THE DIME NOVEL WESTERN: THE EVOLUTION OF A POPULAR FORMULA

Dissertation for the Degree of Ph. D.
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DARYL EMRYS JONES
1974

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Russel B. Nye
Major professor

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ABSTRACT

THE DIME NOVEL WESTERN: THE EVOLUTION OF A POPULAR FORMULA

By

Daryl Emrys Jones

The dime novel Western evolved as an expression of nineteenth century America's prevailing attitude toward history, progress, and the national destiny. In the early part of the century, apocalyptic visions and physiocratic theories had nurtured a poetic conception of the national destiny based on the conquest of the wilderness and the future foundation of a pastoral utopia in the West. As popularly conceived, this utopia would combine the respective advantages of civilization and wilderness while transcending the disadvantages of each; it would be a land of plenty, of human bliss, of freedom and equality. For this reason Americans revered progress, seeing in the historical process a trend toward the perfection of society and the realization of an ideal world. Yet as the century progressed the utopian vision became increasingly difficult to

sustain. As gargantuan social and economic forces associated with the industrial revolution steadily polarized society, corrupted political and social institutions, and precipitated moral decline, a growing number of Americans recognized that progress and perfection were not necessarily one and the same. In the face of growing disillusionment and anxiety, the mass of Americans clung persistently to their reassuring vision of an ideal world.

This persistent vision of a utopian ideal is the fundamental organizing principle of the Western formula. It is this vision that governs the nature and function of the formula's three basic components--setting, character, and plot--that determines the relationships among them, and that unifies the principal functions of the Western as a cultural artifact possessing the dimensions of game, ritual, and collective dream. That this vision of an ideal world is indeed the fundamental organizing principle of the Western formula is manifest in the nature, function, and interdependence of the standardized setting, stereotyped characters, and conventionalized plots which evolved in the dime novel Western.

Generated by a cultural matrix in which attitudes toward wilderness and civilization were alike paradoxical,

the dime novel's standardized setting offered writers a hypothetical realm in which to define, articulate, and reconcile conflicting cultural values. On the one hand, it enabled writers to exploit the metaphorical significance of the frontier as a means of synthesizing the respective values of wilderness and civilization and thus idealizing the utopian society of the future. On the other hand, it enabled writers to utilize the wilderness as an objective norm by which to measure the extent to which society as it then existed fell short of the ideal. Thus, while refining the Western as a vehicle for social criticism, the dime novel's standardized setting nevertheless reaffirmed the essential benevolence of the historical process.

Within this progressive context, the stereotyped Western hero emerged as the guardian of the future. Whether backwoodsman, plainsman, cowboy, or noble outlaw, he was a personification of the ideal world, a hybrid character who reconciled the popularly cherished values of the civilized East with the equally cherished values of the wilderness West. Naturally noble and eminently free, he was equally adept in the forest or the drawing room. He was, moreover, an able social critic who bitterly denounced the

imperfections of society and took immediate action to rectify injustice. Yet his violent acts, while seemingly antisocial, were legitimized by the Western's progressive view of history; they were, in fact, implicitly understood as rites of purification. Each time the Western hero resolved a pressing social problem through violence he was merely taking necessary and positive action to perfect society and to assure the ultimate realization of a better world.

The dime novel's conventionalized plots utilized the narrative structure of the traditional romance to portray the Western hero's quest to reorder reality in terms of his personal vision of the ideal world. This quest, in turn, functioned as the keystone of the narrative's moral structure: those who aided the quest were characterized as pure and gallant, while those who opposed it were cast as the agents of evil. From this opposition arose a sequence of violent confrontations between moral and ideological antagonists. Invariably, wrongdoers were paid "the wages of sin" and the Western hero emerged as the redeemer of society: he vanquished the forces of evil, restored moral equilibrium, and blazed a trail to the ideal world of the future.

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Daryl Emrys Jones

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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Department of English

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I would also like to thank Ray B. Browne, Director of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, for permission to include material which has previously appeared in somewhat different form in publications released by the Bowling Green University Popular Press. Portions of Chapter III first appeared as "Of Few Days and Full of

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Trouble: The Evolution of the Western Hero in the Dime Novel," in New Dimensions in Popular Culture, ed. Russel B. Nye (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972), pp. 107-34, and "Clenched Teeth and Curses: Revenge and the Dime Novel Western Outlaw," Journal of Popular Culture, 7 (Winter, 1973), 652-65, reprinted in The Popular Western: Essays Toward a Definition, ed. Richard W. Etulain and Michael T. Marsden (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1974), pp. 10-23. The final portion of Chapter IV originally appeared as "Blood n' Thunder: Virgins, Villains, and Violence in the Dime Novel Western," Journal of Popular Culture, 4 (Fall, 1970), 507-17.

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I

THE DIME NOVEL WESTERN:

FORMULA AND CULTURE

> The thirst for works of the imagination is as strong and universal at the present time as at any former period; and we trust that of the floods which annually pour in upon the reading world, there are some fountains at which the soul may drink and feel itself refreshed and invigorated.
>
> --The Western Monthly Magazine, 1833

Perhaps it was in part the note of confidence sounded in this opening statement of Isaac Appleton Jewett's "Themes for Western Fiction" that won him, in December 1833, the first annual prize for the best essay to appear in the pages of The Western Monthly Magazine. Addressed to the writers of America, Jewett's essay made an impassioned plea for a new and distinctly national literature which would draw its subject matter from the rich artistic resources offered by the wilderness West. Citing the wealth of material available to artists in the landscape, characters, and incidents of the frontier--particularly as it had been in

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the early days of Kentucky's Dark and Bloody Ground--Jewett asserted that

> We know not where are themes more worthy the highest efforts of the pencil and pen, than those presented in the incidents, expeditions, and displays of character which distinguished these early periods. We know not if there be within the wide limits of our land, a theatre upon which more solemn, thrilling tragedies have been enacted . . . and seldom have the sublime qualities of perseverance in most disastrous chances; fortitude under bereavements and torture; self-possession in apalling crises, and of courage in battling with a ruthless foe, shone forth more brightly than among the actors in those fearful scenes.[1]

Assuredly, Jewett predicted, it would be from those works of the imagination which distilled the emotional impact of the West that the soul would someday drink and feel refreshed.

Though eloquently phrased, Jewett's call for a national literature nurtured on the frontier experience was not so much a new and original proposal as it was a reflection of a trend well under way in American letters. Already at least two epic poems, Daniel Bryan's The Mountain Muse (1813) and James Kirk Paulding's The Backwoodsman (1818), had been inspired by the West; The Pioneers (1823), The Last of the Mohicans (1826), and The Prairie (1827) had won Cooper a lofty place in American literature; and

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numerous short stories, novels, and pioneer biographies had emerged from the pens of Gilbert Imlay, Hugh Henry Brackenridge, Charles Brockden Brown, James McHenry, N. M. Hentz, William Joseph Snelling, Timothy Flint, Matthew St. Clair Clarke, and James Hall. The late thirties, forties, and fifties spawned an even greater body of literature which utilized frontier settings and incidents. Skilled writers like Cooper, Paulding, and Hall continued to produce Western fiction, and were soon joined by a coterie of talented newcomers--most notably Robert Montgomery Bird, whose Nick of the Woods (1837) won instant acclaim, and William Gilmore Simms, who dramatized life on the Southern Border both in The Yemassee (1835) and in the series of works known collectively as the Border Romances (1834-1840).

During this same period a number of less talented writers--James Strange French, Nathaniel B. Tucker, Charles W. Webber, Charles Fenno Hoffman, Emerson Bennett, A. W. Arrington, John Esten Cooke, and Mayne Reid--ground out Western fiction that proved to be immensely popular. For example, two novels by Emerson Bennett, The Prairie Flower (1849) and Leni-Leoti (1849), sold one hundred thousand copies each, and Bennett's rivals were nearly as

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successful. Yet with the possible exception of an occasional work by Mayne Reid, these popular novels were poorly written, highly melodramatic, and embarrassingly derivative. John Myers, the hero of Cooke's Leatherstocking and Silk (1854), for instance, is an unintentionally amusing replica of Natty Bumppo who, in even the most extreme circumstances, seems incapable of saying anything more profound than "Anan?"[2] By the late 1850s such novels were the rule rather than the exception. Indeed, to such an extent had Western fiction degenerated by 1858 that in June of that year William T. Coggeshall, then the Ohio State Librarian, told the Beta Theta Pi fraternity of Ohio University that "Tomahawks and wigwams, sharp-shooting and hard fights, log cabins, rough speech, dare-devil boldness, bear-hunting and corn-husking, prairie flowers, bandits, lynch-law and no-law-at-all miscellaneously mixed into '25 cents novels,' printed on poor paper and stitched between yellow covers, represent the popular idea of Western Literature."[3]

One result of this sudden deterioration in the quality of literature concerning the West has been that interpreters of the early Western have concentrated their efforts almost exclusively on works produced before 1860--

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icularly those by Cooper, Simms, and Bird. For the
reason, interpreters who credit Wister's The Virginian
resurrecting the Western from the murky realm of sub-
rature have dealt exclusively with works penned after
--those by Andy Adams, Eugene Manlove Rhodes, William
od Raine, Emerson Hough, Zane Grey, Frederick Faust,
a host of more recent writers in the six-gun and sage-
h school. Consequently, with regard to the Western,
period between 1860 and 1900 might justly be termed
forgotten era." Critics of the Western have, of
se, concerned themselves with selected works by such
ers as Mark Twain, Bret Harte, Hamlin Garland, and
hen Crane--even though it remains a moot point as to
her or not the works in question are in fact "Westerns."*
these same critics have largely ignored the development
ng this period of that variety of story which, indis-
bly, is a Western.

---

the purposes of this study, a "Western" is defined as
orm of romance which is set somewhere along the moving
ntier at a time when the values of wilderness and
ilization are in tension, and which concerns the in-
vement of a highly stylized protagonist in some form
pursuit. This definition is specifically meant to ex-
de those stories which deal primarily with the agri-
tural West, and which therefore might better be termed
gional," "local color," or simply "realistic."

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At least two factors account for this critical
eglect. On the one hand, almost all Westerns written
etween 1860 and 1902 appeared as dime novels or story
apers printed on cheap pulp paper--a notoriously ephemeral
edium. Thus, only a small number of dime novels survive
oday, and the majority of these are inaccessible to
cholars; they are either in the hands of collectors or
umbling, uncatalogued and unmicrofilmed, in the rare book
aults of a few major libraries. On the other hand, critics
ve, with some justification perhaps, neglected dime novel
sterns because of the genre's undeniable mediocrity.
vertheless, it was the dime novelist--working in the
mparative anonymity of a large publishing house, meeting
gid deadlines, and looking to sales as the sole measure
his artistry--who gradually, over a period of nearly
fty years, fashioned many of the Western's most charac-
ristic elements.

As a medium for the dissemination of popular art,
e dime novel was not a strikingly original development
t rather the culmination of a trend in publishing which
gan in the 1830s. Although the population of the United
ates was at that time approaching twenty million people,

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t of whom were literate, the majority of readers were
ied access to popular literature by the high cost of
dbound books and the limited number of libraries. All
this changed with the introduction of the steam rotary
ss--which drastically lowered printing costs--and the
sequent development of new techniques in marketing and
s distribution. As early as 1839, inspired innovators
the field of publishing began tapping the potential of
mass audience; Wilson & Company of Boston initiated the
lication of the weekly story paper with Brother Jonathan,
ompilation of several short stories and chapters from
ial novels, printed on cheap paper, organized in news-
er format, and issued at minimal cost to both publisher
reader. The experiment was an instant success. Other
ns, spurred by the example of Brother Jonathan, printed
ir own versions, and succeeding years saw the rise of
n popular story papers as The Flag of Our Union, The New
k Ledger, The New York Weekly, and The Youth's Companion.[4]

Although popular fiction in the form of fifteen-
twenty-cent serial novelettes appeared throughout the
ties and fifties--series like Ballou's The Weekly
elette or Gleason's Literary Companion--the dime novel

per se did not app
heartened by their
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Robert Adams, and
1858, they formed
be known as the H
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Beadle venture.[5]

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Beadle printers,
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did not appear until Erastus and Irwin Beadle,
ned by their initial success with a pamphlet en-
The Dime Song Book, conceived the idea of printing
novels complete under one cover, to be sold for a
Engaging the services of a business associate named
Adams, and moving from Buffalo to New York City in
they formed the publishing firm which later came to
wn as the House of Beadle and Adams. In June 1860
eleased the first dime novel: Malaeska: the Indian
f the White Hunter. Written by a well-known domestic
st, Mrs. Ann S. Stephens, this tale of white hunters
ble savages sold 65,000 copies within a few months--a
ion which virtually guaranteed the success of the
venture.[5]

The popularity enjoyed by Beadle and Adams' "yellow-
ovels" soon lured other firms into the field. Over
ars, the House of Beadle and Adams encountered its
st competition from five rivals. In 1863, one of the
printers, George Munro, set out on his own and
ly launched a lucrative series called Munro's Ten
ovels. In 1867, Robert De Witt expanded his small
hing house and released the first of 1,118 dime

novels that he was

in 1970, Norman Mu

Still, the greates

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Others, particul

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hat he was to publish in the next ten years. And
Norman Munro, George's brother, entered the field.
he greatest success was reserved for two relative
rs, Frank Tousey and Street & Smith.[6] Together
ost of smaller competitors, these firms--based in
and aiming their stories at a predominantly
audience--dominated the market until the first
f the twentieth century, when the combined effects
g second-class postal rates and the burgeoning film
eventually brought about the demise of the dime

Though classified under the rubric of "dime novel,"
thrillers released by these firms actually varied
n format. Some, like The New York Weekly, were
tory papers; save for their sensational black and
llustrations, they resembled an ordinary newspaper.
particularly those that flourished from 1860 to
re issued semi-monthly as seven by five inch pam-
veraging one hundred pages and priced at a dime.
88, the format was enlarged to twelve by eight
n an effort to accommodate larger front cover il-
ons; dime novels of this period ran from sixteen

to thirty-two page

In the 1890s these

appear with color

some stories assu

Publishers were n

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Philip Durham c

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-two pages in length, and sold for only a nickel.
90s these so-called "nickel weeklies" began to
th color illustrations, and shortly thereafter
ies assumed the format of the modern pocket novel.[7]
s were not, however, reluctant to release a story
han one format, or even to reprint the same story
imes under different titles. If a tale serialized
ly story paper received favorable reception, it
tly re-released as the latest number of an ongoing
novels "complete under one cover."
hile formats varied, the stories were nearly all
enerally, they were 30,000 to 50,000 words of
action, inflated description, and--since authors
to fill a chosen format--padded prose. They
h pirates, detectives, highwaymen, bootblacks, and
They concerned adventure, history, love, war,
life in the city and life on the sea.[8] Popular as
, however, all of these types of stories were
tstripped in popularity by the Western. After
ng stories published by Beadle and Adams alone,
rham concluded that "approximately three-fourths
ne novels deal with the various forms, problems,

and attitudes of l

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It is diff

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copies.[11] Sales

William Everett,

Review in 1864,

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tudes of life on the frontier, and that more than
concerned with life in the trans-Mississippi West."[9]
It is difficult, in retrospect, to comprehend the
ent of the popularity attained by the dime novel,
ust have been phenomenal. During banner years, var-
ms were concurrently publishing as many as 101 dif-
eries, and some series ran to more than a thousand
Novels with an initial printing of 60,000 to 70,000
ften went through ten or twelve editions in a single
For instance, one of the earliest Westerns pub-
y Beadle and Adams, Edward S. Ellis' Seth Jones; or,
ives of the Frontier, sold out of its first printing
) copies almost immediately; translated into half a
nguages, it eventually sold more than 600,000
Sales figures similar to these were not uncommon.
Everett, writing in the prestigious North American
n 1864, could not veil his astonishment:

> e works, . . . issued by Messrs. Beadle &
> . . . circulate to the extent of many
> red thousands. This need hardly be
> ed to anyone who is in the way of casting
> eye on the counter of any railway book-
> or newsdealer's shop. But the statis-
> statement, from authority, may excite
> interest--that, up to April lst [1864],
> gregate of five millions of Beadle's
> Books had been put in circulation, of

which half at
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amount to near
three months .
dented in the
Novel is issue
undoubtedly ol
any other seri
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In a similar comm

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alf at least were novels . . . the
single novels by popular authors often
to nearly forty thousand in two or
onths . . . . Sales almost unprece-
in the annals of booksellers. A Dime
s issued every month and the series has
edly obtained greater popularity than
er series of works of fiction published
ica.[12]

r comment addressed fifteen years later to
the Atlantic Monthly, W. H. Bishop contended
ovel and story paper literature presented "an
eld of mental activity, the greatest literary
n bulk, of the age, and [one] worthy of a very
sideration for itself. Disdained as it may be
ly cultivated for its character, the phenomenon
tence cannot be overlooked."[13]
yet, for the most part, it has been overlooked--
as it concerns the development of the Western.
rle Curti made some initial inquiries into the
1937, it was not until the publication in 1950
sh Smith's Virgin Land: The American West as
Myth that scholars began to realize the signifi-
e dime novel as a cultural document. In recent
selected Western heroes, Kent Ladd Steckmesser,
., and William Settle have attempted to determine

the role played by

process.[14] As ye

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Cawelti has at

ayed by the dime novel in the legend-making
As yet, however, no attempt has been made to
influence of the dime novel upon the development
ern itself. Unquestionably, the influence was
But what was the nature of that influence?
y, what elements characterize the Western? What
r cultural dynamics govern its popularity? And
w did the dime novel modify these elements and
se dynamics?

e extraordinary popularity of the Western story
numerous attempts to define the nature of the
d to isolate the reason or reasons for its con-
cess. Yet a brief survey of these attempts soon
at serious discussions of the Western have, until
ntly, lacked a viable and consistent methodology—
gy which would promote the disciplined use of
le insights gained through such disparate fields
gy and sociology in a pursuit long regarded as
ive province of the literary critic. John G.
s at last provided this methodology in a seminal

essay entitled The

Cawelti's essay i

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stems from the

led The Six-Gun Mystique.[15] An examination of
ssay is therefore a crucial prerequisite to an
on of the dime novel Western.

il recently, Cawelti explains, interpreters of
forms like the Western have commonly taken one
r of two standard approaches to the material at
approach uncovers pervasive themes, while the
sses itself to the principal function performed
. Critics who have taken a thematic approach
d on discernible social and political themes in
. Maintaining that literature is a reflection
od and culture which produced it, they see the
an expression of the unique aspects of the Amer-
ence. This approach has led to a wide variety
interpretations. John Williams, after drawing
ry distinction between the "conventional" Western
rious" Western, asserts that the conventional
an allegorical treatment of the "elemental con-
en the personified forces of Good and Evil"--a
hich may be traced to "the New England Calvinist
nd." Presumably, the Western's popularity thus
the reaffirmation of spiritual values induced by

a ritual drama in

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ama in which Good inevitably triumphs over Evil,
n the gunplay, the pounding hooves and the
agecoaches, there is a curious, slow, ritual-
ent that is essentially religious." John R.
n agreement with Williams--or at least partially
oses to emphasize the Western's significance as
epic. "The major western theme is ultimately a
ne," Milton argues, "a quest for salvation in
ms. This is also the quest for maturity, more
than in some other regional literatures because
part of the land itself, a new land trying to
traditions and to assume an identity in a world
n many ways gone on before it." Max Westbrook
this same quest motif in the Western; its most
heme, he explains, is "the rebellion against
s and the search for some embodiment or symbol
value," although admittedly this theme may
self through one or more of six different sub-

these examples are intended to suggest, inter-
of the Western based on thematic analysis are
ent and invariably contain more than an element

of truth. Indeed

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Indeed, it is the plethora of cogent interpreta-
n conflicting--that in the end frustrates any
ng explanation of the Western in terms of a
asive theme. Arguing the basic inadequacy of
ions which are exlusively thematic, Cawelti
their failure to three problems intrinsic to the
proach itself. First, since the concept of
gue, it proves extremely difficult to assign to
mes relative degrees of importance or to deter-
act relationships existing among interrelated
es conflicting themes. Second, thematic
y encouraging the examination of isolated ele-
out of context, usually fails to treat the work
ic whole. And third, the "analysis of works as
ections of social or cultural themes commonly
simple equation between the experience of works
other kinds of experience." That is to say,
alysis often causes us to confuse our experience
or narrative works with our experience of life
instead it should be obvious that we experi-
f art not as life but rather as unified struc-
ion, thought, and feeling.[17]

Similar p
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ar problems account for the failure of inter-
sed on an exclusively functional approach.
tations assign to the Western the performance
unction which may be either ideological or
. Ideological interpretations assume the
iterature to be the expression of the predom-
y or the fulfillment of the specialized needs
group or class which produces or controls
uently, Mody C. Boatright, to give but a
e, maintains that the Western rationalizes
on the principles of social Darwinism: it
quality while simultaneously promoting a con-
in the universal freedom to become unequal,
ng to reaffirm the values of the enterprising
[19] Psychological interpretations, too, while
n art a more universal application, commonly
ure to the performance of a single function.
these interpretations, literature springs from
c conflict which, remaining unresolved in life,
ion through symbolic fantasies (i.e. repeti-
on). Once created, however, it functions to
iously those inner needs and desires which

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rdinarily incapable of satisfying in their
s (i.e. wish fulfillment).[20] Hence, "in the
mula that has become the American 'western,'"
hoanalyst Warren J. Barker, "the ostensible
count of the struggle to bring law and order
ing frontier seems to be a relatively unimpor-
ehind which a far more ancient and universal
having to do with the task of every child to
rk forces of the oedipus which threaten to
rogression into maturity . . . . Absorption
n story is not necessarily a regressive or
astime but may be, particularly for a child,
ing with pressing unconscious conflicts."[21]
ther psychoanalyst, Kenneth J. Munden, main-
e Western expresses "deeply repressed and for-
ies and wishes centered around the oedipal
nden, however, goes one step further than
ting that the Western is actually a collective
asmuch as the cowboy myth is representative
ulfillments of a particular community, group
t will reflect certain aspects of the oedipal
sent in that culture." Moreover, the cowboy

myth undergoes a

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s a continual but "gradual process of selec-
on and disguise by means of well-known uncon-
isms . . . . That the process of selective
d disguise is collective, that is to say the
e masses, can be grasped from the moment that
f the decisive, universal, emotional relation-
ist between every child and its parents, no
ariable environmental factors may be intro-

these interpretations it should be clear that
l approach, like the thematic approach, is at
ly valid as a means of interpreting the
most functional analyses, Cawelti argues,
the work by subordinating its various elements
mance of a single function: for the social
unction is the expression of a group ideology;
oanalytic critic it is the repetition compul-
ed by deep-seated oedipal conflict. "But un-
rious functional explanations are mutually
only one can be right," reasons Cawelti, "we
he idea that a literary work has a variety of
. . Moreover, since our own experience

suggests that mos

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Invariably, func

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most complex human actions have a variety of
e seems little reason not to assume that com-
s like works of art have a variety of func-
tendency of functional analysis to subordinate
of the work to the performance of a single
s to a second weakness intrinsic to the method.
unctional interpretations fail to take cogni-
artistic and aesthetic qualities of the work;
investigate its capacity to please and enter-

uch as Cawelti recognizes in both thematic and
des of interpretation a common error--their
, their mutual tendency to reduce the work
articulation of a single theme or to the per-
single function--he pleads convincingly for
approach, one which is by nature eclectic.
he seeks a mode of functional interpretation
vealing the manner in which the Western's
ucture makes possible the unified accomplish-
argest variety of social and psychological
evant to the cultural context." Any such ap-
utions, must give primary attention to the

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tain.[24]

It is th

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unction of art--its power to please and enter-

is through a consideration of this power that
ives at a satisfactory approach to the study of
forms like the Western. His approach, stimu-
sights provided in F. E. Emery's essay on the
cal Effects of the Western Film," rests on the
thetic phenomenon of identification. Whereas
nctional approaches based on the process of
lment assume a direct identification of the
th the hero, Cawelti contends that this identi-
mains far from total. At least two significant
vent it from becoming so: first, the reader
nscious of the differences between himself and
is own personal qualities, interests, and values
is identification a selective one"; and second,
"maintains a certain detachment or aesthetic
om the action since he knows it is a work of
" Hence, even when experiencing works which
elatively high degree of identification, the
erves his awareness of the distinction between
lity. Since he does not confuse art with life,

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.n the course of the artistic experience to
:riers that he has erected to protect his ego
/orld," and therefore to enter "into more
:t with the pattern of his inner needs."[25]
reader's enjoyment of an artistic work, then,
1 from any simple and direct causal relation-
a particular psychic conflict and the elements
"Individuals do not normally prefer a given
e they see it as serving or satisfying some
eeds or sets of needs," Emery concludes, "but
.ewing such a theme they experience some sense
iarmony between it and certain of their own
.nner needs and tensions." In Emery's state-
e reader's enjoyment depends upon the harmoni-
ie relationship between the artistic elements
ind the unconscious needs of the reader, Cawelti
) important ramifications for students of the
the first place, it suggests that popular art
e a wide variety of social and psychological
:o a pattern somehow related to the pattern of
.ues in the audience. And secondly, it sug-
ie work of art is not a simple derivative of

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omous artistic structure which imitates reality
anner as to create strong feelings in the audi-
simulataneously preserving a sense of detach-

is the concept of a dominant organizing prin-
ding the artistic structure--the principle which
patterning of various social and psychological
ithin the work--that underlies all discussions
." As Cawelti explains, "a formula is a conven-
em for structuring cultural products." It may
tiated from other systems of narrative structure
connotes an arrangement of conventions, those
tereotyped images of meaning and value shared by
ulture, whereas other systems of narrative
ertain more generally to an arrangement of in-
nose unfamiliar and unique images of meaning
the creative artist. Formula may also be dif-
from myth in that it remains primarily a cul-
ssion, whereas myth is universal. While a
express archetypal patterns, it does so in a
ıe to the cultural context which produced it.

Formulas, then, a

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n, are much more specific than myths. They
to a limited number of conventional settings,
and plots. Thus, although the Western formula
some extent of the archetypal pattern of ac-
s the Oedipus myth, it does so in a manner
ts its genesis in nineteenth century America:
ce in the frontier West at a time when the re-
lues of wilderness and civilization are in con-
it portrays the involvement of a certain kind of
e form of pursuit. Formulas, Cawelti concludes,
ures of narrative conventions which carry out a
cultural functions in a unified way"; they might,
st be defined as "principles for the selection
plots, characters, and settings, which possess
to their basic narrative structure the dimen-
llective ritual, game and dream."[27]
elti's definition of formula embraces three
rs which account for the popularity of narrative
such as the Western. First of all, formula
mand the artistic power which results from a
tting, character, and action, as well as from
experience of excitement, suspense, and release.

When adroitly ha
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handled, Westerns are capable of arousing
ons in even the most discerning reader. They
n in spectacle; imagined visions of a lone
he towering stone pillars of Monument Valley,
ive cattle herd cutting a dusty swath across
ins of Texas, lend an attractive epic quality
ern. Moreover, the structure of the Western
complicated; anyone, even a child, can easily
it.[28]

ondly, the Western formula carries out an arche-
ture which is, in turn, based either on innate
ities and needs or on fundamental and universal
experience. The Western, Cawelti notes, is
example of that archetypal pattern which Northrop
beled the mythos of romance, for the elements
cterize the respective forms are identical.[29]
les are sufficient to establish the Western's
a specialized form of romance. In the romance
and in the Western specifically, the plot is
ed by a major adventure--the quest. As Frye ex-
s quest involves conflict between "two main
a protagonist or hero, and an antagonist or

enemy . . . . T

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The enemy may be an ordinary human being,
er the romance is to myth, the more attributes
will cling to the hero and the more the enemy
demonic mythical qualities. The central form
s dialectical: everything is focussed on a
ween the hero and his enemy, and all the
ues are bound up with the hero." Moreover,
cal structure lends itself to melodrama:
ety and complexity are not much favored.
end to be either for or against the quest. If
it they are idealized as simply gallant or
y obstruct it they are caricatured as simply
r cowardly. Hence every typical character in
s to have his moral opposite confronting him,
nd white pieces in a chess game." One finds in
ogue of the characteristic elements of romance
arious properties discussed by thematic inter-
he Western. But Frye also points out elements
s of romance which, when embodied in the
e attracted the attention of psychoanalytic
as well. The romance, he explains, bears an
ionship with the oedipal fantasy, and its

symbolic structu

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Clearly, one o

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ructure is analogous to that perceived by Jung
ve dream: "Translated into dream terms, the
ce is the search of the libido or desiring self
llment that will deliver it from the anxieties
but will still contain that reality."[30]
e's reference to the relationship between ro-
dream leads to the third major factor which ac-
the popularity of the Western formula. As
gests, the Western possesses the primary cul-
sions of game, ritual, and collective dream.
e of Cawelti's most striking and original con-
to the understanding of popular formulas springs
alogy between the structure of narrative form-
e structure of games. Like a game, which "takes
certain kind of board or field whose shape and
dicate the significance of particular actions,"
Western generates meaning through the relation-
en a standardized setting or landscape--the
he neutral ground between civilization and wil-
d the actions which take place on that land-
en Natty Bumppo shoulders his rifle, turns his
pleton and trudges toward the setting sun, for

example, the imp

Yet games also d

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implications of his act are readily apparent.
so depend upon opposing players or groups whose
values constitute moral antitheses, groups with
t either associate or disassociate himself.
gly, the Western formula depends upon the con-
n opposing characters or groups--lawmen and
epherders and cattle barons--whose respective
ons are usually denoted by such external char-
as the color of their "uniforms"--their white
s. Finally, the various rules which dictate
cy of actions in a game or which control the
ogression of actions have their counterparts in
ed situations which, according to the plot
or may not be allowed to occur. Thus, when
savage eyes the blonde curls of the captive
reaches for his tomahawk, cavalry bugles invar-
shrilly in the distance. Formula stories, then,
have a number of rules which must be learned if
s to be fully appreciated. Nevertheless, the
latively simple; nearly anyone can participate
g so, share the ego-enhancement which comes
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pular formulas such as the Western also serve as
ial. Through a process that Cawelti terms a
of resolution," they articulate and reaffirm the
ultural values of the age that fosters them. In
singly complex modern world, where alienation is
and frustration on the upswing, popular formulas
vital function formerly undertaken by organized
they purge frustration, quiet fears, and offer
the same time, they build a sense of group soli-
ntering the imagined realms of popular formulas,
ed individual joins the millions of other people
hemselves in a similar plight.[32]
nally, popular formulas function as collective
disguising psychic tension, they enable the in-
o confront and temporarily resolve his innermost
vithout endangering that esteem in which he con-
olds both himself and his culture. On one level,
rmulas embody the timeless and universal dreams
many interpreters have suggested, the Western
ddress itself to the universal oedipal conflict.
level, however, popular formulas embody the
stic dreams of a particular time, culture, or

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of society. No doubt this provides a partial ex-
n for the popularity of the Western among adoles-
or Cawelti argues convincingly that "the Western
s the conflict between the adolescent's desire to
ult and his fear and hesitation about the nature
hood"--a contention firmly supported by the char-
the Western hero, a man who possesses adult power
ncy while yet remaining apart from society, thus
the continued inviolability of his innocence.
sly, Cawelti explains, the popularity of Westerns
ults may to some extent be attributed to a "psy-
al dynamic of hostility and fear of society mixed
inability to recognize this aggressive anger for
is . . . " Whether farmer, industrial worker, or
at, the powerless individual who finds himself
n the vast and constantly accelerating machinery
n urban-industrial society resents his diminishing
ence and growing reliance on uncontrollable eco-
d social forces. Yet he also realizes that he must
his place in that machinery if he is to survive.
individuals the formulaic fantasy of a potent hero
tly resorting to violence as a means of rectifying

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e and promoting social order may in fact be a col-
dream which functions to legitimize aggression--a
function in a society where ambiguous values exalt
achievement and encourage individual aggressive-
le paradoxically extolling the virtues of conform-
social responsibility.[33]

In examining the three primary factors which deter-
popularity of the Western formula--its unity of
character and action, its archetypal structure,
threefold function as game, ritual, and collective
t is important to remember that the Western, al-
t embodies universal elements, remains predomi-
cultural expression. Unquestionably, the success
estern formula is due in part to those components
e timeless and universal, but the formula's long
urance can only be explained by those components
e expressly cultural. The Western formula main-
s popularity through successive generations because
exible, because it possesses the capacity to change
nse to changing cultural concerns and preoccupa-
s alterations occur in the cultural context, the
e formula develops new themes, characters, and plot
ons.[34]

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As a result of these developments, it is both pos-
nd fruitful to examine any particular phase through
ne Western formula has evolved--its manifestation in
e novel, for instance--and to determine the manner
n prominent elements of the formula during that
eflected the dominant concerns of the age. That is
L of this study. Paradigmatically, this study is
ant to offer an interpretation of the complex rela-
os existing among a popular formula in general, the
which produces it, and the psychological dynamics
: reflects.

At this point it is worth repeating some of the
ntal assumptions--derived mainly from The Six-Gun
e--which will remain operative throughout this in-
tion. In the first place, this study, although it
rates on the cultural elements of the Western
recognizes that popular formulas embody timeless,
al patterns as well. Secondly, while it recognizes
e dime novel Western was an autonomous artistic
n, this study nevertheless assumes that some iden-
e relationship existed between, on the one hand, the
iized settings, stereotyped characters, and

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conventionalized plots of the dime novel Western and, on the other hand, the culture which produced them. Finally, this study assumes that this relationship was not simply direct and causal, nor was it controlled by any single dynamic; rather, it resulted from the complex interplay of several socio-psychological forces. Consequently, to determine precisely which forces exerted the most profound influence upon the development of the Western formula in the dime novel, we must first examine the prevailing cultural climate of the nineteenth century.

Between 1820 and 1860 the United States experienced a rate of economic growth unequaled before or since in American history. In the ten year period from 1840 to 1850 alone, the combined commodity output of agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and construction increased by fifty-seven per cent--a growth rate duplicated in the following decade and, save for a temporary lapse during the Civil War, matched in every decade throughout the remainder of the century.[35] During this same span of time America became a predominantly urban nation; while the population rose by

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226 per cent in the forty years between 1820 and 1860, the proportion living in cities increased by 797 per cent. In 1820, only twelve cities boasted a population of more than 10,000; by 1860, 101 cities exceeded that figure, and New York had surpassed 1,000,000. To provide for this population and keep pace with the expanding economy, rapid advancements were made in transportation. Canals were dug and roads constructed. The railroad, an amusing novelty in the 1820s, became the dominant mode of transportation; by 1860, 30,636 miles of track stretched into the heart of the continent.[36]

This growth was not without its cost. The rich resources of the wilderness West, once considered a bounteous Garden of Eden, were plundered in the name of expansion. Following the discovery of iron deposits in the Lake Superior region, copper in Michigan, and gold in California, mining operations scarred the landscape. Farmers burned millions of acres of virgin timber as a means of clearing land, and on the Great Plains bison were senselessly slaughtered at the rate of hundreds of thousands annually; 800,000 were killed in the 1859-1860 season alone.[37] Despite determined efforts by a small number of

onservationists, the implacable forces of civilization ushed back the American wilderness. By the turn of the entury it was gone.

But there were other costs as well, for the economic revolution rent the social, legal, and moral fabric f America. Contrary to Jacksonian rhetoric, the "age of galitarianism"--ostensibly an age of equality and freedom f opportunity for all--in fact witnessed the establishment f increasingly rigid class distinctions and a corresponding movement away from social mobility toward social immobility. Industrialization, urbanization, unprecedented oreign immigration, and the occupation of new farm land ll played prominent roles in undermining social mobility. evertheless, since the egalitarian ethos of free enterrise and material progress masked the deleterious effects f runaway economic change, popular social theory failed o reflect growing inequities.[38] Few Americans were able o comprehend the nature of the change until it was too ate.

Prior to the 1830s the American notion of equality ew sustenance from the seemingly unlimited availability f wealth and the unquestioned belief that anyone, through

virtue and honest industry, could succeed. As a result, most Americans took a dynamic view of class structure. Class consciousness was pervasive, of course, and various social ranks were clearly delineated by wealth, dress, speech, manners, and education, but few Americans were genuinely antagonistic toward the upper class. Wealth was recognized as the most important criterion for high social standing, and every individual, popular theory proclaimed, was free to use his natural abilities to acquire it. "Class levels," notes one historian of the period, "were regarded as rungs to be climbed rather than as permanent ranks."[39] Moreover, the closed aristocracy of wealth and family made up of the rural landed gentry was falling before the forces of democracy, and a new class of urban merchants and industrialists was rising. Poor boys were indeed becoming rich, and most citizens looked confidently forward to a not too distant time when, as one ebullient contributor to The Knickerbocker put it in 1838, the "mummeries of fashion, the criterion of externals, the factitious distinctions of wealth and family, will cease, and men will be regarded by the true standard of morality and practical utility."[40]

Yet the opening statement of this same article, that "There has been a distinction made, by which a certain part of our population are called 'working men,' or operatives," clearly reveals that by the late 1830s changing social and economic realities were eroding the Jacksonian ideal of a classless egalitarian society.[41] Chiefly responsible for this trend was the rapid transition from an economy based on small handicraft shops specializing in domestic production for a limited clientele to an economy based on large factories geared for the mass production of goods for wide distribution. In an effort to adequately supply the demands of the booming market, industries expanded, and in doing so came under the control of wealthy investors. This, of course, provided the foundation for the establishment of two distinct social classes: one composed of both unskilled laborers and formerly independent artisans who, displaced by new machine technology or outmoded by an expanding market, increasingly depended for their livelihood upon the impersonal factory system; and, another class consisting of merchant-investors who amassed huge fortunes simply through the manipulation of capital.[42] Remarking upon this unwelcome trend toward social

tratification, the Philadelphia Public Ledger on Oc-
ober 11, 1837 recalled a time in the recent past "when
e heard nothing from American presses, about classes and
istinctions of rank. Then, all occupations were consi-
ered equally honorably [sic], and distinctions between
ndividuals were founded, not in trades and professions,
ut in character and conduct."[43]

American workers were acutely aware of their de-
lining status. Even in the early 1830s they realized that
pportunities for economic and social advancement were
eing closed to them. In reaction to the altered economic
ituation and their diminishing independence, industrial
orkers formed labor unions and political parties. The
ature of their demands--a reduced working day, free public
ducation, the abolition of imprisonment for debt, reform
f the militia system, elimination of special privileges
nd monopolies, and reform of the banking system--attests
o the fact that labor organization was not spurred by any
eep-seated proletarian rejection of capitalist society,
it rather by a uniform desire for equality of opportunity
n the universal struggle for riches.[44] By uniting,
orkers sought to counteract economic trends which

threatened their cherished ideals of independence and equality; trends which, according to a report by the Trades' Union National Convention of 1834, operated "to produce a humiliating servile dependency, incompatible with the inherent natural equality of man."[45] Though organized labor did indeed succeed in winning minor reforms, its effectiveness as a preventative agent against growing social stratification was nullified by the severe depression of 1837. Hard times, together with a surplus of cheap immigrant labor and the replacement of skilled workers by machines, erased former gains and brought about the virtual collapse of the fledgling labor movement. No longer hindered by effective labor opposition, thriving under laissez-faire economic conditions, the growing capitalist plutocracy set about consolidating its power.[46]

Nothing aided this effort more than the massive tide of foreign immigrants that surged into the national economy during this period. Between 1815 and the Civil War, and cresting in the forties and fifties, more than five and a half million Europeans entered the United States. For the most part these newcomers were unskilled; nevertheless, they were suitable as production-line factory workers,

as heavy construction laborers, or as domestic servants. Moreover, they were quite willing to work for wages lower than those which native Americans had come to expect. This fact, compounded by the overwhelming surplus of labor itself, caused wages for a vast number of workers to drop, or at least to remain stationary, while living costs inexorably rose. Each year the average worker, whether immigrant or native, found his status more permanently fixed; he was, he soon realized, a wage-slave with scant hope of ever rising to a higher social and economic position. For a member of the upper class, however, immigration was unmistakably a boon; the ready availability of cheap labor hastened the full-scale introduction and implementation in factories of mass production techniques. Consequently, profits swelled.[47]

Recognizing this increasing class polarization, Parke Godwin, a New York journalist and Fourier socialist, concluded that "our modern world of industry is a veritable HELL" where "the few rich are becoming more and more rich" and "the unnumbered many are becoming poorer"--a conclusion which recent quantitative studies confirm.[48] The obvious contrast between the rich and the poor became even more glaring in light of the aristocratic affectation, the

ostentatiousness, and the conspicuous consumption of the nouveaux riches. The "aristocracy of the New World," wrote journalist G. G. Foster in 1853, "have never been equaled on the face of this earth, in all that is pompous without dignity, gaudy without magnificence, lavish without taste, and aristocratic without good manners."[49] By 1860, while wealthy capitalists paraded the latest fashions, erected palatial summer homes, and feted foreign nobility, there were, in New York City alone, nearly 500,000 hungry tenement dwellers looking on in anger.[50]

Class distinctions were not radically different in the South. There vast wealth lay in the hands of great cotton and sugar planters who amassed huge fortunes through a combination of rich soil and slave labor. In contrast, the small planters and ordinary farmers who composed the majority of the population found it increasingly difficult to maintain their social and economic status, especially after 1850 when the Gulf Plains had been settled. Wealthy planters repeatedly took advantage of their vast crop to undersell small farmers, to squeeze them out and subsequently buy up their land. By the eve of the Civil War, the great plantation owners held a virtual monopoly of the

est cotton land and constituted a distinct aristocratic lass. The popular romantic conception of antebellum outhern gentlemen sipping mint juleps in magnolia-shaded uxury was not entirely without foundation, for by 1860 he income of the cotton states' one thousand richest amilies equaled that of all of the more than half million emaining white families in the South.[51]

Except in the West, where equality of opportunity ersisted until the last decades of the century, class ines in America were clearly drawn and permanently fixed y 1860. Two distinct types of aristocracy existed: in he urban centers of the North, a plutocracy composed of erchants, manufacturers, shipping magnates, and specu- ators; and, in the South, a landed aristocracy made up of ealthy planters. Together these two groups virtually con- rolled the destiny of the remainder of the population. onsequently, in the minds of the vast majority of Ameri- ans the dynamic view of class structure prevalent in the 830s had, by 1860, been supplanted by a bitter realization hat most men were isolated behind what one historian has ptly termed a "wall of economic immobility." The long ccepted ethic of success and individual achievement,

buttressed by a common belief in equality of opportunity and sustained by a fleeting dream of rags to riches metamorphosis, had unavoidably collapsed under the unremitting daily regimen of hard work for low wages, poor living conditions, and dehumanization resulting from the grueling tedium and mass discipline imposed by the impersonal factory system. In view of this erosion of popular ideals and cherished hopes, it is not surprising that the common man's suppressed frustration at last erupted in major class strife; beginning with the July draft riots of 1863, violent social upheavals recurred intermittently throughout the remainder of the century. Though the Upper Ten succeeded in maintaining its social and economic position during this turbulent era, its sustained superiority merely confirmed the absence of upward social mobility. And while the lower class could not refrain from admiring the opulence of the rich, neither could it help but feel that such extravagance was somehow both immoral and unjust.[52]

The popular tendency to associate the concept of wealth with both immorality and injustice was as commonplace in the late nineteenth century as it is today. Discoursing on "The Foundation of the Labor Movement" before

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an audience gathered in Boston's Music Hall in 1871, Wendell Phillips, the renowned reformer and labor leader, assured himself an affirmative reception by identifying the chief enemy of the working man as "capital--the child of artificial laws."[53] As he was no doubt aware, Phillips' reference to the legal sanctions accorded incorporated wealth tapped what had become by 1871 a popular American antipathy toward law and the legal system. Much of this attitude stemmed from a widespread and often substantiated notion that law was employed as a means of safeguarding the vested interests of the upper class while at the same time denying the basic democratic rights of the majority. In an 1849 article which serves as an index to popular opinion during this age of increasing class stratification, one contributor to the Democratic Review asserted that society is perpetually engaged in a "conflict," the ultimate goal of which is "'equality in the eye of the law to all who live under the law.'" This conflict, he concluded--wielding a martial metaphor that would soon become characteristic to attacks upon invidious class distinctions--will continue unabated

> until the time shall come when the great body of the people shall no longer be taxed to

> benefit a few; when the substance of the many that should go to the support of their families, and the education of their children, shall no longer be wrenched from them, to swell the countless millions in the coffers of manufacturers and cotton lords; until unjust laws shall be done away with; until this system of legislating for classes, of legislating for the few at the expense of the many, is entirely abolished; until the principle that the earth is made for the benefit of all, is recognized as a rule of action.[54]

hough Judge Lemuel Shaw had contended in 1845 that law im-
osed a "restraining power" upon every individual, "however
levated in social and political condition," most Americans
imply did not agree.[55] To the contrary, the rise of the
egal profession itself from a chaotic condition in 1790 to
position of social and political domination by 1850
eemed only to confirm popular suspicions with regard to
nefarious association between law and special privilege.
oreover, as a growing number of lawyers consolidated their
osition as members of the upper class they inherited the
nimosity which the lower class increasingly reserved for
ts social superiors. In the years during and after the
ivil War, as urbanization and industrialization fostered
ie growth of big businesses whose doubtful practices were
efended by large staffs of corporate lawyers, this senti-
nt gelled.

In addition to the apparent class bias of the legal system, other factors contributed to the popular disrespect for law. Perhaps the most important of these grew out of a longstanding debate within the legal profession itself. This debate, rooted in the previous century, centered on the nature of the relationship between law and Christian morality. In the years following the ratification of the Constitution, members of the American legal profession had sought to formulate a doctrine of law which would command international respect and yet at the same time be uniquely suited to the republican principles endorsed by the new nation. Not surprisingly, lawmakers in America--conditioned as they were by an intellectual heritage which included Anglican and Calvinist theology, Puritan theocracy, Stoic philosophy, Newtonian physics, and the writings of such men as Locke and Thomas Paine--constructed a system of law based on the unquestioned premise fundamental to both English Common Law and Continental European Civil Law: namely, that "all positive law is an endeavor to enact universal natural law." The law of nature, William Blackstone had explained, is dictated by God and thus takes precedence over all other forms of law: "It is binding over all the

globe in all countries, and at all times; no human laws are of any validity, if contrary to this." If it were to be respected, reasoned lawmakers, human law must conform to that divine law embodied in the Christian faith.[56]

In the course of the next fifty years, however, it became increasingly apparent that this goal, though admirable in theory, was incapable of realization--particularly in a nation whose Constitution provided for a clear separation of Church and State. Moreover, despite lawyers' efforts to sanctify their profession by constructing involved legal defenses of Biblical narratives, they found the clergy unwilling to share the moral leadership of the country. Gradually it became more and more obvious that a partnership between law and Christian morality was no longer feasible. At last, in 1844, the uneasy partnership formally ended with the Supreme Court's momentous decision in the Girard Will Case. In spite of Daniel Webster's eloquent reiteration of Blackstone's contention that Christianity inhered in the law, Justice Joseph Story proclaimed that most Americans outside the legal profession had long recognized--that Christian morality and American law were distinct entities.[57] Thus, the story of the evolution of

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American jurisprudence in the nineteenth century is, in one respect, the story of the growing disparity between civil and moral law.

The majority of Americans were, of course, unaware of the implications of the debate which occupied the legal profession from 1790 to 1844. However, they did know one thing, and that was that law, at least as they saw it administered, seldom mirrored their own idea of what was true and just. Much of this popular attitude toward law undoubtedly resulted from the intricacies of the judicial process itself. American jurisprudence, observed a South Carolina professor in 1838, "is now so technical and artificial in its character, that its relations and connections with morality cannot be well comprehended or expounded by one not professionally learned in the law." Indeed, had most citizens of the time read Tocqueville they would doubtless have agreed with him that the American lawyer "resembles the hierophants of Egypt, for like them he is the sole interpreter of an occult science."[58]

Many lawyers attempted to counter this growing public distrust by emphasizing the function of law as a positive, organic force which served to build freedom into

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society. Others, however, took a different approach. The law of nature, the moral law, the municipal law, and the law of nations, said Theodore Sedgwick in 1857, together impose a system of "restraints" the combined "pressure of which the individual is forced to acknowledge his incapacity to resist."[59] To a people who still thought of themselves as free and self-reliant pioneers, this statement no doubt sounded like a challenge.

By the last half of the nineteenth century, then, the average American could no longer see a connection between civil and moral law. Too often there seemed to be a wide and unsettling disparity between that ideal justice which ought to prevail in the application of law and that lesser justice which, in fact, did prevail. Finally, in addition to his natural distaste for artificial restraints, the common man doubted the ethics of pettifogging lawyers, regarded courtroom procedure as mere chicanery, and looked upon law itself as a tool employed by a vast conspiracy of the rich to subjugate and exploit the poor.

The numerous declamations against the evils of class distinction and institutionally sanctioned injustice illustrate the degree to which popular rhetoric of the age

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was suffused by a distinct moral tone, a pervasive sense of outrage and foreboding born of an acute sensitivity to the moral ramifications of the industrial revolution. Reasons for this anxiety, for this tendency to question the moral fiber of American society, are not difficult to discern. For one thing, the ease and luxury which accompanied growing national prosperity proved difficult to reconcile with the traditional popular belief that virtue was best fostered by adversity. Seemingly, a widespread desire to live fashionably was eroding America's reverence for the spiritual value of hard work. In an age of rampant materialism, it seemed, the price of success was too often the utter abdication of moral principles. As one might expect, concerned moralists singled out money as the root of all evil: "The inordinate pursuit of money," said a member of the clergy in 1842, "for the gratification of avarice, vanity, pride, and ambition, has deeply corrupted the principles of the country, and nearly destroyed all generous public feeling." In a similar vein, an Episcopal Bishop observed in the fifties that "Wealth came in and created social distinction which took the place of family, and thus society became vulgarized."[60]

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Such jeremiads were not limited to the pulpit. In 1845, The American Review, a Whig journal and traditional champion of unrestricted industrial enterprise, gloomily addressed itself to the new materialism in an introspective article on the "Influence of the Trading Spirit Upon the Social and Moral Life of America." "While the commercial spirit in this extravagant form gives a certain sobriety and moral aspect to society," the article observes, "it occasions an excessive barrenness of real moral excellencies." May we not, then, wonder "whether our morality is not of a somewhat inferior quality, and in a too narrow view. It is artificial, conventional . . . . Our virtues are the virtues of merchants, and not of men . . . . We have more conscience than heart, and more propriety than either."[61]

This same article locates a second source of widespread anxiety--the apparent breakdown of the family unit--and attributes this trend as well to the uncontrollable zeal manifested in the quest for riches: "The excessive pursuit of gain begets a secrecy of thought, a contradiction of ideas, a barrenness of interest, which renders its votary any thing but social or companionable. Conversation

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essantly takes an anxious and uninteresting turn; and
fireside becomes only a narrower exchange, and the
lor a more private news-room." So too, this restless
erialism has engendered "one of the greatest curses of
social state--the great want of intimacy and confidence
tween children and their parents . . . ."[62] Such expres-
ons of concern were not unfounded, for the nineteenth
ntury witnessed the progressive disintegration of the
nily as a self-sufficient economic, political, social,
d spiritual unit. The impact was greatest upon working
ass families. As economic conditions changed, small
nily-operated craft shops and businesses gave way to
ge impersonal factories where jobs kept parents away
m the home during the long working day, and left them
tired for healthy family pursuits in the evening.
eover, economic necessity drove children into the work-
world prematurely, depriving them of an education,
ering them from the social and spiritual guidance of
home, and exposing their malleable young minds to the
tations of urban crime and vice.

That the economic revolution was widely regarded as
reat to the cherished American institutions of home,

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arriage, and family can be seen in the popular reaction to
he changing role of women. Traditionally, women had been
evered as symbols of unimpeachable innocence and morality.
hey preserved the sanctity of the home and exerted a re-
emptive power over family members who daily confronted the
emptations of the avaricious working world.[63] Yet the
ealities of modern industrial society radically altered
he roles of many women; seldom were their new roles conso-
ant with their former symbolic role.

Observing with disapproval the highly publicized
ehavior of women in the upper class, many Americans feared
he adverse moral consequences of sudden prosperity. Emma
illard, pleading for the establishment of female semi-
aries as one means of halting the declining standard of
orality among women, told the New York State Legislature
hat the present "depravation of morals and manners, can be
raced to the introduction of wealth, as its cause." Women
the wealthy class, she lamented, "have erected the idol
fashion; and upon her altar, they sacrifice, with shame-
ss rites, whatever is sacred to virtue or religion."[64]

While prosperity steadily undermined the morality
women in the upper class, the ever present specter of

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:ty jeopardized the virtue of women at the opposite end
ıe social spectrum. With the growth of industry,
try girls by the thousands migrated to major cities
e they acquired, overnight as it were, the dangerous
dom of urban anonymity. Concerned citizens wondered
ɔnce beyond the watchful eyes of parents, these young
n might not fall easy prey to temptation. In fact,
did, and the story of the country girl gone wrong had
me a familiar one long before Dreiser's Carrie Meeber
ped off the afternoon train in Chicago. Aggravating
problem, the unremitting rigors of factory work proved
demanding for some women. Their health suffered, and
they had outlived their usefulness to employers they
d themselves alone in the city with no way to earn a
ng. "What becomes of them then?" asked Orestes Brown-
"Few of them every marry; fewer still ever return to
native places with reputations unimpaired."[65] Even
women who managed to hold down jobs sometimes found
possible to subsist on their low wages, and conse-
ly turned to the oldest profession. Alarmed by the
ı of prostitution, a New York doctor in 1883 attri-
profligacy in the city to the low wages paid

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leworkers, explaining that his profession afforded him
y and unpleasant opportunities of knowing the wants of
e unfortunate females, who try to earn an honest sub-
ence by the needle, and to witness the struggles often
by honest pride and destitution. I could site [sic]
instances of young and even middle-aged women, who
been 'lost to virtue,' apparently by no other cause
the lowness of wages and THE ABSOLUTE IMPOSSIBILITY
ROCURING THE NECESSARIES OF LIFE BY HONEST INDUSTRY."[66]

The myriad effects of the economic revolution upon
moral complexion of America--the restless materialism
of sudden prosperity, excessive competition and cu-
ty in the working world, the atrophy of close inter-
onal ties and general good will among people, the
kdown of the family unit, and the contamination of the
ol of woman as guardian of virtue--combined to produce
tional mood of deep spiritual disquiet. Symptomatic
his mood, a wave of evangelical Protestantism swept the
ion, and the proportion of adult church members in the
lation doubled between 1800 and 1875. Still, the power
he church as a force for social control steadily de-
ned during this same period. Little by little, the

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ch inexorably lost its capacity to impose upon society coherent body of spiritual values.[67] Clearly, the ican people no longer wanted dogma; they wanted diver-

By 1860, the unbridled optimism with which the ma- ty of Americans had greeted the first stirrings of the omic revolution in the early part of the century had seriously eroded by a clearer notion of the true im- of industrialization upon the quality of modern life. ne detrimental effects of economic growth upon the so- , legal, and moral landscape of society became more rent, many people began to entertain grave doubts about future. Yet an irrevocable commitment to industriali- on had already been made, and hope dwindled that the se of the nation could be changed. Even the cataclysmic Between the States proved little more than a temporary sion from the main business of conquering the conti- through science and industry. Optimism continued to ne ostensible mood of the age, but it was an uneasy nism at best. As the pace of change accelerated, the current of popular uncertainty and frustration grew. pressible, it rose to the surface, spilling over in

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violent social strife that marked the last three
cades of the century.

For an age ostensibly progressive and optimistic,
nineteenth century produced a surprising number of
uments which reveal the utter despondency, the absolute
elessness, of many Americans. In a speech delivered at
ton's Horticultural Hall in 1869, Wendell Phillips
matized the plight of the vast inarticulate labor force
at only rises to toil and lies down to rest. It is
ted by no hope, mellowed by no comfort; looks into
dens it created, and up to wealth it has garnered, and
no pleasure thence; looks down into its cradle,--there
no hope . . . ."[68] Less passionately phrased but
ally disturbing were the results of studies conducted
George Henry Evans' National Reform Association, which
nd "the new born power of machinery throwing itself into
labor-market, with the most astounding effects--wither-
up all human competition with a sudden decisiveness
t leaves no hope for the future."[69]

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The growing despondency among Americans resulted t only from a deterioration in physical living condi- ons but, more importantly, from an apparently irrever- ble decline in the status and independence of the indi- dual. As industrialization progressed, economic changes rced more and more people to compromise their former lf-reliance. The artisan, for example, who once owned s own shop and sold his own products, lacked the finan- al resources necessary to compete in the new mass market; en his business failed, he was abruptly reduced to the vel of a factory wage-earner with nothing to sell but his bor. Like the artisan, many individuals within a rela- vely short period of time became completely dependent on the industrial system; each was, in effect, surrender- g his destiny to the vicissitudes of gargantuan economic d social forces. Yet security was not the sole loss perienced by the industrial worker. As the wage-earning pulation expanded, and as the employment of cheap immi- ant labor proliferated, the former dignity and respect- ility of labor diminished.[70]

While most workers may have been only dimly aware the long term effects of their declining status and

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pendence, all were acutely sensitive to the day to day
cts of unrelenting factory tedium and mass discipline.
ing hours lasted as long as daylight permitted, and
when the working day was later reduced to ten or
en hours, gains were offset by production speed-ups
tightened discipline. To stimulate efficiency, most
ories imposed a rigid system of petty rules often en-
ed arbitrarily by foremen and superintendents.[71] In-
tions brought salary reductions, and few workers could
rd to challenge the authority of their superiors, even
that authority was blatantly abused. The degree to
h factory work was both degrading and dehumanizing may
nferred from the attitude expressed by a Fall River
on mill superintendent in 1855. "I regard my work-
le just as I regard my machinery," he bluntly asserted.
long as they can do my work for what I choose to pay
, I keep them, getting out of them all I can . . . .
my machines get old and useless, I reject them and get
and these people are part of my machinery."[72]

Beginning in 1860, these human "machines"--their
s numbed by undeviating routine, their self-esteem
lessly demeaned by long days of regimentation and long

ghts of poverty--turned in ever-increasing numbers to me novels and story papers as a means of transcending the undaries of their twilight existence. Literacy was the eat equalizer, for it offered every individual, despite s status, access to a fantasy realm where the grim real- ies of modern industrial life did not intrude.

Several observers of the time were quick to locate e allure of cheap fiction. The Reverend Jonathan B. rrison, after investigating social conditions among mill- nds in a New England factory town in 1880, arrived at the llowing conclusion with respect to the popularity of ory paper literature: ". . . I am convinced by much servation, [that] the only effect of this kind of reading that it serves 'to pass away the time,' by supplying a nd of entertainment, a stimulus or opiate for the mind, d that these people resort to it and feel a necessity for in much the same way that others feel they must have iskey or opium."[73] Mrs. Jennie C. Croly, a humanitarian ted for her efforts to help New York working girls, ared a more penetrating insight in testimony before the nate Committee on Education and Labor in 1883. Working rls read pulp fiction, she explained, because "they want

mething very different from what they have in their daily
ves . . . . And I do not blame them for it. They are
azy for something that is outside of themselves, and
ich will make them forget the hard facts of their daily
ves."[74]

Dime novelists, too, were sensitive to the needs of
eir audience. Eugene T. Sawyer, author of several Nick
rter detective novels and countless stories in Street &
ith's Log Cabin Library and New York Weekly, recognized
at the primary appeal of sensational pulp fiction lay in
s power to transport readers beyond the confines of their
mmonplace lives. "To a man whose life is measured by
rds of ribbon and pounds of cheese, or bounded by the
ur dingy walls of a counting house," Sawyer explained,
dime novel is a revelation and a delight. Most of my
aders are mere 'supers' on the stage of life. They are
t in themselves picturesque. Nothing romantic ever
ppens to them. For all these, hungry for something to
ke them out of themselves, the dime novel provides a
rill per page, the only real mental stimulus they are
pable of. The heroes [who] strut through the pages of
e 'yellow-back' are the only interesting persons they
er hobnob with."[75]

Though the dime novel was unquestionably aimed at a predominantly working-class audience, its appeal, in one sense at least, permeated the entire culture. It served as an opiate for any individual of any social class who sought relief from the anxieties of the age. Again, somewhat defensively perhaps, Sawyer explained: "It is not, however, only the 'submerged tenth' who reads cheap stories. I have been into bookshops and seen bankers and capitalists gravely paying their nickels for the same tales their own elevator boys read. I have known literary men to confess that they had read tales as bad as mine with interest and excitement. Such yarns are about as good a remedy for brain fag as you could find. They're easy to read and require little effort of the mind. You can read 'The Pirate of the Caribees' when your nerves forbid ethical discussions."[76] Similarly, an author formerly employed by Beadle and Adams argued in retrospect that "It is a mistake to assume that the 'Beadle' appeal was merely to newsboys and bootblacks or the half baked intelligences of the community. Take the 'Nick Carter' stories for example, and they were to be found in the hands of men of large business interests and public affairs who did not hesitate to acknowledge that they

sought mental relaxation in following the marvelous detective's hairbreadth adventures."[77] Clearly, the intrinsic entertainment value of dime novels--arising mainly from their patterned experience of excitement, suspense, and release--provided a variety of mental relaxation which cut across class distinctions and stimulated broad audience appeal.

Yet a study of the evolution of the Western formula in the dime novel suggests that other less obvious but equally significant factors contributed to the popularity of pulp stories, especially among members of the lower class. Unquestionably, the archetypal structure embodied in the Western formula was one of these factors. A more important factor, however, was the manner in which the dime novel Western performed its threefold cultural function as game, ritual, and collective dream. From its first appearance in 1860 to its demise in the early twentieth century, the dime novel Western responded to the anxieties and aspirations of the age--a function clearly reflected in its development of a standardized setting, stereotyped characters, and conventionalized plots.

II

THE MIDDLE LANDSCAPE: SETTING IN THE DIME NOVEL WESTERN

> Here was nature clothed in virgin majesty. Such had she been for ages. Such was she when she sprung from the hand of her Creator . . . an Arcadia of simplicity and bliss. No government with its vile machinery of jails and court-houses, or sheriffs and lawyers, then bound free spirits in its iron chains; and no tax-gatherer thrust his importunate hand into the purses of well meaning citizens, to obtain wherewithal to execute the new-fangled projects of modern ingenuity . . . .
>
> --The Western Monthly Magazine, 1833

If asked to define a Western, the average man on the street would probably conjure up visions of cowtowns and deserts and reply without hesitation that it is a story which takes place somewhere in the Far West. He might even add that it takes place in the Old West--implying the nineteenth century--since automobiles, airplanes, and other modern contrivances seem somehow inappropriate to the picture framed in his mind. Yet further reflection would doubtless lead him to qualify his initial response. Remembering, on second thought, tales of Daniel Boone's

Kentucky prior to the Revolution, or of Cooper's New York during the French and Indian War, he might be inclined to dismiss these tales and limit his notion of the Western strictly to those stories set in the trans-Mississippi West. Alternatively, he might choose to include these tales and define the Western in terms of an all-embracing concept such as "the moving frontier."

This latter approach is perhaps the more fruitful, for it predicates a definition based upon the unique equation that exists between the spatial and the chronological aspects of the Western's standardized setting. Simply stated, the spatial or geographical setting of a particular Western story is a function of the story's setting in time. During the century and a half of national expansion between 1750 and 1900, the frontier moved steadily westward from the rolling and thickly forested countryside east of the Alleghenies to the semi-arid and arid regions of the Far West. Accordingly, a Western that takes place in, say, 1850 would--by reason of correspondence with historical fact--necessarily be set in a geographical region west of that of a Western which takes place in 1790. Westerns, then, have no common geographical setting. Yet there is

in the time-space equation of the Western's setting a single constant--the frontier itself. All Westerns are set on the frontier, that imaginary line where advancing civilization confronts the vast American wilderness. The relationship between this standardized frontier setting or landscape and the actions played out upon it constitutes a fundamental means by which the Western formula generates its meaning and aesthetic appeal.

Crucial to an evaluation of the standardized setting of the Western is an understanding of the function of the frontier as metaphor. Juxtaposing East and West, man and nature, society and wilderness, the frontier functions in the Western as a means of continuing the longstanding intellectual debate with respect to the idea of nature as the physical, spiritual, and moral antithesis of society. To the extent that it conceptualizes nature as an idyllic realm devoid of society's imperfections and concomitant evils, the Western resembles primitivistic literature of all times and all cultures. Yet the attitude toward nature expressed in the Western is at times equivocal. This ambivalence in the Western, so uncharacteristic of the common lot of primitivistic fiction, reflects a corresponding

ambivalence discernible in nineteenth century American attitudes toward nature.

In January 1860, only five months before the House of Beadle and Adams published the first dime novel, an anonymous contributor to The Christian Examiner revealed his age's characteristic ambivalence toward nature in an essay entitled "The Study of Nature." "The life of man is a perpetual struggle with external Nature," the essay commences. "Her spontaneous and unelaborated products yield him neither sufficient nor appropriate food, nor clothing, nor shelter; and all her influences, if untamed and unresisted, are hostile to his full development and perfect growth, to his physical enjoyments and his higher aspirations, and even to his temporal existence. While obedience to her dictates is the law of all lower tribes of animated being, it is by rebellion against her commands and the final subjugation of her forces alone that man can achieve the nobler ends of his creation." Striking this note repeatedly, the essayist proclaims man's relationship to nature essentially antagonistic, though it is, to be sure, an antagonism ultimately constructive. Man's virtues and capabilities, he argues, are realized only through struggle.

Wherever man exists as "the spoiled child of what are called 'more favored climes,'" he invariably "falls almost to an equality with the brute . . . ." But wherever he endures a harsh environment, "The extent of his victories over Nature is a measure not only of his civilization, but of his progress in the highest walks of moral and intellectual life." The subjugation of hostile nature thus constitutes the ultimate test of human character: only by subduing nature may man "vindicate his claim to be called a being, not a thing . . . ."[1]

Yet the same essay, scarcely twenty pages later, suddenly adopts a Wordsworthian tone. Lapsing into conventional Romantic rhetoric, the essayist speaks endearingly of that "inborn sympathy with Nature" which "is the source of the highest and most refined enjoyments of which childhood is susceptible." Contradicting his earlier admonition that nature and "all of her influences" are "hostile" to man's "full development and perfect growth," the anonymous essayist now emphatically proclaims nature's influences soothing and educative:

> To him who has never abjured this native impulse, or who has in maturer life returned to his pristine allegiance to our common mother, the responses of her oracles are the

> most soothing of external influences, and he is emphatically a wise man who has learned to commune with her in the many tongues in which she speaks to her children. He finds not music only, but profound instruction, in the notes of the song-bird, and the sighing of the pine; for him the voice of the thunder, of the bursting volcano, of the seething ocean, mingle grand and cheering truths with their words of terror.[2]

That an intelligent and articulate contributor to The Christian Examiner was capable in one breath of speaking of a harsh and unrelenting nature and yet in the next breath of invoking primitivistic visions of a benificent and bountiful nature, complete with the "bursting volcano" of an exotic South Sea paradise, clearly testifies to the profound cultural double-think characteristic of American attitudes toward nature in the last century.

This ambivalence resulted from the widespread currency and convergence in the early years of the century of two contradictory bodies of thought, each of which was decidedly eclectic. The first of these fused a notion of ancient lineage in Western civilization--the believed existence of an apocalyptical land in the region of the setting sun--to various attitudes generated by Puritan millennialism, the hardship of New World conditions, physiocratic theories, and nationalistic fervor, and thereby arrived at

a rationale for man's subjection of nature. According to this persuasion, unimproved nature presented a physical and moral obstacle to man's predestined realization of a pastoral utopia. Directly opposed to this conviction, however, a second outlook was widely countenanced. Combining notions derived from the European concept of the "sublime," deism, natural law theory, the Romantic cult of poetic sensibility, and cultural primitivism, this body of thought provided a persuasive rationale for the preservation of nature in its unimproved state. A summary of the genesis and influence of these contradictory bodies of thought provides a necessary context in which to offer a meaningful interpretation of the metaphorical significance and function of the Western's standardized setting.[3]

The more venerable of the two bodies of thought devolved in part from the ancient Greeks, who first entertained visions of "an apocalyptical land where men could hope to plant their seed and live happily ever after." This perfect land, they predicted, lay somewhere to the west beneath the setting sun.[4] Recurring intermittently, the vision of a pastoral utopia in the unexplored regions to the west persisted throughout the development and

expansion of Western civilization. Yet successive societies failed to discover the predicted Elysian fields, and as the boundaries of the known world were extended westward from the Mediterranean to Europe the locus of paradise was necessarily fixed further and further to the west. The discovery of the New World, however, promised the realization of the dreams of antiquity. Enthusiastic speculation mounted that the apocalyptical land had been found at last.

Dreaming of untold wealth and bounty--and ignoring their traditional fear of wilderness--early travellers to the New World habitually described the lush green continent before them as an earthly paradise. To Thomas Morton the summer beauty of New England made the land "seem paradice," and John Smith asserted that "heaven and earth never agreed better to frame a place for mans habitation" than in Virginia, "a lande, even as God made it." Leaving Roanoke, an infant colony whose future doom was then unimagined, Thomas Harriot expressed reluctance to depart "out of this paradise of the world." Similar hymns of praise for America as a land of unsurpassed natural beauty, salubrious climate, longevity, and fabulous wealth permeate the accounts of early voyagers to the New World. At a loss for imagery

commensurate with a land whose material plenty reputedly included such luxuries as spices, silks, and rubies, visitors commonly resorted to Biblical allusion. Virginia was, to Daniel Price, "a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey." Similarly, George Alsop recognized in the natural beauties of Maryland "Hieroglyphicks of our Adamitical or Primitive situation." And, promoters of the early colony of Georgia declared it a "future Eden" which, significantly enough, lay "in the same latitude with Palestine herself, That promis'd Canaan, which was pointed out by God's own choice, to bless the Labours of a favorite People."[5]

As this last allusion suggests, it was the Puritans especially who saw in the colonization of the "future Eden" of the New World the possibility of fulfilling their long awaited millennial destiny as God's chosen people. Yet "future" and "possibility" were key words. It required only brief exposure to the grim realities of life in the wilderness to shatter grandiose expectations and convince the majority of Puritans that the New World--in its present state, at least--was not the paradise it was earlier rumored to be.[6] Belief persisted, of course, that America was

destined to be the site of the Second Coming, and that a time would surely arrive when the earth would be transformed into a material paradise symbolizing the spiritual transformation engendered in the souls of men.[7] Yet it was generally accepted, too, that the millennium would not commence until the site of the Second Coming had been adequately prepared and the souls of men cleansed and transfigured thereby. Hence the trials associated with wilderness life were interpreted as God's means of testing the moral fiber of man. Biblical parallels supported this interpretation. Practitioners of the art of typology, the Puritans saw their situation prefigured in that of the children of Israel; they were, asserted Edward Johnson, the modern day counterparts of "the ancient and Beloved of Christ, whom he of old led by the hand from Egypt to Canaan, through that great and terrible Wildernesse." Fancying themselves engaged in a spiritual exodus, the Puritans regarded their wilderness existence as an unpleasant but nonetheless important part of God's plan: it was an intermediate phase preliminary to the advent of the millennium. As Cotton Mather observed in 1693, "Wilderness" was the stage "thro' which we are passing to the Promised Land."

Still, if they were to prove themselves worthy of deliverance, the Puritans realized, then they must exert their utmost efforts on behalf of redeeming the world from its wilderness state.[8]

This proved no easy task. The wilderness constituted both a physical and spiritual threat to the Puritan pioneers. It was, to begin with, a threat to simple survival. Food and shelter were not always readily accessible, and even the acquisition of these necessities of life demanded competition with wild beasts and even wilder men. There was, moreover, the distinct possibility that the perpetual struggle for survival would cause civilized man himself to succumb to what John Eliot termed "wilderness-temptations," and to revert to a more primitive, savage state--a suspicion which, to some extent, practical experience confirmed. Yet wilderness was not merely a frustrating physical obstacle. As Roderick Nash has observed, wilderness also "acquired significance as a dark and sinister symbol." The Puritans inherited the traditional Western conception of wilderness as a moral vacuum cursed by God, and encounters with wild animals and Indians tended to confirm this view. Furthermore, since the Old Testament

represented wilderness as the natural habitat of satyrs and demons, the Puritan imagination populated the dark forest with a menagerie of supernatural beings. Wild beasts were not the only denizens of the wilderness, claimed Cotton Mather; there were, in addition, "Dragons," "Droves of Devils," and "Fiery flying serpents." There were also pagan Indians, whom Mather termed "horrid Sorcerers, and hellish Conjurers and such as Conversed with Daemons." Clearly, the wilderness assumed in the Puritan mind a sinister metaphorical significance. It was the environment of evil, and Puritans conceived of their mission as the eradication of evil from the face of the earth. To perform their task of preparing a site for the coming millennium, they must subdue nature, civilize the wilderness and, in the words of Thomas Shepard, illuminate the "thick antichristian darkness" with "the cleare sunshine of the Gospell."[9]

The Puritan bias against the wilderness persisted among later generations of pioneers, but the millennial dream was secularized and fused to the growing belief in the Manifest Destiny of America. Following the Biblical injunction that man should increase and multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it, Americans set about converting the

wilderness into a rich and prosperous civilization. At all times their efforts in this respect were inspired and directed by the persistent vision inherited from the Greeks of "an apocalyptical land where men could hope to plant their seed and live happily ever after."

Among the intellectual elite, blueprints for the eventual foundation of a pastoral utopia in America took the form of physiocratic economic doctrines. Benjamin Franklin, eager to keep America free of the social and spiritual ills plaguing industrialized Europe, envisioned the West as the setting for a society of simple yeomen characterized by "a general happy Mediocrity of fortune." Agriculture, he felt, was "the only honest way" for a nation to acquire wealth, and since felicity, virtue, and prosperity invariably accompanied agriculture, it would only be within a vast agrarian utopia that Americans would be able to preserve their "glorious publick Virtue" and thus qualify themselves for the moral and spiritual leadership of mankind.[10] Franklin's habit of equating the wilderness with opportunity and of measuring America's moral and spiritual progress in terms of her progress in transforming the wilderness into a pastoral "paradise on earth"

was continued by J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, a French emigrant to America who settled on a small farm in New York. In Letters from an American Farmer, Crèvecoeur forecast the ultimate effect upon American society of continued westward expansion. It would produce, he explained, three main segments of society: a western region of primitive backwoods settlements; a central region of prosperous small farms; and an eastern region of overpopulated cities, accumulated wealth, and social stratification. While social conditions in the extreme western and eastern regions would be undesirable, he predicted that conditions in the agrarian middle region would foster virtue and happiness.[11] A similar pastoral society was envisioned by Thomas Jefferson. Embodying his theoretical hostility toward industrialization and artificial social institutions in a grand vision of agrarian democracy, Jefferson entrusted the future of the American republic to a society of small farmers. Though less progressive than Franklin, and advocating agrarianism more as a political alternative to European aristocracy than as a positive ideal in itself, Jefferson nevertheless believed that the simple pastoral life constituted the only viable means of fostering the economic

and moral independence required of a nation whose spiritual leadership was predestined.[12] "Those who labor in the earth," he announced in his Notes on Virginia, "are the chosen people of God, if ever He had a chosen people, whose breasts He has made His peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue."[13]

The note of millennialism sounded in the writings of Franklin and Jefferson echoed in the minds and hearts of all manner of Americans, even those incapable of assimilating physiocratic doctrines. Increasingly, the rush for riches in the wilderness West was dignified and sanctioned by the potent blend of nationalistic fervor and a sincere belief in America's millennial destiny. Even James Fenimore Cooper, whose novels lament the destruction of the wilderness, was convinced of America's providential settlement and recognized the challenge to humanity posed by her unique moral potential. This explained, he declared in 1832, why "so vast a portion of the earth as America" had remained undiscovered for so long, awaiting the development in man of a moral strength equal to the challenge of ushering in the millennial era. Similarly, Horace Bushnell reasoned in an 1837 Phi Beta Kappa address that "there

are too many prophetic signs admonishing us, that Almighty Providence is pre-engaged to make this a truly great nation . . . . This western world had not been preserved unknown through so many ages, for any purpose less sublime, than to be opened, at a certain stage of history, to become the theater wherein better principles might have their action and free development."[14] Popular publications of the age are replete with similar invocations to subdue the wilderness in the name of God and country. "Christianity, rational philosophy, and constitutional liberty," declared a nineteenth century orator, "like an ocean of light are rolling their resistless tide over the earth." There would doubtless be setbacks, he admitted, but "the great movement will . . . be progressive, till the millennial sun shall rise in all the effulgence of universal day."[15]

The ancient longing for a pastoral utopia in the West--mapped out in physiocratic doctrines and promoted by the combined effects of wilderness conditions, millennial fervor, and nationalistic zeal--fostered in America an intellectual and social milieu in which attitudes toward nature were principally utilitarian. Wilderness meant opportunity; it had value as potential civilization.

Unimproved nature constituted a physical and moral obstacle which must be overcome if the dreams of mankind were to be realized. "Go you into the moral wilderness of the West," Joseph P. Thompson exhorted an audience in 1859; "there open springs in the desert, and build a fountain for the waters of life."[16] Americans took up the challenge in ever increasing numbers, confident that their efforts as the agents of civilization were ordained by God and ennobled by humanitarian purposes. In the physical and moral battle against nature, progress meant plenty; success meant spiritual reward.

The dominant popular attitude toward nature continued to be one of antipathy, but a contradictory, positive attitude was simultaneously emerging. Intellectual currents generated in Europe as early as the sixteenth century--particularly in the fields of aesthetics, religion, politics, and social thought--flowed across the Atlantic to America, where they influenced New World opinion and stimulated the gradual development of native pride in the beauties of the American wilderness. While this appreciation for nature encouraged the emergence both of America's first school of landscape painting and the nature worship

of Bryant, Emerson, and Thoreau, it conflicted sharply with the dominant utilitarian attitude toward wilderness.

The climate of change was fostered principally by developments in aesthetics. As scientific discoveries accompanying the Enlightenment revealed to mankind a universe both infinite and harmonious, belief was strengthened that the universe was the creation of a divine being whose image and sublimity were reflected in the physical features of the earth. This led to a new idea of beauty which largely dispelled the earlier Classical conception of ordered, proportioned beauty. According to adherents of the new concept of the sublime, the rugged, chaotic scenery of the wilderness could also be aesthetically pleasing. Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant alike argued that the terror man experienced when viewing wild scenery was not inspired by loathing but rather by profound awe and exultation, and William Gilpin, the English aesthetician who first defined the "picturesque" as the pleasing quality of nature's irregularity and intricacy, provided admirers of untrammeled nature a rhetorical style and standardized vocabulary for expressing their appreciation. By 1800, natural scenery and phenomena--mountains, forests, waterfalls, and storms--

commonly elicited paeans celebrating the "picturesque," the "beautiful," and the "sublime" qualities of nature.[17]

Deism likewise contributed to the growing appreciation of wilderness scenery. By applying the powers of reason to nature, deists induced faith in the existence of an all-perfect Deity, the First Cause of the universe. Natural objects and phenomena had always possessed spiritual significance, of course, but religion had in the past invariably given direct revelation precedence over so-called "natural evidence" of the existence of God. Moreover, wilderness had formerly been excluded from the category of nature as being too chaotic. Yet deism radically altered this view. In fact, as pure nature unaffected by the hand of man, wilderness was accorded primary importance by deists as the clearest lens through which to perceive the Creator. In civilized areas, where man's works were superimposed on the works of God, spiritual truths were distorted or obliterated; conversely, in the sylvan dells and leafy grottoes of the uninhabited wilderness, such truths were communicated without distortion.[18]

The polarity between civilization and wilderness acknowledged by deists also constituted an underlying

assumption of natural law theory. As early as 1523, Francisci de Victoria had published De Indis et De Jure Belli Hispanorum in Barbaros, a work in which he castigated the conquistadors' efforts to enslave the Indians of the New World and defended the rights of the Indians against the claims of the Spanish sovereign. Establishing a distinction between divine law and human law, Victoria identified the laws of God with the laws of nature and right reason. God had given liberty to all men, asserted Victoria, including the Indians; not even the King of Spain had the right to deprive them of it. Francisci de Victoria's work was consulted as a primary source by later proponents of natural law theory, especially by Hugo Grotius and John Locke, the two authorities on natural law most commonly cited by leaders of the American Revolution. It is noteworthy, too, that in his "Treatise of Government" Locke made specific reference to the unhampered function of natural law in the American wilderness.[19]

Natural law theory, in combination with deistic religious dogma and the concept of the sublime, had the effect of ameliorating to some extent the traditional Western antipathy toward unimproved nature. Habitually

identifying nature specifically with the vast wilderness in America, prominent thinkers during the Enlightenment turned to nature as the source of liberty, truth, and beauty. This change in attitude opened the way for the nineteenth century vogue of nature.

With the advent of Romanticism, nature was acknowledged to be attractive not only to the rational mind but to the poetic sensibilities of man as well. Nature, it was argued, spoke to man directly through the feelings, and the closer man lived to nature the closer he would come to apprehending true wisdom. The wilder aspects of nature, in particular, appealed to the Romantic penchant for the extreme, the solitary, and the remote. The wilderness setting was rich with scenes of desolation and grandeur that imaged poetically the agony and the ecstacy of the human soul. Bleak crags and lightning-blasted trees deepened the somber shades of Byronic melancholy, and snow-capped peaks and shimmering lakes suffused the ailing soul with exultation. Whether motivated by unrequited love or boredom with the ways and wiles of man, the Romantic wanderer tormented by ennui habitually sought refuge amid the benificent influences of nature.[20]

The idea that nature exerted a physically restorative and spiritually redemptive influence on man was symptomatic of the cultural primitivism that flourished during the Romantic Movement. Believing that man's health and happiness decreased as he approached higher and higher states of civilization, primitivists idealized savage cultures and other societies that preserved simpler and therefore happier modes of existence. This outlook, of course, was not new to Europe. Following the publication near the end of the sixteenth century of Montaigne's seminal essay, Of Cannibals, tributes to noble savages and wilderness life became so popular as to assume the character of literary conventions. Eighteenth century English poets like Shaftesbury and Pope longed for the "pathless wilds," and Defoe's attractive characterization of Robinson Crusoe's simple life on a deserted island implied by contrast the corruption prevalent in English society. It was not until the nineteenth century, however, that primitivism fully flowered. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the period's foremost primitivist on the Continent, expressed some reservations with regard to life in the wilderness, but in Emile he nevertheless presented a convincing argument that modern

man's condition would improve substantially were he to incorporate an element of primitivism into his civilized life.[21] Rousseau's beliefs, often misconstrued by his popularizers, generated a cult of primitivism on both sides of the Atlantic.

The idea of wilderness as the antipode of civilization, superior to civilization both spiritually and morally, was a concept fundamental to the world view emerging from Europe during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Unimproved nature was admired for its beauty and sublimity. It was worshipped by deists as the handiwork of God. Its influences were alternately soothing and exhilarating, but always spiritually educative. In sum, wilderness was regarded as a pristine realm apart from society--a realm where man, unfettered by myopic human laws, uncorrupted by the evils of the modern world, might live a simple, innocent life in harmony with the divine rhythms of nature.

In view of the European enthusiasm for wilderness and its associated values, it is not surprising that during the period following the War of Independence a growing number of patriotic Americans recognized in the virgin

American wilderness a means of establishing a national identity. The wilderness was, after all, the sole distinctive attribute of the fledgling nation. America was destitute of the material and artistic achievements generally indicative of cultural independence, but she did possess primeval forests and sun-drenched prairies outrivalling in sheer scope and rude grandeur anything that Europe had to offer. In an age in which unimproved nature more and more frequently connoted beauty, freedom, and innocence, Americans turned to the American wilderness as the principal vehicle for the expression of national pride.

In trumpeting the future greatness of the nation, American intellectuals and artists availed themselves of each of the aesthetic, religious, and socio-political concepts implicit in the European vogue of nature. When extolling the incomparable beauty of their native scenery, for example, they invariably invoked the standardized vocabulary associated with the concept of the sublime.[22] Typical of this practice is Jefferson's tribute to Virginia's Natural Bridge, which he enthusiastically proclaimed "the most sublime of nature's works": "If the view from the top be painful and intolerable, that from below is

delightful in an equal extreme. It is impossible for the emotions arising from the sublime to be felt beyond what they are here; so beautiful an arch, so elevated, so light, and springing as it were up to heaven! the rapture of the spectator is really indescribable!"[23] Equally rapturous responses to the sublimity of American scenery characterize the poetry of William Cullen Bryant and the early landscape paintings of Thomas Cole, whose canvases commonly depict wildly emotional scenes in which diminutive human figures stand isolated in the foreground, dwarfed by a colossal background of elemental violence.[24] Yet the concept of the sublime was not the only idea associated with the vogue of nature implemented in the interests of American cultural nationalism. The deistic religious sentiments which informed the European appreciation of nature confirmed the American predilection for investing every manifestation of nature with a moral significance evocative of mingled feelings of awe and reverence for the Creator. Characteristically, nationally self-conscious Americans proclaimed the evocative powers of their native scenery unequalled. If the European landscape was conducive to religious inspiration, then the American landscape was doubly so--a

conviction manifested in the dual melodies of piety and patriotism that swell and counterpoint in the lines of Bryant and other prominent nature poets of the age.[25] Transcendentalists, too, while rejecting the deists' dependence on reason, nevertheless agreed with deists that nature was the proper source of religion, and consequently touted the unmatched godliness of American scenery. The writings of Thoreau, in particular, exemplify in addition the manner in which primitivistic notions implicit in the vogue of nature were also made to serve the national interest. Adopting an approach similar to that employed years earlier by Phillip Freneau in "The Philosopher of the Forest," and again in the "Tomo-Cheeki Essays," Thoreau extolled the virtues of savagery, criticized modern society, and linked the moral potential of man to the American wilderness.[26] By the middle of the nineteenth century, a spirit of patriotic zeal informed the entire complex of ideas associated with the vogue of nature; for better or worse, the national identity was wedded to wilderness.

The apotheosis of the wilderness West as a symbol of the national character engendered a profound cultural paradox--a paradox evinced by the ambivalence already noted

in "The Study of Nature," the essay printed in The Christian Examiner in 1860. The predominantly utilitarian attitude toward nature fostered in America by a combination of pioneer hardship and millennialistic and physiocratic visions was sharply contradicted by new attitudes growing out of the Romantic vogue of nature. With the widespread assimilation of Romantic notions, the conceptual conflict became increasingly apparent. On the one hand, wilderness was despised as a physical and moral obstacle to the perfectability of man and the realization of the ancient dream of a pastoral utopia. On the other hand, it was reverenced as a national symbol with decidedly positive aesthetic, religious, and socio-political associations. Wilderness was both an antagonist and a sanctuary, an obstacle and a national treasure. The interests of God and country seemingly mandated its destruction, yet these same interests enjoined its preservation. For the most part, Americans remained committed to the advancement of civilization, but their commitment was moderated by grave doubts about the moral and ethical costs of progress. Might not the destruction of the wilderness, they wondered, mean the loss of the beauty, freedom, simplicity and innocence associated

with unimproved nature? Might not the conquest of the wilderness prove to be, in the end, a pyrrhic victory?

Many Americans were convinced that it would. By the middle of the century the commercial spirit was rampant in America. Technology was disrupting older, presumably better patterns of living, and urbanization and industrialization were rapidly eroding the moral and ethical foundations of society. In the face of these adverse changes in the quality of life, a growing number of Americans--particularly artists and writers--expressed concern for the future welfare of the country. Invariably they associated industrialization with corruption and utilized the wilderness as a symbol of all that was being sacrificed in the name of progress. Thomas Cole, implicitly denouncing the frenetic pace of modern life, and contrasting the evanescence of human civilizations with the slow and orderly rhythms of nature, allegorized the perils of progress in "The Course of Empire," a pessimistic series of paintings to which he attached a suitably grave motto: "First freedom, and then glory; when that fails,/ Wealth, vice, corruption."[27] Thoreau, too, denounced the morally poisonous tendencies of modern industrialized life, and like

Thomas Cole he prescribed nature as the only antidote. "The forest and wilderness," he announced before the Concord Lyceum in 1851, are "the tonics and barks which brace mankind . . . .": "in Wildness is the preservation of the World." While such statements led many of Thoreau's contemporaries to believe that he favored total reversion to the savage state, this was not the case; rather, he himself lived "a sort of border life," alternating between civilization and wilderness, and he advocated for all men a similar mode of life conditioned and balanced by perpetual contact with both extremes.[28]

In their criticism of modern industrial life, Cole and Thoreau followed the nineteenth century practice of exploiting the metaphorical significance of the tension between civilization and wilderness as a means of positing a better world. Consistently, the tendency of thought was toward synthesis, toward the reconciliation of the opposed values of civilization and wilderness. Using wilderness as an objective norm by which to measure the imperfections of developing civilization, Americans of the last century idealized a future society which combined, in the words of Orestes Brownson, "all of the individual freedom of the

savage state with all the order and social harmony of the highest degree of civilization."[29] Such a utopian society was, of course, unattainable in a practical sense, but the concept of a middle state synthesizing the attributes of civilization and wilderness excited the popular imagination. The notion "must be considered merely an interesting dream," wrote Charles Lane in The Dial in 1844. Still, he admitted, "Some amalgamation may . . . be possible; and to unite the advantages of the two modes has doubtless been the aim of many . . . . To view all things as male and female is a favorite habit of many acute minds; and to such it may appear, that the forest and civilized lives are the male and female, and from whose marriage an offspring shall result more conducive to human bliss."[30] To the extent that it conceptualized a rural landscape little different from the ancient Greeks' "apocalyptical land where men could plant their seed and live happily ever after," the utopian landscape posited by Thoreau and Lane was simply another manifestation of the longstanding pastoral ideal foreseen by the Puritans and envisioned by Franklin, Crèvecoeur, and Jefferson. Yet it was predicated on a positive rather than a negative attitude toward nature, and it provided a means

of realizing the pastoral ideal without sacrificing the wilderness values which Americans had come to cherish.[31]

In artistic and literary productions of the age, the nineteenth century utopian ideal was commonly visualized as a spatial and chronological middle state, a pastoral landscape frozen in space and frozen in time. Set somewhere in the popular imagination, it lay halfway between civilization and wilderness, combining the advantages of each while transcending their respective limitations; so too, it lay halfway between the future and the past, blending the promise of one with the security of the other. While no earthly setting corresponded to this visionary landscape, Thomas Cole found its dual nature approximated in the Connecticut River Valley, where the stark contrast between the sunny fields of a farming community and a rugged cliff obscured by dark and threatening clouds inspired him to paint "The Oxbow."[32] Thoreau found his version of the utopian landscape at Walden Pond, where he divided his time between cultivating his intellect and cultivating his bean field, alternately immersing himself in the accumulated wisdom of five thousand years of civilization and the perennially renascent spirit of nature.

The mass of Americans, however, possessed neither the refined sensibility nor the creative talent of a Cole or a Thoreau. Yet they, too, found the utopian landscape of their dreams. Slowly and haltingly, it materialized in the standardized setting of the formula Western.

Since its origin in The Leatherstocking Tales, the Western has functioned thematically to explore and contrast the relative desirability of life in a state of nature with life in a state of society.[33] Inasmuch as the actions of the Western take place on the frontier, where wilderness and civilization converge, the setting serves as a hypothetical neutral landscape. This neutrality provides the Western's setting the measure of flexibility crucial to the success of popular formulas: depending upon his own sympathies and specific purposes in a given story, an individual author may judge either of the two antipodal realms—wilderness or civilization--superior as a place in which to live. At first glance, the majority of Westerns would seem to affirm the superiority of life in the wilderness. To be sure, the typical Western assumes a regressive,

primitivistic posture indicative of its genesis in the Romantic period, and like other types of primitivistic literature it utilizes the wilderness West as an objective norm by which to measure the imperfections of society. At times its social criticism amounts to a veritable indictment of civilization's fundamental values and institutions. Yet this is only one aspect of the thematic function of the Western. A closer examination reveals that the Western's social criticism is at all times registered within a broader context of progressivism. The Western does not, of course, unequivocally affirm the value of civilized life, but neither does it totally affirm the value of life in the wilderness. Rather, it cultivates the tension between civilization and wilderness as a means of positing an ideal middle state comparable to that conceived by Cole, Thoreau, Brownson, and Lane--a utopian ideal that is set in the future, and that synthesizes the respective advantages of life in a state of nature and life in a state of society.

This dual function of the Western--its criticism of present society and its dialectical idealization of a future utopian society--is evident throughout The Leatherstocking Tales, where Cooper's primitivistic notions are

defined and qualified within a broader context of progressivism. Exploiting the frontier setting as a hypothetical neutral ground in which to contrast the desirability of life in a state of nature with life in a state of society, Cooper laments the destruction of the wilderness and criticizes the shortcomings of civilization--its artificial class distinctions, its unjust laws, its greed and selfishness. At the same time, however, he recognizes the shortcomings of life in a state of nature, where harsh conditions foster savagery, ignorance, and fear. Since he finds neither extreme--civilization nor wilderness--totally conducive to the realization of man's highest potential, Cooper idealizes a perfect middle state which combines the advantages of each while transcending their respective limitations. Natty Bumppo personifies this middle state; he is a human embodiment of the frontier metaphor. As Francis Parkman recognized, Natty is a "hybrid offspring of civilization and barbarism" who joins "uprightness, kindliness, innate philosophy, and the truest moral perceptions" with "the wandering instincts and hatred of restraint which stamp the Indian."[34] Cooper agreed, admitting in 1850 that Natty symbolizes the marriage of "civilization" and "savage

life," for he represents "the better qualities of both conditions, without pushing either to extremes."[35] Natty's dual nature explains his paradoxical situation in The Leatherstocking Tales. He represents, in Cooper's progressive view of history, the ideal state that human civilization is inexorably approaching. He is a spokesman for primitivism who criticizes society as it presently exists, but he is simultaneously pointing the way toward America's glorious destiny. He is thus a living paradox, a creature of the past and a herald of the future. Fleeing from civilization, "where the hammer is sounding in [his] ears from sunrise to sundown," he becomes "the foremost in that band of pioneers who are opening the way for the march of the nation across the continent."[36]

Following the example set by Cooper in The Leatherstocking Tales, dime novelists continued to exploit the metaphorical significance of the frontier as a means of dramatizing the conflict between the values of wilderness and the values of civilization. Of course, this is only the most obvious of several internal, aesthetic dynamics which governed the evolution of the Western's standardized setting: simply enough, the frontier setting evolved

organically as the geographical embodiment of the Western's fundamental theme. Yet a study of the dime novel suggests that the evolution of the Western's standardized setting was also influenced by external, cultural dynamics. In response to a cultural matrix in which attitudes toward nature and toward modern urban-industrial civilization were equally paradoxical, the dime novel developed a standardized frontier setting which functioned in a manner advantageous to the utility of the Western as a fictional medium through which to reconcile the principal cultural conflicts of the age. On the one hand, the development of a standardized frontier setting refined the Western as a vehicle for the expression of primitivistic sentiment and social criticism. On the other hand, it provided the Western a ready means of idealizing a utopian society of the future--a function of the Western formula which served to reaffirm the nineteenth century's progressive view of history, thereby offering a beleaguered society renewed hope for the future. This dual cultural function of the standardized frontier setting becomes apparent in an examination of the settings of dime Westerns written between 1860 and the turn of the century.

In the early dime novel--those written in the sixties and early seventies--descriptions of natural scenery and of the frontier setting generally reflect the mid-nineteenth century ambivalence toward the wilderness West. Characteristically, the attitude expressed is simultaneously Romantic and utilitarian, primitivistic, and progressive. When describing nature, dime novelists invariably invoke the conventional rhetoric of the sublime, but beneath this Romantic mien their concept of nature is dominantly utilitarian and materialistic: wilderness is prized for its value as potential civilization. Such is the case in one of the earliest and most popular dime novels ever written, Edward S. Ellis' Seth Jones; or, The Captives of the Frontier, a story of Indian fighting set in a "remote spot in western New York" at a time when "the tide of emigration was rolling rapidly and surely to the west." "Ere many years," Ellis comments in retrospect, "villages and small cities would take the place of the wild forest." Already "the rich virgin soil had been broken, and was giving signs of the exhaustless wealth it retained in its bosom, waiting only for the hand of man to bring it forth."[37] Similar visions of progress and plenty are

invoked in The Hunted Life; or, The Outcasts of the Border, an 1867 Western by Edward Willett. Describing the wilderness West in terms of the persistent edenic myth inherited from the ancient Greeks, Willett hails the Kentucky landscape as the future site of the long heralded pastoral paradise in the West. As though viewing the Promised Land from Pisgah, an old hunter and his wife pause at the crest of a mountain range to survey the "rolling and beautifully timbered country" spread out below them: "In the distance they could discern a broad and level plain, wonderfully fertile, and abounding in buffalo and elk and all manner of game, a paradise for hunters and an eldorado for farmers."[38] This passage typifies the progressive vision of the West promulgated in the early dime novel. Habitually, dime novelists couched descriptions of the West in paradisical imagery--no matter what geographical area they were attempting to depict. As wilderness steadily receded before the advance of civilization, they merely fixed the locus of paradise farther and farther west. Even as late as 1880, little more than a decade prior to Frederick Jackson Turner's formal proclamation of the closing of the frontier, one dime novelist was still describing Texas as an

apocalyptical land of "velvet prairies" and "forest-fringed rivers" where "the sun ever shines and the grass is ever green."[39]

The idea of the West as an apocalyptical land of material plenty and human bliss is reflected in a number of early dime Westerns whose thrust is clearly utopian. Invariably, they synthesize the contradictory Romantic and utilitarian concepts of nature, subordinate primitivistic notions to the dominant progressive philosophy, and idealize pastoral utopias which combine the advantages of life in a state of nature and life in a state of society. Rose Kennedy's Myrtle, the Child of the Prairie, for example, is set in the mythical western city of Wakwaka, a utopian society strikingly similar to that envisioned by Orestes Brownson. Combining "all of the individual freedom of the savage state with all the order and social harmony of the highest degree of civilization," Wakwaka offers a life of ease and freedom amid the bounties of nature, whose omnipresent beauties exert an ameliorating influence upon human passions:

> Not that human nature was acted upon by the beautiful influences of Wakwaka to become otherwise than it always is; selfishness was rampant, no doubt in many minds, shrewd, cool,

> and calculating; but large prospects of rapid gains and the absence of old-time formalities had, for a season at least, expanded the hearts of her people.
>
> And it cannot be said but that a constant reminder of the lavish generosity and beauty of nature--silently spoken by her blooming prairies rolling one after another into almost infinite distance, her wood-crowned hills, and free, magnificent waters--had some effect upon the souls of those who enjoyed this profusion of her riches.[40]

The physically restorative and spiritually redemptive effects of life in Wakwaka are apparent in the character of Hugh Fielding, the novel's protagonist. His "physical powers," we are told, "were exercised and invigorated by his out-of-doors life," and his "spiritual nature was fed with the very honey of existence." In fact, "It was not so much to startle the partridge out of the long grass, or to chase the deer to the cover of the wood, that he slung his gun upon his shoulder, although he kept the house well supplied with the choicest game, as it was to be out alone in the midst of boundless and ever-varying beauty, free to dream and to think, while breathing in life of body and liberty of soul."[41]

Inasmuch as it actually depicts the utopian society of the future, Myrtle, the Child of the Prairie differs from the majority of dime Westerns written during the 1860s.

To be sure, the pastoral ideal informs most novels of the period, yet it is generally characterized as a dream whose realization will require considerable effort and sacrifice. Novels in this category are Romantic in their descriptions of nature but progressive in outlook, and they invariably invoke the edenic myth as justification for western settlement and extermination of the Indian. Quindaro; or, The Heroine of Fort Laramie offers a case in point. The hero of the novel, Quindaro, is a confirmed Indian hater who shares the Puritan view of the West as a second Eden created by God to test and spiritually prepare humanity for the advent of the Millennium. Quindaro's sweetheart, Mary, shares this outlook. When Quindaro asks her if she desires to leave the wilderness where she has been raised and enter the civilized world which she has never seen, she replies by describing her dream of a millennial future: "I know but little of the world, and that little is only what I have gleaned from books. But it must be beautiful. I have read of the 'Garden of Eden,' where our first parents were so happy. And I have pictured to myself even a brighter scene, where intellect controls the actions of mankind. But there was a serpent in Eden. Is there any such where

Christian men and women dwell?" Gravely replying "that there is 'no rose without its thorn,'" Quindaro admits that "Society is not free from such serpents as cursed the beautiful garden." Yet neither is the wilderness West, he gloomily concludes, reiterating the by now familiar Puritan analogy between the savages of the forest and the evils lurking in the moral wilderness of the human heart:

> Where, upon the footstool of the Creator, can be found a place more lovely than that which surrounds us! Here is Nature fresh from God's hand. It combines, in its variety, much of the grandeur and beauty which the hand of the Infinite has vouchsafed to us on this globe . . . . Look around you. Do you see that broad valley stretching, far as the eye can reach, toward the eastern sky? See, the sun, as it appears over the mountain-peaks beyond, gives to each emerald blade a tinge of golden light, forming a picture which the hand of man could never copy . . . . And here are a thousand other beauties. The mountains, the streams, and ten thousand charms no tongue or pen can describe. Yet, all these beauties are marred by the presence of savages; and blood stains the face of nature! There are many things in all parts of the world, whether in the crowded city or in the deep forest, to mar the loveliness which abounds on every hand. It appears as if the dark demon, which reigns within man's heart, must manifest itself everywhere--everywhere![42]

Though grimly aware of the pervasiveness of evil, Quindaro sees in the extermination of the Indian and the conquest of the wilderness a providentially ordered plan for the

ultimate redemption of mankind. The conquest of the wilderness constitutes, in effect, a rite of purification: by exterminating the disciples of Satan and restoring the Garden of the New World to its pristine state, man may expunge evil from the world and usher in the long awaited millennial age.

Millennialistic sentiment permeates the early dime novel Western, but more often than not the conquest of the wilderness is advocated on nationalistic as well as religious grounds. Glorifying western expansion as a national mission ordained by God, early dime Westerns customarily celebrate the pioneer experience and all who played a part in it. According to the author of Queen of the Woods; or, The Shawnee Captive, pioneers were patriots whose "energy was indomitable. Never weary, never conquered, they advanced still onward toward the setting sun, laying first the foundations of home and then of empire." Daniel Boone, the first pioneer to gain national recognition, is dubbed the "patriarch of the wilds," the "great pioneer of power and civilization."[43] Similarly, in Daniel Boone's Best Shot; or, The Perils of the Kentucky Pioneers, Boone is "the advance guard of that great civilization that was to

follow in his tracks. He was there to subdue the savages and prepare the way for coming greatness . . . ."[44] And in Boone, the Hunter; or, The Backwoods Belle, the venerable trailblazer proudly exclaims: "The Lord hath ordained me an instrument to people the wilderness and make the waste places full of people."[45]

Not unexpectedly, dime novelists inspired by nationalistic fervor conceive of the wilderness West as a vast natural resource whose grandeur and inexhaustible bounty signify the Manifest Destiny of America. They voice a Romantic appreciation of nature, and they take patriotic pride in the beauties of native American scenery, but their concept of the West is nevertheless essentially utilitarian. This point is perhaps best illustrated by Percy St. John's ambivalent sentiments in Queen of the Woods; or, The Shawnee Captive, an 1868 Western that chronicles Daniel Boone's efforts to establish the settlement of Boonesborough. In passages characterizing Boone, St. John attributes to the great pathfinder refined sensibilities and a Romantic appreciation of nature. He was a man, St. John asserts, "who had an eye for the beautiful in nature . . . . No man ever more sincerely worshiped the native beauties of

forest and field than Daniel Boone." In passages describing the natural setting, however, St. John reveals a different concept of nature. Kentucky is a "paradise" where man may acquire all of "the necessities and luxuries of life," explains St. John, proudly declaring that "fairer country never blessed the eyes of the hopeful emigrant." Yet it is a paradise whose potential is yet to be realized. It is not the wild beauty of the landscape but rather its fertility and value as potential civilization that St. John finds appealing, for he describes a rolling plain "which, without having many claims to beauty, has other advantages in connection with it. It is richly fertile, though now overgrown with weeds, reeds, rank grass, with here and there a pecan-bush, a coffee-tree, or a dwarf mulberry; but which, ere many years shall have passed, will have a splendid city in its eastern confines and waving cornfields all around." This progressive, utilitarian concept of nature underlies the novel and nullifies St. John's superficial paeans to the beauties of untrammeled wilderness. Though he praises the "lofty mountains, beautiful valleys," and "clear streams" of the virgin land, St. John closes the novel with a tribute to the pioneers who

established Boonesborough "in the center of a wilderness, which they were daily bringing into subjection."[46]

To the extent that it reflects the progressive spirit of the mid-nineteenth century, St. John's Queen of the Woods; or, The Shawnee Captive typifies the majority of dime novel Westerns penned during the 1860s and early 1870s. Superficial in their appreciation of wilderness, novels of this period commonly subordinated primitivistic notions to the overriding ideal of progress. Like Seth Jones; or, The Captives of the Frontier, they manifested a utilitarian concept of nature. Like Myrtle, the Child of the Prairie, they envisioned the West as the future site of a pastoral utopia. Like Quindaro; or, The Heroine of Fort Laramie and Queen of the Woods; or, The Shawnee Captive, they celebrated the conquest of the wilderness on religious and nationalistic grounds. All of these various ideas, of course, were inspired and conditioned by the seldom questioned belief that America was destined to become a utopian society of comfort, happiness, and equality. This belief in turn shaped the developing Western formula. Insofar as its frontier setting functioned to idealize a utopian future from the conflict between wilderness and civilization, the

Western embodied and affirmed the optimism of the age. Yet the mood of America was changing.

The beginnings of change are evident in the manner in which Westerns of this period utilize the conventional ubi sunt. The poetic speech eulogizing the passing of the wilderness and the inexorable advance of civilization is, of course, part of Cooper's legacy to the Western. In The Leatherstocking Tales, the ubi sunt contributes to the novels' elegiac tone by counterpointing primitivistic and progressive sentiments: inasmuch as it mourns the passing of the wilderness and the decline of the Indian race, it is primitivistic; inasmuch as it forecasts the advance of civilization and the eventual triumph of the white man, it is progressive. The integrity of the ubi sunt as an artistic device in The Leatherstocking Tales thus derives from its irony and balance. Yet this balance is commonly sacrificed in dime Westerns penned during the early and middle 1860s. In novels of this period the death of an Indian invariably triggers a panegyric to the superiority of the white race and the glorious progress of civilization. The dying words of An-ga-wam, a Huron warrior in an 1866 Western entitled The Twin Scouts. A Story of the Old

French War, are typical: "White man . . . you have triumphed at last, and I see in my fate an emblem of the fate of my nation. As I die to-day, a bloody death, such will be the fate of my nation at the hands of the white man."[47] In dime Westerns written during the late 1860s, however, the ubi sunt is not nearly so peremptory; though it maintains a broadly optimistic view of the historical process, it acknowledges the baser aspects of the pioneer ethos and balks at the costs of progress. Even so thoroughly progressive a novel as St. John's Queen of the Woods; or, The Shawnee Captive invokes the ubi sunt as a means of criticizing the frenetic materialism threatening to undermine the moral authority of the national mission. When Massaquoit, a noble Shawnee brave, laments the destruction of the wilderness and decries the unjust fate of the proud tribes that "melt away, like snow under the sunrays," his hereditary claim to the land elicits contrasting reactions from two frontiersmen. Nathan Hicks, an unprincipled self-seeker who looks upon nature's beauties "merely in the light of dollars and cents," derides the Indian's claim and dismisses it arbitrarily. Conversely, Ned Harris, an upright man who possesses "an eye for the beautiful in

nature," sees justice in Massaquoit's argument. Still, he reasons, change is the first law of nature; the wilderness must and shall be sacrificed to greater ends, and the Indian's only hope for survival lies in conversion to white ways.[48] While both frontiersmen affirm progress, the implication of their differing reactions is clear: there is a wrong way and a right way to advance the cause of civilization; progress must be dignified by high moral purpose. After 1870, the ubi sunt more frequently assumed this admonitory tone.

America's growing tendency to question the desirability of progress is reflected in a number of dime Westerns written during the 1870s. Published in 1873, Frederick Whittaker's Boone, the Hunter; or, The Backwoods Belle ironically makes the godfather of civilization, Daniel Boone, a spokesman for the new uncertainty. Always in his previous appearances in the dime novel, Boone had been depicted as a willing servant of society and his historical bias against the trappings of civilized life had been suppressed--a practice doubtless attributable to his characterization in John Filson's The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke and Timothy Flint's Biographical

Memoir of Daniel Boone. Yet in Boone, the Hunter; or, The Backwoods Belle the indomitable pioneer begins to sound more like his anti-social counterpart, Natty Bumppo. Boone is resigned to his role as God's "instrument to people the wilderness and make the waste places full of people," but he nevertheless voices doubts about the inevitable consequences of progress. Standing on a hilltop with his brother, Squire, and awed by the sight of a massive herd of buffalo thundering across a verdant plain untouched by the hand of man, the usually taciturn Boone is moved to speech:

> "Squire," he said softly, "when first I stood on this hill and looked out over the plains of this favored land, five strong brave men stood by me, and we rejoiced together that the Lord had shown us such a goodly heritage. Brother, of those five not one is left, and only I am alive to tell the people of the Yadkin what manner of land this is, and how I was preserved. And yet, brother, I am loth to depart from it and bring back settlers. A few years more, and yonder forest will lie low, while of all that great herd of God Almighty's cattle, not one will be found this side of the great river. The ax and the rifle will turn paradise into a market for men to buy and sell, and you and I, brother, where shall we be?"[49]

Late nineteenth century Americans were no doubt in sympathy with Boone. By the middle 1870s civilization was

encroaching upon the last remaining pockets of American wilderness. Virgin forests were being ravaged to satisfy the nation's need for timber and farm land. Every year millions of buffalo were being slaughtered to feed railroad crews laying track deeper and deeper into America's hinterland. Yet the pace of change continued to accelerate, bringing with it a host of social ills--rampant commercialism, class polarization, moral decline. Like Daniel Boone, a growing number of Americans looked into the nation's urban-industrial future and asked themselves, "Where shall we be?"

More revealing, perhaps, than any other evidence of the impact of industrialization upon the American psyche is the conspicuous absence from the dime Western of allusions to modern technology. This is generally true even of stories dealing with mining camp life, for it would hardly do to remind the fantasy-seeking reader of the complexities of the industrial age. An interesting exception, however, occurs in Deadwood Dick, The Prince of the Road; or, The Black Rider of the Black Hills, a story written by Edward L. Wheeler in 1877 as the first number of Beadle's Half Dime Library. Returning to a secluded mountain retreat after a

month's absence, the hero of the tale, a noble outlaw known by the sobriquet Deadwood Dick, discovers that his hideaway has been appropriated by a mining company. At this point the author himself intrudes:

> What a transformation is all this since we left the Flower Pocket a little over a month ago! Now, everywhere within those majestic mountain-locked walls is bustle and excitement; then, the valley was sleeping away the calm, perfume-laden autumnal days, unconscious of the mines of wealth lying nestling in its bosom, and content and happy in its quietude and the adornments of nature's beauties.
>
> Now, shouts, ringing halloos, angry curses at the obstinate mules, the rumbling of ponderous machinery, the clink of picks and reports of frequent blasts, the deadened sound of escaping steam, the barking dogs, the whining of horses--all these sounds are now to be heard.
>
> Then, the valley was peacefully at rest; the birds chimed in their exquisite music to the Aeolian harp-like music of the breeze through the branches of the mountain pines; the waters pouring down from the stupendous peaks created an everlasting song of love and constancy; bees and humming-birds drank delicious draughts from the blushing lips of a million nodding flowers; the sun was more hazy and drowsy looking; everything had an appearance of ethereal peace and happiness.
>
> But, like a drama on the stage, a grand transformation had taken place; a beautiful dream had been changed into stern reality; quietude and slumber had fled at the bold approach of bustling industry and life.[50]

Though ludicrously inflated, Wheeler's purple prose might well be considered a common man's eulogy to the passing of

a simpler, happier age. With the advent of industrialization, America's cherished dream of a pastoral utopia "changed into stern reality." The nation's future--once so bright--assumed a darker cast.

The publication of the first Deadwood Dick novel in 1877 offers a convenient point from which to date a new era in American history and a new phase in the evolution of the Western formula. Following the massive railroad strike of that year, America entered a period of labor strife, industrial violence, and urban unrest unprecedented in the nation's history. In response to the growing mood of discontent, the dime novel Western changed in emphasis. Whereas formula Westerns written before 1877 had been predominantly progressive in tone--the primary function of the frontier setting being the dialectical idealization of a utopian society which America seemed likely to realize at some future date--formula Westerns written after 1877 became increasingly primitivistic in tone--the primary function of the frontier setting being the analysis and simplistic resolution of current social problems which placed the nation's utopian ideal in jeopardy. Westerns of this period, then, customarily function as vehicles for

social criticism. They assume an anti-progressive posture from which to criticize society, yet this posture is merely speculative, for paradoxically their social criticism is at all times defined within a broader context of progressivism. While they bitterly denounce social evils and warn against perilous trends in the developing society, they nevertheless affirm the values of civilization and posit the eventual realization of a better world.

The manner in which dime novelists used the setting of the Western to facilitate the analysis and simplistic resolution of social problems is plainly illustrated by The James Boys in No Man's Land: or, The Bandit King's Last Ride, a novel released in 1891 under the by-line D. W. Stevens but probably written by John R. Musick. The story is set in a mythical western region called No Man's Land, "a scope of country west of the Indian Territory, north of Texas, east of New Mexico, and south of Colorado and Kansas." Unaccountably overlooked in surveys, and thus "under no special jurisdiction of any State or Territory, this scope of country became a place of refuge for thieves and escaped convicts of all classes. Men and women fled there, and colonies were formed."[51] No Man's Land, it soon becomes

apparent, is a virtual Hobbesian state of nature, a place where the author may investigate, in Hobbes' words, "what manner of life there would be, where there were no common power to fear . . . ." Not to be confused with a Rousseauvian state of nature, where man lacks socially acquired behavior and desires and therefore retains his primordial innocence, No Man's Land differs from organized society in only one crucial respect: its absence of law and social contract enforcement. Uncontrolled by law, the residents of No Man's Land are avaricious and violent, and life in the outlaw haven is consequently "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."[52] Yet the focus of the novel is not ultimately upon No Man's Land, but rather upon society in the United States. No Man's Land merely functions as a foil against which to explore the unsettling disparity between conventional law and true justice.

Despite the title's reference to the James Boys, the novel deals with the plight of Oliver Davis, an upstanding young man falsely accused of murder and sought by legal authorities in Lima, Ohio. Oliver would gladly return to the States to clear his name, but he is convinced that he would be unjustly persecuted. Asked to explain why

he is a fugitive, he laconically replies: "Suffice it to say that I am guilty in the eyes of the law, but innocent in the sight of heaven. The wealthy and the great have hired the newspapers to slander me. Scores of witnesses are ready to swear my life away . . . . Half a million dollars are ready to bribe judge and jury to hang me, but I will never be taken alive." This note of criticism is sounded recurrently throughout the novel, and always the targets of invective are the same: entrenched wealth and a legal system too easily manipulated by unscrupulous plutocrats. Oliver Davis, the narrator remarks on one occasion, "had offended a wealthy and powerful family, and his blood was demanded of [sic] them . . . . Money is power, and the poor man has little show against the great and rich. He is trampled beneath their feet, as the elephant and ox trample on the insect."[53]

While the novel bitterly castigates the failures of society and the established legal system, its ultimate judgment of society is affirmative. Conversing with his sweetheart, Minnie Potter, a simple girl who has always lived in No Man's Land and who has no conception of organized society, Oliver maintains the necessity for law and

explains the nature of the social contract. The following exchange occurs when Oliver observes that law "is necessary for the preservation of society":

[Minnie:] "What's that?"
[Oliver:] "People living together and enjoying themselves. They make laws, and the laws are to protect the weak from the strong."
[Minnie:] "Protect the weak. Why out here if a fellow hasn't got the nerve to protect himself he goes under."
[Oliver:] "That's wrong."
[Minnie:] "No, it's right."
[Oliver:] "It can't be."
[Minnie:] "Well, it's the way they do things here and a fellow must learn to not let any one get the drop on him."
[Narrator:] He had no time to instruct her in the laws of moral rights and ethics . . . .

Oliver's affirmation of society and the value of law is further emphasized by the story's setting, for the absence of law in No Man's Land fosters a climate of violence and fear. "It would be better for me if I were dead," Oliver remarks. "Life here, chased about by everybody, driven by detectives and Indians is hardly worth having." Even the choleric Frank James agrees. Reflecting upon the greed and treachery of his cohorts, he cynically muses, "No man in No Man's Land can be trusted." Such statements serve to

clarify the novel's final statement that life in society, while imperfect, is nevertheless better than life outside of society. This qualified affirmation of society and the value of law is confirmed by the story's ending, though its simplistic resolution of the disparity between law and justice is patently absurd. Marrying Minnie and using the million dollars that she fortuitously inherits from her outlaw father, Oliver returns to Ohio, wins acquittal in the courts and commences a new life as "a rising young lawyer."[54]

The increasingly important thematic function of the dime novel Western as a vehicle for social criticism led to the development in the late 1870s of a standardized setting ideally suited for this purpose. Westerns of this period--and nearly all of those written since--commonly take place in and about an isolated, newly established town or mining camp situated on the advancing frontier and surrounded by the open prairie of the Great Plains or the deserts and mountains of the Far West. As the spearhead of advancing civilization, the town is tenuously linked to the rest of the world by a trail, a stagecoach line, or in some instances by a railroad, and each day more settlers arrive to swell the population of the already bustling community. In

terms of chronology, the stories take place sometime during the zenith of the mining and open range cattle industries in the last three decades of the nineteenth century--a period that John Cawelti has termed "the epic moment."[55] Several factors account for the evolution and standardization of this particular setting.

Perhaps the most significant factor contributing to the development of the dime novel's standardized setting was the Western's primary thematic function as a vehicle for criticizing the imperfections of society and simplistically resolving the problems of modern urban-industrial life. The setting that evolved in the dime novel was not, of course, entirely innovative. Cooper had employed similar settings years earlier in The Leatherstocking Tales, where the action invariably takes place in the vicinity of a remote frontier outpost--a fort, a wagon train, a muskrat trapper's "castle"--that serves as a microcosm of the world at large. In only a single novel, The Pioneers, does Cooper actually use a town to image the novel's fundamental thematic conflicts. Perhaps the absence of towns in four out of five of the novels may be explained by the moral focus of The Leatherstocking Tales: while exploring social

problems, Cooper probes beyond them to their ultimate source in the strengths and weaknesses of human nature. A wagon train serves this purpose as well as a town. Dime novels, however, seldom achieve Cooper's thematic depth. Nor is their ultimate focus moral. Instead, they customarily focus on problems which are, in essence, generally social and specifically urban. For this reason a town or a mining camp--still in the early stages of settlement but already possessing such features of eastern society as newspapers, elections, and an established class structure--is most suitable as a microcosm through which to criticize and resolve the pressing conflicts of a predominantly urban-industrial culture. That this is, indeed, the chief reason for the presence of a town in the dime Western's standardized setting is confirmed by an examination of the Deadwood Dick novels penned by Edward L. Wheeler. Though set in such different geographical locations as Deadwood, South Dakota or Leadville, Colorado, all thirty-three novels in the series take place in the vicinity of a newly established town or mining camp. Moreover, each of these communities is plagued by one or more social problems also afflicting eastern society--problems which Deadwood Dick,

the hero, takes it upon himself to resolve. For example, in Deadwood Dick on Deck; or, Calamity Jane, the Heroine of Whoop-Up, Deadwood Dick rids the mining town of Whoop-Up of an assortment of speculators, shifty politicians, and "capitalists who would like to step down into the little city of Whoop-Up, and grasp the tyrant's reins in their hands." In Deadwood Dick of Deadwood; or, The Picked Party, the noble hero foils attempts by a "purse-proud aristocrat" to establish a corrupt business empire in Deadwood. And in The Phantom Miner; or, Deadwood Dick's Bonanza, the Prince of the Road confronts the disparity between law and justice in the Idaho boom town of Eureka.[56] Insofar as these fledgling communities function as miniature replicas of eastern society, they refine the Western as a vehicle for social criticism.

A related factor contributing to the development of the dime novel's standardized setting was the Western's secondary thematic function as a fictional medium through which to idealize a utopian future. Always bustling with activity and growth, the cowtowns and mining camps depicted in the dime novel are invariably located on the advancing frontier, where their presence implicitly affirms the

continued progress of civilization. To be sure, these newly settled towns are daily confronting the perils associated with progress, and it is this confrontation that gives rise to the numerous conflicts that provide the Western its action. Yet the dime novel characteristically portrays these growing towns during an epic moment when the social evils which have already corrupted the urban centers of the East have not yet gained a firm foothold. Hence the future of these embryonic societies remains pliant, and their presence in the Western's standardized setting sustains the possibility that a utopian society may yet evolve in the West. Against this progressive backdrop, the Western hero emerges as the guardian of the future. His stylized acts are rites of purification, for each time he resolves a social problem afflicting one of these incipient utopias--by shooting a villain, say, or by foiling a scheming aristocrat--he is taking a positive step toward the eventual realization of a better world. Thus, while the standardized setting of the Western facilitates the expression of social criticism, it simultaneously functions to affirm a progressive, optimistic view of the future.

No doubt a third factor contributing to the development of the dime novel's standardized setting was the unusually dramatic quality of the western landscape itself. Commenting on this aspect of the Western's setting in The Six-Gun Mystique, John Cawelti calls attention to four important characteristics of the Great Plains and Far West topography: "its openness, its aridity and general inhospitability to human life, its great extremes of light and climate, and, paradoxically, its grandeur and beauty."[57] Each of these features of the western landscape is repeatedly emphasized by dime novelists. Inasmuch as it is perhaps the longest and fullest description of the western topography ever to appear in a dime novel, the following passage from Ned Buntline's Sib Cone, the Mountain Trapper merits extended quotation:

> The declining sun looked upon as desolate a scene as could well be imagined in that lonely region, the prairies of the Far West. As far as the eye could reach, nothing was to be seen but a dry and barren plain, stretching away to meet the embrace of the distant horizon. The grass was short, and embrowned by the melting summer sun, which, in that distant region, often shines for weeks unclouded, drinking up the moisture from the earth, and with it, its consequent vitality. For weeks, ay, months, no rain had fallen. Unclouded days and dewless nights had followed in their burning cycle; and the plain

> lay parched, and gasping for its cool drink, like one with a raging fever. Not a shrub, or bush, or even a tuft of grass, broke the sameness which everywhere met the vision. Silence and desolation seemed there to reign together. Not an insect chirped--not a bird flew by; nothing was heard, nothing moved; but there that lonely plain lay, like a stagnant ocean, basking in the light of a September sun.
>
> The plain was one of many which extend almost uninterruptedly from Council Grove to the base of the far-distant mountains, near Santa Fe--a region of country which has nothing to exceed it for wildness and sterility on the whole continent of America. Covered with the short buffalo-grass, in places furrowed by tremendous chasms--and again dotted with hills of shifting sand--the hunting ground of the Comanche and other prairie tribes--the home of millions of buffaloes, antelopes, and deer . . . . It is a land of plenty, and of want; of destitution, and of beauty; of life, and of death.[58]

A landscape of vast grandeur and striking contrasts, the western setting visually images the dramatic conflicts implicit in the Western formula: the clash between civilization and wilderness, man and nature, good and evil, and life and death. Moreover, the Western's characters attain epic proportions when drawn against a backdrop of such magnitude.

The unlimited openness of the western landscape is--at least in terms of the Western formula's internal aesthetic dynamics--the most functional aspect of the

Western's setting, for it offers the reader a bird's eye view of the action continually unfolding--often simultaneously--on various parts of the landscape. It is helpful to think of the dime novel's standardized setting as a gigantic electric map representing a military battlefield, or, alternatively, as a vast gameboard upon which opposing pieces are carefully moved. In any event, this setting may generally be subdivided into three distinct areas: located in the middle of the landscape, an isolated town or mining camp; surrounding the town, a vast intermediate area of open prairie; and, farthest removed from the town, an outlying camp, commonly a ranch or hideout. The precise character of the setting's opposing extremes--the town and the outlying camp--differs according to the nature of the conflict and the location of the villain. In the simplest stories the town represents the forces of civilization, progress, and virtue, while the outlying camp harbors antithetic forces, usually Indians or outlaws. This is not always the case, however, for the situation is sometimes reversed in stories that are, relatively speaking, more sophisticated. Here a villain masquerading as a law-abiding member of the community--often a banker or a

lawyer--subtly undermines the values of civilization from within, duping the ignorant populace and making the town the abode of evil. If so, the outlying camp becomes the locus of positive forces--in most cases noble rogues who, despite their status as outlaws, nevertheless advance the cause of justice and virtue. This situation prevails, for example, in the Deadwood Dick novels, where the dashing road agent and his men periodically gather at their outlying camp, sweep down upon the town to strike a blow for justice, and then retire again to their mountain stronghold. As this example suggests, open space is crucial to the Western's setting: conflicts between the opposing forces may occur anywhere, and the reader must retain an unimpeded view of the pattern of action as it moves swiftly back and forth among the three areas of the standardized landscape.

While open space is crucial to the Western's setting, it also creates at least two intrinsic fictional problems. First of all, since the setting itself is so extensive, it would seem highly unlikely that tiny bands of men roaming over the vast prairie would often meet; hence some motivation short of random chance is needed to bring

opposing parties into conflict, thus insuring plot action. To avoid this problem, dime novelists often depict conflicts--especially the climactic, decisive battles which generally end the stories--as organized assaults upon either the town or the outlying camp. For the sake of variety, however, skirmishes occasionally occur on the intermediate landscape of the open prairie. When they do, they usually take place at a waterhole, a motte, or a box canyon where opposing groups are likely to meet, and where the action may be enclosed and intensified. A second problem, however, is not so easily surmounted. Since conflicts involving different groups may and do occur simultaneously on widely scattered areas of the landscape, some method is needed to unify the overall pattern of action. This problem no doubt explains dime novelists' exclusive use of the unlimited omniscient point of view; by rapidly shifting scenes, authors may narrate events taking place concurrently on various parts of the landscape. Moreover, as a form of crosscutting, this technique further serves to build tension. Yet dime novelists sometimes resort to more ingenius techniques. For instance, in Big Foot Wallace, the King of the Lariat; or, Wild Wolf, the Waco, Major Sam S.

Hall utilizes the moon as a device to unify no less than six different parties rapidly approaching each other on the darkened prairie:

> The moon, although still shining brightly, was now low in the western sky, casting its brilliant rays aslant, its arrows kissing alike the paint-daubed cheek of the Commanche [sic], the yellow face of the Mexican, the bronzed features of the Texan outlaw, and the pallid lily skin of the trembling captive in the Commanche [sic] camp.
>
> Out upon the northwest plain, hidden by a bend of the San Miguel, the orb of night shone down upon a galloping mass of Waco warriors . . . .
>
> On the south bank of the San Miguel, the moon smiled placidly also upon three men, who were driving the cruel spur at every bound of their steeds, as their eyes stared fixedly and painfully ahead . . . .[59]

A similar device appears in Frederick Whittaker's Top Notch Tom, the Cowboy Outlaw; or, The Satanstown Election, where a rotating telescope conveniently mounted in the belvedere of an isolated ranchhouse provides the narrator a means of describing, with tactical precision, skirmishes occurring within a radius of six miles.[60] Though admittedly contrived, such unifying devices enable dime novelists to turn problems created by open space to their advantage. As a result, the dime novel--like the modern Western film--often captures the epic power of the West in grand, panoramic scenes in

which small parties of horsemen, dwarfed by the boundless, sun-drenched landscape, clash silently in the distance.

There remains but one final aspect of the Western's setting to discuss, and it is perhaps the most difficult to isolate and document: that is, the emotional and psychological impact of the western landscape itself. Readers have long found the colossal scope of the western landscape its most attractive quality. Extolling the powerful psychological appeal of the landscape depicted in Cooper's novels, Balzac explains that "You incarnate yourself in the country; it passes into you, or you into it," and "you feel it impossible to separate the soil, the vegetation, the waters, their expanse, their configuration, from the interests that agitate you."[61] Dime novelists seldom challenge Cooper's descriptive powers, but they do occasionally succeed in capturing the stirring, oddly mixed feeling of exhilaration and loneliness elicited by the boundless expanse and solitude of the western landscape. "In the midst of the ocean, tossed upon a spar," observes Edward Ellis in Irona; or, Life on the Old South-West Border,

> the shipwrecked mariner gains some idea of the vastness of the expanse around him, and of his own littleness in this great world of ours. So the traveler journeying alone over the

> western prairie, feels, perhaps in a lesser degree, the mighty extent of the American continent. Hour after hour, day after day, he may gallop over the monotonous waves of land; week after week he may kindle his camp-fire on the banks of streams and on the plains themselves, and for months he may wander whither his fancy leads him, without meeting one of his own kind.[62]

In the measureless vistas of the western landscape, readers of the Western--particularly city dwellers--transcend their twilight existences; their longing for unrestricted freedom and primitive, uncomplicated contact with nature is satisfied.[63] Even what one dime novelist has called the "immense, crushing loneliness" of the western landscape is somehow ennobling and soul stirring.[64] "'How beautiful all this is,'" says Frank Weston, contemplating the Texas prairie in The Mustang-Hunters; or, The Beautiful Amazon of the Hidden Valley. "'It ar' that,'" his companion answers. "'Give me a hunter's life afore all the sprees and drinks of the settlements. Ef it weren't for my trips to the settlements, I'd never be onhappy.'"[65]

The standardized setting that evolved in the dime novel continues to appear, almost unchanged, in Westerns

written today. Synthesizing ambivalent attitudes toward nature and exploiting the metaphorical significance of the frontier, it continues to facilitate the Western's traditional function as a vehicle through which to criticize and simplistically resolve the dominant cultural conflicts of the age. Although criticism registered by the Western is often bitter, it is never psychologically unacceptable; it never seriously challenges cherished values, for it is at all times qualified and contained by the broader progressive context that is the dime novel's foremost legacy to the twentieth century Western. Within this progressive context even the bitterest social criticism--to say nothing of the Western hero's violent, antisocial behavior--assumes positive value as a stimulus toward reform and the eventual realization of a better world. In the meantime, the beauty and boundless grandeur of the western landscape offers readers of the Western rare but exhiliarating moments of transcendence. As Stuart B. James eloquently observes, "the setting of the western novel is desolate and strewn with bones and the depths of its encircling silence a mockery to the lost human cries that have for centuries been lifted to its

fierce stars. Yet across this waste men courageously carry their frail but creative dreams, blueprints of images sufficiently powerful, as Malraux has it, to deny our nothingness."[66]

III

OF FEW DAYS AND FULL OF TROUBLE: THE EVOLUTION OF THE WESTERN HERO

> If it be inquired what were their predominant traits, we answer, that they possessed in an eminent degree . . . those strong and original virtues which constitute the basis of efficient character. They were abundantly gifted with patience, perseverance, frankness, generosity, a dauntless heroism and an enthusiastic love of liberty. These are the qualities which were developed, amplified, and brought to maturity by peculiar agencies, existing only in the wilderness.
>
> --The Western Monthly Magazine, 1833

Nothing provides so accurate an index to the values and preoccupations of a culture as the characteristic attributes of the heroes enshrined in its popular art forms. This is especially true of the Western hero. As the first native embodiment of the values of a nation still in its infancy, and as the product of an age of possibility--an anxious age in which the outcome of the great American experiment remained in doubt, and in which social and moral issues were therefore charged with a disproportionate

urgency--the emerging Western hero constituted a remarkably undistorted mirror image of the culture that produced him. And yet he was exactly that--a mirror image, a reflection--and like all reflections in a mirror, he imaged reality in reverse. The Western hero was not therefore a projection of the expressed ideals of the average nineteenth century American; rather, as the preeminent character in a communal fantasy, he was a projection of the average American's secret aspirations and repressed anxieties.

In the span of more than six decades during which the dime novel flourished, four popular stereotypes of the Western hero emerged: the backwoods hunter or trapper modeled after Cooper's Leatherstocking; the daredevil scout or plainsman typified by Buffalo Bill; the cowboy, knight errant of the plains; and, the noble outlaw, the rogue of the West. Henry Nash Smith examines the evolution of the dime novel Western hero in his pioneer study, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth, and recognizes in these four stereotypes a progressive abandonment of traditional social and moral codes of behavior, complemented by a simultaneous increase of sensationalism, iron-willed self-reliance, and moral turpitude. Suggesting that these

"changes in the characters reveal a progressive deterioration in the Western story as a genre," Smith argues that the decline of the stereotyped hero from a "saint of the forest" to a rebellious outlaw was inevitable, for the choice of an outcast as the representative hero of a growing, civilizing, industrializing society doomed the dime novel Western to ethical and social irrelevance.[1]

In retrospect, Smith's conclusion seems rather harsh. To suggest that the dime novel Western lacked social relevance because its characteristic hero lived apart from society is to disregard powerful forces which worked beneath the surface of late nineteenth century society--forces with initially motivated the mass veneration of such a figure and which were ultimately reflected in popular literature. If the novels were indeed "devoid alike of ethical and social meaning," why did they sell in such vast numbers? If the hero as self-reliant isolato was not relevant to an industrializing society, what accounts for the way in which Daniel Boone, Buffalo Bill, and Deadwood Dick fired the popular imagination for nearly forty years? Popularity alone, then, testifies to the genre's social significance. But what explanation lies behind the apparent

paradox of a society which, though seemingly "committed to the ideas of civilization and progress, and to an industrial revolution," could venerate in fact only those men who defied these values by their very life styles? And what accounts for the trend in the evolution of hero stereotypes toward the progressive abandonment of traditional social and moral codes in favor of sensationalism, self-reliance, and questionable morality?

Smith himself approaches an answer when he states that it "is the presumably close fidelity of the Beadle stories to the dream life of a vast inarticulate public that renders them valuable to the social historian and the historian of ideas."[2] The dime novel Western, as a popular art form, performed its threefold cultural function as game, ritual, and collective dream. Its social significance, then, arises not from the fact that it mirrored the overt and often expressed ideals of a progress-hungry, materialistic culture--because it did not--but rather because it reflected and embodied that culture's latent anxieties and aspirations. The nature of these anxieties and aspirations played a prominent role in determining the character of the Western hero.

In spite of its expressed optimism and faith in progress, the nineteenth century was an age preoccupied by all of the problems that inevitably accompany rapid social change. It was an age of industrialization, urbanization, class polarization, and control of society by big business and the international agricultural market. Above all, it was an age in which the average individual found his freedoms severely abridged by gargantuan social and economic forces. Totally subject to these forces, powerless to effect any real change in his life, the common man could yet escape into the pages of a pulp thriller and become, if only temporarily, a self-reliant Western hero eminently free in a fantasy realm where every problem had a swift and clear-cut solution. Hence, the astounding popularity attained by each of the four stereotyped heroes who appeared in the dime novel--the backwoods hunter or trapper, the plainsman, the cowboy, and the outlaw--may be attributed in part to that character's capacity to resolve in fantasy the predominant cultural conflicts of the nineteenth century.

Three such conflicts played crucial roles in the development and consequent popularity of the Western hero.

In the first place, the trend witnessed by the nineteenth century toward class polarization and social immobility constituted a widespread source of anxiety. The Jacksonian dream of a classless egalitarian society--a dream that had once seemed on the verge of realization--was shattering under the impact of economic change. No longer could most Americans hope to succeed simply through virtue and honest industry. Little by little, opportunities for economic and social advancement were being closed to them. At the same time, the status of the individual was perceptibly diminishing. Each year the average man found himself less in control of his own destiny; he was becoming, he soon realized, a mere pawn subject to the whim of unpredictable economic and social forces. Distraught by these adverse changes in the quality of life, many Americans longed for a simpler world--a world where men were self-reliant, where individual achievement was rewarded, and where social status was determined not by birth and wealth but rather by one's innate abilities.

Americans were also distressed by the apparent moral decline of the nation. The upright American character, long heralded for its unyielding strength in times

of hardship, seemed incapable of standing up under the equally heavy burden of sudden prosperity. Business ethics were deteriorating. Once known for their rare combination of perspicacity and honor, American businessmen were beginning to find more profit in shrewdness alone. Avarice was becoming the byword of the day, and a restless materialism was seeping through every level of society, even contaminating the moral sanctuary of the home. Women and children, whether motivated by greed or driven by economic necessity, were entering the working world and exposing themselves to corruption and vice, yet no one seemed capable of protecting them. Virtue was under assault on every quarter, yet the church and the family were no longer able to impose viable social controls. As most Americans viewed it, the forces of good were steadily falling back before an onslaught of evil, and no one seemed willing or able to step into the breach.

A third source of widespread disappointment and discord lay in the unresponsiveness of law and the legal system. Surely, thought most citizens, in a time of moral crisis it was vital that the vast resources of the legal system be enlisted in defense of the weak, the unprotected,

and the virtuous; that the utmost power of the law be invoked as a means of upholding moral standards. Yet this was not happening. To the contrary, it seemed that law was being employed as the tool of the strong. Unscrupulous plutocrats, exploiting the intricacies of the judicial process, were manipulating the law in an effort to safeguard their own interests. At the same time, the fundamental democratic rights of the majority were being ruthlessly denied. Moreover, law had lost its former connection with Christian morality, both formally in the Supreme Court and informally in the court of public opinion. Ostensibly, law was no longer forwarding the cause of righteousness, and as a result many Americans were understandably disturbed by the growing disparity between that ideal justice which ought to prevail in the application of law and that lesser justice which, in fact, did prevail.

It is to these three interrelated cultural conflicts that the Western initially addressed itself. Cooper provided the Western's prototypical response to these conflicts in The Leatherstocking Tales, where he struggled to envision a master plan for a viable social order by systematically defining established social, moral, and legal

codes in light of their practical applicability to the realities of human nature. That such a utopian social order--at once flexible enough to permit free expression of man's nobler passions, and rigid enough to control his baser passions--is incapable of perfect realization is, of course, the Western's raison d'être. Only in fantasy can the irresolvable conflicts between the individual and society, between good and evil, and between freedom and restraint, be fully resolved. Yet even in fantasy the resolution of these conflicts requires a catalyst. That catalyst is, as Cooper recognized, the hero. He alone is centrally involved in each of the primary cultural conflicts addressed by the Western, and he alone is of sufficient stature to contend with them. Of course, Cooper was too adept an artist to provide his novels the kind of one dimensional hero and simplistic resolution of conflict that would later become standard fare in the dime novel, but he did issue the first significant American literary response to the predominant cultural conflicts of the nineteenth century, and he did provide the Western a viable method for addressing these conflicts in terms of its hero. Inasmuch as he charted the fundamental lines along which the dime

novel Western would later develop, his treatment of these matters requires brief comment.

Throughout his novels Cooper was vitally concerned with the problem of social order.[3] While he repeatedly depicted the moral chaos wrought by social upheaval and therefore insisted upon clearly defined class lines, he nevertheless realized that a viable democracy must to some extent remain fluid, that it must offer the man of talent and virtue suitable opportunity to improve his station in life. In some ways the tribal system of the American Indian typified this ideal social order, and so we find Cooper digressing momentarily from his description of Rivenoak, the dignified Huron chief in The Deerslayer, to praise the Indian social order as a system characterized by "little which could be called monarchical or despotic . . . . Hereditary influence did certainly exist," but "rather as a consequence of hereditary merit and acquired qualifications, than as a birthright."[4] As this statement suggests, Cooper's concept of the ideal social order was rooted in a confirmed belief in the essential inequality of man, and to that extent it was redolent of the Jeffersonian distinction between artificial and natural nobility. Hence, in The

Bravo and The Headsman, novels set in European locales, Cooper attacks the principle of aristocracy directly. He portrays it as a self-defeating system which, by denying the able individual an opportunity to improve his position in society, permits a single dominant class to perpetuate itself indefinitely. In this manner aristocracies purchase social stability only at a severe cost to human potential. Yet total democracy was in Cooper's mind equally self-defeating. Founded on a principle of absolute equality that fails to take into account the fundamental inequality of man in terms of virtue and ability, total democracy is incapable of assuring a capably governed, stable society. Too often men are poor judges of their own ability; uncontrolled, they will invariably unleash chaos. This, of course, is one of the lessons Cooper taught again and again in his novels set on the American frontier. Perhaps its clearest expression is found in The Pathfinder, where Cooper systematically creates a cast of characters, each of whom is notable for a particular skill or talent, and then manipulates the plot in such a manner as to illustrate the havoc that ensues when a character misjudges his own natural abilities and usurps the role of another character

better suited for that role by nature and experience. Yet The Pathfinder merely investigates the problems inherent in a social order founded on a principle of absolute equality; it does not prescribe a practical solution to these problems. Nor do any of Cooper's other novels offer a facile equation for an ideal social order capable of avoiding the mutually distasteful extremes of aristocracy on the one hand and total democracy on the other. Always, the fundamental question remains: what manner of social order might preserve stability while at the same time guaranteeing the man of talent unlimited opportunity for social advancement?

There was no doubt in Cooper's mind that democracy constituted the only reasonable option. Yet it ought to be, he felt, a limited democracy--a form of democracy that, cognizant of the inherent moral inequality of man and the fallibility of even the most upright of men, would maintain stability through a just system of social controls. Cooper realized, however, that even this limited form of democracy had its insurmountable problems. No bureaucratic system of social controls was, to begin with, immune to the manipulation of a privileged few. Moreover, no law was equally just to all men. The recurrence in Cooper's novels of

unprincipled self-seekers like Tom Hutter, Hurry Harry March, and Ishmael Bush testifies to Cooper's recognition of the need for a pragmatic and expedient system of legal restraints. But he was aware, too, that the law instituted to curb the excesses of the unprincipled egoist constituted in many instances an unjust infringement upon the God-given liberties of the morally upright individual. The problem, then, was one of reconciling civil rights and natural rights, civil law and moral law. None of Cooper's novels offers a realistic means of reconciling the two. The dilemma was--in the real world, at least--irresolvable.

Yet the realm Cooper depicted in his frontier romances was not the real world. It was an imaginary world, a neutral ground where the pressing conflicts of the real world might be confronted hypothetically. And so, into this imaginary world Cooper placed his image of the ideal man--"a fair example of what a just-minded and pure man might be, while untempted by unruly or ambitious desires, and left to follow the bias of his feelings, amid the solitary grandeur and ennobling influences of a sublime nature; neither led aside by the inducements which influence all to do evil amid the incentives of civilization,

nor forgetful of the Almighty Being whose spirit pervades the wilderness as well as the towns."[5] Variously named Natty Bumppo, Leatherstocking, Hawkeye, Pathfinder, and Deerslayer, this ideal man was to become the prototype Western hero. Though a man of humble origin, poor and for the most part uneducated, Natty manifests throughout the novels a natural nobility that defies artificial class distinctions. Moreover, he displays a highly developed moral sense--symbolized by his prowess in the wilderness--and an unwavering commitment to justice. Inasmuch as he is a character "without any of the blots produced by the expedients, and passion, and mistakes of man," but one who nevertheless retains traits sufficiently individual and human as to prevent him from becoming a "monster of goodness," Natty provides Cooper a convenient foil against which to define the social, moral, and legal conflicts that inform the novels.[6]

Throughout The Leatherstocking Tales Cooper employs Natty as a means of drawing a distinction between artificial and natural nobility, thereby demonstrating the absurdity of a social order that prevents the individual from attaining a social position commensurate with his innate

worth as a human being. Extolling Natty's character in The Pathfinder, Cooper asserts that "it was not possible to live much with this being and not feel a respect and admiration for him which had no reference to his position in life. The most surprising peculiarity about the man himself was the entire indifference with which he regarded all distinctions which did not depend on personal merit."[7] Cooper further clarifies the distinction between artificial and natural nobility by contrasting Natty's status within society to his status in the wilderness. In the settlements, where wealth, education, and hereditary influence commonly determine an individual's station in life, Natty habitually defers to his superiors. Still, his humility never degenerates to sycophancy, for he corrects their mistakes and reproves their vices with a fearlessness that demonstrates how essentially he regards the more material points of human character. As a result, his innate superiority as a human being is firmly established in the reader's mind. Yet in episode after episode he is treated disrespectfully by characters who foolishly judge men exclusively in terms of externals--a myopic tendency which, particularly in the account of Natty's quest for the hand

of Mabel Dunham, his reputed social superior, Cooper castigates unmercifully. In the wilderness, however, where nature strips away artificial distinctions and measures man solely by his innate qualities, Natty attains the stature he so richly merits. His moral rectitude and unequalled proficiency in the wilderness arts win him the respect and admiration of even his archenemies. Implicit in this contrast between Natty's status within society and his status in the wilderness beyond society is Cooper's prescription for an ideal social order that would abandon the time honored distinctions of birth and wealth and determine social position instead on the basis of a single criterion: the personal merit of the individual.

Cooper also employs Natty as a means of exploring the conflict generated by the disparity between morality and legality. A thoroughly righteous man, Natty is endowed with remarkable powers of moral perception and "a natural discrimination that appeared to set education at a defiance. "In short," Cooper observes, "a disbeliever in the ability of man to distinguish between good and evil without the aid of instruction would have been staggered by the character of this extraordinary inhabitant of the frontier." Natty

does, of course, display ordinary human prejudices, but "no casuist could have made clearer decisions in matters relating to right and wrong." Still, Cooper asserts, "the most striking feature about the moral organization of Pathfinder was his beautiful and unerring sense of justice"--a "noble trait" without which "no man can be truly great."[8] Possessed of these virtues, Natty exemplifies the predicament of the good man in an evil world. He is a restrained and highly principled man unjustly shackled by laws instituted to control the multitude of individuals less principled than he. Naturally enough, he harbors resentment for the law. "There are regions," he observes in The Prairie,

> where the law is so busy as to say, In this fashion shall you live, in that fashion shall you die, and in such another fashion shall you take leave of the world, to be sent before the judgement-seat of the Lord! A wicked and troublesome meddling is that, with the business of One who has not made his creatures to be herded like oxen, and driven from field to field as their stupid and selfish keepers may judge of their need and wants. A miserable land must that be, where they fetter the mind as well as the body, and where the creatures of God, being born children, are kept so by the wicked inventions of men who would take upon themselves the office of the great Governor of all![9]

Natty speaks from bitter experience, for he had come into conflict with the law at a much earlier date. And while

his flight to the lawless prairie beyond the outermost reaches of civilization offers a temporary respite from the encroachments of the law, it does not provide a permanent resolution to the conflict between individual morality and legal restraint which Natty had faced years before in Templeton. In fact, The Pioneers remains Cooper's definitive treatment of the conflict. In this novel, the first of The Leatherstocking Tales, Cooper brings the anarchic world of the wilderness personified by Natty into conflict with the ordered, law-governed society personified by Judge Marmaduke Temple. Natty, schooled in nature but untutored in the ways of the law, lives an upstanding life regulated solely by his own personal moral code. In contrast, Judge Temple lives by the maxim that "Society cannot exist without wholesome restraints." These opposing philosophies clash when Natty, who has for years hunted only as a means of feeding himself, kills a deer out of season; accordingly, he is charged with a violation of the game laws and brought before the bench. But when asked whether or not he is guilty, the old trapper resolutely replies, "I may say not guilty with a clear conscience . . . for there's no guilt in doing what's right . . . ."[10]

These same words might have been uttered by any one of the stereotyped Western heroes who attained popularity more than forty years later in the dime novel. Whether trapper, plainsman, cowboy, or outlaw, each of these popular heroes was, like Natty, characterized by his asocial status, his natural nobility, and his intuitive recognition of the disparity between that which was merely legal and that which was morally just. But this similarity between the venerable trapper and his pulp successors should not be construed simply as a naive and unimaginative attempt by second-rate writers to follow an old trail blazed by Cooper. To some extent, of course, dime novelists were duplicating Cooper's initial response to the predominant cultural conflicts of the age. Yet at the same time they were developing the character of the Western hero in response to significant changes in the cultural context.

In retrospect, two such developments are especially evident. First, as the industrial revolution rigidified class lines and denied the man of virtue and industry any reasonable opportunity to improve his station in life, dime novelists responded by gradually externalizing the Western hero's innate nobility. By rendering this nobility

increasingly manifest in external traits and behavior, they enabled him to transcend conventional class distinctions and more and more frequently exercise social prerogatives hitherto reserved for members of the upper class. Secondly, as public furor grew in response to the apparent inadequacy of the law as a fair and effective deterrent to the frightening moral decline of the nation, dime novelists endowed the Western hero with an increasingly defiant streak of rebelliousness.

This rebelliousness, in particular, played a crucial role in the evolution of the Western hero in the dime novel. Concerned primarily with the appeal of their fictional characters in the marketplace, dime novelists realized that the disparity between morality and legality provided them a sure-fire method for creating popular heroes. Specifically, it offered them a magic formula whereby they might synthesize in the person of a single fictional character the two ostensibly irreconcilable traits which the reading public most highly prized and most often demanded of those it would venerate: virtue and rebelliousness. On the one hand, public demand had always existed for a standard hero who, guided by his own unerring sense of right and

wrong, would lead the forces of good into battle against evil. On the other hand, in an age of increasing class polarity, an age in which socioeconomic forces suppressed individual freedoms, public demand existed for a hero who would reject any and all forms of artificial social and legal restraint. The dime novel Western hero satisfied both of these demands; wholeheartedly engaged in fighting villainy, he sometimes found it necessary to subvert social and legal codes in the interests of a higher justice.

The introduction of heroes who occasionally acted without regard for the law touched off an ascending spiral of rebelliousness in the dime novel. Evolving through respective incarnations as backwoodsman, plainsman, cowboy, and outlaw, the Western hero progressively abandoned traditional social and legal codes of behavior in favor of sensationalism and absolute self-reliance. But this trend is not, as Henry Nash Smith has proposed, indicative simply of a "deterioration in the Western story as a genre"; rather, it is indicative of the manner in which the Western formula developed in response to changes in the cultural context. The commercial aspects of publishing did, of course, contribute an element of sensationalism to the dime

novel: cover illustrations became more lurid, descriptions of violence more graphic, and characters themselves more flamboyant. Yet, for the most part, the trend toward an increasingly rebellious hero constituted an independent, organic development in the Western formula--a development that paralleled the average American reader's growing anxiety during a turbulent era of social change.

The Backwoodsman

The substantial body of Western literature that preceded the dime novel produced two basic types of protagonists, each of whom personified one pole of the ambivalent American attitude toward the West. Modeling their fictional characters after men like Davy Crockett, Simon Girty, or Lew Wetzel, writers who feared the possible atavistic effect upon the human character of the moral vacuum offered by the wilderness--its dangerous freedom, its absence of institutional controls--commonly depicted the Westerner as an ugly white man. If he was not an ill-mannered braggart like Crockett or a treacherous moral degenerate like Girty, then he was, like Wetzel, a violent

and uncouth adventurer who lived by the motto that "the only good Indian is a dead Indian." Conversely, writers who subscribed to the primitivistic Romantic notion that untrammeled nature, the handiwork of God, led "The views and aspirations of the soul/ To majesty," used Daniel Boone or Natty Bumppo as their prototype, and consequently depicted the Westerner as a self-reliant, naturally noble, shrewd but spiritually unblemished child of nature. Both types of protagonists proliferated in the dime novel Western. Embellishing historical accounts of the exploits of famed men of the wilderness, and unabashedly borrowing from the rich legacy of pre-dime novel frontier fiction, dime novelists continued to portray the backwoodsman in terms of entrenched conventions. Hence, the forest hunter or trapper of the early dime novel was either a volatile and violent ugly white man or a veritable saint of the forest.

In creating ugly white men, dime novelists found no dearth of examples in early Western fiction. In fact, the stereotyped characteristics of the ugly white man were firmly established by the middle 1840s. While characters cast in this mold were sometimes presented in early Western

literature as basically good-natured men whose rustic habits and folksy humor abrogated their lack of social polish, they were more often portrayed as rough and surly Indian killers driven by a single ruling passion--an insatiable hatred for the red man. Introduced in James McHenry's The Spectre of the Forest (1823), reappearing in N. M. Henty's Tadeskund, the Last King of the Lenape (1825), and thereafter widely popularized in various works by Hall, Flint, Paulding, Bird, Simms, and others, the Indian hater was customarily depicted as the lone survivor of a family massacred by savages. Brooding over his personal tragedy--if not actually unbalanced by it--he forsakes the white settlements and disappears into the forest on a life-long mission of vengeance. Characteristically, the Indian hater's inner turmoil is reflected in his physical appearance: his dark countenance is invariably convulsed with emotion, his glance is wild and distracted, and in some instances his head bears the indelible purple scars of the scalping-knife--a grim detail often used to account for the uncontrollable fits of blood lust to which he periodically succumbs.[11]

The principal historical model for the Indian hater in the early dime novel was Lew Wetzel, the renowned Kentucky scout. In a story first serialized in 1866 in the New York Weekly and later reprinted in Starr's American Novels as Lew Wetzel, the Scout; or, The Captives of the Frontier, Emerson Rodman recounts the details of the ill-fated Bowman expedition against the Indian stronghold at Chillicothe, and describes Wetzel as "a man young in years, yet with an expression of face and appearance of dress that showed he had much experience in backwoods life."[12] Seldom, however, were characterizations of Wetzel as understated as this. In most instances, dime novelists portrayed Wetzel in terms of the familiar stereotype of the Indian hater. Edward S. Ellis, introducing Wetzel in 1861 in The Frontier Angel; or, A Romance of Kentucky Rangers' Life, characterizes the scout as a man who, "to his dying day, carried out the very letter of the vow he had made, never to let any treaty, flag of truce, or any imaginable pretense, screen an Indian from his vengeance. This terrible resolution he had made for the inhuman butchery of his parents when a mere boy by the savages." Ellis also describes Wetzel's physical appearance in terms of the

stereotype, explaining that the scout's "face was nearly as dark as an Indian's and marked with the small-pox. His eyes were of the fiercest blackness imaginable, and there were few who could stand their terrible glance when angry." To enhance his savage aspect, and perhaps to tantalize the scalp-greedy redskins, Wetzel wears his hair "so long, that when allowed to flow unrestrained, it reached down below his knees."[13]

Throughout the 1860s and into the early years of the following decade, the Indian hater continued to be a common protagonist in the dime novel. Wetzel, of course, provided an obvious historical model, but most dime novel Indian haters were clearly descended from ugly white men already familiar to readers of early Western fiction. Nevertheless, the stereotype was gradually evolving during this period. In general, the trend was toward the development of a protagonist who--despite his being an ugly white man--possessed traits common to the standard hero of the romance. In The Hunter's Vow, a Beadle dime novel released in 1864, the Indian hater is employed as the protagonist of an initiation story. Young Ham Cass, a pale and bookish boy, witnesses his father's death at the hands of an Indian

warrior known as Broadfoot. Though the settlers scoff at Cass' apparently impotent oath of vengeance, the boy develops expertise in all of the wilderness skills, tracks down Broadfoot, and ultimately slays him.[14] The titular hero of a subsequent Beadle Western, Quindaro; or, The Heroine of Fort Laramie, also takes to the trail after his family has been murdered by Indians. "I have had life for life, years ago," Quindaro admits, "but I will not bate one jot of my revenge or cease my work until the accursed race has been blotted from existence. Already my very name is a terror to them, but it shall become doubly so. I will pursue them to extermination--the monsters!" Despite his passionate nature, Quindaro possesses many characteristics of the traditional hero: he is young and handsome, and he has a sweetheart, though his singleminded purpose precludes his marrying her. He is also rootless; when asked the whereabouts of his home, he proudly replies: "Among the rocks in the mountains, in the valleys, by the river's side--anywhere, if duty calls me. Quindaro is like the wild bird, free to go where he pleases."[15] Similarly, the protagonist of an 1870 dime Western entitled White Slayer, the Avenger; or, The Doomed Red-Skins is a young man

"designed by nature for other and nobler pursuits than that of following the Indians' trail . . . ." Nevertheless, he had, "for the time at least, abandoned all else for the destruction of the red man." If it were not for the cruel savages, White Slayer muses, "I might have been a happy man to-day, sitting in a pleasant home, with the sweet music of my children sounding in my ears. But now the dear voices are all hushed--still in the grave--and these red-skinned fiends it was who made me the wretched, purposeless being I am! Ah, it has cost them dear already, but they shall pay more yet ere my loved ones are avenged!" It is especially significant, in view of other developments taking place concurrently in the dime novel, that White Slayer is rejected when he proposes marriage to Mary Dawson, a girl whom he rescues from the Indians. Mary is obviously frightened by the avenger's volatile nature, and instead marries a peaceable young settler. White Slayer, disheartened, goes "away again, upon the trail of the doomed red-skins."[16]

Mary Dawson's rejection of White Slayer as a suitable marriage prospect is indicative of a fundamental problem confronted by dime novelists when employing the ugly white man as a protagonist. Although the ugly white man

could be ennobled in various ways--he could be portrayed as young and handsome, as being adept in wilderness skills, as being "designed by nature for other and nobler pursuits than that of following the Indians' trail"--he nevertheless remained too choleric, too unrestrained, too bloodthirsty to be a viable romantic hero. As a result, dime novelists after 1870 less and less frequently employed the ugly white man as a protagonist. Instead, they relegated him to a minor role in stories devoted principally to the exploits of unassailably virtuous backwoodsmen.

Stories of this type commonly utilized a device conceived in Nick of the Woods. Making no effort to hide their indebtedness to Bird's Bloody Nathan Slaughter, the Jibbenainosay, dime novelists introduced a series of Indian haters who, during brief but bloody fits of madness, disguised themselves as sub-human beasts in order to terrify and murder the notoriously superstitious Indians. In Albert Aiken's "Red Arrow, the Wolf Demon; or, The Queen of the Kanawha," Daniel Boone is the protagonist, but considerable space is devoted to the bloodcurdling acts of "a strange and terrible being, that wore the figure of a wolf and the face of a man." Striking terror into the hearts of

all who see him, the Wolf Demon indiscriminately murders Shawnee warriors, always leaving his ghastly "red totem"--three knife slashes in the shape of an arrow--on the breasts of his victims. Not surprisingly, the Wolf Demon proves in the end to be none other than Boone's companion, Abe Lark, who when dying admits that his crusade of retribution has been provoked by "remembrance of the wife that the red demons tore from me a year ago . . . ."[17] While the Jibbenainosay device offered a facile tool for advancing the plot, its chief advantage lay in the fact that it enabled dime novelists to employ the Indian hater's violence as a foil against which to define the virtuous protagonist's characteristic restraint. The author of Daniel Boone's Best Shot; or, The Perils of the Kentucky Pioneers, for instance, takes care to inform the reader that Boone does not kill indiscriminately: his "mission was not slaughter entirely, for he never was the aggressor in the fights he had with the Indians, but only chastised them for their inhuman cruelties to white settlers." Instead, all indiscriminate slaughter is accomplished by the "Jubernanesy," an "evil spirit" reputed to be half-man and half-bison. Beneath a buffalo-head mask, of course, the blood-chilling

"Jubernanesy" is actually Walter Blackwell, a white settler "made insane by cruel wrongs, and in that condition making himself a terror to the savages of the West . . . ."[18]

While the ugly white man--particularly in his guise as Indian hater--gained limited exposure as the protagonist of the early dime novel, he never attained the degree of popularity enjoyed by his counterpart, the saint of the forest. Indeed, by the publisher's own admission, the first dime novel Western hero was modeled after Cooper's Leatherstocking.[19] This precedent was generally followed by other dime novelists. As a result, the protagonist of the pulp Western of this period is typically a self-reliant, naturally civilized, backwoods hunter or trapper in the tradition of Leatherstocking and Daniel Boone. "Of seventy-nine dime novels selected as a sample of those dealing with the West between 1860 and 1893," comments Henry Nash Smith in his original survey of the dime novel, "forty contain one or more hunters or trappers whose age, costume, weapons, and general functions entitle them to be considered lineal descendants" of Leatherstocking.[20] Although these backwoodsmen are sometimes young, they are more often venerable, dialect-speaking, innately virtuous heroes adept in all of the wilderness skills.

Daniel Boone was invariably portrayed in this light. In Percy St. John's Queen of the Woods; or, The Shawnee Captive, published serially in 1868, Boone is a "tall, spare man" possessed of an "experienced and keen sense of woodcraft . . . . His eye, however, spoke more than anything else the true character of the man. It was clear, bright, and keen. Not a tree, not a bush escaped his notice. Not a sign of the forest was lost upon him."[21] Frederick Whittaker, the author of Boone, the Hunter; or, The Backwoods Belle. A Romance of Early Life in Virginia, explains that Boone's "provincial accent was the only disadvantage under which he labored," for his physical and spiritual natures were flawless. The renowned woodsman, Whittaker explains, was a "tall, powerfully built man, lean and sinewy, with a grave aquiline face and piercing blue eyes . . . . Grave and powerful as was his countenance, there was yet in it an expression of complete and guileless simplicity and honesty, mingled with the opposite quality of great shrewdness."[22] This shrewdness, indicative of superior moral perception, manifests itself in Boone's ability to interpret the cryptic signs of the wilderness; in Paul Braddon's Daniel Boone, the Hero of Kentucky, for example,

it is said of Boone that "hearing a twig snap conveyed to his acute ear volumes of information."[23] Even the passage of time has no discernible effect upon Boone's natural abilities. "Once more pitted against the dusky heathen" in Joseph E. Badger's The Wood King; or, Daniel Boone's Last Trail. A Romance of the Osage Country, the dialect-speaking backwoodsman is decidedly old, as evidenced by "the long, snowy locks that fell below his rude skin cap"; nevertheless, "the weight of years seemed to sit lightly upon his frame," and Boone experiences but little difficulty outrunning even the swiftest Osage warriors.[24]

Dime novelists customarily took advantage of the backwoodsman's dialect as a means of exploiting the character's comic possibilities. Drawing upon pre-existent traditions, they endowed the Western hero--whether ugly white man or saint of the forest--with idiosyncrasies common to both Southwestern and Down East strains of American humor.[25] The influence of The Crockett Almanacks, for example, is apparent in one of the earliest Davy Crockett dime novels--Kill-bar, the Guide; or, The Long Trail--where the Southwestern frontiersman, boiling over with braggadocio, resorts to the traditional longbow when

recounting his efforts to elude a lovestruck termagant: "I'm Killb'ar, slid from t'other side of the Rocky Mountains on a greased whirlwind, to get rid of Suke Spoon, who are arter me though she knows I are a married man." Later in the story, when he and the heroine are treed by an angry bear, the boastful Davy takes advantage of the breathing spell to relate another "stretcher": "Hyar we are in a kind of a scrape, my little gal! I war in somethin' sich a one by myself, years ago, when I war Injun'-huntin' out in Kentucky. Jist as the tree was chopped down, though, thar came up a high wind, which, with the help of my buffeler-skin, sent me a-whizzin' cl'ar over the top o' the woods to t'other side."[26] Though perhaps the most memorable, Crockett was only one of countless ring-tailed roarers in the dime novel; by 1870, the character who proudly proclaimed himself half-horse, half-alligator had become a fixture in tales set on the Southern Border.

In contrast to the Southwestern tradition, which derived its humor from tall tales and swaggering self-assertion, the Down East tradition provided comic relief through the presentation of a lowborn character whose pretensions to gentility were repeatedly undercut by his

incongruous appearance and pattern of speech--a highly affected vocabulary marred by mispronunciation and senseless repetition. The protagonist of Edward S. Ellis' famous Beadle Western, Seth Jones; or, The Captives of the Frontier, is a self-reliant, naturally noble backwoodsman, yet he manifests all of the character traits common to the traditional Yankee peddler. Possessing "a long, thin Roman nose, a small, twinkling gray eye, with a lithe masculine frame, and long dangling limbs," he introduces himself to Alfred Haverland in a voice that is in a "peculiar, uncertain state," and which when excited makes "sounds singular and unimaginable": "How de do? How de do? Ain't frightened, I hope; it's nobody but me, Seth Jones, from New Hampshire." Informing Haverland of the proximity of Indians, Seth warns, "if you vally that 'ar wife of your bussum, and your little cherubims,(as I allow you've got,) you better be makin' tracks for safer quarters."[27]

As the Western formula evolved in the dime novel, the exploitation of the hero's dialect for comic purposes diminished. Beginning in the 1870s, the dialect peculiar to Southwestern humor was more and more often assigned either to ancillary, purely comic characters--often the

hero's sidekick--or to uncouth ruffians in the ugly white man tradition. Similarly, the burden of Down East humor was gradually shifted from the hero to incidental characters whose bumbling actions resemble David Gamut's in The Last of the Mohicans. Nevertheless, this type of character--whether he be Josephus Doublebee, the Massachusetts greenhorn gone west to "strike somethin' of a romantic nature," or Professor Reuben Springs, who sells exploding alarm clocks to the Indians--serves only as a tool for introducing the comic element no longer associated with the hero.[28] This marked tendency to shift the burden of comedy away from the hero is significant, for it was a change requisite to the establishment of the backwoodsman as a character whose traits more nearly approximated those of the naturally noble and inherently superior hero of the traditional romance.

The concept of the hero as an elderly hunter or trapper had long posed major artistic difficulties for the dime novelist. An intrinsic fictional problem arose from the fact that the aged backwoodsman was, in the first place, simply too old to provide the love interest which the audience demanded and which, therefore, inspired most plots.

Secondly, the backwoodsman's dialect and ensuing comic role confined him to a lower class status, a position which doomed him to the bachelor life in an age of genteel sentimental heroines. Both the eastern dime novelist and the class-conscious eastern audience for whom he wrote would have considered it an indisputable social impropriety for the common and boastful--though admittedly virtuous--backwoodsman to marry even the silliest of the anemic upper class heroines. Like any other popular artist striving to sell books, the dime novelist tried to satisfy public demand. If the reader wanted a hero capable of participating in the novel's love plot, then it would be necessary, the writer realized, either to reshape the aged lower class hero the Cooper tradition provided or to find some device for avoiding the dilemma entirely.

Seeking the easiest solution, dime novelists displayed considerable ingenuity in avoiding the problem. A favorite maneuver involved the use of multiple protagonists, one or more of whom was old enough and resourceful enough to dominate the main plot of capture and pursuit, while the other was young enough and genteel enough to satisfy the exigencies of the romantic sub-plot. For example, Irona;

or, Life on the Old South-West Border opens as young Ross Wellend and his sweetheart, Irona Seraville, accompany two Leatherstocking figures, Ned Nuggens and John Smith, across the desolate plains of West Texas. Almost immediately, Irona is captured by Indians and Wellend loses his way on the plains. The two Texan hunters then step into the foreground of the tale, dominating the remaining action and rescuing Irona from the Comanches. Meanwhile, Wellend is wandering aimlessly; as events draw to a close, however, he fortuitously reappears--just in time to claim the heroine.[29] In a few stories of this type, the marriageable hero hails from the West; if so, he is customarily differentiated from his less genteel companions by his dapper attire. Pete Wilkins, the aged, dialect-speaking hunter of The Mustang-Hunters; or, The Beautiful Amazon of the Hidden Valley. A Tale of the Staked Plains, is garbed in soiled buckskin. In contrast, Frank Weston, a marriageable youth born of a prominent Texas family, sports a "broad-brimmed hat of gray felt" and a "black velveteen coat," tastefully complemented by "high boots of varnished leather" and "white buck-skin breeches."[30] Though a native Westerner sometimes figured in stories of this type, dime novelists more

commonly introduced a well-bred hero from the East.[31] This situation occurs in Gunpowder Jim; or, The Mystery of Demon Hollow. Forty-five years old, dressed in buckskin, and accompanied by his loyal hound, Misery, Gunpowder Jim fills the role of the dialect-speaking protagonist. Yet the novel also has a marriageable hero--Edgar Allison, an eastern gentleman traveling in the West. As usual, the heroine, Lotta Anderson, is captured--first by Indians and later by border ruffians. Enlisting the aid of Gunpowder Jim and another elderly trapper by the name of Button Hole Jack, Edgar rescues Lotta and subsequently weds her. Following their marriage, Edgar and Lotta "often try to induce their trapper friends to change their mode of life, but all their efforts are in vain." The two stalwart woodsmen, having dominated the plot action and politely reminded the lovers that "the leopard" cannot "change his skin," shoulder their rifles and conveniently disappear into the wilderness.[32]

Another standard device for providing the dime novel with a marriageable hero without reshaping the popular image of the backwoodsman appears in Seth Jones; or, The Captives of the Frontier. Throughout the tale, the

obvious hero is Seth Jones, the traditional aged, comic, dialect-speaking backwoodsman already familiar to readers. Mary, the lovely daughter of Alfred Haverland, is carried off by redskins, and Seth is obliged to rescue her; however, at the end of the tale, when the venerable backwoodsman is basking in the praise of the gratefully reunited family, the plot abruptly twists, and Seth startles everyone by revealing himself to be none other than Eugene Morton--Mary's long-lost, young and genteel suitor--in disguise. First divesting himself of his buckskin garb, then dropping his Down East dialect in favor of lofty sentimental rhetoric, the metamorphosed hero leads his ecstatic sweetheart to the altar.[33] This plot maneuver, perhaps inspired by Oliver Effingham's masquerade as Edward the trapper in The Pioneers, became a frequently practiced dime novel technique.

Although a love interest could be incorporated in the Western formula either through multiple protagonists or through disguise and abrupt character reversal, these unsubtle maneuvers were unquestionably inferior to the fusion within a single character of the best of both worlds: the wilderness skills and unlimited freedom of the Western

hero; and, the youth, gentility, and love interest common to the eastern hero. The trend toward the development of this hybrid hero--a development which demanded, of course, that some traits long associated with the Western hero be abandoned--was gradual, and it was not until the creation of fictional characters modelled after Kit Carson and Buffalo Bill that a hero of these unique proportions consistently appeared.[34] Nevertheless, the beginning of the trend is discernible. As early as 1861, the hybrid hero appeared in Edward Ellis' Nathan Todd; or, The Fate of the Sioux' Captive. Not only is Nathan a Leatherstocking figure who speaks dialect and who shows a strong element of Down East humor, but he displays additionally many of the traits of the genteel Easterner: he is young, speaks elevated rhetoric in the presence of ladies, discourses on religion, and eventually makes the heroine his bride.[35] Yet Nathan was an anomaly in the early dime novel, for although young backwoodsmen frequently dominated the action of tales penned in the 1860s, their dialect and the manner in which they were exploited for comic purposes usually relegated them to inferior social status.

During the following decade, however, the status of the Western hero improved dramatically. The rise of Davy Crockett offers a case in point. Published in 1869, Killbar, the Guide; or, The Long Trail portrays Crockett as a barrel-chested frontier braggart. When he is not wrestling bears or embroidering the truth, he is eluding Suke Spoon, a lovestruck, rolling-pin-swinging virago.[36] Two years later, appearing in The Texan Trailer; or, Davy Crockett's Last Bear-Hunt, the eccentric backwoodsman again reveals his ill-breeding. On one occasion, after disposing of a grizzly bear that has hugged him nearly to death, Crockett turns to the genteel heroine and brashly exclaims: "I've only had a good squeezing . . . . Howsumever, I've been hugged before, and I've no doubt such a good-looking gal as you have been hugged, too. If I hadn't a blue-eyed little wife, down in Tennessee, I'd be tempted to play the bear to you."[37] With his 1873 appearance in The Bear-Hunter; or, Davy Crockett as a Spy, Davy acquires considerable social polish; he treats women with the utmost courtesy, and he occasionally prays.[38] Yet this is merely a portent of his vastly improved behavior in 1879 as the young and genteel hero of Daring Davy, The Young Bear Killer; or, the Trail

of the Border Wolf. Here Davy possesses traits common to the Western hero--he is a master of woodcraft, and he tracks down villains--but he also displays the attributes of the polished Easterner. He is described as "gallant" and, aside from an occasional "I reckon," he speaks perfect English. Moreover, he commands the attentions of not one but two sentimental heroines, one of whom breathlessly refers to him as "my idol, my king." At the end of the tale, in an act which symbolically corroborates his triumph over the limitations of his humble origin, Davy weds the genteel Rosebud Thornton, and together they begin a new life "strewed with roses."[39]

While Davy Crockett was gradually improving his status throughout the 1870s, other backwoodsmen of lower class origin were making similar progress--particularly in novels penned by Joseph E. Badger, Jr. In an 1871 Western, The Forest Princess; or, The Kickapoo Captives. A Romance of the Illinois, two Leatherstocking figures exist side by side. Pete Shafer, the elder trapper, speaks in dialect and furnishes the comic element. Young Uriah Barham, who does not speak in dialect, wins the hand of Myra Mordaunt. Three trappers appear in The Border Renegade; or, The Lily

of the Silver Lake. While two of them speak in dialect, the third uses the conventional rhetoric of the sentimental novel, and it is he who weds the genteel heroine.[40] By the middle 1870s, heroes of this type were appearing regularly in the dime novel. Retaining all of their former expertise in the manly arts, they proved themselves equally adept in the social graces: their English was impeccable--or as nearly so as dime novelists could make it--and their deportment in the presence of the gentler sex was beyond reproach.

The transformation of the stereotyped Western hero from an old, dialect-speaking comic backwoodsman into a young and handsome gentleman who was as much at home in the drawing room as he was in the forest constituted a major development in the Western formula. On the one hand, it was a purely aesthetic development governed by internal dynamics, an organic change dictated--in fact, predetermined--by a contradiction implicit in the basic narrative components of the formula as initially conceived. Specifically, it was a refinement generated by the pressing need to reconcile the image of the formula's central character with the requirements of its fundamental plot, and thereby

to construct a more tightly unified, streamlined narrative structure. For as long as the stereotyped hero remained an ugly white man or an elderly, unrefined buffoon, he was detached from an essential aspect of the narrative formula--the love plot. To remedy this situation and involve the hero more directly in all levels of the plot action, dime novelists were compelled to resort to those unwieldy devices already discussed--either the introduction of multiple protagonists or, on occasion, disguise and abrupt character reversal. Invariably, these devices strained credulity and flawed the dramatic unity of the tale. But the transformation of the stereotyped hero resolved this problem. As a young man of obvious refinement, the Western hero assumed a prominent place in the love plot. At the center of the tale, involved in all levels of plot action, he became the principal axis around which all other elements of the narrative formula cohered.

On the other hand, the transformation of the stereotyped Western hero was a development governed by external, cultural dynamics. The hero's abandonment of his dialect and comic propensity--traits which the eastern audience deemed inferior in the 1860s, and which branded the Western

hero a member of the lower class--and his corresponding acquisition of personal attributes and social prerogatives long presumed to be those solely of the upper class, reflected a pervasive popular tendency to question the accepted values of the established social order. In a sense, of course, the Western hero was merely being "civilized" for the eastern audience. Yet it was a manner of "civilizing" that implicitly denied the rigid class structure of the East. In an age of increasing class stratification and declining social mobility, the rise of the Western hero affirmed that the opportunity for social advancement still persisted--provided one had the necessary inner resources. For although he possessed neither inherited wealth nor formal education, the Western hero evinced a natural nobility intuitively recognized and equally admired among commoners and kings. Armed solely with this nobility, he transcended the limitations of his humble origin. Consequently, the rise of the Western hero satisfied--if only in fantasy--the increasingly strident popular cry for a homogeneous social order in which the status of the individual was determined not by artificial class distinctions but rather by the individual's innate worth as a human being.

That dime novelists were generally aware of the social implications of the Western hero's improving status is evidenced by a tale penned in 1873 by Frederick Whittaker. Set in colonial Virginia, Boone, the Hunter; or, The Backwoods Belle. A Romance of Early Life in Virginia dramatizes the old Jeffersonian distinction between natural and artificial nobility. From the outset it is obvious that Daniel Boone and his younger brother, Squire, are "natural gentlemen." Daniel's countenance is characterized by "an expression of complete and guileless simplicity and honesty," and though he is disadvantaged by a "provincial accent," he speaks "a language surprisingly well-chosen for a man of his plain appearance." Moreover, "the roughly-clad hunter" carries himself "with the simple dignity of a prince, for it is in the free woods that a man becomes a true gentleman, and proud of the name."[41] In contrast, the city-bred Captain Yelverton, an arrogant British officer, is a gentleman only in the most artificial sense of the word. Though born of noble stock, he is an inveterate gambler and heavy drinker who regards the rude backwoodsmen with ill-concealed disdain. As the plot unfolds, Yelverton and young Squire Boone become bitter rivals for the hand of

Annie McArdle. Taking advantage of a gambling debt, the lustful dragoon pressures Annie's weak-willed father into sanctioning his betrothal to the maiden. Squire Boone, of course, dedicates himself to preventing the repugnant marriage, and it soon becomes apparent that the rivalry can end only in violence.

At this point a second theme emerges, for Whittaker reveals a consuming interest in exploring the Western hero's relationship to law and the legal system. Impulsively, Squire expresses his intention of fighting it out with Yelverton on equal terms. Daniel, however, rejects the plan, cooly warning his brother that he "must remember we're not in the wilderness now. Thar's law and courts, more's the pity, in this colony, and we can't settle our own disputes without comin' into law." Conversely, Yelverton mutters, "Bah, what's shooting a man here in the backwoods? They've no laws here." Not content to let the characters reveal themselves, Whittaker intrudes: "And thus it will be seen what a different opinion two different men entertained of the laws of the old North Colony. The hunter feared them--the town-bred dandy and gambler despised them." Ostensibly, then, Whittaker introduces law as a means through which to

define the attitudes, respectively, of natural and artificial gentlemen; whereas the natural gentleman fears the law, the artificial gentleman despises it. Yet ensuing events in the tale obscure this distinction, suggesting that Whittaker's understanding of the Western hero's relationship to law was at best imperfect, and that he was, in fact, working more by intuition than by conscious design. Waiting in ambush, Yelverton shoots Squire and severely wounds him. Again the hotheaded youth favors immediate action, and again Daniel cautions restraint. Nevertheless, it becomes evident that the renowned hunter's scruples apply only to the means used to accomplish Yelverton's demise, for he warns his brother that it is of the utmost importance that the villain "be killed in fair fight before all men . . . . We are in the colonies now, and the law favors no murder. Be easy with this. The man shall die. I have said it." Shortly thereafter, Daniel's prediction is realized. Conceding that he "ain't much used to the law . . . and it's mighty poor justice, from all I've seen of it," and furthermore that "Wood law and rifle justice is what I'm most used to," Daniel confronts Yelverton and swiftly slays him in a duel.[42] These events, of course,

tend to obscure Whittaker's initial distinction between natural and artificial gentlemen on the basis of their respective attitudes toward law. Contrary to Whittaker's claim, Boone does not fear the law; like Yelverton, he resents it. Moreover, both men place themselves above the law. Yet distinctions may nonetheless be drawn between the two men--not on the basis of their mutual resentment of the law, but rather on the basis of their differing motives for resentment. Yelverton is a moral degenerate who resents the law because it interferes with the realization of his own selfish interests. In contrast, Daniel is endowed with an innate moral superiority, and therefore resents the law because it inhibits his freedom to act in the interests of a justice higher than that which conventional law can enforce. To Daniel, who intuitively understands natural law, civil law is an unnecessary shackle. Guided by an unerring sense of right and wrong, adhering to a strict personal code whose informing principle is fair play, Daniel is above the law.

Inasmuch as the tale retains as its hero a man who, though naturally noble, is advanced in years and therefore excluded from a central role in the love plot, Boone, the

Hunter; or, The Backwoods Belle does not typify those novels in the vanguard of frontier fiction in the 1870s. It does, however, contain significant transitional elements. As the tale's dual themes suggest, dime novelists at this time manifested a growing tendency to define the Western hero almost exclusively in terms of two fundamental relationships: his relationship to the established social order, and his relationship to law and the legal system. Both of these relationships, of course, had always been crucial factors in determining the hero's unique status, especially in Cooper's novels, and thus dime novelists were to some extent merely clarifying elements implicit in the Western formula from its inception. Yet dime novelists were at the same time gradually modifying the image of the formula hero in response to the changing cultural climate of the last half of the nineteenth century. In response to the class antagonism prevalent in the East, they continued to endow the Western hero with a greater and greater degree of natural nobility--a nobility which, insofar as it was manifested by a member of the lower class, testified to the artificiality of a rigid social order based on birth and wealth, and affirmed instead a more open order based upon

the individual's innate qualities. Additionally, in response to the popular antipathy toward law and the legal system, dime novelists imbued the Western hero with an increasingly acute sense of the disparity between morality and legality--a perception that naturally fostered a willingness to subvert the law whenever it threatened to interfere with the execution of true justice. Both of these traits, initially defined in the character of the backwoods hunter or trapper, became the principal attributes of the next stereotyped dime novel Western hero--the plainsman.

The Plainsman

As the American frontier gradually moved westward, the hardy backwoods hero of the dime novel forsook the dark paths of the forest and stepped into the dazzling sunlight of the open plains. The transition from forest to prairie was accomplished without great difficulty, for the dime novelist merely needed to seat his handsome trapper on a horse, and to replace his trusty flintlock with a percussion-cap Winchester and a Colt handgun, in order to update a hero who already commanded a wide and devoted audience. Yet the

change that accompanied the Western hero's emergence from the forest was not simply one of external accoutrements; it was, in addition, a more profound change in the nature of the man himself. This natural nobility and this thorough distaste for artificial social and legal restraints--traits merely incipient in the character of the backwoodsman--flourished in the sunlight of the open prairie. Behind him in the forest the Western hero left all of the disagreeable mannerisms that had previously betrayed his lower class origin and impeded his social progress. When he stepped into the sunlight it was as a new man, an exemplar of everything proper and noble. Still, the land which lay before him was dangerously open, barren of the spiritual shelter and sustenance that the forest had formerly provided. It was a land where self-reliance, no longer curbed by the overwhelming spiritual presence that breathed through the cathedral-like silence of the forest, might easily assume exaggerated importance, and thus become a device for rationalizing moral, social, and legal transgressions.

The transition from backwoodsman to plainsman was accomplished largely through the use of a historical personage, Kit Carson, whose reputation as a courageous scout

and Indian fighter had been established long before the advent of the dime novel.[43] An orphan raised without formal education on the Missouri frontier, an apprenticed leather worker who deserted his craft to pursue adventure in the untamed West, Carson lacked the impressive physical endowments of the typical Western hero. Nevertheless, his colorful role in Jessie Benton Frémont's adroitly edited reports of her husband's exploring expeditions vaulted Carson, by the 1840s, into national prominence. In 1858 he became the subject of a biography, The Life and Adventures of Kit Carson, the Nestor of the Rocky Mountains, from Facts Narrated by Himself, written by an army surgeon, DeWitt C. Peters, who made extensive use of Carson's own dictated but at that time unpublished autobiographical narrative. Subsequent years witnessed the appearance of two more biographies: Charles Burdett's Life of Kit Carson: The Great Western Hunter and Guide, published in 1862; and, John S. C. Abbott's Christopher Carson. Familiarly Known as Kit Carson, released in 1873.[45] All three of these biographies played a role in the formulation of the Carson legend, but principal credit must be assigned to the popular novelists of the age.

Carson first appeared as a fictional character in 1849 in Emerson Bennett's best-seller The Prairie Flower, but his role was a minor one and it was not until later that year, with the publication of Charles A. Averill's hardbound novel Kit Carson, The Prince of Gold Hunters, that the renowned scout became a fictional character of major proportions. In Averill's tale, Carson is not the genteel hero central to the love plot, but he is nevertheless the focal point of the narrative. Indeed, drawn as a solitary figure mounted on horseback amid the barren wastes of the prairie, his indomitable spirit revealed in every line of his sunburnt face, he towers over the other characters. He is proud, indifferent to danger, and ennobled by his supreme self-reliance, yet he retains many of the traits of his backwoods forebears: he is dressed like a trapper, and he is not the genteel and therefore marriageable hero of the love plot but merely a faithful guide.[46]

It is in this same transitional state that Carson entered the dime novel. That his character underwent no significant evolution in the intervening years between 1849 and the advent of the dime novel is only mildly surprising, for Charles A. Averill, perhaps aspiring to repeat his

former success in hardbound format, himself penned several Carson tales for Street & Smith's Campfire Library. Without exception, these tales demonstrate his reluctance to abandon a character type that had already been favorably received.[47] This absence of significant innovation was characteristic of Carson's treatment in the dime novel. From the early 1860s through the 1890s Carson was the protagonist of more than seventy original tales and reprints written by a host of dime novelists, including such deft storytellers as Edward Ellis, Albert Aiken, T. C. Harbaugh, Francis W. Doughty, Julius Warren Lewis, Harry St. George Rathborne, and John R. Musick.[48] Nevertheless, Carson remained a relatively static character. As a transitional link in the evolution of the Western hero, he retained some traits of the backwoodsman while simultaneously displaying others that foreshadowed the eventual development of a young, naturally noble knight of the plains.

Dime novelists were, of course, to some extent aware of the pressing need for a younger, nobler Western hero--a character who would not only keep pace with changing public taste but who would, at the same time, function more satisfactorily within the narrative formula itself. While their

efforts to make such a hero of Kit Carson were neither consistent nor lasting, their awareness of the limitations imposed by the Carson prototype provided by Averill is evidenced in nearly every tale in which Carson appeared. In 1862, for example, Edward Ellis introduced the famous plainsman in "Viola Vennond; or, Life on the Border," a tale released serially in the Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper and later reprinted in Beadle's Dime Library as The Fighting Trapper; or, Kit Carson to the Rescue. Kit's role in the tale is minor--he arrives as events are drawing to a close, just in time to rescue a party besieged by Indians--but his characterization is nonetheless notable. Significantly, he is not cast in the backwoodsman's usual role as the heroine's loyal guide and fatherly protector. This role is consigned to Vic Vannoven, an amiable old trapper obviously descended from Leatherstocking. Instead, Kit is young, athletic, and decidedly handsome, though still called a trapper and clothed in the trapper's customary garb.[49] Other dime novelists made similar attempts to deviate from the standard fictional characterization of Carson. George Blakelee, writing for The Little Chief Library under the pseudonym C. Leon Meredith, provided his readers a youthful

hero by concentrating on Carson's early life; as the respective titles imply, Kit Carson, The Border Boy deals with the illustrious scout's boyhood, while Kit Carson, The Young Hunter fictionalizes his early manhood.[50] In one novel written by George L. Aiken, Kit Carson's Bride; or, The White Flower of the Apaches, the scout is even permitted to marry; it is likely, however, that this was not so much a legitimate effort to introduce a marriageable hero as it was simply an attempt to account for the historical fact of Carson's marriage to Mountain Flower, a Cheyenne girl.[51]

While these novels suggest the extent to which dime novelists chafed under the limitations imposed by Averill's Carson prototype, writers were, for the most part, unable to consistently eliminate from the fictional image of Kit Carson those persistent traits that invariably linked him to the backwoodsman of an earlier era. Throughout the eighties and nineties Carson occasionally appeared as a refined and gallant youth complete with flat-crowned, wide-brimmed hat, a percussion-cap Winchester and a Colt handgun. Still, he was every bit as likely to appear as a backwoodsman whose character showed no appreciable

development beyond the stereotype established by Averill in 1849. In the 1879 hardbound edition of Thomas Harbaugh's Kiowa Charley, the White Mustanger; or, Rocky Mountain Kit's Last Scalp Hunt, Carson is, anachronistically enough, an aged, dialect-speaking trapper. Again, in The Boy Rifle Rangers; or, Kit Carson's Three Young Scouts, a tale penned after the turn of the century, he is not strictly speaking a plainsman at all, but rather "a true knight of the wild woods," complete with long rifle and coonskin cap.[52] Hence, Kit Carson remained a transitional character in the evolution of the Western hero. But while many dime novelists were content to endlessly duplicate an outdated stereotype, others were not. Acutely sensitive to the demands of both their craft and the audience they served, a growing number of dime novelists recognized the need for a younger, more refined hero--a character whose traits would more clearly approximate those required by the changing internal and external dynamics of the evolving Western formula. Some of the more innovative writers, incapable of altering a stereotype bound by association to the historical Kit Carson and lodged unshakeably in the popular mind, abandoned Carson altogether. Instead, they resorted to the

creation of fictional plainsmen who, though sometimes named after the great scout and thus capitalizing on his fame, nevertheless possessed the requisite traits of the new brand of hero--youth and social polish.[53]

Much of Kit Carson's popularity undoubtedly stemmed from the fact that he was an actual, real-life participant in the opening of the West. Most of the exploits attributed to him by pulp writers were purely fictitious, but others--just enough to lend stories in which he figured an air of authenticity--could be documented. Surely this fact was not overlooked by Edward Zane Carroll Judson, better known as "Ned Buntline," a man whose exploits--some in the realm of literature and some that were not but deserved to be--had rendered his name a household word in America. Small in stature but large in confidence, Buntline was an experienced writer whose exciting life matched that of any hero he created. Running off to sea at an early age, participating in a series of adventurous military campaigns, delivering temperance lectures, stumping for the Know-Nothing party, and surviving six vitriolic marriages, Buntline was an active man.[54]

Perhaps it was in hopes of finding a man with credentials as impressive as Kit Carson's that Buntline left New York and journeyed west in the fall of 1869. At first, he intended to make a dime novel hero out of Major Frank North, commander of three companies of Pawnee scouts engaged in fighting the Sioux, but when he arrived at Fort McPherson, Nebraska and sought out North, the major declined Buntline's offer. Instead, according to legend, he suggested that Buntline use the man asleep "over there under the wagon."[55] That man was William F. Cody, christened "Buffalo Bill" in recognition of his exploits as a buffalo hunter employed by construction crews of the Kansas Pacific Railroad. Buntline talked with Cody and accompanied him on several scouting missions, and shortly thereafter he returned to New York to build a story around his newly-discovered hero. On December 23, 1869, "Buffalo Bill, the King of the Border Men" began as a serial in the New York Weekly.[56]

The story was an instant success, and by 1872 Cody's exploits in the dime novel had earned him such fame that a play, Buffalo Bill, The King of Bordermen, written by Fred G. Maeder and based on Buntline's story in the New York Weekly,

opened at the Bowery Theater. Cody, visiting New York at the time, was so impressed by the performance that he agreed to act in a play which Buntline planned to write. On December 12, 1872, Buntline wrote the play in the record time of four hours; The Scouts of the Plains; or, Red Deviltry As It Is opened only four days later. Despite the fact that the show's two stars, Cody and his friend Texas Jack Omohundro, could not memorize their lines and therefore relied on continual prompting by Buntline, who also acted in the play, the show was a popular success. Critics, however, did not react to the gunplay and Indian killing so favorably. As Cody later admitted, "Buntline, as 'Cale Durg,' was killed in the second act, after a long temperance speech; and the Inter-Ocean said that it was to be regretted that he had not been killed in the first act."[57] The play nevertheless went on tour during the season of 1873-74, this time with another authentic hero added to the cast--the famous Wild Bill Hickok. The association with Wild Bill was short-lived, however, for the "deadliest shot in the West" had the "demoralizing habit," according to Cody, "of firing blank cartridges at the legs of the supers, often burning them severely and at times almost

bringing our performance to a ridiculous close."[58] Ultimately, after three years of work with Buntline, Cody and Texas Jack struck out on their own to organize Buffalo Bill's Wild West, the show destined to win Cody immortality.

The Wild West show played an enormous role in establishing Buffalo Bill as the greatest Western hero of all time. Over a period of more than fifty years, untold millions of people in America and abroad thrilled to the show's dazzling displays of bronc-busting, bulldogging, roping, trick riding, and marksmanship. Although the show reflected Cody's penchant for pageantry--the opening parade and introduction of the Congress of Rough Riders of the World, the Indian attack on the Deadwood Stagecoach, the reenactment of Custer's last stand at the Battle of the Little Big Horn--its primary appeal lay in its unprecedented authenticity. Most Easterners had never seen the like, and even Westerners found the show impressive. Mark Twain, after attending performances two days in succession, penned a letter to Cody in which he praised the show, explaining that it "brought vividly back the breezy, wild life of the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains, and stirred me like a war

song. Down to its smallest details, the show was genuine . . . it is wholly free from sham and insincerity and the effects it produced upon me by its spectacles were identical with those wrought upon me a long time ago by the same spectacles on the frontier."[59] As Twain's comment suggests, the Wild West show capitalized on the longstanding eastern vision of the West as a realm that constituted a moral antithesis to the East. In contrast to the insincerity, artificiality, and socio-economically induced uniformity of the East, the West meant naturalness, simplicity, and individuality. Buffalo Bill, himself one of nature's noblemen, became the principal spokesman for the values of the West, and his extravaganza was popular because, as Frederick Remington recognized, it represented "a poetical and harmless protest against the Derby hat and the starched linens--those horrible badges of the slavery of our modern social system, when men are physically figures, and mental and moral cogwheels and wastes of uniformity--where the greatest crime is to be an individual, and the unpardonable sin is to be out of fashion."[60]

Buffalo Bill's theatrical career, and particularly his association with the Wild West show, exerted

considerable influence upon the dime novel. Following the publicity surrounding his appearance on the New York stage in 1872, Buffalo Bill's name became magic in pulp literature. Not only did there suddenly occur an upsurge in the number of novels in which Buffalo Bill appeared but, in addition, Beadle and Adams began publishing stories supposedly written by Cody himself. The famous scout may indeed have penned a few, but evidence strongly suggests that the actual author was Prentiss Ingraham, an experienced dime novelist. In terms of wordage, Ingraham was the most prolific writer of Buffalo Bill stories. Although his contribution to the Cody canon is vastly exaggerated--he is usually credited with 211 of 557 original Buffalo Bill titles, when in fact he authored no more than 121--it was nonetheless substantial, especially in terms of the span of years during which his stories remained in circulation.[61] Inasmuch as Ingraham served as a press agent for Cody's Wild West show,his prodigious literary effort on behalf of Buffalo Bill is not surprising. In fact, increases in Ingraham's story production may be traced directly to corresponding increases in Wild West show publicity. In 1892, for example, immediately prior to the staging of the Wild West

show at the Chicago World's Fair, Ingraham wrote nine new Buffalo Bill novels for Beadle's Dime Library.[62] The mutually profitable association between Wild West show publicity and dime novel production is further established by the large number of novels whose covers bore color illustrations of the show, and whose pages contained notices of future performances.[63] In all, about half a dozen novels, including those written by authors other than Ingraham, actually dealt with the Wild West show itself, and two introduced stars of Cody's extravaganza--Buck Taylor and Nate Salsbury--to the public.[64]

The exploitation of the dime novel as a publicity vehicle for the Wild West show had a lasting impact upon the fictional characterization of the Western hero. Paradoxically, while Cody's show won popular acclaim because it depicted the people and pastimes of the West with a degree of authenticity previously absent from similar theatrical productions, it nevertheless surrounded these people and pastimes with an aura of pomp and pageantry. Through his association with the show, Buffalo Bill was himself glamorized, especially by publicity conscious dime novelists. Over a period of years, this overt theatricality

became an integral part of Buffalo Bill's characterization in the dime novel.

The changing fictional characterization of Buffalo Bill may easily be traced from 1869, when Buntline introduced him to the public in "Buffalo Bill, the King of the Border Men." As depicted in the illustration on the cover of the New York Weekly in which the story premiered, the renowned plainsman resembles the backwoods heroes who preceded him. He is still bearded, long haired, garbed in shaggily fringed buckskin, and though he carries a pistol in his belt he leans on the trapper's customary flintlock rifle. He does ride a horse in the story, but his morality remains that of the backwoodsman, for he delivers temperance lectures to his occasionally intemperate companion, Wild Bill Hickok, and shows no surprise when a gambler turns out to be a villain. Despite his rugged demeanor and ungrammatical English, Buffalo Bill thinks noble thoughts and consequently wins the lady of his heart, the exquisite Louisa La Valliere, whom he has rescued from a band of drunken soldiers. Presumably this is Buntline's attempt to account for the historical fact of Cody's marriage to Louisa Frederici, since the dime novel hero of

1869 had not yet attained the social status necessary to marry a genteel heroine. As Buffalo Bill explains after rescuing Louisa, "If I see her anymore, I shall love her, and love above my station would be madness and folly."[65] This is probably the only story ever to appear in which Buffalo Bill was permitted a romantic attachment; throughout his subsequent dime novel career he rescued countless heroines, invariably winning their admiration but never their hands.

In Prentiss Ingraham's novels--all written between 1879 and 1904--Buffalo Bill's characterization changed abruptly. Most importantly, the tortured speech that Buffalo Bill had spoken in Buntline's stories was in Ingraham's novels supplanted by a lofty diction that must have represented the author's conception of eloquence. Dialect continued to appear in the stories, but it was invariably assigned to Buffalo Bill's companions, especially to Wild Bill in the early novels.

This practice was continued by other dime novelists following Ingraham's death in 1904. By elevating Buffalo Bill's speech and assigning dialect instead to the scout's companions, dime novelists shifted those traits long

associated with dialect--lower class status and comic behavior--away from the Western hero, thereby improving his status without sacrificing the comic element so vital to their stories.

This practice, identical to that formerly employed by writers seeking to improve the social status of the earlier stereotyped backwoodsman, naturally produced a series of comic characters who often accompanied the Western hero. Interestingly enough, though Buffalo Bill's companions included Little Cayuse, a Piute Indian boy, and Dauntless Dell, an Arizona ranch girl, his comic cohorts were most often dialect-speaking trappers: Catamount Tom, the hide hunter; Alkali Pete Allen, the homely frontiersman; Old Nick Wharton, the owner of an eccentric mare; and, most popular of all, Nick Nomad, the superstitious trapper who, in company with his bony nag "Nebuchadnezzar," made the first of many appearances in Buffalo Bill in the Land of Fire; or, Nick Nomad, the Mountain Wanderer.[66] Characters of this type seldom occupied roles crucial to the action of the tale. A noteworthy exception, however, was Old Huckleberry, an aged, dialect-speaking trapper who debuted in an 1893 Ingraham novel entitled Buffalo Bill's Spy Shadower;

or, The Masked Men of Grand Canyon. The reason for Old Huckleberry's unusual preeminence becomes apparent at the end of the story when, after adeptly disposing of a gang of road agents, the old man removes his elaborate disguise and reveals himself to be the young and handsome Buffalo Bill.[67] Instances such as this in which the trapper assumed a central role were exceedingly rare. As a vestige of an earlier era, the trapper added another dimension to the story's appeal, but he usually remained a minor character whose shabby appearance, long-winded bombast, and bumbling behavior provided comic relief. The habitual introduction of humorous trappers testifies, no doubt, to the continued popularity of the trapper figure even beyond the turn of the century. Yet it suggests, too, that the popular notion of the backwoodsman was inseparably linked to humor. As long as the plainsman retained an external resemblance to his backwoods forebears--because of his comic dialect, his weapons, his humble attire, or his awkwardness in social situations--he could not attain his full potential in the narrative's love plot.

Ingraham no doubt recognized this, for his characterization of Buffalo Bill was markedly different from

Buntline's. As portrayed in Ingraham's novels, Buffalo Bill no longer speaks dialect; neither, except when donning his disguise as Old Huckleberry, does he bear an external resemblance to the unsophisticated trappers who preceded him. In fact, he gambles frequently and displays a flair for the theatrical, a trait that manifests itself in flamboyant attire and numerous costume changes. Moreover, the dashing scout's social bearing is excruciatingly flawless. He treats the gentler sex with infinite courtesy, and cooly pauses in the midst of even the most desperate situations to bury his dead. Duels, such as the one fought in Buffalo Bill's Double; or, The False Guide, are common, particularly in later stories.[68] These activities are not in the least unusual for the "prince of the plains," for Ingraham's stories assumed all of the trappings of the medieval romance. Though Owen Wister is commonly credited with introducing the chivalric element into the serious Western in The Virginian, his unacknowledged debt to dime novelists is indicated by such Ingraham titles as Buffalo Bill's Bonanza; or, The Knights of the Silver Circle and Buffalo Bill and His Merry Men; or, The Robin Hood Rivals.[69] These tales are representative of Buffalo Bill dime novels written

after 1880. While the titles were not always so undisguisedly chivalric, stories of this period invariably portrayed Buffalo Bill as a virtual knight errant, dashing over the plains in the interests of truth and justice.

Buffalo Bill's acquisition of sophistication and polish, however, was paralleled by his growing habit of engaging in questionable activities. Ingraham's Buffalo Bill not only gambles--a spicy pastime in the nineteenth century, and one which doubtless contributed to his appeal--but he even dares at times to place his own concept of justice above that of the law. Repeatedly, the plot provides him a just mandate for doing so: either the army has dispatched him on a lone mission to round up deserters and other wanted men, or a group of impotent citizens, frightened by the depredations of outlaws, has deputized him as a peace officer. Hence, Buffalo Bill is afforded ample opportunity to singlehandedly enforce justice, and since he is "schooled . . . in all the craft of the border, and in mountain and plain-lore, Indian trickery and white man's cleverness," his execution of justice is as "invincible as fate."[70]

It remains clear at all times, however, that the prince of bordermen is motivated neither by hope of reward nor by respect for the law per se, but rather by his unwavering personal commitment to justice. Addressing a group of townspeople on behalf of himself and his comrades in Buffalo Bill's Queer Find; or, On a Lone Trail, Buffalo Bill explains that capturing outlaws "is our sworn duty, and whatever we can do, that we will do." Still, he assures the citizens, "we take no trail simply for blood-money. Duty, not hope of reward, brought us here to-night."[71] Yet it is more than a vague sense of duty that spurs Buffalo Bill to action; it is a confirmed belief that the conventional legal system is incapable of dispensing justice equitably and expeditiously. He does, of course, pay lip service to the law's demand for a "fair trial," but his true sentiments are more accurately voiced by one of his companions, Kid-Glove Kate. "Like half the farces called trial by jury," she laconically remarks to a group of townspeople who have unwittingly convicted an innocent man of murder, "your twelve fools have gone wrong, and would hang the wrong person, kill an innocent man . . . simply because you do not know who else to accuse."[72] Buffalo

Bill expresses similar disdain for the legal system, but he is unwilling to dispense with the forms of law altogether. In consequence, he often finds himself in the awkward position of protecting miscreants from a citizenry so enraged that, as he observes in Buffalo Bill's Featherweight; or, Apache Charley the Indian Athlete, "they'll hang a man on suspicion and give him a fair trial afterward--a sure way of getting at the truth, though rather hard on the man if he happens to be innocent."[73]

Since the alternatives to individual action--either the conventional legal system, with its slow and labyrinthine processes, or lynch law, with its rash and dangerously oversimplified reliance on popular whim--are portrayed as hopelessly ineffectual, it comes as no surprise when the flawless Buffalo Bill attempts to solve the dilemma by taking the law into his own unerring hands. He does so in Buffalo Bill's Blind Trail; or, Mustang Madge, the Daughter of the Regiment. After skillfully capturing a road agent, Buffalo Bill learns that the robber has taken to crime in order to regain gambling losses which have placed the mortgage of his mother's home in jeopardy. Instantly recognizing that the youth is no hardened criminal, and sympathizing with

his plight, Buffalo Bill chooses to ignore the legal code and to conceal the crime. The prince of scouts then tracks down the crafty gambler responsible for swindling the would-be road agent, and soon regains the young man's money in an honest game of cards.[74] The fact remains, of course, that Buffalo Bill has placed his individual concept of justice above that of the law, substituting his personal moral code for society's in a manner which was by this time becoming characteristic of the Western hero.

In less than a score of years, then, the fictional characterization of the Western hero had changed dramatically, primarily as a result of Prentiss Ingraham's efforts on behalf of Buffalo Bill. The hybrid backwoodsman-plainsman, best exemplified by Kit Carson, had become a figure of the past, and whereas Buffalo Bill had been initially in Buntline's 1869 story a crude, buckskin-swathed moralist, he had become by the middle 1880s a smooth-talking "Prince of the Plains," a polished theatrical performer whose behavior was on more than one occasion questionable. Ingraham's interest in promoting Buffalo Bill's theatrical career--as well as his own career as a dime novelist--no doubt accelerated the pace of change, but the change itself

was an organic development dictated by dynamics long functioning within and upon the Western formula. By emphasizing Buffalo Bill's elegant attire and imperturbable savoir-faire, Ingraham merely culminated a trend which, incipient in the early dime novel, became increasingly prevalent as the genre evolved--namely, the externalization of the hero's innate nobility. As a means of delineating character instantaneously--good men dressed well and behaved decorously, ruffians did not--this practice constituted, in one respect, the artist's natural response to the internal dynamics of a narrative formula that exalted plot action in favor of character revelation. In another and perhaps even more important respect, the externalization of the hero's natural nobility offered the artist a means of defining the Western hero in terms of his relationship to society and its acknowledged behavioral codes.

The externalization of the Western hero's innate nobility did, however, exact a price. With his exaggerated assumption of all of the trappings of upper class refinement, the plainsman sacrificed that simple humility which had once been so dominant a trait of the backwoodsman. He became theatrical, his appearance flashy, his behavior

strained. Yet this grandiloquence in no way eroded his popularity. Paradoxically, that highly stylized behavior which, had it been exhibited by an Easterner, would have been considered by most readers hifalutin and artificial, was not distasteful when exhibited by a Westerner. To the contrary, readers recognized in the Western hero a man whose innate abilities had won for him the right to exercise the jealously guarded prerogatives of the upper class. Consequently, he was revered as a self-made man. He offered living evidence of the existence of a natural nobility that transcended rigid class distinctions. Moreover, at a time when virtue seemed more often a hindrance that an inducement to success, the refined Western hero emerged as a symbol of hope; he reinforced the popular will to believe in the Puritan notion that virtue and ability were externally manifest, and that they invariably guaranteed tangible reward.

It is probable, too, that still a third dynamic generated the development of a visibly refined Western hero. By externalizing the hero's innate nobility, dime novelists produced a protagonist whose courtly behavior masked that volatility which constituted so prominent an element of his

nature--that ominous streak of savagery which, though most overtly betrayed by the Indian hater, nevertheless remained an unmistakable trait of all Western heroes. In essence, the refined hero's strict adherance to the rules of social decorum in some measure compensated for his habit of violating moral and legal codes. Inasmuch as his concern for propriety increased in conjunction with his self-reliance and lawlessness, his character preserved its delicate balance between acceptable and unacceptable conduct. Consequently, he remained pallatable to a reading public which, while it admired on a subliminal level his subversive behavior, could not on a conscious level accept a character whose actions constituted an overt challenge to established middle-class, Christian values.

In view of the socio-psychological dynamics operating in late nineteenth century American society, it is little wonder that the plainsman achieved the phenomenal popularity that he did. Buffalo Bill, appearing in more than 1,700 original stories and reprints in the United States alone, must be acknowledged as the undisputed champion of pulp heroes, but subsequent plainsmen also enjoyed astounding success at the newsstands.[75] Young Wild West,

the Prince of the Saddle, debuted in Frank Tousey's Wild West Weekly in 1902 and continued to make weekly appearances in the following 1,923 numbers.[76] His character as knight errant, however, remained virtually unchanged, for the development of the stereotyped plainsman had come full circle. Nevertheless, the evolution of the dime novel hero from crude, buckskin-swathed buffoon to gallant knight errant was an important preliminary step: the trend evident in the Western hero's growing tendency to engage in extra-legal conduct, combined with his perhaps compensatory display of courtly manners, set the stage for the cowboy--the next, and most enduring, stereotype of the Western hero.

The Cowboy

While the cowboy was first introduced in pulp literature during the 1870s as a means of lending additional authenticity and background color to stories set in the Southwest, and while he eventually served as the protagonist of a significant number of novels penned during the 1880s and after, he never seriously rivalled in the dime novel the astounding popularity of his predecessors,

the backwoodsman and the plainsman.[77] The competition posed by other pulp heroes evidently proved too intense. Yet the cowboy did, despite his unimpressive record in the dime novel, play an important role in the long term evolution of the Western hero. Outlasting the dime novel, populating the pages of countless serious Westerns and twentieth century pulp magazines, and galloping furiously across millions of movie and television screens, the cowboy was destined to eclipse all other Western heroes and win enduring international acclaim as the foremost symbol of the American West.

It was not until the 1870s, when the burgeoning Texas cattle industry flowed over into the plains states to the north, that the cowboy first began to appear in widely circulated newspapers and popular periodicals, and thus to become known to a significant number of eastern readers. From the first, cowboys were painted unsympathetically as lawless and unprincipled ruffians. In 1878, for example, the Washington Star referred to them as "nomads . . . remote from the restraints of moral, civic, social and law enforcing life, . . . from the very tendencies of their situation the embodiment of waywardness

and wantonness, . . ." who "journey with their herds, . . . loiter and dissipate, sometimes for months, and share the boughten dalliances of fallen women."[78] Readers who may have been inclined to dismiss such sensational characterizations as the work of vituperative or moralistic reporters were no doubt apprised of the accuracy of these accounts when, in his First Annual Message to Congress in 1881, President Chester A. Arthur requested legislation permitting the military to intervene in the activities of a roving gang of "armed desperadoes known as 'Cowboys,'" who were at that time terrorizing the border settlements between Mexico and the Territory of Arizona.[79]

Inasmuch as the cowboy was initially portrayed as a wayward and wanton troublemaker, only a public relations effort of massive proportions could have been capable of polishing his tarnished image, thereby rendering him a suitable companion to that select number of shining champions already installed in the pantheon of American heroes. Such a public relations campaign did, in fact, occur, and the 1880s witnessed a growing reaction against the pervasive conception of the cowboy as a lawless ruffian. The publication and consequent popularity of a number of factual

autobiographies--typified by Charles A. Siringo's A Texas Cow Boy; or, Fifteen Years on the Hurricane Deck of a Spanish Pony--did much to familiarize the public with the more humane traits of the cowboy.[80] Though considerably embroidered, these true life accounts generally depicted the hardship, danger, and drudgery of the cowboy's daily routine.

Drudgery and routine, however, do not make for exciting reading, and consequently most dime novelists minimized this aspect of the cowboy's life. While it is not strictly true, as Henry Nash Smith quips, that the dime novel cowboy "apparently has nothing to do with cattle," it is nearly true.[81] Passing reference is made to roundups, branding, cattle drives, and other chores associated with the cattle industry, but in the last analysis the action of these stories invariably centers on the cowboy's confrontations with Indians, rustlers, and other assorted lawbreakers. The daily activities of ranch life merely provide a novel backdrop for the ageless, standardized plots.

The cowboy, too, is defined in terms of the identical formula that had formerly won popularity for earlier

incarnations of the Western hero. Save for the fact that he is labeled a "cowboy" or a "cowpuncher," he is scarcely distinguishable in the majority of stories from the plainsman who preceded him. Moccasins have given way to boots and spurs, of course, and the Western hero now carries a lariat at his belt, but his fundamental character traits remain the same. Unwilling to abandon a proven formula, dime novelists furthered the dual trends discernible in their earlier characterizations of the backwoodsman and the plainsman: they continued to externalize the Western hero's natural nobility, and they continued to stress his ambivalent relationship to the established social and legal system.

These trends are clearly manifest in the novels of Frederick Whittaker, one of the earliest popularizers of the cowboy. While credit for creating the first dime novel cowboy hero has generally been accorded Prentiss Ingraham, who in 1887 fictionalized the exploits of Buck Taylor, a real life star in Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, the prototype of the cowboy hero actually appeared five years earlier in Whittaker's Parson Jim, King of the Cowboys; or, The Gentle Shepherd's Big "Clean Out." The story concerns

Jim Arthur, a consumptive Harvard divinity student who two years earlier had come west to Muleville, Colorado to regain his health. The invigorating climate has, to put it mildly, done wonders for him. Only a year after his arrival, we are told, Jim "could run twenty miles in two hours, turn fifty handsprings successively, and had increased his chest girth by three inches." Yet Jim is no mere acrobat. No longer a tenderfoot, the "Gentle Shepherd" has mastered the Westerner's manly arts: he is an overseer, first of a sheep ranch and then of a cattle ranch; he shoots coins out of the air with his pistols; and, in one of his more impressive displays of skill, he defeats a rowdy cowboy in a duel with bullwhips.[82]

The natural nobility which Parson Jim obviously possesses, and which the hardy western life has amazingly externalized, is not unexpectedly enlisted in the service of securing true justice for an oppressed citizenry. The town is controlled by The Ranchers' League, a group of wealthy cattle barons who have in the past unscrupulously manipulated the town elections and thus safeguarded their own interests to the detriment of the masses. When election time again approaches, however, Jim Arthur steps

forward as a candidate for the legislature, promising just treatment for the "lowly and persecuted cowboy." After surviving a series of attempts on his life, and foiling the cattle barons at every turn, Jim in the end succeeds in winning the election. Vowing to "protect the poorer class of settlers, who have heretofore suffered all sorts of persecutions from the large cattle-owners," the self-proclaimed "champion of the poor" leaves for the State Assembly amid the impassioned cheers of the townspeople.[83]

Similar plots, which offer the cowboy hero ample opportunity to display his natural nobility and to foil wealthy malefactors, inform Whittaker's Top Notch Tom, The Cowboy Outlaw; or, The Satanstown Election and its sequel, The Marshal of Satanstown; or, The League of the Cattle-Lifters.[84] Set in Texas, these companion stories follow the efforts of the powerful Glasgow Cattle Company to control the local elections and thereby gain legal sanction to fence the open range and deny the country's small ranchers access to water. While the company's interests are promoted by Belshazzar Levy, a scheming lawyer, and Berkley, a treacherous English aristocrat, the small ranchers are defended by two men whose nobility is natural rather than

artificial. Tom Field--reputed to be the deadliest shot in Satanstown, a manly talent which has earned him the sobriquet Top Notch Tom--was raised in the East and trained as a physician. Furthermore, he is an accomplished singer with "a gift for scribbling poetry and music, which no one but the girls knew of, and which he hid carefully from all the rest of the world." His boon companion, Henry Kimble, the marshal of Satanstown, is a bashful native Westerner known as "Hank the Nailer" because of his habit of driving home nails with bullets. Hank's social polish is less obvious than Tom's, but that his innate nobility will ultimately surface is predictable from the first, for the thick Texas drawl which habitually characterizes his speech disappears instantaneously in the presence of ladies. And when, in the course of the first of these novels, Hank helps to clear Tom of a trumped-up murder charge, routs the company's hired killers, and subsequently aids Tom's successful election effort as the representative of "an indignant people" who, "when forbearance ceased to be a virtue," rose up violently against the mighty cattle corporation, Hank's nobility at last emerges. Overcoming his former bashfulness, he weds the genteel Helen Collingsworth.

As the novel draws to a close, Hank forms a partnership with Tom, who also weds his sweetheart, and together they assume control of the cattle company and pledge to keep the range open to all.[85]

The practice of defining the Western hero in terms of his natural nobility and his unique position with regard to established social and legal codes was continued by William G. Patten, another of the cowboy's foremost popularizers. Writing under his own name, or using the pseudonyms William West Wilder or "Wyoming Will," Patten created courageous men of action: Hustler Harry, the Cowboy Sport; Prairie Paul; Hurricane Hal, the Cowboy Hotspur; Cowboy Steve, the Ranch Mascot; and, Cowboy Chris, the Vengeance Volunteer.[86] Describing his rough and ready cowboy heroes as "good men and true," Patten carefully externalized their natural nobility. In Hurricane Hal, the Cowboy Hotspur; or, Old True Blue's Pilgrimage in Satan's Section, for example, Hurricane Hal is the hard-driving foreman of the Red Spur Ranch, yet he remains at all times a model of decorum. He and his companion, Maverick Mat, are "faultlessly attired . . . and, but for the tan of sun and wind upon their hands and faces, they might have passed as gallants of the

drawing room, grace, culture and refinement being shown in every word, look, and motion."[87] Time and again, however, Patten's cowboy heroes find themselves fronting the law. The typical situation occurs in Cowboy Steve, The Ranch Mascot; or, The Bond of Blood, where circumstances compel the hero, Silver Spur Steve, to defend a rustler from an angry mob. Holding his pistols on the mob while the rustler makes good his escape, Steve rationalizes his actions: "I am not flinging myself in the track of the law," he proclaims. "I am simply defying lawlessness."[88]

No such glib rationalization can justify the disregard for law displayed by Daredeath Dick, the hero of Leon Lewis's Daredeath Dick, King of the Cowboys; or, In the Wild West with Buffalo Bill, and the character often claimed as the first cowboy hero.[89] While Lewis describes his central character as "one of the best marksmen, scouts, hunters, riders, and cowboys, as active as daring, as generous as brave, as gentle and sympathetic in friendship as he was terrible in his wrath," Daredeath Dick's generosity and gentleness command far less attention than his lawlessness and wrath. After capturing two villainous brothers who have mistreated him, Daredeath Dick declares that he, as a

"mob of one," intends to lynch the men. He does so without delay, and "Lighting a fresh cigar, Dick watched the convulsions of the two men until they had ceased, his wild glances gradually becoming less wild, and by the time both forms had become motionless in death, his eyes had become as mild and gentle as those of a gazelle. His desire for vengeance had been appeased! His sense of duty and justice satisfied!"[90]

The savagery evinced by Daredeath Dick continued to be a detectable trait of the dime novel cowboy, but by and large it was sublimated in favor of external manifestations of the hero's innate nobility. Throughout the 1890s the hero's physical appearance, attire, speech, and manners received increasing attention.

This was particularly true of the most famous dime novel cowboy hero, Buck Taylor, a character based upon the real life cowboy of that name starring in Buffalo Bill's Wild West. Created by Prentiss Ingraham, Buffalo Bill's press agent and preeminent mythmaker, Buck Taylor was introduced in 1887 in Ingraham's Buck Taylor, King of the Cowboys; or, The Raiders and the Rangers.[91] Though the novel is purportedly an account of the "wild and thrilling"

life of Buck Taylor, it is clear that Ingraham intended it as the first of a series of publicity vehicles for Cody's Wild West show. Consequently, the cowboy hero who emerges in the Buck Taylor novels is decidedly theatrical. In Buck Taylor, The Saddle King; or, The Lasso Rangers' League, Ingraham describes Buck's costume in some detail: "He was dressed in somewhat gaudy attire, wore a watch and chain, diamond pin in his black scarf, representing a miniature spur, and upon the small finger of his right hand there was a ring, the design being a horseshoe of rubies. About his broad-brimmed, dove-colored sombrero was coiled a miniature lariet [sic], so that the spur, horseshoe and lasso designated his calling."[92] Conceding in The Lasso King's League; or, The Tigers of Texas that Buck's attire is perhaps a bit flamboyant, Ingraham admits that Buck "might be called a cowboy dandy, so neat was his appearance." Yet his dandified appearance is misleading, for Buck is "a man to do and dare any deed that mortal could accomplish."[93]

Repeating the characterizational techniques he had formerly utilized in canonizing Buffalo Bill, Ingraham assigned to Buck Taylor the attributes of the medieval knight. Parallels to the chivalric tradition were

initiated in the first Buck Taylor story, Buck Taylor, King of the Cowboys; or, The Raiders and the Rangers, which recounts Buck's attempt as a young man to enlist in Captain McNally's Texas Rangers. After reporting to the Ranger camp, Buck is required to undergo a series of trials which includes boxing, wrestling, and bronc-busting. He demonstrates his skill and courage in each of these events, and is therefore permitted to join the elite band and wear the Ranger insignia. The remainder of the story relates the particulars of Buck's quest to save the traditional maiden, Captain McNally's daughter, from the Indians. As Joseph Waldmeir points out in his discussion of the similarities between the Buck Taylor stories and the medieval romance, ". . . initiation into a band of the Chosen by passing tests of physical strength, the gaining of heraldic identification, the quest, courtesy to fallen or disarmed foe (one does not shoot one's enemy in the back), all are part and parcel of chivalric tradition."[94] Subsequent Buck Taylor stories clarify the hero's role as knight errant. At the head of a band of "half cowboys, half mounted scout rangers" employed by the Government as cattle herders and scouts, Buck roams the countryside dispensing frontier

justice.[95] He is, Ingraham explains in The Cowboy Clan; or, The Tigress of Texas, "the typical Texan cowboy, the beau ideal of a reckless, dashing prairieman, a veritable Knight of the Rope."[96]

It is indeed apt that Buck Taylor is called the "Knight of the Rope," for he and his entire band carry lariats because "they come in handy for hangman's ropes."[97] Nevertheless, Buck maintains that the majority of cowboys are not lawless, and that the character of the cowboy has been unjustly defamed. These men are reckless and wild, he admits in The Cowboy Clan; or, The Tigress of Texas, but they are also "noble in their treatment of a friend or fallen foe."[98] Again defending the cowboy in Buck Taylor, The Saddle King; or, The Lasso Rangers' League, Buck talks with a member of the army's Medical Corps, Surgeon Hassam, saying: "I know well that a great many wicked men have crept into the ranks of our cowboy bands; but there are plenty of them who are true as steel and honest as they can be. We lead a wild life, get hard knocks, rough usage and our lives are in constant peril, and the settling of a difficulty is an appeal to revolver or knife; but after all we are not as black as we are painted.[99] Buck's

protests prove unconvincing, however, for his men repeatedly take the law into their own hands and resort to violence. The typical situation occurs in The Lasso King's League; or, The Tigers of Texas, where Buck's band of cowboys, assigned to guard three prisoners, decide instead to hold a mock trial and lynch the men. Later, when a smirking cowboy informs Buck that the prisoners have "escaped," the Saddle King grins at this example of "cowboy justice." Likewise, Colonel Forsythe, commander of the army post, greets the news philosophically, musing, "Well, I can hardly blame them, yet to bring law and order here in this country justice often must be done by illegal methods, and lawless hands work out a certain salvation I suppose."[100]

The streak of lawlessness manifested by Buck in this scene and others like it, combined with his indisputable natural nobility--always the two chief determinants of the Western hero's popularity--established Buck Taylor as the paragon of dime novel cowboys. Yet his appearance also hastened the decline of the cowboy as a distinctive hero type. From the first the cowboy had been divorced from his true vocation as a cattle herder, and thus deprived of that trait which might best have served to distinguish

him from the vast number of plainsmen already firmly established in the popular mind. It was therefore inevitable that the cowboy would eventually be assimilated by the preexistent stereotype of the dime novel plainsman. This process was no doubt hastened by Prentiss Ingraham's characterization of Buck Taylor. Utilized as a publicity vehicle for Buffalo Bill's Wild West, arbitrarily endowed with the chivalric attributes of the medieval knight, and victimized by Ingraham's taste for flamboyant attire, the cowboy hero was soon sensationalized almost beyond recognition. If he was not portrayed as a plainsman, then he was portrayed as a dandy, a number of whom began to make their way into the dime novel in the early 1890s.

The cowboy-detective Dandy Dan of Deadwood was perhaps the ultimate in fop heroes. Always the epitome of sartorial splendor, this scintillating young man managed to keep his clothes clean in even the most trying circumstances. In Dandy Dan of Deadwood and His Big Bonanza, for instance, Dandy Dan is tied to a column of stone in the midst of the dusty plains, yet he is described as wearing "a suit of neat black velvet, with patent leather boots on his feet. He wore a white shirt, the front of which was

spotless, and in the center of the bosom blazed a magnificent diamond. His broad-brimmed sombrero at his side was gathered up at one corner by a rich cluster of diamonds."[101] Theatrical and flashy, swells like Dandy Dan enjoyed substantial popularity at the turn of the century. The cowboy's initial challenge to the popularity of other dime novel heroes had failed.

In 1904, however, the publishing house of Street & Smith resurrected the manly cowboy and made the first concerted attempt by dime novel publishers to establish the cowboy as a hero of equal eminence with the backwoodsman and the plainsman. In hopes of creating a character capable of competing with Young Wild West, the popular plainsman hero of Frank Tousey's rival Wild West Weekly--an attempt which ultimately failed--Street & Smith launched the first continuing series specializing in stories of ranch and range life. Young Rough Riders Weekly hit the newsstands on April 23, 1904.[102]

The inaugural issue, Ted Strong's Rough Riders; or, The Boys of Black Mountain, penned by Harry St. George Rathborne under the pseudonym Ned Taylor, introduced Ted Strong, a youthful veteran of San Juan Hill who has come to

the Black Hills to claim a cattle ranch left to him by his grandfather. Complications ensue, however, when Ted's claim to the Black Mountain Ranch is challenged by a slick eastern lawyer, Rossiter, and his equally unprincipled son, Earl. Rossiter and his men repeatedly provoke violence, and Ted responds by calling upon some old friends, a group of eastern boys who have conveniently taken up ranching near Black Mountain. Together they organize a quasi-military outfit, the "Young Rough Riders," and commence the series of adventures that occupy them for the following 174 issues.[103]

In some respects the stories comprising Young Rough Riders Weekly resemble English boarding school novels or the later Frank and Dick Merriwell stories, since each of the Young Rough Riders is developed as an idiosyncratic character--often comic--and considerable space is devoted to schoolboy pranks and humorous episodes. Nevertheless, except for a few numbers which appeared near the end of the run when the popularity of the series was dwindling, the stories are set in the West and deal with roundups, cattle drives, rustling, Indian fighting, rodeos, and other activities unique to the Western. Moreover, although Ted

Strong's long haired companion, Bud Morgan, is the only native Westerner in the Young Rough Riders, Ted Strong is consistently developed as a Western hero.

Ted's natural nobility is at all times evident. He is handsome, wiry and muscular, "a born leader of men and . . . just about the finest athlete in America."[104] A crack shot and unequalled master of trick riding, lariat throwing, and steer roping, Ted manages to come out on top in every contest of skill, even when--as in Ted Strong's Nerve; or, Wild West Sport at Black Mountain--he loses because of skulduggery.[105]

In addition, like other Western heroes, Ted is not averse to taking the law into his own hands in order to secure true justice. His occasions for doing so are numerous, for Lawyer Rossiter and his son Earl harbor the Western villain's traditional contempt for the law. Voicing this attitude in Ted Strong's Rival; or, The Cowboys of Sunset Ranch, Earl Rossiter cites Rousseau, "a fellow who didn't believe in being bound by any law," and superciliously explains "that a gentleman--a fellow of wealth and culture--need not be bound by the petty laws such as are made for the common herd . . . . He's able to get away

with a good many restrictions, thanks to his money, and he's a fool if he doesn't use it that way."[106] It is this manipulation of the law by a privileged few that the Western hero stalwartly opposes. Arriving in the Black Hills in the first issue of the series, Ted Strong finds that Lawyer Rossiter, who never forsakes an opportunity to thwart the legal system, has installed one of his own men as sheriff and subjected the honest members of the community to a "reign of terror." But the sheriff and his men underestimate Ted's pluck and make the mistake of rustling stock belonging to Ted's friends. In response, Ted proposes the organization of the Young Rough Riders as a band of "volunteer police." Aware that this is the only course of action open to them, Ted's friend, Kit Summers, concludes: "There's only one thing to do, boys, ... We must take the law into our own hands. We have rifles and ammunition here. We'll organize ourselves into a body of rough riders and we'll patrol this country and defend our own property and try to enforce the law."[107] From this time forth, Ted Strong and his rough riders set about administering vigilante justice to the cowtowns of the West, and even when, in later issues of the series, they are appointed deputy

marshals, they continue to step outside the law whenever it is warranted by expedience.

With the demise of Young Rough Riders Weekly in 1907, the cowboy's brief exposure in the dime novel came to a close. During his two decade ascendance he had emerged as yet another manifestation of the formula Western hero who--though somewhat modified in outward appearance--continued to retain the same fundamental traits. The cowboy was endowed with a natural nobility which, even more obvious than that of the backwoodsman or plainsman, operated irrespective of social class. And since it was a God-given nobility rather than an artificial nobility acquired through birth and wealth, it constituted an implicit rejection of the social structure pertaining in the East, where society was rigidly polarized and opportunities for advancement steadily diminishing. The cowboy's nobility affirmed instead the value of an open and equitable social order in which the individual was assured a station in life commensurate with his innate abilities. Of course, the Western hero had always been an energetic critic of the establishment, but the cowboy proved to be an especially resentful foe of the upper class. Significantly, as the

lower class readers of the dime novel grew more restive, the animosity harbored by the Western hero toward members of the upper class reached new levels of intensity. At the same time, the cowboy evidenced an increasingly acute awareness of the disparity between morality and legality--a perception which, in turn, augmented his willingness to forsake institutionalized forms of law and to invoke instead his own individual concept of justice. As the dime novel evolved, the Western hero more and more often exceeded the reach of the law. Nor did it matter that he was sometimes cast as a lawman. Even when he wore a badge he remained an individual, not merely an arm of the law. This distinction still pertains today, for when the badge is removed from the heroic marshal's breast and worn by a lesser man it becomes a tin star. When not enforced by the naturally noble, strong-willed individual, the law itself becomes as ineffectual as the good natured but bumbling deputy, Festus, of television's popular Gunsmoke.

The Outlaw

Concurrently with the development in the dime novel of the plainsman and the cowboy, another stereotyped Western

hero was rising to prominence. He was the noble outlaw, the Robin Hood of the American West. Imbued with all of the color and charisma of his pulp competitors, he remained decidedly different from them in one crucial respect: he stood outside the law. The plainsman and the cowboy repeatedly demonstrated a penchant for bypassing legal impediments, but they nevertheless remained for the most part law-abiding members of the community. In marked contrast, the outlaw was a social outcast and confirmed rebel whose attitude toward law was openly defiant.

The West had always known more than its share of lawbreakers, and the gold rush had proved a mixed blessing that brought not only wealth but so-called "road agents" as well. Yet strangely enough it was not until 1877 that the outlaw first assumed the role of hero in the dime novel. It was at this time that the publishing house of Beadle and Adams commissioned Edward L. Wheeler, an experienced dime novelist, to write the initial number of the firm's new Half Dime Library. Wheeler responded with Deadwood Dick, the Prince of the Road; or, The Black Rider of the Black Hills. Released on October 15, 1877, the novel contains a striking description of the Western's first outlaw hero, a road

agent whose instant popularity was destined to stun even the publishers:

> He was a youth of an age somewhere between sixteen and twenty, trim and compactly built with a preponderance of muscular development and animal spirits; broad and deep chest, with square, iron-cast shoulders; limbs small yet like bars of steel, and with a grace of position in the saddle rarely equaled, he made a fine picture for an artist's brush or a poet's pen . . . .
>
> His form was clothed in a tight-fitting habit of buck-skin, which was colored a jetty black, and presented a striking contrast to anything one sees as a garment in the wild far West . . . . A broad black hat was slouched down over his eyes; he wore a thick black veil over the upper portion of his face, through the eyeholes of which there gleamed a pair of orbs of piercing intensity, and his hands, large and knotted, were hidden in a pair of kid gloves of light color.
>
> The "Black Rider" he might have been justly termed, for his thoroughbred steed was as black as coal, but we have not seen fit to call him such--his name is Deadwood Dick. . . .[108]

Intelligent, handsome, and chivalrous, Deadwood Dick was the subject of more than thirty novels penned by Wheeler in the next eight years. When the brilliant outlaw's career came to an abrupt end with Wheeler's death in 1885, profit-minded dime novelists created Deadwood Dick, Jr., a character whose exploits, differing only slightly from those of his namesake, enthralled readers for twenty years more.

While the popularity enjoyed by Deadwood Dick was swelling the coffers of the House of Beadle and Adams, other publishing houses capitalized on the growing appeal of the outlaw hero. Soon no respectable firm was without its own dashing road agent. Moreover, these outlaws were not exclusively the products of imagination; in the desperate search for new material, dime novelists often turned to historical accounts of the lives of actual Western badmen, a practice which disturbed a small but influential number of citizens who denounced the trend as a glorification of lawlessness. Beadle and Adams heeded the demands of moralists by prohibiting its staff of authors from writing stories which dealt with actual outlaws, but the policy soon proved to be more professed than real.[109] Other firms, particularly those of Frank Tousey and Street & Smith, ignored the public furor altogether, releasing novel after novel that sensationalized the notorious careers of such desperadoes as Jesse and Frank James, the Younger brothers, the Daltons, Rube Burrows, Harry Tracy, Tiburcio Vasquez, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Hank Starr, and other lesser known bandits.[110] When, in 1883, the Postmaster General threatened Frank Tousey with the loss

of second-class postal privileges unless he withdrew some of the more lurid outlaw stories from the market, Tousey cut seventy-seven titles from his Wide Awake Library. Still, as Government vigilance waned, these same stories were re-issued under different titles, and the flow of outlaw tales resumed.[111] By the 1890s, one series which printed a high percentage of outlaw stories, Street & Smith's Log Cabin Library, boasted a weekly circulation of 25,000 to 30,000 copies, and it is likely that other series were equally popular.[112] In fact, outlaw stories continued to be so profitable that, in 1901, both Tousey and Street & Smith inaugurated separate series devoted solely to the exploits of the James brothers. In all, 277 novels appeared in Tousey's James Boys Weekly and Street & Smith's Jesse James Stories before 1903, when, faced with renewed pressure from both Government and public, the two firms reached a mutual agreement to discontinue the publication of all stories dealing with outlaws.[113]

Although a number of factors eventually conspired to bring an end to the outlaw's inglorious career in the dime novel, the popularity he enjoyed for a period of three decades was nothing short of phenomenal. To some extent

this popularity can be explained by his archetypal identity. Rogues and bandits have exerted considerable appeal in all ages and all cultures, and one might argue convincingly that the outlaw, moreso than any other Western hero, represents a projection of human concerns more universal than uniquely American in nature. Certainly this universality is undeniable, and it would prove an easy task to trace the bloodline of the Western outlaw back to the numerous devil-may-care European highwaymen--such men as Robin Hood, Claude Duval, Dick Turpin, Sixteen String Jack, or Tom King--who preceded him in the dime novel and who no doubt influenced his development.[114]

But while the Western outlaw is in one sense a reincarnated archetype, he is in another sense the unique product of a specific cultural context--a cultural context which, naturally enough, fostered the development of those hero types most responsive to its own social imperatives and psychological preoccupations. Like other versions of the Western hero, the outlaw responded to three deep seated cultural conflicts prevalent in the United States during the last half of the nineteenth century: the increasing polarization of society and its concommitant class

antagonism; the apparent moral decline of the nation; and, the growing awareness of an unsettling disparity between that ideal justice which ought to prevail in the application of law and that lesser justice which, in fact, did prevail.

In the manner in which he responded to the first two of these cultural conflicts, the outlaw hero was little different from the backwoodsman, the plainsman, or the cowboy. Like them, he was a man whose natural nobility--evident in every thought, look, and gesture--testified to the inequity of a social hierarchy founded upon artificial distinctions of birth and wealth. Moreover, he was an unassailably virtuous man whose superhuman efforts as the champion of good reassured readers that the growing forces of evil would, in the end, be defeated. In this manner, too, he resembled other Western heroes. Yet the outlaw's mode of response to the popular antipathy toward law and the legal system differed markedly from that of the backwoodsman, the plainsman, and the cowboy.

As a lawbreaker, the outlaw was a unique figure whose characterization posed a singular problem for dime novelists. While previous Western heroes had either acted

in the absence of law or, on occasion, bypassed legal formalities in an attempt to exact a more nearly perfect justice than that which an imperfect legal system could ever hope to realize, never before had a Western hero openly opposed the law; never before had a Western hero reacted against societal restraint so violently as to waylay stages and rob banks. How then might this new and virulent strain of rebelliousness be reconciled with the hero's traditional virtue? And how might the outlaw hero be differentiated from that mob of ordinary badmen who, in league with the forces of evil, also opposed the law?

Dime novelists attacked the problem in two ways. First, they masked the bandit hero's questionable behavior with an impenetrable veneer of respectability, always emphasizing his social polish, courtly manners, and chivalrous conduct toward friend and foe alike, particularly women. Second, and more importantly, they provided him with a justification for his rebelliousness. Though his heart was as true as steel, they explained, he had been unjustly persecuted and driven outside the law. Thereafter, a good but dangerously embittered man, he lived solely for revenge.

Once instituted, the theme of persecution and justifiable revenge rapidly assumed the nature of a formal characterizational device in the outlaw story. Indeed, so pervasive did it become, and so familiar to readers, that authors merely needed to refer to "a thin smile" or "eyes glowing like coals" in order to supply all necessary character motivation. Of genuine significance, however, is the manner in which dime novelists tailored the timeworn theme of persecution and revenge to their own cultural context, consciously transforming it into a narrative convention which enabled them to instill in the outlaw hero that quality most responsible for his appeal--the violent but justifiable rejection of all forms of restraint, especially the law. The genesis of conventional persecution and revenge may best be traced in the saga of Deadwood Dick.

One of the more prolific writers on the staff of Beadle and Adams was a flamboyant Philadelphian who wore a Stetson hat, saluted strangers as "Pard," and billed himself "Edward L. Wheeler. Sensational Novelist."[115] Acquaintances thought Wheeler somewhat odd, but no one could dispute his knowledge of the writing business, for it was his pen that produced the most popular outlaw hero of the

age: Deadwood Dick, the Black Rider of the Black Hills. Galloping through a series of adventures in more than thirty novels, the dashing Prince of the Road embodies all of the attributes of preceding Western heroes. A deadly shot and skilled equestrian, a master in the art of disguise, he cleverly evades pursuit or tracks down villains--tasks facilitated by a guaranteed income of five thousand dollars a year from his own gold mine. Forever young, handsome, and chivalrous, Deadwood Dick brings a blush to the cheeks of the beautiful and yearning women who abound in the novels; usually he resists their awkward advances, but he does marry three times and father two children. Each time, however, his wife's unfaithfulness or death shatters his domestic bliss, banishing him once again to a rootless life roaming the hills with his two valiant sidekicks, Calamity Jane and Old Avalanche, the Indian fighter.

In the first novel of the series, Deadwood Dick, the Prince of the Road; or, The Black Rider of the Black Hills, Wheeler begins to define the outlaw hero in terms of persecution and revenge, a theme he would return to in later novels, consciously developing and refining it as a

narrative convention. When first introduced to the reader, Deadwood Dick is already a road agent. Though he spends considerable time eluding those who would claim the price on his head, he is actually in hot pursuit of Alexander and Clarence Filmore, two crafty malefactors who, we are given to understand, figure prominently in the outlaw's mysterious past. As the novel nears its conclusion, Deadwood Dick captures the villains and spirits them off to his mountain stronghold. Preparations are made for a hanging, and Dick's loyal followers only await a signal from their captain before hoisting the two Filmores into eternity. But that signal is long in coming, for the outlaw chieftain must first justify the deed to all present, including the reader. Flinging aside his black mask and addressing the crowd, Deadwood Dick reveals that his real name is Edward Harris; an orphan, he had been taken in and raised by the kindly Harris family. But this home, too, was soon denied to him, for the scheming Filmores successfully managed the "accidental" deaths of his foster parents. Then, as executor of the Harris estate, the elder Filmore swindled Edward and his lovely sister out of their share of the family wealth. Moreover, he foully mistreated them. "Finding that this

kind of life was unbearable," the outlaw explains, "I appealed to our neighbors and even the courts for protection, but my enemy was a man of great influence, and after many vain attempts, I found that I could not obtain a hearing; that nothing remained for me to do but to fight my own way. And I did fight it." Taking his sister with him, Deadwood Dick continues, he escaped from the Filmores, but not until he had first gone to his father's safe and "purloined a sum of money sufficient to defray our expenses." Though the money was rightfully his, its theft branded him a criminal in the eyes of the law. As a result, the outlaw concludes, "The Hills have been my haunt ever since . . . . Now, I am inclined to be merciful to only those who have been merciful to me . . . . Boys, string 'em up!"[116]

Insofar as it is embodied in the plot of this, the first of the Deadwood Dick stories, the theme of persecution and revenge manifests itself primarily through a relationship between individuals: the Filmores persecute Deadwood Dick and he takes revenge upon them. But the theme also has an obvious social dimension in that Deadwood Dick's justification for taking the law into his own hands rests on society's refusal to take a stand against the social evil

which the Filmores represent. Were it not for the unresponsiveness of the legal system and the inaction of the public, Deadwood Dick contends, he would not have been forced to act on his own. And had he not been forced to act on his own he would not have become involved in that chain of events which ultimately deprived him of his rightful place in the community. Through a kind of emotional transference, then, Deadwood Dick comes to resent not merely those villainous individuals who actually precipitated his problems but the whole of society as well.

This anti-social sentiment assumes a much wider scope in subsequent Deadwood Dick novels, largely as a result of a significant refinement made by Wheeler in the manner in which he implemented conventional persecution and revenge. Whereas he had instituted the convention in the original Deadwood Dick story primarily to justify Deadwood Dick's attack upon specific individuals, he utilized it in later novels to create stock situations which would afford the outlaw an opportunity to justifiably attack society in general. Usually Wheeler employed one or the other of two situations, each of which placed society in the role of oppressor and Deadwood Dick in the role of

misunderstood defender of Virtue. In the first, Deadwood Dick attempts to aid a party in distress but finds himself repeatedly hampered by an ignorant populace. This, of course, provokes the outlaw's wrath. In the second situation, Deadwood Dick renounces his life on the road and strives to become a law-abiding member of the community; invariably, however, he is persecuted by an unforgiving public and driven back into the hills where he broods over his unjust treatment and swears vengeance.

This latter situation begins to take shape in the fourth of the Deadwood Dick stories, Wild Ivan, the Boy Claude Duval; or, The Brotherhood of Death. Disheartened by the disloyalty of his wife and his band of men, Deadwood Dick announces his intention to reform. It is, to say the least, an ominous announcement, for it is succeeded by a stern warning which betrays the outlaw's suspicions in regard to the public: "If they will let me alone, I pledge my word--and God knows I never yet willingly broke it--that I will leave them alone--them, the people. But if they strike me on account of the past, I will strike them back--to the death!"[117]

Deadwood Dick's mistrust proves to be well-founded. In the following novel, The Phantom Miner; or, Deadwood Dick's Bonanza. A Tale of the Great Silver-Land of Idaho, the citizens of the mining town of Eureka spurn the reformed outlaw's offer "to lead an honest existence, and be a citizen among you." The sheriff, "a reckless fellow, whose previous good luck had made him vain," makes a foolhardy attempt to capture the notorious Prince of the Road, and the ex-outlaw responds by gunning him down with a single shot. Later, when questioned by the town's newly appointed sheriff, Deadwood Dick attributes the incident to the former sheriff's "rash hotheadedness." The new sheriff sternly remarks, "You say so because you recognize no law, young man," whereupon Deadwood Dick appeals to the lawman's innate sense of justice, explaining: "No more I don't. But didn't I offer to make amends, and become an honest, loyal citizen, if the people of Eureka would accept of me? Yes, you know I did, and they chose my hate rather than my friendship. They shall have all they want of it." Seeing justice in this argument, the sheriff expresses his willingness to help. But the noble outlaw has his pride: "I ask no one to fight my battles . . . . All my life I have

had to depend upon my own muscle. I can fight the battle on alone."[118] And he does just that; persecuted by a public both unable to discern true virtue and unwilling to forgive, Deadwood Dick has no choice but to remain an outlaw.

By depicting Deadwood Dick's encounters with society in terms of conventional persecution and revenge, Wheeler gained two artistic advantages. First, it allowed him to employ the community as a foil against which to define in the noble outlaw an essential trait common to all Western heroes: namely, that he is a man possessed of superior powers of moral perception.[119] Inasmuch as the Western hero is able to detect the presence of evil when the general public is not, he takes it upon himself to protect the community by acting swiftly--even if this entails subverting those social and legal codes which the public holds most dear. Unlike other Western heroes, however, the outlaw hero does not merely subvert these codes; he violates them outright, and since the public remains unaware of the need for prompt and decisive action it inevitably misinterprets such violations. Thus, the outlaw hero incurs the animosity of the very community he is

striving to protect--a bitter irony which, in turn transforms his previously latent disdain for the credulous public into overt enmity. By depicting Deadwood Dick's encounters with society in terms of conventional persecution and revenge, then, Wheeler dramatized that tension which exists between the alienated individual and the community, between insight and credulity, and between morality and legality. It is from this tension that the central ambivalence of the outlaw hero arises; he is at the same time a paragon of virtue and a confirmed rebel, a public servant and an expendable martyr.

A second advantage stemmed from Wheeler's use of conventional persecution and revenge. Deadwood Dick's banishment from the community affords him an opportunity to vent his righteous indignation in the form of bitter social criticism. Throughout the Deadwood Dick saga, the outlaw's attacks focus essentially upon the same three interrelated issues which he initially raised in his justification for lynching the Filmores: first, the stolidity of a citizenry that either cannot or will not distinguish between good and evil and which, through its inaction, consequently furthers the spread of evil; second, the iniquity

of a social system which sanctions the exploitation of the common man by an unscrupulous ruling class; and, finally, the fundamental injustice of a legal system which, while it permits those of wealth and influence to perpetrate the most heinous crimes, at the same time severely punishes the common man for the least indiscretion.

The artistic advantages which Wheeler gained by defining the outlaw's relationship to the community in terms of conventional persecution and revenge become apparent in two consecutive stories which relate Deadwood Dick's encounters with the citizens of the bustling boom town of Leadville, Colorado. In each of these tales, Deadwood Dick is portrayed as both a misunderstood protector of the people and an outspoken social critic. In Deadwood Dick in Leadville; or, A Strange Stroke for Liberty, the outlaw holds up a stage but takes great pains to assure the passengers that he means them no harm: "These mountain districts are infested with ruffianly bands of road-agents and outlaws, who prey not only upon one another, but upon all who come within their reach, often resorting to the most fiendish torture to extort money. It does me proud to claim that Deadwood Dick and his followers are in no way allied to

such gangs." Instead, maintains the outlaw chief, he is "a protective agent for the people." Though he waylays stages and deprives the passengers of their money, he does so only to prevent the unscrupulous Captain Hawk from getting his hands on it when he halts the stage farther down the road. After the passengers have arrived safely in Leadville, Deadwood Dick explains, he will see to it that their money is returned. In spite of this valuable public service, however, Deadwood Dick and his men are ostracized by a society which refuses to make a distinction between good and bad outlaws. Still, it is of little consequence, notes the outlaw proudly: "Let the world regard us as it will--we care not. We are a band, to a man, who hate the world and everything worldly . . . ." And as for the citizens themselves, he continues, unable to repress a bitter laugh: "The people--well! . . . They would smite me down, were I to do them each and every one a blessing. They have a grudge against me which only my death can appease."[120]

Though Deadwood Dick is persecuted by a community which fails to recognize that he is acting in its best interest, it is nevertheless apparent that some such individual action is necessary. Lamentably, Leadville's legal

system is clearly unresponsive to the needs of the people--so much so, in fact, that a number of citizens have, "in defiance of the law, set themselves up as adjusters of their own wrongs . . . . Almost to a spirit of insubordination has this thing amounted to among those who plead for justice without receiving it, and hence came the organization known as the Regulators and Adjusters, making Leadville the possessor of two laws--a law of the State and a law of the people."[121]

In essence, the remainder of the novel contrasts the relative ineffectiveness of each of these forms of law. On the one hand, the law of the State is plainly inept. When Noel Farnsworth complains to the town sheriff that his sister has been kidnapped, the genial but incapable lawman throws up his hands in resignation. After a moment's hesitation, he feebly suggests that Farnsworth offer an ample reward in hopes that his sister will be returned unharmed. Then too, Ralph Gardner, the miscreant who has engineered the kidnapping, repeatedly uses his influence as "one of the richest men in Leadville" to bend the law in his favor, even invoking it in his defense when caught cheating at cards. And on still another occasion, Beautiful Bill, an inaptly

named town bully who refers to himself as "a respected and law abidin' citizen," harasses the cowed citizenry. But the officers of the law are afraid to oppose him, so "Justice let him alone." On the other hand, the law of the people is not without its failings either. Too many of Leadville's citizens glory "in taking human life, whether in self-defense, in justice, or cold-handed." Blinded by mob psychology, manipulated by those "ruffianly and villainous characters . . . who literally 'boss' the town," the enraged populace is not only ineffective but potentially dangerous as well. At last, in a revealing scene which follows the capture of the notorious road agent Captain Hawk, the two alternative forms of law come into direct conflict:

> An instant trial was ordered by the people, and though the sheriff should have waited the slow motion of the law, by rights, he could not resist without running the risk of having his own life taken by the mob . . . . Accordingly a jury was selected, and the case was brought up, with a prominent lawyer as prosecutor . . . . A young pettifogger undertook the defense, but after he had spoken a few words, the crowd grew so excited, and revolvers were displayed in such profusion, that he wisely took a seat. A verdict of 'guilty' soon followed--the jury not leaving their seats.[122]

On the following morning, just as the sun edges up over the horizon, Captain Hawk is hanged.

Against this backdrop of confusion, coercion, and iniquity, Deadwood Dick stands out as a cool and uncorruptible enforcer of true justice. Guided solely by his own infallible sense of right and wrong, unrestricted by legal impedimenta, he is the defender of unarmed virtue, the champion of the downtrodden, and yet he is not free; he is an exile, a lonely and homeless man untiringly persecuted by the very community for whom he fights. Confiding to Calamity Jane his grim conviction that the "justice grabbers . . . will never get over their antipathy toward me, until they see me dangling in mid-air beneath a tree-limb," Deadwood Dick resolves to surrender to the people and pay his debt to society. However, he has an ulterior motive, and therefore extracts from Calamity Jane a promise that she will cut him down immediately after he is hanged and, if possible, resuscitate him. "After that," he explains, "I am not afraid of them, for they cannot hang a man but once, and that satisfies the law for all previous misdemeanors. I have but to hang, and then I can laugh at them all, for I shall be a free man--free to go where, or do whatsoever I choose." Accordingly, Deadwood Dick rides into Leadville and surrenders himself to mob justice. Permitted a few last words before being hanged, the Prince of the Road defends his notorious past

in such a way as to implicitly contrast the true justice he has enforced with that lesser justice exacted by the law:

> Some of you may say that my life as a road-agent has been highly criminal. I don't agree with you on that score, for where I have tapped you, I have done so in a gentlemanly manner, and have, as a rule, circulated the spoils among poor and needy families . . . . I have aided a few ruffianly characters in getting a grand send-off, to be sure, but they were the worst of human brutes, and feared neither God nor man, and whose lives were a curse to the country and a discredit to the name of man . . . . Therefore, in balancing my accounts, I have not much to regret. But the law has seen fit to regard me as a ferocious criminal, and not wishing to offend the law--the great, majestic law--I do deliver myself up to be lynched from the nearest limb of the nearest tree.[123]

Moments later, "in the name of the law," Deadwood Dick makes his exit at the end of a rope.

It proved to be a brief exit, however, and when Deadwood Dick appeared in the next number of Beadle's Half Dime Library he was eminently free. As he explained in a later novel, "while I hung and paid my debt to nature and justice, I came back to life a free man whom no law in the universe could molest for past offenses."[124]

Yet his days of freedom were numbered. Resurrecting his hero in Deadwood Dick's Device; or, The Sign of the Double Cross, Wheeler again constructed his story in terms

of conventional persecution and revenge. The plot involves Deadwood Dick's efforts to maintain ownership of a mine which he has inherited upon the death of a friendly miner. The Howells, the miner's avaricious family, resent Deadwood Dick's acquisition of the property and use all of their vast wealth and power to wrest it from him. It is clearly a class struggle, for Wheeler rather intrusively describes the Howells as "a leading family, both financially and socially--for Leadville, mind you, has its social world as well as its Eastern sister cities, formed out of that class whom fortune has smiled upon. And surrounded by a great superfluity of style, pomp and splendor, they set themselves up as the 'superior class,' ye gods!"[125] Using their influence, the Howells prejudice the citizens against Deadwood Dick, and soon the servile sheriff makes a rash attempt to arrest him. Cornered, his vehement protest that he is "lawfully a free man" ignored, Deadwood Dick regretfully guns down the sheriff's men and effects his escape--but not before he utters a fearful proclamation: "To-night I have been forced again into crime, and am an outlaw, by the decree of the people. Let them look out, for I will not stop now, but they shall learn to fear my name as an omen of death."[126]

Characteristically, Deadwood Dick's oath of vengeance is justified on the grounds that he has been unjustly persecuted by a society which, lacking his own "keen sense of perception," too often honors its enemies and maligns its benefactors. As he declares in a rare moment of self-revelation:

> I despise a man who is proud of himself, his name, or any worldly possession. No! I am not proud of the name of Deadwood Dick--I should be a contemptible sinner were I. It is not a name to be proud of, for there are many stains upon it, never to be washed out; yet, outlaw, road-agent, dare-devil though I have been, and am now, I have been driven on, step by step, by a people who have no mercy--who refuse to let me alone, after I had hanged and thus paid the penalty of crime. So that, though my future prospects may not be pleasant to reflect upon, I have the consolation of knowing that no man was ever paid nature's debt by my agency, who was not at heart a ruffian and villain, and whose death was not a relief to the community, and a favor to every honest man.[127]

And again, when asked if he must always live such a "wild, strange life," the noble outlaw fiercely replies, "Always! . . . I am an outcast, and as such I have only to remain. Society or the public at large refuse to receive me. They are everlasting enemies . . . . They curse me, and drive me about, and I have no choice except between this life and death." Reflecting upon Deadwood Dick's blighted life,

Old Avalanche mutters, "He's bin treated like as ef he war sum dishonorable coyote, an' ef he ain't got cause fer revenge, I don't know myself."[128] Calamity Jane heartily agrees, and together they join Deadwood Dick in a campaign of terror against the citizens of Leadville.

Throughout the remainder of the Deadwood Dick saga, Wheeler again and again utilized conventional persecution and revenge as a means of creating stock situations which afforded the invincible Prince of the Road an opportunity to justifiably defy the law in order to defend the downtrodden and, in the process, bring swift justice to a society in which affluent evil-doers further their own ends by duping the public and manipulating the hopelessly ineffective legal system. In Deadwood Dick on Deck; or, Calamity Jane, the Heroine of Whoop-Up. A Story of Dakota, the outlaw hero comes to the aid of an honest miner who feels "that very few poor men are so poor but what they can stand firm for their rights"; if there were more men in the country like him, we are told, "there would, undoubtedly, be a change for the better, when every man would, in a greater or lesser degree, have an independence, and not be ground down under the heel of the master of money."[129] In

Deadwood Dick of Deadwood; or, The Picked Party, the outlaw chief cooperates with a detective to topple the business empire of a "purse-proud aristocrat" who lives by the maxim that "wealth is omnipotent." For his efforts, however, Deadwood Dick is sentenced to death by a drunken judge, and it is only because of Calamity Jane's quick thinking that he manages to escape.[130] On another occasion, while defending the rights of a peaceful Crow Indian whose lands have been usurped in Deadwood Dick's Claim; or, The Fairy Face of Faro Flats, the noble outlaw threatens to kill Philander Pilgrim, the local attorney and editor of the town newspaper. "A man is liable to arrest, sir, for uttering a threat!" exclaims the attorney. "Good Blackstone," the outlaw chuckles, "but it don't answer here. If you have ever heard of me you will know that I am the man who has found it right, necessary and convenient to defy arrest."[131] Always defiant, the prince of outlaws continues to lead the forces of good into battle against evil until, in Deadwood Dick's Dust; or, The Chained Hand. A Strange Story of the Mines, Being the 35th and Ending Number of the Great 'Deadwood Dick' Series, he is killed while successfully destroying a town whose citizens have appropriated his own tract

of land and lynched Calamity Jane.[132] Thus, ironically, the valiant hero who has spent his life defending the rights of others in the end loses it in defense of his own.

During the eight years that Wheeler concentrated his efforts primarily on the Deadwood Dick series, he penned a number of other novels which also illustrate his awareness of the fact that the noble outlaw's source of popular appeal lay in his justifiable rebellion against social injustice. In these tales Wheeler consistently implemented the narrative convention of persecution and revenge to explain his hero's death as a social being and rebirth as a free individual immune to law. Fred Brayton, formerly a detective, and hero of A No. 1, the Dashing Toll-Taker; or, the Schoolmarm o' Sassafras, takes to the road as a result of a false conviction of murder.[133] In Solid Sam, The Boy Road-Agent; or, The Branded Brows. A Tale of Wild Wyoming, Solid Sam turns to a life of crime because a group of ruffians has appropriated his gold mine. Though he plans to waylay them individually and collect the gold which is rightfully his, he finds this impossible and instead demands that the citizens of Placer City restore his gold and pay him protection money. When they refuse, the outlaw and his men

"justifiably" reduce the town to a "series of heaps of smoking ashes and charred embers, to tell of the vengeance of Solid Sam."[134] One of the clearest examples of the noble outlaw's vindication occurs in Apollo Bill, the Trail Tornade; or, Rowdy Kate from Right-Bower. A Story of the Mines. Approaching the problem laterally, Wheeler explains that "circumstances have been chronicled of a brave and gallant man, with a spice of nobility in his heart, who has taken to the profession of stage robbery, more on account of some secret life trouble, than taste for the business itself." Soon Wheeler reveals the "secret life trouble" that has caused law abiding citizen Bill Blake to be reborn as the dashing Apollo Bill. His home and family, it seems, were destroyed by a roving band of border ruffians. Swearing an oath of vengeance, Blake set out to track down the murderers; in the process, however, he accidentally shot and killed an innocent man. Pursued thereafter by the untiring "minions of the law . . . hunted down to the last resort, he rallied around him a band of fellows and took to the mountains. They were discovered in their first retreat and branded road-agents ere they had earned the right to such a calling. Assailed by despondency and anger at

this injustice, Apollo Bill fled to this fastness and organized his men into what is known as Apollo Bill's road-agents."[135] Like so many other fictional outlaws, Apollo Bill has been falsely accused by a society ignorant of the nature of true justice; he is given no choice but to rebel.

On the basis of these tales and those in the Deadwood Dick saga, it is possible to outline the structure of persecution and revenge as a narrative convention employed by dime novelists to create popular outlaw heroes. Essentially, it may be divided into three separate phases. In the first, a good man unjustly persecuted by one or more evil individuals discovers that the legal system can neither protect him nor punish his oppressors--a fact usually attributed to the villain's ability to use wealth and influence either to manipulate the law itself or to corrupt those involved in the slow and complex judicial process. On occasion, though, the hero simply refuses to entrust his fate to a jury composed of citizens who lack his own moral insight. In the second phase, the hero undertakes individual action to avenge his wrongs but, through a fatal misstep, breaks the law and becomes a social outcast. In some instances, the hero does not himself break the law;

rather, he is framed by the villain. In the final phase, the outlaw's hatred for the evil individuals who initially persecuted him changes to hatred for society in general. This hatred invariably finds expression in violent action against the community. Implicit at all times, however, is the fundamental assumption that such chastisement is merely part of the hero's paternalistic duty as protector of the people and enforcer of true justice.

Although formulated as a means of fashioning fictional outlaws, conventional persecution and revenge also played a profound role in the development and popularization of legends about actual Western badmen. Seizing upon those few facts which were germane to the convention, and shamelessly altering those that were not, dime novelists portrayed famous outlaws of the West as victims of an oppressive social system. Nowhere is this process more conspicuous than in the development of the legend surrounding California's most celebrated bandit--Joaquin Murieta.

When a posse of rangers under the command of Captain Harry Love rode into the city of Sacramento in the middle of July, 1853, they carried with them two grotesque specimens preserved in spirits: the hand of Manuel Garcia, alias

"Three-Fingered Jack," and the head of Joaquin Murieta. To this day it remains a subject of debate whether or not the head was in reality Murieta's, but it is likely that it was not. Indeed, no one at the time could even give a reliable description of the Mexican bandit who, it was claimed, was responsible for a rash of robberies and killings across the entire state of California. This is not surprising, for at least five different Joaquins actually operated in the area. Yet so much mystery surrounded the identities of these men that any crime committed by a Mexican was automatically assumed to be the work of a single ubiquitous desperado named "Joaquin." And so, when Harry Love and his men at last rode into town with a severed head and claimed the reward, it was widely considered a fait accompli: the notorious "Joaquin" was dead.[136]

In 1854, John Rollin "Yellow Bird" Ridge, a part-Cherokee journalist and poet, published a slim volume entitled The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta, The Celebrated California Bandit.[137] Save for a few details about the Love expedition, Ridge's narrative is sheer fabrication. It does, however, introduce an aspect of the Murieta story which dime novelists later found highly

useful. As a young man in California, Ridge claims, Murieta became the victim of anti-Mexican sentiment. American miners ravished his lovely wife Rosita, hanged his brother on a false charge of horse-stealing, and tied Joaquin himself to a tree and whipped him unmercifully. Swearing an oath of vengeance, Ridge declares, Murieta turned outlaw and spent the remainder of his life terrorizing the hated "Yankees."

For the most part, Ridge's tale went unnoticed. However, in 1859, an anonymous hack writer for the California Police Gazette pirated the Ridge narrative, made a few minor alterations, and published it serially as The Life of Joaquin Murieta, Brigand Chief of California. Released shortly thereafter under separate cover, this version refers to Murieta's wife as "Carmela" instead of Rosita, claims that she was murdered as well as ravished, and supplies Murieta with a later mistress, "Clarina."[138] This version enjoyed a much wider sale than the Ridge narrative, and was undoubtedly the source consulted by dime novelists.

In all, Joaquin Murieta figures in eight dime novels, seven of which were written by one man--Joseph E.

Badger, Jr., an experienced dime novelist in the employ of Beadle and Adams.[139] Embellishing the basic account of persecution and revenge that he found in the Police Gazette, Badger gradually incorporated in his own renditions of the Murieta legend those standardized components common to persecution and revenge as an established convention in the dime novel. As a result, these tales provide an object lesson in the creation of popular heroes; during a span of only eleven years, Badger successfully transformed a vicious outlaw into a noble victim of social injustice.

In The Man-Hunters; or, The Scourge of the Mines (1871), Badger introduces Murieta as a "famous and desperate highwayman, a demon incarnate." As such, he constitutes the worthy opposition for the novel's hero, Ned Payson, the roving miner. Though only a small portion of the story actually concerns the outlaw himself, Badger does considerably embellish the Murieta legend. Joaquin, he explains, has an exact double, a villain who goes by the name of Luis Cardoza. In the course of the story, Joaquin's mistress--here mistakenly called Clarissa rather than Clarine--runs off with Cardoza, but when the tale ends it is revealed that it was really Murieta himself who had left with the girl,

retiring from outlawry and settling down to a peaceful existence in Sonora. Remaining behind in his place, Joaquin's double assumed command of the outlaw gang. Thus, we are told, it was actually Cardoza rather than Murieta who was later killed by Harry Love's posse.[140] Despite this interesting addition to the legend, Badger makes no attempt whatsoever to justify Murieta's outlawry on grounds of persecution and revenge.

Seven years later, however, Badger again turned to the Murieta legend, this time beginning to define the outlaw in terms of conventional persecution and revenge. In Three-Fingered Jack, the Road-Agent of the Rockies; or, The Boy Miner of Hard Luck (1878), Murieta avenges an unjust whipping.[141] A subsequent novel, Big George, The Giant of the Gulch; or, The Five Outlaw Brothers (1880), takes place, strangely enough, four years after the outlaw met his end. Led by the grief-crazed Clarina, the remaining members of Murieta's band avenge their leader's death by hunting down and murdering each of the men who served with Harry Love on that fateful day when the outlaw breathed his last. Defending Murieta's life of crime, his faithful men explain that he "was outlawed, a price set upon his head. For what?

Because he sought revenge against those who had blackened his whole life--those who had robbed and flogged him; those who had hung his brother like a dog for another man's crime; those who had outraged and murdered his innocent wife. If he committed crime, if he stained his hands in blood, had he no excuse?"[142] A similar justification occurs in The Boy Pards; or, Dainty Lance Unmasks (1881). Though Murieta opposes the titular hero, Dainty Lance, he is "not all evil." Moreover, he is now "a model of manly grace and beauty," and his voice is "soft and musical as that of a woman."[143]

At this point, Badger apparently determined in earnest to canonize Murieta as a stereotyped dime novel outlaw hero, for his next effort, Joaquin, the Saddle King. A Romance of Murieta's First Fight (1881), assumes the classic structure of conventional persecution and revenge. Focusing on Murieta's youth, the tale pits Joaquin, a poor but naturally noble vaquero, against the rich and villainous Don Manuel Camplido, Joaquin's deadly rival for the hand of the enchanting Carmela Felix. In an attempt to discredit Murieta, the cunning Camplido first captures the noble hero and then hires a band of assassins to murder Carmela's father. Afterward, taunting his youthful prisoner, Camplido

reveals his vile plan to Joaquin in a speech which evinces the Western's implicit conviction that evil is too powerful for conventional law. All evidence left at the scene of the crime, Camplido declares, will point toward Joaquin as the guilty party. Then, when the outraged public becomes suitably incensed,

> I will deliver you up to justice. My witnesses are well trained, and tell a straightforward story. The threat and the plot are sworn to; you were recognized, despite your disguise . . . . They swear to this, I swear that I captured you red-handed. Your guilt is proven beyond the shadow of a doubt, and you are sentenced--of course to suffer death, but in just what shape I have not yet fully decided. If the trial takes place before a regular tribunal of law, you will be garroted. If tried by the lynch law of your loved Americans, then a hasty noose--either way a sure and shameful death!

Although Murieta escapes and eventually frustrates Camplido's villainy, the angry townspeople regard him as a "murderous outlaw." Unjustly condemned, deprived of his rightful place in the community, Murieta swears vengeance against Camplido: "If I can only find him--only meet him face to face on equal terms, with no one to interfere--I ask no more of fate."[144]

The struggle between Murieta and Camplido continues in Joaquin, The Terrible. The True History of the Three Bitter Blows that Changed an Honest Man to a Merciless Demon

(1881). In this tale Badger dramatizes incidents from the Ridge narrative but explains them in terms of his own melodramatic plot. It is Camplido, we are told, who whips Joaquin, who hangs Joaquin's brother Carlos on a trumped-up charge of horse-stealing, and who, at the head of a gang of rowdy miners, rapes and murders Carmela. Is it any wonder, Badger asks, that Murieta afterward embarked upon such a bloody career? "I am no apologist for crime . . . but I firmly believe that not one man out of a hundred, who really possessed the spirit of a man, would have turned out any better than he, provided they were forced to pass through the same fiery ordeal, and were as innocent of wrong as was Joaquin Murieta when the blows began to fall."[145]

At last, in Badger's final Murieta novel, The Pirate of the Placers; or, Joaquin's Death-Hunt (1882), the noble outlaw's festering hatred for Manuel Camplido changes to hatred for society itself. Resorting to the same technique Wheeler had employed in the Deadwood Dick saga, Badger implements conventional persecution and revenge to create a situation which affords Murieta an opportunity to justifiably attack society at large. In the tale which results,

Camplido characteristically uses his vast wealth to gain control of the town of Marysville. Disguising himself as a parson, he then prejudices the typically credulous public against Murieta, convincing the angry citizens to organize a Vigilance Committee to track down the outcast. Since the citizens have "thrown down the gauntlet," Joaquin has no choice but to respond; accordingly, he sets fire to the local gambling hall. Then, as a stiff wind sweeps the flames across the entire town, the audacious outlaw's voice rings defiantly in the night air: "Men of Marysville, this is the work of Joaquin Murieta! You set out to hunt him from the face of the earth--he shows you that he knows how to strike back! This is the first blow, but not the last by many!" Yet the last blow is soon to come, and with it the conclusion of Joaquin Murieta's exploits in the dime novel. Awakening one morning, the citizens of Marysville are greeted by a ghastly sight. A corpse hangs by the neck in front of City Hall; though badly mutilated, it is identified as Manuel Camplido. On its breast, pinned fast by a dagger driven in to the hilt, a scrawled note reads: "Died for Carmela."[146]

Joaquin Murieta was only one of the many actual badmen glorified in pulp fiction. The notorious James brothers of Missouri were similarly exalted. These desperate men--both Frank and Jesse, but especially the latter--were ideally suited as dime novel outlaw heroes. Legend had endowed them with perennial youth, dash, and charisma, and actual incidents in their lives corresponded to the conventional formula of persecution and revenge. Legend claimed, for example, that Jesse had been bound and savagely beaten by Yankee invaders during the Civil War. Furthermore, since the James brothers had ridden with Quantrill's guerrillas, they were reputedly excluded from the universal pardon extended at war's end, and thus forced into outlawry. And finally, in a documented incident, the boys' mother had been maimed and a younger brother killed when Pinkerton detectives attacked the James home in hopes of capturing the outlaw brothers. Yet despite this provocation, the James boys, legend asserted, merely robbed the rich in order to give to the poor.

Realizing the source of the James boys' appeal, dime novelists unerringly capitalized on it in hundreds of stories utilizing conventional persecution and revenge. To

cite only a single example, in The James Boys at Cracker Neck Jesse is generous and extremely courteous to the gentler sex. After waylaying a stagecoach and forcing the passengers to disembark, the blue-eyed and fearless "bandit king of America" refuses to rob a kindly old woman. Instead, he gives her one hundred dollars to aid her sick husband in Kansas City. Later, the "royal bandit" and his men find themselves trapped in an abandoned house surrounded by Sheriff Timberlake's posse. The situation grows desperate, but the bandits are ultimately rescued by Jesse's sweetheart, Zeralda Mimms, and "a party of the best citizens in the Cracker Neck neighborhood and some big officials from a distance who came to rescue Jesse James." Once the citizens have foiled the instruments of institutional law, they remove their disguises and reveal themselves to the celebrated outlaw brothers. Since one of the rescuers is Jesse's "dear old major" and another is an "ex-Confederate colonel," the reader is reminded that the lawless acts of the James boys are justifiable in light of injustices perpetrated upon them in the past.[147]

It is nearly impossible to overestimate the importance of conventional persecution and revenge as a means

of justifying the outlaw's rebellion against established social and legal codes. It was this factor, not merely his dashing manner, that established the outlaw's popularity. For although readers were themselves familiar enough with social and legal injustice to understand and identify with a man whom society had driven into rebellion, they could not condone unprovoked lawlessness.

This point is illustrated by Billy the Kid's failure to attain heroic status in the dime novel. Nearly all dime novels which exploited the Kid's career neglected to explain his lawlessness in terms of conventional persecution and revenge.[148] As a result, he remains a consummate villain. In Don Jenardo's The True Life of Billy the Kid, he is "a fiend incarnate," a "young monster" with a "cold, wicked smile" and "small basilisk eyes" that gleam "like the orbs of a serpent."[149] In J. C. Cowdrick's Silver-Mask, The Man of Mystery; or, The Cross of the Golden Keys, the Kid is "a common cut-throat."[150] And in Francis W. Doughty's Old King Brady and 'Billy the Kid'; or, The Great Detective's Chase, he is "the bloodthirstiest little cowpuncher what ever straddled a horse."[151]

Only a single dime novel, Edmund Fable's Billy the Kid, The New Mexico Outlaw; or, The Bold Bandit of the West, justified the outlaw's behavior. In this story Billy commences his life of crime only after he has been repeatedly provoked. Robbed by a "syren" in Silver City, unjustly accused of a robbery and thrown into jail, the outlaw declares in a manner reminiscent of Deadwood Dick's earlier protests: "I have tried to do right . . . . Since I came to this country I have molested no man, and see where I am? Robbed of all my hard earnings, passing my time in this dingy prison, why should I strive any longer for that which in this country seems impossible? I'm done with it."[152] Escaping through the chimney, Billy embarks upon a life of crime. While this novel justified the Kid's lawlessness in terms of persecution and revenge, it was published in Denver and received minimal circulation. No doubt it was largely overlooked, and since other fictional accounts of the Kid failed to provide any justification for his lawlessness, he never achieved the popularity of other dime novel outlaw heroes. It was not until years later, when his exploits were fictionalized in full-length hardbound biographies, that his anti-social activities were rationalized. Only

then were readers able to identify with his revolt against social injustice, and only then was the Kid exalted as a popular hero.

Whether used to create fictional outlaws like Deadwood Dick, or implemented as a means of transforming actual Western badmen like Joaquin Murieta or the James boys into misunderstood rebels, the narrative convention of persecution and revenge enabled dime novelists to provide the American public with heroes who possessed a capacity for resolving in fantasy the otherwise insoluble cultural conflicts of the nineteenth century. In essence, the outlaw served at least two interrelated cultural needs. On the one hand, he was a projection of the widespread American preoccupation with the meaning and value of law. As a good man victimized by the unsettling disparity between that which was morally just and that which was strictly legal, the outlaw hero won a kind of immunity from restraint. Thereafter, guided solely by his own infallible sense of right and wrong, he could resolve the disparity between moral and civil law by taking swift and decisive individual action which insured the execution of true justice. On the other hand, the outlaw hero was a projection of the average

American's growing alienation in a modern society characterized by industrialism, materialism, and the suppression of individual freedoms by a rigid socioeconomic structure. Eminently free, the invincible outlaw hero was a man who would not, in Edward L. Wheeler's words, "be ground down under the heel of the master of money." Neither would he stand idly by in an age of apparent moral decline; inevitably, he punished the wicked and triumphed over evil. And if, like an angel of wrath from Revelation, he sometimes found it necessary to purify an entire society with thunder and pillars of fire, then this too was just.

The End of the Crimson Trail

The outlaw was the last stereotyped Western hero to flourish in the dime novel. For a character whose pulp career had been so thunderous, his end was ironically quiet. It came about in 1908 when Arthur Westbrook's Adventure Series--though originally billed as a library of outlaw biographies--printed as its forty-third number a tale entitled Jesse James' Fate; or, The End of the Crimson Trail, in which Jesse was tracked down and killed by fictional

detective Jeff Clayton.[153] The following number, Jeff Clayton's Lost Clue; or, The Mystery of the Wireless Murder, focused on the exploits of the dashing detective who, in company with Old Sleuth, thereafter replaced the outlaw as the hero of the series.[154] This abrupt change in the nature of the hero of the Adventure Series reflected a more pervasive change taking place in pulp fiction, for the Western hero did indeed meet his end at the hands of the detective. As early as 1880, dime novelists adept at penning detective stories as well as Westerns--writers like Edward L. Wheeler and Harry St. George Rathborne--had sent the gumshoe west in pursuit of lawbreakers. There he constituted a worthy opponent for crafty villains, and often, like the Western hero, resorted to operating outside the law in order to compensate for the inadequacies of formal justice.[155] Tracking down villains in the West, and later returning to the sin-ridden cities of the East, the detective soon rivalled the Western hero in popularity. Plainsman like Young Wild West maintained a wide audience as late as 1928, but new stereotypes of the Western hero failed to emerge. By 1890 the frontier had been closed. It would produce no more real-life heroes; its aura of

danger and excitement was but a glorious memory. The teeming city was fast becoming the modern wilderness, and the six-gun hero was trapped in an eternalized past.

The character who remained was a man whom Cooper would not have recognized. During the Western hero's long career in the dime novel, he had evolved from a humble but humorously crude backwoodsman into a polished and defiant social rebel. Gradually, the buckskin-garbed hunter of the pre-dime novel Western tradition had acquired the youth and refinement of the traditional hero of the romance. His virtue and natural nobility had become more obvious, and as he had lost his comic traits and escaped his lower class origin he had assumed a prominent place in the Western's love plot. Moreover, as a plainsman and later as a cowboy, he had gained chivalric attributes and a distinct flair for the theatrical. Yet his stylized behavior had served increasingly to compensate for that streak of savagery and rebelliousness which had always been a distinct aspect of his character. It was this violent anti-social behavior which, in the end, had driven him outside the law.

The changes in the character of the Western hero were, of course, governed by dynamics functioning both

within and upon the narrative formula. The intrinsic exigencies of the Western's love plot, for example, in some measure prompted the hero's abandonment of comic traits and his corresponding acquisition of social polish. Extrinsic economic factors--publicity campaigns promoting Buffalo Bill's theatrical career, or the Government suppression of outlaw stories--likewise influenced the nature of the Western hero. Yet the most profound changes may doubtless be attributed to the dominant sociological imperatives and psychological preoccupations of the age. In response to the widespread American longing for a simpler world where men were self-reliant, where individual achievement was rewarded, and where social status was determined by intrinsic merit rather than by artificial distinctions of birth and wealth, the Western hero gradually developed a visible air of refinement which complemented his natural nobility and thus enabled him to transcend ordinary class limitations. Equally comfortable in the wilderness or the drawing room, he repeatedly proved himself superior as a human being to the self-satisfied plutocrats who sought to oppress him. In response to the popular fears of moral decline, the Western hero developed acute powers of moral

perception which enabled him to ferret out evil and destroy it, even when this meant a desperate and dangerous struggle against public ignorance and apathy. Finally, in response to popular discontent with regard to the inherent inequities of institutional law, the Western hero increasingly displayed a willingness to subvert the law--or violate it outright--in order to exact true justice.

Obvious relationships, then, exist between the character traits developed by the Western hero and the cultural conflicts prevalent in the society which produced him. It is important to recognize, however, that these relationships were not simply direct and causal. Nor can a specific character trait be explained exclusively in terms of a single cultural conflict, though in the instances cited above it is particularly tempting and nearly justifiable to do so. The traits manifested by the Western hero instead resulted from the complex interplay of several aesthetic and socio-psychological dynamics--dynamics which remain in the last analysis inextricably interwoven.

There is, however, apparent in the changes in the nature of the Western hero an overall trend toward the development of a stereotyped character whose attributes

would in every respect accord with his aesthetic and socio-psychological functions in the narrative formula. The development of a youthful, naturally noble and self-reliant hero provided the Western a protagonist ideally suited to his aesthetic functions in the narrative. Yet from its inception the Western had been more than a vehicle for entertainment. It had been a means of testing accepted values and exploring alternative life styles. Set on the dividing line between wilderness and civilization, juxtaposing the antithetical values implicit in each, the Western functioned through a kind of dialectic to posit an ideal world--a world which synthesized the positive qualities and eschewed the negative qualities of both extremes, wilderness and civilization. It is this function of the Western which initially determined the nature of the Western hero in Cooper's novels and which ultimately dictated the traits he would acquire in the dime novel. As he evolved through successive dime novel incarnations, the prototype Western hero provided by Cooper was progressively adapted to the popular concept of the ideal man--ideal, that is, according to the standards of the predominantly lower class eastern audience. He thus became a hybrid character who reconciled the popularly cherished

values peculiar to the wilderness West with those peculiar to the civilized East, but who yet espoused none of the unpopular values appurtenant to either. Accordingly, the boorishness which had been initially an adjunct of the hero's wilderness life style was systematically refined out of existence and supplanted by the social polish and cultivated sensibility which civilization alone could produce. At the same time, however, the Western hero rejected the unjust social and legal restraints characteristic to the present, imperfect state of civilization, and displayed instead the freedom and self-reliance fostered by life in the wilderness. He thus synthesized the best of both worlds: he manifested the highest attributes of man in a civilized state, yet he retained the absolute freedom of man in a primitive state of nature. Mediating between the antipodal realms of wilderness West and civilized East, transcending their respective limitations and embodying the principal attributes of each, the Western hero blazed a trail to the better, future world envisioned in the dreams and prayers of man.

IV

THE QUEST FOR AN IDEAL WORLD:

THE DIME NOVEL WESTERN PLOT

> Let the poet and the novelist pour their light over these themes. We know them to be full of moral and romantic interest; for the few which the historian has preserved, even when contemplated by his pale and sober lamp, quicken the pulses of the blood, thrill us with an intenser admiration of virtue, while they reveal hidden and mighty energies of the human soul.
>
> --The Western Monthly Magazine, 1833

If one were to apply to the dime novel Cooper's oft-noted dictum that "On the human imagination, events produce the effects of time," one might expect to grow old in the course of reading a single dime novel, for events in these early Westerns seldom allow the reader time to pause and reflect.[1] In Buffalo Bill's Leap for Life; or, The White Death of Beaver Wash, for instance, the extraordinary plainsman escapes from a fort attacked by a thousand Indians, fights two jaguars and a grizzly bear, survives an enormous explosion, and emerges unscathed from a second Indian attack --all within the space of four pages.[2] While this narrative is more exaggerated than most, it is not exactly atypical.

Often the plot of the dime novel seems nothing more than a fast-paced, loosely-connected sequence of fistfights, gunfights, and hairbreadth escapes strung out interminably and tied together by a happy ending. Certainly the typical plot of the dime novel is both implausible and complicated. Yet through this labyrinth of complications, discoveries, and improbable reversals winds the unifying thread of myth.

The Western's basic narrative structure is archetypal. In its fundamental conflicts, its dialectical form, and its recurrent plot situations and motifs the Western formula embodies the universal pattern of human experience that Northrop Frye has denominated the mythos of romance. Hence several of the characteristic features of romance are worth recalling. Essentially, Frye explains, the romance is a collective oedipal fantasy, the "nearest of all literary forms to the wish fulfilment dream . . . ." In addition to its psychological dimension, however, the romance also has a related social dimension: it reflects and embodies humanity's perpetual "search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time or space." This search typically takes the form of a quest undertaken by a central character in pursuit of an ideal. In English literature, the quest romance is best illustrated by the first book of The Faerie Queene, in which

St. George undertakes a mission to slay the dragon and thus "to raise Eden in the wilderness and restore England to the status of Eden." Moreover, Frye continues, since the romantic quest invariably leads the hero through a sequence of minor and major adventures, the "essential element of plot in romance is adventure . . . ." This plot normally has three stages: "the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of a battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero." If successful in his quest, the hero is hailed as "a redeemer of society" and--provided he survives the quest--his reward generally includes a maiden whom he has "rescued from the unwelcome embraces of another" or "from giants or bandits," and whom he often takes as his bride.[3]

Frye's discussion of the mythos of romance provides a useful framework in which to examine the basic narrative structure of the formula Western, for the dime novel Western is essentially a nineteenth-century American adaptation of the traditional romance. Each of the characteristic features of the romance recurs in the dime novel Western, but each has been influenced by cultural dynamics and transformed accordingly. Like the traditional romance, which

gives literary form to humanity's "search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time or space," the dime novel Western functions as an elaborate social ritual which embodies and affirms nineteenth century America's search for a utopian society of comfort, happiness, and equality--an ideal society which is usually identified with Eden and which, as revealed in the earlier discussion of the Western's setting, synthesizes the respective advantages of wilderness and civilization while transcending the limitations of each.

Understood within this context, the Western may be viewed as a narrative construct whose unifying principle is the Western hero's quest to reorder reality in terms of his own vision of the ideal world. Since the questing hero naturally encounters obstacles which he must confront and overcome, the essential element of plot in the Western--like that of the traditional romance--is adventure. In the dime novel this adventure usually derives from a recurrent pattern of capture, flight, and pursuit--a plot attribute directly traceable to both religious and secular versions of the Indian captivity tale, but also frequently employed in nineteenth-century melodrama.[4] The narrative structure of the Western, moreover, resembles that of the traditional

romance insofar as its plot is tripartite in structure. For example, in Seth Jones; or, The Captives of the Frontier, perhaps the most popular dime novel ever written, the titular hero first undertakes a perilous journey through the forest in an attempt to rescue Mary Haverland, the typical maiden in distress, from the clutches of the cruel Mohawks. Seth's early efforts prove fruitless, but eventually he and his stalwart companions engage the savages in a crucial struggle which corresponds to the second stage of the archetypal romantic plot. Emerging from the struggle victorious, Seth escorts Mary back to her grieving family in the settlement. Shortly thereafter, in the third and final stage of the plot, Seth flings off the humble backwoods garb in which he has been disguised and stands revealed as Mary's long lost suitor, Eugene Morton. Handsome, resplendent in his gentlemanly attire, the beaming hero is suitably exalted by the surprised but no less grateful family. Disclaiming the family's stunned pronouncement that he must have "risen from the dead," the triumphant hero leads his eager sweetheart to the altar.[5]

As the unifying principle of the Western's narrative structure, the hero's quest to reorder reality in terms of his personal vision of an ideal world becomes the axis of

the Western plot. Clustered around this axis is a complex of minor characters whose moral opposition constitutes the principal source of plot conflicts. Discussing this aspect of the mythos of romance, Northrop Frye observes that "Characters tend to be either for or against the quest. If they assist it they are idealized as simply gallant or pure; if they obstruct it they are caricatured as simply villainous or cowardly. Hence every typical character in romance tends to have his moral opposite confronting him . . . ." These pairs of moral opposites, Frye explains, include the hero and the villain, the heroine and the siren or dark temptress, the hero's faithful companion and the traitor, and animals friendly to the hero and animals unfriendly to the hero. There are, in addition, two archetypal characters whose respective relationships to the antithetical moral scheme of the romance are somewhat anomalous: the child of nature, such as the shy and elusive, half-wild forest nymph, who is generally a friend or servant of the hero; and, the rustic clown who is "licensed to show fear or make realistic comments," and who provides "a localized safety valve for realism without allowing it to disrupt the conventions of romance."[6] Each of these typical characters of the romance, whether part of the moral scheme of the romance or

essentially detached from it, has his counterpart in the dime novel Western. Invariably, plot conflict in the Western arises from the confrontation of these paired moral antagonists.

The Western's two principal antagonists are the hero and the villain. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the hero himself is the personification of the ideal he seeks. In him the conflict between wilderness and civilization is internalized and resolved; his character synthesizes cherished values associated with wilderness and civilization respectively, and therefore images the utopian society of the future. Consequently, his value system and conception of the utopian ideal closely correspond to those of the ordinary reader and thus dictate the ethical system which prevails within the fictional world of the narrative. What the hero considers to be right <u>is</u> right within the context of the novel; and, conversely, what he considers to be wrong <u>is</u> wrong. Rarely does the reader have occasion to dispute the hero's moral judgments. Always, however, the reader takes exception to the judgments and actions of the villain, the hero's dedicated moral opponent and his virtual equal in terms of power and skill. This results from the fact that the villain's world view is alien to both the hero and the

ordinary reader. Like the hero, the villain is motivated by a desire for unrestricted power to assert his individual will in an attempt to reorder reality in terms of his own vision of the ideal world. Yet the villain's concept of the ideal society is generally narrow and egoistic, whereas the hero's is broadly egalitarian. The essential difference, then, between the villain and the hero is that the hero's concept of the ideal world is closer to that of the reader.

Villains are variously incarnated in the dime novel, but they possess in common a concept of the ideal world that differs markedly from that of the hero. In the dime novel the Western villain is often an Indian who envisions the ideal world as an untrammeled state of nature, a virtual happy hunting ground where the white man never ventures. Though understandable--noble, in fact--this vision is inconsistent with the hero's progressive ideal, and the Indian is therefore both an obstacle in the path of the questing hero and a real and imminent threat to the progress of society and the future realization of a utopian world. As a result, the Indian is portrayed as a cunning and brutal, innately evil savage. Wontum, for example, the principal villain of Quindaro; or, The Heroine of Fort Laramie, has a "brow black

as midnight" and "snake-like eyes," and several times he is called "The Evil One."[7] A similar character, Telonga, appears in Queen of the Woods; or, The Shawnee Captive. Believing that the Great Spirit intends Kentucky to be preserved forever as a hunting ground for the Shawnee, Telonga leads his "painted rascals" against the encroaching white settlers until, mortally wounded in combat with the novel's hero, he utters the conventional ubi sunt and dies with a final cry of sorrow, "My people--my people!"[8] Another character in this same novel, Simon Girty, typifies a second type of villain who often appears in the dime novel--the half-breed or white renegade. As commonly portrayed, he is the exact moral opposite of the hero. Whereas the hero is the embodiment of the best of both extremes--wilderness and civilization, Indian savagery and white society--the renegade or half-breed unites "the worst passions of both races, without the slightest of their virtues."[9] His vision of the ideal world, moreover, is both narrow and egoistic, lacking even the basically noble motive of racial pride that accounts for the villainous Indian's concept of the ideal world. In the renegade the quest for a better world has degenerated to an all-consuming lust for individual power and wealth. This selfish motive is shared by a third

incarnation of the Western villain, the crafty plutocrat--usually a banker, lawyer, or politician--who commonly opposes the hero in dime novels written during the 1870's and after.

Plot conflict in the dime Western also results from the moral opposition of the heroine and the siren. The heroine in the dime novel is always portrayed as unassailably pure and virtuous, angelic in appearance and shy in demeanor, and equally devoted to both God and the hero, on whom she bestows her fervent but wholly ethereal adoration. She is also associated with wisdom, power, and especially wealth. Often she stands in a position to inherit a fortune from her powerful and prestigious father or uncle. Minnie Potter, for example, the heroine of The James Boys in No Man's Land; or, The Bandit King's Last Ride, is characterized as "a gold mine," and at the end of the tale she inherits a million dollars.[10] Similarly, the wealthy heroine of The Pirate of the Placers; or, Joaquin's Death-Hunt is named, significantly enough, Lota Sylva.[11] Since the heroine is associated with power and wealth, she is naturally desired by villain and hero alike, and usually she functions as a mere pawn to be captured by the villain and rescued by the hero. Nevertheless, her symbolic role in the narrative

is significant. Depending upon the nature of the Western in which she appears, the heroine may fill one or the other of two possible symbolic roles. In the majority of Westerns--and always in the initiation or maturation story, where the hero is invariably an eastern tenderfoot--the heroine personifies the ideal society that the hero seeks to realize. Any threat to the heroine, especially an assault upon her virtue, constitutes a threat to the purity of the utopian ideal. Thus, in foiling the villain's repeated attempts to seduce the heroine, the hero is protecting the ideal from corruption and preserving the possibility of realizing the utopian society of the future. The hero's eventual marriage to the heroine symbolically corroborates the attainment of the ideal. In other Westerns, however--and always in stories of romantic synthesis, such as The Virginian, where the hero is an experienced westerner--the heroine simply personifies civilization. Hence the marriage of the western male to the eastern female symbolically images the synthesis of the respective values of wilderness and civilization. In this case the hero and heroine together constitute the utopian ideal.

Although the heroine ultimately wins the affections of the hero, she is commonly opposed by a dark and alluring

rival, a woman of mystery who repeatedly tempts the hero and thus constitutes an implicit threat to the successful completion of the quest. Dime novelists usually characterize the temptress as a fiery and passionate woman of Latin blood. Possessing raven black hair and a lustrous olive complexion, she is easily recognizable as the moral opposite of the blonde and fair-skinned heroine. She is, moreover, an active sexual aggressor whose fits of jealous fury contrast vividly with the bland and even-tempered behavior of the passive heroine. The temptress is thus a dangerous companion. When the hero spurns her affections--as he inevitably does--she customarily joins forces with the villain and plots the hero's downfall. Eventually, however, she discovers that she is also secretly despised by the villain, who is merely using her as a tool, and in the end her violence is turned upon him.

While major plot conflicts in the dime novel Western arise from the moral antagonism between hero and villain, heroine and temptress, minor conflicts are precipitated by confrontations between the hero's faithful companion and his moral opposite, the traitor in league with the villain. Repeatedly rescuing the hero from tight spots, the hero's fidus Achates also exposes the traitor's covert attempts to

subvert the quest. In the typical situation, he confronts the traitor openly, often in a crowded saloon or on the open prairie. The traitor, however, is customarily a sly and cowardly figure who shrinks from open confrontation, preferring instead to lurk in shadows or lie in the safety of ambush. In either case, the confrontation between the hero's sidekick and the skulking traitor ends in violence, and a particularly gruesome death normally awaits the traitor.

More so than the plot of any other type of romance, the Western plot accords a central role to animals. They, too, may hinder or help the hero's quest. Minor plot incidents often involve the hero's struggle with a ferocious beast of the forest, usually a mountain lion or grizzly bear. Though these confrontations hinder the quest, the hero in some instances anticipates them eagerly, regarding them as opportunities to measure his prowess. When Davy Crockett spots bear tracks in The Bear-Hunter; or, Davy Crocket as a Spy, for example, he is "nerved by hopes of meeting with his favorite game . . . . The unusual length of the claws, foot, stride, etc., filled Crockett with hope that the bear was a grizzly; a species with which he had never yet measured his prowess, though long anxious for the opportunity."[12] Figuring even more prominently in the

Western plot are those animals friendly to the hero. In the early dime novel, where the hero is portrayed as a trapper or hunter, he is often accompanied by a dog. Such dogs--usually resembling Hector, Natty Bumppo's toothless hound, or Peter, the talented dog of Nick of the Woods--repeatedly aid the questing hero by tracking down antagonists. Chaw, Shank Shingle's loyal canine in Daniel Boone's Best Shot; or, The Perils of the Kentucky Pioneers, is the "best dorge for b'ars an' Injuns ever knowed. He can smell 'um for a mile, an' is sure death when he lays a hold . . . ."[13] In the later dime novel, where the hero is portrayed as a plainsman, cowboy, or outlaw, his dog is replaced by a horse. Famous horses introduced in the dime novel include Buffalo Bill's incomparable mount, Powder Face, who often lies down in the tall prairie grass to hide his master from Indians, and Jesse James' midnight steed, Sirocco. Yet the trend continues today in the television Western, as evidenced by such well-known equine twosomes as Silver and Scout, or Trigger and Buttermilk.[14] While these horses primarily support the quest by providing the hero transportation, they may also be counted upon to aid the hero in difficult moments. Possible plot situations are virtually endless: when the hero is asleep and unaware of approaching

danger, his horse neighs a warning; when the hero is knocked out, his horse nuzzles him back to consciousness; and when the hero is tied up, his horse gnaws through the rope or gallops back to town where, riderless, he attracts attention and thereby summons a rescue party to the aid of the hero.

The Western plot also makes use of those traditional minor characters of romance who, though morally neutral children of nature, may nevertheless be brought to serve the hero. Like Telie Doe of Nick of the Woods, these nature sprites usually appear in the dime novel as forest maidens of mysterious origin. They sometimes function as messengers, often warning of impending danger, but their rapport with nature makes them especially valuable as guides. In "Red Arrow, the Wolf Demon; or, The Queen of the Kanawha," a story released in Beadle's Saturday Journal, the hero is guided by Kanawha Kate, a shy and beautiful huntress to whom "the forest--although to strange eyes a trackless wilderness --was as familiar as her own little garden. She knew the way as well in the darkness as in the light. She was, in very truth, a child of the wilderness, and from infancy she had traversed freely the brown paths of the wild woods."[15] Children of nature in the dime Western are exclusively female. Male characters who might be expected to fill this

role--the noble savage, for instance, invariably function as the hero's faithful companion.

One other minor character figures in the plot of the dime novel, though with considerably less frequency than most. He is the rustic clown of the traditional romance--a character who, according to Frye, calls "attention to realistic aspects of life, like fear in the presence of danger, which threaten the unity of the romantic mood." Psychologically, he provides "a localized safety valve for realism without allowing it to disrupt the conventions of romance."[16] This character appears most notably in Daniel Boone's Best Shot; or, The Perils of the Kentucky Pioneers, where Bill Whiner is introduced as an habitual "croaker of evil." Each time Boone's party prepares to attack a band of Indians, Whiner's face assumes a "funereal" expression. Moreover, he repeatedly urges retreat, vociferously predicting that the entire party will be "filled full of arrows and scalped before daylight." Invariably, however, he is silenced by the withering looks of his companions, and when the battle commences he rises to the occasion and fights as gallantly as anyone else. And naturally, when the battle ends in victory he calmly announces that he was never really worried at all.[17]

Given the imposing array of characters who aid or oppose the quest, a wide variety of plot situations and minor conflicts is possible in the Western. There are, moreover, at least three major areas of possible variation within the unifying archetypal pattern of the quest itself. First of all, the narrative structure permits a variety of obstacles to the quest. These obstacles may be forces of nature, or social and legal institutions, or evil individuals. Secondly, the values espoused by the questing hero may differ. There is, for example, a substantial disparity between the personal values of Daniel Boone and the personal values of the psychopathic gunfighter who recurrently appears in modern film and television Westerns. And finally, the Western's basic narrative structure permits variation in the degree of success achieved by the questing hero. In seeking to reorder reality in terms of his own vision of the ideal world, the hero may either fail outright or be forced to compromise his ideal. This resolution is characteristic of the naturalistic Western; it never occurs in the dime novel, where authors strive to reassure their readers rather than to depress them. A different kind of Western results when the hero discovers in the course of his quest that he must reevaluate his initial conception of the ideal

and form better values. Commonly known as the initiation or maturation story, this variant is a perennial favorite among Western writers. Still a different Western results when the hero totally succeeds--at least for the moment--in reordering reality in terms of his personal vision of a better world. Dime novelists rely on these last two plots--the maturation story and the successful quest--exclusively.

J. R. Scott's Red River Bill, the Prince of Scouts illustrates the typical pattern of action in the maturation story. The tale concerns Harold Tracy, a young eastern tenderfoot, who in company with two veteran scouts, Red River Bill and Nick Spooner, journeys through the wilderness in a perilous attempt to rescue the novel's heroine, Anna Adams, from a Sioux war party led by the notorious renegade Burling Sharp. Though Harold's intentions are noble, his misconceptions about wilderness life have dire consequences; repeatedly he makes near fatal mistakes which jeopardize the lives of his companions. One by one, however, he abandons his earlier misconceptions, and when Bill and Nick fall into the hands of the savages Harold realizes that the fate of the captives rests entirely in his hands. In the end, of course, Harold redeems himself: killing Burling Sharp, he rescues the captives and thereby endears himself to Anna. She, we

are told, "believed he had proved himself a man in the true sense of the word, and she afterwards became his wife."[18]

From this plot outline it is possible to generalize the classic pattern and symbolic significance of the Western maturation story. Typically, an eastern dude, inexperienced and overconfident, is guided through the wilderness by an elderly and experienced veteran of wilderness life. Together they seek to rescue a captive heroine. Early attempts to rescue her prove futile, but the hero's contact with the wilderness causes him to abandon his false values and to formulate better ones--a process symbolized by his gradual acquisition of wilderness skills. Thus, when the elderly veteran is incapacitated--as he always is, usually getting captured, wounded, or killed--the hero is capable of rising to the occasion. This he does, rescuing the heroine and making her his bride. While this plot clearly embodies an oedipal fantasy, it also allegorizes the nineteenth-century progressive view of history. The dude's educative contact with the wilderness, his redemption, and his attainment of the heroine give literary form to the popular belief that civilization's contact with the wilderness would strengthen the national character, redeem society, and thus assure the eventual realization of the utopian

ideal. No doubt it is significant, too, that the hero's maturation necessitates the sacrifice of the elderly veteran, who clearly personifies the wilderness.

While many dime Westerns are constructed around the pattern of action known as the maturation story, the vast majority rely upon the triangular love plot derived from the sentimental novel. In its classic form, the plot involves the struggle between two suitors for the hand of the innocent heroine. One of the suitors, the hero, is a paragon of virtue who offers the heroine pure romantic love. The other suitor, the villain, feigns romantic love but is actually motivated by lust and greed. When the heroine declares her preference for the hero, the villain kidnaps her and threatens her with "a fate worse than death." The hero then kills the villain, rescues the heroine, and all ends happily amid the sonorous clangor of wedding bells. Reduced to its essentials, this familiar plot is clearly a thinly disguised allegory portraying the triumph of good over evil. Yet it also has a broader social dimension--at least as conventionally embodied in the Western. The heroine, it would seem, represents the ideal society that the questing hero, the people's champion, seeks to realize, while the villain represents a threat to that society. Hence the overall pattern

of action--in which the hero eliminates the villain and weds the undefiled heroine--allegorizes the successful eradication of all forms of personal and social evil that threaten the perfection of society, while at the same time it affirms the ultimate realization of a better world.

Perhaps the two most intriguing aspects of the triangular love plot are its reliance upon a sexual symbolic framework and its customary association of sexual transgression and death. Neither of these, of course, is peculiar to the dime novel. Endlessly retelling the Genesis account of the Fall, sentimental novels written during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had firmly established the villain as a specifically sexual symbol of universal evil who, by attempting to seduce the heroine, strove to overcome the power of good in the world. For his efforts he was ultimately destroyed. Likewise, the heroine who allowed herself to be seduced inevitably died, usually in childbirth or simply by wasting away under the pangs of an unbearable guilt. Heroines were spotlessly innocent; if they were anything less they received the "wages of sin."

It is not surprising that popular American fiction of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries betrayed a penchant for associating sexual transgression and death. In

a Christian society that had traditionally regarded primordial sin as sexual sin it was not an unnatural reaction. Had not Eve succumbed? And, had not mankind been punished with pain and death? Literature that implied a connection between sexual misconduct and death thus served a morally didactic purpose: it sternly warned of the dangers inherent in sexual license. Seducers, it taught, died violently, and fallen women were inevitably deserted and left to bear the physical and moral consequences alone. Sexual sin was the ultimate sin; it would therefore invoke the ultimate punishment--death and damnation.

Always an important plot element, the wages of sin motif played an increasingly significant psychological role in popular fiction written during the last half of the nineteenth century. At this time the moral ramifications of industrialization and urbanization were becoming painfully evident. One of the more disturbing repercussions of the industrial revolution was its effect upon woman's traditional role as a symbol of unimpeachable innocence and morality. Economic necessity was more and more frequently causing the American woman to forsake her traditional place in the home and to assume a position in the national economy. This was popularly regarded as a threat to woman's morality

and, consequently, to the sanctity of the home, the institution of marriage, and the preservation of the family unit. In the home, woman was isolated from the temptations of the outside world; her virtue was safe from assault. In the wicked working world, however, she was vulnerable; she might even assume traditional male prerogatives, including sexual license--a fear which the growth of prostitution seemingly confirmed. These anxieties recurrently surfaced in the popular rhetoric of the age. Contending in 1860 that woman possesses an elevating aesthetic and moral power in life, and that this power is best exercised in the home, an anonymous reviewer for The Christian Examiner argued "that in proportion as she wanders from the sphere of the instinctive, and the seclusion of the hearth, so her actual position becomes anomalous, and her special power diminished." The desire of some women to desert their proper place in the home, he maintained, could only be attributed to "perverted instincts."[19] Similar sentiments were incorporated in late nineteenth century fiction, though not overtly. Rather, as David Brion Davis points out, "the transformation in woman's economic and social position was accompanied by psychological tension, reflected in fiction by the heightened association between sex and death."[20] In reaction to popular fears

about the decline of morality and woman's changing role in society, popular fiction of the period reaffirmed traditional moral values. Heroines became impossibly genteel, and fallen women and their vile seducers were inevitably destroyed.

The dime novel Western also responded to fears prompted by moral decline and woman's integration into the national economy. Through the pattern of action embodied in the triangular love plot the dime Western rigidified the standards of female characters, punished sexual transgression, and reaffirmed the sanctity of marriage. Without fail, the villain died horribly and the fallen woman earned the wages of sin. Unlike her counterpart in the sentimental novel, however, the fallen woman of the dime Western did not suffer a fate so colorless and jejune as death by childbirth or guilt; instead, her penance was sensational and violent. She became either a revenge-crazed tigress who first killed her seducer and then herself, or a bitter Amazon who, stripped of her femininity, endured a kind of living death.

Both varieties of ruined women appear in Edward L. Wheeler's The Black Hills Jezebel; or, Deadwood Dick's Ward, a story which clearly illustrates the use of the wages of sin motif in the dime novel. Wheeler opens the tale by

introducing Girard Athol and his daughter Kate. Girard, a cripple, is searching for his wife, Kate's mother, who years before had married him for his money and shortly thereafter departed with his gold savings. In the meantime, he has learned that she resides somewhere in the Black Hills under the name of Madame Cheviot, for she has illegally remarried and plans to marry still a third time in the near future. Athol, crazed by jealousy, is determined to prevent the marriage at all costs.[21]

Like her hunchbacked father, Kate seems at first to be an unorthodox character. She wears men's clothes, handles ruffians with ease, and is known by the alliterating nickname "Kentucky Kit," a standard attribute of male characters in the dime novel. As her lack of femininity suggests, she is a fallen woman: her father describes her as a genuine "blue-grass widow," and Ned Harris, better known as the delightful rogue Deadwood Dick, can see that the young lady has a "secret under all her bright and smiling exterior." Moreover, whereas virtuous dime novel heroines are typically shy and submissive, Kate is decidedly bold. Discovering Ned Harris asleep in the grass, she steals a kiss, thinking, "I'll bet he's a reg'lar 'masher,' too, as they say out East. Anyhow, it wouldn't take long for him to

'mash' me, if he's as good as he looks." When Ned awakes, she disregards his "bold, unwavering eye" and declares that she trusts him, "though you are the first I have placed confidence in, for many a year." Eventually she becomes Ned's "ward" and lives under the same roof with him, despite his professed fear of public opinion.[22]

In the meantime, the evil Madame Cheviot has learned of the proximity of Girard Athol and Kentucky Kit, and she therefore hires Bloody Bill and Black Bob to dispose of them along with the ever dangerous Deadwood Dick. The two ruffians fail, however, and during the wedding ceremony between Madame Cheviot and a wealthy rancher, Kentucky Kit unexpectedly arrives and shoots her mother. But the wicked woman is only wounded. Attempting to conduct the wedding again several days later, she is again foiled, for her husband, the hunchbacked Girard Athol, arrives on the scene shouting "my time has come for vengeance. It is too late to mend your ways, for Jezebel! you shall die ere you do any further deviltry." With a demonic laugh, the betrayed husband plunges a dagger into his faithless wife and escapes.[23]

While this main plot is unfolding, the fortunes of another fallen woman are being followed in a sub-plot.

Millicent Raymond, who has been seduced by the villainous Ralph Randall, begs him to fulfill his promise to marry her: "What assurance have I that you will fulfill your promise, to me, sir, after dyeing my soul, with sin, to satisfy your will?" Randall replies that he will indeed marry her, but only if she will consent to rob her father and dispose of Deadwood Dick. Reluctantly, she agrees to comply with his demand, for she is presumably pregnant and would rather face "the inevitable result of a few months to come" with a husband. Yet she also issues Randall a stern warning: ". . . if you refuse to marry me, I'll send you to one of the most horrible deaths that my ingenuity can devise. You shall find that Millicent Raymond is yet able to right her wrongs, or to kill her betrayer and avenge them." Shortly thereafter, Randall betrays signs of growing affection for Kentucky Kit, and Millicent responds instantly. She kills Kentucky Kit and then herself. Randall and the crazed hunchback, Girard Athol, do escape death in this novel, but only because they must live on to terrorize a sequel.[24]

As this outline suggests, the plot of the dime novel Western reaffirmed the Biblical admonition that "the wages of sin is death." Girard Athol kills Madame Cheviot because she has stolen his gold, but clearly this crime is

outweighed by her sexual betrayal. Thus, the deaths of the novel's female characters--Madame Cheviot, Kentucky Kit, and Millicent Raymond--are directly related to sexual misconduct. The belief that sin is inevitably punished and that evil will ultimately destroy itself was no doubt a very comforting thought for the reader disturbed by apparent moral decline.

While fast action and violent conflicts in the dime novel arose exclusively from the maturation story or the love triangle, these are merely two plot variants possible within the Western's basic narrative structure--the archetypal pattern of the quest. No doubt these two plots recurred in the dime novel because of their special suitability as patterns of action through which to address the unique cultural conflicts and psychological preoccupations of late nineteenth century America. Stories concerning the maturation of the Western hero offered readers needed reassurance that America, too, was maturing; that the national character was growing stronger; that evil was being systematically purged from society and that a better world was imminent. Stories based on the triangular love plot functioned similarly; through the wages of sin motif they endorsed established moral values and affirmed that the forces

of good would ultimately vanquish evil and ring in a utopian future. Seldom are today's Westerns so simple or so unswervingly optimistic. The problems of today are in many ways different from the problems confronted by Americans of the last century, and the modern Western reflects this difference: external conflicts are commonly internalized; characters tend to be morally ambivalent; plot situations are complex and resolutions often equivocal.[25] Yet the archetypal structure of the Western enables it to change with the times. Today, as always, it reflects and embodies humanity's difficult, sometimes hopeless but nevertheless unending search for a golden age.

V.

THE UNIFYING VISION

> It is in this population, associated in a favorable spot, under the broad protecting wing of free institutions, that those energies have been developed, which are carrying forward the West with a rapidity that has no parallel in past ages. Enterprise, emulation, inspiring hopes, free thought and unfettered action, are working their miracles among us. Society is in ceaseless motion. It is active almost to restlessness. It is continually engaged in perfecting what has already begun, or in devising and commencing new schemes for its advancement in happiness and virtue.
>
> --The Western Monthly Magazine, 1833

After more than sixty years of furious publication, millions of miles of newsprint, and countless bloody conflicts and hairbreadth escapes, the dime novel died a lingering death in the 1920s. Several factors contributed to its demise, including prohibitive second-class postal rates and the rising popularity of films.[1] Those publishing houses that did manage to survive, notably Street & Smith and Frank Tousey, did so by gradually altering the standard dime novel format, literally transforming it over a period of years into a pulp magazine. During their heyday in the late twenties and early thirties such popular pulps as Western

Story, Far West, and Ranch Romances, sold at the rate of twenty million copies per month.[2] Today Westerns appear in various formats, in magazines and books, on movie screens and television screens, and they continue to be astoundingly popular. Yet the dime novel--so important a medium in the evolution of the Western formula--has outlived its usefulness and is today consigned to the files of private collectors and the rare book rooms of a handful of major libraries.

No single factor, of course, adequately accounts for the phenomenal popularity that the dime novel Western enjoyed in its time. Undoubtedly, much of its success may be attributed to its intrinsic value as an autonomous artistic construct, to its unity of setting, character, and action, and to its ordered vision of reality. So, too, its popularity may be explained in part by its reliance upon an archetypal structure that reflects and embodies the most fundamental and universal concerns of mankind. Yet both of these elements are characteristic of all popular art forms. Neither serves to differentiate the Western formula from any other popular formula, nor does either account for the enduring popularity of the Western per se. Rather, the Western's unique character and its ensuing popularity must be attributed to factors which are expressly cultural.

The Western evolved as an expression of nineteenth century America's prevailing attitude toward history, progress, and the national destiny. In the early part of the century, apocalyptic visions and physiocratic theories had nurtured a poetic conception of the national destiny based on the conquest of the wilderness and the future foundation of a pastoral utopia in the West. As popularly conceived, this utopia would combine the respective advantages of civilization and wilderness while transcending the disadvantages of each; it would be a land of plenty, of human bliss, of freedom and equality. For this reason Americans revered progress, seeing in the historical process a trend toward the perfection of society and the realization of an ideal world. Yet as the century progressed the utopian vision became increasingly difficult to sustain. As gargantuan economic and social forces associated with the industrial revolution steadily polarized society, corrupted political and social institutions, and precipitated moral decline, a growing number of Americans recognized that progress and perfection were not necessarily one and the same. Indeed, the trend of history was ominous; instead of improving, the quality of life was perceptibly deteriorating. America's glorious future, once a virtual certainty, was becoming a

matter for grave doubt. In the face of growing disillusionment and anxiety, the mass of Americans clung persistently to their reassuring vision of an ideal world.

Americans are still envisioning an ideal world, and doubtless it has become obvious by now that the central thesis of this study is that it is, in fact, this persistent vision of a utopian ideal which has been and continues to be the fundamental organizing principle of the Western formula. It is this vision that governs the nature and function of the formula's three basic components--setting, character, and plot--that determines the relationships among them, and that unifies the principal functions of the Western as a cultural artifact possessing the dimensions of game, ritual, and collective dream. That this vision of an ideal world is indeed the fundamental organizing principle of the Western formula is manifest in the nature, function, and interdependence of the standardized setting, stereotyped characters, and conventionalized plots which evolved in the dime novel Western.

Generated by a cultural matrix in which attitudes toward wilderness and civilization were alike paradoxical, the dime novel's standardized setting offered writers a hypothetical realm in which to define, articulate, and

reconcile conflicting cultural values. On the one hand, it enabled writers to exploit the metaphorical significance of the frontier as a means of synthesizing the respective values of wilderness and civilization and thus idealizing a future utopian society that combined, in the words of Orestes Brownson, "all of the individual freedom of the savage state with all the order and social harmony of the highest degree of civilization."[3] On the other hand, it enabled writers to utilize the wilderness as an objective norm by which to measure the extent to which society as it then existed fell short of the ideal. Thus, while refining the Western as a vehicle for social criticism, the dime novel's standardized setting nevertheless reaffirmed the essential benevolence of the historical process.

Within this progressive context, the stereotyped Western hero emerged as the guardian of the future. Whether backwoodsman, plainsman, cowboy, or noble outlaw, he was a personification of the ideal world, a hybrid character who reconciled the popularly cherished values of the civilized East with the equally cherished values of the wilderness West but who yet espoused none of the unpopular values appurtenant to either. Naturally noble and eminently free, he was equally adept in the forest or the drawing room.

He was, moreover, an able social critic who bitterly denounced the imperfections of society and who took immediate action to rectify injustice. Yet his violent acts, while seemingly anti-social, were legitimized by the Western's progressive view of history; they were, in fact, implicitly understood as rites of purification. Each time the Western hero resolved a pressing social problem through violence he was merely taking necessary and positive action to perfect society and to assure the ultimate realization of a better world.

The dime novel's conventionalized plots--invariably a maturation story or a story of a love triangle--utilized the narrative structure of the traditional romance to portray the Western hero's quest to reorder reality in terms of his personal vision of the ideal world. This quest, in turn, functioned as the keystone of the narrative's moral structure: those who aided the quest were characterized as pure and gallant, while those who opposed it were cast as the agents of evil. From this opposition arose a sequence of violent confrontations between moral and ideological antagonists. Invariably, wrongdoers were paid "the wages of sin" and the Western hero emerged as the redeemer of society:

he vanquished the forces of evil, restored moral equilibrium, and blazed a trail to the ideal world of the future.

The standardized setting, stereotyped characters, and conventionalized plots that evolved in the dime novel refined the Western as a popular narrative formula possessing the primary cultural dimensions of game, ritual, and collective dream.[4] Utilizing the boundless open space and unique topographical features of the Great Plains or Far West landscape, the standardized setting of the dime novel functioned as a vast gameboard with designated sectors and clearly marked boundaries. Much of the meaning of the dime Western derived from the actions and movements upon this gameboard of characters who--aiding or opposing the hero's quest--resembled the opposing players or pieces of a game. Additionally, the dime Western's plots were highly conventionalized, dictating which actions were permissible and which were not. Any infraction of the rules brought elimination from the game: hence, unfailingly, female characters who violated the dime novel's strict moral code were punished with death.

The dime novel Western also functioned as an elaborate social ritual. Through its frontier setting and its hero's hybrid character it articulated conflicting cultural

values, reconciled them, and thus dialectically idealized a utopian future. Through its hero's stylized violence and its felicitous plot resolutions the dime Western simplistically resolved all problems that threatened the realization of the ideal. And finally, through all three of its components--setting, character, and plot--it affirmed the ultimate realization of a better world. In an age troubled by industrialization, urbanization, class polarization, moral decline, and large scale suppression of individual freedoms, the dime Western ritualistically purified society and reaffirmed cherished cultural values. It purged frustration, ameliorated fears, and above all offered hope.

Finally, the dime novel Western functioned as a collective dream. Its formulaic fantasy of a potent hero reluctantly resorting to violence as a means of rectifying injustice and promoting social order no doubt functioned to purge and legitimize the latent aggression of the untold numbers of powerless individuals caught in the vast and constantly accelerating machinery of modern urban-industrial society. Yet it did more than this. It imaged the indefatigable human spirit that drives man forward and sustains him in his ancient and unending search for a golden age.

NOTES

NOTES

CHAPTER I

[1]1(Dec. 1833), 578.

[2]Harold Arlo Blaine, "The Frontiersman in American Prose Fiction: 1800-1860," Diss. Western Reserve Univ. 1936, pp. 233, 246-47.

[3]The Protective Policy in Literature: A Discourse on the Social and Moral Advantages of the Cultivation of Local Literature (Columbus, Ohio: 1859), in Clarence Gohdes, "The Earliest Description of 'Western' Fiction?," American Literature, 37(Mar. 1965), 70-71.

[4]Charles Bragin, Bibliography: Dime Novels 1860-1964 (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Charles Bragin, 1964), p. 10.

[5]Russel B. Nye, The Unembarrassed Muse: The Popular Arts in America (New York: Dial, 1970), p. 201.

[6]p. 201.

[7]Bragin, pp. 1-5.

[8]Nye, pp. 201-02.

[9]"Introduction," Seth Jones by Edward S. Ellis and Deadwood Dick on Deck by Edward L. Wheeler: Dime Novels (New York: Odyssey, 1966), p. ix.

[10]Nye, pp. 201-02.

[11]Charles M. Harvey, "The Dime Novel in American Life," Atlantic Monthly, 100 (July 1907), 40.

[12]"Critical Notices: Dime Books," North American Review, 204(July 1864), 303, 304n.

[13]"Story Paper Literature," Atlantic Monthly, 54 (Sept. 1879), 383.

[14]Merle Curti, "Dime Novels and the American Tradition," Yale Review, 26(Summer 1937), 761-78; Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (1950; rpt. New York: Vintage-Knopf, n.d.); Kent Ladd Steckmesser, The Western Hero in History and Legend (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1965); Don Russell, The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1960); and, William A. Settle, Jr., Jesse James Was His Name (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1966).

[15](Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1971). My discussion attempts merely to summarize the main tenets of Cawelti's argument in order to provide a methodological framework in which to discuss the dime novel. Since summary inevitably involves oversimplification and distortion, readers not familiar with Cawelti's arguments should consult The Six-Gun Mystique.

[16]John Williams, "The 'Western:' Definition of the Myth," Nation, 193 (Nov. 18, 1961), 401-02; John R. Milton, "The Western Novel: Sources and Forms," Chicago Review, 16, No. 2 (Summer 1963), 100; and, Max Westbrook, "The Themes of Western Fiction," Southwest Review, 43(Summer 1958), 232-33.

[17]Cawelti, pp. 4-7.

[18]p. 7.

[19]"The American Myth Rides the Range: Owen Wister's Man on Horseback," Southwest Review, 36(Summer 1951), 157-63.

[20]Cawelti, pp. 10-12.

[21]"The Stereotyped Western Story: Its Latent Meaning and Psychoeconomic Function," The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 24(June 1955), 279.

[22]"A Contribution to the Psychological Understanding of the Origin of the Cowboy and His Myth," The American Imago, 15(Summer 1958), 127-28, 143-44.

[23]Cawelti, pp. 15-17.

[24]pp. 17-18.

[25]pp. 18-21.

[26]F. E. Emery, "Psychological Effects of the Western Film: A Study in Television Viewing," Human Relations, 12, No. 3(1959), 205, in Cawelti, pp. 21-22.

[27]Cawelti, pp. 27-33.

[28]pp. 67-68.

[29]pp. 68-70.

[30]Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (1957; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1965), pp. 186-87, 195, 193.

[31]Cawelti, p. 71.

[32]pp. 31-32.

[33]pp. 81-84, 14-15. For a brief discussion of the stylistics of depicting violence in the modern Western, see Philip Durham, "Riders of the Plains: American Westerns," Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, 58(1957), 22-38.

[34]Cawelti, p. 12.

[35]Douglas T. Miller, The Birth of Modern America, 1820-1850 (New York: Western Publishing Co. [Pegasus Books], 1970), p. 81.

[36]George Rogers Taylor, The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860 (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), pp. 388, 79.

[37]pp. 385-87.

[38]My discussion of class polarization during the Jacksonian period is indebted to two studies by Douglas T. Miller: The Birth of Modern America, 1820-1850, and Jacksonian Democracy: Class and Democracy in New York, 1830-1860 (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967). Also helpful is Rowland Berthoff, An Unsettled People: Social Order and Disorder in American History (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 175-203.

[39]Douglas T. Miller, Jacksonian Democracy, pp. 23-29, 57-70.

[40]"Human Occupations (Pt. 2)," The Knickerbocker, 12 (Dec. 1838), 476.

[41]p. 475.

[42]Douglas T. Miller, Jacksonian Democracy, pp. 31-33.

[43]Douglas T. Miller, The Birth of Modern America, p. 112.

[44]Douglas T. Miller, Jacksonian Democracy, p. 43.

[45]Douglas T. Miller, The Birth of Modern America, p. 111.

[46]Douglas T. Miller, Jacksonian Democracy, p. 140.

[47]pp. 81-82, 102-05.

[48]Parke Godwin, Democracy, Constructive and Pacific (1844), in American Issues: The Social Record, ed. Merle Curti, Willard Thorp, and Carlos Baker (Philadelphia: 1960), pp. 412-14, in Douglas T. Miller, Jacksonian Democracy, p. 139. Robert E. Gallman, "Trends in the Size Distribution of Wealth in the Nineteenth Century: Some Specualtions," in Six Papers on the Size Distribution of Wealth and Income, ed. Lee Soltow (New York: Columbia Univ. Press for the National Bureau of Economic Research, 1969), p. 15, concludes that "changes in the distribution of population among the three locations--large cities, the plantation South, and other rural areas--tended, during the nineteenth century, to raise the share of wealth held by the rich."

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[50]Douglas T. Miller, Jacksonian Democracy, p. 135.

[51]Berthoff, pp. 180, 184.

[52]p. 196, and Douglas T. Miller, Jacksonian Democracy, pp. 179-87.

[53]Wendell Phillips, Speeches, Lectures, and Letters, 2nd Series (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1905), p. 166.

[54]"Human Rights vs. 'Divine Rights,'" The United States Magazine and Democratic Review, 24(Apr. 1849), 292, 299.

[55]Perry Miller, The Life of the Mind in America, from the Revolution to the Civil War (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1965), p. 212. My discussion of law is indebted to "The Legal Mentality," Book Two of Miller's indispensable study.

[56]pp. 164-65.

[57]pp. 198-202.

[58]pp. 187-88.

[59]p. 210.

[60]Douglas T. Miller, The Birth of Modern America, p. 45.

[61]The American Review: A Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art and Science, 1(Jan. 1845), 95-98, in The Nature of Jacksonian America, ed. Douglas T. Miller (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1972), p. 75.

[62]pp. 74-75.

[63]See Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," American Quarterly, 18(Summer 1966), 151-74.

[64]Douglas T. Miller, The Birth of Modern America, p. 49.

[65]p. 95.

[66]pp. 102-03.

[67]Berthoff, pp. 245-46.

[68]"Christianity a Battle, Not a Dream," Speeches, p. 292.

[69]A Documentary History of American Industrial Society, ed. John R. Commons and associates (Cleveland: 1910-1911), 7, 294-305, in Douglas T. Miller, Jacksonian Democracy, p. 143.

[70]Douglas T. Miller, Jacksonian Democracy, pp. 152-54.

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[72]Norman Ware, The Industrial Worker, 1840-1860: The Reaction of American Industrial Society to the Advance of the Industrial Revolution (New York: 1924), p. 77, in Berthoff, pp. 201-02.

[73]Certain Dangerous Tendencies in American Life, and Other Papers (Boston: 1880), pp. 167-68, in Popular Culture and Industrialism, ed. Henry Nash Smith (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday-Anchor, 1967), pp. 403-04.

[74]Report of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor, 2(1883), pp. 613-14, 614, in Smith, Popular Culture and Industrialism, p. 404.

[75]Gelett Burgess, "The Confessions of a Dime Novelist," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 105(May 15, 1941), 2.

[76]p. 5.

[77]"Dime Novel Days," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 112 (Jan. 15, 1942), 2-3.

NOTES

CHAPTER II

[1] [Anon.], "The Study of Nature," The Christian Examiner, 68(Jan., 1860), 33-36.

[2] p. 54.

[3] The following summary synthesizes ideas presented in a number of full length studies of the significance of the frontier and the wilderness West. Most helpful are Edwin Fussell, Frontier: American Literature and the American West (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965); Lucy Lockwood Hazard, The Frontier in American Literature (1927; rpt. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1961); Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964); Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967); Charles L. Sanford, The Quest For Paradise: Europe and the American Moral Imagination (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1961); and Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (1950; rpt. New York: Vintage-Knopf, n.d.).

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[5] References in this paragraph are selected from early travel accounts quoted in Sanford, pp. 83-84.

[6] For a discussion of the Puritans' intellectual legacy with regard to the wilderness, see Alan Heimert, "Puritanism, the Wilderness, and the Frontier," New England Quarterly, 26(Sept. 1953), 361-82. For a dissenting view, see Nash, p. 35.

[7]Sanford, pp. 82-83.

[8]Edward Johnson, Johnson's Wonder-Working Providence, 1628-1651 (1654), ed. J. Franklin Jameson, Original Narratives of Early American History, 7(New York: 1910), p. 59; and, Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World (London: 1862), p. 13, quoted in Nash, pp. 34-35, 26.

[9]Nash, pp. 24, 29, 36-37. Mather, Wonders, pp. 13, 85; Mather, Decennium Luctuosum: An History of Remarkable Occurrences in the Long War which New England hath had with the Indian Salvages (1699) in Narratives of the Indian Wars 1675-1699, ed. Charles H. Lincoln, Original Narratives of Early American History, 19(New York: 1913), p. 242; and, Thomas Shepard, The Clear Sunshine of the Gospel Breaking Forth upon the Indians in New-England (1648) in Joseph Sabin, Sabin's Reprints, 10 vols. (New York: 1865), X, 1, quoted in Nash, pp. 29, 36-37.

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[11]Smith, pp. 142-43.

[12]p. 144.

[13]The Complete Jefferson: Containing His Major Writings, Published and Unpublished, Except His Letters, ed. Saul K. Padover (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc., 1943), p. 678, quoted in Sanford, p. 126.

[14]Cooper and Bushnell are quoted in Ernest Lee Tuveson, Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role (Chicago: 1968), pp. 126-27, 154, and requoted in Klaus J. Hansen, "The Millennium, the West, and Race in the Antebellum American Mind," Western Historical Quarterly, 3(Oct., 1972), 376.

[15]Quoted in Ralph H. Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought (New York: The Ronald Press, Co., 1940), p. 36, and requoted in Sanford, p. 126.

[16]Joseph P. Thompson, The College as a Religious Institution (New York: 1859), p. 34, quoted in Nash, p. 39.

[17]Nash, pp. 45-46.

[18]p. 46.

[19]Sanford, pp. 58-60.

[20]From Beowulf to Modern British Writers, ed. John Ball (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1959), p. 628. Also see Nash, p. 47.

[21]Nash, pp. 47-49.

[22]For a fuller discussion of the origin of this practice, see Mary E. Woolley, "The Development of the Love of Romantic Scenery in America," American Historical Review, 3(Oct., 1897-July, 1898), 56-66. For a discussion of the popular appreciation of the aesthetic value of nature during the nineteenth century, see Hans Huth, Nature and the American: Three Centuries of Changing Attitudes (Berkley: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1957), pp. 30-53.

[23]Padover, The Complete Jefferson, p. 826, quoted in Sanford, pp. 136-37.

[24]Sanford, pp. 138-42.

[25]pp. 135, 138, 143.

[26]Nash, pp. 55-56. For fuller discussions of Thoreau's attitude toward wilderness, see Fussell, pp. 175-231; Marx, pp. 242-65; Nash, pp. 84-95; and, Sanford, pp. 179-82. Also see Lawrence Willson, "The Transcendentalist View of the West," Western Humanities Review, 14 (1960), 183-91.

[27]Louis Legrand Noble, The Course of Empire and Other Pictures of Thomas Cole, N. A. Life and Works (New York: 1853), p. 226, quoted in Sanford, p. 153.

[28]Henry David Thoreau, "Walking," in Excursions, The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, 11 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1893), IX, 275, 296, quoted in Nash, pp. 88, 84, 93.

[29]The Works of Orestes A. Brownson, ed. Henry F. Brownson, 20 vols. (Detroit: 1882-1907), XV, 60, quoted in Nash, p. 94.

[30]"Life in the Woods," The Dial (April, 1844), reprinted in the Appendix to Thoreau, Walden, ed. Sherman Paul, Riverside Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957), pp. 236, 238, and quoted in Sanford, pp. vi-vii.

[31]Nash, pp. 94-95. Of the middle landscape, Sanford, p. viii, says that "Americans have consciously or unconsciously sought to establish a midpoint between savagery and civilization, to establish a national identity which was neither primitive in the frontier sense nor excessively civilized in the European sense. With respect to this midpoint, the American concept of nature has tended to be largely sylvan and rural."

[32]Nash, p. 81.

[33]James K. Folsom makes this point in his "Introduction" to The Masterworks of Literature Series edition of Timothy Flint, Biographical Memoir of Daniel Boone (1833; rpt. New Haven: College & University Press, 1967), pp. 10-11. In a related discussion in his The American Western Novel (New Haven: College & University Press, 1966), p. 31, Folsom contends that "The conflict in the Western novel, in its broadest terms, is an externalized debate which reflects the common American argument about the nature of, in the modern parlance, 'the good life.'"

[34]Francis Parkman, "The Works of James Fenimore Cooper," North American Review, 74(1852), 151, in Nash, p. 94.

[35]James Fenimore Cooper: Representative Selections, ed. Robert Spiller (New York: 1936), pp. 306-07, in Nash, p. 94.

[36]James Fenimore Cooper, The Pioneers (1823; rpt. New York: Washington Square Press, 1962), pp. 421, 424.

[37]Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 8(Oct. 2, 1860; rpt. Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 8, Nov. 9, 1877), pp. 1-2.

[38]Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 125(June 4, 1867), p. 11.

[39]"Buckskin Sam" [Major Sam S. Hall], Wild Will, the Mad Ranchero; or, The Terrible Texans, Beadle's Dime Library, No. 90(Mar. 24, 1880), p. 1.

[40]Beadle's Half Dime Novelettes, No. 1(Dec. 5, 1860; rpt. Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 54, May 16, 1863), p. 18.

[41]pp. 18-19.

[42]By the Author of "The Silver Bugle" [Lieut. Col. Hazelton], Quindaro; or, The Heroine of Fort Laramie, Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 77(Jan. 31, 1865), pp. 68-69.

[43]By the Author of "The Silent Hunter" [Percy St. John], Queen of the Woods; or, The Shawnee Captive, Beadle's Dime Novels, Nos. 152-155(June 9, 1868-July 24, 1868; rpt. Percy St. John, The Big Hunter; or, The Queen of the Woods, Beadle's Dime Library, No. 86, Jan. 28, 1880), pp. 4, 12.

[44]John Sherman, Daniel Boone's Best Shot; or, The Perils of the Kentucky Pioneers [Original Series Unknown], (?; rpt. Tousey's Wide Awake Library, No. 1150, Dec. 3, 1892), p. 10.

[45]Frederick Whittaker, Boone, the Hunter; or, The Backwoods Belle, Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 278(Mar. 25, 1873), pp. 29-30.

[46]St. John, Queen of the Woods, pp. 2-3, 13.

[47]W. J. Hamilton, The Twin Scouts. A Story of the Old French War, Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 92(Mar. 3, 1866), p. 94.

[48]St. John, Queen of the Woods, p. 22.

[49]Whittaker, Boone, the Hunter, p. 40.

[50]Edward L. Wheeler, Deadwood Dick, the Prince of the Road; or, The Black Rider of the Black Hills, Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 1(Oct. 15, 1877), p. 21.

[51]D. W. Stevens [John R. Musick?], The James Boys in No Man's Land: or, The Bandit King's Last Ride, Tousey's New York Detective Library, No. 438(Apr. 18, 1891), p. 3.

[52]Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan: Or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil, ed. Michael Oakeshott (New York: The Crowell-Collier Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 101, 100.

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[54]pp. 6, 15, 27, 30.

[55]John G. Cawelti, The Six-Gun Mystique (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1971), pp. 39-40.

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[58]Ned Buntline [Edward Zane Carrol Judson], Sib Cone, the Mountain Trapper, Starr's American Novels, No. 31 (Jan. 11, 1870), pp. 1-2.

[59]"Buckskin Sam" [Major Sam S. Hall], Big Foot Wallace, the King of the Lariat; or, Wild Wolf, the Waco, Beadle's Dime Library, No. 204(Sept. 20, 1882), p. 24.

[60]Beadle's Dime Library, No. 303(Aug. 13, 1884), p. 22.

[61]Quoted in Norman Foerster, Nature in American Literature: Studies in the Modern View of Nature (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), p. 5.

[62]Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 32(Nov. 23, 1861), p. 38.

[63]See Martin Nussbaum, "Sociological Symbolism of the 'Adult Western,'" Social Forces, 39(Oct., 1960), 25-26.

[64]"Noname" [pseud.], Dandy Dan of Deadwood and His Big Bonanza, Tousey's Wide Awake Library, No. ?(1891?; rpt. New York: Gold Star Books Collector's Edition [IL7-37], n.d.), p. 73.

[65]Frederick Whittaker, The Mustang-Hunters; or, The Beautiful Amazon of the Hidden Valley, Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 226(Mar. 28, 1871), p. 24.

[66]Stuart B. James, "Western American Space and the Human Imagination," Western Humanities Review, 24(Spring 1970), 155.

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[2]p. 101.

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[4](1841; rpt. New York: Washington Square, 1961), p. 505.

[5]Cooper, The Pathfinder (1840; rpt. New York: Washington Square, 1960), p. 138.

[6]Cooper, "Preface to The Leatherstocking Tales," in The Deerslayer, p. xvi.

[7]Cooper, The Pathfinder, p. 136.

[8]pp. 136-37.

[9]Cooper, The Prairie (1827; rpt. New York: Rinehart, 1950),pp. 402-03.

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[11]G. H. Orians, "The Indian Hater in Early American Fiction," Journal of American History, 27, No. 1(1933), 33-44.

[12]Emerson Rodman, "The Mad Captain," Street & Smith's New York Weekly (Nov. 1, 1866; rpt. Boynton Belknap, M.D. [pseud.], Lew Wetzel, the Scout; or, The Captives of the Wilderness, Starr's American Novels, No. 16, 1871), p. 11.

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[16]Major Lewis W. Carson [Albert Aiken], White Slayer, The Avenger; or, The Doomed Red-Skins, Starr's American Novels, No. 37(Apr. 19, 1870), pp. 9-10, 24, 96.

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[18]Tousey's Wide Awake Library, No. 1150(Dec. 3, 1892), pp. 10-11, 13.

[19]Edmund Pearson, Dime Novels; or, Following an Old Trail in Popular Literature (Boston: Little, Brown, 1929), p. 99.

[20]Smith, Virgin Land, p. 105.

[21]Beadle's Dime Novels, Nos. 152-155(June 9, 1868-July 24, 1868; rpt. The Big Hunter; or, The Queen of the Woods. A Romance of the Days of Boone, Beadle's Dime Library, No. 86, Jan. 28, 1880), p. 2.

[22]Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 278(Mar. 25, 1873), p. 18.

[23]Paul Braddon [William Howard Van Orden], Tousey's Wide Awake Library, No. 152(?; rpt. Tousey's Wide Awake Library, No. 1186, Nov. 11, 1893), p. 2.

[24]Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 288(Aug. 12, 1873), p. 10.

[25]Smith, Virgin Land, p. 104.

[26]Captain Comstock [Charles Dudley Warren?], Starr's American Novels, No. 18(Feb. ?, 1869), pp. 9, 51.

[27]Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 8(Oct. 2, 1860; rpt. Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 8, Nov. 9, 1877), p. 1.

[28]J. Milton Hoffman, Gunpowder Jim; or, The Mystery of Demon Hollow, Beadle's Frontier Series, No. 37(1908), p. 12; and, "An Old Scout"[pseud.], Young Wild West Running the Gauntlet; or, The Pawnee Chief's Last Shot, Tousey's Wild West Weekly, No. 37(1903).

[29]Edward S. Ellis, Irona; or, Life on the Old South-West Border, Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 32(Nov. 23, 1861).

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[31]Smith, Virgin Land, p. 109.

[32]Hoffman, Gunpowder Jim, pp. 18, 98.

[33]Ellis, Seth Jones; or, The Captives of the Frontier, Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 8(Oct. 2, 1860; rpt. Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 8, Nov. 9, 1877), pp. 15-16.

[34]Smith, Virgin Land, p. 106.

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[36]See n. 26.

[37]Chas. E. Lasalle [Edward S. Ellis], The Texan Trailer; or, Davy Crockett's Last Bear-Hunt, Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 231(June 6, 1871), p. 19.

[38]Harry Hazard [Joseph E. Badger, Jr.], The Bear-Hunter; or, Davy Crockett as a Spy, Starr's American Novels, No. 118(May 27, 1873).

[39]Harry St. George [Harry St. George Rathborne], Daring Davy, The Young Bear Killer; or, The Trail of the Border Wolf, Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 108(Aug. 19, 1879), pp. 2, 6, 13.

[40]Smith, Virgin Land, p. 108, makes this point with reference to The Forest Princess; or, The Kickapoo Captives. A Romance of the Illinois, Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 227 (Apr. 11, 1871), and The Border Renegade; or, The Lily of the Silver Lake, Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 250(Feb. 27, 1872).

[41]Whittaker, Boone, the Hunter; or, The Backwoods Belle, Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 278(Mar. 25, 1873), pp. 18, 28, 49.

[42]pp. 50, 65, 67, 92.

[43]Smith, Virgin Land, p. 106.

[44]Milo Milton Quaife, "Historical Introduction," Kit Carson's Autobiography (1935; rpt. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. x.

[45]Smith, Virgin Land, pp. 91-94.

[46]pp. 94, 96-97.

[47]Kit Carson's Pledge; or, The Prince of the Gold Hunters. A Powerful Romance of Gallant Kit Carson, Street & Smith's Campfire Library, No. 37(?); Kit Carson's Trail; or, The Hunters of the Rockies. A Startling Tale of the Famous Pathfinder, Street & Smith's Campfire Library, No. 52(?); and, Kit Carson's Gold Train; or, Wild Adventures in the Sierras. A Great Tale of California in the Early Days, Street & Smith's Campfire Library, No. 57(?). J. Edward Leithead, "The Anatomy of Dime Novels, No. 6," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 413(Feb. 15, 1967), 14-15.

[48]Leithead, "The Anatomy of Dime Novels, No. 6," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 413(Feb. 15, 1967), 14-19, and No. 414(Mar. 15, 1967), 24-29.

[49]Edward S. Ellis, "Viola Vennond; or, Life on the Border," Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper, 20(July 2, 1862 and following five issues; rpt. Latham C. Carleton [pseud.], The Hunters; or, Life on the Mountain and Prairie, Irwin P. Beadle's Ten Cent Novels, No. 1, Nov. 11, 1863; rpt. anon., The Fighting Trapper; or, Kit Carson to the Rescue, American News Co., 1874; rpt. Capt. J. F. C. Adams [pseud.], Beadle's Dime Library, No. 68, May 21, 1879.

[50]No. 184(?), and No. 185(?).

[51]Munro's Ten Cent Novels, No. 229(?). Noel B. Gerson, Kit Carson: Folk Hero and Man (1964; rpt. New York: Avon Books, 1967), p. 101.

[52](New York: Beadle and Adams, 1879); and, "An Old Scout" [pseud.], The Boy Rifle Rangers; or, Kit Carson's Three Young Scouts, Tousey's Pluck and Luck, No. 181(?), in J. Edward Leithead, "Buckskin Men of Forest and Plain," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 248(May 15, 1953), 35-36.

[53]Several novelists introduced youthful fictitious heroes named after Carson. See "Buckskin Sam" [Major Sam S. Hall], Kit Carson, Jr., The Crack Shot of the West. A Romance of the Lone Star State, Starr's New York Library, No. 3(June 7, 1877; rpt. Beadle's Dime Library, No. 3, 1878), and "An Old Scout" [pseud.], Kit Carson, Jr. in the Wild Southwest; or, The Search for a Lost Claim, Tousey's Pluck and Luck, No. 406(?).

[54]See Jay Monaghan, The Great Rascal: The Life and Adventures of Ned Buntline (New York: Bonanza Books, 1951).

[55]pp. 5-6.

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[57]Colonel William F. Cody, Life and Adventures of Buffalo Bill (Chicago: Stanton and Van Vliet Co., 1917), p. 265.

[58]p. 267.

[59]Richard J. Walsh and Milton S. Salsbury, The Making of Buffalo Bill (Indianapolis: n.p., 1928), p. 221, in Joseph Schwartz, "The Wild West Show: 'Everything Genuine,'" Journal of Popular Culture, 3(Spring 1970), 663.

[60]Frederick Remington, "Buffalo Bill in London," Harper's Weekly, 36(Sept. 3, 1892), 847, in Schwartz, 662.

[61]Don Russell, The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1960), pp. 387-88.

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[63]J. Edward Leithead, "Buffalo Bill Item," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 61 (April 15, 1937), 1-2.

[64]Russell, pp. 392-93.

[65]Quoted from an exact reprint of Buntline's first story entitled Buffalo Bill (New York: International Publishers, n.d.), p. 183, in Smith, Virgin Land, p. 117.

[66]This novel, "By the author of Buffalo Bill" [pseud.], Street & Smith's Buffalo Bill Stories, No. 196 (1905?) is included in a discussion of Buffalo Bill's companions by J. Edward Leithead, "Buffalo Bill, Multi-Storied Border King, pt. 4," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 174(Mar. 15, 1947), 19.

[67]Beadle's Dime Library, No. 777(Sept. 13, 1893).

[68]"By the author of Buffalo Bill" [Prentiss Ingraham?], Street & Smith's Buffalo Bill Stories, No. 128(1903?).

[69]Prentiss Ingraham, Beadle's Dime Library, No. 644 (Feb. 25, 1891), and No. 735(Nov. 23, 1892).

[70]Prentiss Ingraham, Buffalo Bill's Queer Find; or, On a Lone Trail, ?(?; rpt. Street & Smith's Great Western Library, No. 74, 1908), p. 180.

[71]p. 40.

[72]p. 282.

[73]"By the author of Buffalo Bill" [Prentiss Ingraham], Street & Smith's Buffalo Bill Stories, No. 145 (1904?; rpt. New York: Gold Star Book Collector's Edition [IL7-44], n.d.), p. 42.

[74]Prentiss Ingraham, Beadle's Dime Library, No. 691 (Jan. 20, 1892), in Russell, p. 403.

[75]Russell, p. 387. Though Buffalo Bill was renowned in England, Norway, Holland, and Germany, he was especially popular in France, as indicated by such titles as Le Hero du Far West; La Course a la Mort a Travers les Campements Enemis and Le Derniers Exploits de Buffalo Bill Contre Sitting Bull. George Fronval, "Dime Novels in France," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 379 (Apr. 15, 1964), 27-37.

[76]Charles Bragin, Bibliography: Dime Novels 1860-1964 (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Charles Bragin, 1964), p. 7.

[77]For another discussion of the dime novel cowboy, see Warren French, "The Cowboy in the Dime Novel," Texas Studies in English, 30(1951), 219-34.

[78]Douglas Branch, The Cowboy and His Interpreters (1926; rpt. New York: Cooper Square, 1961), p. 189.

[79]James D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897 (Washington: n.p., 1909), VIII, 53-54, in Smith, Virgin Land, pp. 122-23.

[80](1885; rpt. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1950).

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[83]pp. 15, 21.

[84]Beadle's Dime Library, No. 303(Aug. 13, 1884) and Beadle's Dime Library, No. 310(Oct. 1, 1884).

[85]Whittaker, Top Notch Tom, The Cowboy Outlaw, pp. 6, 3, 5, 27-28.

[86]William G. Patten, Hustler Harry, The Cowboy Sport; or, Daring Dan Shark's General Delivery, Beadle's Dime Library, No. 545(Apr. 3, 1889). Wild Vulcan, The Lone Range-rider; or, The Rustlers of the Bad Lands, Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 682(Aug. 19, 1890). Hurricane Hal, The Cowboy Hotspur; or, Old True Blue's Pilgrimage in Satan's Section, Beadle's Dime Library, No. 676(Oct. 7, 1891). Cowboy Steve, The Ranch Mascot; or, The Bond of Blood, Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 806(Jan. 3, 1893). Wm. West Wilder--"Wyoming Will" [pseud.], Cowboy Chris, The Vengeance Volunteer; or, The Death-Hunt Pards, Beadle's Popular Library, No. 30(Oct. 21, 1891).

[87]Patten, Hurricane Hal, The Cowboy Hotspur, p. 2.

[88]Patten, Cowboy Steve, The Ranch Mascot, p. 11.

[89]Beadle's Banner Weekly (Nov. 6, 1886-Jan. 15, 1887; rpt. Beadle's Dime Library, No. 629, Nov. 12, 1890). Unaware of the 1882 appearance of Parson Jim in Frederick Whittaker's Parson Jim, King of the Cowboys; or, The Gentle Shepherd's Big "Clean Out," Beadle's Dime Library, No. 215 (Dec. 6, 1882), Don Russell, in The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill, pp. 389, 392, suggests that Daredeath Dick was the first cowboy hero, but adds that "Daredeath Dick is a character so weakly drawn, playing so minor a part in the story named for him, that any such claim is a technicality." Russell therefore reserves the honor for Buck Taylor, the cowboy hero introduced in Prentiss Ingraham's Buck Taylor, King of the Cowboys; or, The Raiders and the Rangers, Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 497(Feb. 1, 1887). Still, both Daredeath Dick and Buck Taylor were preceded by Parson Jim, and perhaps by other as yet undiscovered cowboy heroes as well.

[90]Lewis, Daredeath Dick, King of the Cowboys, pp. 8, 28.

[91]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 497(Feb. 1, 1887).

[92]Beadle's Dime Library, No. 649(Apr. 1, 1891), p. 2.

[93]Beadle's Dime Library, No. 653(Apr. 29, 1891), p. 2.

[94]Joseph Waldmeir, "The Cowboy, the Knight, and Popular Taste," Southern Folklore Quarterly, 22(Sept. 1958), 116.

[95]Ingraham, The Lasso King's League, p. 28.

[96]Beadle's Dime Library, No. 658(June 3, 1891), p. 2.

[97]Ingraham, The Lasso King's League, p. 2.

[98]Ingraham, The Cowboy Clan; or, The Tigress of Texas, p. 7.

[99]Ingraham, Buck Taylor, The Saddle King, p. 21.

[100]Ingraham, The Lasso King's League, pp. 9-11, 24.

[101]"Noname" [pseud.], Dandy Dan of Deadwood And His Big Bonanza, Tousey's Wide Awake Library, No. ?(1891?; rpt. New York: Gold Star Books Collector's Edition [IL7-37], n.d.), p. 73.

[102]J. Edward Leithead and Edward T. LeBlanc, "Rough Rider Weekly and the Ted Strong Saga [Bibliographic Listing]," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 478 (July 15, 1972), 3.

[103]Ned Taylor [Harry St. George Rathborne], Ted Strong's Rough Riders; or, The Boys of Black Mountain, Street & Smith's Young Rough Riders Weekly, No. 1(Apr. 23, 1904).

[104]pp. 3-4.

[105]Ned Taylor [Harry St. George Rathborne], Ted Strong's Nerve; or, Wild West Sport at Black Mountain, Street & Smith's Young Rough Riders Weekly, No. 8(June 11, 1904), pp. 27-28.

[106]Ned Taylor [Harry St. George Rathborne], Ted Strong's Rival; or, The Cowboys of Sunset Ranch, Street & Smith's Young Rough Riders Weekly, No. 9(June 18, 1904), p. 5.

[107]Taylor, Ted Strong's Rough Riders, pp. 1-3.

[108]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 1(Oct. 15, 1877), p. 2.

[109]Despite the firm's ban on "characters that carry an immoral taint" or "the repetition of any occurrence which, though true, is yet better untold," stories glorifying the life of Joaquin Murieta appeared in several Beadle publications, and the deeds of Black Bart formed the principal subject matter of William H. Manning's The Gold Dragon; or, The California Bloodhound. A Story of Po-8, the Lone Highwayman, Beadle's Dime Library, No. 279(Feb. 27, 1844).

[110]J. Edward Leithead, "The Bandit Brothers of Old Missouri," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 276(Sept. 15, 1955), 70-75; "The James Boys in the Saddle Again," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 280(Jan. 15, 1956), 2-5, and No. 283(Apr. 15, 1956), 26-30; "Outlaw Trails in Indian Territory," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 289 (Oct. 15, 1956), 78-80, and No. 290(Nov. 15, 1956), 87-89; and, "Wyoming's Wild Riders and Other Hunted Men," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 294(Mar. 15, 1957), 20-24.

[111]Ralph P. Smith, "Barred by the Post Office," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 145(Oct. 15, 1944), 1-5.

[112]William A. Settle, Jr., Jesse James Was His Name: or, Fact and Fiction Concerning the Careers of the Notorious James Brothers of Missouri (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1966), p. 189.

[113]Settle, p. 190, and Quentin Reynolds, The Fiction Factory: or, From Pulp Row to Quality Street (New York: Random House, 1955), pp. 115-16.

[114]For interesting accounts of the highwayman tradition in the English "bloods" or "penny dreadfuls," and later in the American dime novel, see E. S. Turner, Boys Will Be Boys, 2nd ed., rev. (1948; rpt. London: Joseph Michael Ltd., 1957), pp. 46-65; Ross Crauford, "Gallows Fruit," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 18 (June 15, 1932), 1-6; and, George H. Cordier, "The Duval Series," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 142(July 15, 1944), 1-3.

[115]Albert Johannsen, The House of Beadle and Adams (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1950), II, 296.

[116]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 1(Oct. 15, 1877), p. 13.

[117]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 35(Mar. 26, 1878; rpt. Deadwood Dick Library, No. 5, Mar. 15, 1899), p. 27.

[118]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 42(May 14, 1878; rpt. Deadwood Dick Library, No. 7, Mar. 15, 1899), pp. 3, 17.

[119]For an interesting discussion of the Western hero's superior moral perception, see James K. Folsom, The American Western Novel (New Haven, Conn.: College & University Press, 1966), pp. 136-37.

[120]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 100(June 24, 1879;rpt. Deadwood Dick Library, No. 23, Mar. 15, 1899), pp. 5, 16.

[121]p. 7.

[122]p. 26.

[123]pp. 30-31.

[124]Deadwood Dick's Dream; or, The Rivals of the Road. A Mining Tale of Tombstone, Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 195(Apr. 19, 1881), p. 8.

[125]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 104(July 22, 1879; rpt. Deadwood Dick Library, No. 21, Mar. 15, 1899), p. 5.

[126]p. 8.

[127]p. 23.

[128]pp. 23, 25.

[129]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 73(Dec. 17, 1878; rpt. Deadwood Dick Library, No. 15, Mar. 15, 1899), p. 9.

[130]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 156(July 20, 1880; rpt. Deadwood Dick Library, No. 17, Mar. 15, 1899), pp. 9, 12, 30-31.

[131]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 362(July 1, 1884), p. 3.

[132]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 430(Oct. 20, 1885), p. 14.

[133]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 299(Apr. 17, 1883; rpt. The Detective Road-Agent; or, The Miners of Sassafras City, Deadwood Dick Library, No. 63, Mar. 15, 1899).

[134]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 141(Apr. 6, 1880; rpt. Deadwood Dick Library, No. 32, Mar. 15, 1899), p. 31.

[135]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 236(Jan. 31, 1882; rpt. Dick Drew, the Miner's Son; or, Apollo Bill, the Road-Agent, Deadwood Dick Library, No. 48, Mar. 15, 1899), pp. 4-5, 17.

[136]Joseph Henry Jackson, Bad Company (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949), pp. 7-12.

[137](1854; rpt. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1955).

[138]Jackson, p. 19.

[139]Jackson, pp. 22, 332, makes reference to the only Murieta tale not penned by Badger. Unsigned, Joaquin: The Claude Duval of California appeared in DeWitt's Fifteen Cent Library in 1865 and was later reprinted in the Echo Series as Joaquin: The Marauder of the Mines. Apparently this was the first Murieta dime novel. I have been unable to locate a copy, but a passage quoted by Jackson indicates that the outlaw was even then accruing nobility: "He was noticeable during his youth for the gentlest and most placid of natures; everybody who knew him in those days speaking rapturously of his then noble and generous spirit."

[140]Harry Hazard [Joseph E. Badger, Jr.], The Man-Hunters; or, The Scourge of the Mines, Starr's American Novels, No. 60(Mar. 7, 1871; rpt. Ned, the Roving Miner; or, Arkansaw Jack's Match, Beadle's Pocket Library, No. 327, Apr. 16, 1890), pp. 7, 30.

[141]Beadle's Dime Library, No. 28(Feb. 26, 1878).

[142]Beadle's Dime Library, No. 88(Feb. 25, 1880), p. 14.

[143]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 203(June 14, 1881), p. 13.

[144]Beadle's Dime Library, No. 154(Oct. 5, 1881), pp. 12, 19.

[145]Beadle's Dime Library, No. 165(Dec. 21, 1881), p. 29.

[146]Beadle's Dime Library, No. 201(Aug. 30, 1882), pp. 7-8, 29.

[147]D. W. Stevens [pseud.], The James Boys at Cracker Neck, Tousey's Wide Awake Library, No. ?(?; rpt. New York: Gold Star Books Collector's Edition [IL7-34], n.d.), pp. 91-92, 124-26.

[148]Kent Ladd Steckmesser, The Western Hero in History and Legend (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1965), pp. 73, 76.

[149]Don Jenardo, The True Life of Billy the Kid Tousey's Wide Awake Library, No. 451(Aug. 29, 1881), pp. 5-7.

[150]J. C. Cowdrick, Silver-Mask, The Man of Mystery; or, The Cross of the Golden Keys, Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 360(June 17, 1884), in Steckmesser, p. 76.

[151]Francis W. Doughty, Old King Brady and 'Billy the Kid'; or, The Great Detective's Chase, Tousey's New York Detective Library, No. 411(Oct. 11, 1890), p. 4.

[152]Edmund Fable, Jr., Billy the Kid, the New Mexico Outlaw; or, the Bold Bandit of the West! A True and Impartial History of the Greatest of American Outlaws . . . Who Killed A Man for Every Year in his Life (Denver: Denver Publishing Co., 1881), in Steckmesser, p. 75.

[153]William Ward [Harry St. George Rathborne?], Jesse James' Fate; or, The End of the Crimson Trail, Westbrook's Adventure Series, No. 43(1908?). For a discussion of this little known series, see J. Edward Leithead, "The Anatomy of Dime Novels, No. 10, Pt. II," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 430, 68-71.

[154]William Ward [pseud.], Jeff Clayton's Lost Clue; or, The Mystery of the Wireless Murder, Westbrook's Adventure Series, No. 44(1908?).

[155]For a discussion of the similarities between the Western hero and the detective, see John Seelye, "Buckskin and Ballistics: William Leggett and the American Detective Story," Journal of Popular Culture, 1(Summer 1967), 52-57.

NOTES

CHAPTER IV

[1]James Fenimore Cooper, The Deerslayer (1841; rpt. New York: Washington Square Press, 1961), p. 1.

[2]By the Author of "Buffalo Bill" [pseud.], Buffalo Bill's Leap for Life; or, The White Death of Beaver Wash, Street & Smith's Buffalo Bill Stories, No. 100 (1902?; rpt. New York: Gold Star Books Collector's Edition [IL7-33], n.d.), pp. 38-41.

[3]Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (1957; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1970), pp. 186-87, 194, 192.

[4]For a discussion of the evolution of the Indian captivity tale from a direct story of divine providence to a blood and thunder adventure story, see Roy Harvey Pearce, "The Significance of the Captivity Narrative," American Literature, 19(1947), 1-20. The plot and characters of the so-called "Indian plays" of nineteenth century melodrama are discussed in David Grimsted, Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater and Culture, 1800-1850 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 215-20. Conversely, a study of the impact of the dime novel Western upon melodrama appears in Frank Rahill, The World of Melodrama (University Park: The Penn. State Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 235-38.

[5]Edward S. Ellis, Seth Jones; or, The Captives of the Frontier, Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 8(Oct. 2, 1860; rpt. Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 8, Nov. 9, 1877).

[6]Frye, pp. 195-97.

[7]By the Author of "The Silver Bugle" [Lieut. Col. Hazelton], Quindaro; or, The Heroine of Fort Laramie, Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 77(Jan. 31, 1865), p. 55.

[8]By the Author of "The Silent Hunter" [Percy St. John], Queen of the Woods; or, The Shawnee Captive, Beadle's Dime Novels, Nos. 152-155(June 9, 1868-July 24, 1868; rpt. Percy St. John, The Big Hunter; or, The Queen of the Woods, Beadle's Dime Library, No. 86, Jan. 28, 1880), pp. 31-32.

[9]Joseph E. Badger, Jr., The Wood King; or, Daniel Boone's Last Trail, Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 288(Aug. 12, 1873; rpt. The King of the Woods; or Daniel Boone's Last Trail, Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 355, May 13, 1884), p. 3.

[10]D. W. Stevens [John R. Musick?], The James Boys in No Man's Land; or, The Bandit King's Last Ride, Tousey's New York Detective Library, No. 438 (Apr. 18, 1891), pp. 16, 30.

[11]Joseph E. Badger, Jr., The Pirate of the Placers; or, Joaquin's Death-Hunt, Beadle's Dime Library, No. 201 (Aug. 30, 1882), p. 11.

[12]Harry Hazard [Joseph E. Badger, Jr.], The Bear-Hunter; or, Davy Crockett as a Spy, Starr's American Novels, No. 118(May 27, 1873), p. 13.

[13]John Sherman, Daniel Boone's Best Shot; or, The Perils of the Kentucky Pioneers [Original Series Unknown], (?; rpt. Tousey's Wide Awake Library, No. 1150, Dec. 3, 1892), p. 3.

[14]Silver and Scout, of course, are ridden by the Lone Ranger and Tonto. Trigger and Buttermilk belong to Roy Rogers and Dale Evans.

[15]Albert W. Aiken, "Red Arrow, the Wolf Demon; or, The Queen of the Kanawha," Beadle's Saturday Journal, I, Nos. 35-49(Nov. 12, 1870-Feb. 18, 1871; rpt. The Wolf Demon; or, The Queen of the Kanawha, Beadle's Dime Library, No. 49, Aug. 21, 1878), p. 30.

[16]Frye, p. 197.

[17]Sherman, Daniel Boone's Best Shot, pp. 3-4.

[18]Tousey's Wide Awake Library, No. 1311(Mar. 19, 1897; rpt. New York: Gold Star Books Collector's Edition [IL7-59], n.d.), p. 125.

[19][Anon.], "Womanhood," The Christian Examiner, 68(Mar., 1860), 175, 168.

[20]Homicide in American Fiction, 1798-1860: A Study in Social Values (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1957), p. 148. For a fuller discussion of the relationship between sex and death in American fiction before 1860, see pp. 147-236.

[21]Beadle's Half Dime Library, No. 201(May 31, 1881; rpt. Deadwood Dick's Ward; or, The Black Hills Jezebel, Deadwood Dick Library, No. 41, Mar. 15, 1899), pp. 1-2.

[22]pp. 5, 10.

[23]p. 28.

[24]pp. 17, 29.

[25]Recurrent plots and common variants in the modern Western are discussed in Russel B. Nye, The Unembarrassed Muse: The Popular Arts in America (New York: The Dial Press, 1970), pp. 301-02, and Mody C. Boatright, "The Formula in Cowboy Fiction and Drama," Western Folklore, 28 (Apr., 1969), 136-45.

NOTES

CHAPTER V

[1]The impact of rising second-class postal rates on the form of the dime novel is discussed by Ralph P. Smith, "Barred by the Post Office," Dime Novel Roundup, No. 145 (Oct. 15, 1944), 1-5. In a personal letter to me dated May 24, 1971, Charles Bragin, noted dime novel collector and bibliographer, attributes the demise of the dime novel to the growing popularity of films.

[2]Russel B. Nye, The Unembarrassed Muse: The Popular Arts in America (New York: The Dial Press, 1970), pp. 210-12. Full length studies of the pulp magazine include Frank Gruber, The Pulp Jungle (Los Angeles: Sherbourne Press, 1967) and Quentin Reynolds, The Fiction Factory: or, From Pulp Row to Quality Street (New York: Random House, 1955).

[3]The Works of Orestes A. Brownson, ed. Henry F. Brownson, 20 vols. (Detroit: 1882-1907), XV, 60, quoted in Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967), p. 94.

[4]Initially discussed in Chapter I, my ideas with regard to the Western's function as game, ritual, and collective dream are indebted to John G. Cawelti, The Six-Gun Mystique (Bowling Green: The Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1971).

Note: Epigraphs prefixed to chapters are taken from Isaac Appleton Jewett, "Themes for Western Fiction," The Western Monthly Magazine, 1(Dec., 1833), as follows: 575 (Ch. I); 577, 576 (Ch. II); 578 (Ch. III); 583 (Ch. IV); and, 586 (Ch. V).

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LIST OF REFERENCES

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Dime novels cited in this study are fully documented in the Notes to individual chapters. There exists no single, comprehensive bibliography of dime novels, but a number of shorter bibliographies are helpful. The definitive bibliography of Beadle and Adams publications is Albert Johannsen, The House of Beadle and Adams, 2 vols. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), Supplement (1962). Also helpful is Charles Bragin, Bibliography: Dime Novels 1860-1964 (Brooklyn: Charles Bragin, 1964). A complete list of Buffalo Bill dime novels appears in Don Russell, The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960). Dime Novel Roundup, a monthly newsletter for collectors and libraries, publishes bibliographical listings periodically.

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