

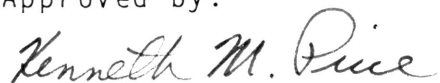
**The Crisis in Nineteenth Century
American Mythology:
An Examination of the Authentic American in
Popular Literature (1792-1852)**

by
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Abstract

The paper is an examination of the concept of the American as it was expressed in the enduring popular literature of the period. A brief discussion of the fundamental principles of American mythology is followed by an examination of the development of national identity in eight significant works of fiction. The works discussed are: Modern Chivalry (Brackenridge), A History of New York and "Rip Van Winkle" (Irving), The Spy and The Pioneers (Cooper), The Scarlet Letter and The House of the Seven Gables (Hawthorne), and Uncle Tom's Cabin (Stowe).

The thesis of the paper is that an image of the American emerged in the works prior to Uncle Tom's Cabin which was of a strongly individualistic nature. The emphasis on self-reliance resulted in an individual ethical standard as a characteristic of the national identity. An unfortunate result of this standard is the seeming lack of a workable social ethic. The existence of this flaw in the national identity was revealed with the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin in 1852.

Finally, some suggestions are offered for examining the course of the cultural dialogue, with its corresponding developments in literature, after the Civil War.

Acknowledgement

I wish to thank both Dr. Jerome Loving and Dr. Kenneth Price, who served as my advisors in this project. Dr. Loving was very helpful in setting me down the right path in the early stages of the research. Dr. Price graciously agreed to take over the advisory duties at the end of the first semester, and has been of immense help in bringing everything together for completion.

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Introduction

"Here are no aristocratical families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclesiastical dominion, no invisible power giving to a few a very visible one. . . ." With these words, Crèvecoeur addressed the question "What is an American?"¹ It is only the beginning of an answer -- an attempt to show, at least, what an American is not. Two years after Crèvecoeur penned these words, Thomas Jefferson set down perhaps the most memorable statement of a nation's ideals ever composed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. . . ." Crèvecoeur's words were in fact a negation of some aspects of England's national identity. Jefferson's words in the Declaration of Independence are an assertion of something about an American identity. It is the foundation on which the image of the American was to be built. The American Revolution involved the colonists' rejection of their identity as Englishmen. With the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783 they faced the problem of establishing an identity as Americans. The question of what constituted an ideal citizen in a democracy had to be addressed.

The situation in which history placed the people of the

new nation was unique. Opportunity was the watchword: opportunity to make a new start, to own land, to help mold the institutions of government, to make a fortune, or to be left alone. Jefferson's words (borrowed from Locke) stated the fundamental principles governing life in the new world -- the guidelines for making the most of opportunity. After the Revolution, negation of the past would prove to be inadequate. Americans were called to build the future.

1. Literature and the Notion of the Authentic American

This paper is concerned with the work of one group within the new society: the writers of popular fiction. The writers in the decades after the Revolution had to first figure out what an American was before they could write about one. It was up to them to characterize a believable American for their readers. In the prologue to The American Adam, R. W. B. Lewis identifies this process as the first step in creating a "native American mythology."² The writers tried to develop a character which embodied the principles of the society. The character illustrated how one might best take advantage of the opportunity offered in the new world. The figure they sought will be referred to in this paper as "the authentic American." This figure is never realized in all its complexity as a particular character in any one work. Rather, the authentic American is an image, the image that early Americans saw when they thought

of themselves. This representative figure is not necessarily male, though most of the characterizations offered are male. As will be seen, the image of the authentic American which finally emerges does have inherent biases. Generally speaking, these are related to economic or social class. These biases will become vitally important to the discussion, and much more will be said about them in the conclusion to the paper.

Writers were not the only members of society involved in developing the authentic American, of course. Anyone who had a notion of what it meant to be an American was involved. Idle conversations were probably the most influential mechanisms in the figure's development, and folklore played an important role. We recognize that a sense of national identity did emerge, and there was a collective notion of the American. It lay at the root of nationalism and patriotism. The authentic American personified society's ideals; the writers tried to characterize the authentic American. One of a writer's goals is to create vivid images. The authentic American is one of these images. If an author is popular, his images are remembered by a significant portion of the population. His private notions of the authentic American enter the public forum to be discussed, and thereby influence the sense of national identity. The work of writers is one of the few mechanisms in the development of national identity of which we have records. We may look at the popular literature of the day and see for

ourselves what characterizations of the authentic American were being presented to the population. I would stress that the word "popular" is here used in a positive sense, to denote that the works were widely read. Only such works could have significantly affected the national consciousness, and it is on these works which this discussion of the authentic American will focus.

2. The American Dream and the American Ideal

Many of the terms used in this discussion are familiar phrases, which have become trivialized through repeated use. Terms such as "the American ideal" and "the American dream" have broad connotations, and are frequently used without a specific meaning. Such terms do have a specific meaning as they are employed in this discussion. We have already noted that a hallmark of American ideology is the right of each man to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. John Locke's wording was "life, liberty, and property." The change is significant in the development of the authentic American. Happiness is not necessarily equated with the possession of property. Nor is happiness guaranteed. The authentic American is free to seek happiness. The notion of the authentic American may differ greatly from one author to another, depending on how "the pursuit of happiness" is conceived. Some authors suggest that it involves seeking

public esteem; others suggest that it is to be found in the escape from responsibility. I identify "the pursuit of happiness" with "the American dream." Some of the concepts associated with the American dream are those of a new beginning in the wilderness or in a young settlement, freedom (liberty) and self-reliant action. All this is aimed at realizing what we may call "the American ideal," which in fact becomes two ideals: the romantic ideal of escape and the transcendental ideal of positive freedom.³

3. Statement of the Thesis

R. W. B. Lewis opens The American Adam with a discussion of the nature of culture. He compares the course of cultural history to a many-voiced dialogue. The purpose of this paper is to follow the dialogue concerning national identity as it developed in the most popular literature of the period. Lewis described the authentic American as an Adam figure:

an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources.⁴

Lewis' image is a good one, and I concur with it on most points. My first intention is to clarify the meaning of some of the terms involved in the dialogue, and to further

sharpen the image of the authentic American as it existed in the popular consciousness. My thesis is that after nearly eight decades of continued discussion of what it meant to be an American, when an image of the authentic American had been delineated which seemed to serve the purposes at hand, a fatal flaw in the principles at the root of the image was exposed. This paper is a study of the development and failure of the American national identity as it was manifest in literature from 1776 to 1852.

The argument divides into two broad segments. The first, which occupies the bulk of the discussion, traces the development of the authentic American, the hero of the American mythology. The second segment of the argument involves a criticism of this figure. The slavery issue exposed certain hypocrisies which had been incorporated into the figure. The image of the authentic American was seen to be unrealistic, and in fact harmful as an image of the collective identity. It allowed a great many people to be, in fact, deprived of much that is promised in the fundamental principles governing life in America.

4. The Cultural Dialogue

A discussion of some aspects of the cultural dialogue is in order before we begin to examine particular works. In brief, the dialogue begins with general principles and arrives at particular images. These images share common fea-

tures, and these features are the characteristics of the authentic American. Over the period involved in this study, variations in the concept of the authentic American naturally occurred. The figures presented at the beginning of the period, for example, are often military figures. With the passage of time, the military theme recedes. The authentic American generally does serve society in some manner, however. It is these broader characteristics, such as public service, which define the authentic American. More specific notions, such as military service, are subject to frequent change. We wish to discover the more general attributes of the figure.

5. American Self-Reliance

Self-reliance is one of the most essential characteristics of the authentic American. Like the "unalienable rights" passage in the Declaration of Independence, self-reliance was originally a European notion which was adopted by the new democratic society of America. The European tradition is commonly referred to as the doctrine of self-culture; its strongest proponent in the early nineteenth century was Goethe. It is an idealistic, somewhat aristocratic notion that the goal of a worthwhile life is the complete realization of all potential: all a person's talents are to be developed by himself, to their fullest expression.⁵ This conception of the purpose of life arrived

full-strength among American literati in the 1820's, largely by way of a translation of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship done by the Englishman Thomas Carlyle.⁶ It blended well with the native notion of the self-made and self-educated man, of which Benjamin Franklin was the prime example. In 1827, Carlyle stated a description of self-culture more democratic than the original European strain:

Let each become all that he was created capable of being; expand, if possible, to his full growth; resisting all impediments, casting off all foreign, especially all noxious adhesions; and show himself at length in his own shape and stature, be these what they may.⁷

This may be considered a description of American self-reliance.

The cultural dialogue concerning the authentic American began, then, with the premises that (1) all men are in some measure equal, (2) all men are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and (3) the best life is a self-reliant life. In the course of the dialogue, these general principles became associated in specific ways with particular catchphrases, such as "the American dream" and "the American ideal." Authors created characters which personified various interpretations of these broad notions, often implicitly rejecting previous characterizations of the authentic American. Two versions of the American ideal, the notion of how one should spend one's time, were to be discerned at the heart of these characterizations. We may

classify these as the romantic ideal and the transcendental ideal. They provide a dialectical tension in the notion of the authentic American. When the slavery issue entered the dialogue, however, this ambiguity in the American ideal could not be maintained. The image of the authentic American was thrown into a crisis from which it is still recovering.

Review of the Literature

The concept of "the authentic American" is not a purely literary notion. Consequently, relevant scholarship has appeared in other fields of study, including sociology and history. Where such works shed light on the subject as it appears in literature, they have been consulted. Merle Curti's book, The Growth of American Thought, is largely concerned with the processes by which European systems of education, religion, and politics were adapted to American life. The section on "The Cult of Self-Improvement" provides a good description of the American reception of self-reliance.¹

Discussion of the figure in a literary context is to be found in many sources. The vast majority of these are incidental references to the notion of American identity or American principles. As the figure here referred to as "the authentic American" is a popular concept, the hero of American mythology, scholars often take it for granted that their readers have a grasp of the nature of this figure, and refer to it as a standard. Several articles cited in this paper provided terminology in such a context which proved useful for this discussion.² The topic as a whole is apparently too broad to be addressed in the space of a journal article: a computer search of the Arts and Humanities Citation Index

discovered no similar discussions, though it did provide several good sources on isolated aspects of the discussion.

One conception of the authentic American is as the American hero. The working title of this project was "The Hero in Early American Literature." This title was abandoned once it became apparent that the representative American was, in fact, seldom heroic in a traditional sense. This shift in focus distinguishes the paper from the many works concerning the more traditional notion of heroism in America. Theodore L. Gross devotes a short section of The Heroic Ideal in American Literature to a discussion of Hawthorne's heroes. What he has to say about these figures, though, concerns the traditionally "heroic" aspects of their acts.³ The remainder of Gross' book concerns authors not included in this study, either because they do not fall within the time period examined, or because they were not sufficiently popular to be included. Marshall W. Fishwick's work, American Heroes: Myth and Reality, explores popular, non-literary heroes. His section on the popularity of the self-made man as hero is another useful commentary on the importance of self-reliance in America.⁴ On the whole, however, Fishwick is concerned with the development of the authentic American in the forums of popular discussion and folklore, which are not considered here. Henry Nash Smith's Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth contains a good discussion of the role of the frontier in American consciousness. In short, Smith argues that the availability

of unsettled land was one of the primary features which distinguished the new world from the old. Smith also addresses the conflict between the frontiersman and the social order which appears in the Leatherstocking tales.⁵

The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste, by James D. Hart, is indispensable to research concerning the role of popular literature in forming a notion of national identity. It traces the shift in literary preference from English romances to books centered on aspects of American life.⁶ This shift is a sign of the growing sense of the need for a national identity, and of the fact that many people looked for literature to help create that identity. Hart's book provides a good account of what type of literature seemed to serve this purpose. Similar general discussions of the development of American literature are to be found in introductions to anthologies. Though these are very broad in their scope, they do provide some insight into the historical and cultural forces at work during the period in question.⁷ Robert E. Spiller's Literary History of the United States also offers a useful overview of the literature of the period.⁸

The American Adam, by R. W. B. Lewis, provides the methodology employed in this discussion of the American in nineteenth century literature. His prologue, "The Myth and the Dialogue," defines many of the terms of this discussion. Lewis states that his interest is "limited to articulate

thinkers and conscious artists."⁹ He explores the concept of the authentic American as it emerged in the works of respected authors and philosophers of the period. Those receiving his closest attention are: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Walt Whitman, the elder Henry James, Horace Bushnell, Charles Brockden Brown, James Fenimore Cooper, Robert Montgomery Bird, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, George Bancroft, Francis Parkman, Theodore Parker, and Orestes Brownson. Lewis traces the cultural dialogue as it emerges in the works of these erudite men. It is from this body of literature that he extracts the image of the authentic American as Adam.

The present discussion of the authentic American differs from Lewis' in two respects. First, it is concerned with the notion of national identity, which is a popular notion. It therefore avoids discussion of works which were not well known by the general public. The image of the authentic American which I discover is in some respects different from the tragic figure which Lewis describes. It will be noted that, of all the authors which Lewis discusses, only Hawthorne and Cooper appear in this study. The second significant difference between the two discussions is actually a result of the different natures of the characters described. Lewis does not explore the crisis which affected the national identity in the years immediately prior to the Civil War. While this paper employs the methods and terminology of Lewis' work, it deals with a different species of

literature. As a result, a thesis is developed which does not appear in Lewis' work.

I. Selection of Works for the Study

1. Criteria for Inclusion

Literally hundreds of works published between 1776 and 1865 are, in one way or another, worthy of being considered for inclusion in this examination of the concept of the authentic American. Certain limits naturally had to be imposed on which works would be included; there had to be criteria for eliminating most of the possibilities. The guidelines employed serve to focus the scope of the inquiry, allowing a more intensive study of each work and at the same time allowing enough flexibility to avoid restricting the paper to an unreasonable extent.

First among the limiting factors is the requirement that the central figure in the work, the potential authentic American, be a fictional character. This stipulation is in keeping with the role that popular literature has in establishing the national identity. I am primarily interested in finding what sort of a character emerged, in the works of authors writing for the general public, as the notion of the representative citizen. Literary representation of actual persons in the young nation were certainly important in forming a national identity. Benjamin Franklin, as he pre-

sents himself in the Autobiography, is a superb example of such a figure, as is George Washington as presented in Parson Weems' famous (though inaccurate) biography.¹ These figures were esteemed in the public mind for their own deeds, however, and would have been cultural icons even without their literary representations. As such, they did influence the nature of the literary figures I am studying.

The second limit imposed on the works to be considered is that they must be prose works. Suffice it to say that other forms, such as poetry and drama, have never enjoyed the wide popularity of prose works in America. Eliminating forms other than prose from consideration has little impact on what types of figure are left for the study. The authentic American appears in both poetry and prose. A character appearing exclusively in works of poetry is hardly likely to be truly representative.

The most important requirement of the works under discussion is that they be popular. The authentic American, above all, must be a popular notion; he or she must have been significantly well-known to the public in order to obtain a place in the national consciousness and a role in the cultural dialogue. In order to gauge the popularity of books from the early and middle part of the nineteenth century, it is necessary to rely on several types of information. Because there is little publishing information available for this period, and because much of what we do have is suspect, any conclusions drawn in this area must be

approached with caution. In his study The Popular Book, James D. Hart provides a relatively trustworthy list of books which enjoyed the greatest popularity at the time of their publication.² I have extracted a list of the American prose fiction from Hart's longer list, and present it as Table 1 in the Appendix.

The popularity of a work at its first appearance is no indication of how subsequent generations valued the work, however. I have shown in Table 2 a list of works from Table 1 included in American Literature: An Historical Sketch (1620-1880), a history of American Literature published in 1882.³ In a bookseller's survey cited by Hart, The Scarlet Letter and Uncle Tom's Cabin were listed as bestsellers in 1876.⁴ This information, from the period immediately after the Civil War, begins to indicate which titles had staying power, both critically and in terms of sales. These works had already outlasted most of the hackwork with which they first appeared. Tables 4 and 5 show which works of general popularity at their release have achieved "classic" status, as indicated by their inclusion in a standard anthology and by the fact that they still spur scholarly discussion. By examining these compilations, taken from various times in the works' histories, I hope to avoid the dangers presented by uncertain information concerning their initial popularity. For example, even if Hart's data on The Scarlet Letter's sales at its release are found to be inaccurate, I feel that its subsequent significance in American literature

will justify an examination of it in this study.

The criteria for selecting the subjects for this inquiry into the nature of the authentic American, then, require that the work in question:

- be a popular prose work published between 1776 and 1865,
- portray a fictional character, not an historical figure,
- had become significant enough in literature to be considered important to the history of literature by the end of the period under consideration.

Tables IV and V are intended to show that the works have endured into our own day, as well.

2. Works to be Included

Based on these criteria, the works selected for study in this paper will be:

| | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Brackenridge | <u>Modern Chivalry</u> |
| Irving | <u>History of New York</u> |
| Irving | <u>The Sketch Book</u> |
| Cooper | <u>The Spy</u> |
| Cooper | <u>The Pioneers</u> |
| Hawthorne | <u>The Scarlet Letter</u> |
| Hawthorne | <u>The House of the Seven Gables</u> |
| Stowe | <u>Uncle Tom's Cabin</u> |

The reason for selecting each of these should be apparent from what has been said, except in the case of The Spy. I have included it because it was Cooper's first successful novel (in fact the most successful American book which had yet appeared), and was written with the deliberate intention of portraying a truly ideal American figure.

It will be noted that, although it was stated that historical figures would not be included in this study, I have included Irving's History of New York. The work does focus on historical figures, but it is a fanciful, humorous discussion, part satire, part tall tale, and only marginally historical. I do not believe that Wouter Van Twiller, Wilhelmus Kieft, or Peter Stuyvesant had any significance in the popular awareness apart from their portrayals in Irving's work. What the public knew of the men, they knew because of Irving.⁵

The same argument applies to my inclusion of The Spy. Cooper supposedly derived the idea for his tale from a true story told to him by John Jay, but he altered the facts to such an extent that he could claim to have no real model for the character of Harvey Birch. Whether he did or not, the story of the patriotic peddler was virtually unknown until Cooper's novel was published.⁶

"Rip Van Winkle" is the only selection from The Sketch Book to be included. It is one of three sketches which deal with an American theme; the other thirty-one are English sketches. "Traits of Indian Character" is a short, little-

known essay on native Americans. "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is primarily a tale of effect. While there are many interesting things to be said in considering the characters of Brom Bones and Ichabod Crane, the two figures add nothing to the dialogue concerning the authentic American which cannot be found in "Rip Van Winkle". For that reason I have included only the latter work.

We now turn to the works themselves, treating each as a separate voice in that part of our early cultural dialogue which concerned the nature of the authentic American. The works will be considered predominantly in chronological order of appearance, yet allowing enough flexibility for the dialogue to be presented in a logical manner.

II. Brackenridge -- Modern Chivalry

Hugh Henry Brackenridge's Modern Chivalry is a humorous investigation of American society as found in the decades immediately after the Revolution. Lewis Leary neatly states Brackenridge's attitude toward the young society in his introduction to the rambling work: "it stands firm on its premise that democracy as practiced in America is a good thing . . . ; but that it is subject to amazing malfunctions when tinkered with by bumbling, ignorant, or conscienceless men."¹ The malfunctions provide the humor for Brackenridge's satire, which is based on a literal interpretation of the statement that "all men are created equal." All men are obviously not equal in a strict sense. Brackenridge points out that there are bumlbers in the new society. Since the principle of equality states that all men have equal opportunity to fulfill their capabilities, though, the problem the dialogue must investigate is the fact that people do not possess equal capabilities. Some of the members of the new society are exiled nobility, and some are exiled prisoners. The authentic American could conceivably spring from either of these origins. The two types, the elite American and the rabble, are juxtaposed throughout the literature of this period.

1. Teague O'Regan

Brackenridge vividly presents the two extremes in society.² His representation of the rabble is a servant named Teague O'Regan, an uneducated Irish immigrant in the service of the retired Captain John Farrago. The Captain says early on, "There is nothing makes a man so ridiculous as to attempt what is above his sphere."³ As proof, we see Teague, the "bog-trotter," attempt to become a great man in society. Teague wants to run for Congress. He might have been elected, but Captain Farrago prevented it, saying that it is enough to have the right to be elected to high office, and therefore not necessary for people like him to exercise that right.⁴ Brackenridge has Teague trying in every way to become a great man, and consistently evokes laughter as the Captain saves Teague, always at the last minute, from doing any number of things "above his sphere." At various times, Teague almost joins a philosophical society, almost becomes a preacher, almost fights a duel, almost plays an Indian chief in forming a treaty (Teague speaks Irish, which is reckoned as good as genuine Kickapoo for this purpose), and almost marries a wealthy woman. He finally obtains a public office, after the Captain agrees to assist him. Teague is appointed an excise officer in a frontier district, but finds it indeed "above his sphere" as the rabble of the district, among whom he rightfully belongs, tar and feather him. Brackenridge's message in Modern Chivalry is clear on

this point: the authentic American who takes advantage of opportunity and becomes a great man through self-reliance, is not one of the rabble.

2. The Marquis de Marnessie

Brackenridge also presents a member of an elite class in Modern Chivalry. Immediately after Teague's unfortunate downfall, near the end of volume IV of the book, we are introduced to a recent immigrant from France, the Marquis de Marnessie. He came to America after fighting in the French Revolution on the side of the nobility. In strict accordance with the forms of the American dream, the Marquis went to the western frontier, bought a hundred acres for a pittance, moved his family into a simple log cabin, and proceeded to live off the land.⁵ The Marquis is a minor figure in Brackenridge's work, but he presents us with another qualification concerning what type of person can reasonably pursue the American dream. He seems to carry out what Terence Martin argues is a common process in our literature, "to cancel institutions and practices that have developed in society so that one might celebrate a genuine point of beginning."⁶ He has gone through the motions, but has failed to achieve an actual new beginning. He argues in favor of monarchy and feudal principles, thus failing to cancel some of Europe's most obtrusive institutions. His pursuit of the American dream is a sham; his new beginning

is only superficial. The Marquis is finally able to compare his life in America only to that of a man awaiting death.⁷

3. Captain John Farrago

Captain Farrago is perhaps the most promising figure for the role of the authentic American. Unfortunately, he does less in the way of seeking the American dream than anyone. He never even seeks a new beginning as the Marquis did. The Captain is in Modern Chivalry as a narrator, observer, and to keep Teague out of trouble until the fourth volume. The book shows us the buffoonery of the rabble and the pointless subsistence of a better class of men, but does not offer a positive image of national identity.

4. The Two Ideals

Modern Chivalry does introduce us to the two types of the American ideal in their most simplistic versions. The transcendental ideal is characterized by an active attempt to realize one's potential. Teague explores every avenue in his effort to become a great man. He is ambitious to make a name for himself and to become a valuable part of society. He wants to fulfill his potential in the greatest degree possible. His grasp of the transcendental ideal is good, but he fails to recognize that he is a clown whose potential is sharply limited.

The romantic ideal is far less ambitious in its goals. To live peacefully, contentedly, in harmony with nature, and to avoid the bustle of society are some of the more readily apparent aims of the ideal. The Marquis achieves this part of the American romantic ideal, but his elitist political beliefs, which remain intact in spite of an attempt at a new beginning, cause him to recede into a snobbish solipsism.

If we refer to Carlyle's definition of self-reliance, it becomes apparent that it may encompass both ideals. The cultural dialogue concerning the authentic American, too, includes both ideals. With this in mind, we may see the dialectical tension involving the ideal as it evolves in subsequent works.

III. Irving -- The History of New York

Washington Irving enters the dialogue with the History of New York in 1809. In it he takes up the question of classes to a further extent than Brackenridge did, again humorously portraying the rabble and its potential for folly in a democracy. Irving also presents a strong elite figure, as well as a class which enjoys a pointless existence in the new world. These three classes are personified in the three governors of New Amsterdam: Wouter Van Twiller, Wilhelmus Kieft, and Peter Stuyvesant.¹

1. Walter the Doubter

"The Golden Reign of Wouter Van Twiller" is an age of romantic escape, but without any distasteful elitism. It is a comfortable society in the new world. Here, as on the Marquis' hundred acres, a new beginning has been achieved through negation:

There were neither public commotions, nor private quarrels; neither parties, nor sects, nor schisms; neither persecutions, nor trials, nor punishments; nor were there counsellors, attorneys, catchpolls, or hangmen.²

As a result of this placid inactivity, however, "the very words of learning, education, taste and talents were unheard

of -- a bright genius was an animal unknown."³ Self-reliance, or the realization of individual potential, is completely missing from New Amsterdam under Van Twiller.

2. William the Testy

Individual ambition arrives with the second governor, but fails to achieve the American ideal because it lacks sensible guidance. Wilhelmus Kieft, or William the Testy, is a caricature of Thomas Jefferson, and is probably the best-known figure in Irving's History. He is a true democrat, and draws Irving's ridicule on that account. William allows popular meetings for the purpose of discussing political matters, which, due to the nature of the rabble, invariably turn into drinking feasts.⁴ His democratic governance is little removed from mob rule, and in the final chapter of the History, Irving summarizes:

Let the disastrous reign of William the Testy serve as a salutary warning against that fitful, feverish mode of legislation, which acts without system; depends on shifts and projects, and trusts to lucky contingencies.⁵

Under William, the people have an interest in doing something in the new world, but the rabble are allowed to interfere with the workings of government, which is "above their sphere."

3. Peter the Headstrong

Irving presents the third governor, Peter Stuyvesant, as the most admirable character in his History. Indeed, Irving asserts that "to say merely that he was a hero would be doing him a great injustice."⁶ Stuyvesant is a hero in the European tradition, however. He is a strong defender of New Amsterdam, but he also proves to be a stubborn absolutist as governor. He is "a governor, of such uncommon activity and decision of mind, that he never sought nor accepted the advice of others."⁷ Stuyvesant is without doubt a self-reliant man in the new world. He directs his energies toward the genuine good of the people. He is no foolish populist, as was Kieft. He makes this clear in his manner of breaking up a tavern meeting that some of Kieft's followers have convened. After arguing that a common cobbler is as unsuited for politics as he is for repairing watches, Stuyvesant vows:

If ever I catch thee, or any of thy tribe, meddling again with affairs of government, by St. Nicholas, but I'll have every mother's bastard of ye flay'd alive, and your hide stretched for drum-heads, that ye may thenceforth make a noise to some purpose!⁸

He serves his office well, but his office is not suited to American society. In the end he realizes this fact. He is the last man left defending his beloved New Amsterdam against the British, even when the citizenry have surren-

dered. Finally seeing the futility of opposing the will of the people, Stuyvesant gives in and signs the instrument of surrender. He retires to the country, having seen that he no longer has a place in the new society.⁹

We may admire Stuyvesant for his courage, his self-reliance, and above all his actions, which distinguish him from Van Twilling's society. However, his variety of self-reliance is aristocratic in nature. When his pursuit of the transcendental ideal fails, he turns to the romantic ideal and lives out his days much like the Marquis.

IV. Irving -- "Rip Van Winkle"

Irving contributes another comment to the dialogue in "Rip Van Winkle," perhaps the best-known sketch in The Sketch Book, published in 1820. Rip personifies the American romantic ideal, as Stuyvesant personified the aristocratic transcendental ideal.¹ In the persona of Diedrich Knickerbocker, the same persona he used in writing the History of New York, Irving says "the great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labor."² Given his druthers, Rip would sit in front of the local inn and talk with his friends. His wife does not allow it, and he turns to the mountains to escape from her nagging. It is during one of these rambles in the Kaatskills that Rip has his encounter with the strange bowlers and their flagon of liquor, which leads to his twenty-year nap. On returning to the village, Rip finds that Dame Van Winkle is dead, and he is forever free of her nagging.³ "Having nothing to do at home, and being arrived at that happy age when a man can be idle with impunity, he took his place once more on the bench at the inn door and was revered as one of the patriarchs of the village, and a chronicle of the old times 'before the war' "⁴

During Rip's sleep, his more ambitious countrymen have won independence. They are free to pursue the American

dream: self-reliant action in a new society, aimed at fulfilling the potential of each individual. The sleepy village is gone, replaced by one with "a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about it," a sensation generated by the townsmen's active pursuit of the transcendental ideal.⁵ Rip, though, is now free to follow his own course. He finds self-fulfillment at the inn door, telling stories and smoking his pipe. Even as he does this, he is achieving the American dream. That he acts differently from Peter Stuyvesant and from his neighbors in doing so only indicates that people differ in their notion of the ideal life.

Rip may be seen as a positive representation of the authentic American, the first we have encountered. Teague and Kieft showed the folly of the masses. The Marquis and Stuyvesant were elitists. Farrago and Van Twiller did nothing at all in striving toward an ideal of any sort. These characters illustrate possible misconceptions of the figure, and serve a very important function in the dialogue. As preliminary explorations of the figure, they helped define the terms of the discussion, and identified the dangers of misinterpretation of such principles as equality, self-reliance, and the new beginning. Rip is a representation of the authentic American in pursuit of the romantic ideal. His interpretation of self-reliance leads him to private service, doing what provides for his own contentment, just as Stuyvesant's led him to public service. Stuyvesant was a governor, but "the changes of states and empires made but

little impression" on Rip.⁶ He is in no danger of solipsism, though, as long as he pursues his private ideal of contentment in the midst of society, at the inn door.

V. Cooper -- The Spy

The distinction in the nature of the opportunities for self-fulfillment in the new world receives a thorough treatment by James Fenimore Cooper in The Spy and in The Pioneers. Harvey Birch, the hero of the first novel, is clearly intended as an example of what an American can be, in the most idealized and patriotic fashion. Birch's sense of public duty dwarfs even Stuyvesant's. In the second novel, Natty Bumppo personifies the romantic ideal of private service; Judge Marmaduke Temple embodies the transcendental ideal, directed toward public service. Judge Temple is one of the elite, but he is not an elitist as Stuyvesant was. Natty is a commoner, and like Rip, serves his private contentment. Unlike Rip, though, Natty is openly hostile to the encroachments of civilization. He ultimately flees society altogether.

1. The Elite in The Spy

In The Spy, there are numerous representations of the elite. They consist mainly of the Wharton family, who live on an estate near Birch's dwelling. Among this class, the ideal is honor, and honor is to be found in public service: specifically, in military service. This stems from the

English origin of the Whartons, and consists in following the creed of a gentleman. It matters little which nation one supports, as long as the service is honorable. Thus at one point the aristocratic ideal is illustrated in its extreme form when Major Dunwoodie, an American, is bound to place under arrest for suspicion of espionage Captain Wharton, who is the brother of Dunwoodie's beloved.¹ This painful sacrifice, on Dunwoodie's part, to what we may term "traditional chivalry" in contrast with Brackenridge, is answered by Captain Wharton when Dunwoodie must ride off to battle, leaving Wharton held prisoner only by his gentleman's word that he will not escape.² Wharton's word is good, and he remains a prisoner of honor.

Such fanatic devotion to their chosen ideal is perhaps admirable on the part of the elite, and it is certainly one possible basis of the American ideal. The elite in The Spy, facing opportunity for self-fulfillment in the new world, choose to find it as new world nobility, with a code of chivalry brought across the ocean in the best tradition of Sir Walter Scott. Their loyalty, however, seems to be to the code rather than to society.

2. Harvey Birch

Harvey Birch has no such artificial code of honor. His realization of the American dream is in serving the country, and in a way which has no rewards of status or wealth.

Birch's only satisfaction for acting in the manner he does is self-fulfillment, for he forfeits everything else. He serves as a counter-spy for America by posing as a British loyalist spy. His ostensible place in life is as a peddler. Harvey Birch is a poor man, hated by his American neighbors, personally estranged from the British, and living a lie to everyone but himself and George Washington. In the course of his duties, he loses all his money and his home, and nearly is executed by his own country as a British spy. In the end, he refuses all pay for his services, saying "not a dollar of your gold will I touch; poor America has need of it all!"³ Birch found himself in the new world, with the opportunity to find self-fulfillment in whatever manner he would, and he found it, absolutely and completely, in the thankless service of his country.

Cooper shows us, in The Spy, the difference between serving the genuine public good in keeping with the American transcendental ideal, and serving only the forms of public good. The code of honor that the Whartons and their peers follow is a social convention which appeared in Europe as a corollary of public service. A gentleman served society in politics or in the military. The code of honor was the mark of a gentleman, a social contract among the aristocracy. Transplanted to America and tested in a situation in which some of the gentlemen are revolting against the king, this code of honor appears as a superficial framework which may be imposed on any actions regardless of their motivation.

While the elite in The Spy are admirable in many ways, their notion of the transcendental ideal of public service is too aristocratical for them to be authentic Americans.

This becomes more apparent when their actions are contrasted with those of Harvey Birch, a commoner who truly serves the public good. As noted earlier, Birch's realization of the American dream has no private rewards, and indeed brings much hardship on him. This ideal is not necessarily any more specific to America than the code of honor is, however. It is conceivable that Birch had a counterpart, just as the American Major Dunwoodie had a British counterpart in Captain Wharton. What is significant is that Cooper did not show us a British counterpart. This rhetorical omission serves its function well in creating a notion of an American hero. It makes Harvey Birch memorable.

3. Honor in America

Finally, one more aspect of Birch's, and America's, ideal should be noted. It has been stated that the gentleman's code of the elite in The Spy arose from public service. It was a by-product of the moral obligations involved in such service. The foundation of the code of honor is not missing from the American public service ideal. Several times, Harvey risks his life in order to do something morally right, though it is not strictly in his, or

America's, best interest. For example, he rescues Captain Wharton from captivity, where he is awaiting execution after being convicted of espionage. Birch knows Wharton is innocent, and does not want him to die unjustly, even though it means risking his own life to prevent it. Wharton at first refuses to escape, being a gentleman and therefore willing to pay the price of honor. Birch responds by saying, "I have laid the plan which, if executed as I wish, will save you -- otherwise you are lost; and I again tell you, that no other power on earth, not even Washington, can save you."⁴ Wharton's loyalty to his code gives way, and he escapes. The American public service ideal has a place in it for honor, but a code of honor does not command first priority. In the words of an American captain, "The cause of America is as dear to me as life . . . but she cannot require her children to forget gratitude and honor."⁵

VI. Cooper -- The Pioneers

In The Pioneers, Cooper again presents images of the elite and the commoner. Natty Bumppo, the old Leatherstocking, is one of the great self-reliant figures in literature, pursuing the romantic ideal in his quest for the American dream. Judge Temple, the founder of Templeton, is no less a self-reliant man pursuing the ambitious, public-service oriented transcendental ideal. The tension between these ideals is apparent from the first scene in the novel. A deer has been shot, and Natty and Judge Temple are discussing who has the right to it. Natty says, "for my part, although I am a poor man, I can live without the venison, but I don't love to give up my lawful dues in a free country. Though, for the matter of that, might often makes right here, as well as in the old country, for what I can see."¹ In this situation we have the two ideals of the American dream squared off against one another. The contrast between the men is further pronounced in that Natty is clearly a common man, and the Judge is one of the elite.²

1. Natty Bumppo

One is surprised to find how few pages in The Pioneers are devoted to the Leatherstocking character. Most of the

novel concerns the actions of the Temple household. Natty is a presence throughout the book, a figure across the lake and in the woods, conspicuous even in his absence. He appears at the climactic moments, performs a memorable action, and closes the scene with one of his rustic, sage utterances. It is through Natty's infrequent speeches that Cooper establishes his character:

'I am a plain, un'arned man, that has served both the king and his country, in his day, ag'in the French and savages, but never so much as looked into a book, or larnt a letter of scholarship, in my born days. I've never seen the use of such indoor work, though I have lived to be partly bald, and in my time have killed two hundred beaver in a season, and that without counting the other game.'³

The most notable aspect of Natty's character, besides his remarkable self-reliance, is his aversion to any of the conventions of society. Natty's romantic way of life, living in a hut away from the community, associating with outcasts such as Chingachgook, the Mohican, and obtaining everything that he requires from the land (except shot, powder, and rifle repair), seems to be both cause for, and result of, his distaste for society and its laws. The major conflict between Leatherstocking and Judge Temple arises over a new law regulating hunting. Judge Temple had strongly supported this law, as well as others restricting fishing and cutting timber, because they would protect his interests: he holds a great deal of land as private property. On hearing of the new law, Natty laughs and says, "Game is

game, and he who finds may kill; that has been the law in these mountains for forty years."⁴ Predictably, Natty eventually is charged with violating the new statute. In strict adherence to the emerging social contract in Templeton, Judge Temple sends a man to search for the deer carcass and to levy the appropriate fine. This is a difficult task for the Judge, given that Natty had saved his daughter's life the previous day, when she was about to be attacked by a panther. To complicate matters, the man Judge Temple assigns the duty to passes it on to Billy Kirby, Natty's closest rival as a woodsman. Kirby balks at the duty, recognizing something in it which violates greater principles than the Judge's right to protection of his private property:

I must say I think he has as good right to kill deer as any man on the Patent. It's his main support, and this is a free country, where a man is privileged to follow any calling he likes. . . . the law was never made for such as he.⁵

What offends Billy in the whole affair is that Leatherstocking is being prohibited by law from realizing the romantic ideal. His pursuit of the American dream is about to be significantly hindered, contrary to the principle that he has the God-given right to pursue happiness.

Natty cannot tolerate the interference, and uses his rifle to defend his hut against the search. He then freely gives up the deer and admits killing it, but too late. He

is in more serious trouble with the law. As the sheriff says, "He has set an example of rebellion to the laws, and has become a kind of outlaw."⁶ He is sentenced to spend thirty days in jail, but escapes easily, planning to obtain the money for his fines in the woods, hunting and trapping beaver. Before he can do so, however, he must have a horn of powder. He arranges for the Judge's daughter to bring him powder the next day. Unfortunately, a forest fire overtakes their meeting place and Elizabeth is nearly killed. Natty saves her again. Judge Temple and his friends find them, and all the loose ends of the story come together. We find that Natty had refused to allow a search of his hut not out of guilt, but out of compassion for the ancient, dying Major Effingham, under whom Natty had served during the war. Effingham was feeble, and Natty did not wish him to be seen by those who once respected him. Effingham held the Indian title to the Judge's lands, and Natty had long ago been left on the land "as a kind of *locums tenens*."⁷ Judge Temple held the land under a royal patent, which had been recognized by the state legislature, and which title "no court in the country [could] affect."⁸ The conflicting claim to the land is quickly resolved, as Judge Temple had been holding half the property for his vanished business partner, Effingham's son, for many years. The property is returned, and in the last chapter we see this land united once again: Major Effingham's grandson has married Judge Temple's daughter.

The matter of Natty's breach of the peace seems to have been forgotten, and Natty sets out anew, at age seventy-two, in search of the romantic ideal in the American dream:

Why, lad, they tell me that on the Big-lakes there's the best of hunting; and a great range, without a white man on it, unless it may be one like myself. I'm weary of living on clearings and where the hammer is sounding in my ears from sunrise to sundown.⁹

Natty is at last incapable of living happily in society, so strong is his sense of the romantic ideal.

2. Judge Marmaduke Temple

Judge Temple is almost as imposing a presence in The Pioneers as is Leatherstocking. He is equally self-reliant, and his accomplishments are more visible to the reader. He is of the elite, and his means of realizing the American dream is a combination of serving the good of society and, in keeping with the transcendental interpretation of self-reliance, in realizing his own ambitions. He has established himself as the benefactor of the frontier society he founded, and occupies its most prominent position. He has earned the title 'Judge,' one of the few titles of honor available in a republic. He has cleared a place in the wilderness, erected a stone mansion, and in effect taken on the role of king within the settlement.¹⁰ When the pioneers arrived on the Judge's patent, they faced a new beginning:

"it was in our very infancy; we had neither mills, nor grain, nor roads, nor often clearings; we had nothing of increase, but the mouths that were to be fed."¹¹ The settlers came through the difficult beginning times largely because of the Judge's efforts. It is in these efforts, necessary in conquering the wilderness in the new world, that Judge Marmaduke Temple realized the American transcendental ideal of fulfilling his potential through self-reliant action.

The difference between the Judge and the Leatherstocking lies in their perceived duty: the Judge, like Peter Stuyvesant, is leading his people; Natty Bumppo, like Rip Van Winkle, wants to live in accord with his own natural inclinations. In the concluding paragraph of the novel, Cooper presents the two types working toward a common goal: the settlement of the continent. Men like Natty scout the frontier, and men like the Judge settle the land. The two ideals are compatible in the grand scheme of things, and the tension between them is healthy.

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VII. Hawthorne -- The House of the Seven Gables

The possible variations on the American dream which have been presented receive a thorough examination and criticism by Hawthorne, the next voice to enter the dialogue concerning the authentic American. In The House of the Seven Gables, Hawthorne explores the possible complications of pursuing either the transcendental or romantic ideal. He then proposes his own manner of resolving the conflict between the ideals, avoiding the simplistic solution Cooper presented at the end of The Pioneers. The subjects of his study are a Puritan pioneer named Colonel Pyncheon, and his descendants. The most prominent of these in the tale are Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon and his sister, Hepzibah. The Judge and the Colonel illustrate the dangers of the transcendental ideal, and Hepzibah shows the hazards of the romantic ideal. Two other figures, Phoebe Pyncheon and Holgrave, provide a synthesis of the two ideals.

1. The Colonel and the Judge

In The Pioneers there was a potential dispute over the land held by Judge Temple, but the dispute was defused by a fortunate (and contrived) coincidence. Hawthorne uses the same type of dispute as the initiating circumstance for his

book. Colonel Pyncheon was much like Judge Temple in his quest for the American dream, but with an important difference: his ambition sprang from pride. He set out to establish, not a town, but a family. The land he chose to use for this purpose had been claimed by a commoner named Matthew Maule, who had built himself a hut on the property. Pyncheon obtained a grant, which included Maule's land, from the state legislature. He finally took possession of the land when Maule was executed for witchcraft. Pyncheon, it must be supposed, had a hand in his conviction.¹ Maule's family was devastated for the sake of Pyncheon's family. The great wrong in Pyncheon's act lies in his violation of Maule's right to pursue the romantic ideal in the American dream.

Colonel Pyncheon built a grand mansion with seven gables and set out to establish his family for posterity. His last act was to obtain title to a vast tract of land in Maine. Before he could make it known that he had concluded the deal, though, he choked on his own blood. This was in keeping with the curse, or prophecy, contained in Maule's last words. The Colonel, contrary to his intentions, greatly injured his descendants as a result of his efforts:

This impalpable claim, therefore, resulted in nothing more than to cherish, from generation to generation, an absurd delusion of family importance, which all along characterized the Pyncheons. It caused the poorest member of the race to feel as if he inherited a kind of nobility, and might yet come into the possession of princely wealth to support it.²

Furthermore, his pride sealed his descendants' ignorance concerning the whereabouts of the missing deed. In his will, he ordered that his portrait never be removed from the wall of his study. He ascertained his presence in the house for generations to come, but denied them the wealth he had obtained for them -- the deed to the land in Maine was hidden behind the portrait.

Colonel Pyncheon's pursuit of the transcendental American ideal violated Matthew Maule's pursuit of the romantic ideal of contentment, just as Judge Temple's actions infringed on Natty Bumppo's life. Pyncheon's descendants must pay for the wrong, however. Unlike Natty, the Maules do not conveniently depart for the frontier, taking their grievances with them. Maule's curse stays with the Pyncheons for generations. The Pyncheons are never secure in their pretensions to nobility, and those descendants who share the Colonel's ambitious nature inevitably die the same way he did. The others are virtually helpless in their estrangement from society, as members of the elite pitifully pursuing the romantic ideal. In the time of the tale, there is one representative of each of these extremes living. Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon pursues the transcendental ideal, but with an eye toward private service, rather than public. Hawthorne points out that what Judge Pyncheon seeks are "the big, heavy, solid unrealities, such as gold, landed estate, offices of trust and emolument, and public honors."³ Such men are doomed never to realize their ambitions, or self-

fulfillment.

2. Hepzibah Pyncheon

On the other hand, it may very well be worse to be one of the privileged elite and to pursue the romantic ideal. Such an individual is Hepzibah Pyncheon, the Judge's sister. Hepzibah is one of the descendants of the Colonel who suffers the most from delusions of nobility. She considers herself of a higher class than her neighbors, and, lacking the ambition for personal reward which motivated the Judge to become a public figure, Hepzibah becomes a recluse. She falls into solipsism. The price she pays for her aloofness is dear; as another character says of her, she "is in fact dead" even as she breathes.⁴ That she is dead to society at large is no question. She is dead in another sense as well: she has killed her potential for a constructive existence. She had chosen the wrong ideal as a young woman. Rip Van Winkle achieved the romantic ideal only when he had reached the age when he could be "idle with impunity." He had been prevented from sitting at the inn door as a young man. He literally slept through his most productive years. Hepzibah has spent her most productive years shut inside the family mansion. Now well into old age, all she can claim as accomplishments are such things as "having formerly thrummed on a harpsichord, and walked a minuet, and worked an antique tapestry-stitch on her sampler."⁵ Like Rip, she has lost

her best years waiting for her life to take on the features of the romantic ideal; unlike him, she finds it nearly impossible to resume human contact once it does. She finally does realize her dream, and moves to the country with a small circle of family and friends, there to live happily ever after. Her version of the American dream, though, has cost her dearly.

3. Hawthorne's Critique of the Authentic American

Here we may pause to consider the problems with the American dream which Hawthorne has exposed. Our first representation of the authentic American was Rip Van Winkle. He pursued the romantic ideal through his self-reliant actions. In Irving's fairy-tale setting, everything turned out for the best. He simply slept between the irresponsible years of his youth and the irresponsible years of his old age. In a more realistic setting, though, this pursuit of the romantic ideal is less attractive. Hawthorne shows us the real dangers of the romantic ideal. Hepzibah does not sleep through her productive years. Rather than escaping to an idyllic existence, her separation from society traps her into a solipsism whose isolation is almost as harsh as that of death.

The transcendental ideal, directed toward public service, was favorably presented in The Pioneers in the character of Judge Temple. He was a respected man who genuinely

benefitted society in his actions. He himself prospered, of course, but there is a sense that Judge Temple deserves his wealth and power. Hawthorne shows how this transcendental ideal may be tainted by pride. Colonel Pyncheon wanted to satisfy his own vanity, to attain a kind of immortality, in establishing his family at the head of society. Judge Pyncheon's goal was to be governor of the state. He did not wish to serve the public so much as to possess yet another emblem of his worth as a human being. Hawthorne thus illustrates the dangers of both the romantic ideal of private service and the transcendental ideal of public service.

4. Hawthorne's Presentation of the Authentic American

The House of the Seven Gables does contain candidates for the role of authentic American, however. Phoebe, a niece of Hepzibah who was reared in the country, is a likely candidate; as is Holgrave, a young reformer who boarded in the house. The two characters complement one another and are united in marriage at the end of the tale. Both are of common origin:

Holgrave, as he told Phoebe, somewhat proudly, could not boast of his origin, unless as being exceedingly humble, nor of his education, except that it had been the scantiest possible, and obtained by a few winter-months' attendance at a district school.⁶

Between them, these two commoners represent both the

romantic and transcendental ideals. Holgrave has a restless air about him, as if he is at any moment about to reorganize the world to his liking.⁷ He advocates a thorough examination of society's institutions every twenty years, to determine if they serve a purpose for the current generation, and should be allowed to continue existence.⁸ He is deeply interested in the affairs of society, and his ideal involves asserting his individuality and self-reliance in society at every opportunity. Phoebe, on the other hand, desires a harmonious existence in nature. When Hepzibah confronts her with the dreary aspects of a life in the decaying mansion, Phoebe sees only the possibility for pursuing the romantic ideal: "There is the garden -- the flowers to be taken care of," observed Phoebe. "I should keep myself healthy with exercise in the open air."⁹

The union of Holgrave and Phoebe, and their life in the country with Hepzibah and two others, shows the possibility of realizing the American dream. Holgrave has to give up some of his ideas of reform in order to adapt to such a life, but becomes a conservative easily once he has achieved the American romantic ideal.¹⁰ The simple explanation is that he has now found an institution worth preserving. Hawthorne's use of two characters to personify the authentic American emphasizes the dialectic nature of the figure. In The House of the Seven Gables, Hawthorne presents a version of the American dream which suggests the proper function of each ideal within the dream. The transcendental ideal is

realized through an ambitious, active participation in the affairs of the world, with the intention of arranging for the realization of the romantic ideal once one can "be idle with impunity." To spend the best years of one's life waiting for the romantic ideal to come along is a pitiful waste of potential, as demonstrated in Hepzibah's case. To blindly pursue the transcendental ideal for its own sake, though, leads one into the trap of greed, pride, and unrealizable ambition, as demonstrated in Judge Pyncheon's case.

VIII. Hawthorne -- The Scarlet Letter

We now turn to The Scarlet Letter, published the year before The House of the Seven Gables, to see what image of the authentic American it presents. Hester Prynne is the primary figure in the tale. She appears in the opening scene of the novel, "the tableau of the solitary figure set over against the inimical society," and immediately gains the reader's sympathy.¹ Her tragic quest for the American dream is the point of focus for the entire work. There is, of course, another type of figure present in the work: the members of the society, especially the elite among them. Governor Bellingham and the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale are, in differing degrees, members of this class. They came to the new world for the sake of religious freedom. In the wilderness they made a new beginning, founding:

a community, which owed its origins and progress, and its present state of development, not to the impulses of youth, but to the stern and tempered energies of manhood, and the sombre sagacity of age; accomplishing so much, precisely because it imagined and hoped so little.²

The people of the settlement are not presented as characterizations of the authentic American. Rather, their Puritan ideal serves as a contrasting element against which we may better understand Hester.

1. Arthur Dimmesdale

Dimmesdale is a young minister who came to America to pursue the Puritan ideal. His character shares the ideals of men like Bellingham, but brings them to life by virtue of his youth and the fact that the reader is allowed to become acquainted with him. He humanizes the Puritan code in The Scarlet Letter. We are told that Dimmesdale "had come from one of the great English universities, bringing all the learning of the age into our wild forest-land."³ His purpose in doing so was to live a godly life in the New Jerusalem in Massachusetts. Perhaps the wildness of the new world overwhelmed his reason; whatever the cause, Dimmesdale's aspirations to spiritual perfection were destroyed by the carnal sin he committed with Hester. The most notable aspect of the Puritan ideal is that it was, by its very nature, impossible to achieve in this life. The goal Dimmesdale sought was nothing less than eternal salvation -- to be one of God's elect. According to Calvinist theology, though, one could do nothing to become one of the elect, and one could not know in this world if he had been chosen as one of the elect. "All the learning of the age" was useless in realizing the Puritan ideal. This fact sets the tone for The Scarlet Letter. It is a book about failure to reach the ideal, about the aftermath of failed dreams.

2. Hester Prynne

Hester sinned, for whatever reason, and the rigid code of the Puritan society forced her to pay dearly for her sin. She was condemned to be an outcast, to be a "stranger" in both the social and theological sense. Any ideals to which she herself aspired, whether romantic, transcendental, or Puritan, were removed from her reach. The story of The Scarlet Letter begins at this point. It concerns the image of the authentic American, which had thus far been discussed in terms of ideals and dreams, deprived of all those ideals and dreams.

After having been released from her stay in prison and being condemned to wear the scarlet letter for the remainder of her life, Hester remained in the settlement, among those who had condemned her and her dreams. She might freely have gone to England or any other place in the world where she was not known, and made a new beginning. Hawthorne suggests that a morbid sense of propriety, a need to do penance, keeps Hester from leaving.⁴ Her consciousness of her failure to reach one of the new world ideals of happiness keeps her from trying again. To leave would require faith in the transcendental ideal of positive freedom, and she no longer possesses such faith. She settles into the role of a "Sister of Mercy," living quietly on the fringes of society.⁵

At the end of seven years, however, Hester seems ready to try again. She persuades Dimmesdale to take passage on a

ship with her, to start anew elsewhere -- this time together. This attempt to achieve an ideal fails as well. Her husband, known as Roger Chillingworth, prevents their escape. Hester afterward resigns herself to her life, and never again seeks the American dream or the happiness it promises. After the deaths of Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, her daughter Pearl became "the richest heiress in the New World," having inherited Chillingworth's fortune. Mother and daughter returned to live in Europe for many years. In the end, though, wealth could not compensate for Hester's lost dreams. She returns to New England and wears the scarlet letter to her grave.⁶ Hawthorne's tragedy of unreachable ideals comes to a close, and we are left to admire Hester's dignity and courage in the face of failure.

3. The Possibility of Failure

The Scarlet Letter introduces a note of tragedy into the cultural dialogue. All the previous voices had portrayed the authentic American in "the pursuit of happiness." Characters sought to live self-reliant lives in hopes of realizing the American dream. This dream was based on either the transcendental ideal of positive, free action, or on the romantic ideal of escape to a life of peace, harmony, and contentment. The notion began to emerge that perhaps both ideals belonged in the complete life: in the vigor of

youth, one should pursue the transcendental ideal, with the purpose of arranging for a peaceful, romantic old age. The authentic American was the figure who lived according to these principles. One's life in the new world was aimed at taking advantage of a new beginning (achieved by negating the past) and the guaranteed right to equal opportunity in pursuing this ideal. The possibility that one might fail to achieve the American dream of happiness through self-reliant actions was introduced into the dialogue in the character of Hester Prynne. She is an authentic American, but she has been deprived of the customary ideals and dreams. The opportunity of a new beginning and her equality to her fellows in terms of this opportunity have been taken away by the fact of her failure.

Hester cannot find happiness, it would seem, so she must seek comfort wherever she may find it. She tries to help others through their own crises in her role of Sister of Mercy. She also finds some comfort in "her firm belief, that at some brighter period . . . a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness."⁷ She has been forced to give up her pursuit of happiness, but sustains herself with the hope that someday society will change its attitude. More people may share her dream, and the tyranny of the Puritan ideal will be lifted. Ultimately, though, Hester finds contentment only in the grave. Hester becomes a very strong person, and is admirable in

IX. The Myth of the Authentic American

By 1851, then, the dialogue had explored most of the likely characterizations of the authentic American, given the general principles on which the country was founded. The dialogue may be viewed as a logical investigation. Given the premises that all men are created equal and that they have rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and given that one may start afresh in the new world, with the purpose of living a self-reliant life, then the ideal nature of that life can be described through a process of trial and error. The qualities of the good life in America can be described, along with the kind of person who can live it.

We have seen that two ideals were present throughout the period in question. The good life could be one of self-reliant activity in society, or it could be one of self-reliant contentment in harmony with nature. The synthesis of these two ideals is hinted at in The House of the Seven Gables. The former ideal is suitably pursued by an individual in the prime of life, with the aim of making the latter ideal possible during old age.

The authentic American may be described in general terms derived from the particular representations in the works examined. The figure is of common origin, but is not

one of the rabble. The authentic American is neither an elitist nor a bumbling fool, and acts in a self-reliant manner, seeking to develop native potential to the fullest, whether it involves great accomplishments or small. Rip Van Winkle's role as village storyteller is as important to society as Judge Temple's role of patriarch. The important feature is that each is fulfilling his potential unencumbered by outside interference, whether from the past or from their fellow men. This brings up another feature of the authentic American: respect for the right of others to pursue the American dream. This is a very difficult posture to maintain, for any assertive action is liable to interfere with someone else's rights. The difference between Judge Temple's interference with Natty Bumppo and Colonel Pyncheon's interference with Matthew Maule is the difference between what is acceptable and what is not. Judge Temple's actions benefitted society as a whole, and Natty was still able to go west and continue his accustomed lifestyle. Colonel Pyncheon's actions benefitted nobody, and in fact injured both the Maule and Pyncheon families for generations. Only when Maule's descendent Holgrave married Phoebe Pyncheon did the curse disappear.

Finally, because the authentic American's actions in pursuit of the American dream are self-reliant, there is always the possibility of failure. Even so, the potential reward is worth the risk. If one fails to achieve happiness, there is still the possibility for an existence free

from abject misery. Hester finds some comfort in aiding the people of the community in their times of sorrow, and she does have some hope that future generations will have a better chance of finding happiness. It is not the life she would have chosen, but it is at least bearable.

X. Life Among the Lowly

Such was the nature of the good life of the authentic American in our country's early literature. It is a rich and complex image. It is also a morally ambiguous image. It fails to take into account the problem of slavery. Slaves were property, and there was no reason to consider them in a question of national identity. In 1852, though, Harriet Beecher Stowe published Uncle Tom's Cabin. As a propaganda novel, it was written with the intention of raising consciousness, of directly affecting the cultural dialogue. What it did was to present slaves as humans, fully capable of aspiring to ideals and dreams, and often better people than the whites who owned them. She showed that slaves had to be included in the discussion of life in America, and that the current notion of the authentic American was unacceptable. The introduction of this declamatory voice into the dialogue effectively returns the discussion to the point where it started, to reconsider its interpretation of the premise that all men are created equal.

1. Slaves and the American Dream

The authentic American had come to be seen in terms of the pursuit of the American dream, and including slaves

in the cultural dialogue seemed an odd thing to do in 1852. Slaves came to America against their will, not out of a desire to begin life anew. They were not included in the principles of democracy or equality. They had no rights to life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness. In short, slaves seemed to have no part in the American dream, and therefore had been ignored in the cultural dialogue concerning the good life of the authentic American.

Uncle Tom's Cabin showed the inaccuracy of this view. The American dream did have a place in the slaves' lives. They were in the new world against their will, but certainly "unencumbered" by their past. Cultural and family ties were stripped away. They faced a new beginning in a more absolute fashion than any white man ever had. What made slavery morally intolerable, of course, was the fact that slaves are human beings. As such, they were fully able to envision the same ideals that formed the foundation of the American dream. Self-reliance was officially denied to the slaves, but they could begin to realize at least one aspect of their potential in spite of their position. They could begin to educate themselves. Many slaveowners allowed their slaves to learn to read the Bible, with the notion that a pious slave would be more willing to endure the hardships of his existence. Even "Bible literacy," which did not usually include the ability to write, was a step toward self-reliance. A slave who could read scripture was free of his master's selective misinterpretation of Christian

doctrines.¹ Bible literacy allowed Tom to maintain a sense of dignity even in the face of Simon Legree's torments. Tom has a sense of self-reliance in that his relationship with Christ is entirely personal.²

Stowe shows slaves in pursuit of both aspects of the American ideal. In one story line, George and Eliza make an escape to Canada. It begins with George's resolution to do something about his condition. Escape is the only alternative to suicide or placid acceptance. He vows to make it to freedom or to die in the attempt. Once there, he plans to earn money to buy Eliza's freedom.³ George seeks the transcendental ideal of positive, constructive freedom. The romantic ideal of escape to a harmonious existence in nature is also present in the book, but it is presented as a religious ideal. This alteration is necessary because a contented existence in nature is impossible for the slaves in this world. This life has proven to be too full of pain. The romantic ideal is to be realized in the afterlife. Uncle Tom pursues this ideal, and sustains himself, for example, by singing hymns promising a mansion in the sky as his eternal reward.⁴ All things considered, it would be much better than a house in the country, but then the slaves pay more dearly for their retreat than Hepzibah Pyncheon had to do.

The tragic aspect of the slaves' lives is that they aspire to the same sort of ideals as their masters, but they are absolutely denied any opportunity to achieve them.

Without equal opportunities, and without the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the slaves are in an impossible position from which to achieve the good life. While a daring man like George may succeed in escaping, most such attempts are doomed to failure. George was light in color, and sufficiently articulate that he could pass for a Spanish businessman at crucial moments. Very few slaves could hope to succeed at realizing the transcendental ideal of improving their lot through positive action. Most were in no position even to try.

Religion, with its promise of an afterlife of romantic bliss, is the only alternative. For those who choose this ideal, though, the best existence possible is one much like Hester's. Tom sustains himself, like Hester, with his faith that things will be better someday. Like hers, too, is Tom's relationship with those around him. "Tom's whole soul overflowed with compassion and sympathy for the poor wretches by whom he was surrounded." He sacrificed his own comfort for theirs, and even converted some to Christianity.⁵ His works in this world were good, but he could have no taste of the good life of the authentic American. A slave could maintain his dignity and self-respect, and even earn the admiration of those around him, but he could not take part in the American dream, the pursuit of happiness, on this side of the grave. The statement of Uncle Tom's Cabin is that the worst that can happen to the authentic American, if he is white, is that he will live a life with-

out happiness; but that is the best he can realistically hope for if he is black. More likely, a slave faced a life of misery which would be relieved only by death.

2. The Authentic American and Slavery

'They are rich, and healthy, and happy; they are members of churches, expecting to go to heaven; and they get along so easy in the world, and have it all their own way; and poor, honest, faithful Christians -- Christians as good or better than they -- are lying in the very dust under their feet. They buy 'em, and sell 'em, and make trade of their heart's blood, and groans and tears, -- and God lets them.'⁶

"They" are the white members of society in general, the people who identified with the image of the authentic American. George's emotional outpouring reveals how the figure is perceived from a slave's viewpoint. Something is very wrong with a society which allows such a state of affairs to continue. Adding to the outrage is the fact that the society holds the rights of its citizens to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, as well as the notion that all men are created equal, to be self-evident truths. What Harriet Beecher Stowe points out in Uncle Tom's Cabin is a whole continent full of self-evident contradictions.

On its most apparent level of criticism, the book shows the hypocrisy involved in the notion of the authentic American. The primary means of doing so is through the character of Augustine St. Clare, a reflective, clear-sighted southern

gentleman who is also a very humane slaveowner. His observations concerning the institution of slavery are generally articulated for the benefit of his Vermont cousin, Miss Ophelia.

St. Clare presents a discussion of the authentic American's difficult position in 1852 which is remarkable for its insight into the origins of the problem:

Your father, for example, settles in Vermont, in a town where all are, in fact, free and equal; becomes a regular church-member and deacon, and in due time joins the Abolition society, and thinks us all little better than heathens. Yet he is, for all the world, in constitution and habit, a duplicate of my father. . . . One fell into a condition where everything acted against the natural tendency, and the other where everything acted for it; and so one turned out a pretty wilful, stout, overbearing old democrat, and the other a wilful, stout old despot.⁷

St. Clare here argues that the only difference between northerners and southerners is in the institutions they support in their respective pursuits of the transcendental ideal. The people are fundamentally the same. There is a dangerous "natural tendency" in both, which only emerges in the southerner's situation.

Both groups are equally culpable for allowing the practice of slavery. St. Clare points out that although many in the north clamor for emancipation, they would be unwilling to allow blacks into their shops to work, into their homes to live, or into their schools to be educated. Southerners "are the more obvious oppressors of the Negro; but the

unchristian prejudice of the north is an oppressor almost equally severe."⁸ The problem with the image of the authentic American is that it served to mask America's hypocrisy. The cultural dialogue had arrived at an image of the authentic American so unrealistic that it served not as a collective identity, but as a collective delusion. Under this delusion, even the incongruity of slavery in a free country was seemingly resolved. Uncle Tom's Cabin, with its sharp criticism working like a surgeon's scalpel, laid open to view the flaw at the heart of the myth.

Conclusion

In defending Harriet Beecher Stowe against the charge that she offered no solution to the problem of slavery, Ernest Cassara argues that Uncle Tom's Cabin itself was her solution. The hope was that if enough individuals could be convinced of the evils of slavery, then their reformed personal awareness would translate into reformed social awareness.¹ As history attests, social reform did come about, but not through the peaceful mechanism that Stowe anticipated. Four years of bloody civil war and a hundred years of adjustment have brought about significant (though not complete) improvement in the situation.

The fact that individual reform does not translate into individual reform may be seen as one indication of a specific problem in the national consciousness. It appears in the image of the authentic American. We may say that the aim of the good life in America is the self-reliant pursuit of personal happiness through either individual escape or individual activity. On critical examination, these individualistic principles seem almost egocentric. The danger of such a situation is revealed in the area of morality. Very little allowance is made for social norms. The authentic American follows an individual ethic. The figure's actions are to be guided by a natural sense of right and wrong, and

the basic moral tenet to be followed may be stated as "one shall not limit individual freedom." Of course one's own freedom should be preserved: suicide and solipsism are both unfavorable courses for the authentic American to follow. The difficulty arises when one must respect the individual freedom of others, while still pursuing what are essentially selfish goals.

The figures which have been discussed as popular literary representations of the authentic American generally respected others' individual freedom. A conflict did arise between Judge Temple and Natty Bumppo, and a similar conflict was explored in The House of the Seven Gables. These were essentially disputes between individuals, though, and were ultimately resolved. The individual ethic seemed to work, if not perfectly, then at least well enough. A pessimist could look at the image of the authentic American and argue that there were more men like Judge Pyncheon in the world than men like Judge Temple, but this only showed that the authentic American was a difficult standard to emulate. There was nothing fundamentally wrong with the image. This notion was called into question with the publication of Stowe's novel.

Uncle Tom's Cabin was written with the purpose of showing the cruelty and barbarism of slavery, and it did so very effectively. It carried a second message, as well, and this second message was an implicit indictment of the authentic American as an unworkable model for the national

identity. It had immense repercussions for the cultural dialogue. The image of the authentic American, as a national identity, endorsed a national delusion. The lack of a social ethic in the figure's composition allowed actual Americans to see themselves as somehow insulated from any responsibility for the actions of society. An example of how this delusion operates may be found in the character of Judge Temple. The Judge had a Quaker upbringing, and consequently his individual ethic does not permit him to own slaves. He does, in fact, enjoy the services of a slave, but avoids personal culpability by the fact that the slave is formally his cousin's property. Even though Judge Temple had paid for the man, the notion that personal adherence to an individual ethic was sufficient to ensure morality satisfied the Judge.²

The problem with the individual ethic is not that its source is a personal sense of right and wrong. The problem is that the ethic is only applied to the actions of the individual in question. If a personal sense of right and wrong is extended to concern the actions of others, and of society as a whole, then it does in fact serve as a social ethic. It may even be argued that any ethical code must come from a personal sense of right and wrong. The source, however, is less important than its application. The social evils of slavery were allowed to develop because the natural morality of the authentic American was never projected beyond the individual to the actions of society. Harriet

Beecher Stowe's book showed the consequences of living in a society without a social ethic, and effectively rejected the contemporary representation of the authentic American as an unworkable, dangerous concept. It must be noted that the flaw had been hinted at in previous works, but the slavery issue forced an attentive examination of the problem. It seems probable that the problem of the individual ethic in the notion of the authentic American would have surfaced eventually, even without the slavery issue or Stowe's book.

The Image in Crisis

After the appearance of Uncle Tom's Cabin, the national identity was shaken. An implied morality had been exposed as unrealistic. The authentic American was seen to be a figure rife with hypocrisy. It became apparent that the cultural dialogue would have to reconsider the principles which defined life in America, and that a new type of figure would have to be found to serve as the representative American. The dialogue began to consider those figures who, like the slaves, had been excluded from the American dream. Throughout the period, beginning with the rabble in Modern Chivalry, characters had been presented who lacked the wits or the resources to make the most of the opportunity before them. They had been ignored, or served as the butt of jokes. Subsequently, some characters began to appear, espe-

cially in the twentieth century, who seemed to celebrate their lack of ideals and promise. The anti-hero may be one result of the need to re-examine the role of the lower class, the dispossessed, the outsider in American society.

Hester Prynne not only contributed to the image of the authentic American, but she also offers a possible alternative to the figure's individual ethic. She went counter to the system and succeeded in becoming her own person, in spite of her failure to achieve real happiness. She was forced to find another type of fulfillment, which was less selfish in its nature. At the same time she illustrates a strain of rugged individualism, she explores a new type of ideal. Her vision of a new age introduces the notion of a dream for society, rather than a dream for the self. Hester's character suggests the possibility of an American social ethic, and the dispossessed in society offer an untapped source of characterizations of the authentic American. It was these threads, from the torn fabric of the nineteenth century myth, that the cultural dialogue took up when it renewed the search for a national identity after the Civil War.

Appendix

Table 1

American Prose Fiction Popular at Its First
Appearance^a

| | | |
|---------|-------------------------|--|
| 1791 | Rowson, Susanna Haswell | <u>Charlotte Temple: A Tale of Truth</u> |
| 1792 | Brackenridge, Hugh H. | <u>Modern Chivalry</u> |
| 1797 | Foster, Mrs. Hannah | <u>The Cocquette</u> |
| 1809 | Irving, Washington | <u>History of New York</u> |
| 1811 | Mitchell, Isaac | <u>The Asylum</u> |
| 1815 | Sigourney, Lydia H. | <u>Moral Pieces in Prose and Verse</u> |
| 1819-20 | Irving, Washington | <u>The Sketch Book</u> |
| 1821 | Cooper, James F. | <u>The Spy</u> |
| 1822 | Irving, Washington | <u>Bracebridge Hall</u> |
| 1823 | Cooper, James F. | <u>The Pilot</u> |
| 1823 | Cooper, James F. | <u>The Pioneers</u> |
| 1824 | Seaver, James E. | <u>A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Henry Jemison</u> |
| 1825 | Cooper, James F. | <u>Lionel Lincoln</u> |
| 1826 | Cooper, James F. | <u>The Last of the Mohicans</u> |
| 1827 | Cooper, James F. | <u>The Prairie</u> |
| 1827 | Cooper, James F. | <u>The Red Rover</u> |

| | | |
|---------|-------------------------|--|
| 1828 | Rowson, Susanna Haswell | <u>Lucy Temple</u> |
| 1829 | Irving, Washington | <u>The Conquest of Granada</u> |
| 1931 | Paulding, James Kirke | <u>The Dutchman's Fireside</u> |
| 1832 | Irving, Washington | <u>The Alhambra</u> |
| 1833 | Sargent, Lucius M. | <u>My Mother's Gold Ring</u> |
| 1833 | Smith, Seba | <u>The Life and Writings of</u> <u>Major Jack Downing</u> |
| 1834-35 | Longfellow, Henry W. | <u>Outre-Mer</u> |
| 1835 | Irving, Washington | <u>A Tour on the Prairies</u> |
| 1835 | Kennedy, John P. | <u>Horse-Shoe Robinson</u> |
| 1835 | Longstreet, Augustus B. | <u>Georgia Scenes,</u> <u>Characters, and Incidents</u> |
| 1835 | Simms, William Gilmore | <u>The Yemassee</u> |
| 1836 | Hildreth, Richard | <u>The Slave</u> |
| 1836 | Irving, Washington | <u>Astoria</u> |
| 1837 | Bird, Robert M. | <u>Nick of the Woods</u> |
| 1839 | Thompson, Daniel P. | <u>The Green Mountain Boys</u> |
| 1843 | Cooper, James F. | <u>Ned Myers</u> |
| 1845 | Cooper, James F. | <u>Satanstoe</u> |
| 1849 | Longfellow, Henry W. | <u>Kavanagh</u> |
| 1850 | Greenwood, Grace | <u>Greenwood Leaves</u> |
| 1850 | Hawthorne, Nathaniel | <u>The Scarlet Letter</u> |
| 1850 | Marvel, Ik | <u>Reveries of a Bachelor</u> |
| 1850 | Warner, Susan | <u>The Wide, Wide World</u> |
| 1851 | Hawthorne, Nathaniel | <u>The House of the Seven</u> <u>Gables</u> |
| 1851 | Phelps, Elizabeth S. | <u>The Sunny Side</u> |

| | | |
|------|---------------------------|---|
| 1852 | Southworth, Mrs. E.D.E.N. | <u>The Curse of Clifton</u> |
| 1852 | Stowe, Harriet Beecher | <u>Uncle Tom's Cabin</u> |
| 1853 | Fern, Fanny | <u>Fern Leaves from Fanny's</u> <u>Portfolio</u> |
| 1854 | Arthur, Timothy Shay | <u>Ten Nights in a Bar-Room</u> |
| 1854 | Cummins, Maria Susanna | <u>The Lamplighter</u> |
| 1854 | Robinson, Solon | <u>Hot Corn</u> |
| 1854 | Shillaber, Benjamin P. | <u>The Life and Sayings of</u> <u>Mrs. Partington</u> |
| 1854 | Smith, Elizabeth Oakes | <u>The Newsboy</u> |
| 1855 | Fern, Fanny | <u>Ruth Hall</u> |
| 1856 | Whitcher, Frances M. | <u>Widow Bedott Papers</u> |
| 1857 | Butler, William Allen | <u>Nothing to Wear</u> |
| 1858 | Holland, Josiah G. | <u>Titcomb's Letters</u> |
| 1859 | Evans, Augusta Jane | <u>Beulah</u> |
| 1859 | Southworth, Mrs. E.D.E.N. | <u>The Hidden Hand</u> |
| 1860 | Ellis, Edward S. | <u>Seth Jones</u> |
| 1860 | Stephens, Ann Sophia | <u>Malaeska, or The Indian</u> <u>Wife of the White Hunter</u> |

Table 2

Titles from Table 1 Appearing in a
Critical Text of 1882^b

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Brackenridge | <u>Modern Chivalry</u> |
| Irving | All Titles |
| Cooper | All Titles |
| Paulding | <u>The Dutchman's Fireside</u> |
| Longfellow | <u>Kavanagh</u> |
| Longfellow | <u>Hyperion</u> |
| Hawthorne | <u>The Scarlet Letter</u> |
| Hawthorne | <u>The House of the Seven Gables</u> |
| Stowe | <u>Uncle Tom's Cabin</u> |
| Cummins | <u>The Lamplighter</u> |

Table 3

Titles from Table 1 Found in a Modern Anthology of
American Literature^C

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Brackenridge | <u>Modern Chivalry</u> (excerpt) |
| Irving | <u>History of New York</u> (excerpt) |
| Irving | <u>The Sketch Book</u> (excerpt) |
| Longstreet | <u>Georgia Scenes</u> (excerpt) |
| Hawthorne | <u>The Scarlet Letter</u> |
| Hawthorne | <u>The House of the Seven</u> <u>Gables</u> (excerpt) |

Table 4

Titles from Table 1 Cited in Arts and Humanities
Citation Index, 1984

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Cooper | <u>The Pioneers</u> |
| Irving | <u>The Alhambra</u> |
| Hawthorne | <u>The Scarlet Letter</u> |
| Hawthorne | <u>The House of the Seven</u> <u>Gables</u> |
| Stowe | <u>Uncle Tom's Cabin</u> |

Notes

Introduction

¹J. Hector St. John Crevecoeur, Letters from an American Farmer (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1968), p. 46. This paper is prepared in accordance with guidelines in the MLA Handbook, 1st ed., as per American Literature.

²The American Adam (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 1.

³Frederic I. Carpenter, "Scarlet A Minus," in The Scarlet Letter, ed. Sculley Bradley et al., 2nd ed., Norton Critical Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1967), p. 3.

⁴Lewis, p. 5.

⁵Philip Allison Shelley, "A German Art of Life in America," in Anglo-German and American-German Crosscurrents, Vol I., ed. P. A. Shelley et al., University of North Carolina Studies in Comparative Literature, No. 19 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957), p. 250.

⁶Shelley, p. 246.

⁷Shelley, p. 247.

Review of the Literature

¹The Growth of American Thought, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1951), pp. 355-360.

²See "Scarlet A Minus" as one example of such a source.

³See The Heroic Ideal in American Literature (New York: The Free Press, 1971), pp. 24-26, for his discussion of The Scarlet Letter.

⁴American Heroes, introd. Carl Carmer (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1954), pp. 143-145.

⁵Virgin Land (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 59-60.

⁶The Popular Book (New York: Oxford University Press,

1950), pp. 79-84.

⁷George McMichael et al., eds., Anthology of American Literature, Vol. I, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980); and Robert E. Spiller, "The Roots of National Culture," in The Roots of National Culture, rev. ed., ed. R. E. Spiller and Howard Blodgett, Vol. I of American Literature (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), pp. 1-21, were two such sources consulted.

⁸Literary History of the United States, 4th ed. rev., History (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1974)

⁹Lewis, p. 1.

Chapter I

¹Hart, pp. 48-49.

²Hart, pp. 301-317.

³John Nichol, American Literature, Essay Index Reprint Series (1882; rpt. Freeport, N. Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1972)

⁴Hart, pp. 168-169.

⁵A History of New York, ed. Michael L. Black and Nancy B. Black, Vol. VII of The Complete Works of Washington Irving (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), p. xlix.

⁶The Spy, foreword Curtis Dahl (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc., 1946), foreword, n. pag.

Chapter II

¹Modern Chivalry, ed. Lewis Leary, The Masterworks of Literature Series (New Haven, Conn.: College and University Press, 1965), p. 16.

²See Alexander Cowie, The Rise of the American Novel (New York: American Book Company, 1951), pp. 44-53. Cowie gives a good discussion of Teague's place in the social satire.

³Brackenridge, p. 37.

⁴Brackenridge, p. 38.

⁵Brackenridge, p. 320.

⁶"The Negative Structures of American Literature," American Literature, 57 (1985), 5.

⁷Brackenridge, pp. 322-323.

Chapter III

¹An extensive discussion of Irving's History may be found in William L. Hedges' Washington Irving: An American Study, 1802-1832 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), pp. 65-85.

²Irving, History, p. 101.

³Irving, History, p. 100.

⁴Irving, History, p. 149.

⁵Irving, History, p. 291.

⁶Irving, History, p. 166. Hedges emphasizes that it is the Knickerbocker persona, not Irving, who wants us to regard Stuyvesant as a hero.

⁷Irving, History, p. 167.

⁸Irving, History, p. 247.

⁹Irving, History, pp. 282-285.

Chapter IV

¹See Donald A. Ringe, "New York and New England: Irving's Criticism of American Society," American Literature, 38 (1967), 455-467. Ringe's distinction between New York life and New England life corresponds to the distinction here made between pursuit of the transcendental and romantic ideals. He also discusses Cooper's treatment of the different lifestyles.

²"Rip Van Winkle," in The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent., afterword Perry Miller (New York: The New American Library, Inc.), p. 39.

³See Hedges, pp. 141-143, for this interpretation.

⁴Irving, "Rip," p. 52.

⁵Irving, "Rip," p. 48.

⁶Irving, "Rip," p. 52.

Chapter V

¹Cooper, Spy, pp. 54-55.

²Cooper, Spy, p. 81.

³Cooper, Spy, p. 326.

⁴Cooper, Spy, p. 270.

⁵Cooper, Spy, p. 218.

Chapter VI

¹The Pioneers, afterword Robert E. Spiller (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1964), pp. 19-20.

²See David W. Noble, "Cooper, Leatherstocking and the Death of the American Adam," American Quarterly, 16 (1964), 419-431. Noble argues that the Leatherstocking tales trace the destruction of the American Adam at the hands of society. To the extent that we may identify the American Adam as a purely romantic figure, this is true.

³Cooper, Pioneers, p. 128.

⁴Cooper, Pioneers, p. 153.

⁵Cooper, Pioneers, p. 318.

⁶Cooper, Pioneers, p. 339.

⁷Cooper, Pioneers, p. 421.

⁸Cooper, Pioneers, p. 226.

⁹Cooper, Pioneers, p. 433.

¹⁰Cooper, Pioneers, pp. 39-40.

¹¹Cooper, Pioneers, p. 223.

Chapter VII

¹The House of the Seven Gables, ed. Seymour L. Gross, Norton Critical Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1967), pp. 6-8.

²Hawthorne, House, p. 19.

³Hawthorne, House, p. 229.

⁴Hawthorne, House, p. 216.

⁵Hawthorne, House, pp. 80-81.

⁶Hawthorne, House, p. 176.

⁷Hawthorne, House, p. 177.

⁸Hawthorne, House, p. 184.

⁹Hawthorne, House, p. 75.

¹⁰Hawthorne, House, p. 315.

Chapter VIII

¹Lewis, p. 112.

²Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, ed. Sculley Bradley et al., 2nd ed., Norton Critical Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), p.51.

³Hawthorne, Scarlet, p. 52.

⁴Hawthorne, Scarlet, p. 61.

⁵Hawthorne, Scarlet, p. 117.

⁶Hawthorne, Scarlet, pp. 184-185.

⁷Hawthorne, Scarlet, p. 185.

⁸See Hugh N. Maclean, "Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter: 'The Dark Problem of This Life,'" American Literature, 27 (1955), 12-24. Maclean suggests that the novel sets forth a vision of life as a futile search for happiness.

Chapter X

¹Janet Cornelius, "'We Slipped and Learned to Read,'" Phylon, 44 (1983), 171-172.

²Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin, afterword John William Ward (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1966), pp. 416-417.

³Stowe, p. 29.

⁴Stowe, p. 420.

⁵Stowe, p. 421.

⁶Stowe, p. 209.

⁷Stowe, pp. 247-248.

⁸Stowe, p. 338.

Conclusion

¹Ernest Cassara, "The Rehabilitation of Uncle Tom," College Language Association Journal, 17 (1973), 230-240.

²Cooper, Pioneers, p. 51.

Appendix

^aHart, pp. 301-307.

^bNichol.

^cMcMichael.

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