

The Influence of Transcendentalism through Herman Melville's Short Story, "Bartleby the Scrivener"

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Abstract

The objectives of the research are 1) to analyze the influence of transcendentalism, through Herman Melville's short story, "Bartleby the Scrivener" and 2) to analyze why transcendentalism influences Herman Melville, through the short story, "Bartleby the Scrivener. The methodology used by the researcher is the qualitative research that deals with data that are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers and statistics and use the qualitative data analysis, that it is as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others. Through the analysis, the researcher finds that, the first Herman Melville portrays Bartleby who resists the Lawyer, his master, while he himself as a worker for the law office, the second, he portrays the place where Bartleby is working, which is tame and deficient, as the landscape painters call that there is no life there. The third, he portrays the three nicknames given is dehumanizing because those three nick names, Turkey, Nippers, Ginger Nut are not the human's names. That's how transcendentalism influences Herman Melville. Due to the portrayals explained by the researcher above, then researcher finds that why transcendentalism influences Herman Melville with the book he created is as a tool of criticism.

Keywords

short story; transcendentalism; etymology of transcendentalism; transcendentalism in context; the birth and evolution of transcendentalism



I. Introduction

Transcendentalism is a religious, philosophical, and literary movement, and arose in New England in the middle of the nineteenth century. Critics generally cite 1836 to 1846 as the years when the movement flourished, although its influence continued to be felt in later decades, with some works considered part of the movement not being published until the 1850s. Transcendentalism began as a religious concept rooted in the ideas of American democracy. When a group of Boston ministers, one of whom was Ralph Waldo Emerson, decided that the Unitarian Church had become too conservative, they espoused a new religious philosophy, one which privileged the inherent wisdom in the human soul over church doctrine and law (Encyclopedia.com, 2018). Among the Transcendentalism followers were writers Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Walt Whitman; educator Bronson Alcott; and social theorists and reformers Theodore Parker and William Ellery Channing. Authors Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, and Edgar Allen Poe also felt the influence of Transcendentalists on those who read their writings, those with whom they interacted, and certainly their fellow writers (Encyclopedia.com, 2018).

I am one of the readers that is so curious about what happens in Herman Melville's short story, "Bartleby the Scrivener." As Herman Melville is also as a transcendentalist so as a researcher, she wants to explore that story.

In *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, Herman Melville tells about a successful lawyer of Wall Street that hires a scrivener, named Bartleby, that begins the story as a very good character, but he declines to work by saying "I'd prefer not to" to the commands given to him. In the firm, the problem appears in which Bartleby refuses his task of copying the documents. This situation makes the researcher become so curious in Bartleby as he refuses to do it and the result of his defiance makes him arrested and puts him into the jail. Then this situation makes the Lawyer moves his firm to a different location in order that the Lawyer can abandon Bartleby. Related to Bartleby's character, so the researcher tries to find out the answer towards her curiosity, why Bartleby does such a thing in which as a worker shouldn't deserve to do that In the research Bartleby is explored first and then three other characters whose names are: Turkey, Nippers and Ginger to explore the influence of transcendentalism in the short story. With the curiosity that the researcher has, she chooses the title of the research: "The influence of Transcendentalism, through Herman Melville's short story, "Bartleby the Scrivener".

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Etymological

In Wikipedia (2021) is stated that Transcendentalism emphasizes transcendent values (English: transcendent; Latin: transcendere) In the philosophy of religion, transcendentalism studies the nature of God which can be grasped through the universal reality the word "transcendent" consists of two words "trans" which means across, beyond, above, and the word "scandere" which means to climb. This term together with other forms such as "transcendental", "transcendence". Some of the meanings of transcendent are: superior, sublime, beyond, superlative, beyond human experience, relating to what is forever beyond understanding of ordinary experience and scientific explanation.

a. Transcendentalism in Context

In greelane.com (2019) is explained that the Transcendentalists can be understood through their context that is, by what they against and see as the current situation, and therefore as what they are trying to distinguish. One way to view the Transcendentalists is to see them as a generation of educated people who lived in the decades before the American Civil War and the national divisions it reflected and co-created. These people, mostly New England, mostly around Boston, were trying to make American literature unique. It has been decades since America became independent from Britain. Well, these people believe, it's time for literary independence. So, they deliberately created literature, essays, novels, philosophy, poetry and other writings that were distinctly different from anything from England, France, Germany or any other European country.

Another way of looking at Transcendentalists is to see them as a generation of people struggling to define spirituality and religion (our words, not necessarily theirs) in a way that takes into account the new understandings available to their day. New Biblical criticism in Germany and elsewhere has looked at Christian and Jewish scriptures through the eyes of literary analysis and has raised questions for some about the old assumptions of religion.

The Enlightenment came to new rational conclusions about the natural world, based largely on experimentation and logical thinking. The pendulum swung, and a more Romantic way of thinking less rational, more intuitive, more in touch with the senses was gaining popularity. The new rational conclusion has raised important but no longer sufficient questions.

The German philosopher Kant raises questions and insights into religious and philosophical thought about reason and religion, and how one can root ethics in human experience and reason rather than divine commandments.

This new generation saw the revolt of the previous generation of the early 19th century Unitarians and Universalists against traditional Trinitarianism and against Calvinist transcendentalist. This new generation decided that the revolution didn't go far enough, and stuck too much in rational fashion. It was the "cold-corpse" that Emerson called the previous generation of rational religion.

“The spiritual hunger of an age that also gave rise to the new evangelical Christianity led, in educational centers in New England and around Boston, to an intuitive, experiential, passionate, more than rational perspective. God gave mankind the gift of intuition, the gift of insight, the gift of inspiration. Then the question appears “Why waste such a gift?”

In addition to all this, the scriptures of non-Western cultures were discovered in the West, translated, and published so that they were more widely available. Harvard-educated Emerson and others began to read Hindu and Buddhist scriptures, and examined their own religious assumptions about these scriptures. In their perspective, a loving God would not have led so many of humanity astray; there must be truth in these scriptures too. Truth, if agreed upon with one's intuition of truth, must be true.

b. The Birth and Evolution of Transcendentalism

In Greelane.com (2019), is also explained that was born Transcendentalism as in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds... A nation of men will for the first time exist, for each believes himself to be inspired by the Divine Soul who also inspires everyone.”

It is not only for men, but for women too.

Most of the Transcendentalists were also involved in social reform movements, particularly anti-slavery and women's rights. (Abolitionism is the word used for the more radical branch of anti-slavery reformism; feminism is a word invented intentionally in France decades later and not, to my knowledge, invented in Transcendentalist times.) Why social reform, and why this problem in particular?

Transcendentalists, despite some remaining Euro-chauvinism in thinking that people with British and German backgrounds are better suited to freedom than others (see some of Theodore Parker's writings, for example, for this sentiment), also believe that on a human level soul, everyone has access to divine inspiration and seeks and loves freedom and knowledge and truth. Thus, the institutions of society that foster great differences in the ability to be educated, to be self-directed, are institutions that must be reformed. Women and slaves of African descent are human beings who deserve more ability to be educated, to fulfill their human potential (in 20th century phrases), to become fully human.

Men like Theodore Parker and Thomas Wentworth Higginson who identified themselves as Transcendentalists, also worked for their enslaved freedom and expanded women's rights. And, many women are active transcendentalists. Margaret Fuller (philosopher and writer) and Elizabeth Palmer Peabody (an active and influential bookstore owner) were at the center of the Transcendentalist movement. Others including Louisa May Alcott, the novelist, and Emily Dickinson, the poet, were influenced by the movement.

2.2 Historical Context

a. The Triumph of Capitalism

Through greenlane.com, (2019) is explained that at the time Melville wrote “Bartleby the Scrivener” New York city was firmly entrenched as the final center of the United States’ economy. It had been the nation’s leading port during the colonial era, and by the mid nineteenth century, New York overflowed with banks, credit institutions, insurance companies, brokerage houses, and a thriving stock exchange – all of which put its business community at the forefront of the “organizational revolution” in American economic institutions. By the 1850s, the development of capitalism in New York had matured to the extent that open conflict emerged between wage laborers and capitalists in the form of strikes and street violence. As early as the 1830s, artisan and skilled workers formed trade unions to resist the methods of factory and wage of laborer. These crafts people resented being run out of business as by rich capitalists who undercut their trade by selling cheap massproduced goods. In addition, wage workers lamented the disappearance of the old relationship between master craftsman and apprentices. Before the advent of factory production, most skilled workers learned their trade under a master craftsman, who usually took them in and paid their room, board and education.

Production eliminated the need for skilled workers, requiring instead a large supply of hourly paid, unskilled laborers. Whereas they had once inhabited the same quarters, now an immense social divide had arisen between laborers and their capitalist employers. New York merchants and financiers formed the most conspicuous aristocracy of wealth in the country. These businessmen like famous John Jacob Astor and Andrew Carnegie, dominated the city political and social life and became notorious for their opulence, in “Bartleby the Scrivener,” Melville’s narrator comments wistfully on how the very name of John Jacob Astor rings “like unto bullion,” Melville’s intimate legal office, with its three scriveners (who can be classified as semi-skilled workers), contains elements of both the old and new economic systems.

b. Wall Street and “Bartleby the Scrivener”

Wall Street in “Bartleby the Scrivener” is explained that it is a crucial element in the story because it underscores Melville’s concern about the effects of capitalism on American society. Significantly, the story is set on Wall Street in New York City, which had become the center of American financial and business life by the 1850s. The values of Wall Street are central to the story. The lawyer, who serves as the narrator, has an unabashed reverence for “the late John Jacob Astor,” who was regarded as the most successful businessman of his time. The lawyer also reflects the values of Wall Street in his concern over such relatively superficial aspects of his employees as their appearance and dress. The work-oriented atmosphere of the office is devoid of friendliness and a sense of community.

Indeed, the environment of Wall Street itself, Melville points out, is so business-oriented that after working hours it is reduced to an empty space “entirely unhallowed by humanizing domestic associations.” Melville’s descriptions of Wall Street convey a cold and alienating setting where the forging of close human ties is difficult. (Encyclopedia.com, 2019)

c. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Approaches in Literature

Intrinsic and extrinsic approaches to literature are ways to criticize literature in different terms. Intrinsic approach to literature is concerned to the inner meaning of a text and gives no importance to an author. For intrinsic critics, the author is dead. They only see the text in terms of its own self. According to intrinsic critics, a text is complete in itself. In contrast to intrinsic approach, all the emphasis in extrinsic approach is given to context. The

history, background, autobiography and social circumstances of the author are important (Eaglestone, 2016). In analyzing the short story of “Bartleby the Scrvivener, intrinsic approach is applied in analyzing the text itself, while extrinsic approach, is also applied, that be based on the historical and social circumstances of the author.

III. Research Methods

3.1 Reasearch Design

According to Cresswell in Williams (2007:67), explains that "qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological tradition inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, report details views of information, and conducts the study in a natural setting ". According to Azwar in Siregar (2020), descriptive research analyzes only at the level of description, namely analyzing and presenting facts systematically so that they are easier to understand and conclude. Based on the explanation Moleong in Amrizal (2018) qualitative research is research that intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the subject of research such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, etc., holistically, and by way of description in the form of words and language, in a special context that is natural and by utilizing various natural methods.

3.2 Data and Source of Data

The word ‘data’ is Latin in origin, and literally, it means anything that is given. Different sources have defined the word in different ways. Webster’s Third New Dictionary in Rohit (2020) defines data as “something given or admitted; facts or principles granted or presented; that upon which an inference or argument is based, or from which an ideal system of any sort is constructed. In this study, the data of the study are the sentences or words found in short story of Bartleby the Scrivener. Data may be in the form of notes on paper, books, or kept as files in a database. On the other hand, According to Arikunto (2006: 129) the source of data refers to subject from which the data are found in this study. The source of the data is taken from the short story" Bartleby the Scrivener”

3.3 Techniques of Collecting Data

In collecting data, the writer applies the library reseach in her analysis. According to Zeid in Wiratama (2016: 31), library research has the following characteristics they are the researcher study about text or number directly meaning that the data is not about knowledge from the field as case and the data is ready-made, meaning that the data do not come from the field, so the researcher does not need go to everywhere to get the data

To collect the data of this research, the researcher takes the following:

Search for “Bartleby *the Scrivener*” in the internet

Read the sentences or words of the story of “*Bartleby the Scrivener*”

Describe the story “Bartleby the *Scrivener*”

3.4 Techniques of Analyzing Data

According to Ary in Wahsan (2015: 31) states that the qualitative research deals with data that are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers and statistics.

According to Bogdan and Biklen in Storer (2014) qualitative data analysis as “working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others.”

The researcher takes some steps to analyze the data.

1. The researcher reads the collected data to find out how the influence of The Transcendentalism, through Herman Melville's Short Story,"*Bartleby the Scrivener*" and why it influences Herman Melville's story "*Bartleby the Scrivener*" and why it influences Herman Melville's story "*Bartleby the Scrivener*"
2. The data of transcendentalism analyzed in order to find out why it influences Herman Melville's story "*Bartleby the Scrivener*"
3. The analysis is then evaluated in order to draw conclusion.

IV. Discussion

"*Bartleby the Scrivener*" is one of the most famous stories of Herman Melville. Through the short story are found the characters who are called as the Lawyer, Bartleby, Turkey, Nippers and Ginger Nut. Turkey, Nippers and Ginger Nut are the three other characters in the story that will also be explored and two of them Turkey and Nippers are regarded as the most important characters too, so it is also important to discuss about those three characters related to the title of this research. Bartleby is the character that always refuses the Lawyer where Bartleby is working for him to copy the documents. His refusal of the Lawyer's requests makes the researcher so curious.

4.1 How Transcendentalism Influences Herman Melville in the short story "*Bartleby the Scrivener*"

Transcendentalism influenced a number of important American writers, helping to create a national literary identity. Three of them were Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Walt Whitman (Longley, 2017). Transcendentalism as in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson stated that, "We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds... A nation of men will for the first time exist, for each believes himself to be inspired by the Divine Soul who also inspires everyone." (Encyclopedia.com, 2019) Most of the Transcendentalists were also involved in social reform movements, particularly anti-slavery and women's rights. (Abolitionism is the word used for the more radical branch of anti-slavery reformism; feminism is a word invented intentionally in France decades later and not, to my knowledge, invented in Transcendentalist times.) (Encyclopedia.com, 2019)

On this next discussion, the researcher wants to explore the portrayal of Transcendentalism in the story of "*Bartleby the Scrivener*", that became the center of American financial and business life by 1850s. The Lawyer is as a narrator who hires Bartleby in his law office as a copyist. and when the Lawyer asks Bartleby to do his tasks, but Bartleby refuses him by saying:

"I would not prefer not to". Actually at the beginning Bartleby is a polite, cool and firm scrivener, but now he can change to be a 'difficult-to-understand. Actually it is not only one task but even more than one task that should be done by Bartleby but he always refuses by saying the same words: "I would prefer not to" (Melville: 1956: 7-8). Seems that he has become a disobedient man. The Lawyer has scrivener that was rebellious and does not want to work, but the Lawyer does not want to fire him and even he lets him stay in his office just because the Lawyer is so pity towards him. Bartleby as a worker should not do such a thing towards his master. The resistance done by

Bartleby is passive, silent and unresponsive, but as if Herman Melville portrays Bartleby's resistance as a slap to the capitalist economic system. The setting of the place which is on Wall Street, New York city, as it is said in the story itself (Melville, 1956 : 1-2).

As it has been discussed above, Wall Street in New York city is as the setting of the story but it seems that this setting shows a problem between Bartleby and the Lawyer. The walls as if shows that both Bartleby and the Lawyer are safe from the outside world, but in reality it is said that :

My chambers were upstairs at No. Wall-street. At one end they looked upon the white wall of the interior of a spacious sky-light shaft, penetrating the building from top to bottom. This view might have been considered rather tame than otherwise, deficient in what landscape painters call "life." But if so, the view from the other end of my chambers offered, at least, a contrast, if nothing more. In that direction my windows commanded an unobstructed view of a lofty brick wall, black by age and everlasting shade; which wall required no spy-glass to bring out its lurking beauties, but for the benefit of all near-sighted spectators, was pushed up to within ten feet of my window panes. Owing to the great height of the surrounding buildings, and my chambers being on the second floor, the interval between this wall and mine not a little resembled a huge square cistern (Melville, 1956 : 2)

Through the above quotation can be said that the view of the office where Bartleby is working, is tame and deficient, as the landscape painters call that there is no life there. The view which is found there is contrast with the black color, so no beautiful thing can be seen there. It is like a huge square cistern that makes Bartley lives like an isolated man.

On the next characters, Turkey, Nippers, and Ginger Nut are not given the real names but only given their nicknames, which are regarded that they are conferred each other and were deemed expressive of their respective persons or characters. According to the story, Turkey is said as an industrious man in the mornings and able to ingratiate himself with his employer with his charming manner, but in the afternoons, Turkey becomes irritable and insolent and his work becomes very sloppy. Then Nippers is described as well-dressed n suffered man from indigestion in the mornings that makes him restless and discontented, but in the afternoons his work is steadier and he seems dissatisfied with their position as a scrivener. The last one is Ginger Nut, is hired to run small errands around the law office (Melville, 1956 :2).

By using those three nicknames, the researcher thinks that it shows a condescending and endearing of those three nick names. All three of the scriveners become caricature than real people, Why should be called Turkey? As we know Turkey is an animal not human. Then Nippers. Why is given with this name? It sounds like the name of a terrier rather than man. And the last name is by giving the name, Ginger Nut. It is as the name of snacks which are delivered. By giving with those three nicknames, Turkey is animal, Nippers is like a tertier name, while Ginger Nut is as the name of the snacks can be regarded as a dehumanizing.

Through the analysis done by the researcher above, it is seen that Transcendentalism influences Melville through his work, "Bartleby the Scrivener", first by portraying Bartleby who resists the Lawyer, his master, while he himself as a worker for the law office, the second, by portraying the place where Bartleby is working, which is tame and deficient, as the landscape painters call that there is no life there. The view which is found there is contrast with the black color, so no beautiful thing can be seen there, but shows like a huge square cistern that make' Bartley lives like in an isolated place. The third, by portraying the three nicknames given is dehumanizing because those three nick names, Turkey, Nippers, Ginger Nut are not the human's names.

Ralph Waldo Emerson as a transcendentalist in his words says : "We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds". Herman Melville in this case has been influenced by Transcendentalism in which through his words in his short story, that is created by him, he dares to say and do what in his minds.

4.2 Why does Transcendentalism Influence Herman Melville in his short story,"Bartleby the Scrivener?"

Transdentalism influences Herman Melville, through the short story,"Bartleby the Scrivener", because it can make Melville be able to express his concern towards the effects of capitalism on American society. The book of "Bartleby the ScrIvener" he has created really has underscored him (Encyclopedia.com, 2019). As in researcher's analysis in 4.1 above,. through the characters in "Bartleby the Scrinever", Herman Melville can write about Bartleby's resistance as a worker towards the Lawyer not to copy the documents, the second, he can write about the place where Bartleby is working. It is tame and deficient, as the landscape painters call that there is no life there. The view which is found there is contrast with the black color, so no beautiful thing can be seen there, but shows like a huge square cistern that makes Bartley lives like in an isolated place. The third, Herman Melville can write about the three nicknames given in the short story as dehumanizing towards Turkey, Nippers and Ginger Nut because those three nick names, Turkey, Nippers, Ginger Nut are not the human's names.

So the researcher thinks that the book of "Bartleby the Scrivener " was created by Herman Melville is made as a tool of criticism.

V. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

After having the analysis of the short story of Herman Melville's, "Bartleby the Scrivener", the researcher concludes that:

Transcendentalism influences Herman Melville through the short story, is first by portraying Bartleby who resists the Lawyer, his master, while he himself as a worker for the law office, the second, by portraying the place where Bartleby is working, which is tame and deficient, as the landscape painters call that there is no life there. The view which is found there is contrast with the black color, so no beautiful thing can be seen there, but shows like a huge square cistern that make' Bartley lives like in an isolated place. The third, by portraying the three nicknames given is dehumanizing because those three nick names, Turkey, Nippers, Ginger Nut are not the human's names.

The reasons why Transcendentalism influences Herman Melville, through the short story, " Bartleby the Scrivener", because it can make Melville be able to express his concern towards the effects of capitalism on American society. The book of "Bartleby the Screvener" he has created really has underscored him (Encyclopedia.com, 2019).

Herman Melville can write about Bartleby's resistance as a worker towards the Lawyer not to copy the documents, the second, he can write about the place where Bartleby is working. It is tame and deficient, as the landscape painters call that there is no life there. The view which is found there is contrast with the black color, so no beautiful thing can be seen there, but shows like a huge square cistern that makes Bartley lives like in an isolated place. The third, Herman Melville can write about the three nicknames given in the short story as dehumanizing towards

Turkey, Nippers and Ginger Nut because those three nick names, Turkey, Nippers, Ginger Nut are not the human's names. So for the researcher, the book of "Bartleby the Scrivener" was created by Herman Melville is made as a tool of criticism.

5.2 Suggestion

It is hoped that this research can be useful for the readers and researchers for the future improvement in the study of transcendentalism in literary works, basically about transcendentalism theory in literary work.

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