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Rebuilding a Nation

On April 9, 1865, General Robert E. Lee met General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House, a country crossroads in the forest, and handed over his sword. It was one of the great symbolic moments of American history. Within a few weeks, everyone else had surrendered; and by July the Civil War was over. It was and remains the bloodiest war in American history, both in absolute numbers and in the proportion of casualties to the population. About 360,000 Union soldiers and 260,000 Confederates had died on the battlefield or in military hospitals. Slavery was abolished, a Freedman's Bureau had been organized to assist the former slaves, and the Union was restored. The war left an indelible stain on the American consciousness. Even European countries, at this time, had no war to compare with this one. Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812 with a Grand Army of 600,000, cobbled together from the allies of France. It was the largest army assembled in the West up to that time, but it would have been insufficient for the Civil War. The total number of enlistments on the Northern side was 2,778,304, of whom 2,489,836 were whites, 178,975 were African-Americans, and 3,530 were Native Americans. The figure is slightly misleading, since men sometimes enlisted several times. But the general consensus is that no less than two million served on the Union side. And Confederate enlistments have been calculated at between 750,000 and 1,223,890. It was the closest thing the world had yet seen to a total war, with more American soldiers lost than the total number killed in the two world wars, Korea, and Vietnam. In the South, it left what one traveler in 1875 described as "a dead civilisation and a broken-down system" and what another, ten years earlier, claimed was "enough woe and want and ruin and savagery" "to satisfy the most insatiate heart," "enough of sure humiliation and bitter overthrow" "to appease the desire of the most vengeful spirit." In the

A History of American Literature, Second Edition. Richard Gray.

North, it left a sense of triumph, at the restoration of the nation and the abolition of slavery, but also a sense of tragedy, not least because, even before all hostilities had ceased, only a week after Appomattox, President Abraham Lincoln was dead – killed by a man crying out "Sic semper tyrannis!," "Thus always to tyrants," the motto of the state of Virginia.

"A great literature will yet arise out of the era of those four years," Walt Whitman observed of the Civil War some fourteen years after it had ended. What arose with unparalleled speed, certainly, was a great urban and industrial society dedicated to production, progress, and profit. In the early 1860s the United States as a productive economy extended only as far as the Missouri River. It did not manufacture any steel; and it had an industrial investment of only a half billion dollars. Within twenty years after the Civil War it had become one of the giants of the international steel industry; the number of factories within its borders had more than doubled; and it had an industrial investment of over four billion dollars. Not only that, it had developed the most extensive railways system in the world, binding East and West together in one vast economic unit. Nearly half the railway mileage in the world was in the United States, and that mileage represented one-sixth of the nation's estimated wealth. America, especially on it eastern seaboard, was being transformed from a country of farms and villages into a country of towns and cities. By 1880, for example, over half the population of the eastern United States lived in towns of more than four thousand people. Chicago, at the junction of several railway lines, grew from a fur-trapping village of about 350 people in 1830 to a city of half a million people in 1880, then one million by the time of the Chicago World Fair in 1893. New York City, the largest city in the nation, grew at a similarly phenomenal rate, to a population of three and a half million by 1900. Other Midwestern cities, like Detroit, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis, saw their populations double and triple in the decades after the Civil War, while in the West Los Angeles grew from a population of 11,000 in 1880 to five times that number in just twenty years. Certainly, 40 percent of the population of the United States was still rural by the end of the nineteenth century. But the trend toward urbanization was inexorable and irreversible. And a further symbolic moment, for the American consciousness, came in the early 1890s. The 1890 census revealed that every part of the continental United States had now been organized, most of it already into states. That meant, the historian Frederick Jackson Turner declared, three years later at the Chicago World's Fair, that the frontier was now closed and a new era for America was at hand.

The 1890 census also revealed that the total population of the United States had risen to 63 million, and that the foreign-born element in this total numbered nine million. As a proportion of the total, that element did not represent much of an increase on pre-Civil War figures. But it was enough to generate a moral panic, and eventually repressive, anti-immigration legislation, among native whites because the new immigrants tended to cluster in the cities, as cheap labor for the factories and sweatshops, and were of different ethnic composition from earlier immigrant generations. Before 1860, most immigrants had come from Great Britain, Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia; five million arrived in the four decades prior to the

Civil War. The period from then until the end of the century saw no less than fourteen million new arrivals, mostly from Poland, Italy, Russia, Austria, Turkey, Greece, and Syria. Catholic or Jewish, many of them non-English speakers, their different manners, customs, and beliefs – and, in many instances, different languages – inspired feelings of resentment and distrust, the suspicion that the Anglo-Saxon hegemony was being threatened. Such feelings were, in a sense, a twisted response to a tangible reality: the United States was becoming an even more ethnically mixed, culturally plural nation. Along with these new immigrants arriving mostly on the eastern seaboard were others arriving mostly on the western: some 264,000 Chinese and a much smaller number of Japanese between 1860 and 1900. Again, the numbers were not necessarily large or out of proportion to earlier waves of immigration. But the Chinese immigrants, in particular, inspired fear, resentment, and racial antagonism, with violence against them in the western states escalating in the 1870s and 1880s, and repression culminating in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which outlawed the immigration of all Chinese people apart from a few professionals, students, and tourists.

The experience of other minority groups, already in the United States before the Civil War, was mixed, during the second half of the nineteenth century. With the passing of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1865, four million African-American were freed. With a decade of reform and Reconstruction, about a quarter of a million received an education, many achieved political office, and many more exercised the right to vote. But when federal troops withdrew from the South in 1877, African-Americans swiftly lost the franchise. By 1910, all the former Confederate states had radically restricted black voting rights, while even before that a whole raft of laws established segregation in everything from schools to public transport. Where legal means of repression appeared not to work, then violence was used: by the Ku Klux Klan, established in 1866, and other white vigilante groups. And the basic economic situation for African-Americans remained unchanged. Sixty percent of the land in the South was owned by 10 percent of the white population. Freed black people found themselves forced into sharecropping or tenant farming – by 1900, over 75 percent of black farmers were tenant farmers. They had, to an extent, merely moved from slavery to serfdom. Mexican-Americans were in a more fortunate position. They were not really immigrants, since the United States had merely annexed the territory where most of them already lived. They represented a majority in many of the territories in the Southwest. They could, as a result, maintain their own culture and their own language, their own fierce ethnic pride and independence. For Native Americans, however, the four decades after the Civil War were nothing short of tragic, with the tribes suffering more than they had ever done or were to do in the following years. With whites penetrating into even the remotest corners of the West, the policy of removal was replaced by one of assimilation: the idea being that allotting plots of land to individual Native Americans would draw them into mainstream American society. The new policy was as dismal and disastrous as the old one. It ignored Native American traditions of communal land use, the poor quality of much of the land in question, and the lack of operating capital. It

also ignored the fact that Native Americans had insufficient knowledge of white law and legal maneuvering to stop them losing or being tricked out of what was theirs. By 1887, Native Americans had lost all except 150 million of their original three billion acres; and by 1934, when the policy of allotment was finally reversed, all that was left was 48 million acres, a miserable 1.5 percent of what had once been in their hands.

Real power lay elsewhere, for all sections of the population. By 1890, 1 percent of the entire American population owned over 25 percent of the nation's wealth. Three years later, a survey revealed that there were over four thousand millionaires in the United States: this at a time when seven hundred dollars was a reasonable annual income. At one end of the newly emerging economic and social scale was an industrial working class far outnumbering the middle class: by 1915, the poor would in fact constitute 65 percent of the population. At the other, were those like John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and J. Pierpoint Morgan: industrialists and financiers who accumulated vast fortunes and power. Rockefeller gradually acquired control of 90 percent of the oil industry in the United States. Diversifying, his company Standard Oil had by 1890 become not just the largest oil company in the world but the largest railway company and one of the largest banking concerns. During the same period, Carnegie, who had started working life as a telegraph operator, built up the largest steel manufacturing industry in the world, which he then sold off to a business rival for 500 million dollars. The business rival, Morgan, merged the Carnegie Steel Corporation with other smaller steel companies: the result was the first billion-dollar trust, US Steel, which has dominated its field from its foundation to the present day. Morgan was the spider in a vast web of interlocking directorships, 741 of them in 112 corporations. The web was so intricate, and so tight, that, by the early twentieth century, almost all the leading American capitalists, or "robber barons" as they were and are sometimes called, were associated with either Morgan or Rockefeller. The emergence of this new breed of capitalism could be seen as the price the United States had to pay for its commitment to economic freedom and its emergence as a global power. It was certainly a high one. By the end of this period, in any event, the development and the rationalization of industrialism by private capital was more or less complete.

Morgan, Rockefeller, and their associates sometimes adopted a posture of brazen defiance in response to criticism of their unlimited wealth and power. "What do *I* care about the law?" Morgan said once to a reporter. "Ain't I got the money? The public be damned." "I cheat my boys every chance I get," Rockefeller similarly declared, "I want to make 'em sharp." But, more often, they subscribed to an emerging ideology which saw their wealth as justified, the reward of pluck and luck. The ideology drew on the Protestant ethic, the belief that wealth was a sign of heavenly favor, and on a popularized version of Darwinian theories of evolution: what was termed "the survival of the fittest." That ideology, with its emphasis on success as the inevitable outcome of hard work and sturdy self-reliance, was carried to the public in the popular literature of the day, the exemplary tales for young adults and the new "dime novels" that first appeared in the 1860s and quickly reached

circulation in the millions. Easily the most successful author in this field was Horatio Alger (1834–1899), the titles of whose most popular books for boys tell their own story: *Ragged Dick* (1867), *Luck and Pluck* (1869), and *Tattered Tom* (1871). It was also promulgated in the new mass circulation magazines and newspapers. One of the most remarkable features of this period, in fact, along with the general transformation of the economy – and the political corruption that, very often, went with it – was the development of publishing into a vast and multiple industry and, along with that, the growth of a mass readership, eager to consume that industry's products. The spread of education and literacy, the technology of mass production, the access to all markets opened up by the railways, all meant that something like a uniform print culture was possible for the entire nation, and that specialist audiences could also be catered to or even created.

So there was uniformity and diversity. There were new mass circulation publications: not only the dime novels, celebrating cowboy or detective heroes or telling tales of success, but "story papers" serializing mainly romance and adventure narratives. There were school readers, like the McGuffey readers used in schools between 1836 and 1890 that sang of the virtue of labor and humility ("Work, work, my boy, be not afraid / … / And blush not for your humble place"), doing their cultural work by assimilating their young audience to the values of the dominant culture. There was a steady stream of bestsellers, like the 45 romantic novels of Frank R. Stockton (1834–1902) or *Ben Hur, a Tale of the Christ* (1884) by Lew Wallace (1827–1905), which sold over three million copies. But, on the other hand, there were also a vast number of specialist publications, reflecting and reinforcing the existence of many Americas, the continuing fact of cultural plurality. On one level, there were the literary magazines, like *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Monthly*, and *Scribner's Monthly*, whose relatively small circulations belied their considerable cultural influence. On another level were the more than 1,200 foreign language periodicals in circulation by 1896, serving mostly the new immigrant groups, the over 150 publications catering to African-Americans, and the many other magazines and newspapers circulating among other ethnic groups on a local or larger scale.

Among those who reflected and benefited from both the uniformity and diversity were women writers. The years following the Civil War witnessed an exponential increase in the opportunities available for women, mostly white women but also some others, in education and work outside the menial or domestic. In the South, the challenge of war had required white women to take up more public roles; so did the dearth of men when the war was over, the destruction of a generation in the conflict. In the North and elsewhere, too, the necessities of war, which drew women out of the home in more numbers than ever before, were followed by the demands of the new economy. Women, and especially white women from the middle and lower middle classes, began to enter the new business world as store assistants, telephone and telegraph operators, and clerical workers. For black and white working-class women, it was more a matter of bitter necessity than opportunity: they had to work, in the fields still, or in the factories. The dominant movement, though, was away from the hearth and home, and its accompanying ideology – for

the notion of the "true woman," keeper of the domestic pieties, was gradually being replaced by that of the "new woman," relatively independent and mobile. The change might be regretted by the more traditionally minded, or even by those who saw it as a symptom of a larger change to a culture of insecurity, denial of community. But it was nevertheless acknowledged. And women writers were a part of it. Many of them became writers precisely in response to the new economic opportunities or necessities, because they wanted or needed to find a job. Many of them, like Augusta Jane Evans (1835–1909), Amélie Rives (1863–1945), and Mary Johnston (1870–1936), wrote for the new mass audience and enjoyed a wide readership. Some of them, with less immediate public success in most cases, adopted a tougher, more critical stance toward either the risks women faced in the new dispensation or the restrictions they still suffered from the old. In doing so, they measured a change in writing practice among many American writers during this period, female and male: from depicting the mythic possibilities of America to describing its material inadequacies. They, and those like them, responded to the drastic economic and social alterations occurring in the nation around them by turning ever further from romance to realism, and then later to naturalism.

The Development of Literary Regionalism

From Adam to outsider

Realism was described by Ambrose Bierce as "the art of depicting nature as it is seen by toads" and having "the charm suffusing a landscape painted by a mole, or a story written by a measuring worm." That definition would have delighted Mark Twain, born Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835–1910), because of its mordant wit and because all of his work could be seen as a series of negotiations between realism and romance. "My books are simply autobiographies," Twain insisted once. True of every American writer, perhaps, the remark seems especially true of him. He relied, frequently and frankly, on personal experience: in accounts of his travels, for instance, like *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), *Roughing It* (1872), and *A Tramp Abroad* (1880). Even those books of his that were the results of strenuous imaginative effort can be read as attempts to resolve his inner divisions, and create some sense of continuity between his present and his past, his critical investment in common sense, pragmatism, and progress and his emotional involvement in his childhood and the childhood of his region and nation. The inner divisions and discontinuity were, in fact, inseparable. For all of Twain's best fictional work has to do with what has been called "the matter of Hannibal"; that is, his experiences as a child in the slaveholding state of Missouri and his years as a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi. This was not simply a matter of nostalgia for the good old days before the Civil War, of the kind to be found in other, simpler writers born in the South like, say, Thomas Nelson Page or Richard Malcolm Johnston (1822–1898). Nor was it merely another example of the romantic idealization of youth, although Twain did firmly believe that, youth being

"the only thing worth giving to the race," to look back on one's own childhood was to give oneself "a cloudy sense of having been a prince, once, in some enchanted far off land, & of being in exile now, & desolate." It was rather, and more simply, that Twain recognized intuitively that his years as a boy and youth, in the pre-Civil War South, had formed him for good and ill. So to explore those years was to explore the often equivocal nature of his own vision. It was also, and more complexly, that Twain also sensed that the gap, the division he felt between his self and his experiences before and after the war was, in its detail unique of course, but also typical, representative. So to understand that gap, that division, was to begin at least to understand his nation and its times.

Twain moved with his family to the Mississippi River town of Hannibal, Missouri when he was 4. A small town with a population of about a thousand, Hannibal was a former frontier settlement that had become a backwater. Leaving school at the age of 12, Twain received his real education as a journeyman printer; and, having spent his first eighteen years in the South, he began to travel widely. His travels eventually brought him back to the Mississippi where, in the late 1850s, he trained and was licensed as a riverboat pilot. After his years in Hannibal, this was the most formative period of his life. "I loved the profession far better than any I have followed since," Twain was to say later, in *Life on the Mississippi* (1883). "The reason is plain: a pilot, in those days, was the only unfettered and entirely independent human being that lived in earth." Piloting taught Twain lessons in freedom that were to be immensely valuable to him later. But when the Civil War began, the riverboats ceased operation and, after a brief period serving with a group of Confederate volunteers, he traveled west. There, he spent the rest of the war prospecting for silver with his brother and then working with Bret Harte as a journalist in San Francisco. It was while working as a journalist in the West, in 1863, that he adopted the pseudonym Mark Twain. And in 1865 he made that name famous with the tall tale, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." Brief though it is, the tale is notable not least because it reveals many of the vital ingredients in Twain's art: the rough humor of the Southwest and Western frontier, a recognizable teller of the tale (in this case, a character called Simon Wheeler), above all, a creative use of the vernacular and the sense of a story springing out of an oral tradition, being told directly to us, its audience. Twain now began touring the lecture circuits. His lively personality and quotable remarks made him immensely popular. His lecture tours also reinforced his habit of writing in the vernacular, the American idiom: "I amend the dialect stuff," he once said, "by talking and *talking* it till it sounds right." His first book, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Sketches* (1867), appeared just before he set sail on a trip to Europe and the Holy Land. This was followed by his account of that trip, in *Innocents Abroad*, his humorous depiction of his travels west in *Roughing It*, and a satirical portrait of boom times after the Civil War, *The Gilded Age* (1873), written in collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner.

Twain first turned to the matter of Hannibal in a series of articles published in the *Atlantic Monthly* entitled "Old Times on the Mississippi." Revised and expanded, with new material added (some of it, as Twain candidly admitted, "taken from

books" by others, "tho' credit given"), this became *Life on the Mississippi* eight years later. What is remarkable about the essays and the book is how Twain turns autobiography into history. In his account of his own personal development, the author distinguishes between the romantic dreamer he once was, before training as a pilot, who saw the Mississippi merely in terms of its "grace," "beauty," and "poetry," and the sternly empirical realist he became after his training, when he could see the Mississippi in more pragmatic terms – as a tool, to be used and maneuvered. That same model, contrasting the romance of the past with the realism of afterwards, is then deployed to explain larger social change: with the South of the author's childhood identified with romance and the South of his adult years, after the Civil War, associated with realism – enjoying a sense of "progress, energy, and prosperity" along with the rest of the nation. The key feature of this contrast, personal and social, between times before the war and times after, is its slippery, equivocal nature. The glamour of the past is dismissed at one moment and then recalled with elegiac regret the next, the pragmatism and progress of the present is welcomed sometimes and at others coolly regretted. No attempt is made to resolve this contradiction. And similar, if not precisely the same, confusions are at work in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), a book clearly based on the author's childhood years in Hannibal, renamed St. Petersburg. At the time of writing *Tom Sawyer*, Twain's uncertainty about his purposes was signaled by the fact that he changed his mind over who the book was intended for, adults or children. "It is *not* a boy's book at all," he wrote to his friend William Dean Howells, "It will only be read by adults." But then he announced, in his preface, "my book is intended mainly for the entertainment of boys and girls. I hope that it will not be shunned by men and women on that account." That uncertainty is then registered in the narrative. There is immediacy in some of the language, but there is distance in much of it, an attempt to sound sophisticated, mature, refined: characters do not spit, for example, they "expectorate," clothes are "accoutrements," breezes are "zephyrs," buildings are "edifices." There is the stuff of childhood fantasies (the delicious thrill of overhearing regretful adults mourn your untimely death, bogeymen, the discovery of treasure) and the staple of adult discourse (the tale of Tom and Becky, for instance, is a parody of adult courtship). There is the tendency, on the part of the anonymous narrator, to be ironic and patronizing about the "simple-hearted" community of St. Petersburg and its "small plain" buildings. And there is also an impulse toward elegy, toward seeing that very same place as "a Delectable Land, dreamy, reposeful, and inviting." The only attempt to resolve these contradictions is also the one Twain resorts to in *Life on the Mississippi*: to impose on his material the notions of personal development and social betterment – in other words, the myth of progress. Tom turns out to be, in the words of his Aunt Polly, not "*bad*, so to say – only misch*ee*vous." By the end of the story, he has shown his true mettle by assuming the conventional male protective role with Becky and acting as the upholder of social justice. The integrity and sanctity of the community is confirmed, with Tom's revelation of the villainy of Injun Joe and the killing of the villain. And Tom is even ready, it seems to offer brief lectures on the advantages of respectability: "we can't let you into the gang if you ain't

respectable, you know," he tells his friend, Huck Finn. That this attempt to resolve the divisions of the narrative is less than successful is evident from the fact that *Tom Sawyer*, like *Life on the Mississippi*, is interesting precisely because of its discontinuity. It is also implicit in the author's intuitively right decision to give equal weight at the end of the story to the voice of the outlaw, Huck, as he tries to resist Tom's persuasions. "It ain't for me; I ain't used to it," Huck tells Tom: "It's awful to be tied up so."

The voice of Huck, the voice of the outsider, that begins to be heard at the end of *Tom Sawyer* takes over completely in what is without doubt Twain's greatest work, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, begun in 1876 and published in 1885. Twain began *Huckleberry Finn* simply as a sequel to *Tom Sawyer*, with several narrative threads carried over from the earlier work. Even as he began it, however, he must have realized that this was a very different, more authentic work. For the manuscript shows Twain trying to catch the trick, the exact lilt of Huck's voice. "You will not know about me," the first try at an opening, is scratched out. So is the second try, "You do not know about me." Only at the third attempt does Twain come up with the right, idiomatic but poetic, start: "You don't know about me." Like a jazz musician, trying to hit the right beat before swinging into the full melody and the rhythm of the piece, Twain searches for just the right voice, the right pitch and momentum, before moving into the story of his greatest vernacular hero. The intimacy is vital, too: in a way that was to become characteristic of American fiction, the protagonist addresses "you" the reader directly, in terms that appear spontaneous, sincere, unpremeditated. We are drawn into this web of words in a manner that convinces us that we are enjoying an unpremeditated, vital relationship with the hero. The spontaneity is also a function of the narrative structure. Twain once said that he relied on a book to "write itself," and that is the impression, in the best sense, given by *Huckleberry Finn*. The story has a structure, of course, that of the picaresque narrative (*Don Quixote* was one of Twain's favorite books), but that structure is as paradoxically structureless as the structure of, say, *Moby-Dick* or "Song of Myself." The book flows like the Mississippi, at a constantly altering pace, in unanticipated directions; new characters, episodes, incidents pop up without warning, old characters like Jim or Tom Sawyer reappear just when we least expect them to. Like the great works of Melville and Whitman, too, *Huckleberry Finn* remains an open field, describing an open, unstructured and unreconstructed spirit. It does not conclude, in any conventional fashion. Famously, it ends as "Song of Myself" does and many later American narratives were to do: looking to the open road, with the hero still breaking away – or, as Huck himself has it, ready to "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest."

Twain later described *Huckleberry Finn* as "a book of mine where a sound heart and a deformed conscience come into collision and conscience suffers a defeat." The central moral dilemma Huck has to face, in this deeply serious, even tragic comedy, is whether or not he should betray his friend, the escaped slave Jim, by revealing Jim's whereabouts to other whites, including Miss Watson, his owner. For much of the narrative, Huck is equivocal. Sometimes he sees Jim as a slave, as property that should be returned; and sometimes he sees him as a human being and a friend, requiring his sympathy and help. And the vacillation stems from Huck's uncertainty

over what takes priority: the laws of society, his social upbringing which, however patchily, has shaped his conscience, or the promptings of his own heart, his instincts and feelings as an individual. The book is about the historical injustice of slavery, of course, and the social inequity of racism, the human use or denial of human beings. But it is also about the same fundamental conflict as the one that fires into life *The Scarlet Letter* and so many other American narratives. Huck must choose between the law and liberty, the sanctions of the community and the perceptions of the individual, civil and natural justice. He chooses the latter, the lessons learned from his own experience, the knowledge of his own rebellious heart. In doing so, Huck reflects his creator's belief at the time in aboriginal innocence, the purity of the asocial – and asocial or presocial creatures like the child. And he also measures the extent of the creative triumph, since Twain manages here a miracle: that rare thing, a sympathetic and credibly virtuous character. The sympathy and credibility stem from the same source: Huck is a grotesque saint, a queer kind of savior because he does not know he is doing good. His notions of right and wrong, salvation and damnation, have been formed by society. So, when he is doing good he believes that he is doing evil, and vice versa. His belief system is at odds with his right instincts; hence, the terms in which he describes his final decision not to betray Jim. "All right, then," Huck declares, "I'll *go* to hell."

Twain's strategies for shifting Huck's conflict from the personal to the mythic are several. Easily the most important, though, is his own, almost certainly intuitive, variation on the contrast between the clearing and the wilderness: the riverbank and the river. The riverbank is the fixed element, the clearing, the community. On the riverbank, everyone plays a social role, observes a social function; either without knowing it, like the Grangerford family or the inhabitants of Bricksville, or knowing it and using it to exploit others, like the Duke and Dauphin. Everyone is obsessed with appearances and disguises, and uses language to conceal meaning and feeling from others and themselves. Everyone behaves like an actor who has certain lines to say, clothes to wear, things to do, rather than as an independent individual. It is a mark of Huck's individuality, incidentally, that, on the riverbank, he is constantly forgetting the role he is playing, who he is supposed to be. Everyone, in short, denies their essential humanity on the riverbank, and the humanity of others: here, Jim is not a human being, he is the lowest form of social function, a slave. What adds to the power of this portrait is that, as with the account of the Puritan settlement in *The Scarlet Letter*, it is simultaneously mythic and historical. This is society, the machinery of the social system seen from the standpoint of individualism. It is also a very specific society, that of the South before the Civil War. Drawing on the devices of the Southwestern humorists, but exponentially developing them, Twain offers a brilliantly detailed satirical picture of the Old South: poor whites like Pap Finn and the people of Bricksville, middle-class farmers like the Phelps family, wealthy planters like the Grangerfords – and, of course, the slaves. *Huckleberry Finn* is an unremitting comic assault on the human capacity to substitute "style" for substance, social illusion for experiential fact. But it is also a satire on one particular kind of social "style" that Twain knew only too well. It is a tragic account of what,

generally, happens when people stop seeing and testing things for themselves, as individual human beings. But it also a very American tragedy about a moment in American history when a sense of humanity and individuality was lost, with terrible consequences for the nation.

The river, the fluid element and the medium for escape for Huck and Jim, is, of course, Twain's version of the mythic wilderness. It is a place where Huck can enjoy intimacy with Jim and an almost Edenic harmony with nature. Recasting Huck as an American Adam, Twain shows his hero attending to the moods of the river and its surroundings and, in turn, projecting his own moods in and through those natural surrounds. Huck appears to enjoy a separate peace here on the river, a world apart from rules, codes, and clock time, where "lazying" becomes a positive activity. Free from the postlapsarian compulsion to work, Huck can simply be and wonder: live, meditate, and marvel at the miracle of the particular, the minutiae of life. It is in these episodes on the river that the indelible connection between the voice of Huck and his values becomes clear. Huck scrupulously, instinctively tells it as it is. He sees things as they are, free of social pretence or disguise. He describes things as they are, not cloaked in the rhetoric of society. So he can judge things as they are, not as the social system would tell him to judge them. It is also in these episodes that Huck's power as a syncretic figure becomes clear. Huck Finn brings together and synthesizes the warring opposites of Twain's earlier work. Huck is a focus for all his creator's nostalgia, all his yearnings for childhood, the lost days of his youth, the days before the Civil War and the Fall; and he is also, quite clearly, a projection of Twain's more progressive feelings, the belief in human development and perfectibility – he suggests hope for the future as well as love of the past. Again, this is measured in the language of the book, in that it is precisely Huck's "progressive" attention to the use and function of things that gives his observations such color and immediacy. His words do not deny the beauty of things: the glory and splendor, say, of a sunrise on the Mississippi River. But neither do they deny that things are there for a purpose. On the contrary, they acknowledge that each particular detail of a scene or moment has a reason for being there, deserves and even demands recording; and they derive their grace and force from that acknowledgment. The language Huck is given, in short, is at once exact and evocative, pragmatic and poetic: it reveals things as they are, in all their miraculous particularity. And Huck himself, the speaker of that language, comes across as a profoundly realistic and romantic figure: a pragmatist and a dreamer, a simple figure and a noble man – a perfect gentle knight, who seems honorable, even chivalric, precisely because he sticks closely to the facts.

Which is not to say that even this book is perfect. As many commentators have observed, the last few chapters do represent a decline – or, to use Hemingway's more dismissive phrase, "just cheating" – in the sense that Huck is pushed to one side of the action, and Tom Sawyer is permitted to take over and reduce the issue of Jim's slavery to the level of farce. For all Huck's occasional protests at Tom's behavior, or his famous final declaration of independence, the comedy loses its edge, the moral problems are minimized, and the familiar divisions in Twain's writing begin to reappear. There are many possible reasons for this, but one possible one is that Twain

was perhaps beginning to have doubts about the effectiveness and viability of his hero. Certainly, in his next book, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), set mainly in Arthurian England, Twain turned to a vernacular hero, Hank Morgan, with a more programmatic, reforming dimension. Hank, "a Yankee of Yankees," is transported back to the world of King Arthur, and is determined to transform it according to his model of progress and industry. He fails, and, in describing his failure, Twain equally fails to achieve a reconciliation, let alone a synthesis, of his romantic and realistic impulses. *The Tragedy of Puddn'head Wilson* (1894) is even darker, the comedy even more biting and desperate. This is in part because Wilson himself – although not the narrator, the presiding genius of the book – is given to caustic comments such as the one supplied as an epigraph to the conclusion: "It was wonderful to find America, but it would have been even more wonderful to miss it." But it is also because the closest thing the story has to an authentic rebel, the slave Roxana, is comprehensively defeated. In any event, she does not tell her own story. Her voice is muted, partly because she is trapped within a narrative that is characterized by closure and ironic pessimism and partly because, when she is allowed to talk, she never begins to articulate rebellion or resist the racism of her owners. "Training is everything," Wilson tells us; and Roxana, together with all the other characters, seems hopelessly trapped in training, the prisonhouse of determinism.

The deepening pessimism of Twain, in his later years, is evident from the story "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" (1900) and the longer narrative, *The Mysterious Stranger*, which was published posthumously after editorial work by other hands in 1916. "I believe I can make it tell what I think of Man," he wrote of the latter work, "… and what a shabby poor ridiculous thing he is, and how mistaken he is in his estimate of … his place among the animals." Twain had begun with a gift for comedy and the belief that it could be used to expose the gap between reality and illusion. He ended with the comedy turned bitter, to dark satire and polemic, and with the belief that illusion is all we have, a world of surface and gesture. He had begun with the conviction that there were two forces at war in human nature, feeling and training, and that it was possible to rediscover feeling and restore originality, spontaneity. He ended convinced quite otherwise, that training was all people had, that they could only obey environmental and social conditioning. He had begun with a belief in human nature, its essential innocence, and the rider, the related belief that this innocence could be resurrected in America – that, in short, the American Adam was possible. He ended by calling the human race "damned" for its irreversible servility to systems and surface, and by regarding the American project as a futile, absurd one: his spokesperson was no longer an American Adam, like Huck, but a cynical outsider who observes humankind with a mixture of desperate laughter and contempt – like Puddn'head Wilson or Satan in *The Mysterious Stranger*. On a personal level, Twain continued to enjoy what he termed the "grace, peace, and benediction" of his family and circle of friends until the end of his life. On the social, he remained an ardent reformer and a brilliantly witty, judiciously savage critic of authority and champion of the underdog – attacking European imperialism in Africa, for instance, and American imperialism in the Spanish–American War.

TWO

THE RISE OF REALISM: 1860-1914

The U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) between the industrial North and the agricultural, slave-owning South was a watershed in American history. The innocent optimism of the young democratic nation gave way, after the war, to a period of exhaustion. American idealism remained but was rechanneled. Before the war, idealists championed human rights, especially the abolition of slavery; after the war, Americans increasingly idealized progress and the self-made man. This was the era of the millionaire manufacturer and the speculator, when Darwinian evolution and the "survival of the fittest" seemed to sanction the sometimes unethical methods of the successful business tycoon.

Business boomed after the war. War production had boosted industry in the North and given it prestige and political clout. It also gave industrial leaders valuable experience in the management of men and machines. The enormous natural resources — iron, coal, oil, gold, and silver — of the American land benefitted business. The new intercontinental rail system, inaugurated in 1869, and the transcontinental telegraph, which began operating in 1861, gave industry access to materials, markets, and communications. The constant influx of immigrants provided a seemingly endless supply of inexpensive labor as well. Over 23 million foreigners — German, Scandinavian, and Irish in the early years, and increasingly Central and Southern Europeans thereafter — flowed into the United States between 1860 and 1910. Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino contract laborers were imported by Hawaiian plantation owners, railroad companies, and other American business interests on the West Coast.

In 1860, most Americans lived on farms or in small villages, but by 1919 half of the population was concentrated in about 12 cities. Problems of urbanization and industrialization appeared: poor and overcrowded housing, unsanitary conditions, low pay (called "wage slavery"), difficult working conditions, and inadequate restraints on business. Labor unions grew, and strikes brought the plight of working people to national awareness. Farmers, too, saw themselves struggling against the "money interests" of the East, the so-called robber barons like J.P. Morgan and John D. Rockefeller. Their eastern banks tightly controlled mortgages and credit so vital to western development and agriculture, while railroad companies charged high prices to transport farm products to the cities. The farmer gradually became an object of ridicule, lampooned as an unsophisticated "hick" or "rube." The ideal American of the post-Civil War period became the millionaire. In 1860, there were fewer than 100 millionaires; by 1875, there were more than 1,000.

From 1860 to 1914, the United States was transformed from a small, young, agricultural ex-colony to a huge, modern, industrial nation. A debtor nation in 1860, by 1914 it had become the world's wealthiest state, with a population that had more than doubled, rising from 31 million in 1860 to 76 million in 1900. By World War I, the United States had become a major world power.

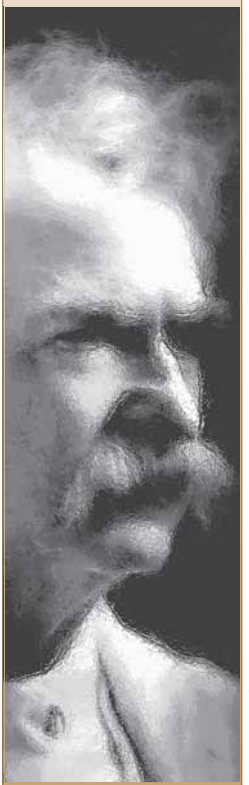
As industrialization grew, so did alienation. Characteristic American novels of the period — Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets,* Jack London's *Martin Eden*, and later Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* — depict the damage of economic forces and alienation on

the weak or vulnerable individual. Survivors, like Twain's Huck Finn, Humphrey Vanderveyden in London's *The Sea-Wolf*, and Dreiser's opportunistic Sister Carrie, endure through inner strength involving kindness, flexibility, and, above all, individuality.

SAMUEL CLEMENS (MARK TWAIN) (1835-1910)

Samuel Clemens, better known by his pen name of Mark Twain, grew up in the Mississippi River frontier town of Hannibal, Missouri. Ernest Hemingway's famous statement that all of American literature comes from one great book, Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, indicates this author's towering place in the tradition. Early 19th-century American writers tended to be too flowery, sentimental, or ostentatious — partially because they were still trying to prove that they could write as elegantly as the English. Twain's style, based on vigorous, realistic, colloquial American speech, gave American writers a new appreciation of their national voice. Twain was the first major author to come from the interior of the country, and he captured its distinctive, humorous slang and iconoclasm.

For Twain and other American writers of the late 19th century, realism was not merely a literary technique: It was a way of speaking truth and exploding worn-out conventions. Thus it was profoundly liberating and potentially at odds with society. The most well-known example is Huck Finn, a poor boy who decides to follow the voice of his conscience and help a Negro slave escape to freedom, even though Huck thinks this means that he will be damned to hell for breaking the law.



Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain)

Illustration by Thaddeus A. Miksinski, Jr.

Twain's masterpiece, which appeared in 1884, is set in the Mississippi River village of St. Petersburg. The son of an alcoholic bum, Huck has just been adopted by a respectable family when his father, in a drunken stupor, threatens to kill him. Fearing for his life, Huck escapes, feigning his own death. He is joined in his escape by another outcast, the slave Jim, whose owner, Miss Watson, is thinking of selling him down the river to the harsher slavery of the deep South. Huck and Jim float on a raft down the majestic Mississippi, but are sunk by a steamboat, separated, and later reunited. They go through many comical and dangerous shore adventures that show the variety, generosity, and sometimes cruel irrationality of society. In the end, it is discovered that Miss Watson had already freed Jim, and a respectable family is taking care of the wild boy Huck. But Huck grows impatient with civilized society and plans to escape to "the territories" — Indian lands. The ending gives the reader the counter-version of the classic American success myth: the open road leading to the pristine wilderness, away from the morally corrupting influences of "civilization." James Fenimore

Cooper's novels, Walt Whitman's hymns to the open road, William Faulkner's *The Bear,* and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* are other literary examples.

Huckleberry Finn has inspired countless literary interpretations. Clearly, the novel is a story of death, rebirth, and initiation. The escaped slave, Jim, becomes a father figure for Huck; in deciding to save Jim, Huck grows morally beyond the bounds of his slave-owning society. It is Jim's adventures that initiate Huck into the complexities of human nature and give him moral courage.

The novel also dramatizes Twain's ideal of the harmonious community: "What you want, above all things, on a raft is for everybody to be satisfied and feel right and kind toward the others." Like Melville's ship the *Pequod*, the raft sinks, and with it that special community. The pure, simple world of the raft is ultimately overwhelmed by progress — the steamboat — but the mythic image of the river remains, as vast and changing as life itself.

The unstable relationship between reality and illusion is Twain's characteristic theme, the basis of much of his humor. The magnificent yet deceptive, constantly changing river is also the main feature of his imaginative landscape. In *Life on the Mississippi*, Twain recalls his training as a young steamboat pilot when he writes: "I went to work now to learn the shape of the river; and of all the eluding and ungraspable objects that ever I tried to get mind or hands on, that was the chief."

Twain's moral sense as a writer echoes his pilot's responsibility to steer the ship to safety. Samuel Clemens's pen name, "Mark Twain," is the phrase Mississippi boatmen used to signify two fathoms (3.6 meters) of water, the depth needed for a boat's safe passage. Twain's serious purpose combined with a rare genius for humor and style keep Twain's writing fresh and appealing.

FRONTIER HUMOR AND REALISM

Two major literary currents in 19th-century America merged in Mark Twain: popular frontier humor and local color, or "regionalism." These related literary approaches began in the 1830s — and had even earlier roots in local oral traditions. In ragged frontier villages, on riverboats, in mining camps, and around cowboy campfires far from city amusements, storytelling flourished. Exaggeration, tall tales, incredible boasts, and comic workingmen heroes enlivened frontier literature. These humorous forms were found in many frontier regions — in the "old Southwest" (the present-day inland South and the lower Midwest), the mining frontier, and the Pacific Coast. Each region had its colorful characters around whom stories collected: Mike Fink, the Mississippi riverboat brawler; Casey Jones, the brave railroad engineer; John Henry, the steel-driving African-American; Paul Bunyan, the giant logger whose fame was helped along by advertising; westerners Kit Carson, the Indian fighter, and Davy Crockett, the scout. Their exploits were exaggerated and enhanced in ballads, newspapers, and magazines. Sometimes, as with Kit Carson and Davy Crockett, these stories were strung together into book form.

Twain, Faulkner, and many other writers, particularly southerners, are indebted to frontier pre-Civil War humorists such as Johnson Hooper, George Washington Harris, Augustus Longstreet, Thomas Bangs Thorpe, and Joseph Baldwin. From them and the American frontier folk came the wild proliferation of comical new American words: "absquatulate" (leave), "flabbergasted" (amazed), "rampagious" (unruly, rampaging). Local boasters, or "ring-tailed roarers," who asserted they were half horse, half alligator, also underscored the boundless energy of the frontier. They drew strength from natural hazards that would terrify lesser men. "I'm a regular tornado," one swelled, "tough as hickory and long-winded as a nor'wester. I can strike a blow like a

falling tree, and every lick makes a gap in the crowd that lets in an acre of sunshine."

LOCAL COLORISTS

Like frontier humor, local color writing has old roots but produced its best works long after the Civil War. Obviously, many pre-war writers, from Henry David Thoreau and Nathaniel Hawthorne to James Greenleaf Whittier and James Russell Lowell, paint striking portraits of specific American regions. What sets the colorists apart is their self-conscious and exclusive interest in rendering a given location, and their scrupulously factual, realistic technique.

Bret Harte (1836-1902) is remembered as the author of adventurous stories such as "The Luck of Roaring Camp" and "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," set along the western mining frontier. As the first great success in the local colorist school, Harte for a brief time was perhaps the best-known writer in America — such was the appeal of his romantic version of the gun-slinging West. Outwardly realistic, he was one of the first to introduce low-life characters — cunning gamblers, gaudy prostitutes, and uncouth robbers — into serious literary works. He got away with this (as had Charles Dickens in England, who greatly admired Harte's work) by showing in the end that these seeming derelicts really had hearts of gold.

Several women writers are remembered for their fine depictions of New England: Mary Wilkins Freeman (1852-1930), Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), and especially Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909). Jewett's originality, exact observation of her Maine characters and setting, and sensitive style are best seen in her fine story "The White Heron" in *Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896). Harriet Beecher Stowe's local color works, especially *The Pearl of Orr's Island* (1862), depicting humble Maine fishing communities, greatly influenced Jewett. Nineteenth-century women writers formed their own networks of moral support and influence, as their letters show. Women made up the major audience for fiction, and many women wrote popular novels, poems, and humorous pieces.

Sarah Orne Jewett

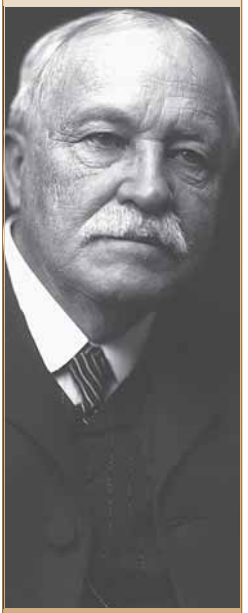
All regions of the country celebrated themselves in writing influenced by local color. Some of it included social protest, especially toward the end of the century, when social inequality and economic hardship were particularly pressing issues. Racial injustice and inequality between the sexes appear in the works of southern writers such as George Washington Cable (1844-1925) and Kate Chopin (1851-1904), whose powerful novels set in Cajun/French Louisiana transcend the local color label. Cable's *The Grandissimes* (1880) treats racial injustice with great artistry; like Kate Chopin's daring novel *The Awakening* (1899), about a woman's doomed attempt to find her own identity through passion,

it was ahead of its time. In *The Awakening*, a young married woman with attractive children and an indulgent and successful husband gives up family, money, respectability, and eventually her life in search of self-realization. Poetic evocations of ocean, birds (caged and freed), and music endow this short novel with unusual intensity and complexity.

Often paired with *The Awakening* is the fine story "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935). Both works were forgotten for a time, but rediscovered by feminist literary critics late in the 20th century. In Gilman's story, a condescending doctor drives his wife mad by confining her in a room to "cure" her of nervous exhaustion. The imprisoned wife projects her entrapment onto the wallpaper, in the design of which she sees imprisoned women creeping behind bars.

MIDWESTERN REALISM

For many years, the editor of the important *Atlantic Monthly* magazine, William Dean Howells (1837-1920) published realistic local color writing by Bret Harte, Mark Twain, George Washington Cable, and others. He was the champion of realism, and his novels, such as *A Modern Instance* (1882), *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), and *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890), carefully interweave social circumstances with the emotions of ordinary middle-class Americans.



William Dean Howells

Love, ambition, idealism, and temptation motivate his characters; Howells was acutely aware of the moral corruption of business tycoons during the Gilded Age of the 1870s. Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* uses an ironic title to make this point. Silas Lapham became rich by cheating an old business partner; and his immoral act deeply disturbed his family, though for years Lapham could not see that he had acted improperly. In the end, Lapham is morally redeemed, choosing bankruptcy rather than unethical success. Silas Lapham is, like Huckleberry Finn, an unsuccess story: Lapham's business fall is his moral rise. Toward the end of his life, Howells, like Twain, became increasingly active in political causes, defending the rights of labor union organizers and deploring American colonialism in the Philippines.

COSMOPOLITAN NOVELISTS

Henry James (1843-1916)

Henry James once wrote that art, especially literary art, "makes life, makes interest, makes importance." James's fiction and criticism is the most highly conscious, sophisticated, and difficult of its era. With Twain, James is generally ranked as the greatest American novelist of the second half of the 19th century.

James is noted for his "international theme" — that is, the complex relationships between naïve Americans and cosmopolitan Europeans. What his biographer Leon

Edel calls James's first, or "international," phase encompassed such works as *Transatlantic Sketches* (travel pieces, 1875), *The American* (1877), *Daisy Miller* (1879), and a masterpiece, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). In *The American*, for example, Christopher Newman, a naïve but intelligent and idealistic self-made millionaire industrialist, goes to Europe seeking a bride. When her family rejects him because he lacks an aristocratic background, he has a chance to revenge himself; in deciding not to, he demonstrates his moral superiority.

James's second period was experimental. He exploited new subject matters — feminism and social reform in *The Bostonians* (1886) and political intrigue in *The Princess Casamassima* (1885). He also attempted to write for the theater, but failed embarrassingly when his play *Guy Domville* (1895) was booed on the first night.

In his third, or "major," phase James returned to international subjects, but treated them with increasing sophistication and psychological penetration. The complex and almost mythical *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903) (which James felt was his best novel), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904) date from this major period. If the main theme of Twain's work is appearance and reality, James's constant concern is perception. In James, only self-awareness and clear perception of others yields wisdom and self-sacrificing love. As James develops, his novels become more psychological and less concerned with external events. In James's later works, the most important events are all psychological — usually moments of intense illumination that show characters their previous blindness. For example, in *The Ambassadors*, the idealistic, aging Lambert Strether uncovers a secret love affair and, in doing so, discovers a new complexity to his inner life. His rigid, upright, morality is humanized and enlarged as he discovers a capacity to accept those who have sinned.

Henry James

Photogravure courtesy National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Edith Wharton (1862-1937)

Like James, Edith Wharton grew up partly in Europe and eventually made her home there. She was descended from a wealthy, established family in New York society and saw firsthand the decline of this cultivated group and, in her view, the rise of boorish, nouveau-riche business families. This social transformation is the background of many of her novels.

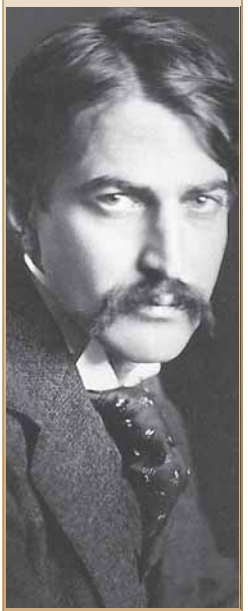
Like James, Wharton contrasts Americans and Europeans. The core of her concern is the gulf separating social reality and the inner self. Often a sensitive character feels trapped by unfeeling characters or social forces. Edith Wharton had personally experienced such entrapment, as a young writer suffering a long nervous breakdown partly due to the conflict in roles between writer and wife.

Wharton's best novels include *The House of Mirth* (1905), *The Custom of the Country* (1913), *Summer* (1917), *The Age of Innocence* (1920), and the beautifully crafted novella *Ethan Frome* (1911).

NATURALISM AND MUCKRAKING

Wharton's and James's dissections of hidden sexual and financial motivations at work in society link them with writers who seem superficially quite different: Stephen Crane, Jack London, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, and Upton Sinclair. Like the cosmopolitan novelists, but much more explicitly, these naturalists used realism to relate the individual to society. Often they exposed social problems and were influenced by Darwinian thought and the related philosophical doctrine of determinism, which views individuals as the helpless pawns of economic and social forces beyond their control.

Naturalism is essentially a literary expression of determinism. Associated with bleak, realistic depictions of lower-class life, determinism denies religion as a motivating force in the world and instead perceives the universe as a machine. Eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers had also imagined the world as a machine, but as a perfect one, invented by God and tending toward progress and human betterment. Naturalists imagined society, instead, as a blind machine, godless and out of control.



Stephen Crane

Photo courtesy Library of Congress

The 19th-century American historian Henry Adams constructed an elaborate theory of history involving the idea of the dynamo, or machine force, and entropy, or decay of force. Instead of progress, Adams sees inevitable decline in human society.

Stephen Crane, the son of a clergyman, put the loss of God most succinctly:

> A man said to the universe:
> "Sir, I exist!"
> "However," replied the universe,
> "The fact has not created in me
> A sense of obligation."

Like Romanticism, naturalism first appeared in Europe. It is usually traced to the works of Honoré de Balzac in the 1840s and seen as a French literary movement associated with Gustave Flaubert, Edmond and Jules Goncourt, Émile Zola, and Guy de Maupassant. It daringly opened up the seamy underside of society and such topics as divorce, sex, adultery, poverty, and crime.

Naturalism flourished as Americans became urbanized and aware of the importance of large economic and social forces. By 1890, the frontier was declared officially closed. Most Americans resided in towns, and business dominated even remote farmsteads.

Stephen Crane (1871-1900)

Stephen Crane, born in New Jersey, had roots going back to Revolutionary War soldiers, clergymen, sheriffs, judges, and farmers

who had lived a century earlier. Primarily a journalist who also wrote fiction, essays, poetry, and plays, Crane saw life at its rawest, in slums and on battlefields. His short stories — in particular, "The Open Boat," "The Blue Hotel," and "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" — exemplified that literary form. His haunting Civil War novel, *The Red Badge of Courage*, was published to great acclaim in 1895, but he barely had time to bask in the attention before he died, at 29, having neglected his health. He was virtually forgotten during the first two decades of the 20th century, but was resurrected through a laudatory biography by Thomas Beer in 1923. He has enjoyed continued success ever since — as a champion of the common man, a realist, and a symbolist.

Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) is one of the best, if not the earliest, naturalistic American novels. It is the harrowing story of a poor, sensitive young girl whose uneducated, alcoholic parents utterly fail her. In love and eager to escape her violent home life, she allows herself to be seduced into living with a young man, who soon deserts her. When her self-righteous mother rejects her, Maggie becomes a prostitute to survive, but soon commits suicide out of despair. Crane's earthy subject matter and his objective, scientific style, devoid of moralizing, earmark *Maggie* as a naturalist work.

Jack London (1876-1916)

A poor, self-taught worker from California, the naturalist Jack London was catapulted from poverty to fame by his first collection of stories, *The Son of the Wolf* (1900), set largely in the Klondike region of Alaska and the Canadian Yukon. Other of his best-sellers, including *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *The Sea-Wolf* (1904), made him the highest paid writer in the United States of his time.

The autobiographical novel *Martin Eden* (1909) depicts the inner stresses of the American dream as London experienced them during his meteoric rise from obscure poverty to wealth and fame. Eden, an impoverished but intelligent and hardworking sailor and laborer, is determined to become a writer. Eventually, his writing makes him rich and well-known, but Eden realizes that the woman he loves cares only for his money and fame. His despair over her inability to love causes him to lose faith in human nature. He also suffers from class alienation, for he no longer belongs to the working class, while he rejects the materialistic values of the wealthy whom he worked so hard to join. He sails for the South Pacific and commits suicide by jumping into the sea. Like many of the best novels of its time, *Martin Eden* is an unsuccess story. It looks ahead to F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* in its revelation of despair amid great wealth.

Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945)

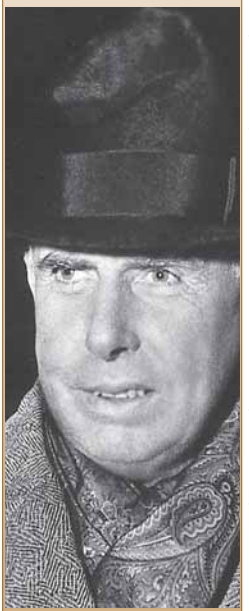
The 1925 work *An American Tragedy* by Theodore Dreiser, like London's *Martin Eden*, explores the dangers of the American dream. The novel relates, in great detail, the life of Clyde Griffiths, a boy of weak will and little self-awareness. He grows up in great poverty in a family of wandering evangelists, but dreams of wealth and the love of beautiful women. A rich uncle employs him in his factory. When his girlfriend Roberta becomes pregnant, she demands that he marry her. Meanwhile, Clyde has fallen in love with a wealthy society girl who represents success, money, and social acceptance. Clyde carefully plans to drown Roberta on a boat trip, but at the last minute he begins to change his mind; however, she accidentally falls out of the boat. Clyde, a good swimmer, does not save her, and she drowns. As Clyde is brought to justice, Dreiser replays his story in reverse, masterfully using the vantage points of prosecuting and defense attorneys to analyze each step and motive that led the mild-mannered Clyde, with a highly religious

background and good family connections, to commit murder.

Despite his awkward style, Dreiser, in *An American Tragedy*, displays crushing authority. Its precise details build up an overwhelming sense of tragic inevitability. The novel is a scathing portrait of the American success myth gone sour, but it is also a universal story about the stresses of urbanization, modernization, and alienation. Within it roam the romantic and dangerous fantasies of the dispossessed.

An American Tragedy is a reflection of the dissatisfaction, envy, and despair that afflicted many poor and working people in America's competitive, success-driven society. As American industrial power soared, the glittering lives of the wealthy in newspapers and photographs sharply contrasted with the drab lives of ordinary farmers and city workers. The media fanned rising expectations and unreasonable desires. Such problems, common to modernizing nations, gave rise to muckraking journalism — penetrating investigative reporting that documented social problems and provided an important impetus to social reform.

The great tradition of American investigative journalism had its beginning in this period, during which national magazines such as *McClures* and *Collier's* published Ida M. Tarbell's *History of the Standard Oil Company* (1904), Lincoln Steffens's *The Shame of the Cities* (1904), and other hard-hitting exposés. Muckraking novels used eye-catching journalistic techniques to depict harsh working conditions and oppression. Populist Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1901) exposed big railroad companies, while socialist Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) painted the squalor of the Chicago meat-packing houses. Jack London's dystopia *The Iron Heel* (1908) anticipates George Orwell's *1984* in predicting a class war and the takeover of the government.



Theodore Dreiser

Photo © The Bettmann Archive

Another more artistic response was the realistic portrait, or group of portraits, of ordinary characters and their frustrated inner lives. The collection of stories *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891), by William Dean Howells's protégé, Hamlin Garland (1860-1940), is a portrait gallery of ordinary people. It shockingly depicted the poverty of midwestern farmers who were demanding agricultural reforms. The title suggests the many trails westward that the hardy pioneers followed and the dusty main streets of the villages they settled.

Close to Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads* is *Winesburg, Ohio*, by Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941), begun in 1916. This is a loose collection of stories about residents of the fictitious town of Winesburg seen through the eyes of a naïve young newspaper reporter, George Willard, who eventually leaves to seek his fortune in the city. Like *Main-Travelled Roads* and other naturalistic works of the period, *Winesburg, Ohio* emphasizes

the quiet poverty, loneliness, and despair in small-town America.

THE "CHICAGO SCHOOL" OF POETRY

Three Midwestern poets who grew up in Illinois and shared the midwestern concern with ordinary people are Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, and Edgar Lee Masters. Their poetry often concerns obscure individuals; they developed techniques — realism, dramatic renderings — that reached out to a larger readership. They are part of the Midwestern, or Chicago School, that arose before World War I to challenge the East Coast literary establishment. The "Chicago Renaissance" was a watershed in American culture: It demonstrated that America's interior had matured.

Edgar Lee Masters (1868-1950)

By the turn of the century, Chicago had become a great city, home of innovative architecture and cosmopolitan art collections. Chicago was also the home of Harriet Monroe's *Poetry*, the most important literary magazine of the day.

Among the intriguing contemporary poets the journal printed was Edgar Lee Masters, author of the daring *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), with its new "unpoetic" colloquial style, frank presentation of sex, critical view of village life, and intensely imagined inner lives of ordinary people.

Spoon River Anthology is a collection of portraits presented as colloquial epitaphs (words found inscribed on gravestones) summing up the lives of individual villagers as if in their own words. It presents a panorama of a country village through its cemetery: 250 people buried there speak, revealing their deepest secrets. Many of the people are related; members of about 20 families speak of their failures and dreams in free-verse monologues that are surprisingly modern.

Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)

A friend once said, "Trying to write briefly about Carl Sandburg is like trying to picture the Grand Canyon in one black-and-white snapshot." Poet, historian, biographer, novelist, musician, essayist — Sandburg, son of a railroad blacksmith, was all of these and more. A journalist by profession, he wrote a massive biography of Abraham Lincoln that is one of the classic works of the 20th century.

To many, Sandburg was a latter-day Walt Whitman, writing expansive, evocative urban and patriotic poems and simple, childlike rhymes and ballads. He traveled about reciting and recording his poetry, in a lilting, mellifluously toned voice that was a kind of singing. At heart he was totally unassuming, notwithstanding his national fame. What he wanted from life, he once said, was "to be out of jail...to eat regular..to get what I write printed,...a little love at home and a little nice affection hither and yon over the American landscape,...(and) to sing every day."

A fine example of his themes and his Whitmanesque style is the poem "Chicago" (1914):

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the
Nation's Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders...

Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931)

Vachel Lindsay was a celebrant of small-town midwestern populism and creator of strong, rhythmic poetry designed to be declaimed aloud. His work forms a curious link between the popular, or folk, forms of poetry, such as Christian gospel songs and vaudeville (popular theater) on the one hand, and advanced modernist poetics on the other. An extremely popular public reader in his day, Lindsay's readings prefigure "Beat"

poetry readings of the post-World War II era that were accompanied by jazz.

To popularize poetry, Lindsay developed what he called a "higher vaudeville," using music and strong rhythm. Racist by today's standards, his famous poem "The Congo" (1914) celebrates the history of Africans by mingling jazz, poetry, music, and chanting. At the same time, he immortalized such figures on the American landscape as Abraham Lincoln ("Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight") and John Chapman ("Johnny Appleseed"), often blending facts with myth.

Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869-1935)

Edwin Arlington Robinson is the best U.S. poet of the late 19th century. Like Edgar Lee Masters, he is known for short, ironic character studies of ordinary individuals. Unlike Masters, Robinson uses traditional metrics. Robinson's imaginary Tilbury Town, like Masters's Spoon River, contains lives of quiet desperation.

Some of the best known of Robinson's dramatic monologues are "Luke Havergal" (1896), about a forsaken lover; "Miniver Cheevy" (1910), a portrait of a romantic dreamer; and "Richard Cory" (1896), a somber portrait of a wealthy man who commits suicide:

Willa Cather

Photo courtesy OWI

Whenever Richard Cory went
down town,
We people on the pavement
looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to
crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim,

And he was always quietly
arrayed,
And he was always human when
he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses
when he said,
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich — yes, richer
than a king —
And admirably schooled in every
grace:
In fine, we thought that he was
everything
To make us wish that we were in
his place.

So on we worked, and waited for
the light,
And went without the meat, and
cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet
through his head.

"Richard Cory" takes its place alongside *Martin Eden, An American Tragedy,* and *The Great Gatsby* as a powerful warning against the overblown success myth that had come to plague Americans in the era of the millionaire.

THREE

The romance

What is the romance?

As the term is used here, "romance" does not mean love story. The fictions taken up in this chapter may or may not include love stories. Labeling these novels "romances" has more to do with certain formal and thematic characteristics than with notions of courtship, sexual attraction, and marriage. Romance designates a wide variety of novels featuring out-of-the-ordinary adventures, mysterious or supernatural circumstances, difficult quests, and miraculous triumphs. These novels often have an epic or mythic cast and display a marked lack of concern for questions of plausibility.[1] Together with the sentimental novel, the romance predominates in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century.

The story of the novel's emergence told by Walter Benjamin, Georg Lukács, Ian Watt, and others helps to situate the subgenre of romance. According to these theorists of the genre, the novel, as we know it, is a relatively late literary invention, coming into being roughly coincident with the Reformation and the emergence of bourgeois capitalism.[2] A modern form for modern times, the novel, observes Benjamin, marks a substantial departure from the storyteller's legends, fairy tales, and epics (87). Benjamin describes the storyteller as an artisan and his/her oral tales as akin to handicrafts, such as pottery. These tales incorporate the shared wisdom and experience of the community and change subtly over time as the community changes. By contrast, the novel is more like a newspaper, a vehicle of bits of information rather than a living record of communal insight. The literary forms of the storyteller, such as the legend or epic, feature heroic or archetypal characters and miraculous events occurring in a timeless realm of universal truths (Benjamin 89, Lukács 66). This account of

the novel tends to identify the genre with an empirical approach to experience. Ian Watt characterizes the novel's emphasis on plausibility as part of a general philosophical shift away from a priori ideas toward the particulars of experience (12, 18). Defined in part by its choice of believable fact over the improbable or extraordinary, the novel rejects the literary conventions of the legend, epic, or fairy tale, which, in their very conventionality, seem implausible (such as the traditional plot and the archetypal hero).

When compared with the type of novel described by Benjamin, Lukács, and Watt, the romance seems to be something of a throwback to the earlier forms of the storyteller. The romance employs supernatural elements or characters with extraordinary capabilities as well as archetypal heroes and traditional plots. Though grounded in a specific historical context, the romance often has a timeless quality (for example, Alymer's attempt to rid his bride of her one visible defect in Nathaniel Hawthorne's story "The Birthmark" is set in a specific time, but, like the story of Pygmalion, its main action could easily be staged in any period). The romance reaches out beyond the fate of its particular characters toward some larger issue or theme, such as the foundation of an American race in the union of Duncan Heyward and Alice Munro at the end of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) or Ahab's quest to penetrate the mask of material reality and grasp the ultimate meaning of existence by hunting down Moby-Dick. Rather than focusing on a heterogeneous society of isolated individuals, romances describe (or lament the passing of) a world in which communities still seem to have cohesive identities. Like the fables and myths of a previous era and the sentimental novels of its own era, the nineteenth-century romance is not reluctant to indulge in allegory. A small but revealing sign of the novel's emergence, according to Watt, is the shift away from type names, such as Mr. Badman, to the use of realistic names, such as Tom Sawyer (19). The romance, however, is not averse to including names with allegorical significance, such as Cooper's Hawkeye (*The Last of the Mohicans*), Hawthorne's Faith ("Young Goodman Brown"), and George Lippard's Devil Bug (*The Quaker City*).

Authors of nineteenth-century romances understood well that their productions represented an anomalous continuation of the epic or mythic impulse. In prefatory material he appended to his romance *The Yemassee* (1835), William Gilmore Simms expressly connects the romance with the epic and distinguishes it from the kind of fiction described by Watt, Benjamin, and Lukács:

> Modern romance is the substitute which the people of to-day offer for the ancient epic. Its standards are the same. The reader, who, reading Ivanhoe, keeps Fielding and Richardson beside him, will be at fault in

> every step of his progress. The domestic novel of those writers, confined to the felicitous narration of common and daily occurring events, is altogether a different sort of composition. (I, vi)

Famously, Nathaniel Hawthorne appreciated the romance's "latitude" in regard to the novel's requirement of a "minute fidelity . . . to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience" (*Seven Gables* 3). The romance, Hawthorne says, furnishes a theater "a little removed from the highway of ordinary travel, where the creatures of [the author's] brain may play their phantasmagorical antics, without exposing them to too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives" (*Blithesdale* 1–2). In a similar vein, Simms characterizes the romance as "seek[ing] for its adventures among the wild and wonderful. It does not insist upon what is known, or even what is probable" (I, vi–vii).

Ostensibly, romancers, such as Hawthorne and Simms, merely desire not to be too constrained by the requirement that fiction believably mirror life as we know it. In writing prefaces announcing that their tales are romances and not novels, they seek to preclude the reader's complaint that such and such a character or event is not believable. But to what end do they seek such latitude? The answer is, I think, that they find in the romance's more overtly imaginative and inventive features, in its mingling of the marvelous and the plausible, a superior route to certain important truths – a route that is not available to the mere fact-gatherer and reporter. Borrowing a phrase from Henry James's description of the romantic, we might say that the romancer is after things "we never *can* directly know; the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire" (qtd. Carton 6). Taking us into "a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairyland, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbues itself with the nature of the other," the romance reveals the power of the imagination to shape or transform the raw data of experience, giving it meaning rather than merely recording it (*Scarlet Letter* 111). As Joel Porte suggests in *The Romance in America*, the romancer turns to fantasy, magic, archetypal heroes, traditional storylines, parable, and allegory as a means of uncovering otherwise inaccessible realities, such as the nature of human motivation, the destiny of a people, and the meaning of existence (ix–x). Believing in the existence of truths or realities that exceed or elude empirical approaches, the romancer sets aside the requirements of plausibility in the interest of making a stronger claim on a deeper, more imaginative form of veracity.

We can get a feel for the formal devices and themes characteristic of the nineteenth-century romance by looking briefly at two famous stories by Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,"

both from *The Sketch Book* (1819–20). Both stories blend everyday facts with the marvelous or strange. For instance, after beginning with a matter-of-fact description of Rip Van Winkle's life, his village, his clothes, personality, habits, and home life, Irving's story takes a romantic turn with the appearance of the English explorer Henry Hudson and his crew of men playing nine-pins. Rip drinks some of their liquor and falls asleep for twenty years, during which time the Revolutionary War takes place. Similarly, in "Sleepy Hollow," Irving's detailed description of a rural community of Dutch folk in the Hudson River Valley is interrupted by the appearance of the headless horseman. Wanting the reader "to grow imaginative – to dream dreams, and see apparitions," the romancer insinuates the extraordinary into the ordinary or shows how the prosaic or unremarkable detail can cast a supernatural shadow in our minds (994). In "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," Hawthorne describes this state of mind as an oscillation "between fancy and reality; by turns, the pillars of the balcony lengthened into the tall, bare stems of pines, dwindled down to human figures, settled again in their true shape and size, and then commenced a new succession of changes" (1259). Whether or not the "legend" is believed as literally true is, I think, less important to the romancer than the reader's sense of its imaginative and emotional power. Whether or not the headless horseman is in fact Brom Bones is less important to Irving than the creation of some measure of terror in the reader, pointing to the power of the imagination to transform the bucolic countryside into a haunted and alien terrain and otherwise rationally explainable events into a supernatural pursuit.

Both tales are supposedly "found" in the papers of one Diedrich Knickerbocker. Superficially a gesture toward plausibility and historical accuracy, this device is not uncommon in American romances. For instance, Edgar Allen Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838) and Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) purport to be documentary narratives based on historical papers. Given the overtly fantastic nature of these fictions, such claims or allusions to historical accuracy are plainly provocative, calling our attention to the different kinds of truth claim made by fiction and history. Just because certain events cannot have happened – there is no headless horseman and Rip cannot have slept for twenty years – does not mean that such flights of imagination do not reveal what Hawthorne termed "the truth of the human heart" (*Seven Gables* 3). Irving describes his tales' "strange sights," "voices in the air," "marvelous beliefs," and "trances and visions" as the beliefs of a past era, but his success in resurrecting these old legends, their grip on readers from his own era to the present, suggests a truth about his audience's continuing desire for the experience of imaginative reverie ("Sleepy Hollow" 993). The retrospective nature of

these fantasies makes it tempting to describe the imaginative effect of Irving's romances as escapist nostalgia. Taking this line, we might conclude that Irving and his audience want to shut out the forces of historical change. Tales such as "Rip Van Winkle" and "Sleepy Hollow" comfort the reader with images of a seemingly static and timeless moment in the nation's past before the nation's population exploded, before the national economy was shifted from agriculture and handicrafts to heavy industry and capitalist speculation, and before the substantial relocation of the nation's population to urban centers. This escapist interpretive line, however, is too narrow to capture Irving's approach to social transformation.

When Rip awakes from his twenty-year sleep, no one recognizes him. The village is larger and more populous. Yankee names, such as Jonathan Doolittle, have replaced the Dutch ones, such as Nicholas Vedder. Rip's home and wife are gone. The portrait of King George the Third on the village inn's sign has been changed to a picture of George Washington. Rip is no longer a subject of the king but a citizen of a republic. In "Sleepy Hollow," the "drowsy, dreamy" little Dutch community is threatened with similar changes by the arrival of Ichabod Crane (993). By marrying Katrina Van Tassel, Ichabod hopes to be able to use her father's considerable farm lands as a basis for future real estate speculation: "his heart yearned after the damsel who was to inherit these domains, and his imagination expanded with the idea, how they might be readily turned into cash, and the money invested in immense tracts of wild land, and shingle places in the wilderness" (999). The Yankee schoolmaster heralds the coming wave of development in the east and expansion to the west. Irving contrasts him with Katrina's father, "Old Baltus Van Tassel," who is "a perfect picture of a thriving, contented, liberal-hearted farmer," who "seldom . . . sent either his eyes or his thoughts beyond the boundaries of his own farm; but within those every thing was snug, happy, and well-conditioned" (998). Yet, despite these signs of change, much remains constant. Rip remains the same. His appetites and inclinations have not been altered in the slightest, and he resumes "his old walks and habits." Ichabod is expelled from Sleepy Hollow by the apparition of the headless horseman. Katrina marries Brom Bones, and life goes on as before Ichabod's arrival. The manners and customs of Sleepy Hollow's inhabitants "remain fixed, while the great torrent of emigration and improvement, which is making such incessant changes in other parts of this restless country, sweeps by them unobserved" (994). The greater and more revealing magic of these tales lies in their compelling portraits of continuity in the face of change. The changes are real and visible but there are also continuities of the human heart that wondrously withstand change and give an enduring, if not permanent, identity to places and peoples. As we shall see in this chapter, transformation

and identity are central themes in all formulations of the nineteenth-century romance.

As Richard Chase, Joel Porte, George Dekker, and many others have shown, the romance is a particularly capacious category of nineteenth-century fiction. It includes the historical romances of James Fenimore Cooper, Robert Montgomery Bird, Lydia Maria Child, William Wells Brown, and others, the philosophical romances of Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville, and such sensational or popular romances as George Lippard's *The Quaker City* (1845), E. D. E. N. Southworth's *The Hidden Hand* (1859), or Edward Wheeler's *Deadwood Dick* (1877). Before the advent of realism in the latter decades of the century, the romance and the sentimental novel are, in effect, the default categories of nineteenth-century fiction. With notable exceptions, such as Rebecca Rush's *Kelroy* (1812), Caroline Kirkland's *A New Home* (1839), and Elizabeth Stoddard's *The Morgesons* (1862), most of the American fiction before 1870 takes the form of either the sentimental novel or the romance. Not only were these two novelistic forms predominant for most of the nineteenth century, they overlap substantially. Novels such as Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* (1827) and William Wells Brown's *Clotel* (1853), or Lydia Maria Child's *Romance of the Republic* (1867), could be convincingly classed as either romances or sentimental fiction. Historical romances, such as Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, draw on the affective devices of the sentimental novel (e.g., scenes of tearful reunion between family members and sorrow at the death of a child), and sentimental novels, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), share many of the traits of the romance (e.g., supernatural apparitions and incredible escapes from danger). Indeed, the ubiquity of the romance was such that, as Nina Baym has pointed out, the terms "novel" and "romance" were used interchangeably in the antebellum era ("Concepts of Romance").

All three types of romance – historical, philosophical, and sensational – feature the extraordinary in the form of astonishing or supernatural events, amazing escapes, unbelievably fortuitous coincidences, characters with almost superhuman abilities, shocking acts of violence, and/or otherworldly apparitions (even when they do not qualify as the Gothic version of the romance, these novels often employ Gothic elements). And all three types claim to illustrate some theme of epic significance, such as the fate of the nation, the malign or benign forces animating nature, or the monstrous deformation of humanity in the modern city. While making various claims to authenticity and accuracy, such as the device of the found papers and the inclusion of historical events and realistic details, the nineteenth-century romance recounts larger-than-life tales filled with strange or astonishing events having some apparent mythic

significance. In effect, the romancer makes a novel of the stuff of fairy tale, myth, and legend.

Each variety of romance will be delineated at greater length below, but here we can use the idea of a legend, a myth-like tale containing some fundamental human truth, to introduce briefly the key differences. The historical romance takes some bit of history (e.g., an episode of espionage in the Revolutionary War) and elevates it to the level of myth. The philosophical romance mines a larger-than-life tale (e.g., the story told by sailors of a great white whale) for its metaphysical or psychological import. And the sensational romance seeks to create a popular legend (e.g., the tale of a notorious outlaw), which will alternatively thrill, horrify, and excite the reader. Like the historical romance and the philosophical romance, the sensational romance often includes Gothic elements, and the Gothic novel could, as I have mentioned, be treated as a subgenre of the romance. I have not focused on the Gothic as a category of romance, because I find it not to be as capacious a category of nineteenth-century American romances as those I have chosen. As one might expect, any given example of one of these types of romance may well do all of these things. Nineteenth-century novelists often produced more than one type of romance. George Lippard, for instance, wrote both sensational romances, such as *The Quaker City*, and historical romances, such as *Blanche of Brandywine* (1846). These different types of romance are neither fixed nor static, and each borrows liberally from the others. While they are not impermeable taxonomic barriers walling one type of romance off from the others, nonetheless, such distinctions, like many we use to classify the changing and hybrid productions of the human imagination, help us to clarify points of emphasis in these novels.

The historical romance

As the two parts of the label "historical romance" suggest, this subgenre of the novel blends bits of history with the strange or extraordinary. The idea conjured by this label may well strike us as odd. The term "historical" would seem to point in the direction of verifiable facts and empirically persuasive demonstrations of cause and effect, but the term "romance" suggests legendary heroes and marvelous events – stories starkly incompatible with notions of historical accuracy (Dekker 26, 58–59). Yet this is precisely what the historical romancer has in mind – a merger of verifiable history and the extraordinary. William Gilmore Simms claims both the historical accuracy of his Indian characters and his right as a romancer to indulge in the "wild and wonderful." In his various prefaces to *The Last of the Mohicans*, James Fenimore Cooper asserts

both the authenticity of his fictional portrait of the French and Indian War and the poetic license he has taken in rendering it.

Using the extraordinary and marvelous to invest otherwise prosaic events with mythic significance, the historical romancer transforms known history into legend. "Legend" is an apt word to associate with this type of fiction, for, as Hawthorne understood, it suggests the heroic or timeless luster that can be given to history when we "attempt to connect a bygone time with the very present that is flitting away from us" (*Seven Gables* 4). Many Hawthorne tales and novels contain particular "legends" within the overarching legend of the romance (e.g., "The Legend of Zenobia" chapter of *The Blithesdale Romance*). By recasting history as legend or myth, the romancer attempts to give the past an archetypal or universal significance. To this end, the romancer invents characters plausible to the historical context, such as a backwoods scout or a colonial era peddler, and endows them with larger-than-life qualities, such as astonishing skill in battle, unswerving courage, or a miraculous ability to appear when most needed. While they may begin as relatively believable individuals from the period and place being described, over the course of the narrative they become epic figures engaged in a struggle for the fate of a nation or people. Not only do these characters have plain allegorical significance (e.g., the noble Indian who must retreat before the advance of [white] civilization or the heroic pioneer woman who, in her self-sufficiency, bravery, and skill, seems a veritable mother of the republic), but also the events described (e.g., a brutal and chaotic battle) have a comparatively straightforward emotional impact and unambiguous moral implication (e.g., the phoenix-like emergence of a noble American people from their bloody conflict with a corrupt force of French and Indians). In the romancer's hands, a motley group of bored, weary, and frightened revolutionary-era troops becomes a brotherhood of valiant men united by their eagerness for battle and glory, and a common peddler risking his life to spy for General Washington becomes an archetype of the selfless patriot (Cooper's *The Spy* [1821]).

Mark Twain's famous critique of James Fenimore Cooper provides a revealing perspective on the historical romancer's transformation of history into legend. By jettisoning concerns for credibility, the romancer's attempts to give history heroic significance become, in Twain's view, far-fetched and absurd ("Cooper's Literary Offenses"). Cooper's heroic Hawkeye speaks in a floridly noble style one moment and a laughably vulgar mode the next, and his skills, such as being able to drive a nail fifty yards distant with a bullet from his rifle, are ridiculously exaggerated. Twain similarly criticized the patent artificiality of the characters and plots of Cooper's literary forerunner, Sir Walter Scott. In effect, Twain's objection to the romancer's alloy of extraordinary events and

historical facts reflects the realists' desire to replace the grandiose and melodramatic with a close and accurate observation of the everyday details of life and to substitute the complexity of moral and social dilemmas as they are actually experienced by highly believable characters for the allegorical clarity of the romance's heroes and villains and their symbolically transparent conflicts.

Twain's criticisms of the historical romance were anticipated by a variety of authors. Southern humorists, such as Johnson Jones Hooper, Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, and George Washington Harris, were particularly blunt in poking fun at romantic visions of frontier life.[3] Instead of the heroic, self-sacrificing frontiersman, the eponymous hero of Hooper's *Some Adventures of Captain Simon Suggs* (1845) is an unscrupulous rascal whose motto is "It is good to be shifty in a new country," and the romance's depiction of fierce battles between Indians and whites is replaced with a game of lacrosse and gambling – victory belonging not to the bravest but to the craftiest (114–17). In her first-hand experience of carving out a settlement in Michigan, Caroline Kirkland found a reality far different from that she had been led to expect by romances of the West. Her novel, *A New Home, Who'll Follow?* (1839), depicts many of the hard and unromantic realities of life in the wild. Instead of the sublime spectacle of a group of intrepid settlers making their way around a wilderness waterfall, Kirkland describes a wagon stuck in a forest mud hole (6–7). The only "war-whoop" her heroine hears is the sound of drunken Indians wanting more liquor (29). Hardly a valiant clan bonded and ennobled by their experiences in planting civilization in the wild, her community of settlers is prone to drunkenness, indolence, greed, and dishonesty. For these writers, the dream inspired by the romance inevitably runs aground on the more humble and base aspects of reality, an outcome brilliantly imaged in *Huckleberry Finn* as the wreck of a steamboat named the *Walter Scott*.

Despite such criticisms, the historical romance, with its larger-than-life characters, often ornate dialogue, melodramatic love triangles, miraculous escapes, astonishing coincidences, and relatively transparent symbolism, has proven to be one of the most durable of fictional genres. Even after the rise of realism, historical romances, such as *Ben-Hur* (1880) by Lew Wallace and *When Knighthood was in Flower* (1898) by Charles Major, were tremendously successful. As George Dekker has pointed out, "No other genre has even come close to the consistent popularity enjoyed by historical romances from *The Spy* in 1821 down to . . . *Roots* in recent times" (1, 4–5). This sustained popularity would seem to be due in part to the sheer variety of the genre's subjects, which are drawn from every historical period from classical antiquity to the recent past. Consider, for instance, *Gone with the Wind*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, and *Ivanhoe*.

By comparison, however, when one looks at American examples of the genre taken from the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, the historical romance seems considerably less varied. At least initially, the American historical romance is fixated on the theme of national identity, repeatedly attempting to imagine the formation or transformation of an American people. Many of these tales use the image of the frontier and violent conflicts between European Americans and Native Americans to stage the birth of an American identity.[4] In Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* and Simms's *The Yemassee*, the Indians, a "once mighty nation," are displaced by an emergent "American" people. Additional conflicts between Anglo-American colonists and France, Spain, or Britain work to separate the emergent "American" people from their "Old World" heritage. The natural environment is often a character in its own right, playing an important role in forging the character and testing the mettle of the emerging people. Some romances focus on the crucial part played by strong and independent women in the drama of national identity, such as Child's *Hobomok* (1824) and Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* (1827). The plantation idyll of the Old South, as exemplified by John Pendleton Kennedy's *Swallow Barn* (1832) and Simms's *Woodcraft* (1852), recasts the question of identity from a distinctly regional perspective. And other romances, such as William Wells Brown's *Clotel* and Child's *A Romance of the Republic*, attempt to imagine a national identity defined by democratic principles rather than race and blood. When one juxtaposes Robert Montgomery Bird's *Nick of the Woods* (1837) with *The Last of the Mohicans* or Lydia Maria Child's *Romance of the Republic* with John Kennedy Pendleton's *Swallow Barn*, the genre of the historical romance begins to resemble a heated debate, with each romancer arguing for a different conception of the national character and a different myth of the national genesis.

The historical romance's passion for the subject of national identity is best understood in light of a few important historical facts. Perhaps the most basic and obvious consideration is the fact that the two constitutive elements defining the concept of nation, territory and people, were in a state of radical flux during the nineteenth century. By conquest, treaty, and purchase, the nation's territory quadrupled, and its population grew at an exponential rate. The sheer diversity of religions, nations of origin, races, ethnicities, and cultures represented by the nation's populace by the end of the nineteenth century would seem to complicate if not preclude the possibility of a unitary national identity. To allay concerns aroused by this rapid and extensive change in the nation's populace, the historical romance attempts to imagine a shared or core national identity impervious to or able to withstand such transformations. It also seems likely that certain ambiguities in the identity of the nation's citizenry invited the genre's repeated attempt to imagine the quintessential American character.

At least from one perspective, American citizenship is defined by political and ethical abstractions rather than a particular bloodline. The nation's seminal document, the Declaration of Independence, speaks of universal political principles, not a shared genealogy, and, while it contains provisions permitting slavery, the Constitution does not set forth any religious, racial, or ethnic traits as identifying the national body politic. The men authoring the open-ended abstractions of the Declaration and the Bill of Rights, however, tended to conceive of their republican political philosophy as the inheritance of a particular people. As they invoked self-evident and apparently universal truths, such as "all men are created equal," the founders assumed the existence of an organic community whose interests and outlook were generally homogeneous. Thomas Jefferson suspected, as Garry Wills puts it, that "a certain homogeneity was necessary" for a democratic society (301). The Declaration's figure of "one people" implicitly drew on a myth of Anglo-Saxon liberty deeming the Americans' capacity for self-rule to be a shared racial heritage. In asserting their constitutional liberties, British colonists, in the view of James Otis (a Boston lawyer and pamphleteer whose arguments on behalf of the colonists' natural rights influenced the course of revolutionary thinking) were simply recovering a family tradition: "liberty was better understood and more fully enjoyed by our ancestors before the coming in of the first Norman tyrants than ever after" (47). This tendency to ascribe the ostensibly universal political and ethical principles of the American nation to a particular group is well captured by Jefferson's proposal for the Great Seal of the United States. John Adams told his wife that Jefferson's seal had on one side "the children of Israel in the wilderness, led by a cloud by day and pillar of fire by night; and on the other side, Hengist and Horsa, the Saxon chiefs from whom we claim the honor of being descended, and whose political principles and form of government we have assumed" (Horsman 22). Adopting the Exodus story, the seal's first side embodies the moral universal of freedom in a symbol that superficially, at least, cuts across lines of ethnic, racial, or cultural difference, but the seal's flip side reverses the thrust of the symbolism to represent the ethos animating the new American nation as the racial legacy of a certain tribe.

At a minimum, the ambiguity of whether the foundational documents express universal values or the birthrights of a particular clan created a gap in the notion of a national identity, which the historical romancers attempted to fill with compelling narrative descriptions of the emergence of the American people. The ostensibly universal principles of the Declaration suggest the contours of one such narrative, and Jefferson's reference to Hengist and Horsa on his proposed seal suggests those of another.

The historical romance's fixation on national identity was also a product of the romanticism which gave birth to the form itself. The romanticism we associate with figures such as Johann Gottfried von Herder, James Macpherson, and Sir Walter Scott tended to privilege the particular genius and identity of each culture as the natural basis for national identity. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, intellectuals and artists began to turn their attention to the vernacular culture of their countries' natives, their crafts and folk arts. Previously derided as ignorant and uncouth, the peasant class seemed a veritable gold mine of authentic culture. The folk came to be associated with certain particularly authentic aspects of national identity. While Cooper and Simms and other romancers do not replace the genteel classes with the peasantry, they invoke the notion that humble everyday people embody values and experiences critically important to the emerging national identity. The genteel hero of *The Last of the Mohicans*, Duncan Heyward, must learn from and bond with the somewhat coarse Hawkeye to become a real American. Hawkeye's closeness to nature, his canny understanding of the wild and its natives, as well as his rough but honest nature make him an apt tutor of the young officer in the ways of the land he will one day govern.

In giving both the common folk and the genteel class important roles to play in the national drama, Cooper, Simms, and other historical romancers follow the pattern established by Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832). Scott's historical romances, such as *Waverly* (1814), *Rob Roy* (1817), and *Ivanhoe* (1819), use heroic characters, grand action, and clear historical significance to create an appealing replacement for the epic. Frequently, the drama of Scott's novels is generated by the conflict between cultures and peoples, such as the clashes between Christians and Moslems in *The Talisman* (1825), the Scottish and English in *Rob Roy*, or the Saxons and Normans in *Ivanhoe*. While taking a nostalgic tone in addressing the lost or threatened cultural identity of particular groups, such as the highland Scots, Scott's romances also exhibit a general optimism about the progressive evolution of society, a feeling shared by American historical romancers, who tend to describe progress as a kind of *force majeure*, an inexorable tendency in all things to move in an upward direction. Though they are frequently noble and brave, the less-advanced Indians of Cooper's and Simms's novels are doomed by the tide of progress to obsolescence and extinction. The American historical romance also echoes Scott's romanticizing of the connection between the natural environment and the national character. In *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), Scott famously celebrated a reverence for one's native land, despising the man who "never to himself hath said, / 'This is my own, my native land!'"

Scott's influence was widespread and varied. It could be felt, as Mark Twain lamented, in the cavalier pretensions of the Old South, its cult of honor, and the valorization of clan or family membership. (Twain went so far as to hold Scott's influence accountable for the Civil War.) However, while we can find Scott's influence in such proslavery romances as William Gilmore Simms's *Woodcraft* (1852), we can also find it in the choice of Frederick Douglass's surname, which was drawn from Scott's poem *The Lady of the Lake* (1810). The name was aptly chosen. Frederick Douglass escaped the slave catchers much as Scott's "black Douglas," a courageous outlaw and member of an "exiled race," escapes his pursuers. Recounting a slave revolt aboard the *Creole*, an American slave ship, Douglass's romance, *The Heroic Slave* (1853), features the heroic Madison Washington, a man with "a giant's strength" and a noble heart. Standing for the "principles of 1776," Douglass's Byronic black rebel subverts the racially homogeneous version of the national identity, implicitly laying claim to the symbolic role of archetypal patriot. Pioneered and made popular by Scott, the historical romance offered a useful template for a variety of idealized scripts of national identity. In the following discussion, I track the course of the nineteenth-century historical romance's preoccupation with national identity through what seem to me to be its most important formulations: the frontier romance, the plantation idyll, and the romance of race and republicanism.

The frontier romance

As noted above, the historical romance is a capacious form, and nineteenth-century American examples include depictions of the time of Christ (*Ben-Hur*) and the reign of King Henry VIII (*When Knighthood was in Flower*) as well as topics closer to home. A notable line of historical romances takes up the theme of the American Revolution. In Cooper's *The Spy* and Lippard's *Blanche of Brandywine*, common revolutionary soldiers as well as the Founding Fathers become epic heroes in the courageous struggle for a new national identity (though the political implications of this revolutionary moment differ for the conservative Cooper and the radical Lippard). Romances of the Revolution, however, are eclipsed by the frontier tale and its cousins (the plantation romance and the western), which predominate the form of the historical romance in the nineteenth century.

For writers concerned with the theme of national identity, the frontier tale is a natural choice because it prominently features both the territory and the people constituting the nation. In the frontier romance, both of these elements

are in a state of flux, becoming "American" through, as Robert Montgomery Bird puts it, the "sanguinary struggle by which alone the desert was to be wrung from the wandering barbarian," a struggle which unites the frontiersmen and settlers in "a common sense of danger" (42, 43). Despite certain variations (consider the contrast between Cooper's noble Indian characters and Bird's utterly brutal savages), frontier tales share an emphasis on the British-American frontiersman or pioneer as representative (with occasional modifications) of important aspects of the national character, and they describe the fight to survive in the land as formative of this identity. Even when protesting the violent oppression of Indians, as Helen Hunt Jackson does in *Ramona* (1884), the frontier romance identifies the American people as Anglo-American in origin and culture.

One of the important precursors to the nineteenth-century frontier romance is John Filson's history *The Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucky* (1784), particularly the pages purporting to be a first-hand account of "The Adventures of Col. Daniel Boon" [sic]. Gilbert Imlay, James Fenimore Cooper, and Robert Montgomery Bird prominently feature scenes resembling the rescue of Boone's daughter described in Filson's book, and Boone is the forerunner of a long line of intrepid wilderness heroes, such as Cooper's Natty Bumppo (*Leatherstocking Tales*) and Bird's Nathan Slaughter (*Nick of the Woods*) (Smith *Virgin Land* 55–60). For Filson, Cooper, Bird, and others, the iconic frontiersman seemed a figure of tremendous national importance. As Richard Slotkin points out,

> Boone undergoes a series of initiations which give him progressively greater insights into the life of the Indians, the peculiar necessities imposed by the wilderness, and the natural laws which govern life. Through his attempts to interpret these initiations, Boone attains a higher degree of self-knowledge and self-discipline and an ability to impose his own order on both the wilderness and the settlement. (*Regeneration* 274)

The philosophical romance: Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville

The subcategory of romance I have denominated as the "philosophical romance" and associated with novels by Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville shares traits with both the sensational romance and the historical romance.[8] Like the sensational romance (which is often marked by Gothic horrors), the philosophical romance manifests a taste for the hallucinatory quality of certain shocking experiences, such as carnival-like freaks and oddities of nature, bizarre or inexplicable events, and acts of horrific violence. These experiences can have a striking afterlife in the imagination, lingering to challenge or dissipate the force of everyday reason. Like the historical romancer, the philosophical romancer is intrigued by the continuing appeal of legend and myth in the era of modern science. Projects associated with the age of progress (the by-word of the nineteenth century), such as historical investigations, the documentary accounts of explorers and mariners, and well-known scientific experiments, can take on elements of the supernatural, the otherworldly, and the inexplicable, becoming somehow larger and more resonant. The amazing tale of some natural phenomenon, such as an albino whale with unusual features and a striking ability to evade capture, can, in the romancer's hands, become a spectral or cosmic force of uncertain origin and significance. If successful, such tales can reintroduce something like magic to minds habituated to rationalism and stiffened by everyday mental operations.

If, as Hawthorne claimed, the characteristic that chiefly distinguishes the romance from other forms of fiction is its inclusion of some measure of the marvelous or extraordinary, then the lesser distinction between historical and philosophical romances is largely a matter of the nature and quantity of such marvels. The historical romance attempts to forge larger-than-life, archetypal figures who act out a narrative drama of epic proportions, like the *Iliad* or the *Aeneid*, working toward an idealized script of the identity, history, and ultimate destiny of a people. In the historical romance, the marvelous or legendary appears in the exceptional abilities of certain key characters, uncanny or providential coincidences and connections between characters and events, fantastic

escapes and climactic battles which seem to settle the fates of competing peoples. In the philosophical romance, such marvels are not only more frequent, but they tend to have either a supernatural, psychological, or metaphysical dimension, such as the appearance of the Flying Dutchman (a spectral ship manned by a dead crew) or a boy driven mad by falling overboard and being temporarily isolated in the immensity of the sea. The philosophical narrative tends to redirect our attention away from the specifics of history toward the human psyche or the meaning of existence. This is not to say that history does not figure in Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville. Poe's romance *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* draws on the history of nautical exploration. Hawthorne frequently turns to the history of his puritan forbears in his novels, such as *The Scarlet Letter*, and his short stories, such as "Young Goodman Brown." Melville uses historical incidents, such as the Battle of Bunker Hill, the slave revolt aboard the *Tryal*, and the *Somers* mutiny, as starting points for *Israel Potter*, "Benito Cereno," and *Billy Budd*, respectively. Yet, in each of these cases, history seems less a destination than a vehicle for an inquiry that is largely introspective and metaphysical.

The form of the philosophical romance reveals a striking taste for shadows and obscurity. Plot devices, such as Melville's keeping Ahab below decks and out of sight until the *Pequod* has sailed, not only create a sense of foreboding and suspense but also engender speculation about both the man and the accounts given of him by others (including that of an apparently mad prophet figure, Elijah, who warns Queequeg and Ishmael not to sign on with the doomed crew of the *Pequod*). Truth, in this case the truth of Ahab's nature, is below decks, out of sight, and in the shadows. At least partially hidden, it is not easily comprehended but deeply encoded and hard to decipher. Truth is to be found "in the back view of a residence, whether in town or country, [not] in its front," as Hawthorne's somewhat unreliable narrator, Miles Coverdale, puts it in *The Blithesdale Romance*: "[t]he latter is always artificial; it is meant for the world's eye, and is therefore a veil and a concealment. Realities keep in the rear, and put forward an advance-guard of show and humbug" (149). Transparent truths, such as obvious character types and clear-cut or unambiguous moral distinctions, are, for the philosophical romancer, cheaply and easily constructed and often false. Following Edward Eigner, we can place the philosophical romance at one end of a continuum ranging from mimetic novels describing the effect of experience to metaphysical novels exploring the nature of experience itself (2–3). Eigner presents a useful account of the changing alloy of philosophical concerns and a motley mixture of fictional genres in nineteenth-century fiction. Of course, when looking at the more metaphysical novels, it may seem odd, even perverse, to suggest that the pursuit of truth inevitably leads one to take

on the habit of mind of the distrustful detective or spy, but this notion seems less objectionable if one recalls examples of intractable or difficult problems, where the relevant facts are shrouded in obscurity or seem endlessly complex and the issues at stake are diametrically opposed. An acknowledgment of even one important but impossible to decide moral or intellectual question may well cast a shadow of doubt over all transparent meanings and clear-cut distinctions.

Unlike the historical romance which depends for its epic effect on the reader's ready translation of its characters into archetypes and its events into larger themes, the philosophical romance loves to confront its readers and main characters with overt but obscure symbols, such as an oddly shaped birthmark. Allegorical emblems which can be easily translated into unambiguous and fixed meanings are not, as Poe put it, "judiciously subdued." The better kind of symbol, Poe says, is "seen only as shadow or by suggestive glimpses, and mak[es] its nearest approach to truth in a not obtrusive and therefore not unpleasant appositeness" ("Twice-Told Tales" 583). This kind of symbol generates a degree of what we might call interpretive friction, a struggle to comprehend, enhancing rather than diminishing the interpreter's sense of the symbol's importance. The scarlet letter worn by Hester Prynne in Hawthorne's novel is not just a scrap of aged fabric and stitching. It is plainly symbolic, something to be read and interpreted ("Certainly, there was some deep meaning in it, most worthy of interpretation"), yet its significance is elusive, "stream[ing] forth from the mystic symbol, subtly communicating itself to my sensibilities, but evading the analysis of my mind" (108). Such signs and portents draw us into interpretive shadows which may well resist conclusive understanding. The opening of Melville's "Benito Cereno" (1855), for instance, draws the reader into a consideration of overtly but obscurely symbolic details of the scene:

> The morning was one peculiar to that coast. Everything was mute and calm; everything grey. The sea, though undulated into long roods of swells, seemed fixed, and was sleeked at the surface like waved lead that has cooled and set in the smelter's mould. The sky seemed a grey mantle. Flights of troubled grey fowl, kith and kin with flights of troubled grey vapours among which they were mixed, skimmed low and fitfully over the waters, as swallows over meadows before storms. Shadows present, foreshadowing deeper shadows to come. (37)

The description's insistent repetition of the scene's greyness is a veritable emblem of indistinctness and interpretive difficulty. How are we to take our bearings when the sky and sea seem to merge in a general obscurity? Yet the obscurity is itself an invitation to interpretation, a mystery wanting solution.

The passage's payoff line telling us that these shadows or interpretive difficulties foreshadow deeper and more important interpretive difficulties to come could well be taken as a motto for the philosophical romance itself.

Later in the same tale, the Yankee protagonist, Captain Delano, is confronted by an old Spanish sailor on board the slave ship, the *San Dominick*. Throwing an elaborate knot he has made to Delano, the Spaniard urges him to "cut it quick." The knot and the sailor's statement indicate the mystery which Delano (and the reader) must unravel, but the difficulty of the solution facing the good Captain (and the reader) is suggested by Melville's description of the knot's complexity and of Delano standing there "knot in hand, knot in head" (66). The implicit homonymic pun of "knot" and "not" represents the blankness of the Captain's mind faced with this cryptic sign, and the extreme variety of knots, "double-bowline-knot, treble-crown-knot, back-handed-well-knot, knot-in-and-out knot, and jamming knot," indicate an intricate web of meaning, as though each knot has its own significance and forms part of a more complex whole. Standing as a symbol for the intractable interpretive problem, the old sailor's "Gordian knots" embody the philosophical romancer's conception of truth as an intensely felt but incomprehensible presence (66).

These romances don't necessarily or flatly contradict the idealist's vision of a two-story universe in which signs or symbols drawn from daily experience stand in some meaningful relation to larger truths; instead, the obscurity and multiple implications of their key symbols expresses their authors' doubt that the particular relation between the sign and the larger truth can ever be known with any finality or certainty. In their taste for ambiguity, the philosophical romances recall Montaigne, who urged his readers to live with uncertainty as a concomitant of a plurality of interpretations and beliefs: "Never did two men judge alike about the same thing, and it is impossible to find two opinions exactly alike, not only in different men, but in the same man at different times" (817). Like Emerson, the philosophical romancers understood that, while "[g]ladly we would anchor" in a final interpretation, "the anchorage is quicksand" ("Experience" 1196). The harder we "clutch" at interpretive or epistemological certainty, the more it slips through our fingers, because we are not given direct access to absolute or essential truths ("Experience" 1194).[9] Plainly balking the reader's desire for interpretive ease and the comfort of obvious significations, the philosophical romance anticipates certain examples of realist and modernist writing which similarly clog the reader's rush to paraphrase experience into unambiguous and transcendent truths, and manifests a vein of skepticism running through nineteenth-century American culture, continuing Montaigne's distrust of either rationalist or idealist certainty. As Montaigne puts it in "Of Experience,"

> Philosophy is very childish . . . when she gets up on her hind legs and preaches to us that it is a barbarous alliance to marry the divine with the earthly, the reasonable with the unreasonable, the severe with the indulgent, the honorable with the dishonorable; that sensual pleasure is a brutish thing unworthy of being enjoyed by the wise man. (855)

Montaigne subverts the "up-on-her-hind-legs" perspective by reminding us that "on the loftiest throne in the world we are still sitting only on our own rump" (857).

In his essay on Montaigne, Emerson, the chief mediator of this line of thinking in nineteenth-century America, characterizes the skeptic as accepting neither the absolutism of the materialist who would pretend that all is determined by matter nor the absolutism of the idealist who would pretend that mind can be walled off from the mess and mire of physical and social existence. As he points out in "Experience," human existence involves both a "flux of moods" and an intellectual capacity to rank "all sensations and states of mind" (1202). Sensation disrupts the tendency to build philosophical castles in the air, and thought disrupts the illusion that we can live merely in an animal state ("Montaigne" 243). The skeptic perceives and objects to the "evils of society" but casts a doubtful eye on the rational projects "offered to relieve them" ("Montaigne" 242, 243).

The skepticism of the philosophical romance can be felt in its depiction of events or occurrences defying or overwhelming rationality. Often, the primary effect of these events is one of shock and horror (e.g., the cannibalism Pym resorts to in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* or the image of Captain Ahab lashed to the head of Moby-Dick as he plunges into the depths of the ocean). At other moments, the irrational may take the form of an unreasoning and irresistible desire, such as Pym's impulse to leap into an abyss. It is precisely "because our reason most strenuously deters us from the brink," the narrator of Poe's "Imp of the Perverse" (1845) claims, that "we the more unhesitatingly approach it" (1591). Such moments are calculated to focus the reader less on what he or she knows or thinks and more on what he or she feels. The moment of horror, for instance, by filling us with dread, redirects our attention away from the cool process of getting and using knowledge and moves us toward an awareness of our beating hearts, throbbing heads, and clammy skins. In philosophical terms, we might say that these moments of sensational excess undermine the rationalist's attempt to separate the mind from the body, the observer from the observed. In the moment of terror or repulsion, what is "out there" in the phenomenal world and what is "in here" in the mind seem inextricably bound together, mind and body are welded together in a shared reaction, and the connectedness that is so striking in those moments

may well make us wonder whether mind and body, the observer and what is observed, can ever be detached from each other as the rationalist would pretend.

In reconnecting the mind and body, the philosophical romancer challenges not only the rationalist's notion of detached objectivity but also the idealist's notion of absolute and undefiled purity. Borrowing Emerson's description of the poet, we could say that Melville's Ishmael comes to appreciate in the "barbaric" markings and religious practices of his friend Queequeg "another carnival of the same gods whose picture he so much admires in Homer" (*Moby-Dick* 65–68, "The Poet" 196). Rejecting attempts to separate the "high" (sentiment and thought) from the "low" (physical needs and desires), Walt Whitman proclaims, "I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul . . . I keep as delicate around the bowels as around the head and heart, / Copulation is no more rank to me than death is" (48, 53). Following William James, we might conceive of this line of thinking as arguing for a shift from the vertical viewpoint of "absolute and eternal mind" toward the horizontal perspective of one lying "flat on [one's] belly in the middle of experience, in the very thick of its sand and gravel" (*Pluralistic Universe* 756). For James, such a shift refocuses our attention on "the world of concrete personal experiences," a world which is "multitudinous beyond imagination, tangled, muddy, painful and perplexed" and which contrasts sharply with the "simple, clean and noble" world of rationalist and idealist philosophy. "The contradictions of real life are absent," James says, from the world your philosophy professor introduces you to: "Its architecture is classic. Principles of reason trace its outlines, logical necessities cement its parts. Purity and dignity are what it most expresses. It is a kind of marble temple shining on a hill" (*Present Dilemma* 495). Within a mental architecture of refinement, purity, and abstraction, the rationalist takes refuge from a world that is "intolerably confused and gothic" (*Present Dilemma* 496). But it is this haunted, confused, and uncertain world that Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville as well as Charles Brockden Brown and the sensational novelist George Lippard plunge us into. Its architecture symbol could be the haunted house or the carnival's funhouse, places of intense and highly volatile feelings and strange or troubling sense impressions.

In these novels, knowing and cognition often take the form of a physical sensation or feeling, such as baby Pearl's recognition of her father's voice in *The Scarlet Letter*. Pearl's recognition is beyond the normal bounds of comprehension and interpretation. Pearl does not and cannot *know* that Arthur Dimmesdale is her father, but she somehow *senses* his identity. The image of her stealing "softly toward him, and taking his hand in the grasp of both her own, la[ying] her cheek against it," appeals to a desire for a form of understanding

that transcends or supersedes reason (169). Such intuition would indicate the possibility of meaning beyond that derived simply from either sense experience or rational process. Pearl's recognition of her father would seem to be based on spiritual or psychic intuition, attesting to the reality of forces beyond the calculus of reason.

Unlike the other romances, whether historical or sensational, the philosophical romance shows a striking willingness to stretch out or defer the action. In *Pym*, Poe induces claustrophobia in his readers by elongating each scene of Pym's suffering to an almost unbearable length. Similarly, Melville's "Benito Cereno" achieves a protracted suspense by deferring the revelation of the slaves' mutiny until the end of the main narrative. Anticipating a kindred effect in Henry James's fiction, Hawthorne's novel *The House of the Seven Gables* spends chapter after chapter in the emotionally and psychologically saturated description of the Pyncheon house, its inhabitants, and its grounds. This deferral of action suggests that these narratives are less interested in how the main characters act than in how they feel or what they perceive and think. The slower pace of these novels is often complemented by an inconclusive or open-ended conclusion. What Pym sees at the end of his narrative is never fully explained. What Dimmesdale exposes in the climax of *The Scarlet Letter* almost immediately becomes a subject of dispute among the witnesses. Miles Coverdale's confession of love for Priscilla in the very last line of *The Blithesdale Romance* does not so much end the tale as suggest a tale that could never begin because of the protagonist's radical inability to act. Stories such as "Benito Cereno" and "Bartleby, the Scrivener" reach endings fraught with significance of uncertain scope and direction. What do we finally learn from Cereno's depression and Babo's mute death ("Benito Cereno" 103)? Does the Wall Street lawyer's final ejaculation of "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity!" resolve any of the ambiguities surrounding the strange life and death of his clerk ("Bartleby" 34)? Even in *The Confidence-Man*, which drives to as final an ending as any nineteenth-century novel, Melville cannot resist cryptically reopening the drama in the last line: "Something further may follow of this Masquerade" (260). This statement does not indicate a forthcoming sequel (Melville would not write another novel for decades); instead, it suggests the impracticability of freezing this shifting and carnival-like society in any ending.

Edgar Allan Poe, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym *(1838)*

Edgar Allan Poe (1809–49) was born in Boston. His parents, both actors, died when Poe was quite young, and he was raised by John and Frances Allan of Richmond, Virginia. In 1826, he entered the University of Virginia but was

Tsalal (which means "to be shaded" or "dark" in Hebrew and "to be shade" in its ancient Ethiopian root), to the ashy whiteness of the tale's final climax. The color contrast of black and white stands for all of these dichotomies, indeed, for the very concept of antitheses itself. And the cosmic or metaphysical mystery central to Poe's tale is his speculation that one can arrive at one state by penetrating its opposite. Pym's notion that extreme drunkenness can produce (at least temporarily) sobriety or the way that Pym and Peters pass through a land of darkness to arrive at a place of complete whiteness mirror on a grander scale the theory held by Poe's documentary inspiration Jeremiah Reynolds that the Earth was hollow and could be entered through vortices at its poles. While the separate identity of opposed conceptions is never erased, throughout Poe's romance a mysterious or unseen connection, dimly felt but never fully comprehended, haunts the literal and figural polar opposites we rely on to take our bearings and navigate experience.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter *(1850)*

Hawthorne (1804–64) was born on the fourth of July in Salem, Massachusetts. One of his ancestors had been a judge in the Salem witchcraft trials, memorialized by Hawthorne as the cursed founder of the Pyncheon family in *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851). Hawthorne graduated from Bowdoin College where his classmates included Franklin Pierce and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. After college, Hawthorne turned to writing and studying colonial history. In March 1837, Hawthorne published *Twice-Told Tales*. The book received critical notice in England as well as the United States. In 1838, Hawthorne met his future wife, Sophia Peabody. He worked in the Boston Custom House in 1839 and 1840, and later became surveyor of revenue for the Port of Salem, a job he celebrates losing in "The Custom House" chapter of *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). From 1853 to 1857, he served as consul at Liverpool. In addition to *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne's novels include *The Blithesdale Romance* (1852), *The House of the Seven Gables*, and *The Marble Faun* (1860) (published in London under the title *Transformation*).

The Scarlet Letter begins in the middle of the novel's main action. Though her husband is absent and presumed dead, Hester Prynne has had a child, and she refuses to identify the father to the civil and religious authorities. As punishment, Hester is forced to wear a scarlet "A" and she must endure a public shaming in the town square. Her husband turns up in Salem calling himself Roger Chillingworth, and he obtains from Hester a promise not to reveal his identity. Chillingworth rightly, it turns out, suspects the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale to be Hester's lover and the father of little Pearl. Chillingworth obsessively and

covertly pursues Dimmesdale, who seems to wither away steadily as the secret of his transgression is maintained and as Chillingworth tends to him in the role of a physician. Late in the narrative, Hester proposes to Dimmesdale that they flee with Pearl to Europe, but this is not to be. At the climactic moment, Dimmesdale acknowledges to the community that he is Pearl's father. His confession seems to break the spell binding the three adults and the child in an increasingly torturous psychological standoff. Having found redemption in his confession, Dimmesdale dies in peace. Chillingworth is effectively finished off by Dimmesdale's death, and he too dies, leaving his estate to Hester and Pearl. Hester and Pearl remove to England where Pearl is raised and educated. Hester eventually returns to Salem where her charity and good works will radically transform the meanings associated with the "A" she wears by choice on return.

Like *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, Hawthorne's romance examines the coexistence of ostensibly opposed concepts, such as submission to authority and rebellion, tradition and innovation, religious orthodoxy and antinomianism. Clearly reflecting Hawthorne's abiding interest in history, these pairings can be grouped within a larger categorical opposition of continuity and change. Where Pym's adventures take him into a fantastic realm seemingly distant from any specific history, Hester Prynne's drama is intimately bound up with the puritan history of Hawthorne's forebears and it bears signs of the revolutionary ferment sweeping Europe and climaxing in 1848.[11] As Hester emerges from the prison and mounts the scaffold where she will be subjected to public censure, she passes a wild rose bush growing just outside the prison. This bush is said to grow on the spot where Anne Hutchinson (1591–1643) entered the prison, and its proximity suggests a kind of mystic connection between Anne and Hester. Tried and exiled for her nonconformist preaching, Hutchinson and her followers were labeled "antinomians" (against law) and, for many, represented the notion that individuals could derive and follow their own understanding of divine will rather than the orthodoxies of scripture and the religious authorities. Passing the rose bush and standing on the scaffold, Hester is pained by her public exposure but not submissive. Her "haughty smile" and "glance that would not be abashed" as well as the "gorgeous luxuriance" of the "A" she has embroidered signify continued defiance (123). By associating Hester with Anne Hutchinson, Hawthorne raises the stakes involved in his heroine's disobedience and defiance. Hester's act is considerably more serious than a mere sin or crime committed by one who subscribes to the social and legal norms of her community. Rather, both her "sin" and her unrepentant attitude are akin to a rejection of those norms. Hester's defiance raises one of the novel's central questions: can continuity in the form of social orthodoxies and

conventions coexist with dissent and resistance? Or must one side of the antithesis overwhelm the other? Both principles have positive and negative aspects. Continuity in the form of adhering to traditional conventions and norms produces order and affirms membership in the larger group, but it can also be stifling and tyrannical. Change may come with welcome innovations and progress, but it may also produce chaos and work to unravel the social fabric.

On the one hand, Hawthorne explicitly rejects stasis as an option. The repetitious and stagnant lives of the Custom-House officials are a perfect emblem of a society utterly patterned and controlled by long-standing customs (89). Some degree of change is necessary: "Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil. My children have had other birthplaces, and, so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth" (93). On the other hand, *The Scarlet Letter* does not endorse revolution. Hester's proposal to Dimmesdale that they flee to Europe, a complete rejection of the orthodox position condemning their affair, does not succeed. Instead, Dimmesdale confesses and dies, and Hester returns to wear the "A" to the end of her days thereby completing their penance. For human nature to flourish, it would seem that change and continuity must coexist. One cannot, in Hawthorne's view, simply erase the force of time-honored customs and start over, but one also should not abandon the attempt to revise tradition and alter the course of the present. Thus, Hester's wearing of the "A" signifies a degree of obedience and submission to tradition, but she also transforms its significance, turning it into a different kind of symbol, "in the lapse of the toilsome, thoughtful, and self-devoted years that made up Hester's life, the scarlet letter ceased to be a stigma which attracted the world's scorn and bitterness, and became a type of something to be sorrowed over, and looked upon with awe, yet with reverence too" (271).

For Hawthorne, symbols, such as Hester's "A," offer a perfect site for exploring the coincidence of continuity and change. Continuity of usage and meaning is required for the comprehension of symbols. For instance, we must have some consistent notion that a particular set of marks represents an alphabet to begin to read the "A" as something more than a decorative pattern, and our understanding of this particular use of the letter "A" requires some passing familiarity with past penal practices of marking or branding culprits with the letter of their crime. By itself, however, such continuity cannot compel either a static or a single interpretation of the symbol. The wild roses growing outside the prison, for instance, can be interpreted as a "token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to" those in custody, but these roses can also be seen as a sign of Anne Hutchison or of Hester's "wild" or outlaw passion for Dimmesdale,

a multiplicity of plausible associations militating against the reduction of the rose to any particular or final meaning (119). The very idea of an unchanging reading of a particular symbol becomes hard to imagine when one is faced with manifold plausible readings.

The inevitability of multiple readings of potent symbols is vividly illustrated by the crowd's diverse reactions to Dimmesdale's "confession" scene. At the critical moment, it seems as though Dimmesdale has torn open his shirt to reveal an "A" miraculously burned in his flesh, a double of the fabric "A" on Hester's breast. Curiously speaking of himself in the third person, as though the person speaking and the person sinning were not the same, Dimmesdale "bids" the crowd "look again at Hester's scarlet letter! He tells you, that, with all its mysterious horror, it is but the shadow of what he bears on his own breast, and that even this, his own red stigma, is no more than the type of what has seared his inmost heart!" (265). While this passage ostensibly insists on a platonic correspondence between the symbols, Hester's "A" and Dimmesdale's "A," as well as on an absolute correspondence between these symbols and the moral state they signify, the skeptical spectator (or reader) might well wonder whether, for all his talk of typological or allegorical equivalence, Dimmesdale has in fact adequately and concretely confessed his sin. Instead of making a full and detailed confession of his transgression, he has gestured to a symbol on his breast, but gestures and philosophical abstractions tend to be imprecise and ambiguous. And this instance is no exception.

While "most of the spectators" say they have seen a scarlet letter on the minister's breast, some deny there was any mark there (267–68). In addition, there is a wide variety of speculation about the meaning or cause of any such mark – some arguing that Chillingsworth has made it appear by means of "magic and poisonous drugs," some saying it has been caused by the "tooth of remorse" (268). Both of these lurid explanations involve supernatural forces, beyond the reckoning of Church leaders or nineteenth-century science. Members of the church hierarchy do not acknowledge Dimmesdale's "A." They shape their accounts of the event so as to protect the young minister's reputation and that of the Church as well. In their view, Dimmesdale has not confessed to any personal sin but has only made a generalized acknowledgment of the worthlessness of "man's own righteousness" in the eyes of God (268). Hawthorne may not be willing to let Dimmesdale and Hester "get away" with their adulterous affair, but there is a covert antinomian sympathy in his description of how the clergy's self-interest leads them to incorporate error in what will become the orthodox account of these events. Our knowledge that God's law is interpreted by humans opens it up to doubt, not necessarily doubt about the existence of God, but doubt about the reliability of human access to the divine intent behind the law.

In addition, the Church's official denial of the "A" burned in Dimmesdale's flesh suggests that the vivid image represents the specter of otherworldly or emotional forces inimical to the orthodoxy's rationalism.

Cruelty enters interpretation in the attempt to confine a human being to a particular symbolic significance, such as the equivalence drawn between the baby Pearl and the scarlet letter, reducing Pearl to being merely a sign of human weakness and depravity. Hawthorne gives many instances of the allegorizing mind's readiness to compress the complexity of a human being into a single overriding symbolic significance: the willingness of preachers and parents, for instance, to make Hester into "the type of shame" and "woman's frailty" (142). Hawthorne's novel also, however, illustrates the impracticability of confining any person or even any symbol forever to a single, limited meaning. Pearl is too wild and too changeable to signify anything consistently, and Hester's exemplary and selfless conduct is such "that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne" (202). Just as religious "lore" and practice shift over time, so does interpretation of symbols (187). The imaginative power of the scarlet letter to generate meaning and feelings proves to be distinct or severable from its origin as a brand of shame for the sin of adultery. Neither Pearl nor the "A" can be successfully reduced to a single meaning, and neither Pearl nor the "A" are static in their significance. Instead, Hawthorne's symbols seem to suggest that the interpretive project of finding or making meaning involves a considerable degree of volatility and variation.

Transformation of characters, as well as of interpretations or symbolic associations, is one of Hawthorne's major concerns in the novel. Borrowing from Coleridge's comments on Wordsworth, we might say that Hawthorne's romance "was intended for such readers only as had been accustomed to watch the flux and reflux of their inmost nature, to venture at times into the twilight realms of consciousness, and to feel a deep interest in modes of inmost being" (406–07). In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne describes such internal dynamics as a kind of torment – a writhing and convulsive process. When Chillingworth recognizes his wife on the scaffold, he briefly, almost unnoticeably, undergoes an Ovidian metamorphosis, not unlike those changes endured by Pym or Charles Brockden Brown's Edgar Huntly,

> A writhing horror twisted itself across his features, like a snake gliding swiftly over them, and making one little pause, with all its wreathed intervolutions in open sight. His face darkened with some powerful emotion, which, nevertheless, he so instantaneously controlled by an effort of his will, that, save at a single moment, its expression might have passed for calmness. (129)

The descriptive terms, "writhing," "twisted," and "intervolutions," signify a very active process through which Roger Chillingworth's outer features for a moment correspond to his inner torment.[12] In this moment of recognition, a terrible process of transformation has begun. After a time, Hester can read the physical signs of this mutation: "Hester . . . was startled to perceive what a change had come over his features, – how much uglier they were, – how his dark complexion seemed to have grown duskier, and his figure more misshapen, – since the days when she had familiarly known him" (166). His newly discovered and malign project of vengeance has distorted his features (in much the same fashion as Dimmesdale's conscience sears an "A" on to his breast). By describing how Chillingworth's scientific curiosity (his pursuit of medical science into the realms of "antique physic" and Indian cures) becomes a means of destruction (much as Aylmer's scientific obsession does in "The Birthmark"), Hawthorne aims to challenge a too sanguine faith in the separation of opposed terms such as matter and spirit or reason and madness (171–72). These oppositions prove to be thresholds over which beings pass as they are transformed.

Like Poe and Melville, Hawthorne is interested to explore what we might call ontological confusion, the exploration of whether antithetical ideas or states of being, such as love and hate, are really separated by firm and certain boundaries. Looking at the interdependent, intensely intimate, and passionate relation between Dimmesdale and his persecutor Chillingworth, Hawthorne speculates whether love and hate might not prove to be

> the same thing at bottom. Each, in its utmost development, supposes a high degree of intimacy and heart-knowledge; each renders one individual dependent for the food of his affections and spiritual life upon another; each leaves the passionate lover, or the no less passionate hater, forlorn and desolate by the withdrawal of his object. Philosophically considered, therefore, the two passions seem essentially the same, except that one happens to be seen in a celestial radiance, and the other in a dusky and lurid glow. In the spiritual world, the old physician and the minister – mutual victims as they have been – may, unawares, have found their earthly stock of hatred and antipathy transmuted into golden love. (269)

Denying any essential or "philosophical" difference between love and hate, Hawthorne seems to imagine the distinction as crucially depending on the perspective of the viewer, the position from which love is "*seen*" "in a celestial radiance" and hate is "*seen*" "in a dusky and lurid glow." Given their similitude, he considers it possible that one can morph into the other.

Metamorphosis or transformation, Hawthorne recognizes, such as the alchemy that Chillingworth has studied, represents a fundamental challenge to the categories and rules we use to organize existence. It cuts across supposed barriers dividing opposites and unravels notions of order. Pearl would seem to be the ultimate example in the novel of the conjunction of the metamorphic and the lawless. She is described as having a mercurial personality, constantly in flux, and she seems to be able in an almost witch-like fashion to invest material reality with her own metamorphic spirit:

> The spell of life went forth from her ever creative spirit, and communicated itself to a thousand objects, as a torch kindles a flame wherever it may be applied. The unlikeliest materials, a stick, a bunch of rags, a flower, were the puppets of Pearl's witchcraft, and, without undergoing any outward change, became spiritually adapted to whatever drama occupied the stage of her inner world . . . The pine-trees, aged, black, and solemn, and flinging groans and other melancholy utterances on the breeze, needed little transformation to figure as Puritan elders; the ugliest weeds of the garden were their children, whom Pearl smote down and uprooted, most unmercifully. (152–53)

As Chillingworth aptly observes, Pearl has no "reverence for authority, no regard for human ordinances or opinions, right or wrong" (182). But Pearl's mutability and her lawlessness cannot be seen as healthy. Under a kind of spell, she seems hardly "human," at times, even to her mother (151). Pearl's quicksilver personality and wildness is directly related to the secret of her paternity, and once Dimmesdale acknowledges her as his own, the spell is broken. This does not mean an end to Pearl's transformation. Indeed, she is transformed into a human child by Dimmesdale's gesture, and afterward she is able to be educated and socialized. But transformation after this disclosure takes on a different tone, it becomes more moderate, predictable, and ostensibly healthy, unlike her earlier uncanny and freakish mutations.

The unhealthy or problematic form of transformation would seem to involve the denial of the social context which in large part defines and labels the characters and attributes certain identities and meanings to them. When Hester and Dimmesdale agree in the forest to flee Salem, in effect rejecting their community's categories, labels, and rules, they become unrecognizable in certain critical ways. Pearl will not recognize Hester without the "A" and won't approach Dimmesdale without an acknowledgment of his relation to her mother. To resist the definitions imposed on one by one's community would seem in Hawthorne's novel to put the very fact of one's identity at risk (234–37). When Dimmesdale reenters Salem after this forest meeting, his shock at the apparent

"mutability" of familiar individuals and places he sees seems to be a clear projection of his own mutability (239–40). He has come back from the forest a changed man. But this change is pathological and disorienting. He has trouble distinguishing dream from reality. The positive form of transformation, embodied in Hester's return to Salem, requires that one accept society's judgment before one can transcend it.

The Scarlet Letter does not, like *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, leave us with a mysterious connection between opposed concepts; rather, Hawthorne's narrative implicitly argues for a salutary if difficult balance between forces pulling in opposite directions. Tradition, history, established religion, and membership in a cohesive community pull in the direction of conformity, continuity, and orthodoxy. Individual inspiration and the free play of the imagination pull in the direction of rebellion, change, and heterodoxy. Refusing to endorse one or the other side of this opposition to the exclusion of the other, Hawthorne's novel suggests that we do and must live in the paradox that both sides of this dichotomy are necessary to our well-being and that we are constantly in a process of transformation as a result. Like Emerson, Hawthorne understands that our desire for "permanence" is accompanied by a different need for "circulation" and "change" (Emerson "Experience" 1196). Hawthorne does not adjudicate between these competing pressures but rather conceives of our endurance of the conflict as revelatory of the hybrid nature of truth and value – it must and always contains something of continuity and something of innovation or change.

Herman Melville, Moby-Dick; Or, The Whale *(1851)*

Herman Melville was born in 1819 in New York City, a descendant of English and Dutch families. His father, a man of grand tastes and less than grand economic resources, eventually was ruined and died in the midst of his family's financial crisis in 1832. This reversal of fortunes effectively ended young Herman's relatively comfortable middle-class existence as well as his formal education. These early crises of financial instability and his father's death clearly impressed Melville with a sense of the transitory and insecure nature of existence. When he muses in *Pierre* (1852) that "In our cities, families rise and burst like bubbles in a vat," Melville probably had his own family in mind (13). Like his friend Hawthorne, Melville was keenly aware of the turbulent and fraught nature of life in nineteenth-century America. "In this republican country," as Hawthorne puts it in *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), "amid the fluctuating waves of our social life, somebody is always at the drowning point" (35). After a succession of different jobs, he served as a cabin boy on a voyage to

Liverpool, a trip he memorialized in *Redburn* (1849). A few years later, he sailed on the whaler *Acushnet*, an experience he would draw from in writing *Moby-Dick*. His experience as a seaman included jumping ship in the Marquesas and Polynesian Islands, adventures he fictionalized in *Typee* (1846), *Mardi* (1849), and *Omoo* (1847). *White-Jacket* (1850) was inspired in part by his naval experience on the frigate *United States*. Melville's literary career has its own dramatic ebb and flow. Initially popular, his appeal began to ebb after *Moby-Dick* (1851). His deeply introspective and autobiographical novel *Pierre* (1852) did not help to rekindle popular enthusiasm for his fiction. After his satiric portrait of a carnivalesque American society, *The Confidence-Man* (1857), he abandoned fiction for years. His last piece of sustained prose fiction, *Billy Budd, Sailor*, an almost existential drama about the impossibility of justice, was written much later and published posthumously in 1924.

Despite its range of reference, complex symbolism, and its sheer length (its "blubber" as Melville termed it), the storyline of *Moby-Dick* can be briefly and simply recounted. Ishmael, a young seaman with no whaling experience, ships on the whaler, the *Pequod*, under the command of Captain Ahab. Ahab, it turns out, is not particularly concerned with acquiring whale oil, the voyage's economic aim; instead, he is obsessed with the destruction of Moby-Dick, a sperm whale which, in a previous encounter, sheared off the lower half of one of Ahab's legs. Eventually the men of the *Pequod* and the great white whale clash. The ship and her boats are destroyed, and Ishmael alone survives. Bound by a whaling line to the leviathan, Ahab is dragged below to a watery death.

This relatively straightforward narrative line is layered with multiple allusions, diverted into sundry digressions and meditations, and crowded with densely symbolic descriptions. In terms of its allusions, Melville's whale story can seem a veritable compendium of Western culture, calling to mind Perseus, Prometheus, Odysseus, Job, Jonah, Hamlet, Lear, Goethe's Faust, Byron's Childe Harold, Montaigne's cannibals, Coleridge's ancient mariner, and Turner's seascapes. Melville's tale also draws on scientific and documentary sources such as J. N. Reynolds's magazine article on Mocha-Dick:

> an old bull whale, of prodigious size and strength. From the effect of age, or more probably from a freak of nature, as exhibited in the case of the Ethiopian Albino, a singular consequence had resulted – *he was white as wool!* . . . Numerous boats are known to have been shattered by his immense flukes, or ground to pieces in the crush of his powerful jaws; and, on one occasion, it is said that he came off victorious from a conflict with the crews of three English whalers, striking fiercely at the last of the retreating boats, at the moment it was rising from the water,

> in its hoist up to the ship's davits. It must not be supposed, howbeit, that through all this desperate warfare, our leviathan passed scathless. A back serried with irons, and from fifty to a hundred yards of line trailing in his wake, sufficiently attested, that though unconquered, he had not proved invulnerable. (379)

Reynolds's description, based on first-hand accounts, conjures the image of a powerful beast that is intelligent, angry, and vengeful. Mocha-Dick is relatively simple, a manifestation of the destructive power of nature, bearing little if any metaphysical significance. In *Moby-Dick*, the white whale is beautiful as well as fierce, mysterious as well as recognizable, and the whaling enterprise is by turns poetic and commercial, playful and deadly serious, eventually coalescing into an obsessive quest to destroy a manifestation of nature that seems to threaten human conceptions of meaning and value.

Moby-Dick is also an education tale. With the novice whaler, Ishmael, as our guide, we follow and learn from his initiation into the world of whaling with its strange and striking customs and polyglot citizens. We are introduced to this world of elemental forces, powerful creatures, and intrepid mariners through a range of perspectives, including the scientific approach of the cetological chapters, which aim at an analysis and classification of the leviathan; the commercial viewpoint of Peleg and Bildad, the *Pequod*'s owners; Ishmael's romantic desire to experience a transcendent truth in the wild; and Ahab's apocalyptic vision of the whale as a sign of the malign or empty nature of existence. A vast and varied amalgam of materials, Melville's novel shifts in voice from Ishmael's first-person narration to that of a third-person omniscient narrator (after the first hundred pages or so, the narrator starts telling us things Ishmael could not have witnessed, such as the behavior and dialogue of the officers at meals); it shifts in tone from the quiet, disinterested tone of a natural historian to the blood and thunder rants of Ahab (in anger, Ahab doesn't just threaten to kill a man, he threatens to "clear the world of [him]," suggesting a kind of cosmic erasure) (133). The novel's main action is repeatedly interrupted by meditations and digressions. In its fragmentary and collage-like collection of disparate materials – literary, mythic, religious, scientific, and historical – *Moby-Dick* has a distinctly proto-modernist aspect, resembling James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* far more than it does a contemporary text such as Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* (1850).

Moby-Dick is also unconventional in its theme, pushing in an agnostic direction more forcefully than any other American novel of its era. Melville's novel pursues the meaning of existence with an epic intensity, traversing its wide variety of perspectives in search of signs of order and divine sanction only to arrive at uncertainty and doubt. Floating on a coffin, Ishmael, like Job, survives

to tell the tale of the *Pequod*'s destruction, but what has he learned? What have we learned? What is the meaning of the tale? The various human ventures – romantic, biblical, scientific, commercial – represented by the *Pequod* and her crew have disappeared utterly. Every atom of the ship, every crew member, with the exception of Ishmael and Queequeg's coffin, has disappeared under "the great shroud of the sea" which rolls "on as it rolled five thousand years ago" (535). In the face of such utter extinction, one wonders what meaning there can be save the raw fact of the transitory nature of existence itself – for a time these people and this ship had being, they existed. For a sense of how strikingly ambiguous Melville's ending is for its time, one has only to turn to the end of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Stowe's enormously popular novel leaves no doubt about the moral and religious import of its ending. Slavery is wrong, condemned by God's if not man's law. A Christ-like martyr, Uncle Tom is bound for heavenly glory, and the wicked slave holder, Simon Legree, is doomed to eternal perdition. What does not reach a satisfying resolution in earthly life will in the next, and justice – the protection of the weak, punishment of the cruel and selfish, and reward for the faithful and generous – prevails in heaven if not on Earth. By contrast, Ishmael's survival and the "universe" that permits it would seem "a vast practical joke" (226). Why is he spared? Why don't the sharks and sea-hawks attack? Why would providence spare him to tell this tale?

The answer to these questions may be found in the fact that we feel compelled to ask them. While *Moby-Dick* does not arrive at a conclusive reading of reality or ascribe a particular meaning to human existence, Melville's novel leaves little doubt that human beings are, by their nature, meaning seekers and meaning creators, compelled to "throw out questions and answers," to borrow a phrase from Whitman (164). In Chapter 99, "The Doubloon," Melville dramatizes the human impulse to interpret reality in the crew's multiple readings of the gold coin Ahab has nailed to the mainmast as a reward for the man who sights Moby-Dick. Ahab sees himself and his fate in it. Starbuck reads it as symbolizing the Trinity and a providential vision of life and death. Stubb, the happy pagan, finds astrological signs indicating a "jolly" ending. And Flask sees a "round thing made of gold" worth so many cigars (412). Largely determined by each interpreter's personality and particular viewpoint, the multiplicity of these strikingly different interpretations seems to cut against the possibility of a definitive reading; otherwise, the readings would agree in some particulars. Melville's acknowledgment of the inevitable multiplicity of interpretation echoes Montaigne's skeptical view of people "who think they can diminish and stop our disputes by recalling us to the express words of the Bible. For our mind finds the field no less spacious in registering the meaning of others than

in presenting its own" ("Of Experience" 813). If we view the varied interpretations of the doubloon as symbolizing different faiths, then the influence of personal predisposition and interest on such beliefs would seem to make the project of faith doubtful; yet, Melville insists, such things must be interpreted: "some certain significance lurks in all things, else all things are little worth, and the round world itself but an empty cipher" (409). To avoid the unbearable option of treating the world as an empty cipher, we read it. Pip's observation of the many interpreters of the doubloon – "I look, you look, he looks; we look, ye look, they look" – suggests how irresistible this process of interpretation is even as it refuses to single out one of the interpretations as better than the others (an equality driven home by Pip's comparison of the lookers to bats) (413). By suggesting that this urge to interpret reality is irresistible if not accurate in any final or absolute sense, Melville focuses our attention on an intersection and potential conflict between what we know and our built-in impulse to assign meaning or value to what we know.

In the chapter entitled "The Whiteness of the Whale," Melville models this tension, by showing how a particular bit of knowledge, a fact, inspires a veritable flood of associated meanings and values. On the simplest level, whiteness is merely one of Moby-Dick's known traits, a genetic accident that can be used to identify him, but, as Melville's chapter suggests, it is a fact that inevitably inspires interpretation. The whale's unusual whiteness must also be seen as an emblem of the whale's nature and a sign of some ultimate theme symbolized by the whale. In the span of a few pages, like one of Whitman's catalogues, whiteness is associated with, among other things, beauty, purity, justice, ancient civilizations, a variety of religious symbols as well as the albatross of Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," lamb's wool, murder, the crest of breakers, and snow. It is both all-color *and* the utter absence of color, the mystic sign of God's love *and* the "all-color of atheism" (196). Like Emerson, Melville would seem to conceive of this ample and metamorphic stream of associations as evidence that the defining "quality of the imagination is to flow, and not to freeze" (Emerson "The Poet" 1188). It also paradoxically evidences both the idealist's quest to push through the surfaces of things to some ultimate knowledge of their essential nature *and* the impossibility of fixing any of these associations to particular essential and unchanging truths. The fact that we can compellingly associate whiteness both with the presence and the absence of God tends to empty it of any essential connection to a deeper, more permanent truth – the truth of whiteness. Rather than being something we can penetrate so as to get at its absolute or ideal meaning, whiteness becomes the catalyst for a stream of responsive associations, which, in its fluid and "multiform" energy, parallels the metamorphic energy of nature.

FOUR

The sentimental novel

What is the sentimental novel?

People discussing the sentimental novel often begin by observing the genre's remarkable commercial success. Sentimental novels, such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) by Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Wide, Wide World* (1850) by Susan Warner, and *The Lamplighter* (1854) by Maria Cummins were best-sellers when the mass market for novels was a relatively new phenomenon (Davidson 16–37, Gilmore 46–54). Nathaniel Hawthorne famously complained, "What is the mystery of these innumerable editions of the Lamplighter, and other books neither better nor worse? – worse they could not be, and better they need not be, when they sell by the 100,000" (Fern xxxiv). More recently, critics have sharply differed on the significance of the genre's popularity – some seeing it as a sign of the sentimental novel's expressive power and others as evidence of the culture's vapidity (e.g., Tompkins 124, Douglas 114).[1] These discussions often overlook a revealing point of connection between the sensational romance and the sentimental novel. Before the extraordinary sales of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (estimated at 5 million before the Civil War), the biggest seller in American fiction had been George Lippard's *The Quaker City* (1845) (Gilmore 54). A marketing expert trying to understand the comparable popularity of such ostensibly different productions would be quick to note that they share an emphasis on powerful emotion. Both genres seek to produce in the reader

an overwhelming emotional reaction, and both genres are willing to shock the reader in order to generate the desired intensity of feeling. A kitten is boiled in Maria Cummins's *The Lamplighter. Uncle Tom's Cabin* includes scenes of gruesome brutality and torture. And the eponymous heroine of Fanny Fern's *Ruth Hall* (1855) confronts sexual harassment and the prospect of prostitution. However, while the production of powerful emotion would seem to be an end in itself in a novel such as *The Quaker City*, in sentimental fiction it has an unmistakable moral and religious dimension.

Perhaps more than any other single factor, sentimental novels are defined by their depiction of the conversion moment, the moment when a flood of emotion transforms the individual, revealing moral truths and human connections previously ignored by or invisible to the convert. In the sentimental novel, characters (and readers) are swept away by a powerful current of feeling, a feeling intuitively known to be heaven sent. This emotional rush reveals the existence of a better, more caring self, and offers direct access to the values that give life meaning. Trueman Flint, the heroic lamplighter in Cummins's novel who adopts the benighted orphan Gerty, "never" hears her sad story "without crying" (239). His tears are an indisputable sign of his good character and an illustration of the sympathetic feeling that ought to direct individuals and societies. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, when Topsy, an orphan slave, expresses her sense that she is so bad as to be unlovable, little Eva spontaneously bursts out, "O, Topsy, poor child *I* love you!" and lays "her little thin, white hand on Topsy's shoulder" (245). The effect on Topsy (and, Stowe hopes, on her readers) is immediate:

> The round, keen eyes of the black child were overcast with tears; – large, bright drops rolled heavily down, one by one, and fell on the little white hand. Yes, in that moment, a ray of real belief, a ray of heavenly love, had penetrated the darkness of her heathen soul! She laid her head down between her knees, and wept and sobbed, – while the beautiful child, bending over her, looked like the picture of some bright angel stooping to reclaim a sinner. (245)

This scene, like many others in sentimental fiction, recalls biblical associations of children and heaven (Matt. 18 and 19). In her redemptive capacity, the child is linked to less worldly ways of perceiving the world, a readier expression and reception of love, and a native understanding of the moral significance of sympathy. The apparently untutored and immediate reaction of the tenderhearted child seems like a sign of the inherent goodness of the human heart. Apparently intractable or impossibly complex problems become suddenly clear and simple when illuminated by the child's intuitive compassion.

In their portrayal of an innate capacity for fellow feeling, sentimental novelists were influenced by the moral sense psychology elaborated by the Earl of Shaftesbury, Joseph Butler, Frances Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith. For these eighteenth-century philosophers, John Locke's concept of right reason – an empirical calculus of sense impressions and inductive reasoning – was incomplete. It left out the emotional and aesthetic aspects of human nature. Human beings were inherently capable of deriving exquisite happiness and pleasure from sympathy and self-sacrifice. For Shaftesbury, Locke's dismissal of innate moral ideas was tantamount to a rejection of virtue. Shaftesbury contended, instead, that the heart is the seat of an innate moral sense that determines right from wrong as the visual sense determines beauty from ugliness. Adam Smith and David Hume extended the moral sense concept by characterizing sympathy as an activity of the imagination, which enables us to go beyond our own person and understand another's suffering. For Thomas Jefferson, the possession of a sympathetic moral sense defined humankind. Following Hutcheson, Hume, and Smith, Jefferson found that "nature hath implanted in our breasts a love of others, a sense of duty to them, a moral instinct, in short, which prompts us irresistibly to feel and to succor their distresses" (Crane *Race* 21–23).

Sentimental fiction similarly posits the existence of the moral sense but conceives of it in overtly religious terms, often using the figure of the angelic, otherworldly child to exemplify it and to illustrate its power to relieve human suffering. In his temperance novel, *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* (1854), T. S. Arthur measures the depths of Joe Morgan's alcoholism by comparing his condition with the innocence of his daughter, Mary (23–24). Particularly touching is Arthur's description of Mary calling, "Father," into the darkened bar where Joe has drunk himself into a stupor. Mary's innocence and her unconditional love for Joe remind the reader of Christ and his heavenly Father whose love does not abate despite our failings. The contrast between Mary's purity and Joe's debased condition aims also at arousing the reader's indignant condemnation of the tavern as a source of human degradation and sorrow (33). Like Stowe's little Eva, Mary is doomed to a short life, but she is still able to redeem her father through love and heavenly insight before she dies. The disfigurements wrought upon her father's face by drink do not prevent Mary's better form of perception from seeing "only the beloved countenance of her parent" (62). Knowing full well that she has been fatally injured in the bar, Mary obtains her father's promise not to return to the tavern until she is better. Joe's promise becomes in effect a temperance pledge (62–64, 71).

While their affective punch is apparently direct and simple, these scenes do a number of things simultaneously. First and foremost, they offer straightforward

representations of intuitive compassion.[2] When Topsy bluntly declares that no one does or can love her, Eva immediately responds with affection and kindness, throwing Topsy an emotional lifeline. Similarly, undeterred by the darkness of the tavern and the debased condition of her father, Mary's love effectively penetrates Joe's alcoholism. But these aren't just rescue scenes in which a helpless victim is protected, comforted, or healed. These are conversion scenes. In Arthur's and Stowe's novels, high emotion drives toward a once-and-for-all reversal of life patterns and behaviors, and the depictions of these radical transformations are designed to produce an echo-like change in the reader who is similarly moved by the scene. Eva's loving reaction sparks a seismic shift in Topsy's life, winning the little girl's soul for Christ. Having recognized Topsy's humanity by her love, Eva can enjoin Topsy to do better, to know right from wrong, and to act accordingly. In Stowe's calculus of sentiment and religious faith, love is the prerequisite for moral responsibility. Without love, Topsy's humanity is denied, and, without the recognition of Topsy's humanity, moral responsibility does not make sense. From this moment forward, Topsy is a changed child, not perfect, but always on an upward course, evolving into a better state of mind and behavior. Miss Ophelia, who has witnessed Eva's ministration to Topsy's parched soul, is vicariously moved to become a loving surrogate parent. Joe Morgan's life is similarly redeemed by his dying daughter's love, which sustains him as he suffers the pains of withdrawal and delirium tremens (76–79). Mary's love becomes the touchstone for his life in sobriety. Change is thus central to the sentimental narrative. The emotional power of such scenes is designed to represent and engender a complete personal transformation. As we shall see, these moments of sympathetic catharsis, or purifying emotional transport, can also be connected to or thought of as inspiring social and political renewal.

Conversion, of course, is a religious concept, and sentimental fiction is marked by its framing of powerful sympathetic feelings in expressly Christian terms. Eva, "The Little Evangelist" of Stowe's novel, touches Topsy and draws her near, just as Christ reached out to the children errantly held back by his disciples (Matt. 19:14–15). Compassionate feelings are repeatedly identified with Christian inspiration in this fiction. In Cummins's *The Lamplighter*, Trueman Flint describes compassion as the surest guide to religious duty (229). In Frank Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends* (1857), sympathy inspires a benign owner to free his slave, George Winston. George's repeated response "God bless you!" signals the role of religious inspiration on the issue of slavery – real Christianity which is intrinsically sympathetic pulls in an abolitionist direction (13). The emotional impulse to aid those in need, such as the orphaned Ellen Montgomery in Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*, is something akin to

a message from God – divine instruction as to how to act toward others. Part of Ellen's role in advancing the religious themes of Warner's novel is to make divine will seem palpable in the sympathy that various characters, such as Mr. Van Brunt, feel for Ellen (87, 91–94, 412–13). Indeed, sentiment is so clearly and ubiquitously tied to religion in this fiction that one might well describe these novels as Christian fiction which merely features sentiment as a means of religious insight. However, although apt in many respects, such a characterization would obscure this fiction's emphasis on emotion as a nonsectarian vehicle of moral change.

Written from a wide variety of Christian (Protestant) perspectives, sentimental fiction generally stresses positive feeling before religious form. These novels are replete with characters who do not practice any orthodox liturgy but who are nonetheless profoundly moral and devout. Good-hearted characters, such as Trueman Flint and Uncle Tom, do not need to go to church to know right from wrong or to love and bear witness to God. Sympathy and other positive emotions precede and are of far greater import than the mere observation of religious forms. Gerty Flint doesn't need catechism to pray: her inchoate and untutored longing "for God and virtue" is "a prayer" (Cummins 245). Such observations do not erase the substantive denominational differences between these writers but rather point to a commonality: a shared accentuation of the role of sympathy and kindly affective response in directing one to a higher truth and moral obligation. Even Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*, one of the more orthodox and overtly pious of these novels, puts the substance of sympathy and proper feeling before the doctrine of any particular creed. Warner's scenes of religious instruction take place in homes, on walks, and on the deck of a passenger boat, and her religious mentors are lay people. In its depictions of the spontaneous and powerful surge of redemptive emotion ending all questioning and argument, replacing doubt with blessed certainty, sentimental fiction carries on the evangelical tradition of the Great Awakening described by Alan Heimert.

Looking at religious thought in the period leading to the Revolution, Heimert maps a split between an emphasis on rationality (associated with the educated and upper classes, High Church liturgy, and deism) and a stress on emotional fervor (associated with the lower parts of the social order, Low Church liturgy, evangelicalism, and an ardent belief in scripture). He sees this division as exerting a continuing influence in the nineteenth century (Heimert 3, 5–6). Of course, such dichotomies often do not remain pure or stable. Over time, the supposed opposites may tend to draw nearer to each other and mix or merge. For instance, Fanny Fern's *Ruth Hall* and Maria Cummins's *The Lamplighter* encompass both a rational, pragmatic program of incremental

self-improvement (think here of Benjamin Franklin's rationalist approach to "moral perfection") and a belief in the power of emotions to reveal moral truths (think here of Jonathan Edwards's belief that the "affections" hold the key to religious truth) (Franklin 63–72, Edwards 10–15). From the evangelical tradition, the sentimental novel inherits a compelling argument for following one's own intuitive and emotional registration of divine inspiration, a principle which, as Heimert observes, has revolutionary potential. The individual's faith in his or her access to divine will through emotion provides a sense of authority independent from time-honored traditions and leads, in certain cases, to a lack of respect for the established social order. While much of *The Wide, Wide World* focuses on Ellen Montgomery's need to learn submission to God's will, Warner shows how one's passions can readily and appropriately fire up into revolutionary zeal, as when Ellen tells her domineering Scottish uncle, "And if I had been in the American army I would have fought *you* with all my heart" (506). Inspiration of this emotionally charged type is not as cautious as the rationalist approach, which continues to seek evidence and maintains a degree of uncertainty, potentially maiming its ability to produce radical or innovative action.

Of course, as noted by Heimert and others, evangelical endorsements of high emotion and rebirth have provoked considerable opposition and skepticism. For contemporaries fearing radical change, the Calvinist ministry seemed "fond to a madness" of "popular forms of government" (Heimert 12). Novelists, from Henry Fielding to Mark Twain, mocked what they saw as the simplistic moral universe of the sentimental writer. In our own era, many have observed how the emphasis on feeling rather than thought can be used by skilled demagogues to advance a fascist political agenda. And the average person may well doubt whether the apparent feelings of certainty generated by strong emotion always lead to the best ethical conclusions. Working through difficult or complex ethical problems frequently entails a considerable degree of uncertainty and hesitancy, especially when the stakes are high, and often the best solution is not known beforehand but emerges from the contest between opposed points of view.

Another line of criticism contends that the emotional fervor touted by the sentimental writers is too facile, too easily put on and off like an article of clothing. For instance, Wendell Phillips, an ardent abolitionist, warned that the emotion aroused by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* may well prove insufficient to motivate real anti-slavery action: "There is many a man who weeps over Uncle Tom and swears by the [proslavery New York] Herald" (Gossett 168). What happens when the moment of passion subsides, when the tide of sympathetic feeling ebbs? Have one's behavior and attitudes been actually and

meaningfully changed? When not caught in the grip of overwhelming emotion, does a different, less intense kind of feeling take over? Do these more moderate feelings guide us? Or are we sent in search of ways to rekindle the moment of evangelical fervor over and over again? How does sentiment help us deal with less dramatic challenges, such as everyday bad behavior or the banal confusions that come up in life? And how do we address cases where strong emotions seem to pull in opposing directions or in a direction of uncertain or questionable morality (such as the desire for vengeance)?

For our purposes, a useful way of categorizing such criticisms and questions is to see them as posing the challenge of a certain form of realism to the idealism underpinning sentimental fiction. As we shall see in the next chapter, this philosophical contrast helps to illuminate some of the defining features of realist fiction. Generally speaking, the philosophical realist works empirically to derive knowledge from the rational analysis of sense impressions, taking an exploratory or inductive rather than paradigmatic or deductive approach to experience and remaining open to uncertainty rather than claiming to arrive at any final or unchanging conclusions. In its literary form, realism tends to eschew allegory, which usually depends on some version of the Platonic or idealist two-story universe, in which the particulars of the lower story more or less clearly emblematize the universals of the upper story. Not believing in the two-story schema or lacking confidence in being able to ascertain the ideals of the second story, realists turn to the particulars of experience to find meaning in a process much too uncertain and muddled for allegory's purposes. Idealism, by contrast, conceives of experience as a readable revelation of absolute values and God's plan (in its religious versions). Influenced by Plato's conception that the particulars of the tangible world are imperfect copies of more perfect ideals (e.g., all the tables in the world are imperfect representations of the ultimate heavenly table), the idealist regards ideas of truth and right, goodness and beauty, not only as aspirations but as knowable ideals which are imperfectly shadowed forth in everyday experience.

Sentimental fiction applies emotion to this philosophical orientation, portraying the sympathetic heart as the best means of access to the moral and philosophical ideals dimly or partially represented in the particulars of experience. As Jane Tompkins reminds us, when viewed from the perspective of those sharing this faith, it is "realistic" to believe in one's emotional intuition (127). Once awakened, the feeling hearts of even such apparently depraved characters as Sambo and Quimbo, the slaves Simon Legree uses to torture Uncle Tom, can penetrate the ephemera of appearances and glimpse divine truth. For Stowe and other sentimental writers, fellow feeling engenders a superior and more accurate view of what matters in everyday life. When thinking about this genre's

claim to reveal the most important truths of human experience, we should keep in mind the fact that sentimental fiction often moves back and forth between fictional invention and biographical or autobiographical reportage. Fanny Fern's *Ruth Hall*, for instance, draws extensively on its author's life story. And as Ann duCille, Cindy Weinstein, and others have pointed out, the sentimental novel is often best read as part of a dialogue with documentary slave narratives – each borrows from the other and both claim that the emotions can reveal important and indubitable moral truths, such as the injustice of slavery. Perhaps because of their authors' overriding faith in the heart as a medium of moral certainty and the clear importance of the social issues being addressed, sentimental novels and slave narratives often display an insouciant disregard for the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction.

The idealism of sentimental fiction, its belief in absolute and fixed values, is reflected in the unambiguous nature of its characters – their relative transparency and typicality. In *The Wide, Wide World*, Ellen Montgomery's emotional and moral survival and growth depend on her ability to see people clearly for what they are. When little Ellen goes to a department store, she recognizes the malign character of a sales clerk, Mr. Saunders, straight away; it is plain in his "tone and manner," "slovenly exterior," and "disagreeable" eyes (46). And when she is rescued from Saunders's rudeness by an older gentleman, Ellen can intuitively rely on his "kind tone of voice" and friendly manner as reliable proof of his good character (48). The appearances and manners of the two characters stand in a perfect and dependable relation to their moral characters (318). Similarly, in Frank Webb's novel *The Garies and Their Friends* (1857), Mr. Walter's good character is as manifest in his noble physiognomy as Mr. Stevens's corrupt nature is manifest in his "cunning-looking eyes," and his "cadaverous skin," and his twitching, "thin compressed lips" (124). Webb takes pains in his story of racial violence in antebellum Philadelphia to deny that racial difference can be read as a sign of moral character, but his novel is nonetheless replete with appearances transparently signifying moral character. Indeed, this transparency of moral character is essential to the project of conversion. As Alice Humphrey informs Ellen, "Christians are the only Bible some people ever read; and it is true; all they know of religion is what they get from the lives of its professors; and oh! were the world but full of the right kind of example, the kingdom of darkness could not stand" (239). In *The Lamplighter*, when Gerty Flint eventually blossoms into a beautiful young lady, her beauty is tied to her transparency, her "tell-tale" face which "speak[s] the truth and proclaim[s] the sentiment within" (318). In each case the transparency and fixity of the character signified by legible outward signs lends support to an idealist conception of absolute and fixed values – the idealist predicate for the sentimental novel.

The idea of fixed and absolute values is alien to the realist world of Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), where all value, including the merit or worth of the main characters, seems to fluctuate in the competitive marketplace of desire. In the sentimental novel, real value, unlike market value, is something fixed and knowable. When in *The Wide, Wide World* Mrs. Montgomery, Ellen's mother, sells a beloved keepsake, a ring, for $80, we are told that this amount represents "about three-quarters of its *real value*" (emphasis added, 28–29). On one level, this remark may simply be intended to indicate that Mrs. Montgomery could have received more for her ring, but, in a novel full of religious idealism and moral absolutes, the term "real value" would seem to suggest something different from and transcending the fluctuations of the second-hand jewelry market. Mrs. Montgomery uses the $80 she obtains for her precious keepsake to buy Ellen a few nice things for her life with the stern and austere Aunt Fortune. The "real value" of this bit of commerce lies in its illustration of the unwavering and unconditional love between mother and daughter. In sentimental fiction, the changeable nature of the market reveals the falsity of worldly values in contrast to the priceless fixity of real value. In her sentimental proslavery novel, *The Planter's Northern Bride* (1854), Caroline Hentz paints free market capitalism as the antithesis of compassion and permanent values. Threatened by competition, illness, and disability as well as driven by materialistic appetites and envy, workers are constantly in motion trying to better their situation, moving from one position to the next. As a result, society is destabilized, and the quality of life (for both worker and employer), which depends in Hentz's view on a high degree of stability, is substantially eroded. For instance, the traveler cannot find a good meal in Northern hotels because the kitchen staff is always new, and the kitchen staff is made discontent and unhappy by the incessant movement and competition (259–60, 265). Not only does the marketplace not value human life, but it also makes a wholesome social order impossible.

The religious and emotional ideals of the sentimental novel are static and unchanging, and the typical sentimental novel's protagonist seeks a kind of spiritual and emotional calm by faithfully adhering to these moral absolutes. This is the quest of both Ellen Montgomery and Uncle Tom. For Ellen, this quest begins when her mother holds out the idea of Christ as a refuge "where changes do not come and they that are gathered there are parted no more forever" (41). The earthly version of this heavenly stasis is a kind of emotional and psychological contentment which is invulnerable to outrage, insult, and changes of circumstance. If she succeeds in submitting to God's will, Ellen will be "content" and "beautifully placid" (189, 190). The ultimate example of this ideal in American sentimental fiction has to be Uncle Tom's unwavering spiritual equilibrium during his torture by Simon Legree. Tom's final torment

comes when he won't reveal the hiding place of two female slaves. In a rage at Tom's refusal to speak, Legree vows to "count every drop of blood there is in you, and take 'em, one by one, till ye give up!" (358). Divinely inspired – his "brave, true heart was firm on the Eternal Rock" – Tom is calm, patient, and unmoved throughout this hellish abuse, even forgiving Legree in the midst of his rage and cruelty (357–59). And when young George Shelby comes to the rescue, too late, and is grief-stricken at the sight of Tom's mangled body, Tom responds, "Don't call me poor fellow!" "I have been poor fellow; but that's all past and gone, now. I'm right in the door, going into glory! O, Mas'r George! *Heaven has come*!" (362). For Stowe, Tom has found a peace that transcends rational understanding and cannot be threatened by changes of circumstance and condition, including death itself. He has attained the unmoved and unmoving spiritual center of a tumultuous and changeable world.

This brings us to one of the central paradoxes of the sentimental novel: it values permanence and stasis as signs of transcendent value, but it is full of movement and transformation. The ultimate goal may be union with unchanging and absolute ideals, but this aim is achieved by way of considerable motion, effort, ongoing development, learning, conversion, lapse, and renewed conversion. For some, conversion – the once-and-for-all spiritual awakening and choice – ironically has to be experienced several times before it seems to take and become permanent. While the sentimental novel's protagonists are inherently good, these characters frequently must go through some process of growth, steadily improving themselves and moving toward the full realization of their good natures. The plot of the sentimental novel is organized around the main character's reversal of spiritual fortunes (a reversal which often has material and social aspects as well).

In addition to the primacy of emotional transport stimulating conversion, sentimental fiction contains many signs of a Franklinian emphasis on prudence, thrift, hard work, and education. At the beginning of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, we watch as Tom practices reading his Bible, a skill that will stand him in good stead in his hardships and suffering. Ellen Montgomery's moral improvement moves in tandem with her educational progress. Under Alice Humphrey's patient instruction, Ellen is not only learning to be less rebellious and willful, she is also learning French, arithmetic, English grammar, and history. Similarly, in *The Lamplighter*, Gerty Flint becomes a better person as she becomes more polite, better educated, and an improved housekeeper. In Gerty's religious, educational, social, and economic progress, Cummins's novel, like many others in this genre, suggests a model for obtaining a respectable and secure middle-class life. And by imbuing the self-improving character with sympathy and a native religious feeling, the sentimental novel seeks to give the project of self-improvement a moral anchor and significance.

Theme and variations: a young woman's story

The narrative template or storyline most associated with the sentimental novel is that of a young woman struggling to make her way in life without the support of a traditional family. Nina Baym has described how novels such as Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*, Maria Cummins's *The Lamplighter*, and Fanny Fern's *Ruth Hall*

> all tell, with variations, a single tale. In essence, it is the story of a young girl who is deprived of the supports she had rightly or wrongly depended on to sustain her throughout life and is faced with the necessity of winning her own way in the world. This young girl is fittingly called a heroine because her role is precisely analogous to the unrecognized or undervalued youths of fairy tales who perform dazzling exploits and win a place for themselves in the land of happy endings. She also fits the pattern of comic hero, whose displacement indicates social corruption and whose triumph ensures the reconstruction of a beneficent social order. (11–12)

The key to these young women's triumphs lies in their achievement of self-mastery. Sometimes this enhanced self-control or self-discipline results in a considerable measure of independence (as in the cases of Gerty Flint or Ruth Hall); sometimes it results in a kind of idealized self-abnegation (as in the case of Ellen Montgomery). Targeted at young people, young women in particular, these novels are didactic, instructing readers in the development of good character and the reciprocal nature of emotional connections and moral obligations. The domestic ideal of finding and maintaining a caring and healthy home is central to the sentimental novel's drama.[3]

We can better identify and understand many of the key elements of sentimental fiction by looking closely at Warner's, Cummins's, and Fern's novels. The comparison of these writers' work also reveals a trend in the fiction (and the era) toward a greater emphasis on the independent judgment and moral and intellectual agency of women.

Susan Warner, The Wide, Wide World *(1850)*

Susan Warner's father, a lawyer, lost most of his money in the Panic of 1837. After this financial blow, Susan and her sister, Anna, took up writing. They authored religious novels, stories, and songs, such as "Jesus Bids Us Shine" and "Jesus Loves Me" (Warner 587–92). Susan's very popular novel, *The Wide, Wide World*, tells the tale of a little girl, Ellen Montgomery, who is severed from her family at a very young age and grows up without a mother (or a father, for that

matter, though his absence does not seem to be a loss of the same magnitude for Warner). At the beginning of the novel, Ellen's mother is very ill, and a doctor has prescribed travel abroad as a restorative (though he doubts she will recover). Because caring for Ellen would further tax her mother's weakened and frail condition, Ellen must remain behind, staying with her Aunt Fortune in the country. Not a particularly warm person, Aunt Fortune has little use for her niece's affectionate, spirited, and imaginative nature. During her time with Aunt Fortune, Ellen receives news that her mother and father have died. After Aunt Fortune marries the man who has been managing her farm, the kindly Mr. Van Brunt, Ellen goes to live with the Humphreys. Unfortunately, Alice Humphrey, the gentle young woman who has been caring for and teaching Ellen, dies, leaving Ellen to fill in as the woman of the house. Letters turn up unexpectedly indicating that Ellen's parents had wished that she would go to live with her aristocratic maternal relatives in Scotland (Ellen's grandmother and Uncle Lindsay). With much sadness, Ellen loses yet another home and leaves America to live with her newly discovered relations in Scotland. The Lindsays find Ellen altogether too "American" and too pious, and seek to reshape Ellen's character in a more fashionable direction. As far as her conscience permits, Ellen complies with good grace to the Lindsays' demands. As originally published, the novel concludes by indicating that Ellen's patient endurance in the Lindsay household will be rewarded by her return to America and a resumption of her life with the Humphreys. Warner (or her publisher) omitted a final chapter (perhaps because of the novel's great length) describing in some detail the luxurious and happy home that Ellen comes to as John Humphrey's bride (8).

The novel's storyline moves Ellen from the city to the country and from the United States to Scotland and back, and each of these moves poses a new challenge for Ellen. She is jarred by the contrasts between her mother's warmth and Aunt Fortune's practicality and between the Humphreys' piety and the Lindsays' worldly and aristocratic outlook. In each case, Ellen must not only adapt to new circumstances and customs, but she must also submit to new forms of discipline – the imperatives of each new set of surrogate parents. The psychological drama running through each of these moves is framed as a matter of discipline. Ellen has to learn to curb her impulses and desires and submit wholly to God's will (11). Particularly difficult for Ellen are those moments in which she must restrain her desire to object to insult, threat, or injustice. Warner gives little sanction to even the more justifiable forms of self-assertion. Ostensibly (though, as we shall see, not entirely), she wants to argue that only by self-sacrifice will Ellen achieve a good life. Ellen's task, her challenge, is to learn to keep her nature in check and to submit to sorrow and the dictates of a higher authority.

The Wide, Wide World opens with young Ellen musing as she looks out the window on a rainy city street, lost in rapt observation of passersby, horses, and carriages (9). The mind of the child, amorphous, open, and waiting to take shape and direction, is not unlike that of the reader who waits for the novel to give shape to his or her imaginings. Distinguished by her intellectual curiosity and desire to learn, Ellen is able to take aesthetic pleasure in a wide variety of experiences. When Ellen goes for a walk with Nancy Vawse, she expresses her curiosity about lichen, to Nancy's surprise ("Tain't worth looking at"), and, when Ellen stares with wonder at a flock of ducks passing overhead, Nancy is perplexed and contemptuous (120). Ellen's imaginative ability (e.g., her ready transformation of a little brook into Niagara Falls) connects her to both Warner and the reader (122). Magnifying and finding significance in small or common details, drawing comparisons, making allusions, and creating virtual worlds out of the experiences before her, Ellen's talents are kindred with those of both the writer and reader of novels.

Warner uses the pattern of repeated adoptions and rescues to advance both Ellen's self-mastery and her story. Beginning with Ellen's separation from her mother, the good parent or guardian is replaced by the unsympathetic surrogate, a substitution that intensifies Ellen's loss and threatens to plunge her into despair. From these low points, Ellen is repeatedly rescued by a more loving caretaker. Thus, Ellen's separation from her mother is made more painful by the insensitivity and thoughtlessness of the family with which she is forced to travel – Margaret Dunscombe and her mother. Fortunately, the gentle and kindly George Marshman appears, offering Ellen a respite from the uncaring Dunscombes. Later, Alice Humphrey similarly comforts Ellen and gives her a refuge from Aunt Fortune's harsh and unloving treatment. At the novel's conclusion, John Humphrey saves Ellen from the Lindsays by marrying her. This pattern of separation and adoption happens so frequently that Ellen wonders "how many times one may be adopted" (504). But, in each case, Ellen has something to learn. The appearance of the better, more loving guardian comes with a renewal of Ellen's spiritual progress. When George Marshman takes Ellen under his wing while they travel together up the Hudson River, he gives her important religious instruction as well as kindness. Similarly, Ellen not only finds emotional relief with Alice Humphrey but also a demanding spiritual and academic education. The overarching effect of these substitutions and their role in furthering Ellen's spiritual progress is to reinforce the reader's sense of a providential hand directing the details of Ellen's life, bringing her low only to raise her up.

Ellen does make progress, learning to set aside her own will. Submitting to earthly authority figures, whether they are sympathetic (Alice and John

Humphrey) or unsympathetic (Aunt Fortune and Uncle Lindsay), prepares Ellen to submit to divine authority. Increasingly as the narrative progresses, she finds peace in relinquishing her will. For instance, turning a decision over to John Humphrey leaves Ellen genuinely happy and content (471). Warner seems willing to give Ellen some latitude to differ from or disagree with other people, such as her Uncle Lindsay, but Ellen must differ in respectful silence and deferential modesty. Blunt or outspoken self-assertion is not permitted, and conquering her impulse to declare her own views and feelings proves to be the chief test of Ellen's spiritual progress. When she vehemently objects to her uncle's taking of a copy of *Pilgrim's Progress* given to her by John Humphrey, her conscience rebukes her, "you spoke improperly; he is justly displeased, and you must make an apology before there can be any peace" (553). Again and again, Ellen is brought into conflict with others as a result of her self-assertion. Each time the lesson is that she will have no peace until she yields, setting aside whatever imperatives her "passionate" nature has seized on, even if that means enduring patent injustices and unfair treatment.

In this terrestrial realm, such wrongs can only be directly addressed by men. Indeed, the good male characters have a considerably easier time of it in Warner's novel. They are entitled to assert their rights and openly rebuke wrongdoers, even with violence when necessary (e.g., the kind older gentleman in the department store appropriately reprimands the malign clerk, Saunders, for his mistreatment of Ellen, and, later, John Humphrey physically chastises the same "scoundrel"). The only direct action Ellen can properly undertake is entreaty and moral suasion. By attaining a feminine ideal of moral purity and selflessness, Ellen can acquire a kind of iconic power as a symbol of proper feeling, and, like the modest and deferential Alice Humphrey, Ellen will be able to inspire others to emulate her. As a follower of Christ, she has moral agency (e.g., the power and responsibility to help others in need), and, as a young woman and later as a wife, her household roles will include many domestic duties and responsibilities. But these forms of agency do not apparently come with a corollary set of civil rights and powers. The form of authority and agency Ellen possesses as a Christian woman would seem to lack any direct worldly application other than charity. No direct connection is drawn by Warner between the goodness of women, such as Ellen's mother and Alice Humphrey, and public opposition to social or political wrongs. Later in this chapter, we shall see how Harriet Beecher Stowe takes up this feminine ideal and modifies it so as to permit women some engagement with the world of law and politics.

Warner's portrait of Ellen's apparent success in accepting submission, however, is complicated by certain tensions and contradictions. Most importantly, Warner is not wholly immune to the appeal of Ellen's critical judgment, her

passionate objection to unjust or spiteful behavior, even her rebellious tendencies. For instance, Warner seems disposed to laugh at Ellen's cheeky, albeit silent, reaction to Aunt Fortune's declaration that "she thanked Heaven she could always make herself contented at home; which Ellen could not help thinking was a happiness for the rest of the world" (333). And Warner is willing to grant some sort of exception to Ellen's program of self-effacement for her ardent defense of the American Revolution: "if I had been in the American army I would have fought *you* with all my heart, uncle Lindsay" (506). Ellen's "extraordinary taste for freedom" and her refusal to cede control of her affections and conscience to her uncle, her belief that there are "some things he cannot command," represent a form of self-assertion apparently meeting with Warner's approval (510, 515). So, while Ellen's main task in self-improvement lies in returning good for ill (e.g., being kind to Margaret Dunscombe despite her spiteful behavior toward Ellen) and stifling her outrage over the oppressions of her Aunt Fortune or her Uncle Lindsay, at times and under certain circumstances, there appears to be some allowance for Ellen to express her desire for freedom and her intuitive sense of equity and justice. With Warner's novel as a guide, women would seem to be faced with the rather substantial challenge of combining the ethos of the American Revolution (e.g., the Founding Fathers' insistence on the individual's moral authority and insight) and the Christian goal of self-sacrifice.

The complexity and difficulty of the balance Ellen must achieve between self-denial and self-assertion would seem to derive, at least in part, from the religious conception of free will. Ellen must *choose* to negate her will, to stifle her objections. When Aunt Fortune unjustly strikes her, Ellen must consciously undertake to humble herself and set aside her outrage (165). In order to make the choice of self-denial, Ellen must have the same kind of moral agency, insight, and free will assumed by the Founding Fathers as authorizing the American Revolution. She must be competent to know right from wrong and have the ability to act on that knowledge. Or, to put it another way, Ellen must have the agency requisite to enter a contract, a voluntary agreement adjusting and structuring the relations of the parties to the bargain. That Ellen has this agency can be seen in Alice's seeking of Ellen's "consent" when asking her to spend the holidays with the Humphrey family. Alice does not simply command Ellen to come (226). However, though such agency is the prerequisite for Ellen's salvation and her spiritual improvement – she must choose Christ – her course of improvement entails a progressive abandonment of agency, a ceding of will. The tension here between the exercise of free will and the ultimate goal of ceding agency is manifest in Warner's conception of contractual exchange as a means of achieving an anti-contractual or gratuitous end. By definition, a

purely gratuitous act, an unearned or unmerited kindness, for instance, eludes the logic and scope of contract. The answer to Ellen's conflicts with other people appears to be that she must act in a non-contractual or gratuitous fashion, giving love and kindness without receiving anything of value in return. Yet, this lesson in charity is framed as though it were a matter of exchange. In her dealings with her difficult aunt and imperious uncle, Ellen has to learn that she must not insist on a kind of fair trade of like treatment for like treatment. She must learn to return humility for pride, love for callous disregard. The relation remains reciprocal, structured as a kind of religiously informed bargain. Alice instructs Ellen that it is worth "paying a price in suffering to find how much kindness there is in some peoples' hearts" (204). The quid pro quo recommended by this better form of exchange is a big spiritual reward for "a little self-denial" (e.g., Ellen reads to her grandmother and is rewarded by the satisfaction of her grandmother's tearful appreciation [245]).

Thus, Warner mixes a large measure self-effacement with a few elements of self-assertion, and her representation of a purely charitable relation to others takes the form of a contractual exchange in which one's kindness earns a spiritual quid pro quo. These incongruities suggest that the values Warner recommends cannot be attained, at least in this world, in an absolutely pure or unalloyed form. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how Warner could portray Ellen's spiritual progress without some of these contradictions and inconsistencies. Idealist notions of religious absolutes are hard to graft onto the rapidly changing world Ellen inhabits. Some contamination seems inevitable. Similarly, a straightforward and unqualified deference to higher authority is difficult to maintain without occasional qualification in the face of the petty and major tyrannies Ellen encounters. Finally, Ellen's project of self-abnegation is unavoidably made more complex by a model of human development which is predicated on the notion that one betters one's self through a series of acts, choices, and agreements.

Maria Cummins, The Lamplighter *(1854)*

Unlike Gerty Flint, the heroine of her most famous novel, Maria Cummins grew up in a financially secure and well-connected family. Her father was a judge, and the Cummins family lived in Dorchester, a prosperous suburb of Boston. Cummins never married. First published in 1854, *The Lamplighter* was very popular, selling 40,000 copies in the first month and 100,000 by the end of the year (Gilmore 54). Famously, *The Lamplighter*'s success spurred Nathaniel Hawthorne to complain to his publisher that "America is now wholly given over to a d—d mob of scribbling women" (Fern xxxiv). Like Warner's *The Wide,*

Wide World, Cummins's novel tells the tale of an orphaned girl who is cared for and effectively adopted, first by Trueman Flint, who rescues Gerty from the brutal Nan Grant, and second by the blind and angelic Emily Graham. Trueman provides Gerty with an extremely humble but wholesome home, and, with the help of Willie Sullivan and his mother, Trueman is able to help start Gerty on the road to a happy life. When Trueman dies, Gerty is taken under the wing of the gentle Emily Graham. Eventually, after many trials, including her rejection of the marriage proposal of an eligible but feckless young man, Gerty becomes an independent and true-hearted young woman capable of tremendous bravery and self-sacrifice. By the novel's conclusion, Gerty has been discovered by her long-lost and prosperous father and is married to her childhood friend Willie.

While the storyline of *The Lamplighter* bears an obvious general resemblance to that of Warner's novel, there are several significant differences. In comparison with *The Wide, Wide World*, Cummins's narrative seems positively worldly. Instead of focusing on her protagonists' submission to the will of Providence, Cummins takes pains to describe Gerty's and Willie's efforts to improve their practical lot in life as well as their spiritual well-being. Cummins's endorsement of thrift, hard work, and perseverance as means of advancement has a secular, Franklinian ring to it largely absent from *The Wide, Wide World* (249). Ellen Montgomery's story seems to take place at some distance from the larger social context, but Gerty's narrative directly engages the changing social texture of the times. Such change can be felt in Cummins's description of the advent of the steamship and railroad. In contrast to the days of stagecoach travel, when "the driver was a civil fellow, each passenger a person of consequence," "[n]ow, on the contrary, people moved in masses; a single individual was a man of no influence, a mere unit in the great whole" (422–23). Later in the novel, Gerty has to enter and contend with a middle- and upper-class society that increasingly resembles a resort where "all are in motion" and "in pursuit of amusement" (444). In this mobile society, there are "counterfeits," disguises, and a rising degree of anonymity. Indeed, middle- and upper-class people have removed from the city to the suburbs to become more anonymous (310). The greater worldliness of *The Lamplighter* can also be felt in the romantic plots that become dominant in the last half of the book. Where romance is almost entirely absent from Warner's depiction of Ellen's and John's feelings for each other, Cummins entangles her heroine in romantic intrigue. Gerty is pursued by a shallow young man, whom she rejects, and she has to struggle with a misapprehension that her beloved Willie has forgotten her and fallen for another – a traditional device of the love story.

The domestic scene has a different and more prominent aspect in Cummins's novel as well. It is less static, less a given, and more a matter of creation

and partnership. In *The Wide, Wide World*, Ellen Montgomery is thrust into different homes and domestic arrangements over which she has little, if any, influence and control, and which are largely static and unchanging. Even the prosperous and happy home Warner originally imagined as Ellen's reward at the end of the novel is already fully furnished and arranged when she crosses its threshold. As Ellen walks through it staring in wide wonder like a child in a fabulous shop, she simply and completely accepts the arrangements, decorations, and furnishings as a given, not presuming or desiring that anything might be changed. By contrast, in Cummins's novel, a home would seem to be something one must dedicate oneself to creating. Though aged and poor, Trueman Flint chooses to provide a home to Gerty, to be her father, and Gerty works hard to become "quite a nice little housekeeper." These choices and labors result in the creation of a new family and a new home. Trueman is "astonished" by Gerty's transformation of their home, and Gerty is overwhelmed by Trueman's "adoption": "bursting into a paroxysm of joyful tears, [she] gasped out the words, 'Shall I stay with you always?' 'Yes, just as long as I live,' said True, 'you shall be my child'" (230–34). Cummins emphasizes the idea of making in homemaking and represents that endeavor as a reciprocal partnership between voluntary agents who are mutually blessed by the joy they give to each other in their joint endeavor to make a home and to be a family. As Cindy Weinstein has pointed out, Cummins's imagining of the domestic brings mutual consent and joint effort to the fore as means of making a family (45–65). In *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, Weinstein compellingly describes how the consensual dimension of sentimental fiction displaces the biological family with families formed by the voluntary affective connection of love.

Cummins's novel represents a substantial revision and extension of the sentimental story of a young woman's development, moving markedly in the direction of independence and self-assertion and showing a greater appreciation for the protagonist's moral authority. Like Ellen Montgomery, Gerty's main developmental challenge is self-control, in particular control of her anger (239). Her temper is associated with her previous brutal and degrading condition while in the care of Nan Grant (240). Emily Graham helps to "cure" Gerty of this "dark infirmity," by instilling in her "the power of Christian humility . . . the humility of *principle*, of *conscience*, – the only power to which native pride ever will pay homage" (263, 271). Like Ellen, Gerty must "learn to bear even injustice, without losing your self-control" (292). She must resist the temptation to return spite for spite (293). The reward for such "self-sacrifice" is the greater joy of helping others (284). However, self-assertion is not quelled here in the same way and to the same degree as it is in *The Wide, Wide World*. Self-sacrifice in *The*

Lamplighter can entail or require rebellion and self-assertion, as when Gerty decides to help the ailing Mrs. Sullivan rather than going on a trip with Emily Graham and her father (326). When Mr. Graham, a benefactor and authority figure, objects, Gerty refuses to prove "traitor to [her] own heart, and [her] own sense of right" (329). Cummins presents Gerty's polite but firm defiance of the wishes of such authority figures as Mr. Graham as noble and meritorious. Gerty's rebellious impulse works toward plainly good ends, and the rightness of her dissent argues implicitly for the independent moral agency of all young women.

Fanny Fern, Ruth Hall *(1855)*

A highly autobiographical work, the storyline of *Ruth Hall* (1855) follows the broad contours of the early life of its author, Sara Willis, who published under the pen name of Fanny Fern. Sara Willis was the daughter of Nathaniel and Hannah Parker Willis. Her father was a successful publisher, and her older brother was a poet and editor. When her young husband died of typhoid fever in 1846, Sara and her two daughters found themselves nearly destitute. She received little support from her relations and attempted unsuccessfully to provide for her family as a teacher and seamstress. In this difficult period, Sara remarried. This alliance proved to be disastrous, and, after two years, Sara left her husband. Sara struggled then succeeded in her effort to support herself and her children by her writing. Sara's brother rejected her writing and refused to help her, just as Ruth Hall's brother does in the novel. With the notable absence of the remarriage and divorce, the events in *Ruth Hall* follow the broad outline of Sara Willis's life. *Ruth Hall* is about the challenges faced by a young widow trying to support her family. As family and friends either abandon Ruth or fail to rise to the challenge of aiding her, her story is perforce one of self-sufficiency. She must overcome the long odds against financial success as a writer, surmount the callous disregard of brother, father, in-laws, and many others, and contend with greedy and unscrupulous editors. The mere fact that the eponymous heroine of Fern's novel is not a married woman is a clear signal that the genre of the sentimental novel is being pushed even further in the direction of endorsing female independence and moral agency. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of the great advocates of women's rights, wrote that "The great lesson taught in *Ruth Hall* is that God has given to woman sufficient brain and muscle to work out her own destiny unaided and alone" (Fern xliii).

While not quite as popular as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*, or Maria Cummins's *The Lamplighter*, Fern's novel was a

best-seller, selling 70,000 copies in the first year of publication, and it won the praise of one skeptical reader of sentimental fiction, Nathaniel Hawthorne, who commented:

> In my last, I recollect, I bestowed some vituperation on female authors. I have been reading *Ruth Hall* and I must say I enjoyed it a good deal. The woman writes as if the devil was in her; and that is the only condition under which a woman ever writes anything worth reading. (Fern xxxiv–xxxv)

Ruth Hall is, as Hawthorne's appreciation suggests, markedly different from other sentimental novels. First, on a formal level, the structure of the novel is distinguished by its fragmentary quality. It reads like a set of relatively discrete scenes or moments of dialogue often with little or no narrative explanation of how we have moved from one moment to the next. Instead, the reader is left to fill in the necessary connective matter. Second, unlike most American sentimental fiction, Fern's novel combines scenes of heart-wrenching pathos with satire, and acerbic portraits of the hypocrites, fools, and scoundrels in Ruth's life. Third, unlike *The Wide, Wide World*, *The Lamplighter*, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Fern does not emphasize the transformation of the individual through religious inspiration and discipline. Ruth is as mature, caring, and good at the beginning of the narrative as she is at the end. And her adversaries, such as her vain and selfish brother and her churlish mother-in-law, are grossly flawed throughout. Fourth, the novel neither begins in childhood, nor ends in marriage. Instead, it ends with Ruth's success in obtaining independence and a valuable identity supplementary to her former roles as wife and mother. In this last move, Fern seeks to merge Ruth's passion for family, her absolute dedication to her domestic duties, with her independent and unconventional vocation as a writer.

Many aspects of this novel are quite conventional to the sentimental genre. Like Gerty and Ellen, Ruth has an intuitively religious nature. She cannot see the beauty of "sea, sky, leaf, bud, and blossom," "listen to the little birds," or "inhale the perfumed breath of morning, without a filling eye and brimming heart." She instinctively and reflexively gives thanks "to the bounteous Giver" (25). As in other sentimental novels, children are here associated with the heavenly perspective: "Blessed childhood! the pupil and yet the teacher; half infant, half sage, and whole angel! what a desert were earth without thee!" (54). Urging her daughter, Daisy, to put down a caterpillar, Ruth observes, "what an ugly playfellow," but Daisy responds as Eva or Christ might, "Why – God made him" (37). In scenes such as Ruth's tearful recollection of Daisy's death as she holds "a little half worn shoe, with the impress of a tiny foot," Fern's novel dramatically

portrays the emotional values that constitute the core of the sentimental project – the undeniably positive feelings, such as the love of mother and child, which the sentimental novelist believes connect all members of the human family (53–54). The hand of divine providence is present and manifest throughout Ruth's travails and suffering. Even in the moments of Ruth's keenest sorrow and greatest loss, she is cared for by "He who seeth the end from the beginning" (50). When she cannot bear the burden of the death of Daisy, her first child, she lays "[t]he weight her slender shoulders could not bear . . . at the foot of the cross" (25). Like other sentimental novels, *Ruth Hall* is filled with morally transparent characters. Ruth's goodness is unmistakably legible in her tender heart and ready tears, and, by contrast, the marked absence of such tears and feelings are equally indicative of the malign nature of her adversaries, such as her mother-in-law and her brother.

However, *Ruth Hall* also dares to disrupt or break out of the conventions of sentimental fiction. For instance, Fern delicately but unmistakably registers the sexual desire felt by the newly wed Ruth for her husband, Harry:

> [Ruth] moved about her apartments in a sort of blissful dream. How odd it seemed, this new freedom, this being one's own mistress. How odd to see that shaving-brush and those razors lying on her toilet table! Then that saucy looking smoking-cap, those slippers and that dressing-gown, those fancy neckties, too, and vests and coats, in unrebuked proximity to her muslins, laces, silks and de laines! Ruth liked it. (11)

That last short sentence speaks volumes, acknowledging many things unspoken in other sentimental fiction. Even more striking for a present-day reader, perhaps, is Fern's suggestion of a sexualized jealousy on the part of Harry's mother, who, after surreptitiously going through Ruth's bureau drawers, objects, "What is the use of all those ruffles on her underclothes" (10). As the heroine of a sentimental novel, Ruth is also sharply distinguished by her native aversion to "common female employments . . . bead-netting, crochet-stitching, long discussions with milliners, dress-makers, and modistes, long forenoons spent in shopping, or leaving bits of paste-board [i.e., personal cards], party-giving, party-going, prinking and coquetting, all these were her aversion" (56). Ruth's impatience with such occupations anticipates by decades Kate Chopin's portrait of Edna Pontellier.

But Fern's most provocative innovation has to be the way she transforms the moment of conversion, the central pivot of the sentimental novel, from a religious event into a professional and vocational epiphany. Brought low by poverty and threatened with the permanent loss of her children, Ruth is

suddenly inspired to try writing as a means of support: "I can do it, I feel it, I will do it." She tells Katy, one of her children, "when you are a woman you shall remember this day" (145, 147). It is no accident that this inspiration comes to Ruth in the month of July (one thinks of the fact that Henry David Thoreau takes up his abode in the woods near Walden Pond on 4 July). Ruth's determination to succeed by writing becomes, in effect, a declaration of independence. The revolutionary import of her decision to pursue a career as a writer and thereby to gain economic independence is hinted at when a character observes that Ruth has "the spirit of '76' flashing from her eyes" (244). Fern's innovation of the sentimental genre and Ruth's rebellion are both qualified by the fact that the sentimental heroine, who would prefer simply to be a happily married wife and mother, was driven to her radical course of action by necessity. Ruth tells one of her daughters, "no happy woman ever writes" (225). Viewed one way, this statement records a simple fact – dire economic circumstances drove Ruth to write (it is her excuse). Viewed another way, it represents a gesture toward the more conventional notions of femininity usually found in the sentimental novel. In any case, it does not mute Ruth's pride in her accomplishment.

Ruth's ultimate triumph is cast in both sentimental and worldly terms. Ruth is deeply gratified by the emotional comfort and spiritual guidance her writing has brought to others. One of her readers tells her that he is "a better son, a better brother, a better husband, and a better father" for having read her articles, praying that she be "rewarded by Him to whom the secrets of all hearts are known" (235). But Ruth is also rewarded in more temporal or earthly terms. Every character who rebuffed Ruth's requests for aid or attempted to obstruct her quest for independence receives his or her comeuppance. Ruth's brother, Hyacinth, is publicly humiliated by his refusal to help his impoverished and talented sister. Her hostile mother-in-law, Mrs. Hall, is embarrassed to find that the book she so enjoys was written by the daughter-in-law she has so thoroughly scorned (260–61). A cousin who cruelly commanded that Ruth's child not address him in public regrets the insult as he cannot now avail himself of her aid (258). Ruth's success as a writer brings considerable financial security, proudly represented by her ownership of shares in a bank (269). Becoming a savvy businesswoman as well as an accomplished author, Ruth's self-transformation has significant practical dimensions. In her dealings with editors (by and large not a particularly sympathetic group), Ruth proves herself to be fully capable of managing her own negotiations in a clear-eyed and business-like fashion. Rejecting Ruth's appeal to his sense of friendship and sympathy, a greedy editor brushes such considerations aside as irrelevant to business. He condescendingly explains to Ruth the harsh rule of supply and demand, only to find himself hoisted on his own petard and incapable of urging friendship

and loyalty on Ruth when she tells him she has already accepted a better offer (188, 189–90).

Comparing *The Wide, Wide World*, *The Lamplighter*, and *Ruth Hall* highlights several aspects of sentimental fiction. Education is clearly an important theme. In addition to studying the basic academic subjects, Ellen and Gerty have to learn certain basic social and religious lessons as well. While such scenes of formative schooling have already transpired before Fern's novel begins (the novel opens with Ruth on the eve of her wedding), literacy and education play a critical role in Ruth's triumph as a writer. All three novels emphasize family, but the family one is born into (think here of the dearth of aid Ruth receives from her father and brother) appears to be less important than the family one creates – the mutually nurturing and consensual relations that one establishes with others. All of the novels valorize religiously inspired fortitude, such as that sustaining Ruth when Daisy dies, and this ability to endure sorrow is nurtured by moments of emotional transport in which the protagonist is swept away by sympathetic emotion to a richer and better sense of life. Comparing these novels, one also observes that they become progressively secular. The focus on religious piety diminishes, and worldly matters become more prominent. The ideal of womanhood would also seem to be in flux, becoming markedly less passive. The insistence on submission is increasingly replaced by an endorsement of the heroine's assertion of her moral and intellectual agency. Finally, looked at as a continuum, these novels become less enamored of permanence and more tolerant of change. The active and shifting world of publishing that Ruth Hall successfully plunges into and conquers is at a fair remove from the happy prearranged home Warner envisions as Ellen Montgomery's reward.

Sentiment and reform: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Apparently preoccupied with the individual's emotions and his or her spiritual state, the sentimental novel might well seem to direct our attention toward inward private matters and away from broader social concerns.[4] Certainly, sentimental fiction has often focused on the development of the individual and the domestic scene. However, certain nineteenth-century writers recognized that the moment of sympathetic catharsis and conversion central to the sentimental novel might be reconceived more broadly as the emotional awakening of an entire society, a pervasive rush of fellow feeling leading to the transformation of the nation's legal and social norms. Among other things, sentimental fiction has been used to argue for temperance, against prostitution, for the relief of the poor, and against the removal of American Indians. The most famous and

influential of the efforts to turn sentiment outward in the direction of political, legal, and social reform is Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe applies the techniques of the sentimental novel to the most provocative issues of her day – race and slavery. Critical characterizations of Stowe's anti-slavery fiction as separating the values of home from those of the legislature or marketplace tend to miss the interconnection between sentiment and public policy that Stowe wants to advance.[5] Her emotionally charged narrative episodes, such as little Eva's expression of love to Topsy or Uncle Tom's martyrdom, are designed to enlist our sympathies in a general recognition of the moral invalidity of slavery and the legal claims of black Americans to freedom.

Uncle Tom's Cabin is organized around two plot lines. One is the northward escape of George and Eliza Harris and their son from slavery to freedom, which has many of the elements of the romantic adventure novel. Eliza Harris's harrowing escape across the icy Ohio River and the heroic resolve of George Harris and Phineas Fletcher to fight the slave catcher Tom Loker on a rocky promontory recall similar scenes of romantic heroics in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). The other is the dark, southward journey of Uncle Tom from less to more extreme forms of slavery and ultimately to martyrdom and transcendence. Both plot lines take the reader through a variety of different Northern and Southern homes. Some of these, such as Uncle Tom and Aunt Chloe's humble cabin, the Birds' cozy home, and the Quaker home of Rachel and Simeon Halliday, are orderly, warm, and welcoming, manifesting the good values of the kind-hearted families who live in them. The plantation homes of the Shelbys, the St. Clares, and finally Simon Legree, by contrast, are corrupted to varying degrees by slavery. The deeper into the peculiar institution we go, the more a lack of order and good feeling characterizes the home, until we arrive at the domestic nadir of the novel, Legree's plantation, which seems in its hellishness to be virtually an anti-home, barren of all domestic comforts and harmony.[6]

As Stowe anticipated, the broad appeal of her novel derives in large part from the iconic power of her characters, their appearances, actions, and words, whose clear and firm outlines and vivid details are readily translatable into definite moral significances. The moral pattern of compassion and Christian forbearance embodied in Uncle Tom is set against the type of tyrannical power represented by Simon Legree. The dramatic interactions Stowe stages between these antithetical types are designed to trigger in the reader an emotional conviction of slavery's moral and legal invalidity. This conclusion, Stowe hopes, will seem conclusive and unimpeachable to the reader not because it is based on superior argument and evidence, but because it springs unbidden from

the well of sympathy innate to human nature. For Stowe, as for other sentimental novelists, sympathetic feelings are akin to a message from God telling us the difference between right and wrong. To be morally legitimate, individual behavior, social norms, and legal rules must not contradict these feelings. Stowe famously posits the authority of this form of moral intuition in her novel's "Concluding Remarks":

> [W]hat can any individual do? . . . They can see to it that they feel right. An atmosphere of sympathetic influence encircles every human being; and the man or woman who feels strongly, healthily, and justly on the great interest of humanity, is a constant benefactor to the human race. See then to your sympathies in this matter! (385)

Sympathy, at least as it is conceived in the sentimental novel, works by identification. One person sees the parallel between his or her experience and that of another, and is then capable of feeling sympathetically for the other's suffering and plight. Gerty Flint indicates the importance of identification to sympathy when she tells Mr. Phillips, an appealing but sorrowful man she has met on a trip to New York, "I should not know how to feel for others; if I had not often wept for myself, I should not weep for you now" (Cummins 435). In effect, sympathy is the product of an always implied question, "how did I or how would I feel when in a position similar to this unfortunate character?" In sympathizing with the challenge Willie Sullivan faces as the sole breadwinner in his family, Willie's employer recalls his own experience as a friendless young man trying to support a poor mother (Cummins 280). In *Ruth Hall*, the heart of the good editor John Walter "readily vibrates to the chord of sorrow" struck by Ruth's writing because he has experienced "desolation of his own" (Fern 185). Of course, the apparent requirement of identification for sympathy raises questions. Are we incapable of sympathy when there is no ready basis for comparing our own experiences to those of the other person? How closely related must the experiences be for sympathy to be possible? How much like us must the other person be before we can identify with and feel sympathy for that person?

By taking up the issues of slavery and racial difference, Stowe plunges headlong into these questions about sympathy. She attacks the potential obstacle of racial difference to interracial sympathy by diminishing differences and heightening similarities. The "imploring *human* eye" and the frail, trembling *human* hand" as well as the fundamental resemblance between black and white families should, Stowe hopes, draw her white readers into an identification with the fugitive slave (emphasis added, 77). When her flight from slavery takes Eliza Harris and her child in desperation to the Birds' Ohio home, Eliza's ladylike

manners and speech and the common ground of parental feeling prevent racial difference from blocking the Birds' (and the reader's) sympathy. The Birds, like Eliza, have lost a child. Mr. Bird "had never thought that a fugitive might be a hapless mother, a defenceless child, – like that one which was now wearing his lost boy's little well-known cap" (77). The image of the threatened child and the parent fighting to protect him, Stowe hopes, will be readily recognizable and familiar enough to overcome whatever barrier racial difference poses to the readers' sympathies and to conjure their most emotionally intense registration of the inequity of slavery.[7]

The utility of the image of the child in danger as a trigger of identification and sympathy across racial lines was not lost on African American novelists, such as Frank Webb and Charles Chesnutt. In *The Garies and Their Friends*, Frank Webb's version of the Mrs. Bird character is able to sympathize with a young black boy named Charlie because she has lost a son named Charlie (147). In the melodramatic climax of Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901), the parallel between the loss of a black child and the threatened life of a white child forces a white woman to recognize her family connection with a black half-sister she has spent a lifetime rejecting. Of course, accepting the necessity of resemblance for sympathy leaves open the possibility of a certain limit to sympathy – at some point, the other person may seem too alien, too different for resemblance, and consequently, for sympathy to occur.

When the sentimental home is expanded into a sentimental community, the political limits of sympathy with its attendant requirement of resemblance become more conspicuous. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe presents the Quaker community of Rachel and Simeon Halliday as a model community united and animated by its members' shared sympathetic awareness of right and wrong. Rachel Halliday leads this benevolent and peaceful polis not by virtue of some power that she possesses, but by reason of the moral authority manifest in her "loving words, gentle moralities, and motherly loving kindness," which solve "spiritual and temporal" problems (117). Punishment, threatened or actual, is not needed to obtain obedience and order from the children in this community. All Rachel has to do is touch the children's intuitive sense of right and wrong with gentle directions, such as "Hadn't thee better?" "The danger of friction or collision" within Rachel's busy but harmonious community is erased by the fact that there is an almost perfect identity in the members' moral responses to questions, problems, and necessary tasks (121). Revealingly, two outsiders, George Harris, a fugitive slave, and Phineas Fletcher, a convert to Quakerism, interrupt the community's consensus of pacifism, sympathy, and self-sacrifice with expressions of rebellious indignation and revolutionary intent. When cautioned by Simeon Halliday against acting violently out of the heat of his

"young blood," George responds that he would "attack no man" but would fight to the death to prevent the recapture of his wife and son. And, while Phineas agrees with Simeon that the "temptation" of armed resistance is best avoided, he adds, "if we are tempted too much, – why, let them look out, that's all." In response to Phineas's readiness to use force to protect the Harris family, Simeon says, "It's quite plain thee wasn't born a Friend . . . The old nature hath its way in thee pretty strong as yet" (163–64). These divergent impulses manifest on a larger scale the tension between submission and self-assertion seen in *The Wide, Wide World* and *The Lamplighter*, and these different responses to the same moral crisis do not cohere any more comfortably in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* than they do in Warner's and Cummins's novels. Indeed, the Quaker community's relative isolation, the homogeneity of its members, and the uniformity of the members' emotional moral responses suggests a fear on Stowe's part that the good-hearted rule of sympathy may be impracticable in the face of social diversity.

In the Quaker community the unity of sentiment obviates the need for resolving conflict through negotiation, debate, and compromise. Such tools of consensus formation are rendered unnecessary because Stowe's Quakers simply obey the same inner voice, a shared voice that defines the members as fundamentally homogeneous or like each other.[8] If the measure of the equity of any society's political and legal system is gauged by how it deals with a diverse population with divergent interests and viewpoints, then the Quaker model of sentiment offered by Stowe would seem decidedly inadequate to the task of achieving justice. The sameness of her Quaker exemplars also seems to reflect Stowe's apprehension that the possibility of a racially heterogeneous citizenry raised by the abolitionist campaign might fracture the homogeneity that makes a governing moral consensus possible in the first place. As many readers have noted, Stowe does not imagine her two black heroes as living happily ever after in the United States. By the end of the novel, George Harris is in Liberia, and Uncle Tom has been martyred.

The way that sameness, an uncanny similarity of emotional and moral response, largely replaces debate and compromise in the Quaker community also points to certain problems or limitations in Stowe's attempt to connect the moral inspiration of sympathetic emotions with the often messy processes of creating a new political or social consensus. Does the Quaker consensus represent the agreement of people from different walks of life and diverse backgrounds, independently and voluntarily arriving at certain shared values? Or to what extent are the members' shared beliefs produced by the fact that they are members of the sect? By telling Phineas Fletcher that his divergent opinions make it clear he was not "born" a Quaker, Simeon Halliday would

seem to suggest that some part of the sect's moral consensus follows from the status of being born a Quaker. To put this problem another way, does the spontaneous eruption of sympathy for the fugitive slave automatically result in a new social and legal consensus? If not, what will the ensuing discussion, debate, and compromise look like? What effects will differences in religious affiliation or racial, class, and gender status have on the establishment of a new social compact? At times, Stowe seems to think that the onrush of sentiment and fellow feeling can overcome such differences in background and social status. At other moments, the reformist potential of sentiment to create a new consensus seems limited by Stowe's deference to notions of inherent racial or gender roles prescribed by God or nature. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe sometimes imagines human relations as determined or governed by status (e.g., one's being born a Quaker, a woman, or a black man). Sometimes, she entertains the notion that they may be based on contract – the voluntary agreement of individuals regardless of status. Her vacillation between status and contract as principles properly structuring human association can be seen by comparing a pair of scenes from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: the debate between Mr. and Mrs. Bird and the colloquy between George Harris and Mr. Wilson.[9]

The Birds' cozy home provides the setting for the first of these scenes. Worn out by the "tiresome business" of legislating, Senator Bird has returned for some "good, home living," distinguishing the worries and concerns of his public career from the harmony of his private, domestic life. However, Senator Bird's vision of domestic tranquility is interrupted by his wife's query "what have they been doing in the Senate?" (67). While she does not normally "trouble her head" about the affairs of state, the moral issues raised by the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 compel Mary Bird to interrogate her husband. Senator Bird replies, "Your feelings are all quite right, dear . . . I love you for them; but . . . we mustn't suffer our feelings to run away with our judgment; you must consider it's not a matter of private feeling, – there are great public interests involved." In response to her husband's argument separating private feeling from public discourse and his suggestion that, as a woman, Mrs. Bird has stepped outside of her area of expertise, Mrs. Bird replies, "I don't know anything about politics, but I can read my Bible; and there I see that I must feed the hungry, clothe the naked and comfort the desolate" (69).

In their conversation, each assumes his or her conventional role (the male lawmaker and the female homemaker). However, to accept these conventional roles as delineating antithetical concerns or areas of expertise – law and morality or head and heart – is to ignore the legal significance of Mrs. Bird's moral challenge to the Fugitive Slave Act and the symbolic value of the couple's legal–moral intercourse. Spontaneous sympathetic feelings corresponding to the teachings of Christ clearly indicate to Mrs. Bird that the deference normally

given to law does not apply in this case. Mrs. Bird's argument is disingenuous to the extent that it seems to separate the moral and legal areas of expertise.[10] And Mr. Bird's invocation of the public–private distinction to suggest that amateurs, such as Mrs. Bird, have no role in setting public policy is alien to Mrs. Bird's religious and moral convictions ("Obeying God never brings on public evils"), which do not stop at the threshold of her home (69). Indeed, in its positing of self-evident moral truths, Mary's objection to the Fugitive Slave Act accords with the Founding Fathers' belief in a legal system grounded in virtue and sanctioned by the citizenry's moral sense.

Ultimately, Mrs. Bird's argument and the couple's joint decision to violate the Fugitive Slave Act are decisively advanced by Eliza Harris's appearance:

> A young and slender woman, with garments torn and frozen, with one shoe gone, and the stocking torn away from the cut and bleeding foot, was laid back in a deadly swoon upon two chairs. There was the impress of the despised race on her face, yet none could help feeling its mournful and pathetic beauty, while its stony sharpness, its cold, fixed, deathly aspect, struck a solemn chill over him. (70)

For Stowe and other anti-slavery advocates, such as William Lloyd Garrison and Senator William H. Seward, the image of the shivering fugitive appealing for aid can work a kind of "magic" on an audience, arousing powerful emotions and galvanizing the political will to end the wicked institution of slavery (Crane *Race* 12–18, 60). Confronted with "the real presence of distress," Mr. Bird, the lawmaker, acts upon the sentiment ably urged by his wife as the foundation for all legitimate law and public policy (77). Far from representing an opposition of head and heart, law and moral feeling, the Birds' dialogue embodies the process of inspiration and conversation through which the public conscience is animated and revised. The Birds' joint efforts to aid Eliza and her son represent a new consensus, holding the Fugitive Slave Law to be ethically invalid.

The Birds' discussion and formation of a new jointly held position is, however, hedged or limited by the fact that their negotiation and debate of this issue runs in the channels provided by their respective gender and spousal roles. Senator Bird brings his worldly experience and rationalist argument to bear on the topic of the Fugitive Slave Law, and Mrs. Bird responds with the moral intuition and sympathy native to women. The happy outcome of their discussion depends in part on each performing his or her role. Mrs. Bird's moral intuition, which is transparently a part of her proper role as wife and mother, must inform Mr. Bird's worldly experience and professional expertise for the latter to be legitimate. The sheer typicality of Mr. and Mrs. Bird makes it hard to envision them expanding their discussion to include Eliza in their debate on the propriety of the Fugitive Slave Law. And as the archetype of the

shivering fugitive, Eliza's very appearance – a frail and desperate mother needing protection – obviates the necessity of seeking her approval for the next leg of her escape, which the Birds plan without her counsel or consent, despite the substantial evidence of Eliza's agency as the author of her own bold escape. As a woman and a supplicant, she must take what they will give. The transparency and legibility of Stowe's characters as types seems to limit the degree to which feelings of sympathy and human connection might inspire a new ethical and political consensus.

In a subsequent scene depicting a conversation between George Harris and a well-intentioned white acquaintance, Mr. Wilson, Stowe goes somewhat further in removing the limitations of type or status from the consensual processes of mutual sympathy and rational debate. Harris and Wilson meet in a tavern, a place of business and politics (a few pages earlier we witness the tavern negotiations between Haley, the slave trader, and Tom Loker, the slave hunter). In their discussion, Harris and Wilson seek to persuade each other of the propriety or impropriety of Harris's plan of escape. Harris begins with the tools of logical argument. He offers Mr. Wilson an analogy: "I wonder, Mr. Wilson, if the Indians should come and take you a prisoner away from your wife and children, . . . if you'd think it your duty to abide in the condition in which you were called" (95). Harris suggests an imagined reversal of positions, but analogy is not Wilson's strong suit (in a neat reversal of racial types). When Wilson responds that Harris's desperate state of mind drives him to break "the laws of your country," Harris sounds a theme taken up by Douglass in his "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" address:

> My country again! Mr. Wilson, you have a country; but what country have I, or any one like me, born of slave mothers? What laws are there for us? We don't make them, – we don't consent to them, – we have nothing to do with them; all they do for us is to crush us, and keep us down. Haven't I heard your Fourth-of-July speeches? Don't you tell us all, once a year, that governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed? (95–96)

Harris's conclusion is inescapable: by the founders' own principles, the duty to obey is predicated on the right to participate. The nullity of the latter voids the former. To make his argument effective in inspiring a new sense of duty and obligation in Mr. Wilson, Harris speaks to Wilson's heart, reducing the latter to tears with a vivid portrait of the cruelties inflicted on his family by the system of slavery.

As with the Birds' debate, when argument is infused with sentiment, a new consensus becomes possible, but here it is a different kind of consensus.

Separated by racial and legal status as well as differing views of religion and civic duty, Harris and Wilson manage to come to terms, and the two men become, in effect, co-conspirators defying the Fugitive Slave Act. Even though Harris's independence and intelligence – his competence to enter into contract – are figured as an inheritance from his white father, this scene comes close to suggesting that people of disparate backgrounds may be able through debate and shared moral feeling to decide what is right rather than simply referring moral questions to the prescriptions of traditional status and role. At the end of their debate, Mr. Wilson notes, "George, something has brought you out wonderfully. You hold up your head, and speak and move like another man" (98). In his revolutionary ardor, George would seem to be an icon for the way powerful feelings can inspire a dramatic and positive transformation, and his mutability is a hopeful sign of a broader social mutability. In connecting the new consensus between Harris and Wilson to George Harris's new manner of being, Stowe's novel suggests not only that our principles may shift or receive new impressions but also that transformation may itself be a gauge of ethical and aesthetic value.

In celebrating the end of slavery after the war, Stowe overtly connects personal development to legal and societal transformation – in both cases, mutability is a sign of moral vitality. The very possibility of personal transformation functions as a measure of the virtue of the American legal system: "It is the pride and the boast of truly republican institutions that they give to every human being an opportunity of thus demonstrating what is in him. If a man is a man, no matter in what rank of society he is born, no matter how tied down and weighted by poverty and all its attendant disadvantages, there is nothing in our American institutions to prevent his rising to the very highest offices in the gift of the country" (*Men of Our Times* 380–81). Citizens, such as Frederick Douglass, who fully embody this process of personal transformation, best represent the nation's values:

> Now if we think it a great thing that [Henry] Wilson and Lincoln raised themselves from a state of comparatively early disadvantage to high places in the land, what shall we think of one who started from this immeasurable gulf below them? Frederick Douglass had as far to climb to get to the spot where the poorest free white boy is born, as that white boy has to climb to be president of this nation, and take rank with kings and judges of the earth. (*Men of Our Times* 381–82)

Stowe similarly locates the Constitution's ethical value in its "progressive character," commending Charles Sumner for demonstrating that the Constitution is not graven in stone but is and was intended by the framers to be revisable so

as "to suit new exigencies and new conditions of feeling" (*Men of Our Times* 223).

A fairly persuasive argument can be made that Stowe's fiction played an important role in pushing the nation in the direction of the eradication of slavery and the recognition of black Americans as citizens. Of course, it is hard, if not impossible, to measure the effect of a novel on the course of public policy and national consensus, yet a few facts suggestive of the impact of Stowe's novel jump out. When published in book form (March 1852), it sold 10,000 copies within a few days. In the first year of publication, 300,000 copies of the novel were sold in the United States. Lending libraries could not keep enough copies to satisfy their patrons (Gossett 164–65). Many newspapers and journals in both North and South saw *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a turning point in the mobilization of anti-slavery feeling in the North. Legislative debates on the issues of slavery, race, and citizenship bear many signs of the shift in the nation's political discourse toward an approach imbued with the language of sympathy and sentiment, a shift that Stowe's very popular anti-slavery fiction helped to underwrite. Ohio Representative John Bingham (the prosecutor in Andrew Jackson's impeachment trial and primary drafter of the 14th Amendment) clearly alluded to one of the most dramatic moments in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in objecting to an amendment of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law proposed in 1860 as a part of an eleventh-hour union-saving compromise:

> that the amendment proposed . . . does not relieve the American people from the unjust obligations imposed upon them by the act of 1850, by which, at the beck of the marshal, they are compelled to join in the hunt – to make hue and cry on the track of a fugitive slave woman who is fleeing, with her babe lashed upon her breast, from the house of bondage. I will not perform that service, and I ask any man on that side whether he will? (Bingham 183)

Given the fact that in 1860 the Fugitive Slave Law was still the law of the land with no legal precedent qualifying or terminating its obligations, Bingham's comments derive their compelling emotional force from the image of the fugitive mother and her babe made famous by Stowe's vivid rendering of Eliza Harris's escape. Bingham and other Republicans repeatedly pointed to this scene as the key test of the illegitimacy of the Fugitive Slave Law.

The sentimental images and tropes so charismatically adduced against slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* form a prominent rhetorical aspect of Senator Charles Sumner's anti-slavery advocacy. In "Freedom National, Slavery Sectional," his first great address as a senator, Sumner introduces himself not as a politician but as a disinterested friend of human rights and democracy who speaks "from

the heart" and who attacks an evil institution "which . . . palpitates in every heart and burns on every tongue." Like Stowe, Sumner uses the image of the "shivering fugitive" seeking aid to force his audience to confront the immorality of the Fugitive Slave Law:

> The good citizen, who sees before him the shivering fugitive, guilty of no crime, pursued, hunted down like a beast, while praying for Christian help and deliverance, and then reads the requirements of this Act, is filled with horror . . . Not rashly would I set myself against any requirement of law . . . But here the path of duty is clear. By the Supreme Law, which commands me to do no injustice, by the comprehensive Christian Law of Brotherhood, by the Constitution, which I have sworn to support, I AM BOUND TO DISOBEY THIS ACT. ("Freedom National" 194)

Sumner's arguments against slavery and race proscription also often emphasize the disruption of the domestic scene as the quintessential moment of moral outrage. An anti-slavery address Sumner gave in 1855, "The Antislavery Enterprise," climaxed its condemnation of the law of slavery with the observation that this law gave slave holders the power "to separate families, to unclasp the infant from a mother's breast, and the wife from a husband's arms" ("Antislavery Enterprise" 15).

Stowe's influence on "Freedom National, Slavery Sectional" can be felt in Sumner's trope of tears as the outward manifestation of the moral sense: "Not a case occurs [under the Fugitive Slave Act] which does not harrow the souls of good men, bringing tears of sympathy to the eyes, and those other noble tears which 'patriots shed o'er dying laws.'" Sympathy, for Sumner as for Stowe, properly governs human behavior and reveals the course of justice. He counts on its arousal in the public on behalf of the fugitive: "But the great heart of the people recoils from this enactment. It palpitates for the fugitive, and rejoices in his escape" ("Freedom National" 181). Sumner singles literature out as an apt tutor of the nation's sympathies and moral sense, praising Stowe in particular:

> Sir, I am telling you facts. The literature of the age is all on [the slave's] side. Songs, more potent than laws, are for him. Poets, with voices of melody, sing for Freedom. Who could tune for Slavery? They who make the permanent opinion of the country, who mould our youth, whose words, dropped into the soul, are the germs of character, supplicate for the Slave. And now, Sir, behold a new and heavenly ally. A woman, inspired by Christian genius, enters the lists, like another Joan of Arc, and with marvellous power sweeps the popular heart. Now melting to tears, and now inspiring to rage, her work everywhere touches the conscience, and makes the Slave-Hunter more

> hateful. In a brief period, nearly one hundred thousand copies of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" have been already circulated. But this extraordinary and sudden success, surpassing all other instances in the records of literature, cannot be regarded as but the triumph of genius. Better far, it is the testimony of the people, by an unprecedented act, against the Fugitive Slave Bill. ("Freedom National" 181–82)

Whether we might find such a claim considerably exaggerated (or implausible because it assumes literature is somehow not molded by precisely the same cultural context producing the politics of the moment), the fact that Charles Sumner, a politician who as much as anybody moved the nation toward a revision of its fundamental charter and basic notions of citizenship, found it plausible is concrete evidence of the political influence of Stowe's emotionally redolent images.

Sentiment and the argument against reform: *The Planter's Northern Bride*

The South was by no means blind to the influence of Stowe's novel. In a review of George Fitzhugh's proslavery tract *Cannibals All!*, the Richmond *Enquirer* lamented the fact that, though "In every mode of argument the champions of the South excel," "they have produced no romance quite equal to 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'" (23 January 1857). A number of anti-Tom novels were inspired by the perception that the South needed fiction defending the Southern way of life and turning the figures and themes of sentiment against abolitionism. When Caroline Lee Hentz, a New Englander transplanted to the South, wrote *The Planter's Northern Bride* (1854), she could draw upon the well-established pattern of the plantation romance (e.g., John Pendleton Kennedy's *Swallow Barn* [1832]). Typically, these novels feature loyal black servants, good-natured plantation owners, Southern belles, dashing young gentlemen, and Northern visitors who are won over to Southern ways.

The Planter's Northern Bride begins with Moreland, the noble plantation owner, traveling to the North in search of a respite from his disastrous first marriage to Claudia, which has ended in divorce (16). Early in the novel, Moreland's soulful response to church music gives the reader a clear signal of his fundamentally good character (34–35). During this service, he first hears the angelic voice and sees the beautiful figure of "Miss Eulalia Hastings," the daughter of the abolitionist editor of the "*Emancipator*" (39). Eulalia is predisposed to like Moreland because she has heard of his charitable aid to one

FIVE

SELECTED READINGS

RIP VAN WINKLE

BY

WASHINGTON IRVING

Elegant Ebooks

WHOEVER has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains, and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky; but

sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of gray vapors about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

At the foot of these fairy mountains, the voyager may have descried the light smoke curling up from a village, whose shingle-roofs gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a little village, of great antiquity, having been founded by some of the Dutch colonists, in the early times of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good Peter Stuyvesant, (may he rest in peace!) and there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a few years, built of small yellow bricks brought from Holland, having latticed windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weathercocks.

In that same village, and in one of these very houses (which, to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather-beaten), there lived many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple good-natured fellow, of the name of Rip Van Winkle. He was a descendant of the Van Winkles who figured so gallantly in the chivalrous days of Peter Stuyvesant, and accompanied him to the siege of Fort Christina. He inherited, however, but little of the martial character of his ancestors. I have observed that he was a simple good-natured man; he was, moreover, a kind neighbor, and an obedient hen-pecked husband. Indeed, to the latter circumstance might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity; for those men are most apt to be obsequious and conciliating abroad, who are under the discipline of shrews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation, and a curtain lecture is worth all the sermons in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long-suffering. A termagant wife may, therefore, in some respects, be considered a tolerable blessing; and if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed.

Certain it is, that he was a great favorite among all the good wives of the village, who, as usual with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles; and never failed, whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The children of the village, too, would shout with joy whenever he approached.

He assisted at their sports, made their playthings, taught them to fly kites and shoot marbles, and told them long stories of ghosts, witches, and Indians. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of them, hanging on his skirts, clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity; and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighborhood.

The great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labor. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling-piece on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and up hill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbor even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn, or building stone-fences; the women of the village, too, used to employ

him to run their errands, and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. In a word, Rip was ready to attend to anybody's business but his own; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm; it was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country; every thing about it went wrong, and would go wrong, in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces; his cow would either go astray, or get among the cabbages; weeds were sure to grow quicker in his fields than anywhere else; the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some out-door work to do; so that though his patrimonial estate had dwindled away under his management, acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst-conditioned farm in the neighborhood.

His children, too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son Rip, an urchin begotten in his own likeness, promised to inherit the habits, with the old clothes of his father. He was generally seen trooping like a colt at his mother's heels, equipped in a pair of his father's cast-off galligaskins, which he had much ado to hold up with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather.

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and every thing he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife; so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a hen-pecked husband.

Rip's sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much hen-pecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master's going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honorable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods—but what courage can withstand the ever-during and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle, he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Times grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle as years of matrimony rolled on; a tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other

idle personages of the village; which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund portrait of His Majesty George the Third. Here they used to sit in the shade through a long, lazy summer's day, talking listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions that sometimes took place when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveller. How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derrick Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, a dapper, learned little man, who was not to be daunted by the most gigantic word in the dictionary; and how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place.

The opinions of this junto were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun and keep in the shade of a large tree; so that the neighbors

could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sun-dial. It is true, he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however, (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When any thing that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth short, frequent, and angry puffs; but when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds; and sometimes, taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapor curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.

From even this stronghold the unlucky Rip was at length routed by his termagant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage, and call the members all to nought; nor was that august personage, Nicholas Vedder himself, sacred from the daring tongue of this terrible virago, who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness.

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair; and his only alternative, to escape from the labor of the farm and the clamor of his wife, was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet with Wolf, with whom he sympathized as a fellow-sufferer in persecution. “Poor Wolf,” he would say, “thy mistress leads thee a dog’s life of it; but never mind, my lad, whilst I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee!” Wolf would wag his tail, look wistfully in his master’s face, and if dogs can feel pity I verily believe he reciprocated the sentiment with all his heart.

In a long ramble of the kind on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill mountains. He was after his favorite sport of squirrel shooting, and the still solitudes had echoed and re-echoed with the reports of his gun. Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll, covered with mountain herbage, that crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent but majestic course, with the

reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands.

On the other side he looked down into a deep mountain glen, wild, lonely, and shagged, the bottom filled with fragments from the impending cliffs, and scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun. For some time Rip lay musing on this scene; evening was gradually advancing; the mountains began to throw their long blue shadows over the valleys; he saw that it would be dark long before he could reach the village, and he heaved a heavy sigh when he thought of encountering the terrors of Dame Van Winkle.

As he was about to descend, he heard a voice from a distance hallooing, “Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!” He looked round, but could see nothing but a crow winging its solitary flight across the mountain. He thought his fancy must have deceived him, and turned again to descend, when he heard the same cry ring through the still evening air: “Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!”—at the same time Wolf bristled up his back, and giving a low growl, skulked to his master’s side, looking fearfully down into the glen. Rip now felt a vague apprehension stealing over him; he looked anxiously in the same direction, and perceived a strange figure slowly toiling up the rocks, and bending under the weight of something he carried on his back. He was surprised to see any human being in this lonely and unfrequented place, but supposing it to be some one of the neighborhood in need of his assistance, he hastened down to yield it.

On nearer approach, he was still more surprised at the singularity of the stranger’s appearance. He was a short, square-built old fellow, with thick bushy hair, and a grizzled beard. His dress was of the antique Dutch fashion—a cloth jerkin strapped round the waist—several pairs of breeches, the outer one of ample volume, decorated with rows of buttons down the sides and bunches at the knees. He bore on his shoulder a stout keg, that seemed full of liquor, and made signs for Rip to approach and assist him with the load. Though rather shy and distrustful of this new acquaintance, Rip complied with his usual alacrity; and mutually relieving one another, they clambered up a narrow gully, apparently the dry bed of a mountain torrent. As they ascended, Rip every now and then heard long

rolling peals, like distant thunder, that seemed to issue out of a deep ravine, or rather cleft, between lofty rocks, toward which their rugged path conducted. He paused for an instant, but supposing it to be the muttering of one of those transient thunder-showers which often take place in the mountain heights, he proceeded. Passing through the ravine, they came to a hollow, like a small amphitheatre, surrounded by perpendicular precipices, over the brinks of which impending trees shot their branches, so that you only caught glimpses of the azure sky, and the bright evening cloud. During the whole time, Rip and his companion had labored on in silence; for though the former marvelled greatly what could be the object of carrying a keg of liquor up this wild mountain, yet there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe and checked familiarity.

On entering the amphitheatre, new objects of wonder presented themselves. On a level spot in the centre was a company of odd-looking personages playing at nine-pins. They were dressed in quaint outlandish fashion; some wore short doublets, others jerkins, with long knives in their belts, and most of them had enormous breeches, of similar style with that of the guide’s. Their visages, too, were peculiar; one had a large head, broad face, and small piggish eyes; the face of another seemed to consist entirely of nose, and was surmounted by a white sugar-loaf hat, set off with a little red cock’s tail. They all had beards, of various shapes and colors. There was one who seemed to be the commander. He was a stout old gentleman, with a weather-beaten countenance; he wore a laced doublet, broad belt and hanger, high-crowned hat and feather, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, with roses in them. The whole group reminded Rip of the figures in an old Flemish painting, in the parlor of Dominie Van Schaick, the village parson, and which had been brought over from Holland at the time of the settlement.

What seemed particularly odd to Rip was, that though these folks were evidently amusing themselves, yet they maintained the gravest face, the most mysterious silence, and were, withal, the most melancholy party of pleasure he had ever witnessed. Nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which, whenever they were rolled, echoed along the mountains like rumbling peals of thunder.

As Rip and his companion approached them, they suddenly desisted from their play, and stared at him with such fixed, statue-like gaze, and such strange, uncouth, lack-lustre countenances, that his heart turned within him, and his knees smote together. His companion now emptied the contents of the keg into large flagons, and made signs to him to wait upon the company. He obeyed with fear and trembling; they quaffed the liquor in profound silence, and then returned to their game.

By degrees Rip's awe and apprehension subsided. He even ventured, when no eye was fixed upon him, to taste the beverage, which he found had much of the flavor of excellent Hollands. He was naturally a thirsty soul, and was soon tempted to repeat the draught. One taste provoked another; and he reiterated his visits to the flagon so often that at length his senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head, his head gradually declined, and he fell into a deep sleep.

On waking, he found himself on the green knoll whence he had first seen the old man of the glen. He rubbed his eyes—it was a bright sunny morning. The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes, and the eagle was wheeling aloft, and breasting the pure mountain breeze. "Surely," thought Rip, "I have not slept here all night." He recalled the occurrences before he fell asleep. The strange man with a keg of liquor—the mountain ravine—the wild retreat among the rocks—the woebegone party at nine-pins—the flagon—"Oh! that flagon! that wicked flagon!" thought Rip—"what excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle?"

He looked round for his gun, but in place of the clean, well-oiled fowling-piece, he found an old firelock lying by him, the barrel incrusted with rust, the lock falling off, and the stock worm-eaten. He now suspected that the grave roysterers of the mountain had put a trick upon him, and having dosed him with liquor, had robbed him of his gun. Wolf, too, had disappeared, but he might have strayed away after a squirrel or partridge. He whistled after him and shouted his name, but all in vain; the echoes repeated his whistle and shout, but no dog was to be seen.

He determined to revisit the scene of the last evening's gambol, and if he met with any of the party, to demand his dog and gun. As he rose to walk, he found himself stiff in the joints, and wanting in his usual activity. "These mountain beds do not agree with me," thought Rip, "and if this

frolic should lay me up with a fit of the rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle.” With some difficulty he got down into the glen: he found the gully up which he and his companion had ascended the preceding evening; but to his astonishment a mountain stream was now foaming down it, leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs. He, however, made shift to scramble up its sides, working his toilsome way through thickets of birch, sassafras, and witch-hazel, and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grape-vines that twisted their coils or tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path.

At length he reached to where the ravine had opened through the cliffs to the amphitheatre; but no traces of such opening remained. The rocks presented a high impenetrable wall, over which the torrent came tumbling in a sheet of feathery foam, and fell into a broad deep basin, black from the shadows of the surrounding forest. Here, then, poor Rip was brought to a stand. He again called and whistled after his dog; he was only answered by the cawing of a flock of idle crows, sporting high in the air about a dry tree that overhung a sunny precipice; and who, secure in their elevation, seemed to look down and scoff at the poor man’s perplexities. What was to be done? the morning was passing away, and Rip felt famished for want of his breakfast. He grieved to give up his dog and gun; he dreaded to meet his wife; but it would not do to starve among the mountains. He shook his head, shouldered the rusty firelock, and, with a heart full of trouble and anxiety, turned his steps homeward.

As he approached the village he met a number of people, but none whom he new, which somewhat surprised him, for he had thought himself acquainted with every one in the country round. Their dress, too, was of a different fashion from that to which he was accustomed. They all stared at him with equal marks of surprise, and whenever they cast their eyes upon him, invariably stroked their chins. The constant recurrence of this gesture induced Rip, involuntarily, to do the same, when, to his astonishment, he found his beard had grown a foot long!

He had now entered the skirts of the village. A troop of strange children ran at his heels, hooting after him, and pointing at his gray beard. The dogs, too, not one of which he recognized for an old acquaintance,

barked at him as he passed. The very village was altered; it was larger and more populous. There were rows of houses which he had never seen before, and those which had been his familiar haunts had disappeared. Strange names were over the doors—strange faces at the windows—every thing was strange. His mind now misgave him; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village, which he had left but the day before. There stood the Kaatskill mountains—there ran the silver Hudson at a distance—there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been—Rip was sorely perplexed—"That flagon last night," thought he, "has addled my poor head sadly!"

It was with some difficulty that he found the way to his own house, which he approached with silent awe, expecting every moment to hear the shrill voice of Dame Van Winkle. He found the house gone to decay—the roof fallen in, the windows shattered, and the doors off the hinges. A half-starved dog that looked like Wolf was skulking about it. Rip called him by

name, but the cur snarled, showed his teeth, and passed on. This was an unkind cut indeed.—"My very dog," sighed poor Rip, "has forgotten me!"

He entered the house, which, to tell the truth, Dame Van Winkle had always kept in neat order. It was empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned. This desolateness overcame all his connubial fears—he called loudly for his wife and children—the lonely chambers rang for a moment with his voice, and then all again was silence.

He now hurried forth, and hastened to his old resort, the village inn—but it too was gone. A large rickety wooden building stood in its place, with great gaping windows, some of them broken and mended with old hats and petticoats, and over the door was painted, "The Union Hotel, by Jonathan Doolittle." Instead of the great tree that used to shelter the quiet little Dutch inn of yore, there now was reared a tall, naked pole, with something on the top that looked like a red night-cap, and from it was fluttering a flag, on which was a singular assemblage of stars and stripes—all this was strange and incomprehensible. He recognized on the sign, however, the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe; but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, GENERAL WASHINGTON.

There was, as usual, a crowd of folk about the door, but none that Rip recollected. The very character of the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about it, instead of the accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquillity. He looked in vain for the sage Nicholas Vedder, with his broad face, double chin, and fair long pipe, uttering clouds of tobacco smoke, instead of idle speeches; or Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, doling forth the contents of an ancient newspaper. In place of these, a lean, bilious-looking fellow, with his pockets full of handbills, was haranguing vehemently about rights of citizens—elections—members of Congress—liberty—Bunker's hill—heroes of seventy-six—and other words, which were a perfect Babylonish jargon to the bewildered Van Winkle.

The appearance of Rip, with his long grizzled beard, his rusty fowling-piece, his uncouth dress, and an army of women and children at his heels,

soon attracted the attention of the tavern politicians. They crowded round him, eying him from head to foot with great curiosity. The orator bustled up to him, and, drawing him partly aside, inquired, “on which side he voted?” Rip stared in vacant stupidity. Another short but busy little fellow pulled him by the arm, and, rising on tiptoe, inquired in his ear, “whether he was Federal or Democrat?” Rip was equally at a loss to comprehend the question; when a knowing, self-important old gentleman in a sharp cocked hat, made his way through the crowd, putting them to the right and left with his elbows as he passed, and planting himself before Van Winkle, with one arm akimbo, the other resting on his cane, his keen eyes and sharp hat penetrating, as it were, into his very soul, demanded, in an austere tone, “what brought him to the election with a gun on his shoulder, and a mob at his heels, and whether he meant to breed a riot in the village?” “Alas! gentlemen,” cried Rip, somewhat dismayed, “I am a poor quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the king, God bless him!”

Here a general shout burst from the bystanders—“A tory! a tory! a spy! a refugee! hustle him! away with him!” It was with great difficulty that the self-important man in the cocked hat restored order; and, having assumed a tenfold austerity of brow, demanded again of the unknown culprit, what he came there for, and whom he was seeking? The poor man humbly assured him that he meant no harm, but merely came there in search of some of his neighbors, who used to keep about the tavern.

“Well, who are they? Name them.”

Rip bethought himself a moment, and inquired, “Where’s Nicholas Vedder?”

There was a silence for a little while, when an old man replied, in a thin, piping voice, “Nicholas Vedder! why, he is dead and gone these eighteen years! There was a wooden tombstone in the churchyard that used to tell all about him, but that’s rotten and gone too.”

“Where’s Brom Dutcher?”

“Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war; some say he was killed at the storming of Stony Point—others say he was drowned in a squall at the foot of Antony’s Nose. I don’t know—he never came back again.”

"Where's Van Bummel, the schoolmaster?"

"He went off to the wars, too, was a great militia general, and is now in Congress."

Rip's heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him too, by treating of such enormous lapses of time, and of matters which he could not understand: war—Congress—Stony Point;—he had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in despair, "Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?"

"Oh, Rip Van Winkle!" exclaimed two or three, "Oh, to be sure! that's Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree."

Rip looked, and beheld a precise counterpart of himself, as he went up the mountain: apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity, and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was, and what was his name?

"God knows," exclaimed he, at his wit's end; "I'm not myself—I'm somebody else—that's me yonder—no—that's somebody else got into my shoes—I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they've changed my gun, and every thing's changed, and I'm changed, and I can't tell what's my name, or who I am!"

The bystanders began now to look at each other, nod, wink significantly, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was a whisper, also, about securing the gun, and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief, at the very suggestion of which the self-important man in the cocked hat retired with some precipitation. At this critical moment a fresh, comely woman pressed through the throng to get a peep at the gray-bearded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, which, frightened at his looks, began to cry. "Hush, Rip," cried she, "hush, you little fool; the old man won't hurt you." The name of the child, the air of the mother, the tone of her voice, all awakened a train of recollections in his mind. "What is your name, my good woman?" asked he.

"Judith Gardenier."

"And your father's name?"

"Ah! poor man, Rip Van Winkle was his name, but it's twenty years since he went away from home with his gun, and never has been heard of since—his dog came home without him; but whether he shot himself, or was carried away by the Indians, nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl."

Rip had but one question more to ask; but he put it with a faltering voice:

"Where's your mother?"

"Oh, she too had died but a short time since; she broke a blood-vessel in a fit of passion at a New England peddler."

There was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence. The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. "I am your father!" cried he—"Young Rip Van Winkle once—old Rip Van Winkle now! Does nobody know poor Rip Van Winkle?"

All stood amazed, until an old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, put her hand to her brow, and peering under it in his face for a moment, exclaimed, "Sure enough! it is Rip Van Winkle—it is himself! Welcome home again, old neighbor. Why, where have you been these twenty long years?"

Rip's story was soon told, for the whole twenty long years had been to him but as one night. The neighbors stared when they heard it; some were seen to wink at each other, and put their tongues in their cheeks: and the self-important man in the cocked hat, who, when the alarm was over, had returned to the field, screwed down the corners of his mouth, and shook his head—upon which there was a general shaking of the head throughout the assemblage.

It was determined, however, to take the opinion of old Peter Vanderdonk, who was seen slowly advancing up the road. He was a descendant of the historian of that name, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the province. Peter was the most ancient inhabitant of the village, and well versed in all the wonderful events and traditions of the neighborhood. He recollected Rip at once, and corroborated his story in the most satisfactory manner. He assured the company that it was a fact, handed down from his ancestor the historian, that the Kaatskill mountains had always been haunted by strange beings. That it was affirmed that the

great Hendrick Hudson, the first discoverer of the river and country, kept a kind of vigil there every twenty years, with his crew of the Half-moon; being permitted in this way to revisit the scenes of his enterprise, and keep a guardian eye upon the river, and the great city called by his name. That his father had once seen them in their old Dutch dresses playing at nine-pins in a hollow of the mountain; and that he himself had heard, one summer afternoon, the sound of their balls, like distant peals of thunder.

To make a long story short, the company broke up, and returned to the more important concerns of the election. Rip's daughter took him home to live with her; she had a snug, well-furnished house, and a stout, cheery farmer for a husband, whom Rip recollected for one of the urchins that used to climb upon his back. As to Rip's son and heir, who was the ditto of himself, seen leaning against the tree, he was employed to work on the farm; but evinced an hereditary disposition to attend to any thing else but his business.

Rip now resumed his old walks and habits; he soon found many of his former cronies, though all rather the worse for the wear and tear of time; and preferred making friends among the rising generation, with whom be soon grew into great favor.

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 reverenced as one of the patriarchs of the village, and a chronicle of the old times "before the war." It was some time before he could get into the regular track of gossip, or could be made to comprehend the strange events that had taken place during his torpor. How that there had been a revolutionary war—that the country had thrown off the yoke of old England—and that, instead of being a subject to his Majesty George the Third, he was now a free citizen of the United States. Rip, in fact, was no politician; the changes of states and empires made but little impression on him; but there was one species of despotism under which he had long groaned, and that was—petticoat government. Happily that was at an end; he had got his neck out of the yoke of matrimony, and could go in and out whenever he pleased, without dreading the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle. Whenever her name was mentioned, however, he shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and cast up his eyes; which might

pass either for an expression of resignation to his fate, or joy at his deliverance.

He used to tell his story to every stranger that arrived at Mr. Doolittle's hotel. He was observed, at first, to vary on some points every time he told it, which was, doubtless, owing to his having so recently awaked. It at last settled down precisely to the tale I have related, and not a man, woman, or child in the neighborhood, but knew it by heart. Some always pretended to doubt the reality of it, and insisted that Rip had been out of his head, and that this was one point on which he always remained flighty. The old Dutch inhabitants, however, almost universally gave it full credit. Even to this day they never hear a thunder-storm of a summer afternoon about the Kaatskill, but they say Hendrick Hudson and his crew are at their game of nine-pins; and it is a common wish of all hen-pecked husbands in the neighborhood, when life hangs heavy on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon.

The Last of the Mohicans

Scope: In the years during which James Fenimore Cooper published his five Leatherstocking Tales, including *The Last of the Mohicans* in 1826, the United States was an emerging independent nation. Although growing industries and rapid westward expansion were transforming the young nation, America had yet to contribute significantly to the sciences, arts, and literature, with minor exceptions. James Fenimore Cooper was the nation's first bestselling novelist, writing three dozen novels and becoming an internationally celebrated author. Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales featured a common heroic figure, Natty Bumppo—known as Hawkeye in *The Last of Mohicans*—a brave and resourceful woodsman, a founding figure in American mythology. The book takes place in 1757, during the Seven Years' War between the French and the English; it is both an adventure story and an extended commentary on American values. Despite the novel's accomplishments, Cooper is no longer regarded as a writer of major importance.

Outline

I. The United States was a young and expanding nation in 1820, the year James Fenimore Cooper published his first novel. The republic had grown from 13 states to 22, and the westward march that would continue to expand the nation's boundaries had begun.

- **A.** The new nation was essentially an agrarian society at this time, although the advent of technological change was visible. Canals and railroads increased the movement of goods and produce across the continent.
- **B.** Politically, the nation was robust and confident, with marked pride in its differences from the Old World of monarchy and inherited privilege.
- **C.** Culturally, the young nation had not achieved the same successes in the arts, science, or literature. American writing was predominantly political pamphlets and manifestos, with a few noted exceptions.

II. James Fenimore Cooper was the nation's first bestselling novelist.

- **A.** Born in 1789, Cooper was brought up in Cooperstown, New York, which was part of his father's vast landholdings.
- **B.** Cooper was expelled from Yale University after only two years; he subsequently spent time in the navy before inheriting his father's fortune at just 20 years old.
- **C.** He married Susan De Lancey, also the child of a landowning family, a few years later.
- **D.** In a bet with his wife that he could write as good a work of fiction as those from England, he published his first book, *Precaution*, a poor attempt at satirizing Jane Austen's novel of manners. The rest of his novels were primarily tales of the sea or American history, and he would go on to achieve international renown as an author.

III. Cooper's major achievement can be found in his five Leatherstocking Tales, a series that included *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Prairie* (1827), *The Pathfinder* (1840), and *The Deerslayer* (1841).

- **A.** These books tell the story Natty Bumppo, a brave and resourceful woodsman who established himself as a founding figure in American mythology.
- **B.** In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Natty is called Hawkeye. Like the other Natty characters, Hawkeye is a woodsman of uncommon skill and courage, at home in the wilderness, armed with an unerringly lethal long rifle.
- **C.** Hawkeye lives in a rough harmony with weather and animals; he is deeply learned in the arts of nature but contemptuous of book learning. This reflects Cooper's own suspicion of abstract intellect and his preference for practical problem solving.

IV. The novel's setting is Upstate New York in 1757, during the Seven Years' War. An English commander of Fort William Henry, Colonel Munro, has come under French siege, while his two daughters Cora and Alice have set out to rejoin him. They travel under the protection of a British major, Duncan Hayward, and their guide is a Huron Indian named Magua.

A. The plot is driven by a simple rhythm: danger and escape. With implausible scenarios and heightening tensions, Cooper helps to invent the modern cliffhanger, where suspense is maximized before resolution.

B. Cooper's liberties with reality are in part reflection of the romanticism that rose against the triumph of reason in the 18th century. The novel is best understood as a romantic allegory.

C. There are many memorable descriptions of natural beauty and its discovery throughout the novel. Like his European predecessors, Cooper was attracted to nature's glories just as they were disappearing. The gains of civilization were paid for by the loss of the natural world.

V. Hawkeye's closest affiliations are with Chingachgook and Uncas, his Mohican friends. Like the natural world they inhabit, the Indians are doomed.

A. The novel's final scenes, the death and burial of Uncas, symbolize the gradual elimination of Native Americans from the land.

B. Cooper's characterizations of Indians both stereotype in his demonization of Magua and also elevate their possibilities as characters. Uncas is graceful, fearless, even noble, and his behavior confirms his virtue.

1. Hawkeye insists that Indian souls are equal in value to white souls and that both races will find themselves sharing the afterlife.

2. In the book's last scene of mourning, Hawkeye's devotion and friendship to Chingachgook is underscored, and Hawkeye sheds his only tears in the novel.

VI. Despite the serious subject matter explored in *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper is no longer regarded a writer of major importance. How do we explain this decline?

A. The language of Cooper's fiction is a heightened, formal rhetoric that sounds obsolete to modern readers, especially in dialogue.

B. In 1895, Mark Twain published an essay called "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses" that ridiculed the plots and characters of the entire Leatherstocking series. He declares that Cooper breaks the rules of fiction, where language and dialogue should be recognizable, relevant, and relatable.

C. More recent generations of readers have found Cooper's myth of the New World lacking, the vision essentially only that of a man's world, wherein physical (and often violent) action define the quality of men.

Suggested Reading:

Person, *A Historical Guide to James Fenimore Cooper*.

Ringe, *James Fenimore Cooper*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Hawkeye feels bonds of affection and even kinship with his Mohican allies. At the same time, he frequently and proudly insists that he is "a man without a cross," that is, a full-blooded white man with no mixture of Indian blood. How are Hawkeye's apparently contradictory views best explained? What are the implications of his ambivalence for the novel as a whole? How does the novel treat the affectionate feelings that Uncas has for Cora?
2. In the novel, the wilderness is a place of both safety and danger. Follow Cooper's descriptions as the novel proceeds and select those that best convey his understanding of the natural world and the many different roles it plays in human lives.

Uncle Tom's Cabin

Scope: Harriet Beecher Stowe intended to intervene directly in the debate over slavery, and her outrage over the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was the direct impetus to her writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It was the bestselling American novel of the 19th century, and likely the first American book to sell over a million copies. Praised and attacked by newspapers, clergymen, and politicians all over the country, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* put a human face on the institution of slavery. The novel depicts the journey of Tom, a slave sold from a Kentucky farm into a life of deep uncertainty and danger, who is emboldened by his abiding faith. It is this Christian belief in an afterlife that allows him to forgive his final slave master's torture. In the end of the novel, Stowe intends Uncle Tom to die a martyr's death, though the ending has provoked much controversy and debate for the 150 years it has been in print. No other text in American literary history has combined popularity, notoriety, and influence in the same measure, and as such *Uncle Tom's Cabin* remains a permanent part of the nation's culture.

Outline

I. America's argument over slavery was only a trickle of dissent beginning in the 17th century.

- **A.** In 1696, a group of Philadelphia Quakers announced their support for abolition in Pennsylvania.
- **B.** A few years later, famous Puritan diarist Samuel Sewall produced the first antislavery tract published in New England.
- **C.** Despite demonstrations of antislavery sentiment, the slave trade flourished. In 1776, as continental delegates gathered in Philadelphia to declare their independence, slavery was legal in all 13 colonies.

II. In the first several decades of the 19th century, the division between North and South over slavery grew; most observers knew that slavery was the principal threat to national union.

- **A.** For their part, slaves resisted slavery in a variety of ways, and escaped when they could.

B. The division between the North and the South grew more profound and dangerous.

1. Southerners claimed that slavery was authorized by the U.S. Constitution.

2. Southerners also insisted that the entire Southern economy had come to depend on slavery.

3. Southern preachers utilized a Bible defense of slavery, which relied on scriptural support found therein.

4. Slavery's defenders also appealed to their version of the law of nature.

C. Abolitionism grew in strength and numbers despite long odds. Rooted in the Enlightenment idea of an essential human dignity, abolitionism began in the northern states.

D. The event that galvanized both sides in the slavery debate was the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.

III. To people in the North, including Harriet Beecher Stowe, the Fugitive Slave Law was brutal proof of "the slave power conspiracy."

A. Stowe was born in Connecticut in 1811, the daughter of Lyman Beecher.

B. Educated and gifted, she began writing for publications as a teen and continued writing after her marriage to Calvin Stowe.

C. Outraged by the Fugitive Slave Law, Stowe began to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

D. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was an instant success, with 10,000 copies of the novel sold in the first week and 300,000 in the first year.

IV. The novel is the story of Uncle Tom, a slave from a Kentucky farm, sold when the farm's owner falls into debt. He is purchased along with Harry, the young son of Eliza, Mrs. Shelby's maid. While Eliza and Harry escape and eventually find safety in Canada, Uncle Tom is shipped down the Mississippi River to a slave market.

A. On the journey, Tom rescues a young white girl named Eva, who has fallen overboard. In gratitude, Eva's father buys Tom and brings him to New Orleans.

B. The bonds of affection that grow between the white family and Tom are nurtured by their shared Christian faith.

1. Eva grows ill, and before she dies, she reveals that she has had a vision of Jesus in heaven; she also urges her father to emancipate Tom.
2. Although Eva's father wishes to free Tom after his daughter's death, he is killed before he can do so.

C. Tom is sold to a brutal planter named Simon Legree, who abuses his slaves mercilessly.

1. Legree develops a special hatred for Tom, who refuses to whip another slave when Legree orders him to.
2. Tom's faith is tested with his new master's brutality but is restored when he has visions of Eva and Jesus. He continues to bear Legree's torments with patience.

D. Tom's courage defines Stowe's "Victory," the title of the final chapter, in which Tom expires under a final beating. His faith in the afterlife is what propels his ability to forgive Legree and die a martyr's death.

V. The Christian devotion that sustains Eva and Tom is central to Stowe's purposes. The political and economic implications of slavery were secondary to the central point: Slavery was unforgivably wrong, a sin against nature and God.

A. Stowe insisted that true Christianity required abolition; she often suspended the story to point to its moral and religious significance.

B. She did not intend to write a great American novel; she wrote out of anger and despair, wanting to do what she could to end slavery.

C. Her storytelling borrowed from all kinds of sources: slave narratives, pious sermons, abolitionist press clippings.

VI. Reaction to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was unprecedented. Stowe became internationally famous overnight, and she received an enormous reaction from both those praising and vilifying her.

A. Critics of the book abounded, many expressing shock and outrage, fueled not only by her abolitionist views but also by her gender.

B. Other Stowe critics insisted her account of slavery was inaccurate, that it exaggerated the evils and understated the moderation and benevolence of the South's "peculiar institution." In response, Stowe published a companion volume, *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

C. The effect of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on mass culture was seen in its unprecedented sales and its appearance in the form of songs, toys, playing cards, figurines, and the like.

1. The novel was translated into dozens of languages and sold all over Europe and South America.

2. It was also adapted dramatically on American stages more often than any work aside from the plays of Shakespeare in the latter half of the 19th century.

D. If *Uncle Tom's Cabin* aroused the opposition of many contemporaries, then the novel has also faced powerful objections in the years since.

1. Stowe's narrative techniques, her direct appeals to the reader, her preference for simplicity over complexity, and the novel's sentimentalism and melodrama all combined to repel some readers.

2. Other readers objected to Stowe's treatment of her African American characters.

E. Some recent feminist scholars have proposed that Stowe's point of view embodied a revolutionary effort to replace patriarchal conventions with a more humane set of standards. Other scholars have reasserted Stowe's pioneering influence by reexamining the connections between the African American and women's fights for equality.

Suggested Reading:

Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe*.

Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Some critics have argued that Stowe's emphasis on Christian salvation may weaken her antislavery message. The novel insists, for example, that Uncle Tom wins the "victory" of a heavenly reward by dying at the hands of his slave master. Does this religious conviction diminish the novel's political message?

2. Gender plays an important role in this novel. Consider the main characters and the extent to which concepts of masculinity and femininity shape their attitudes and responses. In particular, Tom has been described as a man who responds to his trials with stereotypical feminine patience and fortitude.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Scope: By the mid-1880s, Mark Twain was among the most popular writers in the country. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, intended as a sequel to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, proved to be Twain's bestselling novel. What Twain achieved in *Huckleberry Finn* were the literary possibilities of colloquial American speech. Insisting that the path to what Twain called "the soul of the people, the life of the people" could only be found in everyday language, his prose is not simply an imitation or transcript of vernacular speech, but a selective, perfected new version of it. His genius for expression reached its highest level in *Huckleberry Finn*. Twain's most important choice is to make Huck the narrator; Huck's voice, one of the principal literary achievements of the American 19th century, evokes a world that is both earthy and mythic, a world in which the nation's democratic promises stand in judgment of racial inequality. The journey that Huck and Jim, an escaped slave he befriends, take down the Mississippi is a voyage into American history.

Outline

I. Mark Twain was born in 1835 in a two-room cabin in small-town Missouri. His family moved to Hannibal when he was four years old, and it was this town perched on the border between frontier and society that would later be immortalized in his fiction.

- **A.** Missouri was a slave state; Twain was raised in an atmosphere accepting of slavery and segregation. Twain's own father, John Clemens, was a part-time judge who sent abolitionists to jail.
- **B.** As a child, Twain had a reputation for making people laugh, a characteristic that he would use later in life.
  - **1.** He also loved to hear "tall tales" told by relatives and the family's slaves. One of those slaves, a kindly man called Uncle Dan'l, provided a major source for the character of Jim in *Huckleberry Finn*.
  - **2.** Twain avoided school whenever possible, and he spent time around the Mississippi River, as the leader of a gang of boys who got into minor trouble.

C. At first Twain wanted to be a river pilot; he even earned his license in 1859 and spent what he called the happiest two years of his life as a pilot.

D. Twain traveled west, changing his name and establishing himself as a famed comic lecturer. He continued his travels, going on to Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, seeing more of the world than most other early American writers.

1. Though he wasn't the first to earn fame as a comic, Mark Twain was considered the best.

2. Twain's popularity reached across the country and even the globe. On a tour of Asia, he reported that Mark Twain and George Washington were the only two American names the people in India recognized.

E. Twain's success as a lecturer aided his sales as a writer. His first books were nonfiction, based on his travels abroad and his time living in the Southwest.

1. In 1876, Twain published *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

2. He immediately set to work on a sequel, but it took him eight years to finish his masterpiece, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

II. In *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain's most important choice is to make Huck the narrator. He must reproduce more or less faithfully the speech and consciousness of an uneducated and often perplexed teenage boy while communicating the novel's serious themes.

A. Since *Tom Sawyer*, Huck's mother has died and his drunken father has vanished, so Huck lives with Miss Watson and Widow Douglas, who try to civilize him.

B. While *Huckleberry Finn* is heavy with motive and moral, the plot is almost nonexistent. The novel is a sample of picaresque, where the plot consists of a more or less unconnected series of adventures, usually dangerous.

C. Huck's first serious challenge is the reappearance of his drunken, abusive father. He escapes by faking his own death and makes his way to Jackson's Island, where he meets Jim, a runaway slave.

III. In terms of the novel's symbolic economy, Huck has found in Jim a new family to replace what he has run from. Both Huck and Jim have chosen to reinvent themselves, and a bond grows between the black man and white boy as they proceed down the river.

A. Jim frequently acts as Huck's protector and counselor, while Huck hides Jim from white men who approach their raft.

B. To avoid suspicion, they travel mainly by night and sleep during the day.

1. One night, Huck and Jim climb aboard a wrecked steamboat called the *Walter Scott*.

2. This selection was intentional; Scott was a bestselling novelist whose romanticization and idealization of the South had great impact.

C. As Huck and Jim float deeper into the South, Twain abandons the novel as he tries to resolve a simple question: Why would a runaway slave run south? It took him another seven years before he would finish the book.

1. His solution to the question that stalled him was to take the power of initiative away from Huck and Jim, and to put others in control.

2. Here Twain introduces two of the most comically sinister characters in American fiction: King of France and Duke of Bilgewater, both swindlers and thieves.

3. The comedy turns into terror when the King and Duke sell Jim back into slavery for $40.

D. The book's moral center lies here: Huck wrestles with whether he should write a letter to return Jim to servitude or allow his humanity to best his socialization.

E. Huck and Tom Sawyer make several lame attempts to rescue Jim, though Tom's childish tricks are played at the cost of Jim's dignity as a human being, and the novel descends into farce.

IV. Huck's retreat and subservience to Tom's ridiculous schemes creates a moral confusion. Huck is the young man who has supposedly grown into ethical insight and has learned to treasure Jim's value. Huck's retreat bespeaks Twain's failure of nerve, or of clarity, and it has been a source of argument almost since *Huckleberry Finn*'s publication.

A. This is one of the reasons the book has been continuously controversial.

B. For his part, Twain knew the attacks would be good for sales, and they certainly were.

V. In subsequent decades, the book has continued to spark debate, less about its indelicacy than about its treatment of gender and especially its use of racially inflammatory language.

A. Most readers have concluded that despite this, *Huckleberry Finn* is essentially an affirmation of human solidarity, a repudiation of suffocating conventions, and an exploration of a limited but generous heart.

B. Above all, this is a novel that revealed to Americans the versatility, range, and unexpected precision that resides within their own language.

Suggested Reading:

Emerson, *The Authentic Mark Twain*.

Kaplan, *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain*.

Questions to Consider:

1. *Huckleberry Finn* presents an exceptional mixture of comedy and violence, sometimes in the same episodes. Scenes of mistaken identity, slapstick, and verbal humor provide the comedy, while dead bodies, slavery, and angry mobs exemplify the violence. How does this remarkable intermingling of tones contribute to Twain's narrative and to his major themes?

2. Many critics have suggested that Jim eventually becomes a surrogate father for Huck. What are the strengths and weaknesses of that hypothesis? Can the links that undeniably bind the two characters overcome the fundamental differences of race, class, and servitude that divide them?

The Tell-Tale Heart

IT'S TRUE! YES, I HAVE BEEN ILL, very ill. But why do you say that I have lost control of my mind, why do you say that I am mad? Can you not see that I have full control of my mind? Is it not clear that I am not mad? Indeed, the illness only made my mind, my feelings, my senses stronger, more powerful. My sense of hearing especially became more powerful. I could hear sounds I had never heard before. I heard sounds from heaven; and I heard sounds from hell!

Listen! Listen, and I will tell you how it happened. You will see, you will hear how healthy my mind is.

It is impossible to say how the idea first entered my head. There was no reason for what I did. I did not hate the old man; I even loved him. He had never hurt me. I did not want his money. I think it was his eye. His eye was like the eye of a **vulture**, the eye of one of those terrible birds that watch and wait while an animal dies, and then fall upon the dead body and pull it to pieces to eat it. When the old man looked at me with his vulture eye a cold feeling went up and down my

back; even my blood became cold. And so, I finally decided I had to kill the old man and close that eye forever!

So you think that I am mad? A madman cannot plan. But you should have seen me. During all of that week I was as friendly to the old man as I could be, and warm, and loving.

Every night about twelve o'clock I slowly opened his door. And when the door was opened wide enough I put my hand in, and then my head. In my hand I held a light covered over with a cloth so that no light showed. And I stood there quietly. Then, carefully, I lifted the cloth, just a little, so that a single, thin, small light fell across that eye. For seven nights I did this, seven long nights, every night at midnight. Always the eye was closed, so it was impossible for me to do the work. For it was not the old man I felt I had to kill; it was the eye, his Evil Eye.

And every morning I went to his room, and with a warm, friendly voice I asked him how he had slept. He could not guess that every night, just at twelve, I looked in at him as he slept.

The eighth night I was more than usually careful as I opened the door. The hands of a clock move more quickly than did my hand. Never before had I felt so strongly my own power; I was now sure of success.

The old man was lying there not dreaming that I was at his door. Suddenly he moved in his bed. You may think I became afraid. But no. The darkness in his room was thick and black. I knew he could not see the opening of the door. I continued to push the door, slowly, softly. I put in my head. I put in my hand, with the covered light. Suddenly the old man sat straight up in bed and cried, "Who's there??!"

I stood quite still. For a whole hour I did not move. Nor did I hear him again lie down in his bed. He just sat there, listening. Then I heard a sound, a low cry of fear which escaped from the old man. Now I knew that he was sitting up in his bed, filled with fear; I knew that he knew that I was there. He did not see me there. He could not hear me there. He felt me there. Now he knew that Death was standing there.

Slowly, little by little, I lifted the cloth, until a small, small light escaped from under it to fall upon — to fall upon that vulture eye! It was open — wide, wide open, and my anger increased as it looked straight at me. I could not see the old man's face. Only that eye, that

hard blue eye, and the blood in my body became like ice.

Have I not told you that my hearing had become unusually strong? Now I could hear a quick, low, soft sound, like the sound of a clock heard through a wall. It was the beating of the old man's heart. I tried to stand quietly. But the sound grew louder. The old man's fear must have been great indeed. And as the sound grew louder my anger became greater and more painful. But it was more than anger. In the quiet night, in the dark silence of the bedroom my anger became fear — for the heart was beating so loudly that I was sure some one must hear. The time had come! I rushed into the room, crying, "Die! Die!" The old man gave a loud cry of fear as I fell upon him and held the bedcovers **tightly** over his head. Still his heart was beating; but I smiled as I felt that success was near. For many minutes that heart continued to beat; but at last the beating stopped. The old man was dead. I took away the bedcovers and held my ear over his heart. There was no sound. Yes. He was dead! Dead as a stone. His eye would **trouble** me no more!

So I am mad, you say? You should have seen how careful I was to put the body where no one could find it. First I cut off the head, then the arms and the legs. I was careful not to let a single drop of blood fall on the floor. I pulled up three of the boards that formed the floor, and put the pieces of the body there. Then I put the boards down again, carefully, so carefully that no human eye could see that they had been moved.

As I finished this work I heard that someone was at the door. It was now four o'clock in the morning, but still dark. I had no fear, however, as I went down to open the door. Three men were at the door, three officers of the

police. One of the neighbors had heard the old man's cry and had called the police; these three had come to ask questions and to search the house.

I asked the policemen to come in. The cry, I said, was my own, in a dream. The old man, I said, was away; he had gone to visit a friend in the country. I took them through the whole house, telling them to search it all, to search well. I led them finally into the old man's bedroom. As if playing a game with them I asked them to sit down and talk for a while.

My easy, quiet manner made the policemen believe my story. So they sat talking with me in a friendly way. But although I answered them in the same way, I soon wished that they would go. My head hurt and there was a strange sound in my ears. I talked more, and faster. The sound became clearer. And still they sat and talked.

Suddenly I knew that the sound was not in my ears, it was not just inside my head. At that moment I must have become quite white. I talked still faster and louder. And the sound, too, became louder. It was a quick, low, soft sound, like the sound of a clock heard through a wall, a sound I knew well. Louder it became, and louder. Why did the men not go? Louder, louder. I stood up and walked quickly around the room. I pushed my chair across the floor to make more noise, to cover that terrible sound. I talked even louder. And still the men sat and talked, and smiled. Was it possible that they could not hear??

No! They heard! I was certain of it. They knew! Now it was they who were playing a game with me. I was suffering more than I could bear, from their smiles, and from that sound. Louder, louder, louder! Suddenly I could bear it no longer. I pointed at the boards and cried, "Yes! Yes, I killed him. Pull up the boards and you shall see! I killed him. But why does his heart not stop beating?! Why does it not stop!?"

	American Literary Texts	*American Events, Texts, and Arts*	*Other Events, Texts, and Arts*
1860	Davis, Rebecca Harding (1831–1910), *Life in the Iron Mills* (novel)	Emerson, Ralph Waldo (1803–1882), *The Conduct of Life* (philosophy)	Eliot, George (1819–1880), *The Mill on the Floss* (novel)
	Hawthorne, Nathaniel (1804–1864), *The Marble Faun* (novel)	The 5 story Pemberton Mill in Lowell, Massachusetts collapses; 88 people are killed and hundreds are injured.	Mill, John Stuart (1806–1873), *Considerations of Representative Government* (political philosophy)
	Holmes, Oliver Wendell (1809–1894), *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* (miscellany)	Abraham Lincoln is elected President.	Great Britain asserts its neutrality in the US Civil War.
1861	Holmes, Oliver Wendell (1809–1894), *Elsie Venner* (novel)	Confederate forces fire on Fort Sumter, beginning the Civil War.	The Russian Czar, Alexander II, emancipates the serfs.
	Jacobs, Harriet (1813–1897), *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (personal narrative)	Jefferson Davis is elected President of the Confederacy.	Victor Emmanuel II is proclaimed King of a unified Italy.
	Winthrop, Theodore (1828–1861), *Cecil Dreeme* (novel)		Louis Pasteur develops the germ theory of disease.
			Dickens, Charles (1812–1870), *Great Expectations* (novel)
			Eliot, George (1819–1880), *Silas Marner* (novel)
			Maine, Henry Summer (1822–1888), *Ancient Law* (legal history)
1862	Alexander, Charles (1837–1927), *Pauline of the Potomac* (novel)	Henry David Thoreau dies.	Otto von Bismarck is appointed Prime Minister of Prussia and delivers his "Blood and Iron" speech.
	Stowe, Harriet Beecher (1811–1896), *The Pearl of Orr's Island* (novel)	Crummell, Alexander (1819–1898), *The Future of Africa* (political essays)	Léon Foucault measures the speed of light on earth.
	Victor, Metta (1831–1885), *The Unionist's Daughter* (novel)	President Lincoln signs the Homestead Act, opening 270 million acres of the American West, in 160 acre parcels, to settlers.	Hugo, Victor (1802–1885), *Les Misérables* (novel)

		Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, decrees a universal conscription of Southern men between the ages of 18 and 35.	Spencer, Herbert (1820–1903), *First Principles* (evolutionary biology)
		Matthew Brady opens an exhibition of battlefield photography, *The Dead of Antietam*, at his New York gallery.	Turgenev, Ivan (1818–1883), *Fathers and Sons* (novel)
		Howe, Julia Ward (1819–1910), "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" (poem/popular song)	
1863	Alcott, Louisa May (1832–1882), *Hospital Sketches* (short stories)	President Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation, ending slavery in the Confederate states.	France establishes a protectorate in Cambodia.
	Hale, Edward Everett (1822–1909), "The Man Without a Country" (short story)	West Virginia becomes a state. Arizona and Idaho are organized into territories.	Archduke Maximilian of Austria becomes Emperor of Mexico.
	Hawthorne, Nathaniel (1804–1864), *Our Old Home* (travel)	Four days of draft riots in New York City end in over 1,200 deaths.	Huxley, T. H. (1825–1895), *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (biological anthropology)
	Trowbridge, John Townsend (1827–1916), *The Drummer Boy* (novel)	A Union victory at the Battle of Gettysburg turns the tide of the Civil War. At the subsequent dedication of the battlefield and cemetery, President Lincoln delivers his Gettysburg Address.	Manet, Edouard (1832–1883), *Olympia* (painting)
		Burnand, F. C. (1836–1917), *Ixion; or the Man at the Wheel* (burlesque)	Mill, John Stuart (1806–1873), *Utilitarianism* (ethical philosophy)
1864	Edmonds, Sarah (1841–1898), *Unsexed: or, The Female Soldier* (novel)	Greeley, Horace (1811–1872), *The American Conflict* (history)	Dickens, Charles (1812–1870), *Our Mutual Friend* (novel)
	Thoreau, Henry David (1817–1862), *The Maine Woods* (travel)	Abraham Lincoln is re-elected President.	Tolstoy, Leo (1828–1910), *War and Peace* (novel)

(*cont.*)

	American Literary Texts	*American Events, Texts, and Arts*	*Other Events, Texts, and Arts*
	Willett, Edward (1830–1889), *Vicksburg Spy* (novel)	Ulysses S. Grant is appointed Commander of the Union armies.	Louis Pasteur invents the antibacterial process known as "pasteurization."
		General Sherman begins his "march to the sea," destroying Confederate lands from Chattanooga to Savannah.	The first Geneva Convention creates the Red Cross Society to treat those who are sick or wounded in battle.
		Nathaniel Hawthorne dies.	French workers are granted the right to strike.
			The First International Workers' Association is formed in London.
			The Metropolitan Railway, the world's first subway system, opens in London.
1865	Thoreau, Henry David (1817–1862), *Cape Cod* (travel)	Robert E. Lee surrenders his Confederate forces to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, on April 9, ending major combat of the Civil War.	The US demands the withdrawal of French forces from Mexico.
	Trowbridge, John Townsend (1827–1916), *The Three Scouts* (novel)	President Lincoln is assassinated on April 9. Vice President Andrew Johnson becomes President.	Karl Benz designs the first automobile not adapted from a horse-drawn carriage.
		P. T. Barnum's first American Museum is destroyed in a fire.	William Booth establishes the Salvation Army.
		The ratification of the 13th Amendment abolishes slavery.	Carroll, Lewis (1832–1898), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (novel)
		The Ku Klux Klan is founded in Tennessee.	
		Alexander Gardner publishes his *Photographic Sketchbook of the War*, a volume of battlefield photos he took while working for Matthew Brady.	

1866	Evans, Augusta (1835–1909), *St. Elmo* (novel)	Cyrus Field lays the first transatlantic cable.	The Seven Week War begins between Prussia and Austria.
	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *Venetian Life* (travel)	The National Labor Union, comprised of skilled and unskilled workers, is founded to lobby for the 8-hour work day.	Alfred Nobel invents dynamite.
	Thoreau, Henry David (1817–1862), *A Yankee in Canada* (travel)	Winslow Homer completes *Prisoners from the Front* (painting).	Dostoevsky, Fyodor (1821–1881), *Crime and Punishment* (novel)
1867	Child, Lydia Maria (1802–1880), *The Romance of the Republic* (novel)	Higginson, Thomas Wentworth (1823–1911), "A Plea for Culture" (criticism)	Mexican Emperor Maximilian is executed. Benito Juárez is re-elected President and restores republican rule.
	Daly, Augustin (1838–1899), *Under the Gaslight* (drama)	The Doolittle Report documents the mistreatment of Native Americans by the federal government and recommends a policy of greater compassion.	Fenian violence increases in Ireland.
	Finley, Martha (1828–1909), *Elsie Dinsmore* (novel)	Nebraska becomes a state.	Joseph Lister introduces sterilization and antiseptic procedures in surgery.
	Harte, Bret (1836–1902), *Condensed Novels and Other Papers* (short stories)	The federal government purchases Alaska from Russia for $7,200,000.	Marx, Karl (1818–1883), *Das Kapital* vol. 1 (political philosophy)
	Twain, Mark (1835–1910), *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and other sketches* (short stories)		Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Don Carlos* premieres in Paris.
1868	Alcott, Louisa May (1832–1888), *Little Women* (novel)	Parton, James (1822–1891), *The People's Book of Biography* (biography)	Emperor Meiji opens Japan to Western influences.
	Alger, Horatio (1832–1899), *Ragged Dick* (novel)	President Johnson is impeached, then acquitted by the US Senate.	The Ten Years War begins in Cuba.
	Davis, Rebecca Harding (1831–1910), *Waiting for the Verdict* (novel)	Ulysses S. Grant is elected President.	Collins, Wilkie (1824–1889), *The Moonstone* (novel)

(*cont.*)

	American Literary Texts	*American Events, Texts, and Arts*	*Other Events, Texts, and Arts*
	Dickinson, Anna (1842–1932), *What Answer* (novel)	The ratification of the 14th Amendment grants citizenship to all born or naturalized in the US and ensures equal protection under federal law.	Dostoevsky, Fyodor (1821–1881), *The Idiot* (novel)
	Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart (1844–1911), *The Gates Ajar* (novel)	The 8-hour work day is established in public works.	
1869	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *Italian Journeys* (travel)	The National Colored Labor Union is founded, when African Americans are denied membership in the National Labor Union.	The Church of Ireland is disestablished.
	Stowe, Harriet Beecher (1811–1896), *Oldtown Folks* (novel)	Barnum, P. T. (1810–1891), *Struggles and Triumphs* (memoir)	The Suez Canal opens.
	Twain, Mark (1835–1910), *Innocents Abroad* (travel)		Arnold, Matthew (1822–1888), *Culture and Anarchy* (criticism)
			Flaubert, Gustave (1821–1880), *Sentimental Education* (novel)
			Galton, Francis (1822–1911), *Hereditary Genius* (eugenics)
			Mill, John Stuart (1806–1873), *On the Subjection of Women* (social theory)
			Richard Wagner's opera *Das Rheingold* premieres in Munich.
1870	Alcott, Louisa May (1832–1888), *An Old-Fashioned Girl* (novel)	*Scribner's Monthly* is founded.	Chancellor Otto von Bismarck initiates the Franco-German War to promote German unification.
	Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart (1844–1911), *Hedged In* (novel)	Lowell, James Russell (1819–1891), *Among My Books* (criticism)	France's Third Republic is created as the empire of Napoleon III collapses.

	Harte, Bret (1836–1902), *The Luck of Roaring Camp, and other sketches* (short stories)	New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art is founded. John D. Rockefeller founds the Standard Oil Company. The ratification of the 15th Amendment guarantees voting rights to all male citizens.	The First Vatican Council proclaims the doctrine of papal infallibility. Verne, Jules (1828–1905), *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (novel) Sacher-Masoch, Leopold Ritter von (1835–1895), *Venus im Pelz* (novel)
1871	Alcott, Louisa May (1832–1899), *Little Men* (novel)	Harland, Marion (1830–1922), *Common Sense in the Household* (domestic advice)	The Commune, a league of radical socialists, controls Paris from March to May. Over 20,000 Communards are executed as the Third Republic reclaims the city.
	Eggleston, Edward (1837–1902), *The Hoosier Schoolmaster* (novel)	Adams, Henry (1838–1918) and Charles Adams (1835–1915), *Chapters of Erie and other Essays* (history)	Darwin, Charles (1809–1882), *The Descent of Man* (biological anthropology)
	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *Their Wedding Journey* (novel) Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart (1844–1911), *The Silent Partner* (novel)	Lowell, James Russell (1819–1891), *My Study Window* (criticism) Mitchell, S. Weir (1829–1914), *Wear and Tear; or, Hints for the Overworked* (health and medicine) Morgan, Lewis Henry (1818–1881), *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (anthropology) William Dean Howells becomes editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. The Great Chicago Fire kills approximately 300 people, leaves over 100,000 homeless and destroys thousands of buildings.	Eliot, George (1819–1880), *Middlemarch* (novel) Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Aida* premieres in Cairo.

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	American Literary Texts	*American Events, Texts, and Arts*	*Other Events, Texts, and Arts*
		James McNeill Whistler completes *Arrangement in Gray and Black* (painting).	
		Whitman, Walt (1819–1892), *Democratic Vistas* (criticism)	
		P. T. Barnum's circus, "The Greatest Show On Earth," opens in New York.	
1872	Ruiz de Burton, María Amparo (1832–1895), *Who Would Have Thought It?* (novel)	Edward Muybridge photographs the stages of a horse's gallop, prefiguring the era of motion pictures.	Financial panic in Vienna.
	Twain, Mark (1835–1910), *Roughing It* (travel)	Alcott, Bronson (1799–1888), *Concord Days* (memoir)	The third Carlist War begins in Spain over the rightful succession to the throne.
		Brace, Charles Loring (1826–1890), *The Dangerous Classes of New York* (documentary reporting)	Claude Monet finishes *Impression: Fog* (painting).
		Congress passes the General Amnesty Act, pardoning most ex-Confederates.	Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844–1900), *The Birth of Tragedy* (criticism)
			Verne, Jules (1828–1905), *Around the World in 80 Days* (novel)
1873	Eggleston, Edward (1837–1902), *The Mystery of Metropolisville* (novel)	Boston's Museum of Fine Art is founded.	Amadeo I of Spain abdicates and is replaced by an unstable republic.
	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *A Chance Acquaintance* (novel)	Jay Cooke, financier of the Northern Pacific Railroad, declares bankruptcy, precipitating a national financial panic.	Arnold, Matthew (1822–1888), *Literature and Dogma* (criticism)

	Twain, Mark (1835–1910) and Charles Dudley Warner (1829–1900), *The Gilded Age* (novel)		Pater, Walter (1839–1894), *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (art history) Spencer, Herbert (1820–1903), *The Study of Sociology* (sociology)
1874	Aldrich, Thomas Bailey (1836–1907), *Prudence Palfrey* (novel)	The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children is founded in New York.	The British Factory Act institutes a 56-hour work week.
	Eggleston, Edward (1837–1902), *The Circuit Rider* (novel)	The Women's Christian Temperance Union is founded in Cleveland.	The first Impressionist exhibition is held in Paris.
	Warner, Charles Dudley (1829–1920), *Baddeck, and that Sort of Thing* (travel)	The Chautauqua movement begins in upstate New York.	Hardy, Thomas (1840–1928), *Far From the Maddening Crowd* (novel)
1875	Alcott, Louisa May (1832–1888), *Eight Cousins* (novel)	Andrew Carnegie introduces the Bessemer steel-making process in the US at his plant in Braddock, Pennsylvania, insuring his dominance of the steel market.	Great Britain and Russia intervene in the conflict between France and Germany and avert another war.
	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *A Foregone Conclusion* (novel) James, Henry (1843–1916), *Roderick Hudson* (novel); *Transatlantic Sketches* (travel), Woolson, Constance Fenimore (1840–1894), *Castle Nowhere: Lake County Sketches* (short stories)	Madame Blavatsky founds the Theosophical Society in New York. Eddy, Mary Baker (1821–1910), *Science and Health* (theology)	Bizet's opera *Carmen* debuts in Paris.
1876	Alcott, Louisa May (1832–1888), *Rose in Bloom* (novel)	Colorado becomes a state.	Porfirio Díaz leads a successful revolution and becomes Mexico's President.

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	American Literary Texts	*American Events, Texts, and Arts*	*Other Events, Texts, and Arts*
	Harte, Bret (1836–1902), *Gabriel Conroy* (novel); *Two Men of Sandy Bar* (drama)	Philadelphia's Centennial celebrations.	The first complete performance of Wagner's *Ring* cycle takes place at Beyreuth.
	Twain, Mark (1835–1910), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (novel)	Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone.	Johannes Brahms composes his *Symphony No. 1*. Eliot, George (1819–1880), *Daniel Deronda* (novel)
1877	Alcott, Louisa May (1832–1888), *A Modern Mephistopheles* (novel)	The US election between Rutherford B. Hayes and Samuel J. Tilden is decided by a Congressional electoral commission. Hayes becomes President.	The last Russo-Turkish war begins over disputed territory; it ends in 1878.
	James, Henry (1843–1916), *The American* (novel)	End of Reconstruction; Federal troops withdraw from the South.	Queen Victoria is proclaimed Empress of India.
	Jewett, Sarah Orne (1849–1909), *Deephaven* (novel)	Nationwide railroad strikes in July and August end in violent confrontations between strikers and the US military.	British General Charles Gordon becomes Governor-General of Sudan.
	Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart (1844–1911), *The Story of Avis* (novel)	Philadelphia's Museum of Art founded.	Auguste Rodin completes *The Age of Bronze* (sculpture).
		Thomas Edison invents the phonograph. Morgan, Lewis Henry (1818–1881), *Ancient Society* (anthropology)	Zola, Emile (1840–1902), *L'Assommoir* (novel)
1878	Alcott, Louisa May (1832–1888), *Under the Lilacs* (novel)	Pierce, Charles Saunders (1839–1914), *How to Make Our Ideas Clear* (philosophy)	Greece declares war on Turkey; the European powers intervene before major combat begins.
	Harte, Bret (1836–1902), *Drift from Two Shores* (short stories)	The Knights of Labor convene their first national assembly in Reading, Pennsylvania.	The International Labor Union is formed.

	James, Henry (1843–1888), *The Europeans* (novel)		Electric street lights are introduced in London. Gilbert and Sullivan's opera, *HMS Pinafore*, debuts in London. Hardy, Thomas (1840–1928), *The Return of the Native* (novel) Morris, William (1834–1896), *The Decorative Arts* (aesthetics) Tolstoy, Leo (1828–1910), *Anna Karenina* (novel, serialized since 1873)
1879	Cable, George Washington (1844–1925), *Old Creole Days* (short stories)	George, Henry (1839–1897), *Progress and Poverty* (economics)	The Zulu War between the independent Zulu nation and Great Britain over the control of southern Africa begins; despite suffering heavy losses, the British defeat the Zulus before the end of the year.
	James, Henry (1843–1916), *Daisy Miller* (novella) Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *The Lady of the Aroostook* (novel) Tourgée, Albion (1838–1905), *A Fool's Errand* (novel)	Pember, Phoebe Yates (1823–1913), *A Southern Woman's Story* (memoir) James, Henry (1843–1916), *Hawthorne* (biography) The postal service introduces new reduced rates for bulk mailing. Mary Baker Eddy founds the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston. Thomas Edison demonstrates his improved electric light bulb.	Ibsen, Henrik (1828–1906), *A Doll's House* (drama) Meredith, George (1828–1909), *The Egoist* (novel)
1880	Adams, Henry (1838–1918), *Democracy* (novel)	James A. Garfield is elected President.	The Transvaal War (or the First Boer War) between South Africa's British and Dutch settlers begins; it ends a year later in a British defeat.

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	American Literary Texts	*American Events, Texts, and Arts*	*Other Events, Texts, and Arts*
	Cable, George Washington (1844–1925), *The Grandissimes* (novel)	Federal deputies kill five men during a mass demonstration of railroad workers in Mussel Slough, California.	France begins initial construction of the Panama Canal, under the guidance of engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps.
	Harris, Joel Chandler (1848–1908), *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings* (folklore)	Electric street lights are introduced in New York City.	Gilbert and Sullivan's opera, *The Pirates of Penzance*, debuts in Paignton, England.
	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *The Undiscovered Country* (novel)		Auguste Rodin completes *The Thinker* (sculpture).
	James, Henry (1843–1916), *Washington Square* (novel)		Dostoevsky, Fyodor (1821–1881), *The Brothers Karamazov* (novel)
	Wallace, Lew (1827–1905), *Ben-Hur* (novel)		Zola, Emile (1840–1902), *Nana* (novel)
	Woolson, Constance Fenimore (1840–1894), *Anne* (novel); *Rodman the Keeper* (short stories)		
1881	Cable, George Washington (1844–1925), *Madame Delpine* (novel)	Beard, George M. (1839–1883), *American Nervousness* (health and medicine)	French troops occupy Tunisia.
	James, Henry (1843–1916), *The Portrait of a Lady* (novel)	Holmes, Oliver Wendell Jr. (1841–1935), *The Common Law* (jurisprudence)	Irish Home Rule activist Charles Stuart Parnell is imprisoned by the British governement for incitement to intimidation.
	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *A Fearful Responsibility* (short stories); *Dr. Breen's Practice* (novel)	Jackson, Helen Hunt (1830–1885), *A Century of Dishonor* (history)	In response to the assassination of Czar Alexander II, the Russian Holy Synod initiates a series of repressive policies, including the pogroms against Jews.
		Boston Symphony Orchestra is founded.	
		Booker T. Washington founds Tuskegee Institute.	

		The Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada, a forerunner of the American Federation of Labor, is founded by Samuel Gompers. President Garfield is assassinated. Vice President Chester A. Arthur becomes President.	
1882	Goldfaden, Abraham (1840–1908), *The Sorceress* (drama) Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *A Modern Instance* (novel) Twain, Mark (1835–1910), *The Prince and the Pauper* (novel)	Whitman, Walt (1819–1892), *Specimen Days* (memoir) Ralph Waldo Emerson dies.	Italy establishes the colony of Eritrea. British forces overtake Cairo. Richard Wagner's final opera, *Parsifal*, debuts at Bayreuth. Ibsen, Henrik (1828–1906), *An Enemy of the People* (drama) Stevenson, Robert Louis (1850–1894), *Treasure Island* (novel)
1883	Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart (1844–1911), *Beyond the Gates* (novel) Twain, Mark (1835–1910), *Life on the Mississippi* (travel) Woolson, Constance Fenimore (1840–1894), *For the Major* (novel)	Winnemucca Hopkins, Sarah (1844?–1891), *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (memoir) William Cody founds his traveling show, Buffalo Bill's Wild West. The Metropolitan Opera House opens in New York City. The Northern Pacific Railroad, connecting the Great Lakes and the Pacific Ocean, is completed. The Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen is formed.	France establishes a protectorate in Vietnam. The first Russian Marxist party, the Group for the Liberation of Labor, is founded. The first volume of the *Oxford English Dictionary* is published. Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844–1900), *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (philosophy)

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	American Literary Texts	*American Events, Texts, and Arts*	*Other Events, Texts, and Arts*
		Congress passes the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act, ending the "spoils system" in government bureaucracy.	
1884	Adams, Henry (1838–1918), *Esther* (novel) Twain, Mark (1835–1910), *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (novel) Hay, John (1838–1905), *The Bread-winners* (novel) Hinton, C. H. (1853–1907), *Scientific Romances* (short stories) Jackson, Helen Hunt (1830–1885), *Ramona* (novel) Murfree, Mary Noailles (1850–1922), *In the Tennessee Mountains* (short stories)	Grover Cleveland is elected President. New York City Tenement-House Commission established.	The Redistribution Act extends suffrage to all British men over 21. The dirigible balloon is invented by the Renard brothers. The Fabian Society is founded in London.
1885	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (novel) James, Henry (1843–1916), *The Author of Beltraffio* (short stories)	The Knights of Labor initiate their first strikes in the United States. William LeBaron Jenney's 10 story Home Insurance Building, considered the first modern skyscraper, is completed in Chicago.	A strike of 8,000 textile workers outside Moscow is put down by Cossack soldiers. Louis Pasteur invents a rabies inoculation.
	Ruiz de Burton, María Amparo (1832–1895), *The Squatter and the Don* (novel)	Grant, Ulysses S. (1822–1885), *Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant* (memoir) Strong, Josiah (1847–1916), *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Decay* (documentary reporting)	Gottlieb Daimler improves the internal combustion engine, creating the first modern gasoline engine. Gilbert and Sullivan's opera, *The Mikado*, debuts in London.

			Vincent Van Gogh finishes *The Potato-Eaters* (painting). Zola, Emile (1840–1902), *Germinal* (novel)
1886	Alcott, Louisa May (1832–1888), *Jo's Boys* (novel)	Standardization of track widths in the South completes the national railroad system.	Slavery is abolished in Cuba.
	James, Henry (1843–1916), *The Bostonians* (novel)	The Supreme Court decides *US v. Kagema* declaring all Native Americans to be wards of the nation.	Heinrich Hertz discovers electromagnetic waves.
	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *The Minister's Charge* (novel); *Indian Summer* (novel)	The Statue of Liberty is dedicated in New York Harbor. *Cosmopolitan* magazine is founded in Rochester. The American Federation of Labor is founded. It soon leads an all-trades demonstration for an 8-hour workday.	Haggard, H. Rider (1856–1925), *King Solomon's Mines* (novel) Hardy, Thomas (1840–1928), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (novel) Huxley, T. H. (1825–1895), *Science and Morals* (ethics)
		Ottmar Mergenthaler invents the linotype machine.	Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844–1900), *Beyond Good and Evil* (philosophy) Stevenson, Robert Louis (1850–1894), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (novella); *Kidnapped* (novel) Auguste Rodin completes *The Kiss* (sculpture).
1887	Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart (1844–1911), *The Gates Between* (novel)	Chicago's Haymarket Riot begins when a bomb explodes during a strike at the McCormick Reaper Works.	The First Colonial Conference is held in London.
		The lead, sugar and whiskey trusts are formed. The US obtains the right to use Pearl Harbor as a naval base.	The Triangle Alliance is formed between Austria, Germany and Italy. Sardou, Victorien (1831–1908), *La Tosca* (drama)

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	American Literary Texts	*American Events, Texts, and Arts*	*Other Events, Texts, and Arts*
	Royce, Josiah (1855–1916), *The Feud of Oakfield Creek* (novel)	Roosevelt, Theodore (1858–1919), *The Winning of the West* (history)	Strindberg, August (1849–1912), *The Father* (drama)
1888	Bellamy, Edward (1850–1898), *Looking Backward, 2000–1887* (novel)	Benjamin Harrison is elected President.	The Suez Canal Convention declares the canal open to all traffic in war and peace.
	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *Annie Kilburn* (novel)	George Eastman invents the Kodak box camera.	"Jack the Ripper" murders 6 women in London.
	James, Henry (1843–1916), *The Aspern Papers* (novella); *The Reverberator* (novel)	Bronson Alcott and Louisa May Alcott die, two days apart.	Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's orchestral suite, *Scheherazade*, debuts in St. Petersburg.
		The Burlington Railroad Strike begins in Chicago and lasts almost a full year.	Gustav Mahler completes his *Symphony No. 1*.
		James, Henry (1843–1916), *Partial Portraits* (biography)	Strindberg, August (1849–1912), *Miss Julie* (drama); *Creditors* (drama)
		Norton, Charles Eliot (1827–1908), "The Intellectual Life of America" (criticism)	
1889	Twain, Mark (1835–1910), *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (novel)	North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana and Washington become states.	Pater, Walter (1839–1894), *Appreciations* (criticism)
	Harris, Joel Chandler (1848–1908), *Daddy Jake the Runaway and Other Stories* (short stories)	Jane Addams founds Hull House in Chicago.	The First International Socialist Congress in Paris creates the Second International.
	Woolson, Constance Fenimore (1840–1894), *Jupiter Lights* (novel)	The Daughters of the American Revolution is founded.	The Eiffel Tower rises above the International Exhibition in Paris.
		Carnegie, Andrew (1853–1919), *Gospel of Wealth* (self help)	The first Pan American Conference is held in Washington DC
		Adams, Henry (1838–1918), *History of the United States during the Administration of Washington and Jefferson* (history)	

		Bruce, Philip (1856–1933), *The Plantation Negro as a Freeman* (ethnography)	
1890	Alger, Horatio Jr. (1832–1899), *Struggling Upward* (novel) Bachelder, John (1817–1906), *A.D. 2050* Donnelly, Ignatius (1831–1901), *Caesar's Column: A Story of the Twentieth Century* (novel) Fuller, Alvarado (1851–1924), *A.D. 2000* (novel)	The Populist Party is formed. The tobacco trust is created. Congress passes the Sherman Antitrust Act outlawing corporate monopolies that operate "in restraint of trade." Approximately 300 Native Americans and 25 federal agents die at Wounded Knee, South Dakota in the last major confrontation of the Indian Wars.	Great Britain creates the first free elementary education program. Ibsen, Henrick (1828–1906), *Hedda Gabler* (drama) Wilde, Oscar (1854–1900), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (novel)
	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (novel) James, Henry (1843–1916), *The Tragic Muse* (novel) Vinton, Arthur (1852–1906), *Looking Further Backward* (novel)	The Mississippi State legislature enacts the Mississippi Plan, activating poll taxes, literacy tests and residency requirements to disenfranchise African Americans. Brandeis, Louis (1856–1941) and Samuel Warren (1852–1910), "The Right to Privacy" (jurisprudence) Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *A Boy's Town* (memoir) James, William (1842–1910), *Principles of Psychology* (psychology) Riis, Jacob (1849–1914), *How the Other Half Lives* (documentary reporting)	

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	American Literary Texts	*American Events, Texts, and Arts*	*Other Events, Texts, and Arts*
1891	Bierce, Ambrose (1842–1914?), *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* (short stories)	The Forest Reserve Act preserves several hundred acres of undeveloped land, and makes provisions for natural research.	Brazil adopts a republican constitution.
	Garland, Hamlin (1860–1940), *Main-Travelled Roads* (short stories)	The United States and Great Britain sign their first copyright agreement.	Construction begins on the Trans-Siberian railroad.
	McDougall, Walter (1858–1938), *The Hidden City* (novel)	Herman Melville dies.	Doyle, Arthur Conan (1859–1930), *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (short stories)
	Mitchell, S. Weir (1829–1914), *Characteristics* (novel)	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *Fiction and Criticism* (criticism)	Gissing, George (1857–1903), *New Grub Street* (novel)
		Crummell, Alexander (1819–1898), *America and Africa* (political essays)	Hardy, Thomas (1840–1928), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (novel)
		Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart (1844–1911), *Chapters from a Life* (memoir)	
1892	Bierce, Ambrose (1842–1914?), *The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter* (novel)	A strike of mill workers at the Homestead Steel plant near Pittsburgh ends after a 4-month standoff; Pinkerton detectives and armed guards clash with strikers, leaving 10 dead and hundreds wounded.	Hendrick Lorentz discovers the electron.
		Cooper, Anna Julia (1858–1964), *A Voice from the South* (essay collection)	Paul Cézanne completes *The Card Players* (painting).
		Wells, Ida B. (1862–1931), *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (documentary reporting)	
	Gilman, Charlotte Perkins (1860–1935), *The Yellow Wallpaper* (novella)	Alice James dies. (Her diary, *Alice James: Her Brothers – Her Journal* is published in 1934.)	Piotr Tchaikovsky's ballet, *The Nutcracker*, debuts in St. Petersburg.
	Harper, Frances E. W. (1825–1911), *Iola Leroy, or, Shadows Uplifted* (novel)	Walt Whitman dies.	Hauptmann, Gerhart (1862–1942), *The Weavers* (drama)

1893	Bierce, Ambrose (1842–1914?), *Can Such Things Be?* (short stories)	Hawaii becomes a US protectorate.	Women are enfranchised in New Zealand.
	Crane, Stephen (1871–1900), *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (novel)	Chicago's Columbia Exposition opens; Simon Pokagon, a Potawatoni, opens the fair with a greeting, later published as "The Red Man's Lament."	Belgian workers call a general strike in April.
	Fuller, Henry Blake (1857–1929), *The Cliff-Dwellers* (novel)	*McClure's Magazine* is founded by Samuel S. McClure.	Antonin Dvořák completes his *Symphony No. 5 ("From the New World")*.
	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *The World of Chance* (novel)	Turner, Frederick Jackson (1861–1932), "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (history)	Durkheim, Emile (1858–1917), *The Division of Labor* (anthropology)
	Jones, Alice (1846–1905) and Ella Merchant (1857–1916), *Unveiling a Parallel* (novel)	A financial panic follows the failure of several major railroads. Hundreds of banks and thousands of businesses declare bankruptcy as the nation slides into a depression that lasts until the end of the decade.	Wilde, Oscar (1854–1900), *Salomé* (drama)
1894	Chopin, Kate (1851–1904), *Bayou Folk* (short stories)	A strike of railroad workers begins in the Pullman company town outside of Chicago and spreads nationwide. In the ensuing violence between strikers and federal troops, 13 die and 57 are wounded.	The Turkish army begins the systematic extermination of Armenians.
	Gillette, King Camp (1855–1932), *The Human Drift* (short stories)	Lloyd, Henry Demarest (1847–1903), *Wealth Against Commonwealth* (corporate history)	For his support of the Irish Home Rule bill, William Gladstone is forced to resign as Prime Minister of Great Britain.
	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *A Traveler from Altruria* (novel)	Marden, Orison Swett (1848–1924), *Pushing to the Front* (self help)	Nicholas II succeeds Alexander III as Czar of Russia.

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	American Literary Texts	*American Events, Texts, and Arts*	*Other Events, Texts, and Arts*
	Schindler, Solomon (1842–1915), *Young West* (novel)		Gold is discovered in the Transvaal.
	Twain, Mark (1835–1910), *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (novel)		Kipling, Rudyard (1865–1936), *The Jungle Book* (short stories)
1895	Crane, Stephen (1871–1900), *The Red Badge of Courage* (novel)	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *My Literary Passions* (criticism)	The Chinese–Japanese War ends in a Japanese victory. China relinquishes Taiwan and recognizes Korea's independence.
	James, Henry (1843–1916), *In the Cage* (novel)	Wells, Ida B. (1862–1931), *A Red Record: Lynchings in the United States, 1892–1893–1894* (documentary reporting)	Piotr Tchaikovsky's ballet, *Swan Lake*, debuts in St. Petersburg.
	Townsend, Edward W. (1855–1942), *A Daughter of the Tenements* (novel)	The New York Public Library is founded.	Auguste and Louis Lumière invent the first motion picture camera.
		The first hydroelectric plant is installed at Niagara Falls.	Wilhelm Roentgen discovers x-rays.
			Oscar Wilde loses his libel case against the Marquis of Queensbury and is imprisoned for sodomy.
			José Martí leads a rebellion in Cuba against the Spanish imperial government.
			Guglielmo Marconi invents the wireless telegraph.
			Sienkiewicz, Henryk (1846–1916), *Quo Vadis?* (novel)
1896	Cahan, Abraham (1860–1951), *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto* (novel)	William McKinley is elected President.	The first modern Olympic games are held in Athens.
	Frederic, Harold (1856–1898), *The Damnation of Theron Ware* (novel)	Utah becomes a state.	Henri Becquerel discovers spontaneous radioactivity in uranium.
	Jewett, Sarah Orne (1849–1909), *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (novel)	Geronimo surrenders, ending thirty years of "Apache wars."	The Nobel Prizes for physics, physiology and medicine, chemistry, literature, and peace are established.

	Mitchell, S. Weir (1829–1914), *Hugh Wynne* (novel)	The Supreme Court decides *Plessy v. Ferguson* legalizing racial segregation in public places.	Hardy, Thomas (1840–1928), *Jude the Obscure* (novel)
	Read, Opie Percival (1852–1939), *My Young Master* (novel)	Gold is discovered in the Klondike River, Alaska.	Wells, H. G. (1866–1946), *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (novel)
	Major, Charles (1856–1913), *When Knighthood Was in Flower* (novel)	Du Bois, W. E. B. (1868–1963), *Suppression of the African Slave-Trade in the United States* (history)	
		Atlanta University Publications, volume I, *Mortality Among Negroes in Cities*, is published.	
	Twain, Mark (1835–1910), *The Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* (novel)	Harriet Beecher Stowe dies.	
1897	Bellamy, Edward (1850–1898), *Equality* (novel)	Hills, A. M. (1848–1935), *Holiness and Power* (religion)	The French government begins its investigation into the treason conviction of Alfred Dreyfus.
	Chopin, Kate (1851–1904), *Night in Acadie* (short stories)	James, William (1842–1910), *The Will to Believe* (philosophy)	Sir Arnold Ross discovers the malaria bacillus.
	Colburn, Frona (1859–1946), *Yermah the Dorado* (novel)	Henry Ossawa Tanner completes *The Raising of Lazarus* (painting)	Emile Durkheim founds the *Revue de Sociologie*.
	Howells, William Dean (1837–1920), *The Landlord and the Lion's Head* (novel)	Wharton, Edith (1862–1937), *The Decoration of Houses* (interior design)	Conrad, Joseph (1857–1924), *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (novel)
	James, Henry (1843–1916), *What Maisie Knew* (novel); *The Spoils of Poynton* (novel)	The American Negro Academy is founded.	Ellis, Havelock (1859–1939), *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol. I (biological anthropology)
	Twain, Mark (1835–1910), *Following the Equator* (travel)	Atlanta University Publications, volume II, *Social Conditions of Negroes in Cities*, is published.	Rostand, Edmond (1868–11918), *Cyrano de Bergerac* (drama)

(*cont.*)

	American Literary Texts	*American Events, Texts, and Arts*	*Other Events, Texts, and Arts*
		The Jewish Daily Forward, the nation's leading Yiddish newspaper, begins publication under the editorial guidance of Abraham Cahan.	Stoker, Bram (1847–1912), *Dracula* (novel) Wells, H. G. (1866–1946), *The Invisible Man* (novel)
1898	Cahan, Abraham (1860–1951), *Imported Bridegroom and Other Stories of Yiddish New York* (short stories)	The Spanish–American War begins in February, ends in December. The US annexes Cuba and the Philippines as territories.	Emile Zola publishes "J'accuse," an open letter to the French President protesting the unjust imprisonment of Alfred Dreyfus for treason.
	Page, Thomas Nelson (1853–1922), *Red Rock* (novel)	The Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition begins in Omaha, Nebraska.	Pierre and Marie Curie discover the elements radium and polonium.
	Crane, Stephen (1871–1900), *The Open Boat and Other Stories* (short stories)	White supremacists in North Carolina murder African Americans during the Wilmington Massacre. The state legislature responds with a "grandfather clause," effectively disenfranchising former slaves.	Ferdinand von Zeppelin invents the rigid dirigible airship.
	James, Henry (1843–1916), *The Turn of the Screw* (novella)	Congress charters The National Institute of Arts and Letters. Dunbar, Paul Laurence (1872–1906), *Clorindy, or The Origins of the Cakewalk* (musical theater) Gilman, Charlotte Perkins (1860–1935), *Woman and Economics* (sociology)	Paul Gauguin completes *Whence do we come? What are we? Where are we going?* (painting). Wells, H. G. (1866–1946), *The War of the Worlds* (novel)
	Waterloo, Stanley (1846–1913), *Armageddon: A Tale of Love, War, and Invention* (novel)		

1899	James, Henry (1843–1916), *The Awkward Age* (novel)	Atlanta University Publications, volume III, *The Negro in Business*, is published.	The Second Boer War begins in South Africa between British and Dutch settlers. The British take control of the country in 1902.
	Chesnutt, Charles (1858–1932), *The Conjure Woman* (short stories); *The Wife of His Youth and Other Tales* (short stories)	Sam Hose, an African American who confessed to the murder of his white employer, is tortured and burned alive before a large crowd outside of Atlanta. His death inspires Ida Wells to write her anti-lynching tract, *Lynch Law in Georgia*.	The First Peace Convention at The Hague bans chemical warfare, hollow-point bullets, and air-raid bombing.
	Chopin, Kate (1851–1904), *The Awakening* (novel)	Du Bois, W. E. B. (1868–1963), *The Philadelphia Negro* (sociology)	The International Women's Conference is held in London.
	Crane, Stephen (1871–1900), *Active Service* (novel)	James, Henry (1843–1916), "The Future of the Novel" (criticism)	
	Frederic, Harold (1856–1898), *The Market-Place* (novel)	Jordan, David Starr (1851–1931), *Imperial Democracy* (political science)	
	Griggs, Sutton (1872–1933), *Imperium in Imperio* (novel)	Veblen, Thorstein (1857–1929), *The Theory of the Leisure Class: an economic study of institutions* (economics)	
	Norris, Frank (1870–1902), *McTeague* (novel)		
1900	Baum, L. Frank (1856–1919), *The Wizard of Oz* (novel)	William McKinley is re-elected President.	The Boxer Rebellion against Western political and cultural influence begins in China.
	Chesnutt, Charles (1858–1932), *The House Behind the Cedars* (novel)	Debut issue of the *Colored American Magazine*.	Great Britain annexes the Transvaal.
	Crane, Stephen (1871–1900), *Whilomville Stories* (short stories)	The United States adopts the gold standard.	Max Planck introduces the quantum theory of energy.

(*cont.*)

REFERENCES

The contents of this textbook have been reproduced from other original sources for educational purposes only. The topics covered in this course have been selected carefully so that they address the varying needs of ESL students. The selected literary readings included in this textbook are all in public domain. The major sources for this textbook are the following:

- **Bercovitch, Sacvan, ed. *The Cambridge History of American Literature*. vol. 3. Cambridge UP, 2005.**
- **Crane, Gregg. *The Nineteenth-Century American Novel*. Cambridge UP, 2007.**
- **Gray, Richard. A *History of American Literature*. 2nd ed., Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.**
- **VanSpanckeren, Kathryn. *Outline of American Literature*. US Dept. of state, 1994.**