

INTER ARMA SILENT MUSAE: ON SITUATION IN AMERICAN LITERATURE IN 1860-1870s

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The article analyzes factors that determined the state of American literature in the 60–70s of the 19th century and their influence on the state of book market of that period. In literary criticism there is a rather objective view of 1860–1880s in American literature development as a period of a certain crisis of romantic consciousness and a turn to realism which took place under the influence of the works by the best representatives of the European realistic school. But, as any other generalization, this thesis gives a very one-sided idea of the general literary situation that occurred in the USA after the Civil War. But everything new appears in literature not at once, but as the result of interpenetration and long-lasting evolution of artistic elements and principles of realistic and romantic poetics the traditions of which in American literature had been very enduring (deep-rooted). As the result of it, there appeared a special type of narration – neither romantic, nor realistic – but transitional for both of these methods, with it being the product of not only interaction of romantic and realistic aesthetics, but, to a great extent, the result of the ideology of that period or a tribute to the political mode. Reigning in the country was an absolute chaos of ideas and feelings. The American literature of the 60–70s of the 19th century was characterized by an intricate interrelation of such heterogeneous phenomena as sentimentalism of prewar prose, genteel tradition, the reborn legend of a Cavalier and the knights' gallantry (the works by J.E. Cooke), the elements of gothic, and the abolitionists movement, born in the depths of the Boston School, and though weakened, but still a socially significant force (L.M. Alcott and Y. Clemens), and the beginnings of realism (works by H. Morford and J. W. De Forest). Within a short cut of time, there occurred an unprecedented mixture of notions and phenomena of various kinds: ideological, aesthetic, philosophical, and political ones. And this chaotic stratification of not literary trends, but prevailing literary styles, aesthetic and ideological bias influenced equally the novels of the North and the South. Thus, the American literature of the 60 – 70s of the 19th century was the result of compromises: between intellectual literature (with the ideological center in the "Atlantic Monthly" journal) and popular one, longing towards the traditional genre of 'romance' (focused in such journals as "New York Ledger", "North American Review", and since 1871 – "Southern Magazine"). But besides, during the years of the war and the Reconstruction that followed, there occurred a special book-market greatly influenced by a substantial feminization of the life of the country, especially in southern states, which brought to literature a great number of non-professional female writers. Publishing houses were flooded with novels hastily written on the topic of the day. According to Richard Lively, about half of all the literary works published at that time were created by female writers, mainly from the South. The article analyzes the consequences of this phenomenon and how it was perceived by the greatest writers of that time – N. Hawthorne, H. Melville, H. Adams, W.D. Howells, H. James, Mark Twain, and W. Whitman.

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