poem reflects pride in American New England Puritanism it expresses a tolerant view towards immigrants, it is an attitude that puts him at the opposite camp of critics of English Puritanism. However, his defense of New England Puritanism was combined by a liberal rejection of narrow mindedness and strictness of moral code of behavior. The poem's sympathy with the American Indian brings into light the point that, for Frost, nationality and individual personality were parallel terms. Here the act of remembering becomes a

way of both pronouncing national responsibilities and rejecting forms of ethnic hostility.

Frost's collection "A Boy's Will" published in 1915 included his two poems "Now Close the Windows" and "Rose Pogonias" both of which reflect the poet's interest in the regional setting of New England and its local colloquialism, yet reflecting detachment and "otherness" rather than emotional involvement with nature. In other words; he writes subjectively of a regional setting. The same can be said about "The Vanishing Red" written between 1915 and 1916 which is a criticism of a regional issue that calls to the mind Frost's early enthusiastic defense of Native Americans.

His late period poem "The Gift Outright" written in 1941 and recited at John F. Kennedy's inauguration in 1961 expresses national pride at the nation's formation. Thus, it similarly breaks the regional narrowness celebrating the oneness of cause, in spite of the jingoism shown in neglecting any mention to the violent history of the country's formation.

The important question remains: What are the impulses that drove Frost from regionalism into nationalism and universalism?

Being a national American poet-laureate of Puritan descent living in New England, Frost aims at achieving peace of mind and reconciliation with a moral dilemma; Though writing poems on the love of ones homeland and region could be a salient feature of a national and patriotic spirit, the teasing question that presents itself is: How could a person who's ancestors had colonized a land that is not their own (i.e America) usurping it from its legitimate peoples (i.e. the Native Americans), by the enforced labor of people who were wrongfully displaced and enslaved by the white man (African-descent citizens) write about "his region" or homeland, not to mention expressing feelings of national pride!

Frost knew he was standing, morally speaking, on shaky grounds. His poetry, throughout its different phases, reflects a fluctuation of emotions and attitudes that stemmed out of the contradictions of the situation he found himself in; especially after being chosen as poet laureate. He lives in a moral purgatory throughout his writings in which he tries to exhibit the American concept of the homeland and the right to live in a specific land in a truly "New" England and a "new" world.

Frost's ancestors, recognizing this intriguing moral dilemma, found a superficial solution for this case represented in Rudyard Kipling's "the Whiteman's burden". According to this perspective political, cultural, or religious beliefs force states into imperialism as a "missionary activity." Britain's colonial empire was motivated at least in part by the idea that it

was the “white man's burden” to civilize “backward” peoples. Germany's expansion under Hitler was based in large measure on a belief in the inherent superiority of German national culture. The desire of the U.S. to protect the free world” and of the former Soviet Union to “liberate” the peoples of Eastern Europe and the Third World are also examples of imperialism justified by moral and ideological concerns.²³

Frost has found himself caught in a hellish triangle that included: the Red Indian (taking into consideration the derogatory sense of the term) whose land had been taken from him, the Black African who has been removed from his land, and the White European who was the doer of those wrong doings and who sought to recreate a new concept of the homeland by joining these elements together with the help of the scientific development and power he enjoys. It is the realization of this situation that drove Frost from regionalism into nationalism and universalism. And the farthest the poet sets his tone from the regional the more humanitarian in attitude and inclination he becomes, finding, thus, a justification to empathize with the "red", "black", and "white"; criticizing their weaknesses and glorifying their merits, embodying the American concept of the homeland which encompasses humans from all colors and regions putting them together on the American land, exemplifying a three dimensional "Americanism".

After achieving independence from the custody of three great empires of the old world (Britain, France, and Spain), young America had to have characteristic features that distinguish it from other nations; thus was the abolition of slavery, stress on individual freedom, the disregard of feudalism, and openness in accepting new immigrants establishing new standards for citizenship in this new world called America.²⁴

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