



SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON AMERICAN LITERATURE IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY

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СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ, ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ И КУЛЬТУРНЫЕ ВЛИЯНИЯ НА АМЕРИКАНСКУЮ ЛИТЕРАТУРУ В КОНЦЕ 20 ВЕКА

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Abstract: *The important social, political, and cultural factors that influenced American literature in the late 20th century are examined in this article. It emphasizes how literary topics and styles were influenced by historical occurrences including the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, and changes in societal perceptions of gender and identity. The study also examines how a variety of voices and viewpoints emerged in American literature during this time, reflecting the complexity of a society that was changing quickly. The research demonstrates how literature functioned as a mirror and a critique of modern American life through an examination of significant works and authors.*

Key words: *American literature, literary topics, historical occurrences, societal perceptions, gender and identity.*

Аннотация: *В данной статье рассматриваются важные социальные, политические и культурные факторы, которые оказали влияние на американскую литературу в конце XX века. Подчеркивается, как литературные темы и стили были затронуты историческими событиями, такими как Вьетнамская война, движение за гражданские права и изменения в общественном восприятии гендера и идентичности. Исследование также анализирует, как разнообразные голоса и точки зрения появились в американской литературе в этот период, отражая сложность быстро меняющегося общества. Исследование демонстрирует, как литература функционировала как зеркало и критика современной американской жизни через анализ значительных произведений и авторов.*



Ключевые слова: *американская литература, литературные темы, исторические события, общественные восприятия, гендер и идентичность.*

INTRODUCTION

American literature underwent tremendous social, political, and cultural transformation in the late 20th century. Diverse voices and viewpoints emerged throughout this time, reflecting the complexity of American culture. Themes of identity, race, gender, and power relations were explored by writers as a result of the civil rights movement, feminist movements, and other cultural changes. Literature developed as a potent tool for social criticism and critique as America struggled with its past and current problems. This article highlights important writers and works that defined the era as it explores how these influences changed the literary landscape. American literature flourished in the late 20th century, reflecting the country's changing social structure. Writers with strong voices that questioned norms and examined the complexities of identity, race, gender, and culture arose as a result of civil rights movements, feminism, postmodernism, and multiculturalism. When we think back on this time period, it is clear that these literary contributions not only enhanced American literature but also significantly influenced the conversation in society about important concerns. These writers' influence is still felt today, serving as a reminder of the ability of writing to elicit contemplation and motivate action.

LITERATURE REVIEW

American literature was greatly impacted by the country's major social, political and cultural changes during the late 20th century.

The main ideas and conclusions from several academic publications that examine how these factors influenced literary expression during this time are summarized in this survey of the literature. The influence of the civil rights movement on American literature has been extensively studied. Academics like David Levering Lewis and Angela Davis emphasize how authors like Toni Morrison and James Baldwin tackled racial and identity concerns in their writing¹³. Baldwin emphasizes the psychological and social effects of structural racism in his essays and novels, which frequently depict the sufferings of African Americans¹⁴. Morrison's stories, especially "Beloved" explore the historical pain of slavery and its lasting impacts on African American identity¹⁵. These pieces serve as calls to action for social justice in addition to documenting the experiences of marginalized communities. A major change in

¹³ Davis A. *Women, Race, and Class*. — New York: Random House, 1981. P-271.

¹⁴ Baldwin J. *The Fire Next Time*. — New York: Dial Press, 1963. P-106.

¹⁵ Morrison T. *Beloved*. — New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987. P-324.



literature was sparked by the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which led academics to investigate the perspectives and experiences of women. Critics like Sandra Gilbert and Elaine Showalter contend that female writers like Alice Walker and Sylvia Plath subverted patriarchal conventions¹⁶. The internal conflicts that women in a society ruled by men encounter are revealed in Plath's candid poems. Walker's "The Color Purple" is frequently considered as a seminal book that illustrates the interconnectedness of oppression by addressing concerns of racism, gender, and empowerment¹⁷. The significance of women's stories in comprehending larger societal processes is highlighted by these feminist literary critiques.

Critics like Fredric Jameson and Linda Hutcheon have studied the emergence of postmodernism in literature during the late 20th century in great detail. Postmodern writers like Don DeLillo and Thomas Pynchon used experimental narrative techniques to reflect the complexity of modern life; Jameson contends that postmodern literature frequently embodies a sense of fragmentation and irony, mirroring the disorientation experienced in a rapidly changing society¹⁸. DeLillo's "White Noise," for example, critiques consumer

culture and media saturation, showing how these elements shape human experience¹⁹. Additionally, literature started to represent a wider variety of voices as America grew more multicultural. Bell Hooks and Homi K. Bhabha are two academics who have studied how writers from different origins have enriched the literary world²⁰. Because of its examination of the immigrant experience and Indian Americans' quest for identity, Jhumpa Lahiri's "Interpreter of Maladies" is widely debated²¹. Similar to this, Sherman Alexie addresses themes of cultural legacy and resiliency in his writings that portray life on Native American reservations. Numerous academics highlight how literature served as a medium for social criticism and commentary during this time. Themes of addiction, entertainment culture, and existential uneasiness are frequently explored in works by authors like David Foster Wallace, expressing social anxieties about modernity. Critics contend that these literary investigations act as reflections on larger societal challenges in addition to offering insight into personal experiences.

American literature underwent significant change in the late 20th century as a result of social movements, political

¹⁶ Gilbert S., Gubar S. *The Madwoman in the Attic*. — New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979. P-719.

¹⁷ Walker A. *The Color Purple*. — New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982. P-295.

¹⁸ Jameson F. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. — Durham: Duke University Press, 1991. P-438.

¹⁹ DeLillo D. *White Noise*. — New York: Viking Press, 1985. P-326.

²⁰ Bhabha H.K. *The Location of Culture*. — London: Routledge, 1994. P-285.

²¹ Lahiri J. *Interpreter of Maladies*. — Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999. P-198.



upheavals, and cultural transformations. The research discussed here shows that literature from this time period is an essential tool for examining intricate issues pertaining to gender, ethnicity, identity, and cultural diversity. These influences are still present in modern literature, which serves as a reminder of the storytelling medium's persistent ability to both reflect and subvert social conventions.

Main part.

American literature underwent a radical change in the late 20th century as a result of important social movements, political unrest, and cultural changes. Diverse voices and viewpoints that questioned conventional narratives and altered literary expression emerged during this time.

American literature was significantly impacted by the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s as authors attempted to express the challenges and goals of African Americans. Themes of race, identity, and structural oppression were examined by writers such as Toni Morrison and James Baldwin. While Morrison's "Beloved" explored the eerie legacy of slavery and emphasized the need for recognition and healing²², Baldwin's writings and novels offered a moving indictment of racism and its psychological ramifications.

Women's roles in literature were reevaluated as a result of the feminist movements of this century.

Women writers started speaking up and questioning patriarchal conventions. The intricacies of feminine identity and experience were examined by authors like Alice Walker and Sylvia Plath.

In the latter half of the 20th century, postmodernism, which was marked by sarcasm, fragmentation, and a challenge to big narratives, became a dominant literary movement. To capture the complexity of modern existence, authors such as Don DeLillo and Thomas Pynchon used experimental tactics. While DeLillo's "White Noise" criticizes consumer culture and media overload²³, Pynchon frequently uses non-linear storylines that subvert conventional storytelling²⁴. This literary movement demonstrated how literature can both reflect and critique cultural realities by reflecting the confusion felt in a society that is changing quickly.

Numerous writers examined personal experiences pertaining to identity, gender, and race. For instance, Plath studied individual struggles with mental health and social expectations, while Baldwin and Morrison explored the psychological effects of racism on people. There was a search for identity in the

²³ DeLillo D. *White Noise*. — New York: Viking Press, 1985. P-326.

²⁴ Pynchon T. *Gravity's Rainbow*. — New York: Viking Press, 1973. P-760.

²² Morrison T. *Beloved*. — New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987. P-324.



works of writers in this period. A recurrent topic was the pursuit of self-awareness in the face of social forces. Characters frequently had to negotiate complicated identities that were influenced by their personal experiences, gender, and cultural backgrounds. If we claim about isolation and detachment, in a world that was changing quickly, postmodern literature often portrayed feelings of alienation and detachment. People struggled with existential issues regarding their role in society and the significance of their experiences.

Numerous literary works depicted people's paths to empowerment, especially those of women and other underprivileged groups. Stories demonstrated individual fortitude in the face of social obstacles. As for interpersonal relationships, one important subject was how cultural shifts affected interpersonal relationships. The authors looked at how media and consumer culture affect people's relationships and emotional health.

A key component of comprehending late 20th-century American literature is the interaction between societal challenges and personal experiences. In addition to examining the complexities of human identity and personal problems within that environment, authors utilized their narratives to remark on larger social issues. In addition to enhancing the literary landscape, this dual focus offered a sophisticated perspective on the human condition in a changing world.

American writers in the late 20th century skillfully captured the challenges of individuality under social limits through characterization, setting, symbolism, narrative structure, and investigation of neglected voices. Their writings encourage readers to think on the wider effects of cultural norms on people's lives in addition to reflecting the complexity of personal identity. As current conversations about identity, conformity, and resistance continue to develop, this investigation is still pertinent today.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the dynamic interaction of social, political, and cultural forces had a profound impact on American writing during the late 20th century. As the country struggled with issues like gender equality, civil rights, and the challenges of multiculturalism, writers became important voices that both reflected and questioned the dominant narratives of their era. In addition to capturing the hardships and victories of people navigating a world that was changing quickly, this era's literature was a potent vehicle for social criticism and political protest.

Authors frequently used creative storytelling approaches that reflected the fractured reality of modern life as they examined topics of identity, alienation, and empowerment. They tackled important topics including consumer culture, racial inequity, and how technology affects interpersonal relationships through their writings. This



diverse range of voices and viewpoints demonstrates the enduring power of literature as a mirror of human experience, providing insights into individual and societal identities.

To recapitulate, American literature from the late 20th century is remembered for its capacity to elicit contemplation and

motivate transformation. These authors influenced literary debate as well as more general discussions on justice, belonging, and the human condition in a world growing more interconnected by tackling the complexity of social and political environments.

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