



TRANSCENDENTALISM THROUGH THE EYES OF EMERSON AND HAWTHORNE: A COMPARATIVE SKETCH

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Abstract

The relationship between Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne often goes unnoticed in the scholarly world. Given their personal experiences and socio-political scenario affecting the American literary scene at the time, they both seem to contradict each other in their beliefs and values regarding the Transcendental School of Thought. Although a closer look of interaction between the two writers during September 1842 and January 1844 reveals that they were indeed contemporaries. Even though, Emerson and Hawthorne held a completely opposite perspective regarding Transcendentalism, they also seem to agree on certain aspects. The following paper attempts to draw a comparative sketch between Emerson and Hawthorne with regard to their individual perspective of Transcendentalism. Emerson was very much a transcendentalist and Nathaniel Hawthorne was very much a non-transcendentalist. Emerson wrote about the beauty of nature while Hawthorne wrote about it as an evil place. Emerson believed that man was good and Hawthorne believed that man was bad. Emerson thought that people should be individuals and be self-reliant but Hawthorne took that idea to an extreme and turned it into seclusion. These are the reasons that these two

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men fit into their time period on opposite ends of the transcendental spectrum and the following paper traces their individual opinions regarding Transcendentalism and how it shaped their lives.

Keywords: Transcendentalism, Individualism, Self-Reliance, Nature, Individual Perfection.

Introduction to Transcendentalism

Transcendentalism is one of those concepts which has been largely misinterpreted by many throughout the ages by various writers, critics and scholars. The word “Transcendent” means above and beyond. Therefore, a Transcendentalist is an individual who believes in the presence of the divine, above and beyond the understanding of mortal senses. Transcendentalists believe that the divine cannot be known by rational understanding or analysis but it can be felt and understood by spirit through one’s intuition. Emerson referred to the divine as the over soul and Wordsworth referred to it as the soul of all the worlds. The external mortal world we live in is nothing but the raiment or an “outer covering of the divine”. Transcendentalists state that one can understand the divine and become one with it through the agency of nature that resonates with the soul and not the faculty of rational reasoning. It states that if a man comes in contact with nature with a mood of “wise passivity”, and allows elements of nature to influence and enter his soul then he can see into the heart of things hence leading towards oneness with the divine.

Transcendentalism began transforming the American literary landscape during the nineteenth century. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Margaret Fuller stepped

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into the light as the torch bearers of the new European philosophy of Transcendentalism and gave birth to a literary movement which emphasised the importance and equality of every living entity in the mortal world. As the “Father of the Transcendentalist Movement”, Emerson was heavily influenced by European philosophers mainly Immanuel Kant, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Later on, introducing the Transcendentalist though in America, Emerson initially influenced Thoreau and Fuller to join the movement and embrace this new way of life. Years later, Walt Whitman joined the movement throwing light over Emerson’s continual sculpting of America’s Literary Landscape.

The American Transcendentalist movement precisely began in 1836 with the publication of Emerson’s essay “The Nature”. Through the essay Emerson stated the idea that one needs to stop looking up towards the society for answers to their struggles and turn towards nature instead. One of the major tenets of Transcendentalism is throwing light over the fact that Individualism and Self Reliance is better than blindly following the thoughts and beliefs projected by others. Emerson used this philosophy to his advantage in order to transform the literary scene in America. Transcendentalism is not so much of a genre as it is a movement that emphasizes on independence and non-conformity. It gradually altered the course of America’s literary landscape by emphasising on individual thought and the importance of finding oneself in a unique relation to the universe. The followers of the Transcendentalist movement believed that it is not merely a literary or philosophical movement but rather an everyday way of life and means a to seek the divine through nature.

According to the seekers of Transcendentalism, there are three major tenets:

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- i. One must have a firm belief that God is present in all aspects of nature including human beings.
- ii. Through the use of intuition everyone is capable of learning about the existence of the divine. The belief that all of the nature symbolizes the spirit and the world is good.
- iii. Transcendentalists believe that intuition should always have precedence over intellect because intuition comes from the universal soul.

Historically, Plato was the first person to have proposed the concept of transcendentalism. He believed in the absolute good of everything, the one beyond human understanding. This goodness, according to him, could be perceived only through intuition and insight, instead of logic or rationality. An important aspect of Plato 's idea is that he believed in the ability of man to know the mere being in itself. For him the reason was that we are not strangers to the ground of our being. Ralph Waldo Emerson, later, used other Plato 's theory that the world is an expression of spirit to improve the theory of correspondence. For centuries, transcendentalism has been teaching mankind to rely on themselves, their own intuition, natural instincts and impulses and not on any authority out of themselves or on any doctrine or tradition no matter how sacred or old.

In theory, Transcendentalism is nothing but an amalgamation of various philosophies and schools of thought of both east and west. As a leading proponent of American Transcendentalism, Emerson sought the spiritual world to be more primary than the physical one. He believed that the physical world through making humans aware of its beauty, and providing useful goods serves human beings. What Emerson and his followers believed was

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that human beings find beauty and truth within themselves. Self-reliance and individuality were of prime importance to them. In his essay, *Nature*, Ralph Waldo Emerson (2008) wrote the foregoing generations beheld God and Nature face to face; we through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? (P. 38) What Transcendentalists wanted to reclaim was the divine, mystical, and supernatural light bestowed upon human soul by the spirit of God. They regarded the free development of individual emotions as the only solution to human problems. For the Transcendentalists, the world of spirits is the only source for reality. A person sees only appearances, which are transient reflections of the world of the spirit, in the existing physical world. The only way for the people to learn about the physical world is through their senses and understanding. They learn about the world of spirit through another power, called reason by which they meant insight. For them reason or insight was nothing but an independent and intuitive ability to distinguish the absolute truth. In his “An Essay on Transcendentalism” Charles Mayo Ellis (1970) expressed: That belief we term Transcendentalism which maintains that man has ideas, that come not through the five senses or the powers of reasoning; but are either the result of direct revelation from God, his immediate inspiration, or his immanent presence in the spiritual world. (P. 23)

Emerson ‘s romantic philosophy is most clearly seen in his work, *Nature* (1836). In *Nature*, Emerson describes a world in which nearly everything in it is a symbol of the spirit. For Emerson, nature is the material world, everything that exists outside the self. This world is one-half, a cover over a greater realm, the spirit or Soul (P. 52). Transcendentalists believed that for a person to be able to distinguish what is right from what wrong, he should ignore social

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customs and principles and rely only on reason. Emerson emphasized on his Two Truth theory of knowledge, Understanding and Reason in which the former means the empirical truth and the latter, refers to the absolute truth transcending sense, experience and directly perceived by intuition. In his book, Introduction to Metaphysic Henri Bergson (2007) wrote about the differences between these two deeply different approaches to knowing: The first implies that we move round the object; the second that we inter into it. The first depends on the point of view at which we are placed and on the symbols by which we express ourselves. The second neither depends on a point of view, nor relies on any symbol. The first kind of knowledge may be said to stop at the relative, the second, in those cases where it is possible, to attain the absolute (P. 44)

Many social reform movements altered the nation, during the nineteenth century namely: The abolitionist movement, the temperance movement, and the women 's suffrage movement. To the followers of Transcendentalism, slavery was inherently wrong, because it stood in the way of the spiritual development of the slaves. Transcendentalists protested against slavery in a number of different ways and even some of them played a leading role in the abolitionist movement. Apart from that, transcendental movement was active in the philosophical foreground. From the time of Plato who proposed the concept of Transcendentalism to Kant who was interesting for the Transcendentalists. Kant is regarded as the first thinker who believed that God and soul are transcendent. What Transcendentalists believed was that each person is capable to change positively and could attain divinity which means reaching a communion with God based on the reliance on their inherent goodness and reliability and faith

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in their own instinct. "Transcendentalism, in fact, really began as a religious movement, an attempt to substitute a Romanticized version of the mystical ideal that humankind is capable of direct experience of the holy for the Unitarian rationalist view that the truths of religion are arrived at by a process of empirical study and by rational inference from historical and natural evidence" (Buell, 1986, P. 146). Transcendentalism is concerned with making individuals find meaning within themselves instead of waiting for another higher source of guidance.

Transcendentalism Through the Eyes of Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson was an American essayist, lecturer and poet born on May 25, 1803 in Boston. Known as the “Father of Transcendentalist Movement”, Emerson led the movement of Transcendental thought and was seen as a champion of individualism and a prescient critic of the countervailing pressures of society. He disseminated his philosophical thoughts through dozens of essays and more than 1500 public lectures. Emerson was born in a vicarage in a family of a unitarian pastor. He was the third of eight children and after the death of his father when he was eight years old, Emerson’s aunt Mary Moody Emerson took upon the responsibility of his intellectual education. He enrolled at Harvard College at the age of fourteen. From a very early age, Emerson began to create a list of all the books and poems he had read with personal journal entries which he had named “The Wide World”. Emerson’s move to Florida critically influenced his future as the founder of the Transcendentalist Movement and also led towards his meeting with Prince Achille Murat with whom he had long discussions on philosophy, politics, religion and society. Eventually he intensively began writing his own poetry and also came in contact with slavery which had a lasting impact on

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him and was later evident in his future works rooting from Transcendentalism. After the death of his wife in his later years, Emerson went on a trip to Europe where he met Thomas Carlyle, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It was during this trip that Emerson became acquainted with German Idealism and Indian Philosophies.

During 1830, Emerson decided to become a lecturer in Boston, as a result of which the content of his lectures later became an inspiration for his Magnum Opus: his famous essay “The Nature” which is also known as “The Bible of Transcendentalism” by the followers of the Transcendentalist Movement. Through the collection of essays in “The Nature”, he represented his belief that people should lead a simple life and in harmony with the nature. It was through “Nature” that he witnessed the true source of divine revelation. At the same time, he emphasized the importance of the creative activity of man as a driving force for fundamental renewal and a source of freedom and self-determination of the individual. It was through Nature that he introduced his famous appeal “Build, Therefore, Your Own World.” At this point, Emerson no longer regarded the divine as an external or a higher power, but saw it as transferred into man himself. It was with nature that he developed one of the most fundamental tenets of his Transcendentalist School of Thought namely, “The Transcendentalist Triad” which includes Self, Nature and Over Soul. According to Emerson, the Over Soul is not an autonomous entity detached from the world of phenomena but as effective in this as it is in the human mind. Thus, he believed that man can therefore participate directly in the divine through both observation of nature and introspection. The Nature greatly influenced Henry David

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Thoreau and influenced his writing, as a result of which Emerson later on became Thoreau's mentor which led towards Thoreau joining Emerson's Transcendentalist Movement.

During one of his speeches at Harvard, Emerson clearly made his doubts on Christianity evident for which he was proclaimed an Atheist. As the son of a Unitarian, Emerson had been a devout believer of the Christian faith but after the passing of his wife, he began questioning the Church's methods and began to turn away from Christianity. The 'self' was a key concept of Emerson's ideology. He stated that the individual self-needed no religion or other societal constructs. It was Nature that served all needs of refining the Self and nourishing it. Emerson iterated this view of Individualism by linking it further to the idea of self-reliance. In his 1841 essay titled "Self-reliance", Emerson expounded his transcendentalist belief that society tends to corrupt the individuals. For him, an ideal society is one that allows humans to exist as individuals in solitude. For Emerson, individualism was a state of bliss in which the society had little or no corrupting influence on a human.

Through Transcendentalism, Emerson appreciates both the physical and the spiritual, thereby evoking the image of an ambiguous world in all of his essays, especially The Nature. He sees all natural phenomena as fluid and unstable and that allows him to give it more than one meaning and writing about nature as being both material and transcendental but at the same time does not allow for it to be identified by either of these terms. It is through Transcendental School of Thought that Emerson presents a paradoxical image of nature that is at the same time physical, very much affected by man and is spiritual. He states that as a dynamic process where the visible and the invisible necessarily intertwine. Emerson also presented the idea of

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“Metempsychosis”, which functioned as a philosophical template upon which Emerson further built the idea of interconnectedness between the life of scientific progress and increasing scepticism and the idea of Transcendental presence. Transcendentalism in this case became the very process of thinking or rather the ability of mankind to progress through different stages of development, acquire new thoughts and ideas, act in the present and yet keep its belongingness to a history, and also recognise that it already possesses this history within the collective and individual mind.

Emerson believed that the human race for its knowledge and scientific development is very much guided by the Transcendental element of the Metempsychotic experience: an experience that necessarily allows an individual to contain within himself all of history, even if he is only able to recognise parts of it. Emerson clarified that Transcendentalism was not a unified movement. He stated that “there is no pure Transcendentalist”. But he agreed upon most of the tenets that are characteristic of the Romantic movement in America. He was the harbinger of an era in American literature which believed that a human needed no societal institutions like religion, education or moral norms. An individual was self-reliant and could turn to Nature, the eternal source of poetic creation and spiritual fulfilment.

Transcendentalism Through the Eyes of Nathaniel Hawthorne

Nathaniel Hawthorne was an American novelist and short story writer born on July 4, 1804 in Salem, Massachusetts. Hawthorne’s work is steeped in a family and religious tradition which dates back to nearly 200 years prior to his birth to the arrival of William Hawthorne (1607-

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1681) and his son John Hawthorne (1641-1717) in the new world and then ultimately in Salem between 1630 and 1633. Both William and his son John were devout followers of the strictest form of Puritan Calvinism. William Hawthorne was associated with the persecution and execution of two Quakers in 1659. The following incident inspired Nathaniel Hawthorne's work "The Gentle Boy", a tale which documented the abuse and its repercussions suffered by the family of the executed in the community. Another incident which inspired the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne especially his Magnum Opus "The Scarlet Letter", was the association of his great-great grandfather John Hawthorne presiding as a judge to the Salem Witch Trials of 1692. In "The Custom House", the chapter preceding the text of The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne describes William Hawthorne as the earliest emigrant of my name. His treatment of great-great-grandfather John Hawthorne is far less flattering, He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the Church; he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil. He was likewise a bitter persecutor.

Through his literary works, Hawthorne continued to describe the shame and disgust he felt for all the horrors enacted by his ancestors upon others. The events leading to the action of his ancestors and his own life experiences have acted as the centre of moral, literary and symbolic difficulties present in his works. The publication of Hawthorne's short story collection named "Twice-Told Tales" in 1837 attracted the attention of a follower of Transcendentalism named Elizabeth Peabody who presided in his neighbourhood in Salem, Massachusetts. Hawthorne's visit to the Peabody house resulted in his meeting with Elizabeth's sister Sophia Peabody whom he eventually married in 1838. It was through the Peabody sisters that Hawthorne was

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introduced to the doctrines of Transcendentalism and the leading Transcendentalists of the time. Sophia Peabody was an admirer of Emerson and introduced Hawthorne to two of his greatest publications, namely “The Nature” and “Essays- First Series” in 1841.

Initially, Hawthorne was not greatly enthusiastic upon being introduced to Emerson’s Transcendentalism since his invitation to attend one of Emerson’s lectures was rejected. Although Hawthorne was not an active member of the Transcendentalist Club, he often had the opportunity to enjoy their company after moving to Concord, which was Emerson’s hometown in 1842. It was during his stay at Brook Farm in Boston from April to November 1841, that Hawthorne particularly started to become familiar with the Transcendental Philosophy. Also known as “The Brook Farm Experiment”, the place was originally a residential community of around seventy people led by its founder and leader George Ripley who hoped to achieve “Christ’s idea of society”. He hoped to achieve this by dividing the time between manual labour and by leading a life close to nature. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller were among the most frequent visitors of Brook Farm. Although, Emerson was skeptical about the utopian experiment and compared it to the constricting character of a jailhouse and stated, “I do not wish to remove from my present prison to a prison a little larger. I wish to break all prisons.

Not only the project, but also its participants were an object for derision. Emerson mocks Hawthorne in his journal in 1843: “Hawthorne boasts that he lived at Brook Farm during his heroic age: then all were intimate and each knew the other’s work: priest and cook conversed at night of the day’s work. “Actually, Hawthorne did not join the social experiment for

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transcendental fervour, but rather due to financial issues and the option to concentrate in his literary career. Nevertheless, he surely was quite optimistic about the success of Brook Farm since he invested two shares of stock at 500 dollars a share, a sum that was never returned. In the long run, he was hoping to find a cheap place to live within the community in regard to his future marriage to Sophia Peabody. The plan that the inhabitants only had to work for three hours a day to keep the farm functioning yet turned out to be unrealizable. As a result, he left Brook Farm after eight months of living there.

Even though Hawthorne was constantly surrounded by transcendentalists like Emerson and Thoreau along with their Transcendental philosophies dominating the American Literary scene at the time, Hawthorne did not completely agree with the Transcendental philosophy. Hawthorne was what most people called “The Transcendental Pessimist”. Even though he was happy to immerse himself in the Transcendentalist culture, consider the significance of their teachings and even stived to exemplify various aspects of the Transcendentalist philosophy at one point.

Hawthorne did not believe in the principle of “Self-Reliance” and stated that man must give in to the darkness within. As opposed to the perfectionist belief of Transcendentalism, Hawthorne’s idea of “Dark Romanticism” emphasized human fallibility and proneness to sin and self-destruction and the difficulties inherent during the attempts of social reform. Even though the Transcendentalists were non-conformists, who had great faith in the capacity of the human thought and they also believed that spirituality profoundly existed in nature and reason. Yet, Hawthorne was not a devoted follower of Transcendentalism and had difficulty agreeing

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to and understanding the almost perfect optimism and idealism of the Transcendentalist Movement.

Hawthorne believed that the original goals of philosophical movements such as Transcendentalism are rarely accomplished successfully. He also warned that leaders of such movements cannot account for the repercussions of their actions and teachings. He made his skepticism of the Transcendental philosophy clear with constant references to the idea of evil principle throughout his works. As opposed to the Transcendental philosophy of human perfection, Hawthorne believed that the failure to recognize the human capacity to succumb to evil makes it easier for the malevolent elements and individuals to cause them harm. He also believed that no good could ever come out a philosophy which entirely consumed a person and transformed all of their actions into one focus. Even after his constant pessimism towards the philosophy, Hawthorne greatly admired the Transcendentalists and even followed some of their teachings with great devotion even after parting ways with Emerson and Thoreau. It is believed that Hawthorne's paranoia and pessimism towards Transcendentalism resulted from his disdain for the dominating and overbearing Puritan society and beliefs of his ancestors which kept him from completely devoting himself to the Transcendentalist School of Thought.

Therefore, even though Hawthorne was not a Transcendentalist, he was not an Anti-Transcendentalist either. His works indicate that his works resembled a constantly shifting mark which was never fixed to one particular dogmatic belief. Hawthorne was always fascinated and inspired by the immense potential of the Transcendental ideal and he shared it with a reverence for nature and the individual connection to God but at the same time he was

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also terrified of the potential of the evil in the world. Each of his works seem to build-up to a moment of Transcendental revelation: all of the earthly constraints holding humanity back from a true spiritual connection destroyed in a fire; Giovanni and Beatrice living happily, innocently, together in the garden; Owen Warland in *The Artist of the Beautiful* inventing a mechanical butterfly that comes so close to mimicking natural beauty until it is destroyed by the human hands of his adversary; and so on. Yet each of these moments comes crashing back to earth. Hawthorne seems to want to describe a situation in which the idealism of the Transcendentalists can succeed, yet he seems to be constantly visited by the dark-visaged stranger who perpetually reminds him of the foul cavern of the human heart.

Although, a lot of Hawthorne's notebooks, sketches and tales contained reflections of ideas which he held in common with the Transcendentalists. These included concerns with problems of the relation of appearance to reality, the idea of the meaning of life to be found in the midst of nature, the necessity to shake off the dead hand of the past, and also the embodiment of highest attributes in men of humble station.

In most of his romances Hawthorne explored the consequences of the application of the ideas of Transcendentalists. For example, Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter* was uncompromisingly self-reliant and also the events in the story seemed to call for a "new system" for the society, *The House of The Seven Gables* illustrated Hawthorne's interest in democracy. Similarly, *Holgrave* exhibits a Transcendental emphasis on escaping the influence of the past. *The Blithedale Romance* shows the failure of attempts at brotherhood when the characters do not live up to their ideals. Therefore, a study of all of his personal records and

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literary works reveal that Hawthorne was a voluntary associate of the Transcendentalists, with whom he shared a number of assumptions of Romantic Idealism.

Comparison Between the Perspectives of Emerson and Hawthorne Regarding Transcendentalism

Emerson and Hawthorne are regarded as two opposite sides of the same coin called Transcendentalism. On one hand where Emerson is revered as the “Father of Transcendentalism”, Hawthorne on the other hand established himself as the “Transcendental Pessimist”. Whether or not Hawthorne was convinced with Transcendental ideas of Emerson such as Compensation, he did invoke the Transcendental ideas in works like *The Scarlet Letter*. A close examination of Hawthorne’s associations, notebooks and private letters, and the body of his literary works revealed the identity of Hawthorne as a man who associated closely and by choice with the leading Transcendentalists of the time despite his Anti-Transcendentalist views. He always spoke of people like Emerson with respect, paid close attention to their works while reading them and regularly recorded their thoughts about the meaning of life which were in accordance with the Transcendentalist school of thought in his notebooks and gradually used their references in his published works.

At the same time, the stark contrast between Emerson and Hawthorne’s view of Transcendentalism can be highlighted through the three major characteristics established by Emerson in his works which pose as the “the three major tenets of Transcendentalism”. Those are nature, goodness of mankind and individualism”. Hawthorne on the other hand, dealt with

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the same characteristics in an opposite manner in his works. Emerson classified nature as a very important aspect of Transcendentalist Writing. He frequently wrote about being one with the nature. Two excellent examples of the oneness with nature can be found in his essay “The Nature” and his poem “The Rhodora”. For example, when he writes in The Rhodora that “This charm is wasted on earth and sky”, he means that something as beautiful and simple as a rhodora flower is too beautiful and wonderful to be wasted upon earth. He states that the rhodora flower has the kind of beauty which goes beyond the physical reality and by simply observing it the individual can understand the universe better. Emerson believed that nature should be mindfully observed but not disturbed and by merely observing its beauty we can learn a lot about ourselves.

Hawthorne, on the other hand held a very different perspective of nature. He saw nature as a dark and evil place where bad things were prone to happen. Throughout his writings such as “The Scarlet Letter” he painted a dark and sinister image of nature where malevolent spirits lurked around. Even in The Scarlet Letter, the woods have been depicted as a place where evil occurrences take place. For instance, Mistress Hibbins in The Scarlet Letter occasionally ventures into the woods where the devil resides. Even when she asks Hester to accompany her, she clearly refuses that she has a daughter to keep herself away from further sin. Hawthorne was not very fond of nature and showed a clear dislike of nature and its aspects throughout his life which was probably why he left the utopian community of Brooke Farm after living there for a short period of time.

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Goodness of mankind is another major aspect of Transcendentalism where the perspectives of Emerson and Hawthorne clashed. Emerson believed in the absolute goodness of mankind even if they succumbed to evil. He stated in his essay “Self-Reliance” about how man always upholds goodness in all circumstances and should always strive towards perfection by becoming the best version of themselves. Hawthorne had an absolutely opposite perspective regarding the goodness of mankind and self-reliance as he believed that no man is perfect and the mankind in general is bound to give in to their evil desires and inner darkness. In nearly all of his works he wrote about hidden sins and usually gave his characters some kind of symbols which represented their sin.

Emerson believed in individuality and self-reliance to be another important pillar of the Transcendental thought. He talked about how believing in your individuality and standing up for what you believe in leads to true greatness. He also talked about how one has to go against the society’s perspectives and beliefs to achieve greatness. He believed that people should always speak of what they believe in and they should say it with every ounce of strength in them. Even if they change their minds about something they should still speak their minds and should not be afraid of what others think of them. He believed that people should not be afraid to be wrong because there is always time to change their minds.

Despite majority of his views being Anti-Transcendental, Hawthorne had a very introverted personality and was a solid believer of Individualism. He took to being an individual to such an extreme that there was a time when he locked himself up in a room in his house which he used to call the “Dismal Chamber” for twelve years. He stayed there till the time he felt

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confident enough to write his fictional works well. Even majority of his characters were either introverts who stayed by themselves or social outcasts who were kept secluded from the society.

Conclusion

While examining the entire collection of Emerson and Hawthorne's works and their own individual perspectives of Transcendentalism, it cannot be claimed for sure that one influenced the other, however a closer look at Emerson's "The Young American" and Hawthorne's "The Intelligence Office" reveal that between 1842 and 1844 they had frequent interactions while they were neighbours. Therefore, despite having absolutely opposite perspectives of Transcendentalism, Emerson and Hawthorne also agreed with each other on certain aspects of society and certain tenets relating to the Transcendental School of Thought. Since Emerson and Hawthorne lived during the same time period in the nineteenth century, Hawthorne was indeed a contemporary of Emerson and their writings reflect certain similar themes which depict their agreement on certain aspects of Transcendentalism. Both of them emphasized individualism, personal independence and originality. Both of them believed that the society corrupts the individual mind and these beliefs are reflected in all of Emerson and Hawthorne's works. Thus, as contemporaries Emerson and Hawthorne were associated personally with one another, but also in their shared thoughts of human experience which depicts the conflict between the individual and society. And above it all both Emerson and Hawthorne believed that every individual should read the "Book of Nature" at least once in his lifetime.

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