American Romanticism

A Literary Movement

Take notes when you see the pencil.

New York, mid 19th Century

CITY OF NEW YORK.

NEW YORK, LITH. AND PUBLISHED BY H. CHARLES, 165 BROADWAY STREET.

American Romanticism

- The Industrial Revolution brings about rapid change and wealth for some.
- But living conditions for most Americans were harsh and unforgiving.

American Romanticism

- Romantic writers (and artists) saw themselves as revolting against the "Age of Reason" (1700-1770) and its classical values.

American Romanticism

ROMANTIC	CLASSICAL
Emotional	Reasonable and Practical
Individualistic	Public Responsibility
Revolutionary	Conservative/Puritan
Solitude & Nature	Public, Urban Life
Fantasy/Introspection	External Reality
Right Brain	Left Brain
Satisfaction of Desire	Desire Repressed
Organic	Mechanical
Exotic	Mundane
Outcasts	Wealthy Family
Idealistic	Materialistic

American Romanticism

- American Romantic writers were seeking an alternative to the world that had been created by logic and rational thought.

American Romanticism

- American Romantic writers were also fascinated (repulsed?) by the ideas of sin and guilt.
- Perhaps because early America was the scene of terrible things resulting from radical Puritan principles.

American Romanticism

- For example, Celebration was outlawed in Boston from 1659 to 1681.
- Christmas celebrations were outlawed, too.
- As were games of chance, maypoles, and theater.

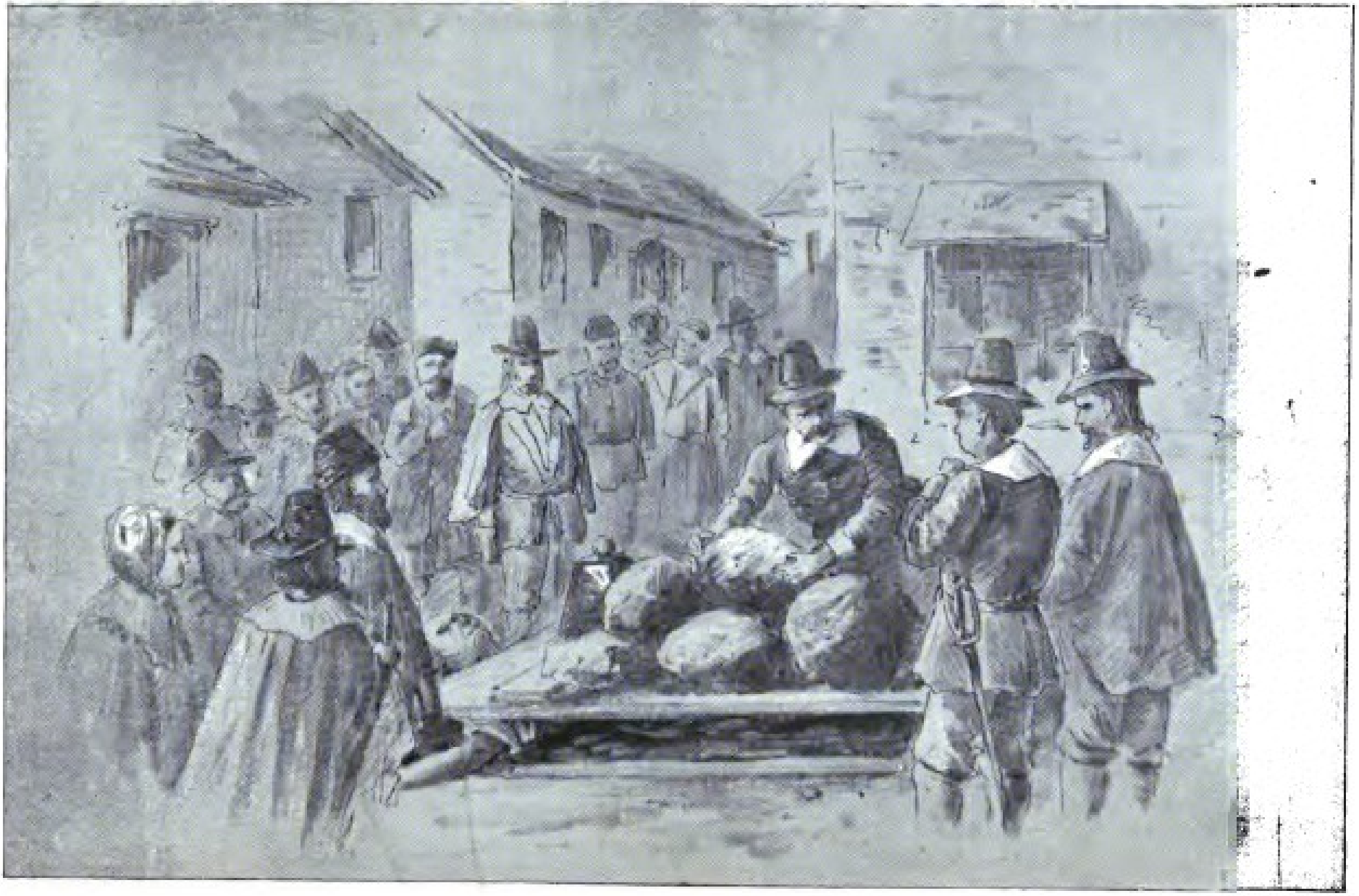
Maypoles: pure evil, according to early American Puritans.

American Romanticism

- And then, of course, there were the Witch Trials.

ARRESTING A WITCH.

THE WITCH No.2.



GILES COREY'S PUNISHMENT AND AWFUL DEATH.

American Romanticism

- The American Romantics searched for new spiritual roots.
- They believed religion stifled the human spirit.
- In their writing, they sought ways to transcend the world created by rationalism, religion, sin and guilt.

American Romanticism

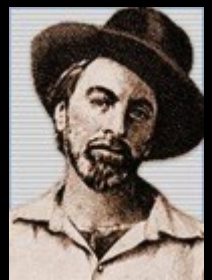
- They transcended by placing importance on feelings.

Feelings are more important than logic and facts!

The individual is more important than the masses!

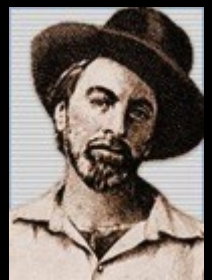
American Romanticism

- The major American Romantic writers:
  1. Edgar Allen Poe
  2. Walt Whitman
  3. Ralph Waldo Emerson
  4. Nathanial Hawthorne
  5. Emily Dickinson
  6. Henry David Thoreau



American Romanticism

- The ideas and attitudes of these and other American Romantic writers form the core transcendental values that inspire American life today.



American Romanticism

- **Reverence for Nature**
- Connecting with nature is the way to rise above mundane life.

Connecting with nature

American Romanticism

- **Optimism**
- Looking forward to a prosperous future is a way to transcend the drudgeries of daily life.

Optimism about the future.

Bierstadt

American Romanticism

- Civil Resistance
- Peaceful, organized resistance to unjust laws is the path to a more perfect future.

Civil disobedience

EMUNDO

American Romanticism

- Plumbing the psychological depths.
- Exploring our dark side is the path to deeper understanding of life.

Journeys to the dark side of the human soul

Summary

- Romantic literature is the opposite of classical literature.
- The American romantic movement was a rejection of the industrial revolution and puritan religious values.

Summary

- American Romantic writers transcended the norms of their day, in search of new frontiers, both physical and psychological.

Sources

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