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LITERARY NATIONALISM AND THE AMERICAN ROMANCE:
AN APPRAISAL OF ROMANCE GENRE THEORY
AND AN EXAMINATION OF CRITICAL OPTIONS

presented by

Ruth A. Harring

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in English

Michael R Lopez
Major professor

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THE PRIORITY OF APPRECIATION-- LITERARY NATIONALISM AND THE AMERICAN ROMANCE: AN APPRAISAL OF ROMANCE GENRE THEORY AND AN EXAMINATION OF CRITICAL OPTIONS

By

Ruth A. Harring

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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Department of English

1994

ABSTRACT

THE PRIORITY OF APPRECIATION--
LITERARY NATIONALISM AND THE AMERICAN ROMANCE:
AN APPRAISAL OF ROMANCE GENRE THEORY
AND AN EXAMINATION OF LITERARY OPTIONS

By

Ruth A. Harring

In 1957 Richard Chase published his seminal critical work The American Novel and Its Tradition in which he proposed that the romance constituted the predominant genre of early nineteenth-century American fiction. He based his hypothesis upon a nationalistic comparison between nineteenth-century American and British fiction. Central to Chase's hypothesis is the critical question: "What is American about American literature?" Chase posited that the romance was the early form of American fiction while the British fictional mode was primarily the novel. Chase found support for his perspective in the works of such well-known literary critics as F. O. Matthiessen and Lionel Trilling.

Through an assessment of twentieth-century literary criticism relative to romance genre theory, this dissertation examines the critical consequences of Chase's hypothesis, contests its nationalistic premise, questions its literary priorities, and provides a selective survey of subsequent romance genre criticism. Chase's hypothesis has generated a great deal of literary criticism. While many American romance genre critics have agreed with Chase about the romance as the dominant nineteenth-century literary form

of American fiction, others have pointed out the limitations of his hypothesis. Due to the widespread influence of Chase's hypothesis upon literary canon, critics of nineteenth-century American literature have felt it necessary to argue for greater recognition of other native genres which existed alongside the romance or to argue for a broader definition of what constituted our early national literature. These critics argue that Chase's hypothesis privileges certain early American authors and texts. Critics argue that Chase's romance genre hypothesis excludes fiction written by women, the novel of manners, fiction written by persons of non-caucasian origin, and fiction depicting social class issues and social conflict.

This dissertation also posits a parallel between the nationalistic ferment of our early American fictionists and twentieth-century romance genre criticism subsequent to Chase. The final chapters on three early American authors, Charles Brockden Brown, James Fenimore Cooper, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, illustrate the initial phases of literary nationalism of our incipient native literature.

Dedicated to
Olga M. Myrom
and
Arthur M. Myrom,
with gratitude for their
role and kindness as parents.

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INTRODUCTION

> For believe it or not England, after all, is, in many things, an alien to us....But even were there no Hawthorne, no Emerson, no Whittier, no Irving, no Bryant, no Dana, no Cooper...were there none of these, and others of like calibre, nevertheless, let America first praise mediocrity even, in her own children, before she praises (for everywhere, merit demands acknowledgement from every one) the best excellence in the children of any other land. Let her own authors, I say, have the priority of appreciation.[1]
>
> Herman Melville, 1850

Background and Thesis

Throughout its history, America has sought to develop its identity through its literature. The course of this quest has fluctuated according to social, philosophical, economic, and political forces impinging upon the culture.[2] While the literary arts of sermons, oratory, and poetry flourished early and retained their prominence (minimally) through the nineteenth-century, the art of fiction began its development primarily after the Revolutionary War and took root in the period after the War of 1812. Early American authors, such as Charles Brockden Brown, Susanna Rowson, Hannah Webster Foster, Washington Irving, William Gilmore

Simms, James Fenimore Cooper, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, and Nathaniel Hawthorne succeeded in establishing a native identity in their fiction, creating an "American" literature.

Alongside our native fiction, on a wave of renewed nationalistic ferment, a rudimentary literary criticism developed. Nearly all major critics during this period addressed the issue of an "American Literature" in their speeches and essays. This criticism began primarily as a discussion accompanying our literature and pursued a nationalistic aim. Its role was prospective rather than retrospective. Its aim was not to reconstruct, but rather to assess indigenous literature, monitor public taste, and suggest potential direction for native fiction.[3] And although critics did not spare American writers their derisive comments, they sought primarily to encourage their efforts toward a national literature. Both late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century authors and critics have frequently identified the literary form which developed during this ferment of literary nationalism as the romance.[4]

In the twentieth-century similar nationalistic overtones developed among American literary scholars as they reconstructed the critical history of our literature.[5] Critical appraisals frequently emphasized the "Americanness" of American literature, and scholars identified the unique characteristics of our early literature particularly to distinguish American literature from the literature of

England. This retrospective criticism documented the growth of our indigenous fiction and culminated in what might be termed a "romance hypothesis." Thus certain twentieth-century critics concurred with some early writers and asserted that romance is the dominant fictional mode of our nascent late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century fiction. This hypothesis was forwarded principally by Richard Chase. In 1957 Chase published his seminal critical work The American Novel and Its Tradition in which he proposed that the romance constituted the predominant genre of early nineteenth-century American fiction. In his introduction Chase argues "that since the earliest days the American novel, in its most original and characteristic form, has worked out its destiny and defined itself by incorporating an element of romance. This purpose," he continues, "has led me to propose a native tradition of the novel."[6] He concludes that "most of the great American novels are romances," and further "that the tradition of romance is major in the history of the American novel" (AN xii).

Thesis and Development

Chase's hypothesis was seminal. It represented the culmination of a long tradition of American literary criticism. He found support for his hypothesis in the work of such well-known literary critics as F. O. Matthiessen and Lionel Trilling. Chase's proposal for a "native tradition

of the novel" allowed Joel Porte to conclude in The Romance in America (1969), that "it no longer seems necessary to argue for the importance of romance as a nineteenth-century American genre..." (RA vii).[7] Porte argues that:

> Students of American literature...have provided a solid theoretical basis for establishing that the rise and growth of fiction in this country is dominated by our authors' conscious adherence to a tradition of non-realistic romance sharply at variance with the broadly novelistic mainstream of English writing. When there has been disagreement among recent critics as to the contours of American fiction, it has usually disputed, not the existence per se of a romance tradition, but rather the question of which authors, themes, and stylistic strategies deserve to be placed with certainty at the heart of that tradition. (RA ix)

Porte's statement pinpoints the nexus of issues which comprise the modern critical debate that focuses upon early American fiction--the romance genre, nationalism, and literary canon.

Through a survey and assessment of twentieth-century literary criticism relative to romance genre theory, this dissertation examines the critical consequences of Chase's hypothesis, contests its nationalistic premise, and questions its "priority of appreciation," that is, how Chase's romance genre hypothesis privileges certain nineteenth-century authors and fiction over others. Since Richard Chase's text, The American Novel and Its Tradition (1957), critics of early American literature have become aware that his hypothesis promoted certain literary biases. Chase's hypothesis sought to distinguish early American fiction from British fiction on the basis of genre.

Consequently, his hypothesis, depending as it does upon this genre distinction, both excluded and privileged certain authors or works in reconstructing a "distinctive" American literary history. The hypothesis at times favored a nebulous "Americanness" over literary excellence. It elevated the nineteenth-century romance over other fictional genres. In discussing the nineteenth-century romance Chase selected male rather than female authors and fiction, and his hypothesis favored caucasian rather than other racial literary representation.

There is little doubt that the romance was a prominent fictional genre in early American literary history. Chase's text made an important contribution in "rescuing" the American romance in the wake of F. R. Leavis's The Great Tradition (1950), a text which asserted the literary primacy of the British novel. As a defense and appreciation of American literary tradition, Chase's critical stance was inherently nationalistic, although due to his cultural milieu Chase perhaps failed to become aware of the potent issue of literary canon which resulted from this unintentional bias. Due to the widespread influence of Chase's romance hypothesis upon literary canon, more recent critics of nineteenth-century American literature have felt it necessary to argue for greater recognition of other native genres which existed alongside the romance or to argue for a broader definition of what constituted our early national literature.

Like those early writers who sought to formulate a national literature, Chase's text confronts the larger critical issue: "What is American about American literature?" He identifies various "qualities [that] constitute the uniqueness of that branch of the novelistic tradition which has flourished in this country" (AN 1). While assuming "the American novel is obviously a development from the English tradition," Chase claims that the uniqueness of the American novel lies in its "strong element of 'romance'" (AN 3, 2). His purpose is to assert a divergent American fictional tradition, the romance, and to trace its historic development within the novelistic tradition. This position subsumes the romance under the broader category of the novel while claiming an independent development for American fiction. Although it is not my immediate purpose to elaborate further upon Chase's viewpoint and critical construction, it is worth noting here that much of his commentary relies upon contrasting the qualities of American romance with the British novel as well as upon a hierarchical sense of literary forms.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, several other critical works appeared which helped to consolidate Chase's hypothesis. This list notably includes R. W. B. Lewis, Daniel Hoffman, Perry Miller, and Joel Porte.[8] Although these critics approached the developing American literature variously, through archetype, myth, symbol, or themes common to romance, their commonality lies in their view of our

native fiction as romance. These critics are significant because they approach early American literature quite differently, yet each individual work has lent greater solidification, if not credence, to the romance hypothesis.[9]

While many subsequent critics enthusiastically accept Chase's assertion, other critical voices argue against its exclusionary bias. Still others grapple with specific genre problems (e.g. defining romance, distinguishing the romance from the novel, etc.). However, since 1957 most critics of early American literature have found it necessary to respond to Chase's hypothesis. As Lawrence Buell asserts in "New Views of American Narrative" (1977), "most scholars have found it more congenial to work within the framework of the romance hypothesis, revising it as needed, rather than to discard it altogether."[10]

In pursuit of distinguishing American fiction, critics consistently recognize the central role Hawthorne's fiction plays. Porte claims "that without Hawthorne there could be no firm theory of American romance" (RA 95). No twentieth-century critic of our early American literature has been able to ignore Hawthorne's contributions to fiction, his ideas on romance set forth in his prefaces, or his central role in the development of a national literature.[11] Hawthorne neither expounded his ideas on romance systematically nor stated his nationalistic sentiments directly, yet he remains the most consistent literary figure mentioned within this body of American genre theory.[12]

Consequently, to confirm their romance genre hypothesis, critics have frequently turned to Hawthorne's prefaces, tales, and longer fiction where he informally presents his theoretical views and describes his fictional practice.

Nineteenth-Century Fiction and Modern Romance Genre Criticism

This dissertation also posits a parallel between the nationalistic ferment of our early American fictionists and twentieth-century romance genre criticism subsequent to Chase's hypothesis. Both our late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American writers and twentieth-century American literary critics, have proved to be alike in their nationalistic concern to forge an American identity based upon native literature. The nationalistic impulse fused early American fiction with its complementary criticism. Modern critics, such as Chase, elaborated upon this fusion of criticism with fiction and elevated the romance as this period's characteristic form of fiction. What has resulted is a twentieth-century debate over issues surrounding the romance genre.

In assessing these two periods, one of formative, nineteenth-century fiction with its complementary criticism, and the other of a retrospective, reconstructive, modern criticism, I observe a similar pattern. This pattern becomes evident in the fluctuations derived from the nationalistic impulse inherent in both bodies of literature

despite the lapse of a century. The nationalistic motivation urged American writers after the Revolution to develop a native literature. This movement began principally in New England and secondarily in the South. What began as presumably a unified national goal changed. This transformation was due primarily to three conditions: 1) the recognition of regional differences; 2) diverse opinions of what defined "Americanism"; and 3) various modes of fiction which developed side by side according to authors' propensities.

What began as a unified demand for a national literature, diversified into literary regionalism and "local color." The process by which this occurred bore similarity to New England's literary struggles for independence from England. As America expanded, regional differences, as in the South or the Frontier, likewise demanded representative literature reflecting their various populations. As these differences in social life, economics, or regional politics became more apparent, the regional demands for literary independence from New England also grew. Many of the claims voiced against England in the national struggle for literary independence which followed the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, were later reiterated in the South or in Frontier states against New England.

The modern romance hypothesis has undergone similar transformation due to significant exclusions that subsequent critics noted. When Porte asserted that "it no longer seems

necessary to argue for the importance of romance as a nineteenth-century American genre," and further "that the rise and growth of fiction in this country is dominated by our authors' conscious adherence to a tradition of non-realistic romance," his statement contained an important political footnote (RA ix). This statement aroused critics' consciousness of literary canon as had the issue of literary independence at one time absorbed the minds of our early critics and authors. Both issues confront the question of defining American literature, an inherently nationalistic question.[13] Ultimately any response to this question will contain some biases and will preclude or include certain authors and novels accordingly. Porte obviously recognized how this hypothesis impinged upon canon issues when he added the following statement:

> When there has been disagreement among recent critics as to the contours of American fiction, it has usually disputed, not the existence per se of a romance tradition but rather the question of which authors, themes, and stylistic strategies deserve to be placed with certainty at the heart of that tradition. (RA ix)

The result has been to contest the limits of Chase's hypothesis, the narrowness of his genre approach to American literary history.

The Critical Debate

A great deal of criticism has advanced upon the above premise. Some modern critics of American literature have since disputed the "romance hypothesis" upon the precise

conditions Porte claims are indisputable. Critics have noticed primarily what literature and which authors are excluded by this claim.[14] Struck by the exclusion of non-caucasian and/or women writers, for example, many critical arguments focus on the issue of the canon. Nina Baym, for example, has attacked Chase's romance theory for its exclusion of women writers.[15] She has also questioned the definition of the romance with considerable documentation from the use of the term by nineteenth-century critics and authors.[16] John Tuttleton has argued for recognition of the novel of manners excluded by the romance hypothesis. He begins The Novel of Manners in America with an essay on James Fenimore Cooper as a novelist of manners.[17] Others have mentioned that an antebellum tradition of realism existed, though largely ignored, and that nineteenth-century critics consistently called for this approach.[18] Still others, basing their conclusions upon cultural affinities, language similarities, philosophical influences, or blurred genre distinctions, etc., see the differences between American literature and British literature as artificial or exaggerated.[19] These critics reject Porte's notion of a "native, non-realistic tradition" of literature "at variance with the broadly novelistic mainstream of English writing" (RA ix). Ultimately, in 1990, John McWilliams boldly asserted that Chase's hypothesis "should be now and finally abandoned."[20]

Much of our early literature veered towards the

romance and our authors improvised upon its original European form. However, I argue with the limitations of a genre approach, such as Chase's hypothesis, to encompass the complexity involved in the development of our early native literature. Recent criticism has pointed out the limitations of the romance genre hypothesis and has offered alternative paradigms to explain the continuity of American literature. Since Chase's hypothesis new critical approaches to early American literature have developed which have proved better to explain the continuity of American literature and to be more inclusive of America's literary diversity.[21] These have generally disregarded Chase's genre distinctions and yet have proved capable of managing the greater diversity and complexity of American literature from its inception with regard to gender, ethnicity, and genre. As a consequence, these methods have had greater explanatory power than Chase's genre approach to early American fiction has allowed. Chase's hypothesis suffers an inadequacy which frequently mar genre approaches to literary history: due to this approach's focus upon a strand of American literature united by a single, yet fluctuating characteristic--the broadly defined romance--other aspects of our early literary history are ignored.[22]

As the body of romance genre criticism has grown, the tendency amongst more recent critics has been to argue for less severe parameters of what constitutes our early native literature. Critics debate the exclusionary bias of the

romance form which Chase's hypothesis and other scholars forward as representing our native literature. The tendency has been to argue for the recognition of various literary "regionalisms" or for a definition of early American literature which would include "local color," so to speak--women writers, minority writers, realism, novels of manners, as well as variant philosophical viewpoints (e.g. socialist perspectives), etc. Since the 1960s, the romance hypothesis has been debated on many sides. This debate has had a diversifying influence. The result has been a demand for greater recognition of the continuous and diverse multi-faceted character of American literature from its roots in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries. While, according to Porte, it "no longer seems necessary to argue for the importance of romance as a nineteenth-century American genre," what dissident critical voices ascertain is that the debate about what constitutes the native tradition of American literature is far from over.

An Overview of The Dissertation

While the previous discussion encompasses the thesis and general direction of this dissertation, one major purpose of this dissertation is to provide a selective overview of American romance genre criticism since Chase's hypothesis was presented in 1957. Against the backdrop of our early fiction and accompanying criticism, I document the convolutions and continuities of this body of American

Romance genre theory. The focus upon critics of this century necessarily calls for a reconstruction of some elements in the literary milieu of our early native fiction. The discussion in Chapter One makes evident the overriding nationalism or political bias which pervades the early development of our native literature. While this nationalistic bias reappears in modern romance genre criticism, the limitations of comparing two bodies of English literature have also invited and suggested alternative approaches to the study of early American literature.

This chapter also focuses upon what distinguishes our early native fiction. Benjamin Spencer's book, The Quest for Nationality, provides a basis for exploring the literary nationalism apparent in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries. Although there are other texts which attempt what Spencer does, his text presents the most concise and least biased approach to the development of our early native literature conjoined with nationalistic ferment.[23] He explains the implicit and explicit nationalism which served as an impetus and sustenance for our early fiction. In conjunction with Spencer, I review early American authors' and critics' ideas on the controversial development of a national literature. Many of their statements have been anthologized in books such as Richard Ruland's Native Muse (1972) or Stanley Bank's American Romanticism (1969). These segments provide

background for Chapter Two's discussion of Richard Chase's critical claims in the late 1950s, the scholarship which solidified the romance hypothesis.

Chapter Two begins by tracing the critical sources which allowed Chase to forward his romance-novel hypothesis and then provides a critical review of his thesis. This chapter also offers a survey of modern criticism subsequent to Chase's romance hypothesis. I have divided this vast body of criticism into two major categories: those critics whose views use Chase's hypothesis to support and extend their own critical texts sometimes refining or correcting his approach; and that criticism which opposes Chase's hypothesis and seeks either to supplement or supplant it with an alternative approach. Within this framework, the discussion of various romance genre critics' viewpoints is arranged chronologically--treating those who favor part or all of the romance hypothesis first--in order to see major trends and organize a great quantity of data.

The critical texts which I discuss in Chapter Two have been chosen for their specific bearing upon romance genre theory as Richard Chase presents it in The American Novel and Its Tradition (1957). Other criteria for selection include the texts' overall critical reception and influence, their contribution to romance genre theory, their relevance to subsequent chapters, and, finally, their representation of my understanding of the progress of modern romance genre theory. Some of the major issues involved are as follows:

the nationalistic issue of literary identity (What is "American" about American literature?); the question of either an indigenous or a shared origin of the romance genre; the development of the romance in America; and, finally, the problem of literary canon.

There are many monumental critical texts which do not directly contribute to romance genre theory but discuss nineteenth-century fiction. These are obviously omitted from my discussion. A second class of criticism which I only footnote are those works which discuss romance genre theory but limit their discussion primarily to a single nineteenth-century author. These works generally focus upon Hawthorne's fiction.

I also contend that nineteenth-century authors' views of their fictional practice are important. Thus, in order to refine my response to Chase's hypothesis from the perspective of these authors, three early American fictionists and one European writer are considered in Chapters Three through Six. In these sections, Charles Brockden Brown's, James Fenimore Cooper's, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's comments relative to the romance are discussed. These American authors are selected for their representativeness in the progression of romance as it served nationalistic purposes in American literature. Selections from their prefaces, essays, tales, and longer fiction are used to discuss their ideas about the romance and fictional methods as well as the relationship of their

fiction to nationalistic literary aspirations. These authors are considered chronologically. This segment also includes a chapter considering Scott's contribution to American fiction.

These chapters also indirectly critique genre assessments of our literary development. The chapters on Cooper and Hawthorne, in particular, critique Chase's approach. The discussion of Cooper illustrates the inadequacy of a genre approach to literature--how certain texts (and/or authors) may be excluded in the process. The segment on Hawthorne provides an illustration of what recent critics have called for--an approach to literature which finds continuity between narrative and other literary genres.

The discussions of Brown, Cooper and Hawthorne together illustrate an artistic latitude which defies the boundaries set by genre theory. These later chapters function in several ways: they discuss the importance of nationalism to the fiction of three early American authors (C. B. Brown, Cooper, and Hawthorne); describe the relationship between the romance and nationalism as it affected their art; illustrate some of the limitations of Chase's method; and suggest an alternative critical approach by example. In brief, Brown's fiction appeared during a period of nascent nationalism and the beginnings of fiction in America. New forms of experience required new forms of expression. Brown succeeded in adapting fictional forms practiced in Europe to

New World circumstances. His fiction transforms the Gothic romance of Europe and represents the rudimentary beginnings of the quest for a national literature. His contribution was to take the first steps in creating a native fiction. Brown's fiction represents the first phase in the development of native literature when nationalism appears in its nascency.

Cooper wrote during the era immediately after the second war with Britain. At that time, to "naturalize" fiction (that is, to use American characters, themes, settings, and ideas) was to nationalize it. His fiction acts as a bridge between Scott's nationalistic romances, or European models, and American fiction. Cooper infuses native fiction with democratic principles as he perceived them. For Cooper, the expression of American democratic ideals in fiction was highly significant. Cooper's fiction represents the second phase of literary nationalism when art became subordinate to a nationalistic goal.

Hawthorne wrote fiction during a less dynamic nationalistic period than those in which either Brown or Cooper wrote following the wars with England. Critics and authors still aspired to a preeminent American author who would represent American ideals, values, character, landscape, and history. Hawthorne desired to be among these ranks. Both his peers and modern critics have accorded this status to Hawthorne. However, Hawthorne subordinates literary nationalism to his art. In subordinating this goal

to his medium, Hawthorne's tales and romances become an authentic expression of this long-sought, national literary goal.

The romance predominates as the preferred literary mode of these three authors. European examples, from the beginning of the search for a national literature, served as models for American writers. Brown made use of European Gothic writers' fiction. Cooper and Hawthorne were directly inspired by Scott's example. The chapter on Scott, placed chronologically, falls between the chapters on Brown and on Cooper. The comments which Scott made about the romance in his essays and in his prefaces illustrate how many of the ideas about romance were not native but rather a continuous literary tradition in the English language. In this tradition literary forms, most often begun in Europe, were modified by American writers to suit native conditions. The prose romance itself is not purely a native art form, as some critics have erroneously assumed subsequent to Chase's hypothesis.[24] Rather, through the example of Scott, the romance became allied with nationalism, and American authors adopted the form for this purpose.

Brown, Cooper and Hawthorne were each experimental: each adopted as well as revised their uses of the romance. Their innovations may be said to have given the non-indigenous romance form an American expression. As authors, these American writers had three primary concerns in common: the comparison between history and the romance; the moral

purpose of fiction; and the relationship between reality and fiction. Scott's contribution remains limited primarily to the first of these concerns. He modeled the use of a "shallow" history for the purposes of the romance and provided American writers with a means to solve the literary dilemma which they confronted in an era dominated by literary nationalism.[25]

Like most early American authors, C. B. Brown, Cooper, and Hawthorne were concerned with their present circumstances, and I have selected to discuss these writers for their representativeness as authors during the inception, rise, and fall of nineteenth-century literary nationalism which accompanied the growth of early American fiction. Creating or contributing to a native and a national literature was foremost amongst their priorities. Each tried to differentiate their fiction from other allied or competing genres, such as epic or history, that were already considered viable genres. These authors aspired to a continuity with those literary traditions as well as latitude for their own innovative art forms. They contended with the problem of reality and how to express their perceptions of reality in literary form. The romance met the purposes of each. The fervor of nationalism, expressed in their fiction to varying degrees, appears and subsides with the national incidents that induced this sentiment--primarily American independence from Britain and the subsequent drive for a similar literary independence.

Critics will always have to contend with the limitations of fixed definitions, while artists continue to refine and improvise upon recognized literary genres. Henry James wrote in his essay "The Art of Fiction" (1888):

> The execution belongs to the author alone; it is what is most personal to him, and we measure him by that. The advantage, the luxury, as well as the torment and responsibility of the novelist, is that there is no limit to what he may attempt as an executant--no limit to his possible experiments, efforts, discoveries, successes.[26]

James recognizes that genre definitions shift with the innovations of artists. Genre, in James opinion, is relatively unimportant for the producer's "art of fiction." While Chase attempts to become more inclusive in the lengthy "romance-novel" genre definition he proposes, his broad definition of romance which invites ambiguity serves a limited purpose for distinguishing this early American fictional mode. His definition also departs considerably from early American authors' views of their practice discussed later in this work. His text becomes what Henry James asserted in 1888, a "clumsy" genre distinction made "for the [critics'] own convenience, and to help them out of some occasional predicament...."[27] Chase's predicament was nationalistic--a need to distinguish American fiction from English fiction in order to elevate the critical estimation of early American fiction. Although his "rescue" of the early American romance was successful, the nationalistic premise sustaining Chase's definition of early American fiction is no longer as useful or as necessary for arguing

either continuity or the distinctiveness of American literature. Other methods prevail. While Chase's genre approach has been useful and has generated a great deal of literary criticism, more recent methods which bypass the nationalistic romance-novel distinction prove more inclusive, identifying the "Americanness" and describing the complexity of early American literature more adequately.

NOTES

1. Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," The Norton Anthology of American Literature eds. Nina Baym, et al., 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: Norton, 1985) 2167.

2. Benjamin T. Spencer, The Quest for Nationality: An American Literary Campaign (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1957). Spencer provides an overview of this history between 1607-1892. His work emphasizes the period after the Revolutionary War, particularly between 1815-1892.

3. Public taste, in this instance, does not refer to the eighteenth-century concept of "taste" as conceived by contemporary English rhetoricians such as Blair, Kames, and Alison and associated with aristocratic hierarchies and social class distinctions. Rather, the term is employed in a republican nationalistic sense. It refers to a democratic public whose individual voices and preferences together assist in determining which authors and which books become published. In American Romanticism and the Marketplace (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985), Michael T. Gilmore discusses how "the commercialization of society and culture, profoundly affected the American romantics and had a shaping influence on the themes and form of their art" (1). He claims that each of the four writers whom he discusses, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and Melville "objected to the reduction of literature to the status of commodity; each expressed resentment at the reading public whose preferences governed the market" (Gilmore 6).

4. A notable exception is Nina Baym who challenges the consistency of the nineteenth-century use of the term "romance." See Novels, Readers, and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984).

5. For a discussion of this lineage of critics in conjunction with Richard Chase see Chapter Two. Chase's hypothesis is discussed in detail in that same chapter. In brief, F. O. Matthiessen's American Renaissance (New York: Oxford UP, 1941) is often considered a primary source for the romance hypothesis Chase forwards in The American Novel and its Tradition (1957). Prior to Matthiessen, D. H. Lawrence's, Studies in Classic American Literature (Garden City: Doubleday, 1951), originally published in 1922, establishes a lineage of nineteenth-century American authors and works. In addition, three articles written in the 1940s from Lionel Trilling's The Liberal Imagination (Garden City, New York: Anchor, 1950), are typically mentioned in conjunction with the shift in criticism towards a romance hypothesis of American literature. These are: "Manners, Morals and the Novel," "Art and Fortune," and "Reality in America." Nicolaus Mills discusses Trilling's contribution and credits David Hirsch, "Reality, Manners, and Mr.

Trilling," Sewanee Review 72 (1964): 420-32, with the above insight about Trilling as a progenitor of the romance-novel hypothesis in American literary criticism. For a discussion of this see Nicolaus Mills, American and English Fiction in the Nineteenth Century: An Antigenre Critique and Comparison (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1973) 4-6, 11-14, 129-36.

6. Richard Chase, introduction. The American Novel and Its Tradition, by Chase (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1957) viii. Further references to The American Novel and Its Tradition are cited in the text using the abbreviation AN and the page number given in parentheses.

7. Porte, introduction ix. Subsequent references to The Romance in America are cited in the text using the abbreviation RA and the page number given in parentheses.

8. R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1955); Daniel Hoffman, Form and Fable in American Fiction (New York: Oxford UP, 1961); Perry Miller, Nature's Nation (Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1967); and, Joel Porte, The Romance in America: Studies in Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and James (Middleton: Wesleyan UP, 1969).

9. A sketch of these works is provided in Chapter Two in conjunction with Chase's debts to modern literary critics.

10. Lawrence Buell, "New Views of American Narrative," Texas Studies in Literature and Language 19 (1977): 235.

11. Richard Brodhead acknowledges how certain texts and authors have become privileged. See Richard Brodhead, "Hawthorne and Tradition," The School of Hawthorne (New York: Oxford UP, 1986) 3-16. Brodhead observes that Hawthorne's "indefiniteness" is what has conferred this position upon him (Brodhead 15). From Hawthorne, Brodhead contends, critics may establish lineages of "American local-color fiction," "romance," "realist," "Protestant," and "Catholic" literary lineages (Brodhead 16).

12. John McWilliams and George Dekker both observe that Chase's romance hypothesis "privileges Hawthorne." George Dekker, "Once More: Hawthorne and the Genealogy of American Romance," ESQ 44 (1989) 72; See also his complete argument (Dekker 70-3, 82-3); and John P. McWilliams, "The Rationale for the American Romance," Boundary 2 17 (1990) 78-82.

13. Spengemann has made this observation. See William Spengemann, A Mirror for Americanists: Reflections on the Idea of American Literature (Hanover: UP of New England, 1989).

14. E.g., McWilliams 71-82; Jane Tompkins, Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860 (New York: Oxford UP, 1985); or, Nina Baym, Feminism and Theories of American Literary History: Essays (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1992).

15. Alongside Richard Chase The American Novel and Its Tradition (1957), Baym also faults Henry Nash Smith Virgin Land (1950), Charles Feidelson Symbolism and American Literature (1953), R. W. B. Lewis The American Adam (1955), and Daniel G. Hoffman Form and Fable in American Fiction (1961), for generating the American romance genre "myth." See Baym, Feminism 10-11.

16. See respectively: Nina Baym, "Concepts of the Romance in Hawthorne's America" in Feminism, 57-70; Nina Baym, Novels, Readers and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984).

17. John W. Tuttleton, The Novel of Manners in America (Chapel Hill: U of NC Press, 1972). The problems of Cooper's fiction relative to genre are outlined in Chapter Five.

18. See William Charvat, "Criticism of Fiction," The Origins of American Critical Thought 1810-1835 (Philadelphia: U of Philadelphia Press, 1936) 134-163. Extensions of this thinking are manifest in the romance-novel debate where distinctions between the romance and the novel are viewed skeptically.

19. For variations of this posture consult: George Dekker, The American Historical Romance (New York: Cambridge UP, 1987); William Ellis, The Theory of the American Romance: An Ideology in American Intellectual History (Ann Arbor: UMI Research, 1989); Elissa Greenwald, Realism and Romance: Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, and American Fiction (Ann Arbor: UMI Research, 1989); or, Nicolaus Mills, American and English Fiction in the 19th Century (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1973).

20. McWilliams 62.

21. Examples of these critics and their texts are cited in Chapter Two. In his 1977 review essay, "New Views of American Narrative," Lawrence Buell suggests that Richard Slotkin's Regeneration Through Violence (1973) and Sacvan Bercovitch's The Puritan Origins of the American Self (1975) posit and reroute the continuity of American literature

avoiding the usual genre constrictions (Buell, "Views" 238-242). Alternatives to Chase's approach and hypothesis are presented in Chapter Two.

22. For a discussion of this point see: Nicolaus Mills, American and English Fiction in the Nineteenth Century: An Antigenre Critique and Comparison (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1973) 18-31.

23. Other notable critical texts and articles dealing with literary nationalism are: George Dangerfield, The Awakening of American Nationalism, 1815-1828 (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); Harry Hayden Clark, "Nationalism in American Literature," University of Toronto Quarterly 2 (1933): 492-519; E. K. Brown, "The National Idea in American Criticism," Dalhousie Review 14 (1934): 133-47; William Sedgwick, "The Materials for an American Literature: A Critical Problem of the Early Nineteenth Century," Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature 17 (1935): 141-62; Robert W. Bolwell, "Concerning the Study of Nationalism in American Literature," American Literature 10 (1939): 405-16; John J. McCloskey, "The Campaign of Periodicals after the War of 1812 for National American Literature," PMLA 50 (1935): 262-73; and Earl L. Bradsher, "The Rise of Nationalism in American Literature," Nathaniel M. Caffee and Thomas A. Kirby eds., Studies for William A. Read (University: Louisiana State UP, 1940): 269-87. The seminal study of literary nationalism is: W. B. Cairns, "On the Development of American Literature from 1815 to 1833," Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin 1 (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1901).

There are several anthologies which have compiled essays and journal articles which chronicle the development of American literature and literary nationalism from its inception: Stanley Bank, ed., American Romanticism: A Shape for Fiction (New York: Putnam, 1969); and two volumes by Richard Ruland, ed., The Native Muse: Theories of American Literature, vol. 1 (New York: Dutton, 1972) and A Storied Land: Theories of American Literature, vol. 2 (New York: Dutton, 1976); and Robert Spiller, The American Literary Revolution (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967).

24. McWilliams observes that "In scholarly practice, the term `Romance' was thereby freed from its undeniably nineteenth-century origin in Scott's `historical romance,' and then elevated into a universal, fictional type with a particular American application" (74).

25. Scott's Introductory to Waverley fixes "the date of my story Sixty Years before this present 1st November 1805"--thus modeling a "shallow" historical time frame which American writers' thought feasible for their fiction. Sir Walter Scott, Prefaces to the Waverley Novels, ed. Mark A. Weinstein (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1978) 9.

Cooper complains of a "shallow" American history in his 1831 Preface to The Water Witch: "The facts of this country are all so recent, and so familiar, that every innovation on them, by means of the imagination, is coldly received, if not absolutely frowned upon." Cited in Robert E. Spiller, James Fenimore Cooper: Representative Selections (New York: American Book, 1936) 289.

26. Henry James, "The Art of Fiction, Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971) 664.

27. Adams 666.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERARY NATIONALISM AND EARLY AMERICAN FICTION

> Long, long are the processes of the development of a nationality.[1] All serves our New World progress, even the bafflers, headwinds, crosstides. Through many perturbations and squalls, and much backing and filling, the ship, upon the whole makes unmistakably for her destination.[2]
>
> Walt Whitman, 1881

Nationalism and Early American Fiction: An Overview, 1812-1860

The era between the War of 1812 and the Civil War may be characterized as an era of renewed literary nationalism. Subsequent to American independence, several factors--social, political and economic--still linked America to England and both hampered and assisted the development of our native literature. During this period, partially motivated by British criticisms of America's "lagging aesthetic development," American men and women of letters launched a vigorous campaign to develop an indigenous literature. This literature was to respond both to the growing sense of nationalistic identity and to critical standards which demanded a degree of excellence matching the

contemporaneous vision of America, its purpose, and its place among nations.

The call from a native author for a distinctive American literature relying to a degree on indigenous materials was heard as early as 1799. In the Preface to his novel Edgar Huntly, Charles Brockden Brown remarks:

> ...that the field of investigation opened to us by our own country should differ essentially from those which exist in Europe, may be readily conceived. The sources of amusement to the fancy and instruction to the heart that are peculiar to ourselves are equally numerous and inexhaustible. (NM 64)

During this era of incipient American fiction, the native author's plea for indigenous elements in fiction seldom meant little more, to use Brown's phrases, than the substitution of "incidents of Indian hostility" or "perils of the western wilderness" for "Gothic castles and chimeras" (NM 64). Although recent independence from England increased interest in developing a native literature, the notion still lingered, as Brown remarks in The American Review and Literary Journal (1802), that America was "united by language, manners, and taste, by the bonds of peace and commercial intercourse, with an enlightened nation, the center of whose arts and population may be considered as much our center..." (NM 66). At the end of the eighteenth-century much of the nationalistic literary quest emphasized the search for topics, the suitability of American soil for literary development, and naturalizing foreign modes and models to the cisatlantic situation.

Brown's milieu and idea of literary nationalism differed sharply from Walt Whitman's ardent literary republicanism nearly a century later. In his essay, "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads" (1888) Whitman asks, "Does not the best thought of our day and Republic conceive of a birth and spirit of song superior to anything past or present?" (NM 434). He continues questioning, "Is there one [European poem] that is consistent with these United States, or essentially applicable to them as they are and are to be? Is there one whose underlying basis is not a denial and insult to democracy?" (NM 434). To this he adds his progressive and humanistic earmark:

> The Old World has had the poems of myths, fictions, feudalism, conquest, caste, dynastic wars, and splendid exceptional characters and affairs, which have been great; but the New World needs the poems of realities and science and of the democratic average and basic equalIty, which shall be greater. In the center of all, and object of all, stands the Human Being, towards whose heroic and spiritual evolution poems and everything directly or indirectly tend, Old World or New. (NM 435)

While these testimonies bracket the impetus and development of literary nationalism between the Revolution and the postbellum decades, many authorial voices resonated between these years. The critical statements and views of authors such as William Gilmore Simms, Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe, and many other American writers underscore the gradual progress of our literature from merely native authors to a literature representative of Americans.

A National Literature

Benjamin Spencer, in The Quest for Nationality (1957), documents this search for national identity in our literature from the colonial period through the late nineteenth-century. In his descriptive study, Spencer presents a "history of the attempt of American authors, critics and patriots to design and foster a national literature during three centuries after the first settlements."[3] His interest lies in "presenting the full play of conflicting doctrines and...counternationalistic currents" rather than "weighting the material in support of a personal predilection or thesis" (QN viii). This descriptive approach is perhaps why Nina Baym comments that his text "remains the best study of this phenomenon"--the growth of nineteenth-century American literature out of native experience.[4] Two other literary historians, Robert Spiller and Richard Ruland have also applauded Spencer's text. Spiller declared Spencer's book the "most comprehensive study of American literary nationalism," and Ruland extolled Spencer as "the most persistent and thorough academic student of American literary nationalism."[5]

To document adequately the interplay of events that shaped our native literature, Spencer avoids both critics' and authors' potential biases. He defers to critics such as F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds, or R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam, for

judging the "full achievement of the American imagination" in preference to recording what he terms "the national literary will" to foster a native literature (ON vii). He also avoids theories of nineteenth-century authors "which may be inferred from their fiction, but [instead] relies on their more explicit statements" (ON viii-ix). Although this technique might be questioned, Spencer achieves a remarkably objective study of the literary nationalism which both accompanied and encouraged our early native fiction.

Likewise, to facilitate the text's historical approach, he claims a broad definition of "literary nationalism" observing that the meaning constantly "shift[s] under realignments in political power and under fresh emphases in literary criticism" (ON viii). To explore a potential definition of nationalism, he begins with Boyd C. Shafer's book Nationalism: Myth and Reality, in which Shafer asserts that the term "`is what the nationalists have made it; it is not a neat fixed concept but a varying combination of beliefs and conditions'" (ON viii). To this Spencer adds:

> the convergence of nationality and literature in what is usually called 'literary nationalism' confronts one, as it were, with a double variable whose processes are complex indeed. Nationality in American literature thus becomes a changing counter, a perennial compromise between the autochthonous national character on the one hand and prevailing literary doctrines on the other. (ON viii).

Thus Spencer's book both identifies and elucidates generational trends or, in his words, the "changing emphases

of literary nationalism" as felt by American critics and authors (ON viii). He traces the cultural content of this nationalistic movement through its various historic fluctuations and through its various literary forms as they contributed and developed. Spencer identifies the literary options in theme and subject matter available to early American authors. He explains how contemporary events, current philosophic trends, and indigenous influences limited and helped to shape American fiction. Spencer concludes that "at its best the quest for nationality was a concern for literary integrity--for delivering American writers from the sterile obligation to express what their own experience had not nurtured and what their own society did not require" (ON ix). The "literary colonialism" of the 1600s was gradually superseded, at first with increased native literary productions and later with the use of native themes, settings, idiom, and ideals. The subsequent national literary identity emerged from an "intensive quest for nationality" which took place largely after the two wars with Britain. This achievement, according to Spencer, successfully "concluded before 1900" (ON x).

Colonial Antecedents

Spencer briefly summarizes the general trends from a nascent colonial literature in America through the end of the Revolutionary War. He observes that the gradual growth of American national identity became more distinct with the

common bond of experience and hopes in the New World setting. He declares that "to this developing sentiment of New World nationality New England gave the most persistent expression," although this feeling expanded to other regions as the Revolutionary War approached (ON 1). Almost from the beginning, colonists sought unique forms of expression to match their aspirations and to differentiate themselves from corrupt European culture. "Pagan" myths of Greece and Rome were rejected in favor of their New World muse. Chronicles, sermons, and personal diaries served as the dominant forms of colonial literary expression. As Cotton Mather's Magnalia Christi Americana (1702) testifies, Puritan destiny proffered a heroic enterprise in which America itself played a redemptive role.

The millennial spirit continued in the eighteenth-century, although the American character took on a more homogeneous and secular appearance. Initially the American writer's dilemma appeared to be one of adapting style to the rigorous and practical American milieu. The Puritan "plain style" still held sway. Spencer notes that "If the American Zion prescribed a plain style, the American wilderness seemed to the colonists to compel also a rude one" (ON 8).

On the other hand, British neoclassic influence persisted throughout most of the eighteenth-century. Frequent British invectives against the disparaging literary climate and the coarse literary productions of Americans prodded colonialists either to yearn for more polished

prose, to increase their longing for literary recognition, or, ultimately to desire literary independence. During this century, recognizing the need for patience was more typical of the more tempered colonial responses to British taunts, as in the case of Thomas Jefferson's or Hector St. John de Crevecoeur's statements. In Jefferson's "Notes on the State of Virginia" (1787) he writes:

> When we shall have existed as a people as long as the Greeks did before they produced a Homer, the Romans a Virgil, the French a Racine and Voltaire, the English a Shakespeare and Milton, should this reproach be still true, we will enquire from what unfriendly causes it has proceeded, that the other countries of Europe and quarters of the earth shall not have inscribed any [American] name in the roll of poets. (NM 48)

Like Jefferson, Crevecoeur responds both firmly and affirmatively to condescending British criticism of American letters. In a famous passage from Letters from an American Farmer (1782) he offers this advice to the American writer:

> You will appear to him something like one of our wild American plants, irregularly luxuriant in its various branches, which an European scholar may probably think ill placed and useless. If our soil is not remarkable as yet for the excellence of its fruits, this exuberance is however a strong proof of fertility, which wants nothing but the progressive knowledge acquired by time to amend and correct it. (NM 44)

Crevecoeur concedes that the rough, practical prose of the "scribbling farmer" is "the only line I am able to follow, the line which nature herself traced for me," affirming the only possible American literary expression (NM 47, 46).

Demands for greater linguistic freedom followed political trends in the latter half of the eighteenth-

century. John Witherspoon, President of the College of New Jersey, called for distinctive American idiom and "coined the term `Americanism'" to denote the linguistic habits and changes taking place in American usage (ON 11). Another positive source of inspiration for the American writer arose from new doctrines of the Scottish Common Sense school critics whose philosophy reaffirmed the American writer's growing sense of pride in indigenous sources of literature.[6] In addition, Tom Paine and Noah Webster launched what was to be a century-long campaign for copyright laws equitable to American writers. Beginning in the 1750s, American literary journals sought out American writers and often excluded European writers. Summarizing the trend of the century, Spencer reports that:

> Though this nationalistic eagerness `to cultivate the belles lettres' pathetically outdistanced literary realizations for many decades, by the end of the Revolution the colonists had at least made critical sorties to discover the likeliest passage to a distinctive new World literature. They were obliged, of course, to proceed from premises and modes already established in Europe, or to find some Old World ideas or ultimate peculiarity congenial to the New. (ON 12-13)

Of the potential themes and topics available for a New World literature four general categories emerged: 1) the American wilderness, nature and the Sublime;[7] 2) moral associations available in the American "Edenic" myth, or neoclassic aesthetic doctrines imported from European sources; 3) a shared though shallow American history; and, 4) the prospective, and sometimes millennial, vision of America's

future and grand mission.

Although the colonial lament for a more polite literature abounded, English literary sources had little relevance for life in America. Differences in political institutions, social structure, and the unique American historical experience all contributed to this gap. Conversely, writers, such as Philip Freneau and Irving, complained that America could not sustain their art. Tensions such as these persisted as problems for the early nineteenth-century writer as well. The advances made during the first two centuries brought "glimpses" of America's literary future; and as Spencer concludes, "By the end of the Revolution something of her emergent cisatlantic character had become evident" (ON 24).

The Interim Years: 1783-1814

William Gilmore Simms (1841) categorizes national literature as being one of two types. The first is merely "produced by native writers from a common stock of human knowledge, in a fair competition with the reflective minds of other nations'" (ON 32). Between 1783 and 1814, this type was not only the circumstance of American letters, but likewise the motivation. The other type of literature which Simms describes was to develop only after the War of 1812. This literature, he writes, "`distinguishes and illustrates, especially, the fortunes, tempers and peculiar characteristics of the people with whom it originates'" (ON

32). This type of literature developed during the course of the nineteenth-century.

The first phase of establishing literary independence occurred gradually. At the outset American writers and critics merely compiled lists of grievances against English literary hegemony. Prescriptions offering how to bring this independence about came later on. During the three decades between the two wars with England, American writers issued what Spencer calls "numerous Declarations of Literary Independence" which created "gradual movement towards cultural autonomy" (ON 25).

Among the targets perceived as threatening American originality and republican ideals, England was most frequently cited, though continental Europe, particularly ancient Greece, was occasionally included. Irving's statement represents the common sentiment of American writers during this period:

> We would rather hear our victories celebrated in the merest doggerel that sprang from native invention, than beg, borrow or steal from others, the thoughts and works in which to express our exaltation. By tasking our own powers, and relying entirely on ourselves, we shall gradually improve and rise to poetical independence.... (ON 27)[8]

Irving's situation, which he describes in an essay "The Author" (1822), also typified the American writer's dilemma:

> Having been born and brought up in a new country, yet educated from infancy in the literature of an old one, my mind was early filled with historical and poetical associations, connected with places, and manners, and customs of Europe; but which could rarely be applied to those of my own country.[9]

Through education, commerce, and imported ideas Americans still felt the influence of European literary perspectives.

Like Irving, Noah Webster (1783) espoused a curious blend of fundamental neoclassic ideals mingled with a belief in the redemptive qualities of democratic principles.[10] As a prominent literary spokesperson he declared that "`America must be as independent in literature as she is in politics'" (ON 27). In contrast to his contemporaries, he provided more explicit directives for American writers. He urged American authors to express universal wisdom and experience from their "original" vantage point. He encouraged Americans to reduce their reliance upon Britain by enlarging their scope to the experience and wisdom available from all nations. Although authors followed the neoclassic dictum of "universal taste" imitating the models of their English predecessors, the trend was for indigenous literature to align with "both the resources and the ideology of the new republic" (ON 30). This proved to be a stepping stone in the progress towards a truly national literature. But first of all, America needed a native literature. Several forces assisted American letters toward this prospect.

While American authors were still following Kamesian doctrines in order to appeal to the "`standard of taste" common to all nations," Hugh Blair's common sense philosophy provided alternatives for the American imagination (ON 33). He advocated the use of indigenous landscapes, encouraged writers to follow their own genius, and, departing from

neoclassic dictates, stressed the importance of nature instead of tradition in cultivating the imagination.[11] His social and aesthetic theories provided specific means by which American writers could foster originality. Blair's ideas helped to decrease the influence of neoclassic ideals in America.[12]

Before 1815 American writers accepted their "English heritage of diction and style as inevitable and incidental rather than as a primary limitation upon a national literature" (ON 53). According to Spencer, "originality" implied primarily a continuation of European modes and doctrines in a New World setting. Likewise, accepting the traditional genre hierarchy established in Europe, native authors first sought to create a literature merely through use of American settings, themes, or ideas. Convinced of European political decadence, American writers consciously used republican ideals or moral attitudes consistent with their native ideals. The American landscape often became the hope of indigenous writers to express these ideals.

Both neoclassicists and romantics embraced the doctrine of the Sublime, the assumption that elevated poetry sprang from elevated scenery. Belief in this principle encouraged writers' faith in use of American landscape. Charles Brockden Brown's advocacy and use of Indians and frontier incidents inspired other writers to adopt these themes. With the popularity of the native Indian, American place names, and metaphors as sources for imaginative fiction, the

issue of an independent idiom arose. Webster vociferously backed nationalistic opinions stating that:

> `As an independent nation, our honor requires us to have a system of our own, in language as well as government. Great Britain...should no longer be our standard; for the taste of her writers is already corrupted, and her language on the decline.' (ON 56)

James Kirke Paulding, writer and nationalist critic, reached further with his assertion that "America could never be `truly independent'...til we make our own books, and coin our own words--two things necessary to national sovereignty" (ON 57). To this James Russell Lowell added his famous dictum that prior to the development of an American literature a companion criticism was required.

As the war of 1812 neared, American literary journals began to dismantle foreign literary authority, particularly the neoclassic principle of universal standards of taste.[13] Edward Tyrell Channing championed this idea in his essay in the North American Review (1816). He argues:

> Let us just look at one or two ways in which freedom and originality of mind are assailed or endangered. The first is by inculcating an excessive fondness for the ancient classicks and asserting their supremacy in literature.... Besides the earliest nations in letters have a sort of patriarchal claim to the reverence of those who come after. Nothing remains of them but their finished and best works....The effect of this is, in many cases, to make what is foreign, artificial, and uncongenial the foundation of a man's literary habits, ambition and prejudices. It is hardly possible that a man, thus trained and dependent, should not lose self respect and come to think every thing vulgar at home. (NM 88-89)

Channing's comments serve as a striking contrast to Irving's

neoclassic perspective cited earlier, although Irving's perspective fluctuates over time.

Gradually nationalist critics placed greater reliance on public taste and preferences, a practice considered more consistent with republican political and social institutions.[14] Spencer observes that despite many post-Revolutionary writers' conviction that "they must abandon a blind deference toward transatlantic dicta, they were less certain of the critical principles which should define a cisatlantic mode" (ON 62). A necessary step took place near the end of this interim period when critics began to analyze reasons for America's lagging literary development. Often these analyses were merely internalized British criticisms reiterated by American authors and critics. Yet American writers continued to argue for copyright protection and for reduction of imported British fiction; and they complained about certain deficits in the native literary milieu: the lack of aesthetic appreciation in America; deficient "associations" available to indigenous writers following Locke and Hartley's associationist aesthetic; the lack of public support for a full-time professional class of writers; and mercenary publishers who preferred acquiring cheaper books available without copyright privileges from abroad instead of supporting a native literature.

In these three decades, American writers had begun to assess their literary resources and re-evaluate their literary choices based upon indigenous criteria. Spencer

observes that accelerating "the birth of an indigenous literature was to reach it greatest intensity" during the next generation of American writers and critics (ON 72). This coincided with the appearance and popularity of Sir Walter Scott's narrative poetry and romances early in the nineteenth-century. His romances offered native writers a more congenial model for their fiction than neoclassic sources.

A Nationalistic Criticism and A National Literature: 1815-1860

The War of 1812 brought a renewed vigor to the nationalistic literary campaign in America. Spencer appraises the cisatlantic "realignments" and "impulses" between 1815 and 1860 as a time when "the tide of literary nationalism was at the full..." (ON 75). He insists that despite the "diversity that played on its surface its deepest currents flowed in a single massive stream," towards developing and sustaining an indigenous national literature (ON 75). Spencer assesses the depth of this impulse noting that:

> through critical essay, correspondence, or formal discourse virtually every major and minor author between 1815 and 1860 felt obliged to expound some version of a national literature. Bryant, Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Simms, Cooper, and many another returned to the subject repeatedly; a few, such as Longfellow and Lowell, altered their views; some like Hawthorne and Irving, expressed their conclusions infrequently or obliquely. (ON 77)

The unfulfilled task for Americans to initiate and sustain a

national not merely a native literature began anew, this time with the companion criticism Lowell called for.[15] The parallel growth of American criticism along side native fiction provided American authors with an alternative viewpoint, often--but not always--more generous, deflecting British taunts against an infant literature, and more genuinely responsive to New World conditions. Native criticism frequently supplied the lacking validation and direction for American literature which transatlantic critics were unable to supply.[16] It also fulfilled the important role of weighing and interpreting imported philosophic and literary ideas in the New World context.

The eventual shaping of American literature often occurred in the form of dialogue between native critics and emerging authors. One of the first tasks in this dialogue was to restructure cultural ties with England from whom America had inherited its language and, as the assumption had been, the continuity of its literature. In Notions of the Americans (1828) Cooper testifies to this fact saying: "It is quite obvious, that, so far as taste and forms alone are concerned, the literature of England and that of America must be fashioned after the same models. The authors, previously to the revolution, are common property."[17] Cooper's epistolary travel guide, hypothetically written by a young Englishman, addresses an English audience. Yet this form also allowed Cooper to speak obliquely to his American audience, offering blunt criticisms about the state of

literature in America. Notions enumerates the various obstacles to the development of American literature. Among these are: an American market that prefers procuring English literature over a more expensively obtained indigenous work; the lack of native materials for imaginative productions; the shallowness of American history; and, the common sense mentality of Americans inhibiting the success of romances. Yet, in a second letter, Cooper prophesies a compelling literary achievement for American writers. He declares that when the "political and religious freedom" which distinguishes America from European culture "begin[s] to be felt [through its literature], it will be felt with a force, a directness, and a common sense in its application, that has never yet been known."[18]

Edward Tyrell Channing in an essay for the North American Review (1816), also addresses this new class of writers with a more sympathetic tone. Refuting neoclassic standards of taste, Channing admonishes his American auditors:

> But we must get out of the habit of dictating to great minds and striving to bring them up in our own way. Genius is not willing to be interfered with and told how to work, where to travel, and what to admire. And yet there are men who go so far as to hold up models for imitation and standards of taste for writers of every age and country....this interference...appears to be the most mischievous of all. (NM 86)

Such pleas for ceasing imitation of foreign literary models echoed again and again in various forms throughout the antebellum period.

The creation of new lines of dialogue between indigenous critics and authors helped to refashion transatlantic literary influences to suit the new American setting and republican audience. During this initial phase, American critics repudiated foreign modes and domination. Spencer observes that the constant influx of foreign books obliged the American writer "constantly to assess the relevance of dominant European practices to the American scene" (ON 89). However, critics now placed greater reliance upon internal standards and resources for the development of imaginative fiction. Paulding's essay "National Literature," (1819-1820) provides an example of this attitude. In his essay Paulding praises Charles Brockden Brown's fiction as "among the most vigorous and original efforts of our native literature" (NM 135-36). He predicts a time when native literature "will be sought after with avidity, and that those who led the way in the rugged discouraging path will be honoured as we begin to honour the adventurous spirits who first sought, explored, and cleared this western wilderness" (NM 135). The final statement of his essay expresses the prevailing sentiment in 1820: "The period is not far distant when...the people of the United States become sufficiently independent to dare to admire and to express their admiration of a[n American] writer," without foreign approbation (NM 136).[19]

A decade-long literary war between American and British periodicals which began in the 1820s assisted this change in

attitude. As literary aspersions accelerated American dependence upon foreign modes declined. British critics registered complaints against American literary independence on both sides of the argument: either against imitation of English models or against American ignorance of established European modes. In "The Magazine of Foreign Literature" (1823), an anonymous British writer charges:

> The authors, without models of their own, are often too proud to form themselves upon those of other countries which the sanction of ages has rendered classical, or they have not the skill to see the wisdom and necessity of doing so. They have no foundation of their own to build on--nothing can come of nothing...all which they attempt of originality is a heterogenous mass of unskilled plagiarism.... (NM 184)[20]

American critics responded with countercharges. Cooper and Simms denounced British standards and literary modes for their aristocratic principles and the corrupting influence of their anti-democratic tendencies upon American audiences. Old World values were considered to prize birth over individual merit, established wealth over moral virtue, and social class and prestige over the common man. These traits were cited among anti-democratic vices considered unsuitable for the American mind. In "Americanism in Literature" (1844) Simms complains that the constant influx of European thoughts, fashions, and tastes, keeps American institutions in bondage. The genius of the poet and historian, he proclaims, is a "scorned and wretched beggar...in the courts of Aristocracy."[21]

Another significant imported literary influence was Sir

Walter Scott's Waverley romances, the first of which appeared in 1814. Although native authors feverishly sought to imitate Scott's romances and the nationalistic elements of his fiction to edify American history, Cooper and other nationalist critics condemned Scott's feudalism.[22] Paulding decried gothic machinery in native literature and advocated that authors replace these elements with resources of American common sense and rationalism.[23] Meanwhile American authors searched for suitable indigenous replacements for the European castle and ancient ruins. The sum of these incidents connotes a new selective critical process going on in native criticism which winnowed and refashioned non-native literary modes to suit democratic principles and prospects.

A Changing Definition: 1812 to 1860

The question of what constituted a native literature was problematic for the American writer throughout these five decades. During the period in which a national literature emerged, several definitions were attempted, each expressing gradual modifications concurrent with literary developments. In his Commencement Address (1825), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow ventured this associationist concept, that a national literature is "linked with the grand and beautiful scenery of our country--with our institutions, our manners, our customs, in a word with all that had helped to form whatever there is peculiar to us and to the land in

which we live" (NM 237). The Athenaeum (1831) suggests the transitional definition connoting typical indigenous sentiments after the second war with Britain:

> By literary independence we do not merely mean works written by Americans; but a literature that appeals directly to the national feelings--is founded on domestic incidents, illustrates or satirizes domestic manners, and above all, administers to the just pride of a nation, inspires a feeling for the national glory, and inculcates a love of country--a literature which foreigners may admire, but none can feel, in the deep sanctuary of the heart, but a native. (NM 235)

Cornelius Mathews (1847), a more rigorous nationalist, expresses a prospective view of what a native literature means in nationalistic terms:

> Something will be gained for the cause of an indigenous literature by a clear development of the idea and the necessity of nationality....Other nations and later ages should look to the writers of the land for the lineaments of its people, and to trace the influence of institutions, of civil and religious polity, upon the condition, the manners and the happiness of individuals, and upon the strength, the power and permanency of the state. (NM 296)

By 1849, Lowell presents clear evidence of a change in attitude towards the fulfillment of a national literature:

> It may not be our destiny to produce a great literature, as, indeed, our genius seems to find its kindliest development in practicalizing similar and more perfect forms of social organization....In the meantime we may fairly demand of our literature that it should be national to the extent of being as free from out-worn conventionalities, and as thoroughly impregnated with humane and manly sentiment, as is the idea on which our political fabric rests. (NM 318).

It is notable that while earlier definitions hint at the

ongoing contest with foreign literary influences, Lowell's definition does not include any such suggestion. His referents are entirely internal, and despite the tone, reflect a securely indigenous viewpoint. His humanitarian perspective registers a shift from a purely nationalistic stance in opposition to external forces towards greater internal reflection. Lowell's view coincides with Hawthorne's humanistic perspective and his successful subordination of literary nationalism to art. Both writers mark the decline of literary nationalism as a literary motivation. Lowell's view also anticipates the post-bellum perspective noted in Whitman's broad democratic zeal embracing all humanity under the autochthonous voice of the American bard.[24]

Non-native Influences on American Nationalism and Fiction

Some of the difficultly in defining an American literature during these five decades was due to various non-native philosophic perspectives which constantly filtered from England and the European continent into American literary spheres. Although some of these influences proved to be assets to the growth of an American literary independence, they by no means provided an exact map for native writers. Along this line, elements of the German Romanticism of A. W. Schlegel, Frederick Schlegel (1817), and Madame de Stael (1813 onward), were introduced through

young American students attending German universities. These three critics felt that the peculiarities of diverse cultures expressed symbolically through their unique literature elucidates the universal mind of all cultures. This literary doctrine implicitly appealed to the creation of an American literature and proved useful to the nationalistic spirit in America.

A second imported critical idea which took root in America was Archibald Alison's doctrine of associations.[25] Associationist doctrine held that "`a common occurrence or common scenery' becomes beautiful chiefly for `those who have poetic associations'" (ON 92). America, which lacked historical depth, suffered lack of poetic associations according to this perspective.[26] Native authors also disparaged the shallow resources of a native literature which might have bestowed poetic associations. Thus native authors energetically sought to create inventories of potential fictional resources and to endow America's landscape with romantic qualities and associations. The American Indians, the Revolution, and other historic events Americans held in common were often named as potential themes.

The reception of Scott's historical romances depicting the recent past of Scotland and England provided a third incentive to native authors who, in turn, aspired to create an indigenous fiction patterned after his fiction. Spencer observes that:

> The ante-bellum writer in America, whatever his reliance on European modes, was so avowedly nationalistic that he habitually seized on those very transatlantic principles and practices that would allow him most fully to exploit the literary resources of his country....and hence, for all his use of... [indigenous] themes, he was likely to find his literary directions through the chart that Scott or the associationists had furnished him. (ON 102)

Scott's fiction blended readily with associationist ideas. These factors encouraged native authors' search for American romantic counterparts and Scott-like, nationalistic associations. Spencer remarks "The genius of European romanticism furnished the imaginative ends; the problem for the American writer was to discover distinctive and appropriate instruments and agencies in the New World toward these ends" (ON 96).

Critics like Rufus Choate enthusiastically outlined useable American themes fashioned after Scott's historical romances and furnished recipes for prospective imitators. Likewise, critics engaged in a search for the "American Scott." Cooper was often compared to Scott, a label he did not always appreciate.[27] One critic, J. W. Davidson (1869) claimed:

> Gilmore Simms is the Walter Scott of South Carolina. Both have done for their native lands the same thing--have traced up the stream of history to its source; and from the terrae incognitae of legend and tradition have given us pictures of life in striking and fascinating colours.[28]

In Views and Reviews Simms credits Cooper with demonstrating how Scott's romances could be adapted to America. Other

authors sought regionally to do for their state what Scott had done for Scotland. As late as 1833, the year of Scott's death, Choate declared his "wish to see such a genius as Walter Scott or rather a thousand such as he, undertake in earnest to illustrate that early [American] history, by a series of romantic compositions ...like the Waverley Novels."[29] C. Hugh Holman notes that "in the 1830s the fictional successes" of Cooper, Simms, Bird, and Paulding, all were "followers of the school of Scott."[30] "By the 1840s," Spencer observes, regional romances had been pervasively established in New England by Hawthorne and Whittier, in the Hudson by Irving and Cooper, and in the South by Simms and Kennedy" (ON 100).

Although Scott's impact upon American literature was greatest between 1814 and 1833, critics have frequently debated how long the romance form persisted in America.[31] Alexander Cowie asserts that although by 1833 "the first great wave of the historical romance had pretty well run its course.[32] But it was not long before a new writer appeared who revivified the genre in the 1830's...."[33] This writer was Simms. Holman contends that "Between 1840 and 1850 American romance reached its maturity of theme and method...."[34] Yet this period fails to include three of Hawthorne's major romances and Melville's Moby Dick. Spencer concludes, "But whatever the inception or the debt, American authors between 1815 and 1860 felt impelled to frame a conception not merely of an American literature but

of a romantic literature" (ON 95). He concludes that "As the Civil War approached, indeed, the romantic impulse tended either to be narrowed into sectional piety or to be transmuted into zealous humanitarianism" as in Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin (ON 100).

Nationalism and American Fiction: Indigenous Dilemmas

In Views and Reviews Simms writes, there is a "world-wide difference between writing for, and writing from one's people.... To write from a people is to write a people--to make them live--to endow them with life and a name--to preserve them with a history forever."[35] Simms' observation identifies a central dilemma for the American fiction writer between 1815 and 1860. Writing "to" a people was what the British had always pursued, a colonial attitude towards America. Writing "from" a people was the uncharted course which the American writer gradually developed through trial and error. The central problem which the politically independent nation now contemplated was defining its own representative literature. New considerations had to be made for public taste and popular support. America needed to generate its own democratic hero springing from the American milieu and appealing to the American mind. Spencer cites Paulding's expression of these necessities:

> ...to be authentically national, American literature would need to reflect `the feelings, attachments, and associations" of the people at large, who constitute the nation; who are the true

> depositories of its manners, habits, strength, and glory, preserve and are fond of those original peculiarities, which give a national physiognomy, distinct in various features from every other.' (ON 112)

Over these five decades, the foremost distinguishing characteristics affecting literature ultimately proved to be democratic principles and ideals.[36]

To capture the republican essence authors were first compelled to draw upon characteristics which distinguished native literature from its European forerunners. In this search fiction writers first assessed native liabilities against imported literary criteria. Writers alternately bemoaned the absence of suitable criteria or proclaimed an abundance of native resources. This sort of evaluation spanned the entire period. Charles Brockden Brown was among the first of the post-Revolutionary writers to expound native assets when he proclaimed the "numerous and inexhaustible" resources for American fiction writers in his Preface to Edgar Huntly (1799) (NM 64). Authors and critics drew up catalogs of useful themes and topics for native fiction.[37] The most frequent boast suggested our American landscape, as John Knapp does in an essay for The North American Review (1818): "If we take any glory in our country's being beautiful and sublime and picturesque, we must approve the work which reminds us of its scenery by making it the theatre of splendid feats and heart-moving incidents" (NM 111). The aborigines, Indian Wars, colonial history, legends, the Revolution, the example of Brown's

psychological fiction were all at one time or another lauded and later revised or discarded as potential avenues for the native writer according to popular appeal. In Notions of the Americans Cooper complains:

> There is scarcely an ore which contributes to the wealth of the author, that is found, here, in veins as rich as in Europe. There are no annals for the historian; no follies (beyond the most vulgar and commonplace) for the satirist; no manners for the dramatist; no obscure fictions for the writer of romance; no gross and hardy offenses against decorum for the moralist; nor any of the rich artificial auxiliaries of poetry. The weakest hand can extract a spark from the flint, but it would baffle the strength of a giant to attempt kindling a flame with a pudding-stone. (NM 224-225)

Ironically, this lament itself becomes a literary resource which echoed throughout the nineteenth-century. Both Hawthorne and Henry James are among the notable authors who later reiterate Cooper's lament against the poverty of American materials.[38]

While Cooper's list of deficits enumerates barriers to a national literature, writers and critics continued to make forays into what might constitute such a literature. John Pickering, a pioneer American philologist, addresses the problems of idiomatic divergence in his essay "Memoir on the Present State of the English Language in the United States of America" (1816). Later this issue developed into a demand not only for linguistic representativeness and native departures from British norms, but also a demand for use of native images and symbols. Thus the nightingale lost its place to the domestic warbler and the castle to the frontier

cabin. In his essay "National Literature" (1819-1820) Paulding advocates selecting images and observations directly from nature over the antiquated fanciful images of inherited superstition. "Fairies, giants, and goblins are not indigenous here," he quips, "And with the exception of a few witches that were soon exterminated, our worthy ancestors brought over with them not a single specimen of Gothic or Grecian mythology" (NM 134). While Paulding maintains a more positive outlook about the abundance of sources for American writers, he also advocates both a more realistic fiction as well as a set of universals. He states: "The best and most perfect works of imagination appear to me to be those which are founded upon a combination of such characters as every generation of men exhibits, and such events as have often taken place in the world and will again" (NM 133). He also notes that "Real life is fraught with adventures to which the wildest fictions scarcely afford a parallel" (NM 133). Although the age predominantly favored the romance form and certain romantic postulates, as Paulding's statement makes evident "small tributary streams" of realism ran crosscurrent to the literary mainstream (ON 150).[39] Most of Paulding's statements, however, were meant to evaluate the trappings of imported romance machinery for adaptation to the transatlantic setting. William Howard Gardiner (1822) criticizes this same point of Gothic elements in American literary settings:

> We have no particular longing after this species of American castle building; we do hope to see the day, when the more commodious structure, the modern historical romance, shall be erected in all its native elegance and strength on American soil, and of materials exclusively our own. (NM 189)

In another essay (1824), Gardiner seeks to correct the pretentious view of what "constitutes the Americanism of an American novel" (NM 196-197). For Gardiner and other critics it is no longer simply a book by an American author describing American scenes and incidents.

This attitude registers a changing perspective. Critics began to view characteristic American literature as a political, ethical or social attitude prevailing in the work. American fiction could now be written in England, using foreign settings and characters, and its authors still rank among "American" writers for their prevalent democratic attitude as in Cooper's or Irving's cases. Thus the critic Grenville Mellen could comfortably state, "It is not necessary that the scene of an American work of imagination should be laid in America. It is enough that it represent our character and manners either at home or abroad" (NM 209).

Likewise, as native critics and writers grew more comfortable with cultural distinctiveness, they also became more willing to acknowledge similarities between themselves and other societies. Bryant, in a review of an American novel (1825), contemplates the fact that human nature and society, and human "passions and affections, virtue and

vice" are universal manifestations which exist in infinite diversity and are affected by both the natural environment and social institutions (NM 215).[40] He encourages the native writer to use non-native resources in his fiction if they supply him more adequately. In Notions of the Americans Cooper enlarges upon this attitude and perhaps identified the most distinguishing and persistent Americanism: "The only peculiarity that can, or ought to be expected in their literature, is that which is connected with the promulgation of their distinctive political opinions" (NM 223). The political and social institutions in America became the most defining characteristic consistently called for as the years progressed.

As the Civil War approached critics and authors tended to place greater emphasis upon the ethical dictums of democratic ideals. Orestes Brownson (1839) depicts the struggle between political and social inequities apparent within the democratic union. As democratic tenets championed the virtue of social equality the enemy to nationalistic concerns is no longer envisioned as external. Thus Brownson advocates that the writer study literature as a whole:

> ...live and labor with no thought of creating a literature, but give himself up wholly to the work of solving some great problem, or of making some great moral, religious, philosophical, or social principle prevail....The discipline he needs is that which fits him to sympathize with humanity, and strengthens him to do battle in her cause. The American poet must sing for the human race. (NM 288)

The American writer has a humanitarian calling to which he must rise, according to Brownson. Sometimes this humanitarianism was filtered through a Christian perspective as Harriet Beecher Stowe states in her Preface to Uncle Tom's Cabin (1839): "all literary influences should achieve a `unison with the great master chord of Christianity, good-will to man'" (ON 124). Melville pairs Christian humanism with nationalism when he suggests in "Hawthorne and His Mosses" that those writers ought to be praised "who breathe that unshackled, democratic spirit of Christianity in all things...."[41] At mid-century Stowe best achieves in fiction what Brownson advocated as an ethical purpose for literature. And Whitman cannot be overlooked as the secular humanitarian poet who "sing[s] for the human race."

By 1849, a year prior to Hawthorne's first romance The Scarlet Letter, Lowell is able to provide a critical overview of the nationalistic attitude as it affected American literary provincialism. He offers an analogy between the growth of a plant and literary development, and declares it impossible to "affirm confidently an indigenous literature.[42] The seed has been imported, accidentally or otherwise..." (NM 311). Thus no literature, he concludes, can be considered truly national in the strictest sense. Instead what is "of common human interest" supplies literature its universal appeal diachronically and despite local or cultural peculiarities. Lowell states:

> No race perishes without intellectual heirs, but

> whatever was locally peculiar in their literature, their art, or their religious symbols, becomes in time hieroglyphical to the rest of the world... Literature survives, not because of nationality, but in spite of it. (NM 312)

Lowell sees nationalistic attitudes as a barrier which obscure the universal qualities of humankind. Returning to organic explanations, Lowell contends that Nature provides the interpretive schemes which reach beyond localisms.[43] He concludes "The only element of permanence which belongs to myth, legend, or history, is exactly so much of each as refuses to be circumscribed by provincial boundaries" (NM 315). According to Lowell, authors ought to be able to select from any geographical region or historic period when they write. He felt the public ought to insist upon "good" rather than "national" literature. Thus Lowell argued for a broader definition of literature. During an era in which a regional literature became the distinctive national mode, Lowell advocated attention to regional or to local peculiarities as a route to universal truths. Hawthorne's fiction responds to each of these qualifications. As a regional and "provincial" author, Hawthorne touched upon universals unbound by the locality about which he wrote.

As the Civil War approached, America's vastness, rapid expansion, and regional diversities required authors to focus upon these minute local or sectional differences in hope of capturing something more universal, and something which might contribute to depicting the collective national character. In its next phase, with the expansive nation and

diffuse sense of nationality, the literary domination of New England gradually subsides along with the intense nationalistic fervor for an national literature. Hawthorne's fiction remains key to depicting this denouement.

Ante-Bellum Nationalism through Region and Locale

Spencer remarks that the intense nationalistic literary campaign "attained its greatest momentum in the 1840s..." (ON 290). In the following decades, this campaign subsided primarily due to political issues dividing national unity. Any hope for a uniform conception of a national literature, between the 1830s and the Civil War, was diluted by the rapid expansion of the West and increased sectional heterogeneity. These factors contributed to a redefinition of a national literature. The pattern of writers such as Irving, Simms, and Hawthorne, who exploited local settings and themes for their fiction, now became the predominant literary mode across the nation. Writers of each region recognized that America's vast territory precluded achieving any single description of her national character except through local or regional means. Southern and Western writers contributed to this composite national literature by characterizing distinct local or regional culture, customs, manners, settings, and history.[44]

Attempts were made to reconcile the leap from locality to nationality. One Southern author, Edward Eggleston, put

it this way: "`The taking up of life in this regional way has made our literature really national by the only process possible. The Federal nation has at length manifested a consciousness of the continental diversity of its forms of life. The "great American novel...is appearing in sections."[45] Critics attempted to demonstrate how the greater literary gap between local character and the universal domain was bridged. One can also observe the shift from the neoclassic idea of universal taste to broad humanitarian sense of universality. Brownson echoed both ideas when he wrote in The Universal Review (1864):

> There is, if we may so speak, a certain universal mind in all men who think, and certain sentiments common to all men who feel. It is to these common sentiments and this universal mind that polite literature is addressed, and these it must aim to embody or express in its creations. Not that the literary man is not free to express individualities, or to describe local manners, usages, habits, and customs, but he must do it always under some relation to the common and the universal. (NM 398)

New American writers also had to contend with the literary dominance of the nation's mother section. New England had already established its literary primacy in the New World over the preceding two centuries. Nineteenth-century writers from every region in the New World had long recognized both the homogeneity and cultural dominance of this region. Margaret Fuller commented that New England stood as the "`chief mental focus--the brain of the body politic'" in the New World (ON 264). Harriet Beecher Stowe had likewise analyzed that New England represented "the

seedbed of the Republic `and all that was likely to come of it'" (ON 264). Spencer states that New England also perceived its literature not as "a sectional utterance but a national archetype" and held the expectation that the rest of the country would model itself after her political principles and literary precedents (ON 264).[46] The preeminence of New England letters ultimately created rivalry between her and other sections of the country as their literary aspirations developed. Consequently, the history of New England's quest for nationality in American literature was recapitulated, in some form, both in the South and in the West.

Although the regional approach to a national literature created friction between the mother section and other parts of the nation, the South and the West were each affected differently. Due to economic and cultural differences with the New England states, Southern writers became particularly sensitive to accusations of "sectionalism." Until the 1850s, they tried to appease New England with conciliatory comments and to reconcile their regional differences by affirming their consonance with national literary goals. Southern writers tried to impart "localism" rather than "sectionalism" into their fiction. Spencer cites Harris's comment as representative of this attitude when he lamented: "`We have no Southern literature worthy of the name, because an attempt has been made to give it the peculiarities of sectionalism rather than to impart to it the flavor of

localism'" (ON 258). Prefaces to longer Southern fiction frequently contained disclaimers to anti-federalism or sectional political bias. Southern writers, such as Simms and Harris, advocated local scenes and materials as the best means to achieving something both national and universal. Edgar Allen Poe, another prominent Southern author, expressed a less political attitude. He sought Southern literary independence primarily to promote originality in Southern fiction, artistic freedom from New England literary hegemony. Spencer remarks, "To the South and West the literary dicta of New York and Boston were likely to seem as autocratic as those of London and the Edinburgh Review had seemed to early nationalist critics" (ON 256). Just as English literary sources had little relevance for New England, Southern and Western writers required their own indigenous images and materials as sources for imaginative fiction.

With the impending national conflict, sharper distinctions between sectional values were drawn. Simms once commented that "a genuine literature `asserts the character of its people, speaks to their wants and represents their honorable interests'" (ON 256-57). It follows, as Spencer notes, that regional literature cannot remain unaffected by political, cultural, and social rivalries between diverse sections of the nation. Although Simms had campaigned for a national literature during most of his literary career, when Southern institutions and

interests were threatened, he revised his perspective and vehemently advocated a sectional literature. Southern literary magazines joined in defending Southern values and institutions. By the late 1850s, the South made a concerted effort towards an "autonomous sectional culture which would interrelate the sections' economy, education, politics, and arts" (ON 274). During the war, Southern literary independence became a fact. Cut off from Northern literary journals, Southern journals and authors began to thrive. When the war ended, Southern writers retreated to treatments of the glorious Southern past, the "lost cause." Gradually, they adopted a local color emphasis, a more politically agreeable mode of fiction which still managed to remain both regionally representative and viable. As Spencer summarizes: "Thus did the literary South pass from an innocuous regionalism through an autonomous sectionalism and finally into at least a partial reinstatement with the dominant cultural trends in the nation as a whole" (ON 278).

The literary situation in the West was strikingly different from the Southern situation. As once New England had felt millennial spirit for its role in the New World, the tendency continued to visualize the West as the fulfillment of this promise. The idea of manifest destiny appears in Henry David Thoreau's essay for The Atlantic Monthly (1862). He emphatically states: "I must walk toward Oregon, and not toward Europe. And that way the nation is moving, and I may say that mankind progresses from east to

west" (NM 410). Encouraged by this kind of attitude, Western authors adhered to New England literary impulses and proprieties more readily.

The course of this prophecy traveled westward as did the nation's progress--across the Appalachians into Ohio, to the Mississippi Valley, across the Plains states, and ultimately to the California coast in expectation of this literary flowering. Sectional pride bestowed a sense upon Western authors that the Appalachians provided, in Spencer's words, "the same protective barrier against the impurities of the Old World that New England had for a time found in the Atlantic" (ON 281). Convinced of the current trend to approach the national through regional means, Western authors were motivated to add their contribution to the national picture. They selected regional themes depicting local idiom, manners, and character traits consonant with their environment and experience. The romantic adventurer Daniel Boone, the Mississippi River boatman, and the California gold prospector progressively replaced his provincial New England forerunner. Even with their own regional literature developing Western audiences still preferred Eastern literature, as once New Englanders had a taste for European fiction and adopted their literary modes. Despite this attitude Western authors ultimately abandoned the traditional romance of the wilderness, pioneer, and aboriginal Indian for more vitally present indigenous material. These writers increasingly found that, in

contrast to the predominant romantic mode of New England, the real and the present impinged more heavily upon their experience. Spencer confirms New England taste could no longer "act as a valid judge...of an authentic Western style" or taste (ON 287). Under these conditions, Western literature began to assume its unique utterance.

Thus, Western authors did not advance by the same route as Southern writers. Western authors were able to create a literature responsive to the Western experience without neglecting the value they placed upon New England literary standards. Their literary independence arrived in response to regional experience. Western fiction developed largely in the absence of literary doctrines which heavily supported the nationalistic literary movement in New England. Instead, it came of age primarily during an era which encouraged regional diversity as a viable means to a national literature.

The West, Spencer concludes, "scarcely converges into the organic regional entity for which [ante-bellum critics] had hoped" (ON 287-88). Instead, Spencer observes, "there were many Western styles and tempers. Riley in Indiana, Fuller in Chicago, Howe in Kansas, and Bierce in California certainly had too little in common to be called a `Western school'" (ON 288). Yet, Spencer insists that for over a century the West retained the grandiose sense of its millennial mission in its fiction, under the "assumption that `America is West'" (ON 289).

The nationalistic literary movement which began in New England between the two wars with England, subsided in the aftermath of the Civil War. As earlier American writers found support for nationalistic literary doctrines, Hippolyte Taine's environmental perspective, first published in 1863, was now in vogue. In his essay "History of English Literature, Taine views art as inseparable from its organic causes--in his words, "the race, the surroundings, and the epoch."[47] American writers' adoption of his critical perspective signals a shift from nationalistic to organic philosophies better suited to national diversity. His ideas tended to further regional and local literary emphases in American fiction. As Spencer writes, Taine's philosophy furthered "the regional as opposed to the broadly continental approach. For if to write memorably is to write always of the milieu which one has experienced... the American author should not venture beyond his own locale" (ON 293).[48]

The Civil War and union victory, acceptance of cultural heterogeneity, and Taine's organic philosophy were forces which brought closure to an era of literary nationalism which had begun at the close of the previous century. New England's struggle for literary independence was reenacted on a smaller scale in both the Southern and Western regions in numerous ways, some of which are identified here: initial preference for a developed fiction over more recent works of indigenous authors; demand for use of native materials, and

preference for local idiom and lexicon; literary modifications due to the lack of historical depth or varying conditions; inapplicability of non-indigenous experience; conflict between literary theories and native conditions; and finally, changing emphases in perception or shifts in philosophies better suited to times and conditions.

The nationalistic forces which gave birth to the popularity of romance subsided after the Civil War along with the romance form. The departure of intense nationalism gave way to the predominance of other critical views and the fictional modes of realism and naturalism. Chapters Three, Five, and Six present three American authors who represent the phases of literary nationalism which accompanied our nascent fiction. Charles Brockden Brown, James Fenimore Cooper, and Nathaniel Hawthorne represent the commencement, rise, and denouement of literary nationalism in its effect upon native fiction.

More immediately, the claims Richard Chase and other critics made during the 1950s and 1960s--for the romance genre being the unique, indigenous form of American fiction distinct from the English novel--are explored in the next chapter. Practically every issue critics raised in the nineteenth-century relative to nationalism and American literature outlined in the foregoing chapter is recapitulated, in some form, by twentieth-century critics. Both early American and modern literary critics called for a distinctive literature. Both groups searched for

representative characteristics and debated the qualities which distinguish American literature. Identifying the unique American experience is a vital aspect central to both sets of critics' expression. The primary critical concern during each century often has been to contrast American and British literature, but, at times, certain critics have acknowledged a continuity between the two bodies of English fiction. Indigenous criteria are developed to assess what is "American" in contrast to what is foreign, resulting in certain exclusions. The local, provincial, and generic is at first prized over diversity and/or universality. Ultimately, an argument develops which challenges the constraints of a literature too narrowly defined. Yet the basic question which engages both generations of critics remains the same: "What is American about American literature?"

NOTES

1. Walt Whitman, "The Poetry of the Future," The Native Muse: Theories of American Literature, ed. Richard Ruland, vol. 1 (New York: Dutton, 1972) 425.

2. Ruland 428. Many significant nineteenth-century literary reviews, essays, speeches have been anthologized in Richard Ruland's The Native Muse where he provides the original text either partially or in full. For ease of reference I frequently cite his text in preference to the original source. I have generally given dates along with the titles in the body of this work. Subsequent references to works collected in The Native Muse are cited in the text using the abbreviation NM and the page number given in parentheses. Other anthologies include: Stanley Bank, ed., American Romanticism: A Shape for Fiction (New York: Putnam's, 1969); and the second volume by Richard Ruland, ed., A Storied Land: Theories of American Literature, vol. 2 (New York: Dutton, 1976); and Robert Spiller, The American Literary Revolution (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967).

3. Benjamin Spencer, introduction, The Quest for Nationality: An American Literary Campaign, by Benjamin Spencer (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1957) vii. Subsequent references to The Quest for Nationality are cited in the text using the abbreviation QN and the page number given in parentheses.

4. Nina Baym, "Concepts of the Romance in Hawthorne's America," Nineteenth-Century Fiction 38 (1984): 427.

5. Spiller, Revolution 499; Ruland, Storied 438.

6. Two critical texts which document the influence of Scottish Common Sense philosophy upon early American literature are: William Charvat, The Origins of American Critical Thought, 1810-1835 (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1936) 27-58; and, Terence Martin, The Instructed Vision: Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and the Origins of American Fiction (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1961). Michael Davitt Bell summarizes Martin's view in The Development of American Romance: The Sacrifice of Relation (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980) 12-14.

7. The American wilderness and nature were associated with the Sublime as Edmund Burke defined this term in his essay "A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful" (1757). Burke proclaims, "Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion

which the mind is capable of feeling." Reprinted in Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971) 310. Charles Brockden Brown's use of the wilderness and of nature in his fiction present examples of the Sublime in their capacity to excite fear and terror.

8. Ralph Waldo Emerson's "The American Scholar" (1837) is the best known "declaration" of this sort, but occurred much later than Irving's statement. An echo is also heard in Melville's statement (1850): "Let us first praise mediocrity even, in her children, before she praises the best excellence in the children of any other land" (NM 323).

9. Washington Irving, "The Author," American Romanticism: A Shape for Fiction, ed. Stanley Bank (New York: Putnam's, 1969) 82.

10. Webster considered European institutions decadent. Like his contemporaries, Webster considered America unique and exemplary among Western nations in its form of government, laws, institutions, and customs (Spiller, Revolution 337-38.) In his dissertation, "An American Dictionary of the English Language," Webster wrote, "the nature of our governments and of our civil institutions requires an appropriate language in the definitions of works, even when the words express the same thing as in England" (Spiller 338). He maintained that language, as an expression of the ideas of a country, preserved the national identity, and consequently language differences were inevitable even between two English-speaking nations (Spiller 337). And although he felt the separation of American and British language was "unavoidable," his essays reveal that he lamented what he called the "retrograde" development of the American tongue according to British neoclassic standards of "stile" and cultivated taste (Spiller 62, 66).

11. Blair distinguishes between imitation of the classics and invention, the finding of a subject through the imaginative element of artistic creation. He detested "`servile imitation'" and asserted that a "good" writer required "`some degree of confidence to follow his own genius'" (ON 34).

12. Blair's influence upon early American writers was significant. His Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres was first published in 1783 and was widely used in American colleges in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century (See Charvat 29-32). More of Blair's ideas are discussed in conjunction with Hawthorne (Chapter Six).

13. According to Charvat, E. T. Channing was one of the "best known" professors of rhetoric and was "indebted to

Blair" for many of his ideas (Charvat 32). In an article for The North American Review (1816), Channing wrote, "But we must get out of the habit of dictating to great minds and striving to bring them up in our own way. Genius is not willing to be interfered with and told how to work, where to travel, and that to admire. And yet there are men who go so far as to hold up models of imitation and standards of taste for writers of every age and country, let their minds be so lofty and original" (NM 86). These statements highlight the neoclassical distrust of innovation and reverence for tradition, attitudes which the romantic movement challenged. Channing's statements also indicate the gradual change taking place in what it meant for authors to be "original." Originality came to mean novelty rather than the conventional imitation of literary predecessors--the finding of topics, themes, and material for literary creation. Instead of remaining complementary terms, convention and invention gradually were understood as opposing ideas.

14. The neoclassic idea of taste differed radically from the democratic viewpoint. The former generally refers to aesthetic judgements made upon the basis of classical models. Human nature was considered to have a universal sense of beauty which could be discerned in classical literature. Taste was thought to improve through study and to be cultivated though knowledge of the classics. John Dryden, Joseph Addison, Lord Shaftesbury, and Edmund Burke all propounded variations upon the idea of taste. David Hume's essay, "Of the Standard of Taste" (1757) signaled the dissolution of their ideas about taste. Hume held that "Beauty is not quality in things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty" (Adams 315). This gave greater validity to the individual taste rather than universal standards. Hume's view is much more consistent with democratic ideas of taste.

15. As developed throughout this chapter, our early fiction is often characterized as a native literature. This generally referred to works by American authors using American settings, together with universal themes and subjects--not necessarily American ideas and themes. A national literature implies the representative literature which Simms describes--a literature which "distinguishes and illustrates, especially, the fortunes, tempers and peculiar characteristics of the people with whom it originates" (ON 32). This literature both represents Americans and often entails American political ideals. Other definitions of a "national" literature are provided in this chapter under the section titled "A Changing Definition: 1812-1860" with quotes from The Athenaeum (1831), Cornelius Mathews (1847), and James Russell Lowell (1849).

16. The conflicting criticism of C. B. Brown's fiction offers an illustration. While Brown met European expectations for an "original" American literature, American critics often questioned Brown's viability as an American author. This idea is discussed more thoroughly in the chapter on Brown.

17. James Fenimore Cooper, Notions of the Americans: Picked Up By a Travelling Bachelor, vol. 2 (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1962) 100.

18. Cooper 122. Cooper writes, "If there were no other points of difference between this country and other nations, those of its political and religious freedom, alone, would give a colour of the highest importance to the writings of a people so thoroughly imbued with their distinctive principles, and so keenly alive to their advantages" (122).

19. Sydney Smith's famous invective, "`In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?'" is credited with having incensed American literati to the decade long literary dispute (NM 157).

20. Note the ironic echoing of King Lear, "Nothing will come of nothing" (1.1.90), in this critic's statement. He mixes a charge against American authors for their lack of originality while imitating a line from Shakespeare.

21. William Gilmore Simms, "Americanism in Literature," Views and Reviews in American Literature History and Fiction: First Series, ed. C. Hugh Holman (Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP 1962) 25.

22. Reiterations of this idea, opposition to Scott's feudalism, can be found over several decades, from James Kirke Paulding's "National Literature" in 1820 to Walt Whitman's "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads" in 1888.

23. See James Kirke Paulding, "National Literature," The Native Muse: Theories of American Literature, ed. Richard Ruland, vol. 1 (New York: Dutton, 1972) 132-36.

24. In the 1880s, Whitman depicts an ascending humanitarianism fused with the American nationalistic "democratic average". His essays in The North American Review (1881) and "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads" (1888) are reprinted in The Native Muse, ed. Richard Ruland, vol. 1 (New York: Dutton, 1972) 414-28 and 428-42. Both depict nationalistic attitudes fused with a democratic humanitarian idealism.

25. Spiller explains that Alison was among the "most influential" English aesthetic theorists in America who

"spoke most clearly and eloquently for the Associationist theory of Hartley..." (Revolution 482). This body of theory, according to Spiller, "brought literature and art into more immediate relationship with experience and provided much of the rationale for the literary nationalism of the North American Review (482).

26. According to Alison's view, the effect of associations in connection with events, places, persons, etc., enhances their "beauty or sublimity" (Spiller, Revolution 493). His text, The Nature and Principles of Taste (1790) discusses how "national associations"--that is, historic events and personages--"have a similar effect, in increasing the emotions of sublimity and beauty as they very obviously increase the number of images presented to the mind" (494). Thus artistic creation benefits from historic associations.

27. See Stanley Bank's comments on this issue in American Romanticism (112-13).

28. Bank 241-42.

29. Rufus Choate, "The Importance of Illustrating New-England History by a Series of Romances Like the Waverley Novels," Address and Orations of Rufus Choate (Boston: 1887) 1.

30. C. Hugh Holman, introduction, Views and Reviews, by William Gilmore Simms (Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1962) xxxiii.

31. G. Harrison Orians also suggests this date in his essay, "The Romance Ferment After Waverley," where he declares that the enthusiasm for the romance dies down after Scott's death. G. Harrison Orians, "The Romance Ferment After Waverley," American Literature 3 (1932): 429.

32. Although there are reasons to distinguish the romance from the historical romance, often these terms have been used either indiscriminately or interchangeably by nineteenth-century literary critics. The reason for this lies in the origin of the terms. In Rhetoric, Blair refers to the romance as "romantic histories." Scott further refines this idea and acknowledges that there are romantic histories, historical romances, and gradations in between these two extremes (See the section titled "Romance and History in Scott's Tradition" in Chapter Four). Modern critics such as Emily Budick and George Dekker have similarly adopted these distinctions. The romance appears to be the broader classification, and historical romances denote a subgenre, to use Scott's phrase, "according to the proportion in which their truth is debased by fiction, or their fiction mingles with truth" (Sir Walter Scott, "Essay

on Romance," Essays on Chivalry, Romance and the Drama, vol. 6 (London, 1824) 134.

33. Alexander Cowie, introduction, The Yemassee, by William Gilmore Simms (New York: American Book, 1937) ix.

34. Holman xxxiv.

35. William Gilmore Simms, The Yemassee, ed. Alexander Cowie (New York: American Book, 1937) 12.

36. To reiterate some of these principles and ideals, American democratic attitudes elevated the common man over birth, wealth, or class distinctions. This ideal fostered the political and religious freedom which underlie its basic institutions and social organization.

37. For an example of this see William Tudor's essay from The North American Review (1815) reprinted in The Native Muse: Theories of American Literature, ed. Richard Ruland, vol. 1 (New York: Dutton, 1972) 92-108.

38. Hawthorne's famous inventory citing romantic deficits of the American continent occurs in his Preface to The Marble Faun: "No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight as is happily the case with my dear native land" (NM 387). Henry James adds to this list in his famous biographical sketch "Hawthorne:" "One might enumerate the items of high civilization as it exists in other countries, which are absent from the texture of American life, until it should become a wonder to know what was left. No State, in the European sense of the word, and indeed barely a specific national name. No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages, nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great universities nor public schools--no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow; no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class--no Epsom nor Ascot! Some such list as that might be drawn up of the absent things in American life....The American knows that a good deal remains; what it is that remains--that is his secret, his joke, as one may say." Reprinted in The Shock of Recognition, ed. Edmund Wilson, (New York: Farrar, 1955) 459-60.

39. Spencer expands this idea in this remark to include post-bellum authors: "Within the early fiction and poetry of the Republic...lay a substantial preoccupation

with the proximate and the contemporary which, expanded and intensified through a century, issued in the conscious pictorial fidelity of Howells and Dreiser" (ON 134).

40. Charvat remarks that Bryant's critical attitude "reveal[s] the influence of Burke, Alison, and Wordsworth (204). Bryant's full statement is that human passions, whether for vice or virtue, "not only exist everywhere, but they exist infinitely diversified and compounded, in various degrees of suppression and restraint, or fostered into unnatural growth and activity, modified by political institutions and laws, by national religions and subdivisions of those religions, by different degrees of refinement and civilisation, of poverty or of abundance, by arbitrary usages handed down from indefinite antiquity, and even by local situation and climate" (NM 215)

Like Coleridge, Bryant demonstrates a concern for how the universal manifests within the particular. As Adams remarks, for Coleridge, "the universal dwells in the particular; the particular does not simply stand for the universal" (459).

Although a portion of Bryant's statement just cited also appears in Coleridge's idea of "organic form" relative to nature's endless diversity, Bryant is less allied with Coleridge than with Taine who appears later on the critical scene. In his essay on Shakespeare, Coleridge remarks that "The organic form...is innate; it shapes, as it develops, itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form...Nature, the prime genial artist, inexhaustible in diverse powers, is equally inexhaustible in forms... (Adams 462). Coleridge proposed this idea as early as 1808 (although the lecture which contains the following quote, "Shakespeare's Judgement Equal to his Genius," was not published until 1836). Bryant and Coleridge differ in their views about the external effect of environment. On this later point, Bryant's statement anticipates the environmental philosophy and determinism of Taine who traces the similarity of "certain general traits" in a common population to "the race, the surroundings, and the epoch," that is, to heredity and environment (Adams 606, 607). As a proponent on realistic fiction during an era of the romance, the significance which Bryant places upon the natural and social environment is hardly surprising. His literary attitude, as Charvat suggests, weaves together several critical perspectives.

41. Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," The Norton Anthology of American Literature, eds. Nina Baym, et al., 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: Norton, 1985) 2169.

42. See n. 41 for a discussion of Coleridge's organic metaphor. Lowell's analogy presents a Coleridgian trope commonly identified with Romanticism.

43. Lowell uses "Nature" in a universal sense, the truth which transcends the local and the provincial. He remarks about finite, physical nature (landscape, flora, and fauna)--"But it is a strange confusion of thought to attribute to a spot of earth the inspiration whose source is in a universal sentiment" (NM 315). His referent posits some ultimate universal truth. And, although Lowell's statement is not as complete, it is reminiscent of Emerson's philosophical description of nature. Emerson's essay, "Nature" (1836), posits seven "uses" nature performs as service to the senses: as commodity; as beauty found in art and natural forms; as a linguistic vehicle of thought and symbol; as a correspondence between material and ideal worlds; as an instrument of moral and intellectual instruction; as a ground for questioning even material existence; and, finally, as a spiritual apparition manifest in and subordinate to mind.

44. Prime exemplars of this literature are Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary E. Wilkins in the Northeast, Joel Chandler Harris in the South, Mark Twain in the Mississippi Valley, and Bret Harte in the Far West.

45. See Edward Eggleston, preface (1892), The Hoosier Schoolmaster, by Eggleston (New York, 1871), in Ruland, Storied 122.

46. Modern romance genre criticism often manifests this same literary ethnocentrism. Genre critics, such as Chase, whose critical focus is early American fiction, have often assumed the superiority and archetypal precedence of New England literature. Jane Tompkins makes clear the limited radius of romance genre critics' literary selection when she analyzes F. O. Matthiessen's selection for representation in his influential American Renaissance. Tompkins states, "Matthiessen's list is exclusive and class-bound in the extreme. If you look at it carefully, you will see that in certain fundamental ways the list does not represent what most men and women were thinking about between 1850 and 1855, but embodies the view of a very small, socially, culturally, geographically, sexually, and racially restricted elite. None of the works that Matthiessen names is by an orthodox Christian, although that is what most Americans in the 1850s were, and although religious issues pervaded the cultural discourse of the period. None deals explicitly with the issues of abolition and temperance which preoccupied the country in this period, and gave rise to such popular works as Uncle Tom's Cabin and T. S. Arthur's Ten Nights in a Barroom. None of the works on the list achieved great popular success, although this six year period saw the emergence of the first American best-sellers. The list includes no works by women, although women at that time dominated the literary marketplace. The list includes no works by males not of Anglo-Saxon origin,

and indeed, no works by writers living south of New York, north of Boston, or west of Stockbridge, Massachusetts" (Jane Tompkins, Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860 (New York: Oxford UP, 1985) 199-200.

47. Hippolyte Taine, "History of English Literature," Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971) 607.

48. Few early American fictionists ever did venture beyond the limits of their own experience. One might choose to view American literature as always having been regional. George Dekker carries this idea one step further suggesting that American literature is merely a regional type within the phenomenon of world literature (See the section on Dekker in Chapter Two, Part Two).

CHAPTER TWO

CHASE AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY ROMANCE GENRE CRITICISM

> The novel and the romance, the novel of incident and that of character--these clumsy separations appear to me to have been made by critics and readers for their own convenience, and to help them out of some of their occasional predicaments, but to have little reality or interest for the producer, from whose point of view it is of course that we are attempting to consider the art of fiction.[1]
>
> Henry James, 1884

Nationalism, Romance, and the Problems of Genre Definition

"Everyone knows what American literature is," reads the first line of William C. Spengemann's thought-provoking book, A Mirror for Americanists: Reflections on the Idea of American Literature (1989).[2] His ironic statement opens a discussion about the complexity of defining these two terms in juxtaposition. He argues that the term "American literature" is inherently ambiguous, rendering multiple interpretations. It may imply something grammatical--literature written in the English language. Or perhaps it refers to literature written by American authors within a

specified geographic boundary, or to literature written about that geographic region. Or it may suggest a political designation. As we see from the variety of nineteenth-century American writers' responses in their quest for a national literature, all these interpretations were at one time considered. Spengemann's discussion highlights the ambiguity problematic to anyone seeking to define a commonly used phrase with any precision. I agree with Spengemann that one cannot settle this ambiguity with any finality. One cannot extract the nationalistic quality implied when the two terms, "American" and "literature," are combined.

In search of this elusive Americanism, nineteenth-century writers attempted to differentiate their fiction from their English predecessors through theme, subject, character, image, symbol, and setting, and, for whatever success they achieved, to make their fiction "American." There has been a striking continuity of American authors intent upon discovering a distinctive element particular to our native literature. Like their literary predecessors, modern critics' expectation for an inherent Americanism implicit in American fiction, however ambiguous that quality may be, attests to this fact.

Spengemann's ideas apply to the problems of definition in general and extend readily to those surrounding the definition of American romance and modern genre criticism. His argument, briefly described above, bears similarity to the problem which early American writers encountered as they

developed an indigenous literature--the question, "What is American literature?" From the late 1700s to the late 1800s literary journalists and authors in their prefaces to American fiction discuss not only the problem of what constituted a national literature but the form that this literature would take.

Defining American literature has always been compounded by geographic, linguistic, cultural uncertainties that critics and writers identified as they distinguished native literature from British literature. For example, Irving, Cooper, and Hawthorne, each at times wrote their fiction abroad and used non-native settings. They each struggled with the limitations of the American scene for the writer. Due to their nativity as well as their characteristic themes and subject matter in their literature, however, these writers have always been considered American authors. It is this type of dilemma and other nationalistic questions that have always accompanied definitions of American literature. As Spengemann observes, one cannot separate the nationalistic component from the various connotations which the combined term "American literature" implies. With this premise constantly in mind, we begin our discussion of twentieth-century literary critics as they deal with genre-related issues concerning early American literature.

The Inherited Mode

As shown in the previous chapter and the above discussion, our native literature began and matured during an era of intense nationalism rendering it nearly impossible to expect any other sort of definition than one which tied indigenous literature to nationalistic elements. The problem, as James Paulding, Noah Webster and other writers recognized, in differentiating American literature from British literature, was that we retained a borrowed language.[3] Consequently, in matters of theme, subject, taste, imagery, setting, dialect, and political and social values, American writers sought an independence from Old World sources. This process has often been referred to as "naturalizing" the novel to the American situation.[4]

Within the context of establishing a national literature, major nineteenth-century authors openly declared they were writing romances, and critics openly discussed the form. The romance ascended from a controversial, debased fictional form in the late eighteenth-century to a respectable genre by the mid-nineteenth-century.[5] Twentieth-century critics have supported the romance supposition of our early authors. According to Chase and other twentieth-century literary critics, the literary form most consistently expressed in American fiction has been the romance. Modern critics have both rediscovered and capitalized upon this issue pairing the idea of American

literature with the romance. This is further complicated by what Spengemann helps us to recognize--that we cannot disqualify nationalism from the term "American literature."

Given these facts, one might expect that the romance genre carries with it some inseparable nationalistic literary gene. This is not the case. There is nothing implicitly national about the nineteenth-century romance. It seems a rather simplistic theory that literature divides itself between nations by genre.[6] But the unique conditions surrounding the development of the romance in America and abroad did produce circumstances in which the romance inherited nationalistic tendencies in its revived form. I discuss Scott's contribution to this revival of romance and his contribution to the American romance genre in a separate chapter. That the romance should acquire these traits was demonstrated in a preceding chapter as we retraced the growth of our native fiction along side the movement for a national literature.

Romance, in modern American literary criticism, has gained something of a patriotic status. In brief, nineteenth-century writers ascribed a nationalistic task to literature. The romance was revived and in vogue, primarily due to Scott who demonstrated its nationalistic potential.[7] American writers exploited this potential combining nationalistic goals with their fiction. The romance form predominated over other fictional modes during the nineteenth-century. Finally, modern criticism, somewhat

ironically, seems to insist that there is something inherently "American" about the romance. Both the nationalistic motivation for fiction and the romance-novel distinction were inherited from Scott and his contemporaries. This comparative perspective, like Chase, counterpoising the American romance with the British novel, comprises one of the main classes of criticism applied to early American literature. Nationalism resides covertly in Chase's hypothesis, depending, as it does, upon comparison between two bodies of English literature and the romance-novel distinction. While it becomes difficult for critics to bypass Chase's hypothesis when dealing with early American fiction as the romance seems to have been a predominant mode, critics may avoid dependence upon either his nationalistic premise or the romance-novel distinction to demonstrate American literature's uniqueness. Critics subsequent to Chase have preferred other methods which bypass Chase's nationalistic use of the romance-novel dichotomy.

The following alternatives have often proven more advantageous for literary critics preferring to avoid comparative issues which occupy Chase.[8] What becomes significant about the romance mode, which some modern critics recognize, is the transformation which took place as the literary form became naturalized to the American milieu. Only as the romance was modified and naturalized to the American setting can it be said to express American

characteristics, ideas, and ideals.[9] This second major classification of genre criticism does not depend upon differentiating the American romance from the British novel. Instead this criticism acknowledges the romance's non-indigenous origin and focuses upon how fiction itself was naturalized in America. George Dekker's The Historical Romance in America (1987) utilizes this method. Dekker's criticism, while accepting the romance hypothesis, serves as a needed supplement to and revision of Chase's model. Dekker's text demonstrates that the distinctiveness of American literature does not have to rely upon a nationalistic romance-novel distinction. The forthcoming chapters on C. B. Brown and Cooper similarly adopt this tactic. In addition, the chapter on Cooper illustrates the limitations of genre theory applications.

Another form this criticism may take is to analyze native literature as largely independent from other English literature tracing the cultural roots of nineteenth-century fiction to early literary forms of expression predominant in America.[10] The correctives to Chase which Buell cites find continuity between colonial and nineteenth-century forms of literary expression. Michael T. Gilmore's book, The Middle Way: Puritanism and Ideology in American Romantic Fiction (1977) represents one example of such an approach.[11] The subsequent chapter on Hawthorne utilizes Buell's suggestion, finding continuity between Hawthorne's art of fiction and a colonial non-narrative genre, homiletics. In contrast to

Chase, neither of these approaches which locate "Americanism" in native literature preclude the fact that other fictional modes existed concurrently, nor do they depend upon a nationalistic lens for their appraisal.

Chase's Romance Hypothesis

In 1957 Richard Chase published a seminal critical text, The American Novel and its Tradition. This work embodies his theory of American fiction. For Chase, American fiction differs from the British novel "in its most original and characteristic form" by its tendency to incorporate an "element of romance" (AN viii). American romance, in Chase's view, derives from the novel and is best viewed as a sub-genre of the novel. His thesis implies that the American romance is neither a distinct genre, nor is American fiction from its inception destined to remain romance. His theory attempts to satisfy the breadth of native literary history by establishing a compromise. Thus, his definition of American fiction posits a hybrid form of early American fiction, something between the definitions of the romance and the novel. Chase constructs a romance-novel equation in which the balance between the two forms may vary in any given text, stretching literary qualities at both ends of the continuum, incipient and modern, the romance and the novel. John McWilliams and other modern critics of American literature found Chase's theory to be "admirably capacious."[12]

Chase observes, "It used to be thought that the element of romance in American fiction was destined to disappear..." (AN xi). His theory proposes that the romance survives in some varying degree throughout an otherwise novelistic American literary tradition. Chase submits that the disappearance of romance, "used to be thought...a good thing, romance being regarded as a backward tendency of the comparatively unenlightened youth of our [literary] culture" (AN xi-xii). Chase, like other critics of early American literature, had to contend not only with the opinion of British critics that early native fiction was inferior to the substantial, British novel, but also with the fact that American critics agreed that native fiction was artistically flawed. Hence, Chase posited that his text was an "appreciation" rather than a "detailed literary history." Within this framework Chased contended that romance, surviving as an "element" of the novel was a "good thing." This view also proposed a kind of continuity which Chase claimed for the expanse of American fiction over a century and a half.

Chase also seemed personally to view the romance as inferior to the modern realistic novel. Chase remarks that "The best American novels have found uses for romance far beyond escapism, fantasy, and sentimentality often associated with it" (AN x). Although he fails to mention that these uses were largely the forms Scott and his European contemporaries formulated, he declares that

American writers elevated "the romance as a form capable of generating moral and intellectual profundity" (AN xi). This argument added force to his thesis. Chase's appreciation of early American fiction was effective in establishing literary credibility for the romance form. According to Chase's perspective American writers rescued the debased romance form from its Old World uses and regenerated the romance with the "dark and complex truths unavailable to realism"--the predominant British fictional mode. These "truths" were made available to American authors through the unique circumstances of their Puritan heritage and their isolation in a vast, uncompromising wilderness. These circumstances comprise the "radical discontinuities" which Chase explains as inspiring the differences between Old and New World fiction.

The idea of "radical discontinuities" provides one of Chase's most persistent themes. He observes that American fiction "has usually seemed content to explore, rather than to appropriate and civilize, the remarkable and in some way unexampled territories of life in the New World" (AN 5). Consequently, according to Chase, most of our best writers deal with "extreme contradictions, the more drastic forms of alienation, the more violent, earthy, or sordid ranges of experience" (AN 10). He traces these outcomes to three sources of the American imagination, roughly: isolation, the New England Manichaean world view, and the American's "dual

[intellectual] allegiance" to both Old and New World (AN 11).[13]

In my view Chase posits several critical contradictions of his own. He asserts that although American fiction "derives from the English tradition," he denies that his approach depends upon that comparison (AN viii). His method, he asserts, "is not comparative but descriptive, except at the beginning of the book, and in one or two other places, where comparison (or contrast) appears to facilitate description" (AN xii). This is one of many latitudes he describes for convenient application of his theory. Another of his suppositions also depends upon establishing ambiguous critical parameters. He proposes that his selection of texts is based upon their "originality and `Americanness'" although, he admits "that the precise nature of these qualities is often debatable" (AN vii). This admits that we cannot know the "precise nature" of American literature as Spengemann's argument cited earlier points out. This leaves a great deal of latitude for future critics' proposals. Chase also posits the evolution of literary forms as Scott once did. Thus, American fiction is marked by its "perpetual reassessment and reconstitution of romance within the novel form" (AN viii); and "The history of the American novel is not only the history of the rise of realism but also of the repeated rediscovery of the uses of romance, and this will continue to be so" (AN xii). These claims for latitude in his critical assessment invite ambiguity into

the definition of American romance. Critics who embrace this portion of Chase's approach may potentially search for these ambiguous romance elements ad infinitum.

One of the frustrations in analyzing critical works which respond to Chase's hypothesis has been their tendency at times to begin their criticism "uncritically," not consulting Chase's romance hypothesis in its detail. They have assumed the romance to be "the" early American fictional tradition rather than a mere hypothesis attended by a larger context of critical machinery. Each text derived from this claim potentially supplies one more brick in the theoretical edifice. Chase's hypothesis becomes oversimplified and a small portion of it mistaken for fact.

Whether this approach either bypasses a shared literary history with British tradition or rests upon distinctions between the British novel and the American romance, in both instances, the ultimate nationalistic result has remained essentially the same--an oversimplified equation of the American romance and the British novel. This perpetuates and imposes an unnecessary nationalistic element upon the critical analysis of early American fiction.

Chapters of literary history begin, as every critic knows, with hypotheses such as Chase proposes. They begin with critics' suppositions and gain force and credence from subsequent repetitions of their insights along similar lines. This proved to be the case with Chase's text and the romance genre hypothesis. Due to the widespread influence

of Chase's romance hypothesis upon literary canon, more recent critics of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century fiction felt it necessary to argue for greater recognition of other native genres which existed alongside the romance. They also have argued for a broader definition of what constitutes a national literature.

Chase's hypothesis has served early American literary criticism well. A notable philosopher (possibly Stanley Cavell) once mused that the purpose of philosophy was to sustain philosophy. This describes the role of the American literary critic. A discipline needs to sustain itself, to generate its own work. According to these terms, Chase has been successful. Some literary critics have depended upon the dark strand of Chase's hypothesis that "The American novel tends to rest in contradictions and extreme ranges of experience."[14] Melville's sense about the "blackness" of Hawthorne's fiction provides an early example of this tradition. Chase has been more a follower than a leader in this strand of criticism. More often critics have followed Chase's hunches about the romance (AN 1). These genre-related hypotheses have perhaps given wider latitude to subsequent critics seeking their own derivative hypotheses. No one can contest Chase's significance in assisting the generation of criticism about early American literature. But too often critics have accepted the few pages of his introduction which posit the romance hypothesis rather than react to the remainder of his text.

Chase's purpose and interest, in his own words, has been "to describe how, in certain instances, this process of amalgamation of realism and romance has been going on" (AN xii). "Certain instances" are bound to ignore other possibilities and create exceptions. This problem remains endemic to most genre approaches to literary history. Canon issues are an offshoot of this approach. Critics subsequent to Chase have been concerned about what his comparative hypothesis perpetuates and whom it excludes. Chase's theory is ultimately questioned upon this basis by feminist and ethnic critics aspiring for recognition of diversity in both gender and genre in the development of early American fiction.

Chase's theory depends upon the assertion that "the tradition of romance is major in the history of the American novel but minor in the history of the English novel" (AN xii). This approach compares and contrasts American with British and romance with novel. Chase asserts, "Doubtless the main difference between the novel and the romance is in the way in which they view reality" (AN 12). His definitions are lengthy and comprehensive. The result of this amalgamated romance-novel ought to be something between the forms. The problem, according to Chase's criteria, is that this can be any one of a multitude of interchangeable "elements." This ambiguity and elusive quality dilutes the hypothesis and invites almost infinite possibilities.

His hypothesis largely validates the equation that

American fiction equals romance and British literature equals the novel. Chase contrasts the novel and the romance with these definitions:

> The novel renders reality closely and in comprehensive detail. It takes a group of people and sets them going about the business of life. We come to see these people in their real complexity of temperament and motive. They are in explicable relation to nature, to each other, to their social class, to their own past. Character is more important than action and plot, and probably the tragic or comic actions of the narrative will have the primary purpose of enhancing our knowledge of and feeling for an important character, a group of characters, or a way of life. The events that occur will usually be plausible, given the circumstances, and if the novelist includes a violent or sensational occurrence in his plot, he will introduce it only into such scenes as have been...`already prepared to vouch for it.' Historically...the novel has served the interest and aspirations of an insurgent middle class.
>
> By contrast the romance, following distantly the medieval example, feels free to render reality in less volume and detail. It tends to prefer action to character, and action will be freer in a romance than in a novel, encountering, as it were, less resistance from reality....The romance can flourish without providing much intricacy of relation. The characters, probably rather two-dimensional types, will not be complexly related to each other or to society or to the past. Human beings will on the whole be shown in ideal relation--that is, they will share emotions only after these have become abstract or symbolic. To be sure, characters may become profoundly involved in some way...but it will be a deep and narrow, an obsessive, involvement. In American romances it will not matter much what class people come from, and where the novelist would arouse our interest in a character by exploring his origin, the romancer will probably do so by enveloping it in mystery. Character itself becomes, then, somewhat abstract and ideal, so much so in some romances that it seems to be merely a function of plot. The plot we may expect to be highly colored. Astonishing events may occur, and these are likely to have a symbolic or ideological rather than a realistic, plausibility. Being less committed to

> the immediate rendition of reality than the novel, the romance will more freely veer toward mythic, allegorical, and symbolistic forms" (AN 12-13).

These definitions are much more allied with the traditional definitions of the novel and the romance than Chase offers in his introduction. They also include some aspects depicting the American adaptation of the romance form--less attention to origin and class, and the three forms he mentions in the final sentence.[15] As our later discussion will point out, major critics such as William Ellis and J. W. Tuttleton have disputed Chase's romance hypothesis on the basis of his disclaimers about society and class in American fiction.

Chase's definition of romance given in his introduction is also "capacious." He begins with another version in a long tradition of romance/novel comparisons, but with a twist: "the American romance-novel, as it may be called--that freer, more daring, more brilliant fiction that contrasts with the solid moral inclusiveness and massive equability of the English novel" (AN viii). How does one identify these elusive qualities? Upon closer analysis this definition offers a restatement of traditional romance/novel distinctions. In devising his own definition Chase primarily relies upon Hawthorne, a mid-nineteenth-century writer, and upon James. He definition of romance is a broad and multi-faceted. He asserts:

> the word must signify, besides the more obvious qualities of the picturesque and the heroic, an assumed freedom from the ordinary novelistic

> requirements of verisimilitude, development, and continuity, a tendency toward melodrama and idyl; a more or less formal abstractness and, on the other hand, a tendency to plunge into the underside of consciousness; a willingness to abandon moral questions or to ignore the spectacle of man in society, or to consider these things only indirectly or abstractly (AN viii-ix).[16]

This definition is as inclusive as it is vague. Chase basically reiterates that the romance is not a novel and finds room for a cadre of certain authors. I find in contrast to Chase that C. B. Brown, Cooper, and Hawthorne (discussed later in this work) each concerned themselves with attributes of verisimilitude (although they may not have used the term), that is, the relationship between fact and fiction. Each regarded their fiction as allied with truthful representation of ordinary reality. Their ability to provide "verisimilitude, development, and continuity" was as much a problem of the nascence of fiction in general, and the lack of models, as it was due to any inherent characteristics of romance as a discrete genre. These early authors' successes in attaining these qualities, however, according to their own criteria and to the criteria of the genres in which they wrote, were various.[17]

A problem of Chase's definition is that it breaks down under the pressure of examples which do not fit. The designation of melodrama applies to the fiction of Brown--but only to certain works of Cooper. Cooper's and Hawthorne's fiction at times approaches idyl, but not Brown's. Brown, Hawthorne, and Melville, "plunge into the

underside of consciousness," but not Cooper--and Poe goes unmentioned in Chase's text. Who willingly abandons moral questions? Certainly neither Brown, Cooper, Hawthorne, nor Melville though one may have to remain flexible about their various views. And how is society ignored? Only when one accepts the modern novelistic view of society can this conclusion be tentatively accepted. Each of our early authors comments on society and mankind in society in important ways, even though their heroes may venture into the wilderness of nature or mind.

The early American authors, C. B. Brown, Cooper and Hawthorne, whom I write about later, were concerned with their present circumstances. Creating or contributing to a native and a national literature was foremost among their priorities. Each tried to differentiate their fiction with other allied or competing genres that were socially acceptable forms, such as history or epic. They aspired for continuity with those traditions as well as latitude for their own forms of art.[18] They grappled with problems of reality and how to express their perceptions in literary form. The romance served the purposes of each. The fervor of nationalism, expressed in their fiction to varying degrees, appears and subsides with national incidents that induced this sentiment.

Two reviewers of Chase's text have made further criticism. John McWilliams argues, "Because Chase had developed an <u>a priori</u> theory of an American fictional genre,

he chose to study those authors and works best suited to exemplify it.[19] Literary critics are first to comprehend the power of repetition in matters of canon and the importance of critical "piggy-backing." While critics claim the credibility of retrospective criticism, this process works from the outside to the inside. It superimposes a theory upon fiction rather than evolving a theory from the fictional works themselves, the authors' contexts, and their perspectives. Theories of this sort do not provide proof but only attempt to substantiate their views by example. Exceptions disprove the hypotheses. In a review of Chase's text, Robert Spiller claims that Chase's theory is circular and attempts to bear itself out by circular argument.[20] An alternative approach might derive from the cultural context rather than superimpose a hypothesis upon a limited number of authors and works.[21]

None of these comments are meant to underestimate the importance of Chase's text and hypothesis to romance genre theory. Rather they are meant to place a perspective upon how his text has been utilized. No hypothesis has been more controversial, nor more central, in the recent critical debate about the Americanness of our native literature.

In my view romance genre theory rests upon an unacknowledged nationalistic premise which resides at the core. A problem appears when critics view early American literature from purely an indigenous perspective. Critics have applied Chase's comparative, nationalistic hypothesis

internally, that is, within the confines of early American fiction as opposed to its original context--as a comparison to British fiction. Consequently, critical debate has focused upon what it means either to be excluded or included in the romance tradition as denying or affirming the national identity of a particular author or work of fiction. The most recent critical appraisals of early American literature have identified the political nuances and have reacted to what they feel is the political agenda behind the romance hypothesis. As the romance achieved a national status as "the" form of early American literature, recent critics have argued for greater recognition for both incipient genres which existed along side the romance and for a broader definition of what constitutes a national literature formulated in a pluralistic society.

Chase seemed unaware of the potent nationalistic premise of his theory which has resulted in the modern critical debate. The present study demonstrates the marriage of two bodies of literature--our early native fiction and twentieth-century American romance genre criticism. A nationalistic intent underlies both. The later chapters in this present text use some of the same authors Chase discusses, C. B. Brown, Cooper, and Hawthorne, in an attempt to fill this gap and to demonstrate some of the problems in application of Chase's romance hypotheses to early American fiction.

I agree with Chase's contention that romance

predominated these earliest forms of American fiction. I provide supplementary information about external forces and circumstances which influence how native writer's naturalized non-native fictional forms beyond what Chase discusses. I also posit another approach which finds continuity in American fiction while avoiding Chase's nationalistic premise. Early American fiction, unlike Chase's supposition, need not confine the historical development of native literature simply to its movement away from (or back into, as Chase suggests) an otherwise novelistic tradition. While I argue that nationalistic premises of early American fiction and modern criticism cannot be ignored, Chase overlooks this most significant factor sustaining his romance hypothesis and the romance form our early native authors adapted. Including the nationalistic context of this movement acknowledges the major impetus behind the development of fiction in America and recognizes how this ingredient impacted our literary development. It likewise shaped early critics' suggestions for and definitions of indigenous literature. Reiterating Shulenberger's observation: "...the whole modern, democratic nationalist era which began with the nineteenth century...has not yet ended."[22]

Both the critical acceptance and critical uproar that ensued subsequent to Chase's hypothesis are predictable. That modern critics should argue for greater latitude in defining American literature was foreshadowed in the

development of our early literature as it developed from region to region. The first cries were simply for a national literature. Later, critics and writers asked for the inclusion of diverse representations--local color, and recognition of regional differences. Ultimately, literature simply asked that universals be represented through the discrete characteristics observable regionally or locally. Modern critics of early American literature argue essentially for a similar latitude--that the definition of American literature provide access to groups and genres the romance hypothesis excludes.[23] This requires the generation and acceptance of a more embracing literary theory which sustains the interests of various subgenres and applies to both genders of early American writers. Critics have questioned whether Chase's hypothesis is capacious enough to include either nineteenth-century women writers, ethnic literature, or other literary genres in which American authors wrote. Contemporary critics have struggled to indemnify domestic fiction, autobiography, slave narratives, realistic fiction, and the novel of manners against the romance hypothesis. Romance theorists, meanwhile, preserve their own canon of specific works and/or antebellum authors --generally, C. B. Brown, Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville.

Spiller views Chase's text as another "illustration of the current quest for method in historical criticism among American (and English) literary scholars."[24] Chase

capitalizes upon and renews the romance-novel distinction that has been debated for over a century. His application continues the nationalistic literary war between two traditions of English literature. The attempt to identify the Americanness of American literature through genre-related methodologies ultimately proves to be inadequate to describe the complexity of early American fiction and its development. To reiterate Julian Hawthorne's sentiment, it seems that critics ought to be able to conceive of "a deeper Americanism than this."[25]

Chase's Debt to American Literary Critics

Chase could not have proposed his hypothesis that the romance genre constituted the main stream of American fiction if it had not been for certain other prior critical works. Chase's thesis gathers momentum, in part, from D. H. Lawrence's Studies in Classic American Fiction (1922). Amongst nineteenth-century fictionists about whom Lawrence wrote--Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville--Chase includes the same list but surprisingly omits Poe from his text. Lawrence's series of essays pays special homage to traits which distinguish a lineage of American writers.[26] Among these traits Chase remarks of Lawrence's observation of the "`duplicity' of the American literary mind," about which Chase declares, "the best American artistic achievements had depended in one way or another on this dualism....(AN 9). Chase applies Lawrence's formulation of American fiction to

construct a contrasting definition with British Literature. The British novel, according to Chase, "has been a kind of imperial enterprise, an appropriation of reality with the high purpose of bringing order to disorder. By contrast, as Lawrence observed in his Studies in Classic American Literature, the American novel has usually seemed content to explore, rather than to appropriate and civilize....merely to discover a new place and a new state of mind (AN 4-5). Chase bases his notion of "radical discontinuities" which he observes in American fiction upon Lawrence's insight of "duplicity."

In "The Rationale for the American Romance," John McWilliams comments that Chase's The American Novel and Its Tradition was written to counter the critical perspective that F. R. Leavis's book promoted. Although Leavis's The Great Tradition was published in 1948, according to McWilliams, its thesis became widely accepted three years prior to Chase's response.[27] Leavis asserted that "the British novel of manners, concerned with class, money, and marriage, has always been `The Great Tradition.'"[28] McWilliams comments that "Leavis's fictional preferences were sufficiently important to be vigorously contested, especially among American literary critics whose very subject matter was, ipso facto, excluded from greatness. Leavis purports that Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad and D. H. Lawrence comprise the list of authors in this tradition.[29] Chase attempts to realign

Leavis's assumption. He replies, "Mr. Leavis's `great tradition' of the novel is really Anglo-American... (AN 3). As long as Henry James has been included, Chase insists that Hawthorne and Melville have their place too. Leavis, Chase protests, has left out "a tradition which includes most of the best American authors" (AN 3). The American branch of Anglo-American literature, according to Chase, veers toward romance. He concludes, "All I hold out for is a provisional recognition of the divergence as a necessary step towards understanding and appreciation of both the English and the American novel" (AN 3). Thus, Chase attempts some reconciliation between the two English literatures, while holding out for a element distinguishing American literature. Chase's final comments in Appendix II betray something of the reversal in the traditional literary hierarchy he would like to see. He observes, "realism is the fundamental distinguishing quality of the novel and in going on to speak of romance as something that in the novel arises from and modifies realism rather than of realism as something that in the novel romance condescends to become" (AN 246). This statement summarizes Chase's wish for romance as the predominant element characterizing American fiction--that critics would think of romance as an elevated form of the novel and realism, rather than as an imaginative debasement.[30]

Prior to Leavis, F. O. Matthiessen's major work, American Renaissance (1941) "played a decisive role in

making possible the American academic study of American Literature."[31] Jonathan Arac's essay "F. O. Matthiessen: Authorizing an American Renaissance," discusses Matthiessen's contribution. Arac asserts that the "particular force" of the renaissance supposition resides in its national emphasis.[32] He contends, "Matthiessen conceived of his subject as essentially national and comparative."[33] According to Arac, "The single theoretical topic that has become institutionally part of the normal procedure," due to Matthiessen's work, "is nationalistic: the question of `American romance...."[34] Although Chase makes little direct reference to Matthiessen in The American Novel and its Tradition, his debt is obvious.

Similarly, Lionel Trilling is often mentioned for his essays which contribute to Chase's romance hypothesis. Trilling's essay, "Manners, Morals, and the Novel" (1947), later republished in The Liberal Imagination (1957), tended to support the novel-romance distinction between British and American fiction.[35] Trilling asserted that the novel "has never really established itself in America."[36] By novel, Trilling means fiction dealing with society and manners.[37] He continues explaining, "Not that we have not had very great novels but that the novel in America diverges from its classic intention, which, as I have said, is the investigation of the problem of reality beginning in the social field."[38]

Several other critical texts fall within this

tradition. Charles Feidelson's Symbolism and American Literature (1953) belongs to the lineage of critical texts which establish a distinctive American vision within native literature. Looking at the literature of Hawthorne, Poe, Melville and Whitman, Feidelson argues for a common "symbolist tradition" uniting early American literati and anticipating modern symbolism.[39] R. W. B. Lewis also merits mentioning. Lewis's The American Adam (1955) presents the "outlines of a native American mythology," an Adamic myth or archetype, present in the fiction of Brown, Cooper, Bird, Hawthorne, and Melville.[40] Matthiessen, Feidelson, Trilling, and Lewis all preceded and anticipate Chase's romance hypothesis. Finally, one must acknowledge Chase's debt to Henry James. Chase places his text securely within the tradition of James, who argued in "The Art of Fiction" (1888) that "the celebrated distinction between the novel and romance" had little relevance to the art. Chase relies heavily upon this thesis for The American Novel and Its Tradition and sees James' novels as exemplary of his romance-novel hypothesis.[41]

Chase's Romance Hypothesis and Subsequent Romance Genre Criticism

I have classified romance genre criticism, in the wake of Chase's text, as having produced two major reactions.[42] A number of texts have been generated upon the acceptance of his romance hypothesis. Among these are several critics who

have attempted to either refine or extend Chase's work.[43] Joel Porte's text, The Romance in America: Studies in Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and James (1969), using Chase as merely a stepping stone in the Introduction, is primarily concerned with the romance as theme, as well as the form, of nineteenth-century fiction. Few books act strictly as a refinement in the way that Porte's text does. Most often they supply missing background or offer alternate routes to investigating the nineteenth-century romance, bypassing Chase's generic distinction entirely. Michael D. Bell's The Development of American Romance: The Sacrifice of Relation (1980) describes two forms of nineteenth-century romance, the "conservative" and the "primary," which distinguish romance, not from the novel, but from reality. George Dekker's The American Historical Romance (1987) provides knowledge about the European sources of inspiration for the American romance. Emily Budick's Fiction and Historical Consciousness: The American Romance Tradition (1989) deals with the tension inherent to this genre between history and fiction produced by romance writers' attempts to "dissolve history into myth."[44]

A second major category of criticism has grown up in opposition to Chase. James Tuttleton's Novel of Manners in America (1972) contends for the simultaneous development of a novel of manners in literary tradition aside from the American romance. Nicolaus Mills criticizes the limitations of Chase's genre approach in American and English Fiction in

the Nineteenth Century (1973) and argues for a comparative "anti-genre" methodology which his text illustrates. The opposition to Chase's hypothesis also includes two texts of feminist criticism: Jane Tompkins' Sensational Designs (1985) and Nina Baym's Feminism and Theories of American Literary History (1992).[45] Both authors are concerned about how Chase's romance hypothesis omits women writers.[46] William Ellis enjoins a different tactic in The Theory of the American Romance: An Ideology in American Intellectual History (1989) arguing that the differences between American and British literature have been overrated and that only one tradition of "English" literature exists.

The texts representing these two major categories are discussed chronologically in this chapter.[47] I have been deliberately selective in the following discussion, choosing texts for their specific response to Chase's hypothesis and for their broad range of application to several nineteenth-century authors rather than to a single author. For each critic I focus upon their contributions to or their arguments with Chase's romance hypothesis as it pertains to matters of genre and the distinctiveness of early American fiction. This topic naturally broadens to include the romance-novel debate and literary canon issues. The first portion discusses critics who agree with and utilize Chase's hypothesis, partially or completely, either extending or refining Chase's assessment. The later segment examines the

work of those critics who oppose Chase's hypothesis and the various solutions they propose.

PART TWO:
REFINEMENTS OF AND SUPPLEMENTS TO CHASE'S THESIS

> The central fact is that American literature has had its own special condition of development and its own special tendencies arising from these conditions. Among the literatures of the modern world, its case is unique.[48]
>
> Norman Foerster, 1928

Joel Porte

Chase's hypothesis became a springboard for Joel Porte's critical text, The Romance in America: Studies in Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville and James (1969). Porte extolls the achievement of this romance hypothesis:

> Thanks to a series of major critical studies that have appeared in the past decade and a half, it no longer seems necessary to argue for the importance of romance as a nineteenth-century American genre. Students of American literature--notably Richard Chase--have provided a solid theoretical basis for establishing that the rise and growth of fiction in this country is dominated by our authors' conscious adherence to a tradition of non-realistic romance sharply at variance with the broadly novelistic mainstream of English writing. When there has been disagreement among recent critics as to the contours of American fiction, it has usually disputed, not the existence per se of a romance tradition, but rather the question of which authors, themes, and stylistic strategies to be placed with certainty at the heart of that tradition (RA ix)

Thus, Porte manages unwittingly to isolate the central

dilemma of Chase's contention. Critics continue to debate these statements on several grounds. The debate begins midway in Porte's statement where he makes claims for authors' "conscious adherence" to the romance mode. Facts do not bear this out. Writing during a period in which romance was viewed skeptically, Brown disguised his "romancing" preferring to speak of himself as a "rhapsodist." For most of his writing career, Cooper consciously tried to avoid writing romance. Hawthorne preferred other fictional modes but remarked that he could not avoid his own allegorical inclination. As pointed out later in this text, allegory was an element essential and peculiar to Hawthorne's art of the romance. Consequently, his fiction took the form of romance. Critics voice diverse opinions about whether or not American literary tradition has been "sharply at variance" with novelistic British fiction. This question has not been decided. Some critics argue that one tradition of English literature exists. Others inquire whether or not genre provides an adequate basis for distinguishing American fiction. Feminist and ethnic literary critics are alarmed by the canonical exclusions which the romance hypothesis dictates. But Porte feels satisfied, for his purposes, with Chase.

When Porte acknowledges his debt to certain critics, the list is fairly predictable--Charles Feidelson, R. W. B. Lewis, Harry Levin, Leslie Fiedler, Daniel Hoffman, and, of course, Richard Chase. This list of creditors hints at

Porte's mixture of mythic and psychological criticism with the romance hypothesis. And, it more or less establishes the same lineage of authors: Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and James. This lineage also assures repetition of the American critical propensity to explore "the dark side" of human consciousness--the claim which Chase and Porte both make about American writers. Surprisingly, Porte forgoes mentioning Charles Brockden Brown. This exclusion prompted the critic A. W. Plumstead's comment in his essay, "Defining American Romance," that Brown's fiction constitutes the "indispensable starting place for any consideration of romance in America."[49] Even Chase discusses Brown's contribution to the romance.

Porte states his thesis early and continues to expand and refine his statement, providing perhaps the most substantive statement in the "Afterward," when he attempts to correct Perry Miller's "narrow" definition of romance. Porte begins offering his definition with this statement from the Introduction:

> I have attempted to show that all these writers created, partially or completely, according to a theory of stylized art--heavily dependent on the use of conventional, or archetypal, figures and on symbol, parable, dream, and fantasy--in order to explore large questions (and this list is not exhaustive) about race, history, nature, human motivations, and art....the American romance is characterized by a need self-consciously to define its own aims, so that `romance' becomes frequently (as I have had occasion to note particularly of The Scarlet Letter) the theme as well as the form of these authors' works (RA x).

The substance of Porte's thesis avows his alliance with

mythic and psychological criticism of his mentors. His text attempts to demonstrate that romance constitutes the "theme as well as the form" of early American fiction. This becomes Porte's refinement of and contribution to Chase's romance thesis.

Cooper's fiction, however, becomes a separate issue for Porte.[50] The criterion which Porte applies to authors Poe to James, makes Cooper's fiction an anomaly, marginal to his theory of romance continuity--the same problem Chase has with Cooper. The third problem with Porte's assumption appears in his thesis. While generating a basis for discussing the romance, Porte confounds the issue and idea of form. Porte is never quite so able satisfactorily to explain what he intends the form of romance to be. Clearly, he is not making a statement about genre. To equate romance with psychological and mythic themes is purely to confuse the definition of genre with subject matter.

For Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and James, Porte has a special classification: these authors all utilize "`art' as an implied or explicit theme" in their fiction and frequently use "`artist' figures" (RA 60). Porte adds these "criteria" to the characteristics, in his opinion, which define American romance (RA 60). Porte finds unity between the theme and subject matter of the romance in all these nineteenth-century authors. Each one, in some way, explores a "deeper psychology" (RA 53). Cooper's obsession with black and white, race and women, is simply the American hero

"facing his own duplex nature--the light and darkness within himself--the duplex nature of experience generally" (RA 10). Poe's Pym voyages into the wilderness of mind. For, according to Porte, "the theme of `life in the wilderness' and that of deeper psychology are ultimately one" (RA 53). One imagines how easily Porte could have included C. B. Brown within this framework. The art of the romancer, Porte observes is not intended to imitate nature, "but rather an expression of the secret self" (RA 58). These criteria add to Porte's psychological view of the romance.

Hawthorne's fiction and his artist protagonists become the sine qua non of Porte's thesis. All romance, like Hawthorne's, Porte claims, "grows out of dark meditations on guilt, sin, suffering--passionate experience of all kinds...(RA 98). Porte interprets Hawthorne's artists collectively to speak for Hawthorne. These artists attest to Porte's thesis--that the form and theme of romance are one, "that every man, when he attempts to confront his secret self, duplicates the experience of the romancer or, rather, composes the romance of his own being" (RA 96-7). Porte's inquest into romance artists doubled as artists within romance reveals their "power to reveal terrible truths about the human heart" (RA 126). Hawthorne's role is primary to this revelation.

Porte's discussion of Melville and James develops similarly. Melville's artist is the disguised "Confidence Man," who tempts "man into following him into a dangerous

world of knowledge and speculation where truth and falsehood are beguilingly mixed" (RA 156). Melville's dark truth revealed through the romance insists upon its faithfulness to life. Romance portrays life more readily than fiction which depicts life as consistent and "exhibits but sections of character," giving the appearance of wholes by offering only parts (RA 168). Porte continues his assessment of the romance with observations which Henry James made about the art of fiction.[51] Porte uses James' fiction to again remind us that American romance art "can be at least partially defined as an attempt to find metaphors for the inner life"--for which James' fiction, in Porte's opinion, provides the summation, "culminates the genre with dazzling brilliance" (RA 215).

Porte's "Afterward" offers him one more opportunity to refine his definition of romance, returning to the theme presented especially through Cooper's and Poe's fiction--the wilderness of mind. Porte admonishes Miller for limiting his wilderness theme in "The Romance and the Novel," a chapter from Nature's Nation, to simply nature. Porte asserts, "I have tried to show that, from the very beginning, the fictional quest for knowledge of the wilderness was synonymous---with the desire and need to explore the self" (RA 227-28). His final statement summarizes his thesis: "What began as a literal and ended as a metaphoric need to peer into and pierce through the wilderness constitutes the true burden of the romance in

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America and a major strand of our literary heritage" (RA 229). While Porte's statement presents a gratifying metaphor for the experience of early American writers, it largely describes the tendency of modern psychological criticism to derive mythopoetic conclusions. Surely Porte illustrates that art contemplates itself, but that this should singularly applies to romance fiction is a doubtful thesis. If this represents his final statement, then the question still remains about the relationship between fiction and reality--the ontological question which especially Brown, Hawthorne and Melville asked. My later chapters on early American authors place this discussion within the immediate context of each author's contemplations about reality and fiction, rather than in a beautifully expressed but displaced twentieth-century psychological metaphor. While one feels as if he or she has learned something about a particular fictional themes underlying nineteenth-century romance from Porte's modern perspective, the reader feels less enlightened about the romance genre as a whole from its nineteenth-century context.[52]

Michael Davitt Bell

Michael Davitt Bell's The Development of American Romance: The Sacrifice of Relation concurs with Chase that the romance tradition dominated nineteenth-century fiction.[53] Instead of focusing upon Chase's generic distinction between the romance and the novel, Bell

concentrates on the relationship between fiction and fact. He contends that the romance during that era was most often contrasted, not with the novel, but with reality or fact. Like James, Bell considers the genre distinction spurious, "resting more on matters of these or subject than of differences of style, mode, or form (DR xi). His interests correlate certain historical, sociological, cultural, and psychological factors with incipient development of fiction in America. Bell proposes to investigate what Brown, Irving, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville "thought they were doing" when they wrote fiction (DR xii). Hence, Bell prefers to "investigate the theory and practice of romance" of these five authors and considers "the connections between this theory and the five writers' actual experience, as `romancers', of their culture" (DR xiii). He describes this experience as follows:

> `Being a romancer' in nineteenth-century America often involved not just an effort to reconcile `imagination' with `reality' but a delicate psychological balancing act between cries of isolated rage and cries for love and attention. The territory was far from neutral. Behind the fiction of Brown, Irving, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, and behind their theoretical ruminations on `romance' as a genre, lay the complex and contradictory experience of `being a romancer' in a hostile culture (DR 36).

This complex cultural situation required a certain subterfuge on the part of its artists. Bell's definitions of the romance in America reveal that developmental process entwined with unintentional subterfuge at its outset, but American artists became fully aware of the necessity to

disguise truth as the romance matured. Although Bell only mentions this point briefly, he asserts that British fiction did not suffer the same complex fate as American fiction because England already had a long distinguished tradition of "nonutilitarian literature" in the works of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, "a heritage notably lacking in the colonies" (DR 11).

The importance of Bell's theory is that, although he discusses the fiction of early American writers, Henry James, instead of Hawthorne, becomes the defining figure of romance. Bell sees the continuity of romance from incipient American literature to its maturity depending upon a definition describing that process rather than relying upon generic distinctions. James' definition of the romance becomes pivotal in the experience of American authors as they evolved towards a self-conscious awareness of the romance's actual function. Bell's study is a description of the progress from the predominant "conservative" definition of romance to what Bell calls the "primary" definition of romance stemming from James' insights about fiction. Despite their differences in defining romance, Bell compromises with Chase agreeing that the romance continues into the twentieth-century. Bell opens the latitude of romance genre criticism post-Chase, bypassing the novel-romance distinction in favor of a romance-realism dialectic.

A major asset of Bell's study is its inclusiveness of the cultural milieu, and his ability to accommodate some of

our earliest authors, however briefly, into his thesis (e.g. William Hill Brown and Susanna Rowson). He incorporates the significant contributions of Scott, associationist aesthetics, and Scottish Common Sense philosophy, though he contests critics' longstanding view of the dynamics involved in literary nationalism summarized in Perry Miller's "The Romance and The Novel." While acknowledging these influences and demonstrating their importance, Bell concentrates on the indigenous development of literature. In doing so, Bell achieves the balance some earlier studies lack. Bell's study is not a genre study per se, but an investigation into the cultural experience of major early American writers and the consequences of that experience relative to their fictional practice.

His study depends upon the two definitions of the romance which Bell developed from his critical observations. Bell distinguishes two culturally operative definitions of the romance, generated by the general cultural distrust of imagination. The romance balanced on the tension between this cultural distrust and artistic function. The earliest definition which predominates the fiction of Brown, Irving, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, Bell calls "conservative." According to Bell, Hawthorne's definition of romance in The House of the Seven Gables (1851) is most representative of these authors' practice. Their romances integrate the "actual" and the "imaginary," as Hawthorne described the "neutral territory" from which he wrote. In this case,

authors' adherence to a "higher moral realism" controls the imaginative latitude of the romance (DR 7). The conservative romance depends upon "balance or reconciliation" (DR 7).

The second type of romance Bell characterizes as James' version. He refers to this as the "primary meaning" of the romance (DR 8). Bell defines this version of romance as lacking "integration between the actual and the imaginary" (DR 8). James' well-known definition of romance conceptualizes its practice--"experience liberated... disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered, exempt from the usual conditions we usually know attach to it" (DR 8). Bell contends James' restrictions of artistic latitude "depend upon the aesthetic or psychological effectiveness of the fantasy," rather than upon the moral considerations to which the conservative theory of romance adheres (DR 8). Bell contends that antebellum writers obscured the primary meaning of romance with the conservative theory of romance in order to legitimatize their art. As these writers became more conscious of this fact, the romance in America matured.[54] Contrasting his theory with Chase's, Bell asserts that James' "psychological motive and effect" was actually more important to the romance than its distinction from the novel (DR 10).

Fiction and imagination in early America were regarded as subversive, antithetical to national values. Blair's Rhetoric and the Scottish Common Sense philosophy, according

to Bell, taught our early American writers about the inferiority of imagination. These beliefs required romance writers to find methods of reconciliation between their forms of art and cultural values. Associationist aesthetics and Scott's example assisted American writers in the reconciliation between the cultural distrust of imagination and their art. Associationist philosophy was also crucial to literary nationalism providing "aesthetic justification" for American authors' use of native materials (DR 18). Nineteenth-century writers incorporated historic "fact" or "realistic" elements into their romances as a mode of reconciliation. As their romances made use of recent events, however, it exposed the threatening disjunction between reality and fiction. The use of native materials, mediating between imagination and fact, effected a reconciliation between fiction and reality. Conservative practice of romance created a foil which obscured the threat of imagination. Through the appropriation of native materials, "The conservative theory of romance offered the excuse that the `romance' emanated not from the writer but from his material..." (DR 36). Thus, Bell maintains, the conservative theory of romance functioned to obscure its primary purpose--its psychological effectiveness. As American authors became more aware of the subterfuge behind their methods and what fiction concealed, the romance in America came of age.

Bell's thesis not only purports that imagination was

considered suspect, his presentation unwittingly confirms that the imagination is subversive, capable of disguising its methods. Furthermore, romance writers excel in this duplicity. Romance, on Bell's terms, not only asserts that the romance and its authors required subversive techniques for the survival of both the form and its advocates, but that the romance is inherently duplicitous. The romance confirms the suspicions of its detractors' opinions of imagination. Lawrence wrote: "Truly art is a sort of subterfuge....we can see through the subterfuge if we choose."[55] He also said, "Art-speech is the only truth. An artist is usually a damned liar, but his art, if it be art, will tell you the truth of his day."[56] Bell's debt to Lawrence, in this regard, is profound though largely unacknowledged in Bell's text.

Bell concludes, "the theory of conservative romance, based on associationist aesthetics and ultimately on American `reality,' was finally a theory of realism, or rational mimesis" (DR 18). Bell would likely admit the American cultural bias towards literary realism while the mainstream of its fiction has been romance. The demands of the realistic novel, as Trilling has pointed out, are generally considered to be quite different from romance. In contrasting the British novel with American fiction, Trilling implies that the purpose of the novel historically has been to preserve the illusion of accepted cultural appearances. He concludes that the novel, ironically,

remains ever the quest for reality.[57] Realism reinforces the fictional truths or myths of a culture, those truths which a culture wants to preserve about itself. Bell similarly seems to imply that if romance was to become legitimate, it, too, must submit to the demands of society to mirror the illusions it wants to preserve. The question remains unanswered in Bell's case as to what illusions the romance preserves in the American setting. He merely posits the dynamic interaction between culture, authors, and fiction. Instead, the truth which the romance hides, according to Bell, is not a cultural truth, but an ontological enigma--that "If `truth' was a fiction and nothing was truer than fiction, then nothing, quite literally, was the truth" (DR 145). He remarks:

> To admit the claims of romance was to open the doors to nihilism. If, for romance, subjective state could become valid objects of mimesis, if no subjective state was certifiably more true than any other, and if truth could only be know subjectively, the chaos of psychological relativism was just around the corner (DR 145).

Since the romance had more to do with "reality" than with the novel, Bell argues that inevitably, literary problems became "inextricably bound up with larger questions of psychological and spiritual significance" (DR 149).

Ironically, Bell's investigation, despite its disavowal of meddling with the "spurious" Trilling-Chase novel-romance distinction, demonstrates that the romance functions in America quite like Trilling posits the novel functions in England. But the illusion which American romance preserves

is spiritual rather than social. This conclusion explains, but does not excuse, Bell's elimination of Cooper from a major discussion. Cooper's attitudes about fiction were often bounded by temporal concerns with democratic values or "truths" and social reality rather than with ontological questions. From my investigations, even Brown was concerned with the sophisticated ontological truths which romance writers encounter and which their fiction harbors if not hides. Hawthorne believed that there was some other reality to which his allegories alluded. Thus, Bell's model places Hawthorne agreeably in the midst of his scheme demonstrating the progress of romance definitions. These relationships between "truth" and "fiction" with which Brown, Cooper, and Hawthorne contend, are discussed in the following chapters as one of the major concerns occupying early American romance writers.

Finally, Bell attempts to correct the traditional view of literary nationalism about which he insists, "The most forceful and extended assertion of such an affinity is to be found in the work of Perry Miller" (DR 161). He objects that the "historical coincidence" between the development of the romance and literary nationalism "has led to the notion that there is a fundamental affinity between the idea of `romance' and the ideal of a distinctive `America'...(DR 161). He asserts that Miller equates romance with "American cultural nationalism" (DR 161). Bell indirectly addresses a major issue of this dissertation--that the nationalistic

impetus behind current American literary criticism has largely remained the unexpressed motivation behind the perpetuation of romance genre theory. Since the romance hypothesis privileges certain authors, its political importance becomes apparent.

Bell manages to circumvent Chase's romance hypothesis and supplant his own theory in its place. He accomplishes this by establishing his focus on the distinction between romance and reality, instead of upon genre distinctions. However, Bell does not abandon the romance as the predominant mode, nor does he contradict Chase's notion of continuity. Rather he establishes his own criteria for the romance and its continuity. He posits the "`philosophical doctrine'" of romance "As developed by Brown, Irving, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville...grew, not out of self-conscious nationalism, but out of a set of ingrained assumptions about the nature and status of romance and romancers in a society hostile to both" (DR 161). Rather than argue for exclusivity, it appears that all of these matters--nationalism, fiction and reality, and the romance and the novel--preoccupied early American writers in different degrees relative to their particular contexts as American authors. Later chapters discuss these concerns and demonstrate their integration.

George Dekker

George Dekker's The American Historical Romance (1987) supplements rather than refines Chase's text, providing much needed background to the romance's "domestication or early flowering in America."[58] His text is important for what it adds to our knowledge of the European origins and particularly the contribution of Sir Walter Scott to the American historical romances of Irving, Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville.[59] Dekker also bypasses Chase's generic distinction and cuts across the nationalistic implications which attend Chase's thesis. His study "is concerned with both the history of historical romance and the history in historical romances" attending to how the genre arose, its "redomestication," and its formal continuity (HR 8).

Dekker's method contrasts with Chase's nationalistic uses of this dichotomy. For Dekker the survival of this oversimplified "scheme of discriminating between the major kinds of modern prose fiction...seems something of a scandal" (HR 15). He defends this opinion using as support James' well-known perspective from "The Art of Fiction" which depicts the romance-novel distinction as needless. His investigation proposes that the continuity between authors depends upon what they acquire as artists from other artists. Dekker remarks that Scott's talents were practical rather than theoretical and that Scott's romances served as models for early American authors. This idea plays well

into Dekker's contention that "for writers of the highest caliber the single most important part of their cultural context is the work of their intellectual peers" (HR 5). Consequently, genre classifications are useful, not as a springboard for nationalistic distinctions as Chase uses them, but as a comparative measure utilized to understand major writers' contribution and fiction "by placing them with other major figures in the historical romance tradition" (HR 5). Dekker's method represents both a more traditional and a more appropriate use of genre.

Dekker's investigations reveal Scott's remarkable ability to adapt and assimilate variant fictional modes of his peers into the romance. Dekker characterizes Scott as a "shrewd analyst of the rhetorical strategies of individual writers," (HR 20).[60] Scott borrowed from other genres for his historical romances: he learned psychological realism from the model of Walpole, Gothic realism from Ann Radcliffe, and the possibilities of regionalism from Maria Edgeworth. Dekker affirms the critical observations of Scott's contemporary, Heinrich Heine, that Scott's historical romances cut across "traditional generic boundaries" and bring into harmony an "extraordinary range and heterogeneity" of elements (HR 22). Similarly, Scott learned from other writers--from Shakespeare and especially from Goethe--the lessons about the momentous patterns in cultural history which he used. Dekker comments that Goethe became "the first major literary artist to see that truly

great events in history were not changes in dynasty but shifts in economic, social, religious, and political structures....[and] that these structures were closely related to, and dependent on, each other" (HR 51). Scott's romances made this paradigm available to American and European authors.

These lessons in history, which Scott adapted into the plot and form of his romances, became one of the three principle contributions of Scott to the historical romance which Dekker describes.[61] Dekker turns to Coleridge for his observations of Scott's fiction. Coleridge succinctly described this intellectual acquisition which Scott accrued from particular writers as Scott's discovery of "a struggle between two opposites, two polar forces, both of which are alike necessary to our human well-being, and necessary each to the continued existence of the other" (HR 35). Dekker abbreviates these forces as "the contest between the principles of progress and reaction" and designs a binary model of "opposed cultural values and associated physical features" (HR 36, 48). This paradigm becomes the basis for most of his interpretation of Scott and of those American authors who acquire the historical romance from Scott's model.

According to this paradigm, the historical romance incorporates the revolutionary struggles of change between the parties of progress and reaction. Scott's revolutionaries and imperialists become the Tories and

Loyalists, the Puritans or the Quakers, or the white man or the red man in American historical fiction. The frontier and the Revolutionary War became _loci_ for American authors imitating Scott. Dekker remarks that these two themes "correspond to the two principal types of conflict between the forces of progress and reaction which are present in _Waverley_--colonial conquest and civil war" (_HR_ 62).

Although Scott never made this claim for himself, the historical romance, as Simms suggests, operates under the same epic impulse, in Scott's words, "to tell the tale of the tribe" (_HR_ 55). About this assertion, Dekker contends, "we need be concerned only with what `epic' has meant to the authors of historical romances" (_HR_ 55).[62] Both Simms and Cooper provide insights into the idea of epic in nineteenth-century America.[63] These definitions see the fiction as heightened, more poetic with the addition of epic attributes, and affiliate Scott's romances with the epic.[64] Scott's role was to show American historic romancers "where to look for appropriately heroic `matter' and how to objectify strong but mixed feeling about their _patriae_ in enduring works of art" ((_HR_ 48). Consequently, Scott's model was as adaptable to America as it was to any other nation. Scott demonstrated how to regionalize a universal cultural and social dynamic.

Dekker reiterates, "Every writer borrows details of plot and characterization as well as the favorite _topoi_ and `matter' of the period from his contemporaries and recent

predecessors" (HR 65). These "borrowings" are recombined for the author's purposes. Among the Americans whom Scott influenced, Cooper stands first and foremost. Cooper mediates the domestication of the form for his contemporary American authors and later writers. His use of the historical romance paradigm remains much closer to Scott than later writers in America. These later writers generally modified the historic romance from Cooper's example. Dekker posits, "For Scott and most of his younger contemporaries, the historical romance was, above all, a modern version of the epic, hence a heroic and masculine genre preoccupied with the fate of entire societies..." (HR 28). Copper, Simms, and Paulding were "but little concerned with individualistic introspection, or reversing the mirror, cosmic questionings" (HR 28), whereas "Hawthorne and Melville saw the historical romance as written by Scott and Cooper would not meet their own needs unless its center of action and moral interest could be relocated inwards" (HR 28). These later developments represent the nineteenth-century antebellum culmination of Scott's influence upon American historical romance.

Dekker subordinates what he terms "the stadialist model of progress" to his binary model of progress and reaction. The stadialist model refers to the philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment. This model incorporates four stages of cultural progress: savage hunting and fishing, barbarian herding, civilized agriculture, and commercial

manufacturing. Cultural forms and social institutions accompany these stages through which all cultures progress. Cultures representative of these stages are often depicted as those in conflict due to opposing cultural values and forms. Cooper's fiction, for example, The Prairie, depicts a sudden transition and consequent clash between savagery and civilization, the first and third stages. Cooper's incorporation of the momentous cultural changes in the Leatherstocking Tales, according to Dekker, is what gives his series epic status. Cooper's fiction provides the most representative example of historical romance in the tradition of Scott and Scottish philosophy. Each successive American author departs from these uses, Cooper having filtered and modeled representative American usages of Scott's fiction.

Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, in Dekker's view, represents a historic romance of the frontier. Dekker characterizes Scott's influence upon Hawthorne as early in his career. Hawthorne's fiction becomes a regional example of Scott's universal model which Hawthorne greatly modified to suit his moral purpose. Hawthorne revised the stadialist stages according to the Puritan approach to history. Puritans projected a typological reading upon current events such that earlier Biblical events were interpreted as recurring in modern situations. The past becomes superimposed upon the present. All experience becomes a "type" of previous Biblical experience. Thus, Hawthorne

modified the model which Scott's romances project about history, and their versions of the Puritan differ.[65] This change also renders an irony in Hawthorne's historical romances, according to Dekker. Still the binary oppositions of progress and reaction are visible, for example, in "The May Pole of Merry Mount."[66]

Dekker illustrates the rejection of Scott's model for the historical romance in The Scarlet Letter. For example, although Dekker considers this book a historical romance of the frontier, he comments that Hawthorne makes little use of the "frontier circumstances in which his characters move and live and have their moral being, but he clearly expects us to bear them in mind" (HR 161). Pagan, European, and Papist "things" are appropriated or discarded seemingly arbitrarily in conflict with the usual binary opposition between cultural artifacts and their attendant political meaning. For example, associations with European decadence "cluster around both Hester and Pearl as they do around the people of Merry Mount" according to Dekker. The New World "gift of imaginative sympathy" also characterizes these figures anachronistically (HR 164). Thus, both Old and New World behaviors are found in Puritans. This, for Dekker, suggests Hawthorne's supplementation of Scott's model with Puritan philosophical vestiges which results in Hawthorne's "progress through regress pattern" of historical movement (HR 164). The Puritan finds his type in Biblical historical precedent. Survival of this ironic "progressive"

adaptation, regressing and finding its parallel in ancient Christian history, becomes the imperative of Puritan progress. Threats to its cultural values become sources of cultural conflict. These adaptations of Scott's model diminish with each author's successive adaptation of his model, until, in Melville, Dekker observes the least of all influence.

With the progress of American historical romance, from Irving, to Cooper, to Hawthorne, and finally to Melville, the process of domestication obliterates Scott's impress. Dekker asserts, "For Melville it was too late in the day, his own and the nation's to recapitulate the conventional oppositions of reactionary Tories and progressive republican Patriots which had been employed with varying degrees of political and literary sophistication by his predecessors... (HR 190). Thus, the final chapters of Israel Potter, Dekker posits, "inverts many of the main themes and situations of the American historical romance" (HR 192). Benito Cereno offers outlandish representations of the "forces of reaction and progress" (HR 198). Dekker stretches his inclusion of Melville's Billy Budd to characteristics extraneous to his original hypothesis. He concludes, "I have stressed Melville's preoccupation with different kinds of knowledge and ways of knowing because it is the central preoccupation not alone of Billy Budd but of historical romance as a genre" (HR 218). Dekker asserts in his defense that this text weighs the forces of past and present, progress and

reaction, but Melville "will not or cannot" reveal the "very inside of his `Inside Narrative' (HR 219).[67]

Although I appreciate Dekker's approach, I have refrained from adopting his methodology. He must be commended for supplementing Chase's text, which only briefly acknowledges European contributions to American fiction. In addition, he demonstrates the limitations of the nationalistic bias Chase's genre approach to early American fiction had maintained. Dekker models a more appropriate use of genre finding generic continuity in cultural elements which inhabit literary form. The multiple contributions of Scott are taken up in greater detail in a separate chapter, and they reappear in echoes throughout the chapters on Cooper and Hawthorne.

Emily Miller Budick

Another text incorporating a vastly different historical consideration of romance from Dekker's is Emily Budick's Fiction and Historic Consciousness: The American Romance Tradition (1989). Budick considers three nineteenth-century authors--Charles Brockden Brown, Cooper and Hawthorne.[68] It strikes a reader that Chase goes unmentioned in Budick's text. In one sense this may speak to the general acceptance of at least part of his hypothesis. From the outset, however tacitly, Budick differentiates her thesis from Chase's dependence upon romance-novel, American-British distinctions, while

acknowledging two of Chase's basic premises. They both agree that the romance constitutes a prominent nineteenth-century fictional tradition which extends into the twentieth-century. Budick also concedes that "the American historical romance tradition differs from British fiction in its choice of romantic as opposed to a specifically realistic vehicle of representation."[69]

Instead, Budick's critical citations are remarkably current--Michael Colacurcio, Stanley Cavell, Jacques Derrida, Wolfgang Iser, Myra Jehlen, Michael Bell, and Sacvan Berkovitch among the most prominent. This list more than likely indicates that dialogue with Chase has become passe. And, despite similarities with Chase, Budick instead refers indirectly to more current genre criticism, more than likely Nina Baym's "Concepts of the Romance in Hawthorne's America" (1984), remarking that the critical "romance-novel" debate of recent years "is not relevant" to her purposes (FH 2).[70] She dismisses Baym's line of argumentation, noting that Hawthorne's use of the term "romance" specifically "locates the American writers' intentional heightening of the disparity between realistic and nonmimetic modes of representation" (FH 2). Furthermore, in Budick's view, the wedding of unrealistic romance to history in American fiction, by itself, enlarges the disparity between these two bodies of English literature. Budick's romance-history dialectic completely sidesteps Chase's romance-novel dichotomy.

Budick's interest lies in the relationship between the American historical romance "tradition's emphatic rejection of mimetic modes of representation and its equally strong insistence on specified setting in place and time (in what we generally call history)" (FH ix). Her theme is American historical romance's "double consciousness of interpretive processes. Its symbols and allegories enforce an awareness of the unknowability of material reality" while it simultaneously "presents a world that, however defamiliarized, is still intensely recognizable" (FH ix). Cooper's historical romance, The Spy, highlighted in her first chapter, depicts the differences between American and British literature, and determines, by example, the subject of American fiction--"the romance of the mind" rather than "the history of the world" (FH 3). The use of history in romance, which Budick alternately labels an author's "historical consciousness," prevents the excesses of the romance's tendency to the "unwriting of history," by which she means, "to dissolve history into myth" (FH 132, 74). Budick remarks, "History is a spectral, not a physical evidence of human action. It records a world that has already disappeared and it must project that world as story, as imaginative construct" (FH 95). The historical romance explores the tension between historical and imaginative truth. Budick's text pursues the problematic relationship between history and the romance over two centuries of American fiction. Nineteenth-century authors and texts

represented in her theoretical construct are primarily Charles Brockden Brown's Wieland, Cooper's The Spy, and several short tales and The House of the Seven Gables from Hawthorne.

Cooper's fiction, particularly The Spy, charts the (not so) "neutral ground" between American and British fiction revealing their essential differences. This text reveals American fiction's course towards romance. Mediated through Scott, Cooper's historical romance defects from a British realistic emphasis. Cooper establishes the American romance as "not only between past and present but between two different national audiences..." (FH 4). Cooper's use of an American historical event--the American Revolution, as well as American characters, scenery, and customs--announced this shift. America's history, however shallow, was to fill the gaps in romantic associations and social stratification which America lacked. The historical romance, beginning with Cooper, thrives on a charged, rather than neutral, political ground for which the romance proposes and attempts to establish verifiable differences between two English-speaking cultures. Budick writes, "Difference or separateness was precisely what British rule denied to America. It was therefore what America had to acquire in order to become a nation" (FH 15). Cooper's fiction, according to Budick, underwrites American individuality and national identity and initiates the historical romance in America.

Whereas Cooper's romance, The Spy, "posits a cooperation between reality and fiction in order to create history on the one hand and historical romance, or literature, on the other," Budick claims that subsequent American historical romances lack this cooperation and instead examine "the failure of historical consciousness to penetrate the fictions of the American mind" (FH 19). These later fictions document and trace the consequences of this failure. Again, in Budick's criticism, as in other twentieth-century romance genre critics, we often find Cooper's fiction isolated in some way. Budick, however, provides a stronger integration of Cooper than other critics often propose.

Subsequent to Cooper, in order to investigate the relationship between history and the romance, Budick proposes a heuristic vehicle, the akedah, to locate the distinctiveness of American literature and to contrive its Puritan origin. The akedian event which Budick finds frequently repeated in American historical romance refers to an historical incident which the Old Testament records--Abraham's near sacrifice of his son Isaac under God's instructions. Budick utilizes this episode to dramatize "the moment when, in the view of these writers, America failed to step meaningfully into history" (FH 19). She claims that American writers inherited the akedah from their Puritan ancestors' typological use of scripture. Puritans envisioned experience through scriptural typology which they

literalized as the American experience. This flaw in their historical thinking disallowed their relationship with actual experience and consequently their enjoyment of an actual history. The historical romances which Budick explores, in her opinion "restore to public consciousness the historical events and the commitment to the life in history sacrificed by akedian heroes," the heroes who re-enact variations of the akedah in American fiction (FH 20).

Brown's Wieland, according to Budick, demonstrates how the Puritan typological thinking survived in eighteenth-century rationalism or enlightenment reasoning. Although each appeared to be a "different kind of historical consciousness," in fact both were ahistorical (FH 37). Brown's historical romance re-enacts the conflict between these two historical philosophies and depicts the demise of Puritan thought. Wieland records the outset of American disrelation with history, its attempt to "unwrite" Puritan scripture and replace it with another genre--with historical fiction. For Budick, Brown's book recapitulates the "history of American thought" (FH 34). Subsequent faulty akedian recurrences which appear in American fiction result from the failure of Americans' historical consciousness, a failure "to temper the archetype with the individual differences that convert myths of history into meaningful, self-conscious and self-willed historical realities" (FH 35).

Budick locates the error for both Puritans and

nineteenth-century ahistoricism in their failure to substitute the new covenant of Christ for the anachronistic Old Testament covenant. "In the Old Testament, the story of the sacrifice stands between the fall and the promised land" (FH 37). The sacrifice of Christ becomes the new covenant of grace. American history, Budick asserts, ought to begin with this moment, but something goes wrong. Akedian historical romances record what goes wrong with the American historical consciousness. Puritan typological tenets threaten to "dispossess America of history altogether" (FH 37). The task of subsequent historical romances is to restore historicism, remind Americans of their authentic history which Puritanism attempts to efface, to over-write with its own version of interpretive history as the literalization of biblical experience.

Budick defines historical romance rather loosely. Her interpretation of Hawthorne's tale, "Roger Malvin's Burial" illustrates this point. For Budick, this tale represents historical romance because "it recovers the exact historical moment, in all its uniqueness and specificity" (FH 55). What Budick means by "exact historical moment" is primarily an archetypal moment in literary history which recapitulates the akedian schema and corrects Puritan ahistoricism. While Cooper's The Prairie offers a renewal of the Puritan mythological promise of an Eden in America's West, Hawthorne's tale offers a corrective which separates myth from history. Budick posits that "Hawthorne revises

Cooper's vision in order to revise the scriptural vision on which Cooper's was based" (FH 58). The historical romance becomes American writers' self-conscious attempts to recover historical consciousness.

Several of Hawthorne's tales contribute to reestablishing America's historical consciousness. "Young Goodman Brown" posits history's role in examining all human experience as "spectral." "Edward Randolph's Portrait" demonstrates how history assists our perceptual distance from the world and from imagination for interpretive purposes. The House of the Seven Gables, Budick's longest examination of a text, illustrates the role of history through the major characters' various interpretations of experience and the limitations of those interpretations. According to Budick, both Hepzibah and Clifford grasp on to erroneous interpretations of the world. Hepzibah resolves her conflict with reality by "dematerializing the present and reasserting the stable physicality of the past" (FH 126). Clifford "dissolves the past, so that reality can be an eternal `visionary and impalpable Now, which, if you once look closely at it, is nothing'" (FH 126-27). At the romance's conclusion, Phoebe and Holgrave cross the threshold, literally and metaphorically, of the Pyncheon house. This departure represents, from Budick's perspective, a balance between past and present, fiction and history, skepticism and knowing. History's capacity, in relationship to fiction, is precisely to restore these

balances. "Hawthorne's history" Budick concludes, "...turns vision around. It renders a point of view that balances human perception on either side of the skeptical divide, between what we can and cannot know" (FH 141). "History, as the record of life now deceased, opens up an indefinite point for observation....reveals the bare traces of a world. These traces we have to interpret" (FH 141).

Budick's text ventures through a specific discussion of the relationship between history and fiction untrod by nineteenth-century critics. Ultimately, her examination of historical fiction posits an epistemological question--what history and fiction, considered individually, know and cannot know. Early American authors and critics likewise contemplated this idea. Her criticism represents an elaborate and complex continuation of this critical contemplation. Her specific akedian archetype, though well developed, suffers limitations in application. Her text represents a significant attempt, however stretched, to find continuity between early American thought and its expression in the nineteenth-century romance. Finally, her history-fiction dialectic for distinguishing American fiction offers an alternative to the romance-novel dichotomy which bypasses nationalistic comparisons. Though acknowledging non-indigenous beginnings of the historical romance genre, her arguments begin and end with native materials.

PART THREE:
OPPOSITION AND ALTERNATIVES TO CHASE'S HYPOTHESIS

> If the choice lies between a continued loose construction of the term [American literature] and a doctrinaire list of exclusions, I believe the former is preferable, if not inevitable.[71]
>
> Benjamin Spencer, 1949

James Tuttleton

Less contentious than Tompkins' critical text, James Tuttleton presents an examination of a genre rival to the romance in The Novel of Manners in America (1972).[72] Both these traditions, the romance and the novel of manners, Tuttleton observes, evolved from the works of both Scott and Cooper. Tuttleton argues against the Trilling-Chase hypothesis using illustrations from a competing American fictional tradition which stretches into the twentieth-century. Cooper represents the only antebellum author whom Tuttleton discusses. This exposes a major drawback of Tuttleton's examination. Hawthorne's fiction is dismissed. Tuttleton remarks that although Hawthorne had material for a novel of manners with The Blithedale Romance, he wrote a failed romance instead. While he admits that, according to Howard Mumford Jones view that "`all novels are in some

sense novels of manners,'" Tuttleton's definition of this genre and his purposes are more specific. One of his purposes, which he succeeds admirably in accomplishing, is to clarify precisely what constitutes the novel of manners.

Tuttleton defines the novel of manners as equivalent to a fictional form of social history, between the polarities of the individual and society but not existing in either of these extremes. As social history, according to Tuttleton, the novel of manners usually attaches to some ideological concern, idea, or issue--"for example, the idea of social mobility, of class conflict, of professional ambition, of matchmaking, of divorce" directed at social mores (MA 10). Unlike the romance, it veers more towards sociology than towards psychology. As such, it becomes concerned with one of five areas of social experience which Tuttleton delineates--either with "social conventions and taboos," "widely accepted ethical standards," "religious and philosophical beliefs," "economic organization," or a community's "political structure" (MA 13). Out of these, the novel of manners primarily focuses upon "social conventions as they impinge upon character" (MA 12).

Perhaps one reason Tuttleton positions himself more neutrally than Tompkins in the romance-genre debate is that he considers it impossible to dispel the "notion of American homogeneity...because it supports the myth of our political egalitarianism" (MA xii). He seems also to concede that the novel of manners has been usurped by the romance which

Hawthorne and Melville practiced and by modern critical elevation of the romance genre. He objectively discusses the conditions which have produced this consequence. Tuttleton observes, "The locus of reality in such novels is not the outer world, as we experience it in society, but the subjective consciousness....Perception, consciousness, feeling are the instruments by which the `exterior social reality' is sacrificed in the service of autistic myths and symbolism," the machinery of romance (MA 263). His most aggressive argument against the romance-novel hypothesis is his observation that "all literary forms are of course subject to the same historical pressures....But they are also to some extent the consequence of our literary criticism..." which has more recently announced the death of the novel of manners in particular (MA 264).

He credits both Trilling and Chase for the effectiveness of this pronouncement. He opposes Chase's and Trilling's assertions that America neither had a "hierarchy of social classes" nor a "variety of manners and mores--those small actions, gestures, emphases, and rhythms that express value" disallowing the novel of manners in America (MA 8). Otherwise Tuttleton argues very minimally with this body of criticism. Instead he subtly combats this perspective with a precise definition and cogent illustrations from the American novel of manners tradition which argue his case commendably. Countering these twentieth-century critics with a simple observation, he

remarks that early American authors produced novels of manners, despite their opposite claims about the lack of material or lack of social conditions conducive to this genre. Tuttleton contends, "We have always had significant novels of manners, because...America has always had those variegated customs, that complexity of manners and types, that hum and buzz of implications, which forms a fund of suggestion for our writers" (MA 27).

Tuttleton cites several interrelated reasons which rendered the novel of manners' critical success problematic. First, American authors tended to subscribe to a hierarchy of genres asserting the "superiority of symbolic romances over the realistic novel" (MA 14). Tuttleton argues that early American writers felt that strict imitation of ordinary reality made lesser demands upon the imagination and was therefore less desirable. Simms, for example, belittled the "domestic novel" as trivial. Tuttleton interprets the domestic novel to mean the novel of manners rather than sentimental novels. The second reason for the novel of manners' lack of critical acclaim is that a vast number of American authors (starting with Cooper, Simms, and Hawthorne) decried America's cultural poverty which inhibited their fiction. Tuttleton submits that American authors became indifferent to other fictional forms with the popularity of the romance. Finally, he observes that throughout American literary history, authors have found it difficult to observe class differences, turning elsewhere

for materials. He insists, however, that social class distinctions have always been a part of American life, but concludes that this makes little difference if American authors are "unable to relate these phenomena to any conception of the social order" (MA 262). According to Tuttleton, Cooper's novels illustrate the rudimentary fiction of this genre, overcoming the alleged social and cultural drawbacks. Cooper's first fictional work, Precaution, the Littlepage trilogy, and the Effingham novels all represent his investigation of society and manners in America. Precaution, set in England rather than America, deals with the hazards of matchmaking in the manner of Jane Austen, though artistically weaker. The Effingham novels argue for the necessity of inequalities (even in a democracy), advocating social classes and property rights for the stability of society. The Littlepage trilogy presents three generations of history concerning the anti-rent issue which Cooper opposed.

Tuttleton's argument with the Chase hypothesis is presented subtly and yet convincingly. Tuttleton presents fictional examples that counter modern critics' assertions that the novel of manners is either inferior or has disappeared. Tuttleton feels that such criticism obscures the long tradition of this genre in America. He cites texts from Cooper which romance genre theorists generally ignore, preferring Cooper's mythological Leatherstocking Tales, which reinforce the romance hypothesis. Tuttleton never

attempts to overthrow Chase's contention for the predominance of the nineteenth-century romance over other fictional genres. If he had wished to dismantle the romance-novel hypothesis, he might have attempted a discussion of Hawthorne's fiction as representing a novel of manners. Tuttleton's tendency to understate his opposition, preferring to present his argument by example, is an effective method. He wins rather than alienates his readers. He establishes the credibility of his argument--the capacity for American authors to establish a novel of manners tradition on the basis of primarily an indigenous social history. His definition of the novel of manners serves as a viable model for comparison between the novel and the romance. Unlike Chase, Tuttleton's definition does not depend upon comparison between British and American fiction. Nor does it depend entirely upon early authors' romance-novel distinctions. Rather Tuttleton provides a modern definition of the novel of manners, establishing the essential continuity between views held in each century. His definition rests firmly upon American fiction and the American experience--an effort which romance genre critics have generally failed to accomplish for a definition of the romance.

Nicolaus Mills

In American and English Fiction in the Nineteenth Century (1973) Nicolaus Mills discusses the inadequacies of genre approaches to the study of nineteenth-century American literature.[73] He acknowledges the lengthy history of what he calls an "exaggerated concern for the Americanness of American literature" that aspires for "our national literature to reflect our independence, especially our political distance from England" (AE 111, 110). He traces the modern origin of the genre approach to Trilling's essays compiled in The Liberal Imagination, "Art and Fortune" and "Manners, Morals, and the Novel." He also points out Richard Chase's and Marius Bewley's contributions to the prominence and continuation of genre theory which he asserts "has dominated criticism of American fiction for the last twenty-five years."[74] Mills posits that the romance-novel thesis distorts the differences between American and British fiction. He suggests instead that critics adopt a comparative "anti-genre" methodology which his text serves to illustrate. Opposing the tactics of genre critics, Mills asks how myth, symbol, allegory, and society are used differently by British and American authors. Mills forms dyads from British and American fiction in order to answer this question and to compare novelistic elements in each fictional tradition. He compares Cooper's The Prairie with Scott's Rob Roy, Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter with Eliot's

Adam Bede, Melville's Pierre with Hardy's Jude the Obscure, and Twain's Huckleberry Finn with Dickens' Great Expectations. He aspires to demonstrate that "what is needed is a reappraisal of the familiar, not a displacement of those texts generally assumed to constitute the great tradition in English and American fiction" (AE 110).

Mills isolates three issues which most concern him about the comparative genre approach used to distinguish American literature: critical claims about literary form; claims about differences in generic focus; and, the claims of literary history--all of which impinge upon literary theory. Mills remarks that genre critics "postulate either a superform...a combination of qualities (which are not true for any one book and have no viable organizing principle) or a fragmented form in which single qualities" are selected to "reveal the essence of American fiction" although other qualities may be as (or more) significant (AE 111). I might add that the first abuse Mills describes is typical of Chase and the later of R. W. B. Lewis's The American Adam. Mills asserts that the focus of American literature has usually been described as abstract, symbolic, and only tangentially concerned with society. He attempts to counter these claims with comparisons. Although Mills posits, like Tompkins, that American fiction is often more visionary than grounded in society, social concerns inhabit each of the texts he studies. He offers as evidence the rejection of modern society in The Prairie and the socio-religious concerns

basic to The Scarlet Letter. In addition, Mills points out, literary historians denounce the "thinness" of American history and society. Mills responds that this interpretation "obscures" the American writer's use of his or her social history, his or her "environment and his [or her] past" (AE 114). Subsequent critics, such as Bell, Dekker, and Budick, make Mills' comment obsolete. But the difficulty modern critics have in penetrating the asocial bias of romance genre criticism still remains, as William Ellis' and John Tuttleton's criticism illustrate.

Mills accuses de Tocqueville of perpetrating certain biases later American literary critics adopted. Mills contends that several fallacies began with Tocqueville's brief comments in Democracy in America. Mills summarizes these comments. He remarks that Tocqueville postulated the subordination of literature to the political constitution of societies, the preference of abstraction in the literature of democracies, the lack of classes and status in America, and the charge that America had no literature, only a picturesque, poetic wilderness (AE 21). These postulates later surface in genre criticism as the following assertions: 1) that the thinness of American society disallows the development of the novel; 2) that this social thinness likewise accounts for the development of the romance instead of the novel in early American fiction; 3) that the romance form manifests itself due to America's unique history; and 4) that American writers' complaints

about the lack of American history and the social deficiencies of democracy provide evidence of their being "forced to write romances rather than novels" (AE 22-24).

Mills observes that the first assumption implies that literature is environmentally determined, an obviously false assumption. He remarks that James wrote detached criticism of American culture while in England, much like a British writer might write. Hawthorne describes Europe in his last major work, The Marble Faun, much as he describes America in his previous fiction. Mills counters the second charge by noting that where American society was most thin, the romance did not flourish, unfortunately supplying no examples. In addition, Europeans, such as Scott and Bronte, wrote romances under different environmental and social circumstances. Mills asserts, concerning the third charge, that "knowing a historical situation does not provide a causal explanation for the literary form" (AE 24). He remarks that much remains unobservable and hence obscure in determining cause and effect. Finally, Mills asserts that American writers, such as Cooper, comment that all fiction --the satire, drama, poetry, history--not just the romance, was difficult to write in America. Furthermore, Mills asserts that class and status serve as prominent resources for "Cooper's Effinghams, Hawthorne's Pyncheons, and Melville's Glendinnings" (AE 16). Mills claims that the comparative method which he advocates cuts across these four assertions listed above and reveals their insubstantiality.

In the wake of de Tocqueville, Mills contends that a modern critic, Lionel Trilling, "laid the groundwork for seeing American fiction as romantic, its concerns as overwhelmingly idealistic, and its major preoccupations as "tangential to society" (AE 4-5). He includes Bewley and Chase in the discussion of modern genre critics at fault in their assessment of nineteenth-century American fiction. He counters the Trilling-Bewley-Chase hypothesis positing other grounds upon which to distinguish indigenous fiction. These, he remarks, stand in relief when American works are compared with British fiction.[75] Mills submits that his examination of comparative texts "reveals a common pattern of similarity and variation" (AE 6). The execution of text rather than genre becomes important for Mills. While his comparisons reveal many common qualities, he summarizes the differences as primarily two. First, that American fiction gives importance to "certain ideational or visionary concerns" that, according to this second point, render these concerns "situationally transcendent of the social context in which they appear" (AE 27). Mills compares this pattern metaphorically to a spiral. British fiction gives importance to matters which "finally makes them coextensive with or subordinate to the social context in which they appear" (AE 27). This pattern Mills identifies with a dome. The difference may be subtle, but to summarize his view, Mills establishes that the primary difference between American and British fiction has to do with their resolution

of social and personal dilemmas. American fiction tends to respond to society with visionary or ideational solutions which transcend the limits of society. British fiction, on the other hand, resolves its dilemmas within a social framework. Both fictional traditions attend to society but resolve their problems differently. These findings, according to Mills, validate his comparative approach.

Mills considers genre critics to have maintained three methodological errors which inhibit their examination of fiction. First, genre critics mistake "the characteristic for the unique"--they fail to see both American and British fiction as hybrids (AE 18). For example, R. W. B. Lewis's declaration of an "American Adam" does not demonstrate the uniqueness of that image to American literature. Adamic images persist in British fiction as well. Both traditions have a common Christian background. So, how do these images differ in the literature of America and in England? And how, then, is American fiction unique? Lewis's analysis of American fiction does not provide answers. Genre critics also mistake "the specific for the unique," according to Mills (AE 19). He contends that genre critics hasten to judge specific qualities of American fiction as a basis for declaring its uniqueness. He questions, for example, whether a particular myth found in American literature that is absent from British literature automatically serves as a distinguishing feature of the former when it does not necessarily appear as a literary "common denominator" (AE

19). Mills retorts that unique characteristics may apply to certain works but lack the genuine ability to distinguish American literature in general. The last methodological error which Mills cites is that genre critics mistake "the pervasive for the unique" (AE 19). Modern genre critics abuse this tactic, mistaking parts of books as representing wholes when a particular feature appears. Sometimes the mere presence of a feature in many texts spurs critics to generalize that quality as a basis for declaring the uniqueness of American fiction. These three fallacies provide the impetus for Mills' correction of the genre hypothesis. Mills proposes that a comparative approach to British and American fiction can remedy these errors of genre criticism.

A primary methodological error in Mills' approach appears as he makes comparisons between American and British fiction. Often these comparisons are on different bases other than upon that which he uses to attack genre criticism. While his comparisons are interesting, they tend to emphasize plot and characterization similarities and only locate significant contrasts in the conclusions of the texts being compared. Thus his analysis of contrasting resolutions which American fiction and British fiction each provide is really his only basis of comparative difference. Otherwise, he uses American fiction which has a social context, historical bearing (though sometimes indirectly applied), and works that have not necessarily been

considered purely romance. These factors detract from his analysis.

Mills' critique of the genre approach, on the other hand, is well worth attention. His posture, that genre critics have tended to ignore what American and British literature have in common and inflate their distinctive qualities, is viable. He correctly assesses and enumerates the problems of genre criticism. He observes that uncritical readings of genre theory, which emphasize only differences, generate the false assumption that British literature is neither symbolic, allegorical or mythic and that American literature fails to deal with society. Thus each tradition is explored with preset biases that obscure analysis of these qualities in their fiction. Genre critics fail accurately to assess these traditions' similarities as well as what might distinguish American literature from other literature.

Mills' charges against genre criticism accurately reveal its limitations. Yet his comparative approach may not either be as practical or as apt a solution as Mills suggests. While some critics, such as William Ellis, have been very successful using a comparative approach, they are often not as rigid in their comparisons as Mills' use of dyads requires. The problem of selection, that is, which texts ought to be compared, also arises. The number of potential dyads is infinite. And why limit comparisons to those between British and American literature? Critical

prerogatives, personal biases, and limitations of knowledge easily play into Mills's methodology. His solution to genre criticism is both simplistic and impractical. Yet his concern for execution is an obvious improvement over the nationalistic, genre-based assessments of early American literature. Mills' contribution to American literary theory lies in his iconoclasm rather than in his proposed methodological substitution.

Two Feminist Approaches

Jane Tompkins

Jane Tompkins' text, Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860 (1985), attacks the Chase hypothesis from the dual perspectives of feminist criticism and socio-cultural contextualization.[76] She argues that critical theories, particularly Chase's romance hypothesis, and anthologies have modified the way we view texts and have therefore excluded important fiction by women from the literary canon. According to Tompkins, the recent theoretical perspectives of Matthiessen, Adams, and Chase have been persuasive in obscuring nineteenth-century women's fiction. Tompkins also targets feminists whose perspectives she claims have been usurped by the canonizing critics and consequently fail to recognize and value the "specifically female novelistic tradition" (SD 123).

Her first chapters illustrate, through the example of

Hawthorne, how literary reputations are manufactured rather than the sole product of literary genius. Literary politics determine access to channels which either promote or obscure an author's fiction. Susan Warner serves as an example of an author whose works were extremely popular during her lifetime but became obsolete due to limited access to politically powerful literary figures and institutions. By contrast, according to Tompkins, Hawthorne's friendships--for example with Franklin Pierce, who became President of the United States, and Longfellow, Hawthorne's classmate at Bowdoin and Professor of Modern Languages at Harvard--provided Hawthorne with a socio-political network which assisted his literary advancement. Due to social processes such as these, Tompkins asserts that modern readers are denied access to certain vital works which were exceptionally popular during the period in which they were written. Readers also lose a more informed sense of nineteenth-century values and cultural contexts out of which fiction evolved. Eclipsed by romance genre theory and studies, modern literary critics' estimations of sentimental fiction are low, Tompkins writes. She argues for the representation of sentimental fiction--primarily a woman's genre--in the literary canon, modeling the criteria by which literary theorists might refashion their selection of canonized texts.

Tompkins selects two works by women for her cultural and literary analysis--Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's

Cabin and Susan Warner's The Wide, Wide World. These two representative popular, sentimental novels are examined alongside Brown's Wieland and Arthur Mervyn, Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans because these texts "offer powerful examples of the way a culture thinks about itself, articulating and proposing solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment" (SD xi). Her hope is to open the canon to works currently undervalued which Tompkins describes as fiction by women and works that during their own time were popular fiction.

Tompkins argues with modern critics from the perspective that fiction, within a specific historic situation, does a "certain kind of cultural work" for which a text ought to be valued (SD 200). She sees this approach as more viable than modern critics' estimations and selections which run counter to the value particular novels often assumed in their own day. Thus, Brown's Wieland and Arthur Mervyn present fictional encounters with a Post-Revolutionary society in transition between Puritan and Enlightenment philosophies. These texts both depict the problems of socio-philosophical upheaval and offer solutions as to how American society can succeed. Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans discusses the problems of racial differences and integration as white Americans encounter the Indian, reinforcing white, Anglo-Saxon primacy and separation or destruction along racial lines. Her chapters on Uncle Tom's Cabin and The Wide, Wide World attempt to reexamine critics'

dismissals of women's fiction for its sentimentality and supposed lack of cultural significance.

Tompkins responds to these charges with illustrations that counter these views. She argues that these two texts do the same "cultural work" that Brown's and Cooper's texts have done. The difference lies in their depicting women's mastery of self through submission to authority. Like the American woman's experience, the texts operate in and are "shaped conclusively by the revival movement and by the social and economic condition of American women in the antebellum years" (SD 185). Both books have been devaluated for their sentimentalism, yet, Tompkins asserts, "Sentimental fiction was perhaps the most influential expression of the beliefs that animated the revival movement and had shaped the character of American life in the years before the Civil War" (SD 149).

Because these texts assert religious and domestic values, Tompkins charges, modern literary critics have dismissed them as socially insignificant and trivial. These novels' socio-political roles and their popularity in the previous century were hardly trivial, Tompkins argues. Both novels had missions and provided their audience with answers to contemporary socio-cultural problems. Stowe envisions her text as being instrumental in bringing about a socio-religious change in American culture which asserts the primacy of Christian love over force. Warner's book illustrates the suppressed roles which women occupy and the

methods by which women tap deep sources of power. Warner's fiction demonstrates the woman's solution to her subordinate role in society. She depicts women's interior journey, their mastery of passion and emotions through submission. Although society suppresses the nineteenth-century woman economically and politically, Warner's novels depict how women rise through submission and sublimation to achieve a higher moral freedom. Tompkins observes, "Learning to renounce her own desire is the sentimental heroine's vocation..." requiring the "ceaseless labor of self-transformation" (SD 176). The woman's path is not one of individualized "self-realization" but rather "to become empty of self" (SD 182). Recent criticism has preferred, in Tompkins' view, "a handful of men who refused to be taken in by the pieties of the age....[and] a darker reality, which the mass of readers could not face" (SD 147). Because these women writers repudiated the dominant cultural value system, critics have ironically claimed that their fiction was out of touch with reality. Tompkins demonstrates the invalidity of this assertion.

Tompkins also demonstrates the viability of women's fiction through examination of its cultural context and contribution. According to Tompkins, critics typically have viewed all the works which she considers in her text as flawed. Typically, they are attacked for their melodramatic qualities and their inept artistry. Tompkins questions why modern critics ignore Stowe's and Warner's fiction while

Brown's and Cooper's fiction is considered mainstream. Her point is well taken. She replies that the reason is simply "because they were written by women, and therefore often addressed themselves to the concerns of a female audience" (SD 120). However difficult it becomes to imagine modern feminist critics resurrecting and touting novels that advocate submission as a socio-cultural value, Tompkins' purpose is more admirable. She would like to see nineteenth-century female authors as visible and considered as viable as their male counterparts. Tompkins' analysis of Cooper's work approaches modern ethnic concerns, although Cooper can hardly be said to have manifested values appropriate to an ethnically diverse culture. To her credit, Tompkins acknowledges this. Cooper depicts nineteenth-century racial tensions but offers solutions many would consider unsatisfactory today. Her analysis of Warner's fiction verges on the mythic, suggesting an interior feminine journey reminiscent of hagiography. But Tompkins does not stray from her interests grounded in socio-cultural constructs. She documents her feminist charges well, but her criticism stops short of shattering Chase's romance-novel hypothesis. Rather, Tompkins makes her readers vividly and verifiably aware of what she calls "The Other American Renaissance," celebrating a tradition parallel to the American romance, a sentimental tradition of women's fiction.

Nina Baym

In contrast to Dekker, who submits the importance of authors' influences upon one another, Nina Baym considers the importance of critical theorists and contemporary reviewers upon American fiction. Two essays from her most recent work, Feminism and American Literary History: Essays (1992) respond directly to Chase's romance-novel hypothesis.[77] The first of these, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Modern Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors," appeared in the American Quarterly in 1981 and was a landmark essay. The second essay "Concepts of the Romance in Hawthorne's America," presents a revised chapter from an earlier work, Novels, Readers, and Reviewers (1984). Both essays directly oppose Chase's hypothesis.

In "Melodramas of Beset Manhood" Baym asserts that literary theories control our perspective of American literature and have "led to the exclusion of women authors from the canon" (FA 3). She contends that recent theories, rather than historical realities, have been responsible for marginalizing well-known nineteenth-century novels by women, such as Susanna Rowson's Charlotte Temple, Hannah Foster's The Coquette, and the largest seller of all, Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. According to Baym, recent literary theories, modeled after criticism from the previous century, began searching for qualities of "Americanness" over "excellence." This approach invites nationalistic

distinctions to prevail over literary criticism. "Beginning as a nationalistic enterprize," Baym argues, "American literary criticism and theory have retained a nationalistic orientation to this day" (FA 5). Theories have adopted fictional preferences which have neither represented the breadth of early American fiction nor mirrored nineteenth-century preferences. Instead, the modern canon has been decided on the basis of nationalistic qualities--criteria like F. O. Matthiessen's selection of five early American authors for their "`devotion to the possibilities of democracy'" (FA 6). This approach, Baym observes, "excludes, at one extreme, stories about universals, aspects of experience common to people in a variety of times and places..." and typically women's fiction (FA 7). Baym casts Marius Bewley, Lionel Trilling, and Joel Porte, together with Matthiessen for their selection of white, Anglo-Saxon, middle class males (essentially Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and James) and for their omission, primarily, of equally significant women writers (Rowson, Foster, Stowe, Wharton, Glasgow, and Cather are cited as possible candidates in this essay; Sedgwick is mentioned in an adjoining essay for her historical fiction Baym considers comparable to Cooper). Trilling's essays, "Reality in America" and "Manners, Morals, and The Novel," together with Matthiessen's work, according to Baym, set literary precedents for privileging American theories of literature which compared British and American literature on the basis of genre.[78] Like other

critics opposed to Chase, Baym recognizes these as the source of inspiration (and bias) for subsequent criticism appearing in the 1950s and 1960s--those of R. W. B. Lewis, Chase, Hoffman, Feidelson, and Henry Nash Smith. These critics, Baym asserts, posit a mythic, male-biased theory of literature which has affected the literary canon.

"The myth," according to Baym, "narrates a confrontation of the American individual, the pure American self divorced from specific social circumstances, with the promise offered by the idea of America....[that] a person will be able to achieve complete self-definition" apart from a society which is inherently "destructive" to individuality (FA 10-11). This body of theory and its corollary myth casts women, for whom roles of enculturation and preservation of society predominate, as the adversary. Often this critical approach has likewise recast women protagonists, such as Hester in The Scarlet Letter, as subordinate to some lesser male figure, Dimmesdale in this case. Texts in which women's roles may have been read as a "woman's version of the myth...are [instead] read as stories of frustrations of female nature" (FA 14).[79] Baym also discredits Chase for having ascribed the male myth to artist protagonists who act as surrogate heroes for the author--suggesting the Adamic myth which has been superimposed upon early American fiction at the expense of again excluding women writers and fiction.[80] Approaches such as these translate authoring into "fathering" texts, once again

marginalizing women and their roles.[81] Baym concludes, "Ironically, just at the time that feminist critics are discovering more and more important women, the critical theorists have seized upon a theory that allows the women less and less presence," illuminating the fact of gender bias and the fabrication of literary theories (FA 18). Having discovered this flaw in the original, nationalistic romance-novel approach to American fiction, Baym claims likewise to demolish the whole critical superstructure.

Baym's second essay, "Concepts of the Romance in Hawthorne's America," again attacks the romance hypothesis, this time for the pretention that it constitutes "a distinct and defining American fictional form" (FA 57). She argues similarly that, consciously or unconsciously, modern critics have incorporated the literary nationalism of the previous century into their criticism. The Chase-Trilling hypothesis has been central to a body of subsequent theory which, according to Baym, has "accepted the idea that in the absence of history (or a sense of history) as well as a social field, our literature has consistently taken an ahistorical, mythic shape for which the term romance is formally and historically appropriate" (FA 58).

Baym argues with Chase's assumption of longstanding, standardized definitions of these generic terms. She claims that Chase presents his evidence on the basis of Simms' and Hawthorne's statements in their Prefaces. Based on considerable research of nineteenth-century reviews between

1820 and 1860, Baym challenges this assumption. She counters that Hawthorne's use of the term "romance" was idiosyncratic and that, furthermore, the term's use was decidedly inconsistent during that period. According to Baym's research, the terms novel and romance were used interchangeably. Journals which attempted definitions to distinguish the terms were still inconsistent about their usages from one edition to the next.

Baym categorizes the prevailing distinctions which reviewers utilized as "diachronic" and "synchronic" definitions of romance (FA 64). The diachronic view of romance "incorporates a history of fiction," and the synchronic view "schematizes existing fiction" (FA 64). The first mode views the novel as a derivative form of the romance. Scott presents this view in his "Essay on Romance" (1824) for the Encyclopedia Britannica. The synchronic mode promotes the term novel as the generic type and subordinates romance as a form of the novel. As these uses merge, Baym observes, a great deal of definitional chaos abounds. Baym's investigations disclose that "romance" was not typically used to refer to contemporary fiction but only to older works. When reviewers did apply the term romance to contemporary fiction, they "referred to works of fiction which were especially exciting, stirring, dramatic, action packed, thrilling interest" (FA 65).

This, of course, renders Hawthorne's definition of romance anomalous, allowing for the singular possibility of

Hawthorne's having meant the "marvellous" effects which Scott discussed. Baym argues for the novelistic nature of The House of the Seven Gables upon this premise. But more important to her argument, is Baym's assertion about what Hawthorne was not doing in his Preface to that work--"he was clearly not...invoking the romance genre as a means of classifying his work as a particularly American creation" (FA 69). Furthermore, according to Baym, Hawthorne's reasons for selecting Italy as the site of his romance, The Marble Faun, unquestionably suggest "that there is something un- or at least non-American in his imagination, in its attraction to themes and events that seemingly have so little pertinence to the ongoing national life" (FA 69). Baym notes, castles and ruins "had long since been noticed in the nationalist press specifically for their lack of distinctive American character" (FA 69). Baym mentions that reviews of Brown also suggest the lack of American qualities in his fiction.

Baym claims that the novel, rather than the romance, "was the appropriate American form but, again, not an exclusively American form. The distinctness of an American literature would lie in its choice of American settings, its treatment of American subjects" (FA 70). Her investigation concludes that "the idea of American romance now controlling so much American literary study is a recent invention" (FA 70).

I agree with Baym's assessment concerning the nationalistic bias of modern romance genre criticism for which Chase's romance-novel hypothesis has been most central. Genre theory has tended to promote white, Anglo-Saxon, male authors at the expense of both minority writers and women writers of the nineteenth-century. In my opinion the problem is not with modern genre theory per se but rather its admixture with nationalism. Any definition of what constitutes "American" literature affects the political arena of modern literary canon. Genres in America have tended to become divided by gender and/or race: for example, "sentimental" fiction is basically known as women's fiction, and "slave narratives" were written by black authors. While the romance may serve as a worthwhile distinction between American and British literature, this same genre approach fails to describe the complexity of early American literary history. One might expect a more egalitarian view of early American literary contributions from critics.

No doubt early American authors sought a distinctive national literature. Genre theory does have its beneficial purposes which Lawrence Buell identifies in a brief review essay, "Prefaces to a Theory of American Narrative" (1982).[82] But American romance genre criticism, attempting to distinguish American from British literature, has exceeded the appropriate limitations of genre theory. Baym quite correctly points out that the prejudices of modern critics were not the biases of readers and reviewers from

the last century. Her criticism has assisted in the search for early American women authors and in modifying American literary history to recognize and include more women authors and their fiction.

However, Dekker's recognition of the importance of authors' influences upon one another serves as a corrective to Baym's study of nineteenth-century reviews. Scott's fiction and practical criticism was a direct influence upon both Cooper and Hawthorne. American authors "went to school," both literally and figuratively, on Scott's fiction. Cooper wrote The Pilot as a direct response to the deficiencies he saw in Scott's The Pirate. Hawthorne read Scott's romances as a youth and learned from Scott's imagination and literary example. In addition, American authors became familiar with generic designations and literary innovations not only through their reading and through important links with other authors, but also through their education. Both Brown and Hawthorne were familiar with Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783) which taught genre designations--"romantic histories," the novel, and the romance.[83] Concentrating upon the importance of reviews and reviewers' opinions, Baym tends to lose sight of other significant educational and cultural transmissions. I agree with Dekker that one of the major influences upon authors is their "intellectual peers." Reviewers' comments are subordinate to these interconnections. I likewise disagree with a portion of

Baym's argument about the liberal use of generic terminology. Baym seems to imply that because reviewers used the terms romance and novel indiscriminately early American authors also applied the term loosely. This generalization does not necessarily follow. The later chapters on Brown, Cooper, and Hawthorne which look more closely at these writers' discriminations and concerns about form, in fact, suggest quite the opposite. These authors were conscious of generic boundaries and argued for artistic latitude. The literary transmission between writers, which Dekker posits, becomes most apparent when examining this topic. In addition, nineteenth-century writers waged their own battle with reviewers whom they considered to misunderstand their authorial intentions. Both Simms' and Scott's appeals to critics to judge fiction on the basis of an author's intentions are particular cases in point. Matters such as these, however, are taken up in the later chapters on early American writers.

William Ellis

The Theory of the American Romance An Ideology in American Intellectual History (1989) draws its observations of the romance-novel dichotomy from a metacritical perspective which focuses on ideology.[84] William Ellis asserts that the Trilling romance-novel hypothesis of American fiction rests upon an ideological notion of what Ellis calls "American exceptionalism." This concise phrase

is meant to replace the elaborate list of socio-cultural distinctions often cited when broaching reasons for American novelists' tendencies to produce romances rather than novels. As such, European novels depending upon class differences, manners, and social life, became realistic and empirical. Conversely, democratic America, lacking these ingredients of aristocratic nations, adopted the romance as its fictional form--a more symbolic, mythic, metaphysical fiction concerned with human nature rather than with society. Ellis refutes this body of theory on the basis of its mistaken notion that America was exceptional. In Ellis's view critics such as Trilling, Bewley, and Chase have erroneously considered nineteenth-century American society, unlike European culture, to be classless and devoid of class conflict. Like many other critics, Ellis holds Trilling's essays from The Liberal Imagination (1950) largely responsible for the development of the romance-novel hypothesis which distinguishes American fiction from European fiction on the basis of genre. He places Chase and Bewley within that same context of responsibility for their contributions to this hypothesis' continuation. Together, these critics have derived a "thesis of consensus history," an erroneous, viewpoint from Ellis's perspective, "that both American society and the culture it brought forth have been exceptional" (TA 35).

Ellis proposes to "address the theory of American exceptionalism" and unravel "how and why the theory arose or

how and why it went wrong" attributing these "hows" and "whys" to the theory of American exceptionalism (TA 7). According to Ellis, this theory depended upon modern critics' "consensus interpretation of American history" and arose during an era of renewed nationalism due to the anti-communist campaign of the Cold War (TA 8). Consensus interpretation held that Americans, unlike Europeans, had avoided "ideological conflict and had, as a consequence of consensus, developed a society remarkably free of significant class conflict" (TA 19). Thus, America "had developed a civilization radically different from that of Europe, where ideological and class conflicts had been constant factors in social life" (TA 19-20). This consensus view partially replaced class distinctions with democratic ideology--that Americans shared both a single notion and single way of life (TA 10). American culture was viewed as "devoid of cultural tension between classes" (TA 32). Hence, for the modern American critic, his concept of "exceptional consensus" becomes interpreted as follows: "The American novelists were interested in the human condition, not society, hence they wrote not substantial novels but romances, in which the study of society would have been beside the point" (TA 11). According to Ellis, the modern American romance genre critics and literary historians who promoted this viewpoint erroneously applied their ideology of the American present to the nineteenth-century. Romance genre theory "incorporated the nationalist consensus" of the

1950s and 1960s, "the desire...to praise things especially `American,' and the desire to deny the reality of class in American history" (TA 89).

Ellis collapses the criteria which modern critics have used to posit the romance-novel hypothesis. He argues that nineteenth-century America, like Europe, sustained a variety of social classes and that the differences in American and European fiction of that period have been exaggerated. Classes are not found in the traditional aristocratic sense as in Europe. Rather, Ellis finds eight different sources for class distinctions, and consequently sources of social conflict, in American society: tribal societies, the "Puritan patriciate," feudalistic New York patroons, Southern slaveholders, slave society, American middle class in contact with European aristocracy, two upper social divisions--an intellectual class (dubbed "the Brahmins of Boston") and a (New York) merchant class, and cosmopolitan society contrasting with an American middle class (TA 130, 133). A ninth category which ought to be admitted to Ellis's list is nineteenth-century gender hierarchy as a source of class conflict. Nineteenth-century social tensions and conflict arose from interaction between these contrasting groups. Novels, such as Cooper's The Pioneers, record both authors' and society's fears about exposing class structure in democratic America as well as the actual development of American cultural struggle and class conflict. When such fears occur, according to Ellis,

fictional characterization becomes insubstantial and is sacrificed for symbology or myth--vehicles of consensus ideology (TA 145). American novels adopt elements of romance to disguise social class distinctions which threaten the notion of American ideological consensus. When Cooper tended towards romance elements in his novels, such as in the figure of Effingham in The Pioneers, he unconsciously defends his personal class biases by creating "insubstantial" characters to reduce the conscious threat of class structure and conflict. According to Ellis, this technique provides an "emotional safety valve" for Cooper or other artistically similar romance authors. This technique circumvents the reader's "ambivalent response" by submerging threatening characteristics which might reveal American class distinctions and sources of conflict (TA 149).

The thinness of characterization and consequent insubstantiality of American fiction derives from American authors' inability to view their subject objectively, from a distance, and therefore dispassionately or satirically. When American authors veer toward the mythic and symbolic qualities of romance, according to Ellis, they "steer the novel away from experience the author does not want to explore, because he wants to affirm a vision without inviting ambivalence towards it" (TA 201). The idea of America as a society of classes in conflict was taboo--conflicting with the myth of ideological consensus. According to Ellis, modern critics have mistakenly promoted

the authenticity of both romance genre theory and the consensus ideology upon which it rests.

Ellis utilizes substantially the same definitions of the classic novel and the romance that Trilling proposes. He remarks, "when a novel directly examines society it is a traditional novel; when it neglects society to examine the human condition it is not, and another term, such as `romance,' might well be needed" (TA 7). He contends that the distinction between the novel and the romance which modern theorist have drawn is "far too sharp" and exaggerates the differences in the practice of American and European authors (TA 101). Ellis argues that American writers, in expressing their nationalistic desire to write something unique and representative of their country, were not doing anything unique. Nationalism was a ubiquitous phenomenon, not confined merely to the United States. He points out that Chase uses Hawthorne's definition of romance to posit his exceptionalist theory, and yet neither Hawthorne's nor James' uses of the term romance support Chase's extension. When Hawthorne defined The House of the Seven Gables as romance his purpose was to emulate Scott's fiction, not to distinguish American fiction from British fiction. Following James' lead in contending that Hawthorne was not a theorist, Ellis asserts that Hawthorne's definition of the romance created confusion rather than theoretical agreement. James, likewise, did not use the term romance to distinguish literary forms and determine

national differences in literature as modern theorists have done. In addition, Ellis points out that critics also view Scott as the founder of realism. This reminder serves Ellis's preference to view American fiction as novelistic rather than to isolate it generically as romance.

Ellis asserts that modern American romance genre proponents have "misread the American novel largely because they misunderstood its social and cultural environment" (TA 8). Ellis maintains that this attitude and approach prevented critics from perceiving similarities between European and American fiction. The nineteenth-century American novel, Ellis contends, has the same social origin as the European novel--a class-based society divided by tensions between social classes. Ellis agrees with Leavis, the British critic to whom Chase's The American Novel and Its Tradition responds, that American and English fiction comprise one tradition. When there were national distinctions, they were no more distinct than those between European nations. "All were, or were on the way to becoming, bourgeois societies" (TA 73).

His chapter on Trilling analyzes the reasons why the novel arose as bourgeois society advanced. His discussion concludes that "The novel is most possible when the common culture of an integrated civilization is shattered, when the ultimate values of life rather than the ability of men to conform to them, are clearly called into question" (TA 39). When "men lived in societies with a common culture and an

integrative ideology" the novel was not possible. Ellis defines an integrative civilization as one which possesses "coherent cultural values in rough harmony with its social relations" (TA 23). Ellis considers the classical Roman and Greek period to have been integrative and their corresponding literary form the epic. The medieval romance was also a product of an integrative society in Ellis's opinion. Neither of these literary forms required the cultural tensions which attended the development of the novel. This viewpoint seems to erase or deny much of social history itself offered from a panoramic distance which obliterates historical detail. Following this paradigm, it appears that if critics could substantiate that America was an integrative rather than a nation fraught with class conflicts, then some corresponding literary form might complement the era. Instead, Ellis contends that the lack of integration has resulted in the novel, a literary form which complements the cultural and social struggles of this period.

Ellis asserts the "American and European novelists had the same interest, and American and European novels usually had the same form. This I am often content to call realism..." (TA 8). He adds that he defines realism loosely declaring that "much of the best `realism' is less interested in verisimilitude and contains more elements of `romance'...than the theorists of the American romance believed" (TA 8-9). Chase and Ellis seem, in some sense, to

agree about traces of romance elements continuing to reside in modern American fiction, despite the ideological differences so important to Ellis's argument. Seen as a single tradition, American fiction, in Ellis's view, often becomes simply not just romance but in the fictional hierarchy a poorly executed novel. He remarks that the distinction between the nineteenth-century American and European novel was "not a difference in genre, but in quality" (TA 189).

The dilemma for American authors, in Ellis's view, was that while they retained their loyalty to democracy, they were profoundly dissatisfied as artists with contemporary American life. They could not write realistically without compromising the "democratic ideal"--"the idea that America and democracy were one, that America so far embodied democratic possibility that its failures reflected upon democracy itself" (TA 196). What modern romance genre critics applied to nineteenth-century American literature was essentially this same provinciality, "a belief that one's nation has a culture that sets it apart" (TA 155). "Democracy," Ellis contends, "because it arose from the political and social movements of the Enlightenment, belonged to Europeans as much as to Americans" (TA 196). According to Ellis, it has been the error of American critics to assume the uniqueness of America and its fiction upon this basis.

It has also been a misreading of American literary history to assume that indigenous writers lacked subject matter because the society lacked the tensions necessary for novel writing found in class conflicts. "In fact, they had the same subjects as novelists elsewhere...and they used them--though some were not as well used as they certainly might have been" (TA 197). Ellis contends the major contribution of American authors to Western literature has been the "international" novel, those novels written by expatriate Americans about other cultures in order to examine America more thoroughly than was possible from inside her borders (TA 198). This allowed certain nineteenth-century authors the necessary distance for "uninhibited" satire of American manners (TA 201). Novels which succeeded in this enterprise were "The Blithedale Romance, The Bostonians, and...parts of Moby Dick, Uncle Tom, and The Gilded Age..." (TA 210). American novels which fail do so because "The satirical focus on American society collapses, and the collapse of the satire is the collapse of the art" (TA 201). Ellis draws this idea back into the notion of American authors' affection for democracy but despair of American life. Their dissatisfaction "made it difficult for them to write of that life with a substantiality born of a fascinated love" (TA 196). Ellis declares, "novels that do not love, and that cannot satirize their subjects, are doomed to insubstantiality" (TA 203).

His final statements concisely assert his perspective:

> America's rise to world power has been accompanied by the forging of a cultural consensus and a tradition of literary patriotism that, when fused, have given rise to the theory of the American romance. The more modest evaluations of late nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century critics have been drowned out by it....Ideological criticism, which castigates those who cannot conceive that American life is `but one of many forms of society' (and hence cannot claim exceptional virtue) in the end advances the cause of the very exceptionalism it rightly, though only fitfully, regards with scorn. In this self-subversion the theory of the American romance plays a role--which testifies to its enduring power as a vehicle of critical false consciousness and modern American self-absorption and self-promotion, leaving to an uncertain future the real, but yet unrealized, possibility that American critics, by discovering their vocation as modest interpreters of a literature of modest and unexceptional importance, will free themselves from ideological chains (TA 207).

Ellis willingly sacrifices differences between American and English fictional modes to displace the romance-novel dichotomy. The method which he finds suitable for his purpose is to collapse both distinctions simultaneously. This, to me, does not seem necessary to dispute or disprove the Chase romance-novel hypothesis as critics such as Bell have shown. He proposes that American critics have been "constrained by the modern consensus...thus fashioning an image of the classic American novel that misses much of its interest, downplays its failures, and fails to do justice to its real, if modest achievements" (TA 17). Confronted by the richness of European tradition and literature, Ellis seems to lead a school of critical theory expatriates much in the same way as nineteenth-century writers Irving, Cooper, Hawthorne and James must have felt when they visited

Europe and wrote fiction from abroad. Constrained by the romance genre theory, Ellis displaces its romantic tendencies to mythologize nineteenth-century American fiction with a more realistic image of the social conflicts which inhabited nineteenth-century life. He argues from a more universal vision, which presents American fiction as one branch of Western literature, rather than from the nationalistic view modern romance genre critics have adopted.

Theories of American literature which have been afraid to confront ethnic issues have avoided the possibility of class and race as sources of social conflict in America. Ellis's approach to American literary history comes closer than any other critic discussed in this section to finding a legitimate place for American novels of social criticism, including the novel of manners and fiction which confronts class issues and ethnic conflict. More often than not, modern genre critics express their ambivalence about the artistic achievement of antebellum American authors and fiction. Yet they have been happy to use this same fiction, generally viewed as romance, for creating nationalistic distinctions excluding certain categories of American fiction and writers in the process. There is no doubt Chase's romance-novel dichotomy has assisted this process.

I submit that Ellis's insight concerning the insubstantiality of American fiction applies to romance genre criticism in general. Ellis stops just short of

making the following claim, but it may be inferred from his discussion. I contend that the direction American literary theory has taken, away from social realities towards mythic and symbolic interpretation of an "unsubstantial" literature for the purpose of nationalistic claims of "exceptionalism," fails to conceal class structure, class bias, and class conflict in American society. Instead, it discloses romance genre critics' fears of and limitations in confronting issues of class. In the absence of a larger framework for discussing indigenous literature romance genre criticism ultimately is not persuasive. This has been due to its exclusion of ethnic and women's fiction and to its deemphasizing social fiction and realities (e.g., the novel of manners, class issues). By removing these categories of writers and fiction, romance genre critics remove the conscious threats to their own critical hegemony--the sources of American class structure and conflict which threaten romance genre theory's theoretical consensus. Denationalizing the borders of our fiction, recognizing its universal qualities, and subordinating our early fiction within the framework of the novel have been Ellis's solutions. There is no necessity for distinguishing American literature upon either a nationalistic basis or upon genre.

While much of early American literature has been the romance, critics need to explore, as Ellis has done, the reasons why our antebellum literature has most often taken

that form. Ellis's examination comes closer than any previous critic discussed here to uncovering those reasons. He exposes the nationalistic bias of modern American romance genre criticism and the flaws inherent to its method. Romance genre theory shortchanges fictional modes which deal with the social issues of race, class, and ethnicity. Until American critics admit the presence of social classes, as Ellis outlines identifying eight representational categories present in the previous century (and adding my category which includes gender as a basis of social class), American literary theory has little room for the discussion of nineteenth-century social issues of race, class, gender, and ethnicity. Romance genre theory has tended to support white, male, Anglo-Saxon representations of nineteenth-century fiction. To expose nineteenth-century class structure, as Ellis has done, is also to expose gender, domestic, and racial hierarchies--the subordination of women, slaves, and other ethnic groups. Recent criticism demonstrates the inadequacies of romance genre theory. The nationalistic novel-romance dichotomy proves to be less capacious and inadequate both as a methodology and as a description of early American fiction than some critics have supposed.

Twentieth-Century Critics and the The Nineteenth-Century Romance

The subsequent chapters on Scott, C. B. Brown, Cooper, and Hawthorne converge with the discussion of twentieth-century critics in several ways. Although twentieth-century literary critics often present their remarks with a greater complexity than the artists who first discussed the romance, these modern critics have derived their concerns and themes from these same late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century authors.

Charles Brockden Brown wrote during a period of generic transition. The novel, the romance, and Gothic fiction were all fairly recent developments. Audiences were suspicious of fiction and of the romance in particular. Authors were hesitant to admit generic commitments in deference to readers' opinions of the romance. Brown was also anxious to write about American scenes and incidents and drew upon available fictional modes. Although Brown was less vocal about his nationalistic impulse than Cooper or Simms, he was eager to contribute to a national literature and to domesticate forms of fiction originated in Europe. Some modern critics cite Brown as an early precursor to the nineteenth-century American romance. As Ellis observes about early American fiction in general, critics self-consciously acknowledge the flawed nature of Brown's fiction. Like modern critics, such as Bell, Dekker, and

Budick, Brown was concerned about the relationship between reality and fiction, and history and romance. Critics who appreciate Brown's contribution to American fiction often emphasize its psychological nature and (apologetically) its use of native, wilderness setting. Although Porte approaches early American fiction partly through its psychological dimension, he surprisingly fails to deal with Brown. Perhaps Brown's fiction does not fit neatly into Porte's hypothesis which stresses that both the theme and form of early American fiction is romance. Although Brown's works were not novels of manners, no one can deny his interest in social issues--for example, the personal and community consequences of the Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic which serves as the basis for Arthur Mervyn. Finally, Brown was enthusiastic about the prospects for literature in America and less concerned about whether or not he was imitating a non-indigenous fictional form. The adaptations which Brown (and other American artists) made of European fictional resources defy any rigid generic distinction which modern romance critics might like to claim.

Some American romance genre critics overlook Scott's contribution to indigenous fiction. Dekker substantiates Scott's importance to American fiction and the strength of authors' relationships as artists. The relationships between artists often contrasted with their adversarial relationship with critics. James' comments in "The Art of

Fiction" substantiate this idea. While both early American fiction writers and critics struggled by trial and error to define and produce a national literature, Cooper, Simms, Hawthorne, and other antebellum writers continued the informal dialogue by literary example between artists across international borders. Ellis reminds us, despite the nationalism which predominated European countries and America, how much writers from every country continued to be inspired by example in the free exchange of international literature. Aside from his historical romances, many topics which Scott discusses from the artist's practical point of view assisted American authors and often appeared, without citation, as phrases in their Prefaces and fiction, as in Hawthorne's case. Like Brown, Scott was concerned with fields which contributed to, overlapped and/or competed with fiction. He discussed issues which concerned artistic practice: the relationship between history and romance; reality and the province of romance; Gothic fiction and a suggested use of Gothic elements in the romance; the evolution of literary forms, their mingling and hybridizing tendencies; and artistic latitude. Although Scott's fiction has been heavily associated with the romance genre, Ellis mentions his contribution to realism and social novels as well. It has become a literary commonplace to call Cooper the "American Scott." The European influence on American fiction has been an issue which romance genre critics often obscure. This has not been a sign of health for this

critical school. The nationalistic purpose of romance genre criticism has been too easily exposed because of this simple oversight.

Cooper's and Hawthorne's fiction has largely been cast and/or recognized for its contribution to the early American romance. This has been problematic in relationship to Cooper's fiction because of the breadth of his experimentation. Cooper's fiction created critical dilemmas for Chase, Porte, and Bell, three major proponents of a form of the romance hypothesis. Each solved their separate issues by isolating Cooper's fiction in some way. Yet Cooper certainly ought to have provided Bell, in particular, ample discussion for Bell's main theme of reality and romance. Critics such as Dekker and Budick, who discuss romance from the historical perspective, find Cooper's oeuvre much more amenable to their critical approaches. Tuttleton's concern for the novel of manners and Ellis' interest in society and social conflict as sources of fiction, are particularly pleased with Cooper's early nineteenth-century presence. Feminist critics, such as Baym and Tompkins who are concerned with gender bias, ought to do more to take issue with Cooper's overt sexism. Ellis and Dekker both confront the racial and ethnic issues that abound in Cooper's work. As a practitioner Cooper was interested, not only in representing his country's nationalistic interest in developing indigenous literature, but within this framework was concerned with issues of

reality and fiction, artistic latitude, and history and fiction--issues likewise discussed in the criticism of Bell, Budick, and Dekker. And, if Ellis is correct, Cooper may have unconsciously inherited both Scott's realism and his romance.

As Brodhead, Bell, and Dekker suggest, Hawthorne is the "golden boy" of romance genre criticism, although modern romance genre critics continually challenge his theoretical contribution to a definition of the romance (often for the sake of their own definition). Hawthorne can be feminine in his instinct, sympathetic to Hester's character, cause, and situation, something which Baym and Tompkins might appreciate though they search for nineteenth-century, female parallels in genre and comparable literary execution. Historical romance critics have a field day with Hawthorne's fiction. Opportunities abound for their expertise. Two of his major novels could be interpreted, but have not been thoroughly explored, as novels of manners--The House of the Seven Gables and The Scarlet Letter. Ellis and Mills, however, both realize their social relevance. Hawthorne's unsystematic comments on literary practice scattered throughout his prefaces, essays, and fiction, challenge critics' ability to synthesize what Hawthorne has not synthesized, compile what Hawthorne fails to draw together, leaving a great deal of room for exercising stamina, coherence, and critical scavenger-hunting. These challenges and enigmas continue to attract critics of every theoretical

persuasion. Hawthorne remains stalwart and flexible in his representation of nineteenth-century American fiction. Hawthorne provides a semblance of a theory for romance genre critics. Those who wish to refute the romance hypothesis, find Hawthorne's lack of systematic critical theory helpful in their enterprise. Like Brown and Cooper, Hawthorne is concerned with fiction and history, and reality and fiction. His psychological fiction coincides nicely with Brown's incipient attempts. But Hawthorne's polish surpasses Brown without question. The nationalistic phases which characterize the decades in which these authors wrote becomes mirrored in their attitudes and fictional purposes, arising in Brown's work, reaching an apex in Cooper's fiction, and subsiding with Hawthorne. As Ellis has suggested, modern literary critics, with nationalistic purposes of their own, attached romance genre theory to the development of American literature. Nationalism, no doubt, was a part of both, but the following chapters indicate the extent to which nineteenth-century literary nationalism was present in the early works of native authors as well as its evolution. As a twentieth-century critic, Ellis perhaps shares the most in common with Hawthorne's nationalism. While Hawthorne mingles social history with fiction, he remains primarily an author who wrote about local incidents and American people and yet captured mankind's universal sympathies and nature.

What tends to become lost for a reader of modern

literary criticism is close contact with texts and contexts which influenced our early American authors. For example, modern critics often mention Scott's Essay on Romance, but they seldom explore it in detail. Frequently, I provide close analysis of essays such as these which were not only read by a lay audience but were influential upon subsequent authors. As indicated in the above discussion, I cover the territory which interested both nineteenth-century fictionists and modern critics--the relationship of literary nationalism, reality, history, and psychology to early American fiction which modern critics have most frequently described as romance.

NOTES

1. Henry James, "The Art of Fiction," Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971) 666.

2. William C. Spengemann, A Mirror for Americanists: Reflections on the Idea of American Literature (Hanover: UP of New England, 1989) 7.

3. Webster wrote, "As an independent nation our honor requires us to have a system of our own, in language as well as government. Great Britain...should no longer be our standard; for the taste of her writers is already corrupted, and her language on the decline." Paulding declared that this country could never be "truly independent till we make our own books, and coin our own words--two things necessary to national sovereignty...." Both are quoted in Spencer (ON 55-56, 57).

4. Cf. Sergio Perosa, American Theories of the Novel: 1793-1903 (New York: New York UP, 1983) x, 6, 11, for use of the term. See also Spencer 28; Also in "An American Romance," Spencer utilizes the organic metaphor in his enumeration of foreign influences as "nutriment for indigenous shoots" which were gradually "shaped and pruned to accord with transatlantic patterns" (95); Bank's introduction to American Romanticism also presents this view (7-16).

5. G. Harrison Orians, "Censure of Fiction in American Romances and Magazines," PMLA 52 (1937): 195-214.

6. Michael D. Bell also disputes this assumption in The Development of American Romance: The Sacrifice of Relation (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980) 160-62.

7. In Scott's General Preface to his "Magnum Opus," he admits his nationalistic intent bound with Waverley: "I felt that something might be attempted for my own country, of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland...to procure sympathy for their [Scotland's] virtues and indulgence for their foibles." In his Postscript to Waverley Scott also confides his admiration of Miss Edgeworth's "Irish portraits" which portray "their habits, manners, and feelings." Sir Walter Scott, The Prefaces to the Waverley Novels, ed. Mark A Weinstein (Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1978) 91, 5.

8. Many critics subscribe to an indigenous focus as preferable to a comparative approach. See Ruland's discussion in Native Muse (8-16); also Michael Davitt Bell takes this approach in The Development of American Romance (see 4, 11-14).

9. This perspective does not begin to approach whether romance is the best literary form for democratic expression. Spencer recognizes this point and comments that the undercurrent of realism was often suggested as the best literary approach for democratic ideals. Some nineteenth-century critics also maintained this attitude. In part, the attempt to merge romance with history is a symptom of this attitude and undercurrent in American literature. See also Bell's discussion (DR 11-14).

10. In "New Views of American Narrative," Lawrence Buell suggests this method as alternative to dependence upon the genre distinction which Chase appropriated to assert America's literary uniqueness. Two texts which Buell claims avoid the errors of Chase are: Sacvan Berkovitch's Puritan Origins of the American Self (1975) and Richard Slotkin's Regeneration Through Violence (1979). For a discussion of his views see Lawrence Buell, "New Views of American Narrative," ESQ 28 (1982): 239-42.

11. Michael T. Gilmore, The Middle Way: Puritanism and Ideology in American Romantic Fiction (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1977) represents one example of such an approach.

12. John McWilliams, "The Rationale for `The American Romance,'" Boundary 2 17 (1990): 72.

13. In a review of Chase's book, Robert Spiller comments that none of these three arguments are new: Robert Spiller, rev. of The American Novel and Its Tradition," by Richard Chase, American Literature 31 (1959): 82.

14. Richard Slotkin's Regeneration through Violence (1979) comes to mind as one who has followed this as well as Melville's lead. Chase's description of the "contradictions and extreme ranges of experience" begins in Melville's critical essay, "Hawthorne and His Mosses" where Melville responds to the "power of blackness" from which Hawthorne's fiction "derives its force" whether from its appeal to that "Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free" (Norton 2164). Harry Levin's assessment of Hawthorne in The Power of Blackness (1958) falls within this tradition as well.

15. Chase discusses the "deprecation of romance" in his introduction (AN x-xi). He attempts to dissuade readers of various opinions about the inferiority of romance to the novel. His resolution to this crisis, which I refer to as the rescue of the romance, reveals his opinion.

16. Robert Merrill interprets Chase's term, "formal abstractness," to mean the mythic, symbolic, and allegorical

forms of fiction. Robert Merrill, "Another Look at the American Romance," Modern Philology 78 (1981): 382. I tend to agree with his perception, although Chase does not give these equivalent terms in his essay.

17. Scott, Simms, Cooper, and Hawthorne all argued to have their fiction judged according to the criteria they set for their fiction. Later chapters on these specific writers provide this evidence.

18. James comment in "The Art of Fiction" is representative of these earlier pleas for latitude. James writes, "The execution belongs to the author alone; it is what is most personal to him, and we measure him by that. The advantage, the luxury, as well as the torment and responsibility of the novelist, is that there is no limit to what he may attempt as an executant--no limit to his possible experiments, efforts, discoveries, successes (Adams 664). Brown, Cooper, and Hawthorne, who are all discussed in this text, made similar statements of their own along these lines.

19. McWilliams 74.

20. See McWilliams 74. He supports his assertion citing Robert Spiller's 1959 review of Chase's book, where Spiller writes: "Mr. Chase's method is to set up a thesis which may serve as an hypothesis of historical development of a literary form. He then selects what he believes to be the few best works of major American authors in this form and proceeds to an analysis of these texts by application of the thesis to the....By a circular argument, he builds an increasing conviction on the part of the reader in the validity of the of the original thesis so that, at the end, he has defended rather than proved his case" (Spiller, "Review" 82). McWilliams also lists a number of recent works that he feels "opened up the ultimately circular quality of Chase's theory" (McWilliams 81). These are: Donald Pease's Visionary Compacts (1986), Evan Carton's The Rhetoric of American Fiction (1985), and George Dekker's The American Historical Romance (1987).

21. Several critics attempt this. Two such examples are: Donald Pease, Visionary Compacts: American Renaissance Writing in Cultural Context (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1986); and Lawrence Buell, New England Literary Culture: From Revolution through Renaissance (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986).

22. Arvid Shulenberger, Cooper's Theory of Fiction: His Prefaces and Their Relation to His Novels (Lawrence: U of Kansas, 1955) 36.

23. George Dekker remarks about the effects of Chase's hypothesis on canon. See George Dekker, "Once More: Hawthorne and the Genealogy of American Romance," ESQ 35 (1989): 69-72.

24. Spiller, "Review" 82.

25. Julian Hawthorne, "The American Element in Fiction," A Storied Land: Theories of American Literature, ed. Richard Ruland, vol. 2 (New York: Dutton, 1976) 111.

26. D. H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (Garden City: Doubleday, 1951).

27. McWilliams 71.

28. McWilliams 71.

29. F. R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (New York: Stewart, 1950) 1, 27.

30. Two other critical works of similar purpose followed closely upon Chase's defense of American literary status. Neither are a direct offshoot of Chase's hypothesis. Instead they tend to function as support along side Chase as both expand the notion of American literature's distinctiveness. Daniel Hoffman's Form and Fable in American Fiction (1961) is applauded for promotion of similar nationalistic literary criticism, treating the use of "folklore, myth, and ritual" in "ten of the most important American tales and romances" (Hoffman 3, x). Leslie Fiedler's psychological study, Love and Death in the American Novel, portrays the American novel's failure to adequately deal with heterosexual love. Each of these texts treated American fiction with a self-conscious need to create a separate identity and accepted Matthiessen's portrayal of America's classic fiction as romance.

31. Jonathan Arac, "F. O. Matthiessen: Authorizing an American Renaissance," The American Renaissance Reconsidered, eds. Walter Benn Michaels and Donald E. Pease (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1985) 90.

32. Arac 94.

33. Arac 95.

34. Arac 99.

35. Nicolaus Mills critiques Trilling's and Chase's classification of "American fiction as romantic and English Fiction as novelistic" as a "basis [to] accurately distinguish between the two traditions." Nicolaus Mills, American and English Fiction in the Nineteenth Century: An

Antigenre Critique and Comparison (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1973) 3. See his introduction pp. 3-10 and pp. 11-14 for his arguments against Trilling's perspective. He mentions Trilling's essay "Art and Fortune" from The Liberal Imagination as also contributing to the misunderstanding of American literary interpretation relative to genre conceptions.

36. Lionel Trilling, "Manners, Morals, and the Novel," The Liberal Imagination (Garden City: Doubleday, 1957) 206.

37. His definition of the novel deprecates the British aristocratic social structure. He writes: "The characteristic work of the novel is to record the illusion that snobbery generates and to try to penetrate to the truth which, as the novel assumes, lies hidden beneath all the false appearances. Money, snobbery, the ideal of status, these become in themselves the objects of fantasy, the support of the fantasies of love, freedoms, charm, [and] power..." (Trilling 204). This definition could hardly make any American envious of British novels.

38. Trilling 206.

39. Charles Feidelson, Symbolism and American Literature (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1953) 75.

40. R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1955) 1.

41. Chase makes evident his reliance upon James for support of his romance-novel hypothesis and his study of contradiction as the literary expression of American experience in the last few pages of his first chapter "The Broken Circuit." He asserts, quoting James' phrase, "`The disconnected and uncontrolled experience,' then, is the essence of romance, and any adequate definition must proceed from this postulate" (Chase 25).

42. A third significant grouping, which is outside the scope of this dissertation, focuses specifically on Hawthorne as the central literary figure of the American romance. There is little doubt that Chase's hypothesis enhanced the place of romance in American critical tradition and, with it, Hawthorne's place in literary tradition. In a review essay, George Dekker observes that the several subsequent Chase-inspired critical works "while contending each for his or her own revisionary account" agree only upon one point--"Hawthorne as an indispensable central figure." See George Dekker, "Once More: Hawthorne and the Genealogy of Romance," ESQ 44 (1989): 72, 82.

Dekker comments that Chase's "romance thesis privileges Hawthorne" and notes that recent trends in criticism, post-

Chase, have "served" Hawthorne "especially well" (Dekker 70-1). A major body of romance genre criticism has developed on this account. A listing of the most prominent texts from this category includes the following: Jane Lundblad, Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Tradition of Gothic Romance (New York: Haskell, 1964); Michael Davitt Bell, Hawthorne and the Historical Romance of New England (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1971); Richard Brodhead, The School of Hawthorne (New York: Oxford UP, 1986) and Hawthorne, Melville, and the Novel (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1976); Jonathan Stubbs, The Pursuit of Form: A Study of Hawthorne and the Romance (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1970); Elissa Greenwald, Realism and Romance: Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, and American Fiction (Ann Arbor: UMI Research, 1989); and, Richard Millington, Practicing Romance: Narrative Form and Cultural Engagement in Hawthorne's Fiction (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992).

43. I have omitted Edgar Dryden's The Form of American Romance (1988) from my discussion as his text has had only marginal reception and influence. He proposes a reader-response approach to romance genre theory utilizing Chase's romance-novel distinction. Except for an application of Ortega y Gasset's literary theory to Scott's Waverley and the European origins of American fiction, has adds no further contribution.

44. Three other books, while they depend upon the romance hypothesis, fail to touch upon genre-related issues. These are: Michael Gilmore, American Romanticism and the Marketplace (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985); Robert Levine: Conspiracy and Romance: Studies in Brockden Brown, Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville, Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989); and, Pamela Schirmeister, Consolations of Space: The Place of Romance in Hawthorne, Melville, and James (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990).

45. Nina Baym, Novels, Readers, and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984) and Feminism and American Literary History (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1992).

46. The most significant chapter from Baym's Novels, Readers, and Reviewers (1984) (Chapter 11) which also critiques Chase's hypothesis on the basis of his romance-novel distinction reappears as "Concepts of Romance in Hawthorne's America" in her more recent book, Feminism 57-70.

47. Another body of criticism which indirectly both critiques and corrects Chase's thesis responds to canon issues. See: Nina Baym: Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870 (Ithaca: Cornell

UP, 1978); Francis Foster, Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-bellum Slave Narratives (Westport: Greenwood, 1979); Paul Lauter, Reconstructing American Literature: Courses, Syllabi, Issues (Old Westbury: Feminist Press, 1983) and Canons and Contexts (New York: Oxford UP, 1991); Joyce Warren, The (Other) American Traditions: Nineteenth-Century Women Writers (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1993); and, Carol Colatrella and Joseph Alkana, Cohesion and Dissent in America (Albany: State U of New York P, 1993).

A final group of criticism is comprised of works that act as corrective, but whose authors do not necessarily comment upon Chase. These are: David Hirsch, Reality and Idea in the Early American Novel (The Hague: Mouton, 1971); Sacvan Berkovitch, Puritan Origins of the American Self (New Haven: Yale UP, 1975); William Spengemann, Adventurous Muse: The Poetics of American Fiction 1789-1900 (Chicago, U of Chicago P, 1977), and, A Mirror for Americanists: Reflections on the Idea of American Literature (Hanover: UP of New England, 1989); Michael Gilmore, The Middle Way: Puritanism and Ideology in American Romantic Fiction (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1977); Richard Slotkin, Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860 (Middleton: Wesleyan UP, 1979); Evan Carton, The Rhetoric of American Romance (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1985); Lawrence Buell, New England Literary Culture: From Revolution Through Renaissance (London: Cambridge UP, 1986); and, Donald Pease, Visionary Compacts: American Renaissance Writings in Cultural Context (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1987). Some of these have been mentioned or discussed elsewhere in this work.

48. From: The Reinterpretation of American Literature (1928) in Ruland, Storied 438.

49. A. W. Plumstead, "Defining American Romance," rev. of The Romance in America, by Michael Davitt Bell, Hartford Studies in Literature 3 (1971): 146.

50. Porte writes: "Beginning with Poe and continuing as a strong current in the works of Hawthorne, Melville, and James, the desire to test and evaluate the opposing claims of novelistic `good sense' and romance `wildness' find expression in the very fabric of American fiction. `Art' as an implied or explicit theme and the frequent use of `artist' figures becomes characteristic of the American romance--indeed among the criteria that define it--as our authors argue out for themselves the question of daylight versus night" (RA 60). Cooper is excluded from this group of authors on the basis of not using artists as figures in working out his romance themes, according to Porte. Porte would also be hard pressed to prove his contention of "`art' as an implied or explicit theme" in Cooper's fiction.

51. Porte inserts two well-known quotes from James' Preface to The American: "The real represents to my perception the things we cannot possibly not know, sooner or later, in one way or another....The romantic stands, on the other hand, for the things that, with all the facilities in the world, all the wealth and all the courage and all the wit and all the adventure, we never can directly know; the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and desire" (RA 195).

Later he again cites this passage from James' Preface: "The only general attribute of projected romance that I can see, the only one that fits all its cases, is the fact of the kind of experience with which it deals--experience liberated, so to speak; experience disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it...." Henry James, The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces by Henry James, ed. Richard P. Blackmur (New York: Scribner, 1962) 33; cited in Porte (196).

52. Dennis Berthold derives a similar conclusion from his reading of Porte. For a discussion of his perspective see, Dennis Berthold, "From Freud to Marx: Recent Directions in Hawthorne Criticism," ESQ 22 (1976): 108-10.

53. Michael Davitt Bell, The Development of American Romance: The Sacrifice of Relation (Chicago, U of Chicago P, 1980). Subsequent references to this work appear in the text using the abbreviation DR and the page number given in parentheses.

54. Bell states: "The breakdown of these postures marks the true beginning of self-conscious romance in America" (DR 25). The postures to which Bell refers are those of the conservative theory of romance which "made a point of accepting and even advertising the corrupting influence of most fiction in order to promote their own works as rare exceptions that proved the rule" (DR 25).

55. D. H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (New York: Doubleday, 1951) 12. His first edition was published in 1922.

56. Lawrence 12.

57. Trilling, "Manners" 204-5.

58. George Dekker, The American Historical Romance (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) 3. Subsequent references to this work appear in the text using the abbreviation HR and the page number given in parentheses.

59. Dekker also treats many minor American authors tangentially, but he admits that his study is biased towards those he calls "elite figures in the historical romance tradition" (HR 4).

60. Dekker posits that "the main themes and even many of the details of plot and character typology in the Waverley novels had already been formulated by the poets and philosophical historian Scott read in his youth" (HR 32).

61. The other two principle contributions are of less concern for the purposes of the dissertation. Briefly, Dekker feels that "Scott's innovations in Waverley also enlarged the scope of the novel from generally by developing its historical consciousness (its conscience, too, for that matter) and by multiplying the variety of natural and social forces that impinged on its character' behavior" (HR 29). The third contribution is directly related to historiography, the inspiration he gave to "professional historian to reform their research methods and extend the range of interest and motives surveyed in their accounts of historical causation" (HR 29).

62. According to Dekker, these are, in brief: Aristotle's model, heroic matter, community portraits, and the most inclusive romance narrative (HR 55).

63. See Dekker 57-8.

64. Dekker notes, "By contrast, the chivalric romance was an aristocratic ideal or fantasy picture of the refinement and marvellous adventures of but one social class" (HR 60). The epic "sought to give a portrait of that society in its totality..." (HR 60).

65. Rather than the linear progress of cultures, Dekker contends that Hawthorne projects an "ascending spiral curve" to represent experience over time (HR 139).

66. See Dekker 155-59.

67. Dekker sees the influence of Scott's historical romance model continuing with post-bellum authors and their fiction. Those whom he discusses are: Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson, Willa Cather's My Antonia, Edith Wharton's Age of Innocence, Elizabeth Maddox Robert's The Great Meadow, Allen Tate's The Fathers, and William Faulkner's Go Down Moses and Absalom, Absalom!.

68. Budick treats Melville's Billy Budd in a minor way.

69. Emily Budick, Fiction and Historical Consciousness: The American Romance Tradition (New Haven:

Yale UP, 1989) xi. Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text using the abbreviation FH and the page number given in parentheses.

70. Baym's article was first published in Nineteenth-Century Fiction 38 (1984): 426-443.

71. Ruland, Storied 459.

72. James Tuttleton, The Novel of Manners in America (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1972). Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text using the abbreviation MA and the page number given in parentheses.

73. Nicolaus Mills, American and English Fiction in the Nineteenth Century: An Antigenre Critique and Comparison (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1973). Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text using the abbreviation AE and the page number given in parentheses.

74. Richard Chase's The American Novel and Its Tradition (1957) and Marius Bewley's The Eccentric Design: Form in the Classic American Novel (New York: Columbia UP, 1963).

75. He examines each dyad for similarities and differences: the Cooper/Scott dyad for "the implications of their historical vision;" the Hawthorne and Eliot for "their treatment of the religious dilemma of the fall;" Melville and Hardy for their nihilistic "preoccupation;" and Twain and Dickens for the relationships they explore between children and the "dehumanization of society" (AE 6).

76. Jane Tompkins, Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860 (New York: Oxford UP, 1985). Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text using the abbreviation SD and the page number given in parentheses.

77. Nina Baym, Feminism and American Literary History (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1992). Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text using the abbreviation FA with the page number given in parentheses.

78. Baym cites a passage from Trilling's essay "Reality in America" which has often been used by other critics in support of this idea. Trilling's passage begins with this idea: "`The novel in America diverges from its classic [i.e., British] intention which...is the investigation of the problem of reality beginning in the social field. The fact is that American writers of genius have not turned their minds to society'" (FA 10). Trilling cites Poe, Melville, and Hawthorne as examples of this fact and Henry James as the exception.

79. Baym mentions, as examples, Cather's The Song of the Lark, Glasgow's Barren Ground, and Wharton's The Reef (FA 24).

80. Baym is referring to the criticism of Donald M. Kartinganer and Malcolm A. Griffith, editors of Theories of American Literature (New York: Macmillan, 1962), whom she sees following in the train of Richard Chase and Richard Poirier, the author of A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature (New York: Oxford UP, 1966). R. W. B. Lewis's The American Adam is another obvious predecessor which Baym overlooks.

81. As the source of this idea, Baym cites: Eric Sundquist, Home As Found: Authority and Genealogy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1979).

82. Lawrence Buell outlines the traditional usages of genre theory in his essay, "Prefaces to a Theory of American Narrative," ESQ 28 (1982): 63-64; 70-72. He mentions three common and helpful uses of genre criticism: "First, in establishing the context and limits of individual genius; second, in providing a means of relating individual achievement to period values (in the sense that genre fashions reflect period ideologies more faithfully than single great works, which are by definition anomalous); and third, by prompting a reexamination of one's assumptions about canonicity, when texts and forms usually considered peripheral (if known at all) are suddenly brought to the center of attention" (Buell, "Prefaces" 63).

Nicolaus Mills analyzes the flaws of genre criticism more closely in his essay "American Fiction and the Genre Critics," Novel 2 (1969): 115-16.

83. Bell points out these connections between early American authors and Blair. He remarks, "Brown expressed his enthusiasm for Blair's Rhetoric as early as 1787. Poe, we are told, `knew at first hand Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres....At Bowdoin, during Hawthorne's undergraduate years, freshman studied Blair's Rhetoric in the third trimester (DR 13). Blair's influence is discussed elsewhere in this dissertation.

84. William Ellis, The Theory of the American Romance: An Ideology in American Intellectual History (Ann Arbor: UMI Research, 1989). Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text using the abbreviation TA with the page number given in parentheses.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE ROMANCE ON NATIVE GROUNDS: CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN (1771-1810)

> That must be a very shallow literature which depends for its national flavor and character upon its topography and its dialect: and the criticism which can conceive of no deeper Americanism than this is shallower still.[1]
>
> Julian Hawthorne, 1884

Identifying the Essential Americanism

As shown in Chapter One, nineteenth-century native writers frequently cast their definitions of American literature with nationalistic overtones. C. B. Brown, Longfellow, Simms, and Paulding all encouraged a native literature on nationalistic premises.[2] Gardiner defined the "Americanism of an American novel" geographically, culturally, and linguistically (NM 196-98). Primarily, American writers' most continuous response to American literature was in nationalistic terms. Edward Tyrell Channing's charged in The North American Review (1816) that "The literature of the country is just as domestick and individual as its character or political institutions" and that "Its charm is its nativeness" (NM 89-90). This

nationalistic viewpoint is just evident three decades later in Margaret Fuller's scathing assertion, in her essay "American Literature--Its Position in the Present, And Prospects for the Future" (1844-1846), that just "because many books are written by persons born in America" it does not necessarily follow that "there exists an American literature" (NM 340). In 1832 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow provided the broadest definition of American literature with this declaration in an essay for The North American Review:

> A national literature, then, in the widest signification of the words, embraces every mental effort made by the inhabitants of a country through the medium of the press. Every book written by a citizen of a country belongs to its national literature. But the term has also a more peculiar and appropriate definition; for when we say that the literature of a country is national, we mean that it bears upon it the stamp of national character. We refer to those distinguishing features, which literature receives from the spirits of a nation,--from its scenery and climate, its historic recollections, its Government, its various institutions,--from all those national peculiarities, which are the result of no positive institutions, and, in a word, from the thousand external circumstances, which either directly or indirectly exert an influence upon the literature of a nation, and give it a marked and individual character, distinct from that of the literature of other nations (NM 252).

Not all early nineteenth-century American authors were as adamantly nationalistic about American literary aspirations as Longfellow. For example, Hawthorne, who was Longfellow's classmate at Bowdoin, appears the least direct and vocal about his nationalistic sentiments. Yet even Hawthorne acknowledged his nationalistic literary goal and aspired to

be among America's first authors. The national character and American historic situation is imprinted everywhere in his fiction.

A further distinction which our early writers made, largely based on nationalistic concerns, emphasizes both the differences and acknowledges the commonalities between American and British literary resources and fiction, though American authors responded variously to those ties. Major antebellum writers, Brown, Irving, Cooper, and Melville all acknowledged a common literary heritage with England, expressing their ideas over five decades. In 1802 Brown wrote in The American Review and Literary Journal of the bonds between America and England "united by language, manners, and taste...whose arts and population may be considered as much our center, as much the fountain whence we draw light and knowledge through books, as that of the inhabitants of Wales and Cumberland," though he joyfully anticipated "a race of artists and authors, purely indigenous, and who may vie with those of Europe..." (NM 66). Irving complained about the impoverished American milieu compared to Old World literary richness, lived and wrote abroad using American, English and Continental settings and materials, but gave American landscape and literature their first legendary "associations." In Notions of the Americas (1828), Cooper acknowledged America's and England's "common property" in the heritage of English literature, and, although he despised being called the

"American Scott," he was first to illustrate how Scott's romances could be adapted to the American setting. In his review "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1850), Melville compared Hawthorne to Shakespeare bridging the gap between the two continents' literature, but decried in the same essay:

> We want no American Goldsmiths...no American Miltons. It were the vilest thing you could say of a true American author that he were an American Tompkins....No American should write like an Englishman or a Frenchman; let him write like a man, for then he will be sure to write like an American" (NM 323-24).

American writers faced the major task of how to "naturalize" fictional forms to the American situation.

In the postbellum decades we see a sharply contrasting viewpoint expressed in Whitman's essay, "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads" (1888). Whitman heavily criticized European literature for its implicit Old World feudalism, and he elevated the democratic contribution of American literature as serving both "New World Progress" and the universal evolution of nations. In the same essay (1888), however, he acknowledged the contribution of all literature, "Old World or New" as directed towards the non-differentiated "Human Being" who stood in "the centre of all" (NM 435; 428). Although America's contribution to English literature was more firmly established at that time, the democratic voice still persistently sought recognition.

Consistently, during the antebellum era, we witness American authors writing about American literature in nationalistic terms. American writers constantly paired

native literature with national ideals, principles, and goals. Over the century these assertions abandoned geographical restrictions for author or setting, yet often writers, such as Cooper, maintained their insistence upon an implicit national idea, democratic principle, or political value, which they felt to be the central qualifying element of American literature.

Julian Hawthorne's 1884 essay, "The American Element of Fiction," capstones these points. He first declares a literature "shallow" which depends upon dialect or geography for its "national flavor and character." He then addresses the issue of native born authors writing about foreign matters or materials and asserts that such works are "more essentially American" because "they subject the things of the old world to the tests of the new, and thereby vindicate and illustrate the characteristic mission of America to mankind."[3] Finally, he concludes, "What is an American novel except a novel treating of person, places, and ideas from an American point of view? The point of view is <u>the</u> point, not the thing seen from it."[4] Over the nineteenth-century, the most characteristic value writers called for to express Americanism has been nationalistic in nature, whether calling for an American image, idea, ideal, or proclaiming our literature's lofty mission.

Three Representative American Writers of Romance Spanning the Nationalistic Era Between the Revolutionary War and the Civil War

The following Chapters on Charles Brockden Brown, James Fenimore Cooper, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, demonstrate how nationalistic ideas and the romance developed together in American fiction. These three authors have been selected for the sequence and progression they illustrate in this process. This discussion, for economy's sake and for the particular interests of this dissertation, are limited to antebellum authors, in contrast to Chase whose hypothesis also includes twentieth-century American writers. These three writers are considered for their experimentation with the popular romance form and for their contribution to the evolution of this fictional form in America.

C. B. Brown wrote fiction during a period when the Gothic romance predominated, sixteen years before Scott attempted his first romance. Brown represents the first phase of fiction occurring in the period of heightened nationalism after the Revolutionary War. His essays "The Rhapsodist" (1789) and "The Difference Between History and Romance" (1780) show some of the early concerns of romance writers--subterfuge to obscure their art as romance writing and comparison with competing genres such as history. These essays are important as the form takes foothold in America and authors feel a need to distinguish the form from other accepted genres. At the time Brown wrote, Clara Reeve's and

Horace Walpole's romances were already well known. C. B. Brown undertook writing the first successful romances in America suggesting how the romance might develop in native soil. His is the first step towards naturalizing the romance inherited from European Gothic fiction. He incorporated "realities" from native sources which he learned from studying human nature and found these aberrations more remarkable than Gothic effects. Writing about the individual, his psychology, and the American experience in the wilderness of mind and nature, Brown struck upon something intrinsically American. His turning inward toward psychology established American fiction on native grounds.

The intervening chapter on Scott, placed between the chapters on C. B. Brown and Cooper, depicts his contributions to the romance in America. This section illustrates the continuity of literary forms between the two continents, European and American and illustrates how many of the ideas about romance were not native but rather inherited from European sources and a shared tradition in English literature. Scott was the most prominent romance writer who supplied American authors with the nationalistic romance formula. Many more American authors aspired to imitate Scott than succeeded. Romances, in the manner of Scott, proliferated after 1814 when he published his first Waverley romance. Cooper and Hawthorne are just two among many American authors who found Scott's romances a source of

inspiration for their writing. Scott addresses practically every issue which nineteenth-century American romance writers also confront--for example, genre definition and the diffuseness of genres, comparison of the romance with other forms and genres, authorial latitude, evolution and adaptations of the romance, and the relationship between fiction and truth. The American romance sprang into existence with the example of Scott. His blend of nationalism and romance inspired American authors--as early American literary critics often recommended--"to do" for their region or country "what Scott had attained" for Scotland. Scott's importance is pivotal in the history of American fiction.

Cooper represents the middle period of this transition, writing after the second war with England during the height of nationalistic fervor. His search for a fictional form which satisfies his fervent nationalism illustrates the central dilemma for authors of his period. Analysis of his fiction also illustrates the limitations of genre theory. Cooper, like his contemporaries, slowly came to appreciate and accept the romance mode. It is helpful to remember that early authors were not in quest of the romance mode, per se, but were seeking how best to express their nationalistic ideals and how to develop a national literature. Chase confuses the issue in his assertion that "Hawthorne was no less convinced than Cooper and Simms that romance, rather than the novel, was the predestined form of American

narrative" (AN 18). Scott's influence and model provided in the Waverley romances served these early writers' purposes. During this period, nationalism becomes wedded to the romance genre--through the example of Scott--and both thrive. American fictionists transformed the romance form they inherited. Cooper's contribution to this process is central.

Hawthorne's fiction is the last considered in this group, as by mid-century, when Hawthorne began publishing his longer romances, the romance mode was largely accepted in America. Compared to Cooper, Hawthorne's nationalism is unobtrusive. Because Hawthorne wrote openly about the romance in his prefaces and experimented with the form, his works are central to any discussion about this genre. Critics vary in their assessment of the fate of romance after Hawthorne (and Melville). Some claim these two authors "exhausted" the form. Others say the romance ferment came to a close. Others find the romance continuing beyond this period, tracking either its intermittent rise and fall, or observing how some "element" of the romance persists in American fiction.[5] In my view, Hawthorne's fiction provides a continuity between the earlier forms of rhetoric his Puritan ancestors preferred and nineteenth-century American fiction. Whatever the claims of modern critics, one can safely declare that the romance becomes fully naturalized during Hawthorne's interim as an American writer. Although Hawthorne was the least vocal about his

nationalism, he did harbor literary aspirations--perhaps for his own fiction or perhaps for some future American author. This period capstones the era of ardent nationalism, and something of an American literature gets underway. American literati may proclaim something of an indigenous and ingenious achievement in Hawthorne's fiction.

The discussion of Hawthorne completes this study of romance as it took root in America from its European origins. This study is neither comparative in the sense of differentiating the romance from the novel, nor in comparing British and American fiction. It acknowledges the common origin of our fictional developments. However, I do commit, in part, to Chase's (and Porte's) thesis that the romance genre dominated the early writing of native authors. It found its impetus in the romances of Scott, but was transformed under cultural, social, and geographical influences peculiar to America.

Romance on Native Grounds

In the lineage of American romance writers, Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810) is frequently the first author twentieth-century critics proclaim. Richard Chase, in The American Novel and Its Tradition, regards Brown as a forerunner in the strand of American romancers for his use of melodrama. He declares Brown a "genuine precursor of the later romance-novelists" (AN 29). R. W. B. Lewis examines Arthur Mervyn (1799-1800) for Brown's contribution to the

Adamic hero in American literature.[6] Michael Davitt Bell studies Brown as a "precursor of American Romanticism... [who] produced a body of work prophetic of much of the later development of the theory and practice of the American romance" (DR 41). In Brown's case this acknowledgement came late. During his lifetime Brown's fiction was acclaimed as something authentically American in both England and France, while in America he was largely ignored until mid-century.

Publicly, Brown did not refer to himself as a romancer. This duplicity is indicative of Brown's literary milieu which did not favor romance.[7] However, his correspondence with his sweetheart, Henrietta, indicates Brown's "attachment to fictitious history" and extensive reading of "all the romances, whether French or English, which I thought deserving of perusal."[8] Brown confides in his journal (1797) that his first fictional work, Skywalk, is "something in the form of a Romance."[9] Yet, in his Advertisement to Skywalk Brown refers to himself as a "story-telling moralist," a more respectable label to his peers than a romancer.[10] Fiction writers during this period often felt the need to validate their art by ascribing some moral purpose. In Brown's "Advertisement" to Wieland (1798), he describes his purpose as "neither selfish nor temporary, but aims at the illustration of some important branches of the moral constitution of man."[11] In The Development of American Romance, Michael Davitt Bell correctly points out that Brown's "`moral' means

`psychological' rather than `didactic'" as it often meant to Brown's immediate audience.[12] Modern assessments of Brown depict his fiction as psychological romance infused with melodrama.[13]

Some critics have also classified Brown's fiction as Gothic. His use of visions and hallucinations, spirits and fanatics, dreams and nightmares, disembodied voices and ventriloquism, somnambulism, and spontaneous combustion have earned him this reputation. His melodramatic incidents--seduction plots, suicides, villainy, and violence--have also connected him with Gothic romance. However, for most of his writing career Brown surprisingly condemns Gothic literary effects in favor of the "real." In his Preface to Edgar Huntly (1802) Brown denounces Gothic romances for their "Puerile superstition and exploded manners, Gothic castles and chimeras" recommending instead native materials, "incidents of Indian hostility, and the perils of the western wilderness" as "far more suitable" (NM 64).[14] Brown correctly assessed his ability to substitute and utilize these "real" sources for the power of his fiction. Critics have likewise acclaimed his success in this area.[15] In part, he links this preference with nationalistic sentiments; but, more significantly here, his preference for basing his fiction on authentic facts surfaces through his taste for extremes and the abnormal. Very often Brown's fiction relies upon mankind's social and psychological aberrations or some mental and physical diseases for his

desired effect. His biographers point out that Brown "rummaged through medical journals for stories of the abnormal; he studied the man in the street...that he might mark any aberration from the normal."[16] Thus, in Brown's view, he based his fiction upon fact.

Though Brown covertly recognized his affinity with romance, he argued to have his fiction seen as realistic. Several sources confirm this observation. In his "Advertisement" to Wieland; or The Transformation (1798), where Brown evokes ventriloquism, religious fanaticism, hallucinations, and self combustion, he pleads with auditors:

> The incidents are extraordinary and rare. Some of them, perhaps, approach as nearly to the nature of miracles as can be done by that which is not truly miraculous...but that the solution will be found to correspond with the known principles of human nature" (AR 37).

His introductory remarks attempt to modulate his reader's responses to these "marvelous" effects much like Radcliffe'S provision of rational explanations for supernatural phenomena.[17] His "Advertisement" also pleads: "In support of this possibility the Writer must appeal to Physicians and to men conversant with the latent springs and occasional perversions of the human mind....If history furnishes one parallel fact, it is sufficient vindication of the Writer..." (AR 37). He argues that "it is the business of moral painters to exhibit their subject in its most instructive and memorable forms" (AR 37). Consequently,

Brown substitutes American "realities"--the Indian and the wilderness--for Gothic machinery.[18] H. T. Tuckermann's critical essay on Brown in the Sketch of American Literature (1853) credits Brown with "being the first American writer of romantic fiction, gives note to Brown's psychological emphasis, and proclaims Brown the "`Supernaturalist'" who achieves the "marvelous by natural means."[19]

Brown's Preface to Arthur Mervyn asserts that the artist's personal observation of human behavior and social incidents provide the writer instructive lessons which he then uses for "inculcating on mankind the lessons of justice and humanity" (AR 40). The artist's dilemma appears in his attempt to distinguish fact from fancy. Brown conveys this dilemma primarily in his Preface to Ormond; or The Secret Witness and in his essay "The Rhapsodist" (1789). The ambiguities he approaches in this essay anticipate both Hawthorne's suggestion of alternative viewpoints and the ontological questioning of Poe's Pym and Melville's Moby Dick. This viewpoint surfaces in his fiction through narrative disjunction. He admits this design in the Preface to Ormond where he asserts:

> My narrative will have little of that merit which flows from unity of design. You are desirous of hearing an authentic, and not a fictitious, tale. It will, therefore, be my duty to relate events in no artificial or elaborate order, and without that harmonious congruity and luminous amplification which might justly be displayed in a tale flowing merely from invention (AR 38).

Like Scott, Brown concludes that experience appears chaotic,

sometimes arbitrary, and non-sequential. Unlike Scott, Brown resolves to deliver his tale as "reality," in his observation of daily life, presents itself--disjointedly and incongruously.[20] Were the author to invent, Brown concludes, his invention would smooth the narrative yet deny reality.

Truth and Fiction

Critics both commended and condemned Brown for his narrative style which he describes in Ormond. Almost all of Brown's fiction appears flawed by the same standard. In Channing's critique of Brown he complains that while Brown's fiction discloses new motives and "springs of action," he never shows "a desire to complete a story" nor draw a "character so much for what it is to effect in the end, as for the development of mind" (NM 125; 128) He disparages Brown's lack of "connexion" between narrative incidents and his carelessness "to any continuity or dependence in the events which lead to or flow from that purpose" (NM 128).

Brown originally uncovers the discomforting disjunction between truth and fiction in his essay "The Rhapsodist" (1789). "The Rhapsodist," through a discreet, and yet confessional, biography, introduces Brown to his potential readership. Part One confesses the rhapsodist's affection for and adherence to truth. It proceeds from a testament of sincerity and truth, but as the essay develops, the persona unwittingly undermines this very assertion. This conflict,

apparent to a twentieth-century reader, most likely developed out of the literary paranoia Brown and his contemporaries suffered.

The rhapsodist claims that his "unpremeditated language" strings reason and fact together. He clings to "reasoning...to illustrate the circumstance" and utilizes "fact to confirm the reasoning" (AR 22). Furthermore, the rhapsodist "derives half the materials of his thoughts from an intimate acquaintance with the world," from observation (AR 22). His facts proceed from first-hand observation in the world.

This essay diverges in Part Two to describe the rhapsodist's ecstatic transports to a reality which surpasses ordinary human perception. Brown's rhapsodist persona asserts: "The incidents of human life have been generally compared to the phantastic stages of a vision" (AR 23). He digresses to illustrate that "philosophical truth" does not confirm poetic comparisons and observations and begins to undermine observable reality. He continues, "But when we approach nearer, and examine it with accuracy, we shall find the idea of resemblance exists only in our own imagination, without any real likeness in the things themselves" (AR 23). He admits, "We are too much interested in the scene that passes before us, to believe it unreal" (AR 23). We may conclude that the poet's art is to create reality or resemblances and connections between things which, according to closer scrutiny, do not exist. At this

point he suggests that if we detach ourselves "from surrounding objects" and project ourselves "forward from a rational conception of the present" we realize "our own resemblance to the phantom of a dream" (AR 23). He concludes, "the life of the rhapsodist is literally a dream. If he wishes to review the transactions of any former period, he searches in vain for the memory of it--it is nought but a shadow" (AR 23).

The progression of his arguments suggests the precariousness of reality, though he avows its truth. This segment of "The Rhapsodist" also reveals the primary conflict which Brown projects in his fiction, and which his literary milieu inflicted upon its fiction writers.[21] The conflict he exposes is between the nature of reality and our observations of it. Our surmise fills the gap between the observable and the hidden. We learn from Brown's essay "The Difference Between History and Romance" (1800) that the conjecture we propose in ascribing causes to effects and motive to actions belong to the "rhapsodist's" province. "The Rhapsodist" depicts this basic disjuncture between reality and fiction which Brown and his contemporary romance writers attempted to resolve.

Continuing his essay, Brown ascribes special privileges to the rhapsodist, beyond the domain of ordinary people, which assist him. He suggests that the rhapsodist, in his isolation, acquires special dispensations. He is transported "`beyond the diurnal sphere'" where "the barrier

between him and the world of spirits...the film is removed from his eyes, and he beholds his attending genius, or guardian angel, arrayed in ambrosial weeds, and smiling with gracious benignity upon the bold attempts of the adventurous pupil" (AR 24). He concludes, "Others may wander long on the bare outside world of spirits....But to thee the impenetrable veil is rent, and thou may'st sit at leisure, and survey the scenes and wonders of the universe within..." (AR 27). This portion of his essay sets a precedent in American fiction. It anticipates both the psychological and the spiritual dimensions of later American fiction, echoes of which are heard in Hawthorne's, Poe's, and Melville's romances. Brown's mingling the psychological and spiritual domains, in some sense, places him in the continuum of American literature from its earliest roots in Puritan contemplation.

The essay's third section describes the rhapsodists' ecstacies as being "in the midst of a wilderness, where few traces of population could be found" (AR 28). He claims to both have "viewed mankind at a distance, and contemplated the fabric of human nature as it appears in a book" familiarizing himself with "manners, literature, and politics, of ancient and modern times" before leaving his retreat" (AR 29). Upon his return from isolation to society, he encounters the "immense difference between the scenes of fancy and reality" (AR 29). He confirms "how unavailing is knowledge unless it be derived from the

wholesome precepts of experience" (AR 29). This journey essentially recapitulates the romancer's journey depicted as the American hero. The hero returns to society from his solitude in the American wilderness with wisdom for civilization. Brown places his rhapsodist in the tradition of poet-priests, the role nineteenth-century American literary figures so often assumed.

The rhapsodist's entrance to society causes a "temporary paroxism" in which, he observes, "my fancy was altogether ungovernable, and I frequently mistook the scene which was passing before me for the lively representation of a dream" (AR 29). A correspondent to the rhapsodist interjects and addresses the writer as one "who speaks, as it were from behind a curtain," denoting both Brown's camouflage and the rhapsodist-romance writer's professional role (AR 30). This correspondent admits of his difficulty in tracing "the Rhapsodist through all the labyrinths," as would a reader of Brown's fiction (AR 30). Finally, the rhapsodist uses the above digression and description of his peculiar and particular experience to defend his literary practice--his licence to "freedom of composition," the latitude of the romance writer to present his fiction as a metaphysical counterpart of reality. In Brown's case, he asserts that unadorned, disjointed fictional narrative is more akin to truth (AR 34). Not only has the rhapsodist been privilege to a viewpoint beyond mundane reality, but his return from ecstacy with his revelation confirms the

wisdom of his viewpoint about reality. His experience validates his privilege as author of fiction; he adheres to truth as he has experienced it. This essay reveals the Romancer underneath the Rhapsodist's disguise. If Brown attests to describing truth in his fiction, he simultaneously brings that truth into question. What Brown establishes is the relativity of truth, which the privileged romancer both witnesses and attempts to communicate. The essay seeks both his reader's sympathy and a resolution of the conflict between the romancer's knowledge and ordinary perception of reality.

History and Romance

Brown's essay, "The Difference Between History and Romance" (1800), provides further insight about his view of this conflict between fact and fiction, as well as his attempt, from another perspective, to resolve the issue of reality he raises. This essay speaks more directly to the rationally-minded public. Brown intends his first distinction between history and romance to assess previous assumptions about truth and its opposite. He states, "It should seem that one dealt in fiction, and the other in truth; that one is a picture of the probable and certain, and the other a tissue of untruths; that one describes what might have happened, and what has actually happened, and the other what never had existence."[22] He announces the perplexity of these distinctions when put into practice. He

observes that the "processes of nature, or the actions of men...[are] imperfectly known" (HR 251). Like Scott's assessment of reality, Brown acknowledges that "Curiosity is not satisfied with viewing facts in their disconnected state and natural order" (HR 251). He clarifies his definition saying:

> The observer or experimentalist, therefore, who carefully watches, and faithfully enumerates the appearances which occur, may claim the appellation of historian. He who adorns these appearances with cause and effect, and traces resemblances between the past, distant, and future, with the present, performs a different part. He is a dealer, not in certainties, but probabilities, and is therefore a romancer (HR 251).

Brown recognizes that the genres may overlap, and that frequently writers combine the roles of historian and romancer within the same work. Romance and history alike concern the human actions. The natural historian, Brown remarks, describes those objects and appearances which come directly before his observation. The historian exceeds his role when describing matters which he has not witnessed. Human actions may be described. However, when description exceeds observation and ascribes motivations, which cannot be directly ascertained, this impinges upon the romancer's province. He admits that some romancers come closer to surmising these motives than others.

According to Brown, cause and effect strictly constitute the romancer's purview. His observation of action's antecedents and subsequent results "is a mere matter of conjecture, and comes within the province, not of

history, but romance (HR 253). An action, in Brown's view, is describable without ascribing motives or cause and effect. He declares that "such descriptions, though they alone be historical, are of no use as they stand singly and disjoined from tendencies and motives..." (HR 253). Consequently, Brown elevates the merit of the romancer over the historian. This is due, in Brown's opinion, to the limitations of the historian's province: "If history related what is true, its relations must be limited to what is known by the testimony of our senses. Its sphere, therefore is extremely narrow" (HR 253). "Useful narratives," on the other hand, link facts together and rely upon "the evidence of others" (HR 253). Brown concludes, "This evidence, though accompanied with different degrees of probability, can never give birth to certainty" (HR 253).

His remarks in another essay have bearing upon his ideas stated here and provide insight about Brown's fictional method. In Brown's critique of "Walstein's School of History" (1799), he writes:

> Human affairs are infinitely complicated. The condition of no two beings is alike. No model can be conceived, to which our situation enables us exactly to conform. No situation can be imagined perfectly similar to that of an actual being. This exact similitude is not required to render an imaginary portrait useful to those who survey it. The usefulness, undoubtedly, consists in suggesting a mode of reasoning and acting somewhat similar to that which is ascribed to a feigned person; and, for this end, some similitude is requisite between the real and imaginary situation; but that similitude is not hard to produce. Among the incidents which invention will set before us, those are to be culled out which

> afford most scope to wisdom and virtue, which are most analogous to facts, which most forcibly suggest to the reader the parallel between his state and that described, and most strongly excite his desire to act as the feigned personages act. These incidents must be so arranged as to inspire, at once, curiosity and belief, to fasten the attention, and thrill the heart (AR 50).

This lengthy quote sustains Brown's ideas concerning the ambiguity of reality, the moral purpose of fiction, and the role of the romancer to invent, with probability, that which is unknowable. At the close of "The Rhapsodist" Brown proclaims, as Scott did twenty-four years later, "How wide, then, if romance be the narrative of mere probabilities, is the empire of romance?" (HR 253). While history and romance both have dominion over human actions, romance maintains exclusive province over the "motive and tendencies of human actions" (HR 253).

Brown's Achievement

Brown's opinions converge with Scott's in recognizing the mingling of genres. Like Radcliffe, Brown attempted rational explanation for remarkable incidents in his fiction. In Clark's words, "his idea of substituting the pseudo-scientific for the supernatural was a step forward."[23] He attracted criticism for bringing "improbabilities" into his fiction, though he maintained the truth of the incidents upon which he founded his fiction. His fiction made forays into ascribing motivation and providing excruciating detail recording the mental minutiae

behind human action. He is credited with initiating psychological fiction and the internal qualities of American fiction which other native authors developed in the absence of a viable alternative usually supplied by history.[24]

Although critics may associate Brown's fiction with the Gothic, he achieved not an imitative Gothic romance but rather an "American" Gothic. His distinctive blend of imagination, turned inward, and fact, acting upon the individual psyche, resulted in the first psychological romances, a wellspring for later American fiction.[25] Brown's message "To the Public" from Edgar Huntly admits of his purpose to supply something indigenous and uniquely American. He declares that there are "sources of amusement to the fancy and instruction to the heart, that are peculiar to ourselves," and states "the purpose of this work [is] to profit by some of these sources, to exhibit a series of adventures, growing out of the condition of our country, and connected with one of the most common and most wonderful diseases or affections of the human frame" (AR 41). Brown's nationalistic enthusiasm was not always supported by critics' observations of his fiction. Edward Tyrell Channing's essay on Brown appearing in The North American Review (1891), suggests a certain defeat for Brown's nationalistic goal. Channing contends, "Brown had the courage to lay the scenes of his stories at home, but no one will charge him with a disgusting familiarity. He has not even attempted to draw a peculiar American character....The

scene is rarely in common life or for ordinary events" (NM 123-24). Yet Brown could claim his uniqueness from his Gothic predecessors in "calling forth the passions and engaging the sympathy of the reader by means hitherto unemployed by preceding authors" (AR 41). Although he avows to provide morally instructive amusement, more deeply ingrained in his fiction are his purposes for romance--at once, national and psychological.

The first stages of naturalizing and nationalizing American fiction are discernable in Brown's fiction. Spiller comments on these aspects of Brown's contribution saying, "Even though he makes very little of the issue of nationalism as such and explores rather the subjective regions of morbid psychology and pseudo-science, he implicitly draws the distinction between...superficial nationalism and genuine originality."[26] Brown sought to use native sources for his imagination. Writers and critics had not yet developed the range of options by which an author might adapt fiction to native ground, as the critical literary debates would after the War of 1812. Scott had not yet arrived on the scene with his nationalistic romances. Like Brown, Scott also critiqued the exaggerated Gothic forms and advocate milder uses and adaptations. Brown's innovation was to substitute psychological and pseudo-scientific extremes of reality for Gothic machinery. Brown's psychological modifications of the Gothic Romance

provided a metaphor for the America wilderness and gave native literature an indigenous stamp.[27]

NOTES

1. Julian Hawthorne, "The American Element in Fiction," A Storied Land: Theories of American Literature, ed. Richard Ruland, vol. 2 (New York: Dutton, 1976) 111.

2. See comments in Chapter Two.

3. Ruland, Storied 111.

4. Ruland 111.

5. In sequence, these statements represent the views of Perry Miller, Orians, and Chase.

6. R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1955) 92-98.

7. Fiction was often regarded suspiciously during Brown's interim as a writer. His letter to Thomas Jefferson admits of the reputation of fiction and its authors during Brown's era. He calls his fiction "mere works of imagination and invention" and comments to Jefferson: "that fictitious narrative in their own nature or in the manner in which they have been hitherto conducted may be thought not to deserve notice, and that, consequently, whatever may be the merit of my book as a fiction, yet it is to be condemned because it is a fiction." David Lee Clark, Charles Brockden Brown: Pioneer Voice of America (Durham: Duke UP, 1952) 162.

8. D. Clark 66, 105. Brown's reading thus familiarizes him with both the melodramatic and Gothic elements of contemporary European romance. Modern critics often commend Brown for having naturalized the romance to the American scene.

A passage from Hugh Blair's Lectures of Rhetoric and Belle Lettres, vol. 2 (London, 1798) indicates the indistinct designations of fiction during Brown's era. Blair's third volume of his Rhetoric categorizes romances and novels under "fictitious histories." No term for realism existed, and the novel and the romance sometimes were considered equivalent distinctions. Blair writes, "The name Romance...we now apply to all fictitious composition" (Blair 2: 74). Brown himself seems to find a difference between the novel and the romance, following Reeve's example. Blair calculates that the novel descended from the "heroic romance" which, he asserts, "dwindled down to the Familiar Novel...without appearance of moral tendency, or useful instruction" until the more recent innovations of Defoe, Fielding, and Richardson, which imitate human behavior, character, and situations as they "actually occur in life" (Blair 2: 75-76).

9. D. Clark 158.

10. D. Clark 160.

11. Stanley Bank, ed. American Romance: A Shape for Fiction (New York: Putnam's, 1969) 37. Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text using the abbreviation AR and the page number given in parentheses.

12. Bell 42.

13. See Native Muse 118; also Chase; Scott's description of melodrama is relevant to Brown's technique. In his essay on Ann Radcliffe, Scott states that melodrama "attains its interest neither by the path of comedy nor of tragedy; and yet it has, notwithstanding, a deep, decided, and powerful effect, gained by means independent of both--by appeal, in one word, to the passion of fear, whether excited by natural dangers, or by the suggestions of superstition. The force, therefore, of the production, lies in the delineation of external incident, while the characters of the agents, like the figures in many landscapes, are entirely subordinate to the scenes in which they are placed." Ioan Williams, ed. Sir Walter Scott: On Novelists and Fiction (London: Routledge, 1968) 110. This scheme of indistinct characterization and subordinating characters to events of which they are victim, certainly describes Brown's fiction. Subsequent references to Sir Walter Scott: On Novelists and Fiction is cited in the text using the abbreviation SS and the page number given in parentheses.

14. Ironically, Leslie Fiedler appraises Edgar Huntly, the same book in which Brown makes his protest against Gothicism, in light of Gothic tradition, calling Brown "the father of American gothic." Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, (New York: Criterion Books, 1960) 104. See also Donald A. Ringe's analysis of Brown's use of the Gothic for psychological themes in American Gothic: Imagination and Reason in Nineteenth-Century Fiction (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1982).

15. In Edward Tyrell Channing's review of Brown's fiction, Channing admits, we "are held captive by the force of character, the intensity of intellectual suffering, the unrelenting perseverance....A spell is thrown over our imaginations, and our belief is at least strong enough for sympathy" (NM 123).

16. D. Clark 191. Brown wrote an interesting entry included in Clark's biography which demonstrates the importance he gives to observation. Brown writes: "I cannot conceive that the character of any man is unworthy to be known, and believe that there is no person, the incidents of whose life, if skilfully related, would not furnish as much

entertainment by their variety, and novelty as any fictitious narrative that ever was written. Fiction, however polished and elaborate, could never yet surpass reality. The life of most men is a continual comedy, which nature has furnished with characters, events, and scenes which cannot be imagined by the strongest power of invention and which, if faithfully related or described, would render the aid of fancy superfluous" (D. Clark 98).

17. The era seemed to call for an enlightened scientific rationalism even in its fiction. As Scott once questioned, why would readers want to return to dull reality in novels when they were at the same time seeking escape?

18. On a psychological level these denote external phenomena (the marauding Indian) internalized and threatening psychic constructions of human nature (the wilderness of mind and human psychology).

19. Quoted in D. Clark 306.

20. See Scott's comments, mentioned in Chapter Four, on the nature of reality and the problems and requisites for attaining narrative realism by filling those gaps for his reader.

21. See Bell's analysis (DR 9-14, 25-36, and 41-61).

22. Charles Brockden Brown, "The Difference Between History and Romance," Monthly Magazine and American Review 2 (1780): 251. Subsequent references to this essay are cited in the text using the abbreviation HR and the page number given in parentheses.

23. D. Clark 308.

24. Matthiessen writes: "The only earlier American writer whose work bore any inner resemblance to Hawthorne's was Brockden Brown...." F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (New York: Oxford UP, 1941) 201.

25. His fiction influenced, in particular, Poe and Hawthorne in the nineteenth-century. Poe is said to have admired Brown. Scenes from Edgar Huntly are reported to have inspired Poe's The Pit and the Pendulum. The psychological is deeply ingrained in Hawthorne's fiction. Hawthorne admired Brown's Arthur Mervyn.

26. Spiller, Revolution 24.

27. In allowing individual interpretation of scripture rather than dependence upon a hierarchical "authority" to which Catholicism like monarchy adheres, Protestantism

encourages a potentially individualistic moral and psychological wilderness. Democracy, viewed this way, seems to be the inevitable invention of Protestantism. A wilderness theme penetrates both the physical circumstances and the mental circumstances of the Protestant spiritual path, the ancestral experience of New Englanders.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEFINING ROMANCE: SCOTT'S INFLUENCE AND THE AMERICAN INHERITANCE

> Literary compositions run into each other, precisely like colors: in their strong tints they are easily distinguished; but are susceptible of so much variety, and of so many different forms, that we never can say where one species ends and another begins.[1]
>
> Lord Kames, 1762

Sir Walter Scott, Nationalism, and American Romance

The route linking American nationalism to American romance can largely be traced through foreign literary resources found in Scott's romances, associationist philosophy, and the Gothic elements of German and English Romanticism touched upon earlier. The literary exchange between European nations and America has already been established. To understand the nationalistic implications hybridized to the romance form, one must turn to its development in the late 1700s and the early 1800s concurrent with the nationalistic fervor primarily in both Scotland, with Scott's romances, and in Germany with the rise of interest in ancient lore through tales, legends, and ancient superstitions. Both German and British romances contained

Gothic elements often associated with romance in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries. Gothic machinery--ghosts, ruins, castles, supernatural events, and grotesque incidents--was inherited through medieval Germanic and Scandinavian sources. Scott refers to these origins and discusses the contemporary definition of romance in his Prefaces to the Waverley novels and in his "Essay on Romance" (1824) for Encyclopedia Britannica. Scott's definition of romance, revived and transformed from the medieval chivalric romance, along with other contemporary definitions, offers a view of the form which American writers inherited.

Sir Walter Scott and the Romance, Circa 1800

American critics and writers have often turned to romance definitions in Scott's "Essay on the Romance." But prior to Scott, Clara Reeve provided a definition of romance in two sources: her "Address to the Reader" in The Champion of Virtue: A Gothic Story (1777) and the Preface to her essay "The Progress of Romance" (1785). Her definition of romance, which distinguishes the form from the novel, has frequently been recognized as one of the earliest to anticipate later developments in American and English fiction.[2] In her advertisement to "The Champion of Virtue," Reeve contrasts the "ancient romance" and the "modern novel" citing Horace Walpole's very successful romance, The Castle of Otranto (1764) as a blend of these two genres. Her

purpose is to persuade the reader that her romance, and the romance in general, blends the best of both literary forms. She differentiates history, which "represents human nature as it is," from romance, which "displays only the amiable side of the picture; it shows the pleasing features, and throws a veil over the blemishes."[3] She avows the moral purpose of the much abused and often corrupted romance form, suggesting the moral utility of her own romance. She claims that the contemporary romance, as a mixed genre, unites "the various merits and graces of the ancient romance and the modern Novel" providing a "sufficient degree of the marvellous to excite the attention.--enough of manners of real life, to give an air of probability to the work;--and enough of the pathetic to engage the heart in its behalf."[4] Keeping the story between "utmost verge of probability" and the "limits of credibility" are significant in the appeal she addresses to her reader.[5] The story itself is a modernized translation of an Old English text which she has modified according to contemporary tastes in romance modeled after Walpole. Although her comparisons allude to, rather than establish, firm connections between the various attributes of romance she discusses, many of the important ideas developed in Scott's essay are contained within her address.

Reeve's Preface to her essay, "The Progress of Romance Through Times, Countries, and Manners," written nearly a decade later, further distinguishes the characteristics and

"boundaries" of the romance and the novel. She outlines the history of romance from its early chivalric sources throughout Europe from the metrical ballad form antecedent to the modern prose romance. Presented in dialogue form, this essay provides a more elaborate distinction between the romance and the novel. Here Reeve claims:

> The Romance is an heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things.--The Novel is a picture of real life and manners and of the times in which it is written. The Romance in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen.--The Novel gives a familiar relation of such things as pass every day before our eyes...."[6]

Such distinctions as this clearly anticipate later critical debates which attempt to distinguish the romance genre from the novel.[7] However, as demonstrated, the romance-novel distinction within British fiction itself was common prior to twentieth-century critics' identification of American literature as characteristically different from other English fiction.

Scott's "Essay on Romance" (1824) contains several discussions pertinent to romance as it developed in nineteenth-century America.[8] He opens his essay contrasting his definition with Dr. Johnson's definition and comparison between the novel and the romance. Whereas Dr. Johnson's definition locates romance in the middle ages as a "tale of wild adventures in love and chivalry," Scott declares that this definition does not suffice for the present circumstances.[9] He claims that neither war, chivalry, or

love necessarily qualify the "legitimate" modern romance. Furthermore, Scott asserts, that "wild adventure" remains the only feature from Johnson's definition suitable to describe current romances (ER 129). Scott defines romance as "`a fictitious narrative in prose or verse; the interest of which turns upon marvellous and uncommon incidents; being thus opposed to the kindred term Novel...[which] differs from the "Romance, because the events are accommodated to the ordinary train of human events, and the modern state of society'" (ER 129). In Scott's 1814 "Introductory" to Waverley, he contrasts his romance with the tale of manners typically associated with the novel. Waverley "is more a description of men than manners," he contends, manners being comprised of "those scenes which are passing daily before our eyes...."[10] In this same essay Scott declares that his narrative must concern "the characters and passions of the actors;--those passions common to men..." (PW 9). In short, Scott's list of modern romance traits includes: the marvelous, the past, and wild adventures written in prose or verse, less concerned with manners than men's character and passions observable in their actions. Like Reeve, Scott emphasizes manners and ordinary occurrences as the novel's province. He concludes with a comment on the complexity of genre distinctions noting that "there may exist compositions which it is difficult to assign precisely or exclusively to the one class or the other; and which, in fact, partake of the nature of both" (ER 130). At the end of the century,

Henry James concurs with this difficulty. Speaking from the artist's perspective, James asserts: "these clumsy separations appear to me to have been made by critics and readers for their own convenience, and to help them out of some of their occasional predicaments...."[11]

Scott's essay also identifies and contrasts several other species of romance, arguing, like Chase does for a mixture of genre elements. He identifies the Spiritual and the Temporal Romance, the Oriental and the European Romance of Chivalry, the Serious and the Comical Romance, the Pastoral, and the Historical Romance. Several correlations to the nineteenth-century romance may be derived from these types and their composition. Like their medieval predecessors, romancers augment history with fabulous information, elevating skirmishes into battles, exaggerating ordinary heroes into demi-gods, enlarging the numbers of enemies, and magnifying the strength or feats of the hero beyond proportion (ER 148). Scott observes, many of the extraordinary incidents of Gothic and Oriental tales provided material for exaggeration and supernatural phenomenon. Spiritual and Temporal Romances provided models for heroes in saints, martyrs, or champion knights, along with appropriate rewards for their deeds. Comic Romances parodied the Serious Romance drawing attention to the literary form and providing commentary on contemporary social conventions. Through lengthy development, the hero of medieval romance became conventionalized and an

archetypal figure.[12] All of these various romance sub-genres educated the contemporary romancer, informed his imagination and the knowledge of his art.

While Scott's Prefaces rarely commented on the epic, his "Essay on Romance" compares epic poetry and the romance. He elaborates the purpose and definition of epic poetry stating, "an Epic poem may be defined as a fable related by a poet to excite admiration and inspire virtue, by representing the action of some one hero favoured by Heaven, who executes a great design in spite of all the obstacles that oppose him..." (ER 137). Romance, in Scott's view, differs from epic in its emphasis "upon the wild excursions of an unbridled fancy, [more] than upon the skill of the poet" (ER 138). Epic poetry has more to offer the historian in terms of its truth than does romance. Romancers are those who have elaborated and exaggerated the truth of history, or altered the facts of the epic poem until they have "obliterated the very shadow of reality or even probability" (ER 139). Scott notes that some compositions may utilize traits of both the romance and the epic poem forming another sub-genre. In Scott's essay on Hoffmann, he comments that some "species of romantic fiction" are capable of "approaching in some measure to the epic in poetry, and capable in a high degree of exhibiting similar beauties" (SS 325). His comparisons between the epic and the romance anticipate Simms's distinctions and definitions which he discusses in his Preface to The Yemassee (1853 edition).[13]

Scott succeeds in modernizing the definition of romance in distinguishing contemporary uses of the form from its historic roots in chivalric metrical romances. He insists that the romance genre transcends historic barriers existing in the simplest societies and adapting to progressive cultural changes. Thus, his arguments defend current modifications in the romance as it changed from verse to prose form. Scott feels that the modern prose form of romance corresponds to both intellectual and social changes that occurred since the demise of medieval chivalry.

Romance and History in Scott's Tradition

Scott's "Essay on Romance" also discusses major subgenres of the romance, one of which is the historical romance. In his description Scott contrasts "Romance and real history" which he declares "have the same common origin" (ER 134). Simms and other American romancers followed Scott in utilizing this romance species. Scott states that their shared tradition has existed so long that a "mixed class between them" has formed (ER 134). These, he clarifies, "may be termed either romantic histories, or historical romances, according to the proportion in which their truth is debased by fiction, or their fiction mingles with truth" (ER 134). This comparison provides ample fuel for later critical discussions about the romance genre. Scott explains the common origin of romance and history as generating from the story-telling faculty present in ancient

cultures. These stories were altered as the events receded in time and became romances. Adding to his original definition he concludes, "Romance, as a fictitious narrative turning upon the marvellous or the supernatural, might, in a large sense, be said to embrace...the mythological and fabulous history of all early nations" (ER 135).[14]

In his Prefaces to the Waverley romances (1814-1832), Scott frequently touches upon the quarrel between romance and history. This comparison was common during this era.[15] Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1798) identifies the romance as a branch of "fictitious history."[16] During Scott's era, the romancer was often depicted as the offender in these incidents, accused of adulterating facts and seducing unwary readers away from their potential love for the "pure sources of historical knowledge" (PW 65)[17]. Scott's "Prefatory Letter to Peveril of the Peak" (1822) addresses this conflict in dialogue form. He answers the disgruntled historian with the retort, "the love of knowledge wants but a beginning..." (PW 67). He proclaims that historical fiction neither exhausts or impoverishes history but rather enhances one's interest in it. Fiction functions to inspire readers to "learn what the facts really were, and how far the novelist has justly represented them" (PW 67). Likewise, The Talisman Preface (1832) responds to a contemporary historian's complaint about Scott's "violation of the truth of history" (PW 221). Scott admonishes, the historian "was not, it may be

presumed, aware that romantic fiction naturally includes the power of such invention, which is indeed one of the requisites of the art" (PW 221). In his Postscript to Waverley (1814), Scott inverts the usual sense of romantic imagination when he acknowledges that "the most romantic parts of this narrative are precisely those which have a foundation in fact" (PW 4). An incredible incident taken from actual history and used in Woodstock (1832) illustrates this point. Scott comments about a scene in which a flowerpot inexplicably explodes amidst a gathering of Parliamentary Commissioners. He comments that the use of "incidents which are real preserve an infinite advantage in works of this nature over such as are fictitious" (PW 227).

One response to public demand for rational fiction which Scott considered was perhaps suggested by Ann Radcliffe's practice of explaining supernatural incidents in her romances where she provides rational explanations for occurrences.[18] At the close of his "Advertisement" to the "Magnum Opus" Scott:

> proposes to publish the various legends, family traditions, or obscure historical facts which have formed the ground-work of these Novels, and to give some account of the places where the scenes are laid, when these are altogether, or in part, real; as well as a statement of particular incidents founded on fact; together with a more copious Glossary, and Notes explanatory of the ancient customs and popular superstitions referred to in the Romances (PW 84).

As a historical romancer, this is as much compromise as he was willing to offer the rationally minded public. In a

statement echoed later by Hawthorne, Scott objects to "compelling" artistic touches and romance elements "into broad daylight" but prefers instead to leave his effects and characters "amidst the shadowy and indistinct light so favourable to the exhibition of phantasmagoria" (SS 115). He questions to what extent the romancer must "gratify the curiosity of the public" or whether "as a painter of actual life, he is not entitled to leave something in shade, when the natural course of events conceals so many incidents in total darkness" (SS 116). In his 1823 review of Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto, Scott cautions against bringing romantic machinery "into too strong daylight" as the romancer risks "awakening la raison froide, the `cold common sense' which he justly deemed the greatest enemy of the effect which he hoped to produce" (SS 91).

Fact, Fiction, and the Province of Romance

In discussing his use of factual history in his fiction, Scott continues his explication on the difference between reality or fact, and the romancer's art of fiction. In general, Scott's fictional design, in his words, draws upon that "neutral ground," that region thought common, by imaginative deduction rather than absolute proof, between "what was ancient and the modern" (PW 34). In speaking of this region he acknowledges, "I can neither pretend to the observation of complete accuracy, even in matters of outward costume, much less in the more important points of language

and manners" (PW 33). He defends his use of imagination to supply such gaps. Thus, he locates his fiction within the "neutral ground," which, similarly, Hawthorne once described as the place "where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other."[19]

Scott's historical settings and fictive renderings are seldom lay "encrusted too deep with the rust of antiquity" (PW 35). Thus Waverley, which he describes as taking place "Sixty Years before this present day 1st November 1805..." is neither a romance of chivalry nor a tale of modern manners" (PW 9).[20] The advantages Scott saw for using this period lay in the availability of language, manners, and sentiments both within the historical memory of the readership as to sustain interest and similar enough to modern times as to render the work intelligible. This technique, Scott contends, throws "the force of my narrative upon the characters and passions of the actors;--those passions common to men in all stages of society, and which have alike agitated the human heart" (PW 9). Scott advises the "painter" of fiction to adhere to historical facts--not to introduce any "ornament inconsistent with the climate or country of his landscape," offer "nothing inconsistent with the manners of the age," and, avoiding any "word or turn of phraseology betraying an origin directly modern," utilize language neither "exclusively obsolete" nor "unintelligible" (PW 36-37).

In his Preface to The Monastery (1830) Scott scrutinizes reality more deeply and observes, "But though such an unconnected course of adventures is what most frequently occurs in nature, yet the province of the romance writer being artificial, there is more required from him than a mere compliance with the simplicity of reality" (PW 161). The romance writer, in other words, alters reality making it more real, so to speak. This is requisite to his art; in fact, this is his art. Scott's Preface to The Abbot (1831) expands upon the artist's role in depicting reality, where, like Brown, he observes:

> In life itself, many things befall every mortal of which the individual never knows the real cause or origin; and were we to point out the most marked distinction between a real and a fictitious narrative, we would say, that the former, in reference to the remote causes of the events it relates, is obscure, doubtful and mysterious; whereas, in the latter case, it is a part of the authors' duty to afford satisfactory details upon the causes of the separate events he has recorded, and, in a word, to account for everything (PW 167).

Along this same line, Scott defends the romance writer's immunities in the "Magnum Opus" Preface to Peveril of the Peak (1831). Here he states: "In a story where the greater part is avowedly fiction, the author is at liberty to introduce such variations from actual fact as his plot requires, or which are calculated to enhance it" (PW 187). Scott comments on characterization in the same vein in his Introduction to the Chronicles of the Canongate (1827). Scott observes, "I have always studied to generalize the

portraits, so that they should still seem, on the whole, the productions of fancy, though possessing some resemblance to real individuals" (PW 74). His characters, like his romances in general, seem to hover in that "neutral ground" between fact and fiction, between obscure history and the vivid present, and, as Weinstein noticed in his Introduction to Scott's Prefaces, between an aristocratic past and a democratic future.[21]

As shown above, Scott's prefaces and essays address the romancer's liberties and his artistic immunities. His insights instructed American writers, such as Simms, Cooper, and Hawthorne, who were familiar with his essays. In his "Essay on Romance" Scott liberates history from mere factual accounts admitting that "the whole store of romantic history and tradition was free to all [romancers] as a joint stock in trade, on which each had a right to draw as suited his particular purposes" (ER 153). In describing the medieval romancer, Scott proclaims that he "was at liberty not only to select a hero out of known and established names which had been the theme of others, but to imagine a new personage of his own pure fancy, and combine him with the [other] heroes...in the way which best suited his fancy" (ER 153). In Scott's Introduction to Count Robert of Paris (n.d.), he enlarges upon the romancer's province, stating:

> It cannot be a matter of doubt that the purpose of an author of a work of fiction is to fix the public attention and for that purpose obtain novelty at whatever rate; nay, if he has not the fortune to unite this necessary qualification with

> a probable tale of a romantic nature, the public good-naturedly permits him to lay his scene in distant countries, among stranger nations, whose manners are imagined for the purpose of the story --nay, whose powers are extended beyond those of human nature, so that there are no limits within the power of a reasonably powerful enchanter, to which the fictitious author may not extend his own capacity, in despite of the limits of natural, and even moral impossibility (PW 241).

In Scott's opinion, the province of romance is unlimited except by imagination and the romancer's artistic capacity. In his "Essay on Romance," Scott contends (though paradoxically in this context) that whatever the imaginative distance, romantic fiction still retains some foundation in history, but through generations of re-telling, imagination and invention predominate.

Despite the imaginative inventions of romance writers and the consequent derivations of their fiction from standard genre limitations, Scott felt that a romance ought to be judged by criteria which the author dictated. Scott offers this supposition in his discussion of Radcliffe's romances where he observes that critics' depreciations of her work are unfounded, only "showing that she does not possess the excellences proper to a style of composition totally different from that which she has attempted" (PW 112). He adds "it is unreasonable to complain of the absence of advantages foreign to her style and plan, and proper to those of another mode of composition..." (PW 112). His Prefaces to Ivanhoe and Peveril attempt to answer critics complaints in advance and imply the author's

prerogative to internal rather than external critical evaluation. This sort of sensitivity and response is found in both Simms's and Hawthorne's Prefaces.[22]

Gothic Elements of Romance

Scott's "Essay on Romance" provides also a brief history of Gothic elements in the European romance. Both Scott's language and his ideas have relevance to his contemporary romance writers and later to genre critics. Romance, Scott concludes, "was like a compound metal, derived from various mines and in the different specimens of which one metal or other was alternately predominant" (ER 176). A single origin cannot be derived. Scandinavian romances, Scott claims, were the richest source of these ancient fables. Although their earliest tales were the most purely historical, their "gloomy imagination" filled their romances with "wild and terrible" Gothic elements (ER 191). German and French romances had distinct attributes. The German tales contain "greater ferocity and less refinement of sentiment ascribed to their heroes" than their French counterparts (ER 194). The Germans inherited traditions from Scandinavia, Rome, and the Orient. Scott remarks, "France must be considered as the country in which Chivalry and Romance flourished in the highest perfection" (ER 199). England, he comments, "cannot boast much of ancient literature of any kind" but adapted French romances during the Norman occupation (ER 203) In Spain, however, Scott

concludes, Cervantes' parody of Chivalry, Don Quixote, "contributed much to put [romance] out of fashion" (ER 199).

Gothic elements were also part of the modern prose romance during Scott's era. In his essay, "On the Supernatural in Fictitious Compositions," he insists that "love of the supernatural" provides the most direct mode for "exciting the feelings of interest" in romantic fiction (SS 312). His reviews of Ernest Hoffmann's, Horace Walpole's, Ann Radcliffe's, and Mary Shelley's romances, provide information on Scott's views concerning the use of Gothic machinery and the supernatural. Scott asserts that fancy, imagination, Gothic machinery, fabulous characters, prodigies in fiction are common to fiction everywhere, the "foundation of these fables" being deeply ingrained in human nature, and he establishes their origin in religious belief (ER 176; SS 313). Scott observes two types of romance that have bearing upon the supernatural and marvelous. In his essay on Horace Walpole, Scott distinguishes these as "that which being in itself possible, may be matter of belief at any period; and that which, though held impossible by more enlightened ages, was yet consonant with the faith of earlier times" (SS 89).[23] In his opinion, the effect of Gothic elements are also tied to romantic associations. In an 1827 review of Ernest Hoffmann's German romances and supernatural fictions, Scott writes:

> Often, too, the legend of the common people, by assigning peculiar features, localities, and specialities to the incidents which it holds in

> memory, gives life and spirit to the frigid and dry narrative which tells the fact alone, without the particulars which render it memorable or interesting (SS 320).

Scott distinguishes a third species of the marvelous found in German romances which he describes as the "FANTASTIC mode of writing,--in which the most wild and unbounded license is given to an irregular fancy, and all species of combination, however ludicrous, or however shocking, are attempted and executed without scruple" (SS 325).[24] One is reminded of Charles Brockden Brown's fiction which was criticized, at times, for its extreme effect and improbability.[25]

About these literary techniques Scott recommends particular caution. In several essays from Lives of Novelists (1827) and his essay on Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818) Scott informs and cautions romancers about the use of marvelous effects and supernatural machinery in their fiction. He advises that:

> the supernatural in fictitious composition requires to be managed with considerable delicacy, as criticism begins to be more on the alert. The interest which it excites is indeed a powerful spring; but it is one which is peculiarly subject to be exhausted by coarse handling and repeated pressure. It is also of a character which it is extremely difficult to sustain, and of which a very small proportion may be said to be better than the whole (SS 314).

Like other effects in his romances, Scott recommends that "supernatural appearances in fictitious narrative ought to be rare, brief, [and] indistinct..." (SS 316). He remarks that the first effect is always the most effective while "it loses its effect by being brought much into view. The

imagination of the reader is to be excited if possible, without being gratified" (SS 314). Scott supports his advice with his view of human nature. He claims that religious belief and superstition teach us "that while we are neighbors to, and encompassed by the shadowy world, of which our mental faculties are too obscure to comprehend the laws, our corporeal organs too coarse and gross to perceive the inhabitants" (SS 313). Hawthorne's spiritualized "neutral territory" is remarkably close to Scott's perspective shown here.

Scott maintains that the marvelous and supernatural machinery in romance functions to exercise the imagination, and is therefore purposeful. He sees the author's principal purpose as opening "new trains and channels of thought, by placing men in supposed situations of an extraordinary and preternatural character, and then describing the mode of feeling and conduct which they are most likely to adopt" (SS 261). Romances of this sort "excite new reflections and untried sources of emotion" and succeed in providing a source of pleasure (SS 272). Unlike Reeve, Scott chooses to emphasize the pleasure of romance reading rather than to defend the genre on moral grounds as she did. Perhaps his ultimate nationalistic purpose for Scotland and his emphasis on romanticized history offset critics who otherwise frequently attacked romance on a moral basis. This solution proved useful during a period critical of fiction in America.[26] The danger inherent to Gothic romance, Scott

pronounces, is that "many narratives turning upon the same interest, are apt to exhaust [the form]" (SS 320). Scott anticipated later critics who also realized that the renewal of the literary form is both inherent to its production and necessary to its survival.

The Evolution of European Romance

According to Scott, literary genres have their evolution and every form becomes altered to its extreme, generally in satire, but also adapting to intellectual demands and social changes as in the case of romance. Thus, he claims, "It often happens that when any particular style becomes somewhat antiquated and obsolete, some caricature, or satirical imitation of it gives rise to a new species of composition" (SS 318). Cervantes, in this sense, achieved in Europe what some critics assert Melville and Hawthorne did for the romance in America--explored the extreme limits of the form and therefore, brought its evolution to a close.[27] As the medieval social structure dissolved, the romance of chivalry became corrupted and the moral purpose of romance disintegrated. Whereas once romances were instructive, Scott writes, the heroic virtues of devotion, purity, generosity, bravery, nobility, physical strength, and military attainments, proportionally became over-idealized, beyond the scope of ordinary people. Chivalry advanced to contain opposing values--artificiality, cruelty, and wantonness, a mere mockery of the system. While the

most evolved stage of medieval civilization subsided, the romance remained. When the metrical ballad no longer sufficed, the prose romance took its place.

Scott asserts that the world was never without romance or its variant forms. He claims that "fables of a nature similar to the Romances of Chivalry, modified according to manners and the state of society, must necessarily be invented in every part of the world... (ER 174). Quoting Southey's Preface to Morte D'Arthur, he adds, "`at similar stages of civilization, or states of society, the fictions of different people will bear a corresponding resemblance, notwithstanding the difference of time and scene'" (ER 174-75).[28]

The Romance of Chivalry was succeeded by Heroic and Pastoral romances. In the Arcadian Pastorals, "fantastic sort of personages, desperately in love, and thinking of nothing else but their mistresses, played upon pipes, and wrote sonnets from morning to night, yet were supposed all the while to be tending their flocks..." (ER 213). The absurdity of this subgenre diminished its value, Scott felt. Likewise, Scott typified the Heroic romances in the seventeenth-century as tedious, borrowing features from Chivalric Romances, but conventionalizing heroes and heroines into standard, predictable types. The heroines were "without exception, models of beauty and perfection" and "heroes, whatever kingdoms they have to govern, or other earthly duties to perform, live through these follies for

love alone" (ER 215). Scott scoffs that these degraded forms were the romances "read by our grandmothers during the Augustan age" (ER 215).

By deduction, Scott's argument implies that the current revival of the romance, altered in form and content, also represents a generic evolutionary trend. In his essay on Hoffmann, Scott observes that when literary genres "seem most worn out and effete" they are "renewed and brought into successful cultivation by a new course of management" (SS 318). When the Prose Romance superseded the medieval metrical romance, he observes, authors continued to use "the same sources of romantic history" available to their predecessors (ER 178). He claims that these later romances were written for a "more advanced stage of society," by more educated authors "whose language was much more copious" (ER 185). Consequently, the romance acquired novelistic tendencies. Readers placed new demands upon the romance for entertainment, "some insight into nature, or at least into manners; some description of external scenery, and a greater regard to probability both in respect of the characters which are introduced, and the events which are narrated" (ER 185). He concludes his essay praising the Modern Romances of DeFoe and Swift as "fiction more impressive than truth...and [more] plausible [than] even the greatest impossibilities" (ER 216).

Toward Romance in America

Scott's "Essay on Romance," Lives of Novelists, and occasional essays and reviews provide relevant background for the numerous critical ideas and romance developments of nineteenth-century American romance writers' and twentieth-century romance critics. He introduces a modern definition of romance to his contemporaries which (minimally) influenced Cooper, Simms and Hawthorne. The distinctive features of romance when compared to the novel, to history, and to epic poetry are important to his generation of romance genre writers and to later critics. He anticipates twentieth-century genre criticism in distinguishing elements of romance and exploring the nebulous boundaries between truth and fiction, history and romance, and the romance and the novel. He acknowledges important multi-cultural and multi-ethnic influences on genre. He insightfully concedes the indistinct outlines of genre which result in subgenres and mixed genres, and recognizes the constant evolution of literary forms. He postulates and utilizes archetypal characterization verging on the mythological. Finally, he bargains for the artists' immunities and for the artistic latitude of romance. This extensive list of credits provides points of departure for both his contemporary romancers and later romance genre critics.

NOTES

1. Lord Kames, The Elements of Criticism 3 vols. (London: 1762) quoted in George Dekker, The American Historical Romance (New York: Cambridge UP, 1987) 56.

2. Stubbs places Reeve as first in the lineage of romance writers (before Scott, Simms and Hawthorne) to call upon the distinction between the romance and the novel. John C. Stubbs, The Pursuit of Form: A Study of Hawthorne and the Romance (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1970) 5, 19.

3. Clara Reeve, "Address to the Reader," The Champion of Virtue: A Gothic Story (London, 1777) iii.

4. Reeve vi-v.

5. Reeve v.

6. Stubbs 5.

7. E.g., Lionel Trilling's several essays in The Liberal Imagination: "Art and Fortune," "Reality in America," and "Manners Morals and the Novel"; or see Chase's text, The American Novel and its Tradition.

8. G. Harrison Orians depicts the sweeping success of Scott's romances in America in his essay, "The Romance Ferment after Waverley," American Literature 3 (1932): 408-31. Two British romancers, Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto (1764) and Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), are frequently mentioned for their Gothic contribution to the romance (see Stanley Bank, introduction, American Romanticism 10-12).

9. Sir Walter Scott, "Essay on Romance," Essays on Chivalry, Romance and the Drama, vol. 6 (London: 1824) 129. Subsequent references to this essay are cited in the text using the abbreviation ER and the page number given in parentheses.

10. Sir Walter Scott, The Prefaces to the Waverley Novels, ed. Mark A. Weinstein (Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1978) 9. Subsequent references to Scott's Prefaces to Waverley are cited in the text using the abbreviation PW and the page number given in parentheses.

11. Henry James, "The Art of Fiction," Critical Theory Since Plato ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971) 666.

12. Scott capitalized upon these archetypal images in his romance Ivanhoe, for example, with the dark Rebecca and the fair Rowena whose fates corresponded with their archetypal hue.

13. Simms writes: "The modern Romance is the substitute which the people of the present day offer for the ancient epic. The form has changed; the matter is very much the same." William Gilmore Simms, preface, The Yemassee: A Romance of Carolina, ed. Hugh Holman (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961) 4.

14. Daniel Hoffman, Form and Fable, uses fable and legend as the basis of his critical approach to early American literature.

15. Charles Brockden Brown wrote an essay, "The Difference Between History and Romance," published in 1880. This was discussed in the chapter on Brown.

16. Blair, Rhetoric 2: 72.

17. For the full discussion of this topic see Weinstein's text (PW 65-67).

18. Scott sees only partial success in Radcliffe's technique. See Scott's comments on this in "Lives of the Novelists" (SS 15-118). Here, Scott relays, "A principle characteristic of Mrs. Radcliffe's romances, is the rule which the author imposed upon herself, that all the circumstances of her narrative, however mysterious, and apparently superhuman, were to be accounted for on natural principles, at the winding up of the story" (SS 115).

19. Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Custom-House," American Romanticism: A Shape for Fiction, ed. Stanley Bank (New York: Putnam's, 1969) 250.

20. The necessity for a deeper history was often discouraging to American fictionists whose own country lacked such as asset. Scott's use of a more shallow historical setting appealed to the American writer beset with this dilemma.

21. Weinstein suggests this third means by which Scott establishes a "neutral ground" for his characters. Scott's selection of common people for his first three novels, Waverley, Guy Mannering, and the Antiquary, acts as a bridge between the aristocratic past and the democratic future (SS xv). This perhaps was also suggestive to American romance writers for whom the use of ordinary characters would appeal to their democratic ideals. Weinstein mentions that further support for this idea appears in the Heart of Midlothian where "Scott emphasizes that he is creating a new kind of

fictional hero and heroine" who, in Scott's words, can lay "no claim to high birth" (SS xv).

22. In his Preface to The Yemassee (1853 edition) William Gilmore Simms objected: "You will note that I call `The Yemassee' a romance, and not a novel. You will permit me to insist upon the distinction. I am unwilling that the story shall be examined by any other than those standards which have governed me in its composition; and unless the critic is prepared to adopt with me those leading principles, in accordance with which the book has been written, the sooner we part company the better....I surely have the right to insist upon this particular. It is only when an author departs from his own standard...that he offends against propriety and merits censure" (Simms 4-5). When Simms made his argument, he was concerned about his romance being compared to history, and his remarks are to be understood in that context. His distinction seems to connote a certain pride in following the example of Scott, with whose works he was familiar. The distinction was not for differentiating the novel from the romance on nationalistic grounds. Simms felt that nationalism could be expressed through the romance and that in supplying the romance with native scenes and characters amplifying historic incidents, native literature achieved the requisite Americanism. This attitude becomes apparent in his essay "Americanism in Literature." William Gilmore Simms, "Americanism in Literature," Views and Reviews in American Literature, History and Fiction, First Series, ed. Hugh Holman (Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1962) 1-29.

23. Walpole's Castle of Otranto represents Scott's later type. Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho attempts a compromise between these two types, according to Scott.

24. Scott's elaboration on the German romance is reminiscent of the fiction and the criticism of Charles Brockden Brown. Scott remarks, "Sudden transformations are introduced of the most extraordinary kind, and wrought by the most inadequate means; no attempt is made to soften their absurdity, or to reconcile their inconsistencies; the reader must be contented to look upon the gambols of the author as he would behold the flying leaps and incongruous transmutations...without seeking to discover either meaning or end further than the surprise of the moment" (ON 325-26). Elsewhere, Scott criticizes Hoffman's romances for their being carried "too much beyond the circle not only of probability but even of possibility" (ON 348). Later in the same essay, he ironically touches upon Hoffman's "indulging the diseased state of his own system," a topic which ironically interested C. B. Brown.

25. See Edward Tyrell Channing's remarks on Brown in his essay for the North American Review (NM 118-130).

26. See Bell's discussion (DR 9-14).

27. Perry Miller discusses the idea of "exhausting" the romance form with quite a different meaning. His comments appear in his essay "The Romance and the Novel," Nature's Nation (Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1967) 246, 255-56. See also Bank's discussion (AR 9).

28. Hawthorne holds a similar view that genres serve a particular society and situation. He remarks in his essay, "The Old Manse" that "Thought grows mouldy. What was good and nourishing food for the spirits of one generation, affords no sustenance for the next": Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, gen. eds. William Charvat, et al., vol. 10 (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1962-1988) 19. Hawthorne's comments are in the context of comparing religious works and his art of fiction.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ROMANCE ON NATIONALISTIC TERMS: JAMES FENIMORE COOPER (1789-1851)

> The only peculiarity that can, or ought to be expected in their literature, is that which is connected with the promulgation of their distinct political opinions.
>
> James Fenimore Cooper, 1828

Cooper and the Genre Critic's Dilemma

It seems ironic that critics should name James Fenimore Cooper, the early American fiction writer who felt rankled at comparisons to Sir Walter Scott, as the author first to supply native fiction with "Scott-like characteristics" and domesticate the historical romance. Of Cooper's contemporaries, W. H. Gardiner (1822) was among the first to confer this status upon Cooper. Gardiner's review of Cooper's first historical novel, The Spy 1821, lauds the author for "having opened a mine of exhaustless wealth--in a word, he has laid the foundations of American romance, and is really the first who has deserved the appellation of a distinguished American novel writer" (NM 194).[1] Francis Parkman's review (1852) pronounces Cooper "the most

original, the most thoroughly national" American author, and he hopes for "literary progeny" as original and prominent (AR 140; 150). A modern critic, Sergio Perosa, in American Theories of the Novel: 1793-1903 (1983), has declared "By choosing the wilderness and the red man, nature rather than society, the ideal rather than the real, Cooper led historical fiction fully into the realm of romance."[2] Joel Porte's important text, The Romance in America: Studies in Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville and James, deletes Charles Brockden Brown from his study. Instead Porte begins his discussion of the romance tradition with Cooper. Despite critics' frequent discussions of Cooper, an analysis of Cooper's literary contribution presents several problems for the romance genre critic.

Cooper's position relative to American romance is puzzling, in part, due to the breadth of fictional categories in which he wrote. In Cooper's Theory of Fiction, Arvid Shulenberger notes that Cooper loosely categorized the range of his fiction as "the descriptive tale, the narrative, the historical novel, the roman de societe, the chronicle of manners, the moral tale, the sea story, and love story, and...the romance."[3] Shulenberger declares:

> The most significant fact about Cooper's early practice in fiction...is that he was above all an innovator, a creator of new forms in the novel. Almost every novel he wrote after the first, during his early period, was a new kind of work, new not merely in exploiting an American subject but also in treatment, theme, and form (CT 12).

Howard Mumford Jones' list of Cooper's "firsts" in American literature also brings into question any genre exclusivity ascribed to Cooper.[4] Cooper's oeuvre (thirty-one novels and fifty-seven prefaces), extending from "the novel of manners, at one end, to the pure romance of adventure, at the other," presents a broad spectrum of fictional categories for genre critics (CT 78). Richard Chase acknowledges something of this dilemma when he observes, "In the writing of Brockden Brown, Cooper, and Simms, we have the first difficult steps in the adaptation of English romance to American conditions and needs."[5] Chase resolves the genre question relative to American fiction by separating these figures from the mainstream of romance in America which, for Chase, begins properly with Hawthorne.[6] Chase's solution only partially solves the problem, and the above discussion represents only part of the romance genre critic's problem with Cooper.

As Jones makes us aware, Cooper's fiction is the progenitor of many fictional themes and schools. While this may be to his credit, it makes it difficult to typecast Cooper or make him the object of exclusive genre claims. Likewise, it remains as difficult to exclude him. Some of the problem categorizing Cooper originates in Cooper's purposes for authorship. His original reason for writing fiction was based upon whim and a wager his wife proposed, not upon a fictional design or goal. Cooper's literary career proceeds experimentally in response to his critics' and audiences' approval and rebuffs. Consequently, he

selected fictional modes haphazardly, and he acquired his purpose for fiction by trial and error such that his literary theory developed only gradually and matured late. His prefaces are often more personal and practical, yet they contain nearly all of his theoretical statements about his fictional method and theory.[7] And these comments are unsystematic and sometimes oblique. In addition, these limited discussions are less theoretically allied with Cooper's contemporaries who subscribed to associationist doctrine, admired Scott's romances, and reviewed Cooper from these perspectives.[8] In addition, Cooper's literary preferences changed subtly and gradually over his entire career. Finally, he failed to present a unified theory of fiction, and a preference for romance, until the last decade of his literary career. The materials from this period are those which critics most often cite to defend their categorization of Cooper. All these factors contribute to the difficulty in unraveling Cooper's fictional theory and his relationship to the romance.

Undoubtedly Cooper belongs to American literary tradition, but genre critics who aspire to place Cooper securely within a genre tradition are faced with various dilemmas. His authorship arose during a transitional period of American literature, and his oeuvre mirrors this fact. The scope of his fiction, the search for popular fictional modes, the scatter-pattern literary modes employed, the nebulosity of his goals beyond a nationalistic focus, all

reflect Cooper's times. These factors often make Cooper's contribution controversial and liable to fluctuations in the critical appraisal of his work. While his contribution is substantial, his fiction, aside from The Leatherstocking Tales, becomes somewhat marginal to purposes of romance genre critics. Chase's solution, placing Cooper outside the mainstream of the romance, may be the most fair estimate.

Some modern romance critics have chosen either to omit Cooper from their genre-related criticism and the romance lineage.[9] Others isolate his fiction in some way from the main thrust of their critical perspective.[10] But primarily, romance genre critics either favor emphasizing Cooper's romances, chiefly The Leatherstocking Tales, or focus on Cooper's patriotism, the overriding principle which ultimately guided much of his fiction. Thus, these components account for the majority of claims critics have made relative to Cooper's role in native fiction: Cooper's overt nationalism which spanned his nearly thirty years of writing fiction, and the fact that his twentieth-century reputation generally rests upon The Leatherstocking Tales, largely a series of romances. Cooper himself stated, "If anything from the pen of the writer of these romances is at all to outlive himself, it is, unquestionably, the series of `The Leather-Stocking Tales'" (CT 79). While these approaches taken by recent genre critics often obscure and disguise Cooper's vast contribution and range of fiction, they have favored the Chase's romance thesis. My discussion

of Cooper proceeds within this context and fully acknowledges the difficulties and biases mentioned above.

In the passages that follow from Notions of the Americans (1828) Cooper briefly surveys well-known American writers, C. B. Brown and Irving, glances toward Scott and his American imitators, and assesses the totality of his apparent options as a writer. Cooper contends that "fictitious composition," in his opinion, is "certainly an inferior branch of imaginative writing" as compared to poetry.[11] About Brown, he wryly states that he "enjoys a high reputation among his countrymen, whose opinions are sufficiently impartial, since he flattered no particular prejudice of the nation in any of his works" (NA 111). He contends that Brown "curbed his talents by as few allusions as possible to actual society" (NA 110-11). In other words, Cooper discounts Brown's contribution to native literature. Cooper values national elements--themes, characters, history, subject matter--over imaginative qualities in fiction and saw nothing decisively American in Brown's fiction. He comments on the general state of American fiction writers saying, "they have all been successful, or the reverse, just as they have drawn warily, or freely, on the distinctive habits of their own country" (NA 111). He then speculates on the success of conjoining romance with a novel of manners. He concludes that while romance itself has "the world curious," such a book would "certainly never be read for that nearly indefinable poetical interest which

attaches itself to a description of manners less bald and uniform" (NA 111).

These statements denote Cooper's search for an acceptable fictional form which might satisfy himself as well as his audience. He concludes that a strict novel of manners cannot succeed, and that furthermore, "All attempts to blend history with romance in America have been comparatively failures," equating manners with history in this instance (NA 111-112). Romance has not succeeded, he reasons, because the subjects are too familiar for the freedom which "imagination absolutely requires" (NA 112). One is immediately reminded of Scott's fiction, and his American imitators, with Cooper's observation that "border" romances have had more success. The greatest success, in his opinion, has befallen "authors who have trusted most to their own conceptions of character, and to qualities that are common to the rest of the world and to human nature" (NA 112). These are "general" qualities, which Cooper complains are more difficult for the American author whose purview is limited by the very circumstances of his residence. It is apparent from these comments that Cooper lamented the conditions for developing an American literature and searched for models in English literature--even in Scott's romances.[12]

Cooper and Scott

Cooper's relationship to Scott is complex and a precarious one for romance critics. Cooper is indebted to Scott for his first work of fiction set at sea, The Pilot (1849), where he determined "to produce a work which...might present truer pictures of the ocean and ships than any that are to be found in The Pirate," Scott's romance (AR 133). This Preface reveals Cooper's rivalry with Scott's fiction, rather than his discipleship. To understand his severe objection to being compared to Scott, one must understand Cooper's ardent patriotism and his view of fiction's purpose. Cooper's reaction to Scott's romances was guided by his nationalism. In 1828, writing to a European audience about Americans, Cooper stated in Notions of the Americans: "The only peculiarity that can, or ought to be expected in their literature, is that which is connected with the promulgation of their distinctive political opinions" (NA 101). Cooper continued to make refinements of this statement in his fiction throughout his literary career. His essay "The American Democrat" offers his best statements on democratic principles.[13]

A decade later Cooper elaborates upon his attitudes towards Scott's romances in his review of Lockhart's Life of Scott (1838).[14] Cooper objects to Lockhart's claim about Scott's "high character as a moral writer" retorting, "We scarcely know a writer who so often limited his object to a

pleasing exhibition of manners and customs, without any ulterior moral aim, as Scott" (CT 52). He determines Scott's weakness as a pervasive, though perhaps unintentional "deference for power" and his desire to please his audience with his imaginative fiction "without other thought of any moral consequences, than a proper care not to offend" (CT 52). For fiction merely to aspire to pleasure over deeper values, Cooper finds unconscionable. The guiding principles inherent to democratic values were most significant to Cooper. In Notions of the Americans (1828) Cooper states that American "directness" and "common sense" was as yet unknown to the world, but the force of her democratic values found in these traits would surface in her literature (NA 122). America's contribution, according to Cooper, lay in its "political and religious freedom" which he predicted "would give a colour of the highest importance to the writings of a people so thoroughly imbued with their distinctive principles..." (NA 122). While America's "cold common sense" discouraged advances in fictional literature, ultimately its message to the Old World is linked with the common sense of democratic values.

In his review, Cooper applauds Scott's achievement in having "eradicated, the sickly sentimentalism of the old school" (CT 51), and extols his literary value in having "raised the novel, as near as might be, to the dignity of the epic" (CT 52). In vivid detail, invention, power of description, and estimation of human character, Cooper

admits, Scott reigned supreme. Cooper contends that in Scott's power of "vraisemblance" we might find both the key to his success and to his failure: "It was, in truth, the art of seemliness, or vraisemblance in delineation, of appearances in practice; and its effect in the latter case, was to render that pleasing to the senses, which was in truth obnoxious to the censures of the right-minded and just" (CT 53). "Seemliness," in Cooper's view, might be used either beneficially or immorally, without attached higher values. He censured Scott for his misuse of vraisemblance.[15] Cooper's Preface to The Leatherstocking Tales (1851) provides his culminating views on this subject. Speaking of balancing traits in the character of Leatherstocking, he declares, "Had this been done without any of the drawbacks of humanity, the picture should have been...more pleasing than just. In order to preserve the vraisemblable, therefore, traits derived from the prejudices, tastes, and even the weaknesses of his youth, have been mixed up with these higher qualities and longings...to represent a reasonable picture of human nature..." (AR 139). Contrasting himself with Scott on the issue of vraisemblance, Cooper places the principle of adherence to literal truth before being pleasing (but deceitful) in fiction.

From Realism to Romance

Cooper modified his ideas about fiction over the three decades in which he wrote. According to Shulenberger, three distinct phases, each a decade long, can be identified over the course of Cooper's writing career. Cooper initiated his literary career resisting romance in favor of realism and the novel of manners (Precaution, 1820, and The Spy, 1821), shunning both the Gothic and sentimental traditions of English fiction.[16] In his Preface to The Spy (1822), Cooper disparages using Gothic imagery in "this land of facts" which neither finds credence in American history nor "the aid of obscure legends, artificial distinctions, and images connected with the association of the ideas..." (AR 117-18). At times he stated his objection humorously as he did in his 1823 Preface to The Pioneers. He points out that his fictional work is in "keeping" with reality as an author's duty is to respect "human nature" (AR 119). He advises "any one, who may take up this book, with the expectation of meeting gods and goddesses, spooks or witches, or of feeling that strong excitement that is produced by battles and murders, to throw it aside at once, for no such interest will be found in any of its pages" (AR 119). Bryant's statements nicely summarizes Cooper's view of the Gothic:

> There is a strong love of romance inherent in the human mind. We all remember how our childhood was captivated with stories of sorcerers and giants....supernatural beings, of acts of desperate heroism, followed by incredible successes, of impossible dangers, and equally

> impossible deliverances. And when our maturer judgment has caused us to turn with disgust, from the relation of what is contrary to the known laws of nature, we transfer the same intense attention to narratives that keep within the bounds of possibility (NM 213).

The nature of "common sense" Americans dwelling in "the land of facts" runs counter to Gothic pretenses and artificialities.

During the first decade of Cooper's fiction he advocates realism over romance, literal detail over imaginative invention, and application of moral values associated with truth, reality, history, and democratic ideas. Within this framework, Cooper explores the relationship between history and fiction. In Cooper's 1824 Preface to The Pilot, he writes:

> The privileges of the Historian and of the writer of Romances are very different, and it behooves them equally to respect each other's rights. The latter is permitted to garnish a probable fiction, while he is sternly prohibited from dwelling on improbable truths; but it is the duty of the former to record facts as they have occurred, without a reference to consequences, resting his reputation on a firm foundation of realities, and vindicating his integrity by his authorities (CT 20).

This recalls the relationship between cause and effect which C. B. Brown forwards, but it simultaneously reverses Brown's priority for fictional representation over historic fact. Cooper does not approach Brown's perspective until the last decade of his writing career. By the end of his first decade as a writer, in The Prairie (1827), Cooper admits departures from "strict historical veracity," to simplify

reality, offering instead only "the general features of the original" (CT 30). In 1833, Cooper writes in his Preface to The Borderers, that the aboriginal characters he introduces "are historical...although the situations are imagined, [but] so nearly resemble the facts...as to give a sufficiently correct idea of the opinions, habits, and feelings" of these beings (CT 32). These changes demonstrate Cooper's gradual shift away from historical fact and literal truth towards romance tenets.

Cooper's Democratic Fiction

Shulenberger characterizes Cooper's second decade of fiction writing as one in which Cooper reflects upon "vraisemblance" ("seemliness") or fictional truth. Most of Cooper's conclusions are expressed in his view of Scott discussed earlier. This period is transitional for Cooper. During this decade Cooper contemplates the relationship between morality and fiction opting for more subtle methods of inculcation that he began to feel fiction was best equipped to provide. He solidifies his attitudes on democratic principles while residing in Europe, only to be surprised by changes upon his return to America. The Bravo (1834), according to Schulenberger, is Cooper's most representative text during this period. In it Cooper explores his political views about an "irresponsible" European government and avoids using "historical characters and events" for his portrayals. In the Preface he proposes

that "the moral...be drawn from its incidents" leaving the reader "to his own intelligence in application" (CT 43). These statements indicate Cooper's shift in attitude away from fact and toward more the subtle, unobtrusive instruction he fully adopts during the last decade of his career. Cooper's Home as Found (1838), written "`to illustrate a principle'" demonstrates his increasing commitment to inculcating democratic values through fictional formats (CT 50).

Cooper's turn towards fictional representations as the best means for presenting democratic values may be seen as early as 1834 in "A Letter to His Countrymen." He states,

> The moral was to be inferred from the events, and it was to be enforced by the common sympathies of our nature....the object was to lay bare the wrongs that are endured by the weak, when power is the exclusive property of the strong; the tendency of all exclusion to heartlessness; the irresponsible and ruthless movement of an aristocracy (CT 41).

From this point forward Cooper more fully integrates democratic ideals in imaginative fiction and continues to revise his attachment to literal fact. We may discern his nationalistic viewpoint both early and late in Cooper's fiction. His belief in democratic principles becomes the most pervasive element distinguishing his fiction. But only during the last third of his career did he adopt the romancer's liberal attitude towards fiction. His 1850 Preface to the Pioneers is indicative of Cooper's mature opinion when he asserts, "rigid adhesion to truth...destroys

the charm of fiction" (CT 89). This view expresses his belated preference for romance. Cooper's conversion to the romance, as a viable mode of expressing his ideals, is best illustrated through his characters, particularly, Natty Bumppo, his hero of The Leatherstocking Tales.

Cooper's Democratic Hero

Cooper preferred commonplace characters as he used in The Spy. In his third Preface to this work (1822), Cooper proposes practical and democratic reasons for this choice: "Common sense is the characteristic of the American people; it is the foundation of their institutions; it pervades society, bringing the high and the low near to each other; it tempers our religion, yielding the indulgence to each other's weakness, which should follow the mandates of God; it wears down the asperities of character--but it ruins the beau ideal" (CT 15). Infusing romance fiction with democratic ideals was Cooper's main challenge.

In Natty Bumppo, Cooper aspired to view civilization from the liminal zone--midway between society and the wilderness. This wilderness was moral as well as natural. Cooper's last Preface to The Leatherstocking Tales (1850) asserts "A leading character in a work of fiction has a fair right to the aid which can be obtained from a poetical view of the subject" (CT 82). While his character is "removed from every-day inducements to err, which abound in civilized life...he retains the best and simplest of his early

impressions" (CT 82). These impressions are spiritual--"God in the forest...in the wind...in all the works of Nature" (CT 82). To preserve vraisemblance, weaknesses mingle with strength of character present, Cooper hopes, "a reasonable picture of human nature" (CT 82). Cooper claims the liberties of a romancer in this final Preface, saying "It is the privilege of all writers of fiction, more particularly when their works aspire to the elevation of romances, to present the beau-ideal of their characters to the reader. This it is which constitutes poetry..." (CT 83).

In Natty Bumppo, Cooper created the unfettered democratic hero. In his special introduction to the Leatherstocking series Cooper wrote about the hero he created:

> ...in a moral sense this man of the forest is purely a creation. The idea of delineating a character that possessed little of civilization but its highest principles as they are exhibited in the uneducated, and all of savage life that is not incompatible with these great rules of conduct, is perhaps natural to the situation in which Natty was placed. He is too proud of his origin to sink into the condition of the wild Indian, and too much a man of the woods not to imbibe as much as was at all desireable from his friends and companions....On the other hand, removed from nearly all the temptations of civilized life, placed in the best associations of that which is deemed savage, and favorably disposed by nature to improve such advantages, it appears to the writer that his hero was a fit subject to represent the better qualities of both conditions, without pushing either to extremes.[17]

Cooper's marginal hero existed between civilization and nature, a blend of the tendencies of each region. His character--based upon higher-order principles--comments on

both worlds from his position, but primarily speaks to society. Cooper writes about Leatherstocking's legendary life at its close in his 1851 Preface to The Prairie: "Here he passes the few closing years of his life, dying as he had lived, a philosopher of the wilderness, with a few of the failings, none of the vices, and all the nature and truth of his position" (CT 91). Natty is both critic and observer, set apart by his moral standards, tried and yet persistent, sustained by principle. Leatherstocking avoids the abuses of society and maintains his "neutral" position by venturing west ahead of civilization's advances.

Cooper even proclaims his distance from his hero in an 1827 Preface to The Prairie. First he admits the difficulty of sustaining interest in a single character over three books and then comments that it is the "duty of a faithful chronicler to follow his hero wherever he might choose to go" (CT 30). Leatherstocking, Cooper implies, takes on a life of his own; the writer is his biographer. This demonstrates Cooper's romantic attitude towards his hero. But the essential distance Cooper creates for both his hero and himself, he achieved through the imaginative distance the romance allows.

Cooper freed himself from critics and set his political views free through the medium of fiction. In his 1845 Preface to Satanstoe, Cooper's anti-rent novel, he states: "true patriotism consists in laying bare every thing like public vice and in calling such things by their right

names."[18] In his Preface to The Chainbearer (1845) he makes this point clear:

> ...we do not pretend to be answerable for all the opinions of those whose writings are submitted to our supervision, any more than we should be answerable for all the contradictory characters, impulses, and opinions that might be exhibited in a representation of fictitious characters, purely of our own creation (CT 69).

Fiction allows Cooper the distance he needs to comment on society from the privileged "neutral" position between the real and the ideal. He realized the value of fiction for his purpose to convey moral principles serviceable to a democratic society. In this case, the mythic hero remains in the wilderness, returning to civilization only in narrative form to impart his wisdom unobtrusively, in the form Cooper found most effective to communicate democratic principles, in romantic fiction. In one of his last novels, Afloat and Ashore (1844), Cooper suggests this idea. His Preface states:

> It is possible that certain captious persons may be disposed to inquire into the cui bono? of this book. The answer is this. Every thing which can convey to the human mind distinct and accurate impressions of events, social facts, professional peculiarities, or past history, whether of the higher or more familiar character, is of use. All that is necessary is, that the pictures should be true to nature, if not absolutely drawn from living sitters. The knowledge we gain by our looser reading often becomes serviceable in modes and manners little anticipated in the moments when it is acquired (CT 67).

Cooper insists here that the end justifies the means. He justifies using romance, the nineteenth-century pariah of fiction, for moral purposes. A "looser reading" implies

reading romance which Cooper makes "serviceable" to his nationalism. This passage conveys Cooper's final position concerning the moral purpose of art. Another passage from Cooper's Preface to The Crater (1847) provides the same position. Cooper remarks, "Truth is not absolutely necessary to the illustration of a [moral] principle, the imaginary sometimes doing that office quite as effectually as the actual."[19] These remarks suggest his resolution between an overriding concern for truth and a vehicle for expression of that truth which he found in fiction.

In Natty, Cooper attained the proper mingling of romance and reality. To take a more "narrow view of an author's privileges," Cooper insists, "would have deprived the world of even Homer" (CT 83). This last word in his final Preface to The Leatherstocking Tales suggests epic poetry. Cooper allied fiction more often with poetry than with romance, and this last line admits his epic purpose for his tale. This same preface refers to these tales as having "poetical" substance. In 1838 Cooper has said that Scott had "raised the novel...to the dignity of the epic," and yet he felt that Scott's romances lacked democratic virtue. Cooper's final Preface to his epic tales subtly claims that his Leatherstocking romances, imbued with democratic principles and national ideals, had surpassed even Scott's romances. In making the indirect comparison to his rival, Scott, Cooper suggests his own achievement.[20]

Cooper's Contribution

These ideas also convey Cooper's ultimate contribution to American literature. Cooper's life-long struggle to validate fiction, unmoored from an absolute adherence to reality, depicts the crisis between a "common sense" culture and romance itself. Cooper searched for a method by which he might express democratic values most effectively. It was a long, arduous journey, but he succeeded in naturalizing the romance to America by using the form to serve a nationalistic purpose. Merged with nationalistic principles and goals, native fiction, and particularly the maligned romance, finally found acceptance. Cooper's literary career, from beginning to end, illustrates this point.

Cooper's position with genre critics today differs no more from his relationship with critics during his lifetime. Modern literary critics, like their nineteenth-century counterparts, neither know precisely what to do with or to do without renegade heroes who resist neat, civilized categories. Cooper, his hero Natty Bumppo, and his fiction, all finally assume this role. The extent to which Cooper's fiction resists categorizing provides the very reason we ought to examine his fiction. As Cooper discovered, fiction offers a means to impact society; the marginal hero, mingling both worlds yet remaining essentially at a distance, offers the best vantage point for cultural criticism. Cooper's fiction provides an opportunity for

American genre critics to reflect upon their premises and conclusions.

NOTES

1. Gardiner notably passes by both Charles Brockden Brown for his non-representative fiction and Washington Irving for his lack of producing a romance. He disqualifies Brown because, "although his scenes are laid in America, [he] cannot be said with truth to have produced an American novel. So far from exhibiting any thing of our native character and manners, his agents are not beings of this world" (NM 194). He likewise discounts Brown's use of American landscape. Irving, although he has produced Knickerbocker and The Sketch Book, Gardiner comments, "has not yet permitted us to view him threading the mazes of romance" (NM 194). Beyond these two candidates, Gardiner admits, "we know not who else there is to enter into competition with our author for the palm as an American novelist" (NM 194).

2. Sergio Perosa, American Theories of the Novel: 1793-1903 (New York: New York UP, 1983) 32.

3. Arvid Shulenberger, Cooper's Theory of Fiction: His Prefaces and Their Relation to His Novels (Lawrence: U of Kansas, 1955) 77. Subsequent references to this work appear in the text using the abbreviation CT and the page number given in parentheses.

4. Jones list among Cooper's firsts: "first novelist of the sea," "first effective novelist of the frontier," "first historian of the American Navy," "first American novelists to conceive of novels in a series," "first of our writers to make the succession of generations in a single family the theme of fiction," "first American novelist to make the morbidity of New England conscience the theme of major fiction," "the first [to write a] social utopia in American fiction...preceding it by the anti-utopia" novel, "the first American to write the inter-national novel," the "first to treat Tories sympathetically," "the first professional man of letters," and "the only American novelist of international stature to take Christianity seriously both as personal motive and as social force" (CT 5).

5. Chase 20.

6. Chase declares, "Following these pioneers [C. B. Brown, Cooper, and Simms] we have had, ever since, two streams of romance in our literary history" (AN 20). The first, and only legitimate stream begins with Hawthorne and includes Melville, James, Twain, Norris, Faulkner, and Hemingway.

7. Shulenberger observes that Cooper's "major concerns in criticism were problems peculiar to a

consciously American literature: the national scene and character as a subject matter for fiction, the sentiment of patriotism as a theme, the peculiarities of American audiences and critics" (CT 11). Two other major sources of Cooper's critical theories are found in A Letter to His Countrymen (1834) and his review of J. G. Lockhart's Narrative of the Life of Sir Walter Scott (1838).

8. Bryant pointed out Cooper's success in these terms when he wrote: "On more than one occasion we have already given somewhat at large our opinion of the fertility of our country, and its history, in the materials of romance....we have had the triumph of seeing them confirmed beyond all controversy by the works of a popular American author, who has shown the literary world into what beautiful creations these materials may be wrought" (Orians 415). Gardiner's 1822 review of The Spy also speaks of Cooper's success in using native materials (NM 186-194).

9. Bell's text, The Development of American Romance (1980), omits Cooper. Bell uses C. B. Brown, Irving, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville.

10. Chase studies Cooper as merely a transitional figure in the development of American fiction. His chapter, "The Significance of Cooper" in The American Novel seems perfunctory. He begins by saying, "Opinion as to the value of Fenimore Cooper's novels has varied markedly in this country" (AN 43). His discussion proceeds marking the embarrassed self-consciousness early critics felt about Cooper "made worse by Cooper's being the first of our major writers and, as such, presenting a special claim to significance" (AN 43). He notes that historian of American literature have not failed to "respond favorably to the great dull imposing importance of his books" (AN 43). He remarks that Mark Twain, who wrote the acerbic essay "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses," was irritated by this "quasi-official overestimation of Cooper" (AN 43). A nationalistic purpose appears in Chase's rationale for giving Cooper importance: "because he was among the first on the scene, Cooper was able to formulate some of the principal attitudes and dilemmas of American fiction" (AN 47).

11. Cooper, Notions of the Americans: Picked Up By a Travelling Bachelor vol. 2 (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1962) 110. Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text with the abbreviations NA and the page number given in parentheses.

12. Cooper's despair of American "poverty of materials" for fiction are well known, and I feel no need to cite them in the text. His best-know statements may be found in Notions of the Americans (1828) (E.g., see NA 108,

114); his third Preface to The Spy (CT 15-16); and his Preface to Home as Found where he states "`This country probably presents as barren a field to the writer of fiction...as any other on earth; we are not certain that we might not say the most barren'" (Orians 426). See Spiller, Representative Selections 303, for the full entry.

13. See Spiller, Representative Selections 182-232. This essay comments on the differences between a representative government and European forms of government--monarchies, aristocracies, and oligarchies. Cooper stresses how citizens of a democracy grant power to their government as a trust. In other forms of government the source from which rights are granted is reversed (e.g., monarchs grant their subjects rights). Cooper distinguishes the "equality of political rights" which Americans enjoy, unlike the inhabitants of European monarchies or aristocracies where privileged classes exist. He also thoroughly discusses the ideas of liberty, station, a free press, property rights, universal suffrage, and slavery in America.

14. Shulenberger affirms Cooper's review of Scott's biography as the "most important single statement about the novel" during the middle period of his career (CT 40).

15. In his Preface to The Pilot (1849), Cooper again censures Scott's romance The Pirate for its lack of vraisemblance on the grounds of his power of creating seeming reality, rather than utilizing "accurate information" (Bank 133).

16. Shulenberger mentions Cooper's expository divergence in the ninth chapter of his novel, The Pilot, where Cooper says: "Our business is solely to treat of man, and this fair scene on which he acts, and that not in his subtleties and metaphysical contradictions, but in his palpable nature..." (CT 23).

17. Spiller, Representative Selections 306-7.

18. Spiller, Representative Selections 316.

19. Spiller 318.

20. Porte argues this point also from his own perspective. See Porte 39.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ROMANCE IN AMERICA: ITS INDIGENOUS FULFILLMENT NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE (1804-1864)

> To talk of his being national would be to force the note and make a mistake of proportion; but he is...intensely and vividly local....Half of the interest he possesses for an American reader...must reside in his latent New England savor.[1]
>
> Henry James, 1879

Hawthorne's Nationalistic Sentiment

Unlike Brown and Cooper, whose fiction is often perceived as marginally significant, Nathaniel Hawthorne's romances have become the sine qua non of American romance genre theory. Melville's essay "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1850) began the long critical tradition surrounding Hawthorne's fiction. Speaking for "Posterity...by proxy" Melville declares Hawthorne's preeminence among American authors as one who refrains from imitating English authors and yet attains to the "brotherhood" of literary genius.[2] Henry James disparages Hawthorne's lack of realism. Yet his essay "Hawthorne" (1879) proclaims, "His work will remain; it is too original and exquisite to pass away; among the men of imagination he will always have his niche."[3] Twentieth-

century romance genre critics concur with these estimates of Hawthorne's fiction. Joel Porte's statement in The Romance in America (1969) is representative of these critics' perception of Hawthorne's importance to genre theory. Porte writes, "It is no exaggeration to say that without Hawthorne there could be no firm theory of American romance."[4]

Hawthorne's place amongst modern genre critics is due to several factors. First, Hawthorne's titles and prefaces to major works admit his allegiance to romance.[5] Secondly, Hawthorne's prefaces openly discuss his view of the form and outline its general characteristics. Like his predecessors, his prefaces contrast the romance with the novel, address the difficulties of writing romances in America, and argue for the romance's latitude.[6] Finally, during Hawthorne's period of authorship the romance appears to have been a well-known and accepted fictional form. This fact is borne out by the popular use of the term "romance" in titles of fictional works. Lyle Wright's book, American Fiction, 1774-1850, lists forty titles as romances published between 1840 and 1845, while prior to 1840 only twenty-two books published in America used the term romance in the title.[7] This connotes a wider acceptance of the form established prior to Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter (1850). In the chapter titled "Romance and the Novel," Nature's Nation (1967), Perry Miller comments that both Scott's and Cooper's fiction "so instructed the American public in the genre that any who could read at all came to take its features for

granted."[8] Most of these romances were regional and local, as Miller points out.[9] Nevertheless, in the wake of Scott's Waverley romances and patterned after Cooper's fiction, romance became a highly accepted and recognized literary form in America.[10] Miller assays that "Hawthorne's major works, [and] Melville's masterpiece...come at the conclusion of three decades during which a host of American writers had cultivated, perfected, [and] formalized the Romance."[11] John C. Stubbs' comment on Hawthorne's achievement in The Scarlet Letter presents the modern critical attitude towards Hawthorne's work as a whole:

> ...we may regard Hawthorne...as a writer who having adopted his literary theory and materials from his contemporaries could concentrate his energy and original genius solely on achieving a culminating expression of the theory and materials. Hawthorne should be seen as a master of an established genre.[12]

The view Hawthorne expressed of his own achievement is unpretentious and far less assuming than the twentieth-century critical opinion of his fiction. The prefaces to his romances generally understate his popularity and rapport with audiences. In the Twice-told Tales Preface (1837), Hawthorne calls himself the "obscurest man of letters in America" (CW 9: 3). He brushes aside stereotypes characterizing him as the "solitary mind" and "secluded man" emphasizing instead "his attempts...to open an intercourse with the world" (CW 9: 6). In Mosses from an Old Manse" (1846), Hawthorne hardly sees himself qualified as the prototypical American author fulfilling his contemporaries'

nationalistic literary aspirations. From this volume of tales, "Select Party" indicates Hawthorne's view that the American public still awaits the evasive, literary "Master Genius." This "stranger,"

> for whom our country is looking anxiously into the mist of time, as destined to fulfil the great mission of creating an American literature, hewing it, as it were, out of the unwrought granite of our intellectual quarries...dwells as yet unhonored among men, unrecognized by those who have known him from his cradle (CW 10: 66).

This passage prophesies a fulfillment of this nationalistic goal. Hawthorne must have heard Longfellow's commencement lecture while they were classmates at Bowdoin College. Longfellow asserted, "But if we would ever have a national literature, our native writers must be patronized" (NM 238). He urged native authors to respond to their national calling with "an utter abandonment of everything else, and a noble self-devotion to the cause of literature" (NM 238). These words must have struck Hawthorne deeply as this was the precise path which he adopted. But Hawthorne likewise speculates that such a genius would go unrecognized amongst his peers until such time that the literary "vanities of the passing moment" subside (CW 10: 67). In either case, Hawthorne admits, "Nor does it matter much to him [the Master Genius], in his triumph over all the ages, though a generation or two of his own times shall do themselves the wrong to disregard him" (CW 10: 66). These comments reflect the tenor of Hawthorne's times rather than any self-inflated sense of his own candidacy in this search.[13] His self

evaluation makes clear the irony of modern critical assertions placing Hawthorne center-front in the development of American fiction.[14]

That an author who appears the least direct and vocal about his nationalistic sentiments and who identifies most clearly with humanity at large and "brotherhood" should be awarded this literary status also seems ironic.[15] From the sentiment he expresses in "Up the Thames," Hawthorne could hardly be ascribed nationalistic feelings like either his American literary contemporaries who valorized the Revolution and Indian Wars, or like Scott whose romances depicted Scottish and British enmity. Hawthorne writes:

> But, in truth, the whole system of a people crowing over its military triumphs had far better be dispensed with, both on account of the ill-blood that it helps to keep fermenting among nations, and because it operates as an accumulative inducement to future generations to aim at a kind of glory, the gain of which has generally proved more ruinous than its loss. I heartily wish that every trophy of victory might crumble away, and that every reminiscence of tradition of a hero, from the beginning of the world to this day, could pass out of all men's memories at once and forever (CW 5: 257).

Yet the national character and American historic situation is imprinted everywhere in his fiction. He preferred rather the common, democratic hero--a vision of life which neither rejected any human for his low character, or poverty, or particular condition.[16] He recognized the kinship of all species of mankind in all conditions, and, like C. B. Brown, wrote psychological romances describing universal human nature.[17] James observed Hawthorne's "democratic strain in

his composition and a relish for the commoner stuff of human nature."[18] It follows that Hawthorne's heroes and heroines were frequently artists or solitary figures--the sculptor of "Drowne's Wooden Image," the Miriams of The Marble Faun, and the Hester Prynnes of The Scarlet Letter, who like Cooper's heroes, suffer some imperfection or limitation.[19] For Hawthorne, all humans were composites of good and evil traits.[20]

The reader must search for Hawthorne's national feeling from intermittent and often subtle statements rather than from nationalistic essays and encomiums. Henry James wrote, in his essay "Hawthorne" (1879), "the reader must look for his local and national quality between the lines of his writing and in the indirect testimony of his tone, his accent, his temper, of his very omissions and suppressions."[21] Some of Hawthorne's comments from Our Old Home (1863) provide a sense of his nationalistic viewpoint. In his introductory statement, "To A Friend," addressed to his life-long friend Franklin Pierce, Hawthorne, in part, delivers his stance. Accused of disparaging British life and character, Hawthorne's literary associates advised him to omit certain passages from his volume. He responded, "there is no reason in the world why they should not be said. Not an Englishman of them all ever spared America, for courtesy's sake or kindness" (CW 5: 5). This statement alone indicates somewhat of the "asperity of sentiment" between English-speaking nations which Hawthorne felt (CW 5:

4). Although he admitted his "hereditary sympathies," Hawthorne observed that "an American is continually thrown upon his national antagonism by some acrid quality in the moral atmosphere of England" (CW 5: 4). Hawthorne blamed the British for maintaining these hostilities. In another essay, "Leamington Spa," from the same volume, he matter-of-factly states: "An American is not very apt to love the English people, as a whole on whatever length of acquaintance," as the British are "beset...to keep up what they seem to consider a wholesome bitterness of feeling between themselves and all other nationalities, especially that of America" (CW 5: 64).[22] He adds, that although a foreigner residing in England may come to appreciate the island as much as a native Englishman, "an American seldom feels quite as if he were at home among the English people. If he do so," Hawthorne asserts, "he has ceased to be an American" (CW 5: 64). Despite all the "bloody wars and vindictive animosities," Hawthorne finds the English soil and culture still "entangled with our [American] heart-strings" (CW 5: 19). But, in his essay "Consular Experiences," like other American contemporaries, Hawthorne affirms that the task which Providence has assigned America could not be accomplished by the British (CW 5: 19). Often this purpose awaits the person of imaginative sympathy, the ordinary democratic hero of Hawthorne's romances and tales.

Art and Citizenship

Hawthorne's sense of nationalism blends with the necessity he felt to write fiction. In "The Custom-House" Preface, Hawthorne acknowledged the disgrace his stern Puritan ancestors would have murmured about his career as an "idler" and "writer of story-books!" with "No aim...laudable" (CW 1: 10). Yet he self-described his "native propensities" as being "towards Fairy Land" (CW 1: 10; 5: 22). Twice, during Hawthorne's career, while under government employment, he felt the "actual" impinge too heavily upon his imaginative impulse to write professionally.[23] He reacted strongly to these encroachments upon art and felt the moral evasion of his inner commitment to write. "The Custom-House" essay and his Preface to Our Old Home both disclose this sense of negligence when errant from writing. In the first essay he writes of his ancestors' queries, "What kind of a business in life,--what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation,--may that be?...And yet, let them scorn me as they will, strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine" (CW 1: 10). These traits involve the necessity to both attain a moral purpose in life--glorify God--as well as contribute to one's country--perform service to mankind. Hawthorne sees his authorship of romances as serviceable and as moral in his era as the lives and duties which his ancestors fulfilled in

theirs. In the later essay he writes:

> The Present, the Immediate, The Actual, has proved too potent for me. It takes away not only my scanty faculty, but even my desire for imaginative composition, and leaves me sadly content to scatter a thousand peaceful fantasies...into a Limbo where our nation and its polity may be as literally the fragments of a shattered dream as my unwritten Romance (CW v: 4).

Both statements and context suggest a link between authorship, religious and/or civic duty, and neglect of that duty. His statements equate his "unwritten romances" to a nation's polity in limbo, democracy's "shattered dream"--both his art and the American democratic ideal potentially want fulfillment. This passage reinforces Hawthorne's sense that he best performed both his moral and civic duty in authorship.

Beset by the "actualities" of mundane life, Hawthorne's intellect and creative sensibilities were blunted as a custom's surveyor. In "The Custom-House" Preface, Hawthorne protests that he has worked too long there, "in an unnatural state, doing what was really of no advantage nor delight to any human being, and withholding myself from toil that would, at least, have stilled an unquiet impulse in me" (CW 1 :42). Hawthorne elaborated upon the losses a Custom House employee acquired in his dependence upon the government. First of these, he noted, was that such a position did not allow a person to "share in the united effort of mankind" (CW 1:38). By this he meant that in the bargain, one lost "if not his soul, yet many of its better attributes; its

sturdy force, its courage and constancy, its truth, its self-reliance, and all that gives the emphasis to manly character" (CW 1: 39). Hawthorne prized the imagination and felt that the "best definition of happiness [was] to live throughout the whole range of his faculties and sensibilities!" (CW 1: 40). When released from the office under a new administration, Hawthorne happily declared, "I am a citizen of somewhere else" and aspired for a more "genial atmosphere which a literary man requires, in order to ripen the best harvest of his mind" (CW 1: 44). The above statements demonstrate the value Hawthorne placed upon his imagination and writing.

In an uncollected tale, "The Journal of a Solitary Man," Hawthorne completes the equation between profession and one's national duty. In this tale, the persona saves some journal fragments belonging to his deceased friend, Oberon, and decides to make public some of this "solitary man's" wisdom. After a period of solitude, the narrator reports, Oberon commits to return to society. He returns with a vow to perhaps save "some youth among them, now in the crisis of his fate" through his example. He declares "that the world is a sad one for him who shrinks from its sober duties" (CW 11: 326). He expresses his ambition to share his message attained in solitary living and contemplation:

> `My experience shall warn him to adopt some great and serious aim, such as manhood will cling to, that he may not feel himself, too late, a cumberer

> of this overladen earth, but a man among men. I will beseech him not to follow an eccentric path, nor, by stepping aside from the highway of human affairs, to relinquish his claim upon human sympathy. And often, as a text of deep and varied meaning, I will remind him that he is an American' (CW 11: 326-27).

This "deep meaning" describes, in part, the conjunction between personal and civic duty--one's moral responsibility to adopt a life task which contributes to the brotherhood of mankind. Oberon's last lines express both his spiritual distance attained in solitude and his visionary insights about mankind. He observes:

> sometimes I look upon the world with a quiet interest, because it cannot concern me personally, and a loving one for the same reason, because nothing selfish can interfere with the sense of brotherhood. Soon to be spirit, I have already a spiritual sense of human nature, and see deeply into the hearts of mankind, discovering what is hidden from the wisest (CW 11: 327).

Together, these sets of statements suggest, not only democratic duty, but how, from an isolated position, an impartial observer obtains a moral vision of mankind which surpasses ordinary observation. Both Brown and Cooper, before Hawthorne, recognized that the solitary writer's privileged position confers a vision and encumbers the imaginative writer with a moral duty to write and thus fulfill his obligation to society. Hawthorne saw artistic endeavor as the moral equivalent of democratic and religious duty. Hawthorne did not underestimate the value of his literary gifts. He was more concerned about under-utilizing his talents.[24] The close of his tale, "The Threefold

Destiny," provides an apt summary of his perspective:

> Would all who cherish such wild wishes, but look around them, they would oftenest find their sphere of duty, of prosperity, and happiness, within those precincts, and in that station where Providence itself has cast their lot. Happy they who read the riddle without a weary world-search, or a lifetime spent in vain! (CW 9: 482).

More remains to be said about Hawthorne's view of the imagination as a means to fulfill this debt and about the latitude romance offers as a means of conveying a writer's privileged vision.

Recovering Hawthorne's Literary Theory

James' observation that one must look "between the lines" of Hawthorne's writing is instructive in recovering Hawthorne's literary theory. "He was not a man with a literary theory; he was guiltless of a system,..." James insists.[25] Other critics have concurred. Robert Spiller's Literary History of the United States (1949) asserts that Hawthorne "bequeathed no sustained definition of his theory of fiction."[26] Jesse Bier begins his article "Hawthorne on the Romance: His Prefaces Related and Examined" (1955) with a similar assumption. Bier states, "in none of Hawthorne's introductory words to `Rappaccini's Daughter,' The Scarlet Letter, The House of the Seven Gables, The Blithedale Romance, and The Marble Faun is there anything like a developed literary theory."[27] He adds:

> The reader is given a consistent view of the `Romance' as Hawthorne employed it and of fiction in general as Hawthorne saw it, but the student

> has no systematic program before him, no close, lengthy discussion of method by which to be guided.[28]

Hawthorne himself provides a suggestion which many scholars have followed. The following comments from The Snow-Image Preface (1851) invite his readers to investigate the whole of his fiction for clues to his thought. Defending his practice of giving autobiographical accounts in his prefaces, Hawthorne informs his critics about his approach to fiction. He arranges "some of the ordinary facts of life in a slightly idealized and artistic guise" and admits, "I have taken facts which related to myself, because they chance to be nearest at hand, and likewise are my own property" (CW 11: 4). These autobiographical prefaces, he insists, are superficial, saying that "these things hide the man, instead of displaying him." His next statement invites the critic to look more closely at his fiction for insights into the author: "You must make quite another kind of inquest, and look through the whole range of his fictitious characters, good and evil, in order to detect any of his essential traits" (CW 11: 4). This suggestion essentially describes the trail any critic must follow in order to recover Hawthorne's theory of romance.[29] To discover any of the essential traits of Hawthorne's literary theory, one may first peruse his prefaces, but ultimately the reader must turn for support elsewhere. Hawthorne's critical statements relative to genre and fiction in general are dispersed

throughout the series of his prefaces and, as James observes, "between the lines" of the entire body of his work.

Hawthorne's Puritan Strain

These ancestors' "strong traits" which Hawthorne sees as "intertwined" with his own character surface in Hawthorne's art of fiction.[30] He seems to have absorbed something from Puritan homiletics and adapted its schema to his fiction providing a continuity between traditional and contemporary popular American literary modes.[31] Oration in America descended from medieval Christian roots in the works of Gregory, Jerome, and Augustine and persisted in Calvinist tradition.[32] This scripturally-based art identified four levels of interpretation, all of which Hawthorne consciously used in his fiction.[33] These modes were hierarchical and were developed together in an oration to achieve the desired effect. The lowest level was the "historic" or "literal" level of fact based upon observable objects and events. The second level was labeled "allegorical" in which one thing stood for another.[34] "Tropology," or moral instruction comprised the third level. Finally, the "anagogical" mode brought spiritual enlightenment.[35] All literature depends, in some measure, upon the first two levels. By giving primary attention to allegory and to the anagogical and moral senses, Hawthorne incorporated all four of these senses of traditional scriptural interpretation in his

fiction. Fiction, under Hawthorne's pen, became the modern substitute for the former Puritan homiletic and scriptural modes.

Hawthorne combined these modes in the best of his romances and tales. Recognition of these modes surface in what he called his "inveterate love of allegory," which he admitted he could not escape (CW 10: 91). Allegory was the primary mode of explication and instruction in oratory and scriptural exegesis.[36] Hawthorne used historical situations and personages not for an ordinary retelling of history, but for some effect of greater interest to him.[37] These elements of his fiction together with Hawthorne's subtle infusion of moral principles, his use of ambiguity to express various interpretations, and his view of art all give credence to his having adapted the Calvinistic art of oration to the nineteenth-century romance.[38]

History and Fiction

Hawthorne's prefaces indicate the degree to which he utilized literal and historic situations and persons in his fiction. The "Custom-House" Preface includes a brief description supposedly recounting how the author of The Scarlet Letter came upon the certain material artifacts which resulted in the romance. Hawthorne comes upon a "mysterious package...of fine red cloth, much worn and faded" (CW 1: 31). He discovers a piece of finely wrought needle work in the shape of a capital letter "A" and muses

about its origin. This incident instigates his speculation, "Certainly, there was some deep meaning in it, most worthy of interpretation...from the mystic symbol, subtly communicating itself to my sensibilities, but evading the analysis of my mind" (CW 1: 31). Hawthorne's first nebulous impressions tend towards the "mystic," the imaginative, and filter from this lofty region to the intellect which begins "cogitating...hypotheses" about how the letter might have been contrived (CW 1: 31). Together with the needlework piece Hawthorne finds a "small role of dingy paper" which he opens finding "a reasonably complete explanation of the whole affair" (CW 1: 32). He then asserts that the "main facts" of his forthcoming story, The Scarlet Letter, are "authorized and authenticated by the document of Mr. Surveyor Pue," and anyone wishing to see these artifacts may (CW 1: 32). From these material origins Hawthorne fabricates the details of his romance. He relays the extent to which he has fabricated and the extent to which the romance depends upon literal fact:

> I must not be understood as affirming, that, in the dressing up of the tale, and imagining the motives and modes of passion that influenced the characters who figure in it, I have invariably confined myself within the limits of the old Surveyor's half a dozen sheets of foolscap. On the contrary, I have allowed myself, as such points, nearly or altogether as much license as if the facts had been entirely of my own invention. What I contend for is the authenticity of the outline (CW 1: 33).[39]

Hawthorne's method of transmuting literal fact and material objects, conjecturing on motive and imagining the human

passions attached to a situation, are reminiscent of C. B. Brown's essay "The Difference Between History and Fiction." Treatment of the human passions was also one of Brown's and Scott's motivating triggers for writing romance. License and invention are standard romance topoi, which Hawthorne reiterates in all the prefaces to his longer works.

Later in "The Custom-House" essay, Hawthorne discusses imagination. Encumbered by the "actualities" of practical pursuits, he proclaims that his "imagination was a tarnished mirror," that he could not engage the imaginative faculty in his present environment (CW 1: 35). What is necessary for a romance writer, he posits, is an etherealized atmosphere--"Moonlight, in a familiar room" (CW 1: 35). Through this medium, ordinary objects become "spiritualized...seem to lose their actual substance, and become things of the intellect" (CW 1: 35). Thus transported, the romance writer achieves the necessary "strangeness and remoteness...and the floor of our familiar room has become a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other (CW 1: 35-6). Both Scott and Cooper, to a limited degree, spoke of and utilized this same romancer's domain. The "neutral territory," however, becomes the literary signature of Hawthorne's method. From this intermediate state, "one remove farther from the actual, and nearer to the imaginative," the romance writer

may "dream strange things and make them look like truth..." (CW 1:36).

One remove from the actual, Hawthorne never intended his romances to be taken literally. His Preface to The House of the Seven Gables reaffirms this. In this preface, he discusses the differences between the novel and the romance, as had his predecessors in this same genre tradition. Like Scott and C. B. Brown, Hawthorne staked his claim for the latitude of his fiction "both as to its fashion and material" (CW 2: 1). The novel, he asserts "is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience" (CW 2: 1). This definition is remarkably conventional following the outlines of Reeve and Scott. He continues, the romance, as an art form, "must rigidly subject itself to laws...sins unpardonably, so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart--has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation" (CW 2: 1). Novels are to adhere to "minute fidelity," the "possible," and the "probable." The romance, freed from those restrictions, depends upon some more universal truth.

Hawthorne's limits of vraisemblance are categorically different from Cooper. Cooper sought to infuse fiction with democratic values, while Hawthorne's primary concern, the "truth of the human heart," was investing psychological romance with what he considered to be universal spiritual

truth. Unlike Scott who relished the varied effects of Gothic romance upon the human constitution for their own sake, Hawthorne advocated "moderate use of the privileges...to mingle the Marvellous rather as a slight, delicate, and evanescent flavor" (CW 2: 1). Yet, Hawthorne maintained, it was the romancer's right to opt for greater use of the marvelous than he suggested.

Allegory, The Moral Purpose of Hawthorne's Fiction

In Hawthorne's allegorical romances and tales, the literal level subordinates its meaning to the moral level figured through human emotions and passions which motivate action. Hawthorne's "truth of the human heart" suggests the allegorical and moral level operating in the fictional works he labeled psychological romance. Objects, persons, and events have meaning beyond their literal denotation.[40] Hawthorne's allegorical effects are most often seen in his symbols or in his Gothic or marvelous effects which often act symbolically--as the scarlet letter "A," or Donatello the faun--half human and half animal, moonlight, mirrors, and snow, the Pyncheon portrait, Goodman Brown's visionary night journey, Rappaccini's poisonous arts, and the mesmerism and hypnotism of Blithedale. Hawthorne uses his images and Gothic elements to suggest something other than themselves. They are allegorical representations. Critics have often accused Hawthorne's characters of being flat and representational rather than persons in their own right.[41]

Hawthorne, himself, acknowledges that things in the world were symbolic, were types, reflections of a higher reality. He once wrote in his fiction, "`Everything, you know, has its spiritual meaning, which to the literal meaning is what the soul is to the body.'"[42] In The American Notebooks, Hawthorne muses, "I am half convinced that the reflection is indeed the reality--the real thing which Nature imperfectly images to our grosser sense. At all events, the disembodied shadow is nearest to the soul" (CW 8: 360). Typically, Hawthorne's allegorical method was for the purpose of indirectly infusing his fiction with a moral or a higher spiritual truth. Ambiguity is a natural result of Hawthorne's method.[43] Hawthorne fiction partakes of both the "Actual" and the "Imaginary," mingles the "Marvellous" with the "ordinary," and paradoxically is both "daydream and yet a fact." His fictional theory begins with the ambiguity which occurs when these loci are imbued "with the nature of the other" (CW 3: 2; 1:36). Romance, in Hawthorne's view, offers a "foothold between fiction and reality," and its defining characteristic is ambiguity. Romance is the art of ambiguity not of facts.[44]

In his Preface to The House of the Seven Gables, Hawthorne wrote:

> Many writers lay very great stress upon some definite moral purpose, at which they profess to aim their works. Not to be deficient, in this particular, the Author has provided himself with a moral;--the truth, namely, that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary

> advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief (CW 2: 2).

He proceeds to discuss his belief that moral teaching in fiction ought to be unobtrusive, concurring with Cooper's ultimate conclusion, that imaginative fiction teaches best "through a far more subtile process" (CW 2: 2). The moral, Hawthorne insists, of a fictional work is far more pervasive and evident throughout the text than one continually present through relentless repetition. Hawthorne thus distinguishes his fiction from prevailing didactic novels. Hawthorne's only other mention of a moral purpose in his prefaces occurs in The Marble Faun, where he lightly comments that "the author proposed to himself merely to write a fanciful story, evolving a thoughtful moral..." (CW 4: 2-3).

Hawthorne's most extensive and pervasive moral construction had to do with the "truth of the human heart," human sympathy and compassion. Characters of his creation who violated this truth often suffered severe real or symbolic consequences: Ethan Brand's stone heart; Zenobia's suicide; Aylmer, who violates human bonds in his intellectual pursuit, loses his wife in attempting to erase her birthmark; Dimmesdale's spiritual pride prevents his to admitting either his love or his sin; Chillingworth vengefully investigates and pursues his rival. All of these figures suffer isolation. Others simply suffer an insurmountable limited perception: Coverdale, in his coldness, fails to inspire friendship with co-inhabitants of

Blithedale; Lindsey, the pragmatic father of Violet and Peony, because of his cold common sense fails to see the viability of the snow image; or the unsympathizing father-in-law who laughs at the destruction of Owen Warland's creation. The cast of characters that fit these categories in Hawthorne's fiction are vast.

Romance and Reality

Hawthorne supplies the fourth sense of interpretation, the anagogical or spiritual sense, in his expression of the relationship between ordinary reality and ultimate reality. For Hawthorne art and imagination mediate between these two spheres.[45] Hawthorne's Notebooks and fiction, rather than his prefaces provide information about his views. In "The Great Stone Face" Hawthorne writes: "Creation was not finished till the poet came to interpret, and so complete it" (CW 11: 43). In another passage from "The Prophetic Pictures," the painter muses, "`Oh, glorious Art!...Thou art the image of the Creator's own. The innumerable forms, that wander in nothingness, start into being at thy beck'" (CW 9: 179). Hawthorne believed that the world is incomplete and imperfect. But he also believed that art, through imagination, is capable of revealing a higher reality otherwise only known in the after-life.

Art shadows forth a spiritual reality. The artist, whether poet or painter, assumes some limited powers to perceive a higher reality. Thus, Hawthorne's scientists--

men of intellect without compassion--often aspire to "wrest from [Nature] some secret, or some power, which she had seen fit to withhold from mortal grasp" (CW 10: 332). Rappaccini and Aylmer become victims of a striving intellect and imagination lacking the requisite heart which would have supplied them with human sympathy and prevented their folly. So typical of Hawthorne's would-be heroes, the man of mere intellect often seeks perfection on earth. The intellect which strives for "triumph over the immortal essence," Hawthorne asserts, "in this dim sphere of half-development, demands completeness of a higher state" (CW 10: 56). Such a goal, however, is unobtainable in the material realm.[46] All knowledge in the world is "narrow" and "partial," more deceptive than falsehood" and only "mimicking the true" (CW 10: 265). Those things which the imagination perceives, according to Hawthorne, are more substantial than that which we perceive in the material world. More often Hawthorne's artists and innocents, whether children or adults, whose faith has not been trammeled, succeed in obtaining a glimpse of perfection or of truth in their flights of imagination and artistic pursuits. Drowne the woodcarver, Peony, Violet and their mother in "The Snow Image," Ernest from "The Great Stone Face," Owen Warland "The Artist of the Beautiful," all represent this class of individuals. Although humanly impossible, according to Hawthorne's perspective, to separate good and evil, he pointed out the source of mankind's dilemma in "The Earth's Holocaust:"

> The Heart--the Heart--there was the little, yet boundless sphere, wherein existed the original wrong, of which the crime and misery of this ourward world were merely types. Purify that inner sphere; and the many shapes of evil that haunt the outward, and which now seem almost realities, will turn to shadowy phantoms, and vanish of their own accord. But, if we go no deeper than the Intellect, and strive, with merely that feeble instrument, to discern and rectify what is wrong, our whole accomplishment will be a dream (CW 10: 404).

What imagination grasps during its visionary excursions spiritualizes "the grossness of actual life and prefigures "a state, in which the idea shall be all and all" (CW 10: 185). As the narrator states in "Drowne's Wooden Image," "that the very highest state to which human spirit can attain, in its loftiest aspirations, is the truest and most natural state..." (CW 10: 320). Hawthorne's artists--individuals of faith, imagination, and human sympathy--attain glimpses of this state. Hawthorne notes, when mankind loses "faith in the invisible" the "spiritual part dies out of them, and leaves the grosser understanding to assimilate ...the things which alone it can take cognizance" (CW 10: 466). Pure intellect is limited without imaginative sympathy and faith. Hawthorne summarizes this view in a comment from "The Artist of the Beautiful:"

> Thus it is, that ideas which grow up within the imagination, and appear so lovely to it, and of a value beyond whatever men call valuable, are exposed to be shattered and annihilated by contact with the Practical. It is requisite for the ideal artist to possess a force of character that seems hardly compatible with its delicacy; he must keep his faith in himself, while the incredulous world assails him with its utter disbelief (CW 10: 454).

Artists, too, have their limitations, according to Hawthorne. In "The Select Party," Hawthorne comments on the ideal and its impermanence in the material world. Led by a "Man of Fancy" through various castle apartments, the guests observe a "multitude of ideal statues, the original conceptions of the great works of ancient or modern art, which the sculptors did but imperfectly succeed in putting into marble" (CW 10: 69). He explains, "it is not to be supposed that the pure idea of an immortal creation ceases to exist; it is only necessary to know where they are deposited, in order to obtain possession of them" (CW 10: 69). They complete the tour through a library consisting of "works which the authors only planned," the guide commenting that these splendid volumes exceeded anything which the authors actually executed (CW 10: 69). In an "incomplete," "half-developed" world which "demands completeness of a higher state," unrealized art alone attains perfection. Artists come closest to attaining truth as they have the imaginative insight to know where the ideal is found, and often they have intermittent experience of this realm.

Redemption Through Imagination

In "The New Adam and Eve" Hawthorne expands his ideas about the relationship between art, nature, and imagination. He states, "Art has become a second and stronger Nature; she is a step-mother" (CW 10: 247). In this case "art" means "artifice," which not only implies one's craft but also

cleverness of intellect, in a sense a trickery exacted upon nature. Hawthorne explains that in an "artificial system, [we] can never adequately know how little our present state and circumstances is natural, and how much is merely the interpolation of the perverted mind and heart of man" (CW 10: 247). What is "natural" here refers to higher Nature. Art, in this case, may deceive us about our true or spiritual nature. Hawthorne explains, "It is only through the medium of imagination that we can loosen these iron fetters, which we call truth and reality, and make ourselves even partially sensible what prisoners we are (CW 10: 247). Human artifice imprisons the intellect and binds the imagination. In Mosses from an Old Manse, Hawthorne asserts that "all custom and conventionalism" become fettering influences of man on man" (CW 10: 25). One of Hawthorne's "four precepts" mentioned in The American Notebooks is "to break off customs" (CW 8: 17).[47] The customs Hawthorne refers to were often the inherited traits of his Puritan ancestors. We read lines to this effect in "Main Street" where Hawthorne describes its former Puritan inhabitants:

> Such a life was sinister to the intellect, and sinister to the heart; especially when one generation had bequeathed its religious gloom, and the counterfeit of its religious ardor, to the next; for these characteristics, as was inevitable, assumed the form both of hypocrisy and exaggeration, by being inherited from the example and precept of other human beings, and not from an original and spiritual source (CW 11: 67-8).

Human artifice imprisons the intellect and binds the imagination. Art, properly used, is not merely the

scientist's craft for the purpose of contriving another artifice, but a means to achieve redemption through imagination.

Hawthorne placed the highest value on imagination and the artist's labors. The subtleties of fiction, satisfy an inner need--"the ideality which the soul always craves" in contemplating beauty (CW 8: 321). Mankind's aspiration to attain the ideal, though impossible in the worldly realm, offers, through imagination, glimpses of another higher reality. Artists represent, for Hawthorne, individuals who have both vision and faith, the prerequisite purity, to realize truth. The artist who inhabits the "neutral territory" mediates between material and spiritual spheres.[48] Art becomes the medium through which the artist imperfectly embodies the truth of a higher reality which he perceives.

Hawthorne's Achievement

Hawthorne encouraged his readers to grant him the latitude of a romancer and to set aside probability and actuality when reading his romances.[49] The latitude of romance, which Hawthorne required, provided him the best means to express moral truths unobtrusively. His literary method invites multiple interpretations of his fiction on either literal, moral, allegorical, or anagogical levels, and on all these levels simultaneously. Hawthorne asked his readers to forgo literal interpretations of his fiction.

Reading romance required an attitude of faith, in Hawthorne's view. His view becomes apparent in "A Select Party," where he comments about a "Man of Fancy's' who invites guest to tour one of his "castles in the air" (CW 10: 57). His comments are relevant to skeptical readers of romance. He writes:

> To such beholders it was unreal, because they lacked the imaginative faith. Had they been worthy to pass within its portal, they would have recognized the truth, that the dominions which the spirit conquers for itself among unrealities, become a thousand times more real than the earth whereon they stamp their feet, saying, `This is solid and substantial!--this may be called a fact!'" (CW 10: 58).

He utilized romance and allegory for the sake of pointing out some higher moral or spiritual truth. Only those with "imaginative faith," according to Hawthorne, could truly sympathize with his art. To "loosen those iron fetters" one must become as innocent as Hawthorne's "new Adam and Eve." Unencumbered by the past, free from "custom" and "conventionalism," they had "no knowledge of their predecessors, nor of the diseased circumstances that had become encrusted around them. Such a pair," Hawthorne declares, "would at once distinguish between art and nature," that is, man's creations and spiritual realities (CW 10: 248).

Hawthorne transformed Calvinist oratorical art into the art of fiction, imbuing American fiction with a more subtle, and yet most cogent, national inheritance than any of his predecessors had achieved. Hawthorne's contribution to a

national literature, whether consciously or unconsciously attained, lies in his ancestral inheritance. He integrated imaginative fiction with an anagogical purpose and with a modern idealism and spirituality. Hawthorne unwittingly summarizes his contribution in "The Old Manse." As he "burrowed among these venerable books" of former Puritan divines, "in search of any living thought" he found "no such treasure" (CW 10: 19). He muses:

> Thought grows mouldy. What was good and nourishing food for the spirits of one generation, affords no sustenance for the next. Books of religion...so seldom really touch upon their ostensible subject, and have therefore so little business to be written at all....there would seem no deadly error in holding theological libraries to be accumulations of, for the most part, stupendous impertinence (CW 10: 19).

Hawthorne's Puritan forefathers wrote sermons for the same moral and anagogical reasons for which Hawthorne wrote fiction. Each form nourished its respective generation. Not only had the Puritan sermon grown moldy, according to Hawthorne, but their religious forms and tenets had become encrusted with their distorted truth.

He infused the continuity of American experience, and enhanced national identity with the fictional mode that suited his purpose, the romance. Hawthorne became vividly national by remaining intensely local. Like his moral instruction, Hawthorne's nationalism is written "between the lines" of his fiction. His fiction, however, is pivotal in American literature. Like the Greek goddess, Janus, his fiction looks both backwards and forwards in American

literary tradition. Hawthorne's psychological romances interweave the New England Puritan strain with the art of fiction. He adapted the best and depicted the worst of his ancestors, writing their legacy in both his fictional themes and in his interpretive strategy. His use of the New England situation made his fiction intensely local, foreshadowing the main current of literary practice and theory advocated in the late nineteenth-century. He achieved what Lowell and Brownson called for--the universal within the local. Under Hawthorne's genius and tenure as a writer this form of artistic expression matured in America. As James asserted, "However little they might have appreciated the artist, they would have approved of the man."[50]

Hawthorne's romances pronounced a denouement of literary nationalism when he subordinated this motive to his art of fiction. Ironically, an authentic American literary expression which incorporates all the traits that early American critics sought in a national literature arises only when a nineteenth-century author successfully sublimated this goal to his artistic medium. Like Brown, Scott, and Cooper before him, Hawthorne demonstrates how literature evolves through artistic license. Each of these authors argued for artistic latitude measured against the standards of known literary genres. Their innovations modified and recombined the standard features of accepted literary genres. As James wrote in "The Art of Fiction," "Art

derives a considerable part of its beneficial exercise from flying in the face of presumptions..."[51] (CP 667). This suggests not only Hawthorne's "privileges of a romancer" but also of the artist's unlimited "advantages," "luxury," "torment," and "responsibility" James celebrated in "The Art of Fiction" (CP 664). The predicament of genre critics is to keep pace with the artist. Artists must maintain their privilege to preserve the latitude of art, to remain free of critics' impositions of restrictive and fixed genre definitions. As James wrote, "there is no limit to [the author's] possible experiments, efforts, discoveries, successes" (CP 664). In a nationalistic pursuit to distinguish American fiction from other English fiction, Chase's romance genre hypothesis imposes both an artificial distinction and restrictive definition upon our native fiction. Along with James "We must grant to the artist his subject, his idea, his donnee; our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it" (CP 666).[52] American literature will remain distinctive so long as its critics grant artists latitude for their art. The only thing which may ultimately distinguish American fiction is the preservation of this principle of artistic freedom.

Concluding Remarks

My purpose has been to point out the trends in criticism since 1957 which have responded to Chase's romance hypothesis. This dissertation has shown how important

critics such as Bell, Budick, and Porte have found the romance hypothesis useful. Other critics have argued that the limitations of Chase's romance hypothesis need to be recognized. As long as an outcome of literary criticism remains political and depends upon identifying differences for nationalistic purposes instead of focusing upon universal qualities of fiction, certain groups of writers and certain genres are likely to remain in the shadows. Critics such as Ellis, Tuttleton, Tompkins, and Baym have shown how the romance hypothesis potentially excludes certain early American fictional works and/or authors. For this reason the romance hypothesis seems inadequate for grasping a literary tradition so diverse from its inception in its literary forms and in the gender and ethnicity of its contributing authors. Recently, in Engendering Romance: Women Writers and the Hawthorne Tradition 1850-1990 (1994) Emily Budick has analyzed Stowe's sentimental novel Uncle Tom's Cabin relative to its conflict with the nineteenth-century romance genre.[53] This type of criticism continues an important dialogue between critics of different persuasions and demonstrates that the debate continues to maintain significant critical interest.

Unlike McWilliams, I do not suggest that we abandon Chase's hypothesis nor that we ignore his contribution to this segment of national literary history. During the 1950s and 1960s the nationalistic position implicit to Chase's hypothesis served an important critical function. It drew

attention to a significant body of early American literature, elevated critical estimations of the romance genre relative to the British novel, and generated a great deal of interesting critical work. Certain events of the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., the civil rights and women's movements) brought about a different awareness in literary criticism. Whereas Chase could not anticipate these social changes, these events affected the interests of critics and their literary priorities. The impact of his hypothesis upon the literary canon also revealed its limitations.

Critical approaches build upon the gaps and limitations of previous hypotheses. Chase made inroads into understanding nineteenth-century literature in America from a particular and important perspective. However, new critical methods are now being utilized which are more inclusive and allow for greater diversity--for women and ethnic representation and for other genres coexistent with the romance. To quote Hawthorne, "What was good and nourishing for the spirits of one generation, affords no sustenance for the next" (CW 10: 19). Criticism, like literature, evolves.

In this dissertation I have emphasized the nationalistic premise which underwrites the romance genre theory and has predominated modern critical assessment of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American fiction. The marriage of the romance genre with nationalism began with Scott, and, in American fiction, subsides with

Hawthorne, only to resurface again in twentieth-century American romance genre theory. As long as nationalism survives, critics may promote a specific literary characteristic, which will function as the romance has for Chase, to validate what they consider an essential "Americanism" within native literature. Comparisons between the romance and the novel antedate comparisons between the two branches of English literature which developed on both sides of the Atlantic. Romance-novel comparisons have been, until recently, a hallmark of twentieth-century romance genre criticism. In the aftermath of Chase's romance hypothesis, critics of early American literature, such as Bell, Budick, Baym, Ellis, Tompkins, Tuttleton, and others, have been reexamining the "priority of appreciation"--that is, which authors and which literary texts become canonized. These critics seek a broader representation than Chase's genre approach seemed to allow. Several critics discussed in this work have found a sense of continuity which distinguishes American literature despite genre designations and without nationalistic comparison to other bodies of English literature. Most importantly, however, ethnic fiction, women authors, and other nineteenth-century genres are being reexamined and/or recovered from obscurity. As Spencer sensed, the inevitable demand for a "loose construction" of the term "American literature" over a "doctrinaire list of exclusions," has come to pass.[54]

NOTES

1. Henry James, "Hawthorne," The Shock of Recognition, ed. Edmund Wilson (New York: Farrar, 1955) 427-565. Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text using the editor's name, Wilson, and the page number given in parentheses.

2. Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," Norton Anthology of American Literature eds. Nina Baym, et al., 2nd ed., vol. 1 (NY: Norton, 1985) 2173. Melville's famous statement reads, "And by confessing him you thereby confess others; you brace the whole brotherhood. For genius, all over the world, stands hand in hand, and one shock of recognition runs the whole circle round" (Melville 199).

3. Wilson 565.

4. Porte 95.

5. "The Custom's House" essay, acting as a Preface to The Scarlet Letter (1850), describes Hawthorne's difficult situation as a romance writer posted as a government inspector. He confesses, "An entire class of susceptibilities...was gone from me" while employed there and contrasts this setting with the "medium most suitable for a romance-writer" which he attained only after leaving the post. Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, gen. eds. William Charvat, et al., vol. 1 (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1962-1988) 36, 35. Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text using the abbreviation CW with the volume and page number given in parentheses. Hawthorne begins his Preface to The House of the Seven Gables (1851) with the remark, "When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude...(CW 2: 1). His third long fiction, The Blithedale Romance (1852), and Hawthorne's last complete romance, The Marble Faun: or The Romance of Monte Beni (1860), both include the genre designation in their titles.

6. Hawthorne's complaints about the deficits a romance writer suffers from in America are well known. His attitude concurs with numerous literary critics and writers before him. The statements of Scott and Cooper have been cited previously. C. B. Brown was a notable exception to this thinking. In The Blithedale Romance Hawthorne protests that the romancer, in the Old World, is granted more license. But, in this country "there is yet no such Faery Land, so like the real world, that, in a suitable remoteness, one cannot well tell the difference, but with an atmosphere of strange enchantment, beheld through which the inhabitants have a propriety of their own. This atmosphere

is what the American romancer needs. In it absence, the beings of imagination are compelled to show themselves in the same category as actually living morals; a necessity that generally renders the paint and pasteboard of their composition but too painfully discernible" (CW 3: 2). In The Marble Faun Preface, Hawthorne again points out that Italy provides a better setting for his romance where "actualities" are not "so terribly insisted upon, as they are, and must needs be, in America. No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a Romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a common-place prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as happily the case with my dear native land. It will be very long, I trust, before romance-writers may find congenial and easily handled themes either in the annals of our stalwart Republic, or in any characteristic and probable events of our individual lives. Romance and poetry, like ivy, lichens and wall-flowers, need Ruin to make them grow" (CW 4: 3).

7. Stubbs 4. Lyle Wright, American Fiction 1774-1850 (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1948).

8. Perry Miller, Nature's Nation (Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1967) 244-45.

9. Miller asserts, "The success of Cooper inevitably showed others how to exploit the market he and Scott had opened. Catherine Sedgwick in New England; Richard Montgomery Bird in Philadelphia, James Hill in Cincinnati, John Pendleton Kennedy in Baltimore, Charles Fenno Hoffman in New York, even John Lothrop Motley in Boston, Daniel Thompson in Vermont, Nathaniel Beverly Tucker and William Caruthers in Virginia--one and all they turned out Romances, each seeking to do for his region what Cooper has done in making the Hudson Valley `Romantic'" (Miller 245).

10. Miller describes what had become the "sacred formula" of the mid-nineteenth-century romance: "to most of the reading public, the regular conventions of Romance imparted all the `philosophy' a sensible man need bother about. The rivalry of blonde and brunette, the melodrama of the self-consuming genius, the stabilizing sanity of the good-hearted denizen of the forest, the defeat of the villain, and always an ever-refreshing presence of environing Nature--all these added up to a system which hung so beautifully together as to require no further explication" (Miller 255).

11. Miller 255. I have selected to discuss Hawthorne in preference to Melville largely because of Hawthorne's more central role in the configuration of romance genre theory. While romance genre critics always discuss Hawthorne's fiction, Melville's has sometimes been left out.

While this may be an oversight on the part of critics, my purpose in these initial chapters is only to see the romance as it appeared in America through its major initial phases--from its inception, through its naturalization, to its acceptance, in America. The three major figures I have selected, C. B. Brown, Cooper, and Hawthorne, are representative, rather than exclusive, and hardly exhaustive of those who might be considered by critics attempting other purposes.

12. John C. Stubbs, "Hawthorne's the Scarlet Letter: The Theory of Romance and the Use of the New England Situation," PMLA 83 (1968): 1447.

13. It ought to be noted, however, that Hawthorne's "humility topos" may also work to suggest its opposite.

14. The Preface to Twice-told Tales (1837) where Hawthorne calls himself the "obscurest man of letters in America" provides one example of his self-effacing attitude (CW 9: 3). Hawthorne writes in his 1851 Preface to The Snow Image "ever since my youth, I have been addressing a very limited circle of friendly readers, without much danger of being overheard by the public at large" (CW 11: 3). Again, after a long absence from writing romances, Hawthorne's Preface to The Marble Faun (1860) cajoles his reader, "that all sympathizing critic...whom an author never actually meets," and inquires whether he still exists (CW 4: 1). Similar to Scott's admonition, Hawthorne notes that a writer's audience "is apt to be extremely short-lived; he seldom outlasts a literary fashion;" moreover, Hawthorne sulks, "If I find him at all, it will probably be under some mossy grave-stone..." (CW 4: 2). Some of his reason for these comments in the latter case may also have to do with the waning popularity of the romance: See Roy Harvey Pearce, "Hawthorne and the Twilight of Romance," Yale Review 37 (1948): 487-506.

15. James ascribes the "vagueness" of Hawthorne's "sense of social distinctions and his readiness to forget them" to his propensity towards "moral or intellectual" advantages gained in fiction (Wilson 462).

16. His statement in "Outside Glimpses of English Poverty" touches upon this point where he says "What an intimate brotherhood is this in which we dwell, do what we may to put an artificial remoteness between the high creature and the low one" (CW 5: 299). In another statement from "A Good Man's Miracle" Hawthorne writes: But the true faculty of doing good consists not in wealth nor station, but in the energy and wisdom of a loving heart, that can sympathize with all mankind, and acknowledges a brother or a sister in every unfortunate man or woman, and as own child in each neglected orphan" (CW 11: 357).

17. Hawthorne states, in his Preface to The Snow Image (1851), that he "has been burrowing...into the depths of our common nature, for the purposes of psychological romance..." (CW 11: 4).

18. Wilson 462.

19. While Cooper consciously sought "vraisemblance," Hawthorne believed that good and evil were essentially everyman's nature.

20. Hawthorne made several statements related to man's dual nature. Two appear in "Fancy's Show Box" from Twice-told Tales (1837). He writes: "In truth, there is no such thing in man's nature, as a settled and full resolve, either for good or evil, except at the very moment of execution....Man must not disclaim his brotherhood, even with the guiltiest, since, though his hand be clean, his heart has surely been polluted by the flitting phantoms of iniquity" (CW 9: 226). These comments surely are reminiscent of Hawthorne's moral theme underlying Miriam's and Donatello's crisis in The Marble Faun.

21. Wilson 521.

22. Recall, for example, the literary wars between England and America discussed in Chapter One.

23. Hawthorne wrote about his term at the Custom's House: "I cared not, at this period, for books; they were apart from me. Nature,--except it were human nature,--the nature that is developed in earth and sky, was, in one sense, hidden from me; and all the imaginative delight, wherewith it had been spiritualized, passed away out of my mind" (CW 1: 26). Later, in this same essay, he again touches upon the artistic losses he suffered--referring to these as "An entire class of susceptibilities" (CW 1: 36). To read the entire passage see CW 1: 36-39.

24. Hawthorne complained about his term as a surveyor was "long enough and too long, to have lived in an unnatural state, doing what was really of no advantage nor delight to any human being, and withholding myself from toil that would, at least have stilled an unquiet impulse in me" (CW 1: 42).

25. Wilson 429.

26. Robert Spiller, Literary History of the United States, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1949) 440.

27. Jesse Bier, "Hawthorne on the Romance: His Prefaces Related and Examined," Modern Philology 53 (1955): 17.

28. Bier 17.

29. Some critics have observed that certain tales express Hawthorne's literary theory. Among these, in particular, are "The Select Party," "The Hall of Fantasy," and "The Haunted Mind." His allegories on art, "The Artist of the Beautiful," "The Great Stone Face," and "Drowne's Wooden Image," are also frequently cited for this purpose. For an exceptionally fine essay discussing Hawthorne's theory of art, see: Charles Howell Foster, "Hawthorne's Literary Theory," PMLA 52 (1942): 241-254. Others follow his lead.

30. Matthiessen remarks that "despite the fact [Hawthorne] never joined a church...[and] his rejection of formal theology.... No matter how much he criticized the cruel rigidity of Puritanism...he possessed an insight that understood it. This means that `he saw the empirical truth behind the Calvinist symbols. He recovered what Puritans professed but seldom practised--the spirit of piety, humility and tragedy in the face of the inscrutable ways of God'" (Matthiessen 199).

31. In American Renaissance F. O. Matthiessen writes: "Oratory, moving with the Revolution from the pulpit to the political forum, was...the one branch of literature in which America then had a formed tradition" (Matthiessen 18). Later he comments "To a degree that we have lost sight of, oratory was then the basis for other forms of writing, and its modes of expression left a mark on theirs" (Matthiessen 22).

Hawthorne admits of his intense study of homiletical writing in the library of his predecessors in "The Old Manse" (CW 10: 18-20).

32. In "The Sermon as Public Discourse: Austin Phelps and the Conservative Homiletic Tradition in Nineteenth-Century America," Russel Hirst writes: "Nineteenth-century American homileticians drew upon broad resources in forming their theories of rhetoric: modern British rhetorics, especially those from Campbell and Whately; various Christian homiletic treatises from ancient to modern times; and the rhetorical models provided by the Bible and by famous preachers through the ages. They also drew directly upon major classical theorists, principally Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and St. Augustine:" in Gregory Clark and S. Michael Halloran, Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1993) 107. See also the discussion on Hawthorne and his Puritan ancestors (G. Clark 233-35).

33. These fourfold levels of interpretation descend from St. Augustine to St. Thomas Aquinas and are found in Aquinas's "Tenth Article: Whether in Holy Scripture a Word

may have Several Senses" of the Summa Theologica (1256-72) (Adams 118-19). Dante's "Letter to Can Grande Della Scala" (1318) also provides this same information (Adams 121-23).

34. Hawthorne's statement from one of his tales illustrates that the fourfold scriptural interpretive schema was still prevalent during his period and known to himself. In this passage he applies this knowledge to fiction rather than scripture. Hawthorne's statement is prefaced by Matthiessen's observation: "Hawthorne described the way in which his own imagination worked when he made one of his characters say, `Everything, you know, has its spiritual meaning, which to the literal meaning is what the soul is to the body,'" (Matthiessen 242).

See also Matthiessen's discussion of Hawthorne, allegory, and Hawthorne's artistic debt to Milton, Spencer and Bunyan (Matthiessen 243-49).

35. For an explanation of the four senses of interpretation, see James J. Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1974) 302-03, 327.

36. Hugh Blair taught in his Rhetoric, "Allegories were a favorite method of delivering instruction in ancient times" (Blair 1: 366). He added "What we call the moral [of a tale or legend] is the unfigured sense of meaning of the Allegory" (Blair 1: 367). He called for "The proper mixture of light and shade," a familiar phrase in Hawthorne's work, "the exact adjustment of all the figurative circumstances with the literal sense, so as neither to lay the meaning too bare and open, nor to cover and wrap it up too much..." (Blair 1: 367). This describes Hawthorne's often stated formula for allegory and symbol.

37. Hawthorne put it this way in his introductory statements to "Rappaccini's Daughter": His fictions are sometimes historical, sometimes of the present day, and sometimes, so far as can be discovered, have little or no reference either to time or space. In any case, he generally contents himself with a very slight embroidery of outward manners,--the faintest possible counterfeit of real life,--and endeavors to create an interest by some less obvious peculiarity of the subject" (CW 10: 92).

Blair's Rhetoric (1898), popular during Hawthorne's educational years, mentions romances and novels under the broader category, "fictitious histories" (Blair 3: 70). Blair describes their function: "Fictitious Histories might be employed for very useful purposes. They furnish one of the best channels for conveying instruction, for painting human life and manners, for showing the errors into which we are betrayed by our passions, for rendering virtue amiable and vice odious. The effect of well contrived stories,

towards accomplishing these purposes, is stronger than any effect that can be produced by simple and naked instruction" (Blair 3: 70).

38. Matthiessen comments on the value Hawthorne placed on ambiguity, or multiple explanations, in his tales and romances in a discussion on the symbolism of the letter "A" in The Scarlet Letter. He concludes, "Hawthorne leaves his reader to choose among these theories. He does not literally accept his own allegory, and yet he finds it symbolically valid because of its psychological exactitude" (Matthiessen 277).

39. Hawthorne establish this same kind of distance from the actual in each of his Prefaces to his other romances. The comments are quite extensive in The House of the Seven Gables Preface. There he professes that he would rather not have ascribed an "actual locality to the imaginative events of the narrative," that he intends no novelistic description of "local manners nor... characteristics of a community," and that the "personages...are really of the Author's own making, or at all events, of his own mixing" (CW 2: 3). He advises his readers that 'the book may be read strictly as a Romance... (CW 2: 3). The Blithedale Romance, Hawthorne asserts, is a "not very faithful shadowing of Brook Farm, in Roxbury" though he cannot deny having "this Community in mind" in order to give more "lifelike tint to the fancy sketch" (CW 3: 1). His purpose for using this setting is likewise to provide distance, "to establish a theatre, a little removed" from ordinary life "where creatures of his brain may play their phantasmagorical antics, without exposing them to too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives" (CW 3: 1). The Marble Faun, Hawthorne insists, is again not a novelistic "portraiture of Italian manners and character" (CW 4: 3). Instead, he values the Italian setting for "affording a sort of poetic or fairy precinct, where the actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon..." (CW 4: 3). He thanks two sculptor friends for lending their "works in marble," but claims that "while stealing their designs, the Author has not taken a similar liberty with the personal characters of either of these gifted Sculptors; his own Man of Marble being entirely imaginary" (CW 4: 4). Conjoined with many details of Hawthorne's longer fictional works, too numerous to mention here, these disclaimers to reality clearly place Hawthorne's fiction in the realm of romance, as late eighteenth-and early to mid-nineteenth-century writers defined their fiction, rather than in a novelistic tradition of manners, the probable, and the possible.

40. Hawthorne describes his use of symbols in "The Old Manse" in writing about a river: "let it be a symbol that the earthliest human soul has an infinite spiritual

capacity, and may contain the better world within its depths. But indeed, the some lesson might be drawn out of any mud-puddle in the streets of a city--and, being taught us everywhere, it must be true" (CW 10: 8). His last line connotes his belief that every object symbolizes or points to another reality, a higher sphere of manifestation.

41. In the essay "Hawthorne," James comments that Hawthorne's fictional characters "are all figures rather than characters--they are all pictures rather than persons...They are all types, to the author's mind, of something general, of something that is bound up with the history, at large, of families and individuals...(Wilson 521). He asserts that Hawthorne's Zenobia, in The Blithedale Romance, is "his only very definite attempt at the representation of a character. The portraits is full of alteration an embellishment; but it has a greater reality, a greater abundance of detail, than any of his other figures..." (Wilson 487).

42. Quoted in Matthiessen 242.

43. He once observed that his daughter's "sensibility is more readily awakened by fiction than realities" (CW 8: 415). Later he noted that "A plaything should be suggestive to the child's imagination, but merely suggestive; and the more work it leaves the imagination to do, the better will the child be occupied and satisfied" (CW 8: 428). These comments together imply the general direction of Hawthorne's theory of fiction. Fiction awakens the sensibilities through exercising the imagination. Ambiguity in a "plaything," as in recreational reading, becomes important to both developing the human heart--that is, human sensibilities or sympathy--and the intellect through the use of imagination. An ambiguous quality in art or in objects offer the opportunity for moral and intellectual development.

44. The three conclusions of Hawthorne's longer romances, The Scarlet Letter, The Blithedale Romance, and The Marble Faun, in particular, each provide ambiguities which the romancer refuses to resolve, despite his readers' urging. (Hawthorne did write an afterward to The Marble Faun which explained many of the complicated events in the later part of the romance. But he refused to explain Donatello's odd physical appearance.) Many of his best tales utilize ambiguity for their effect. This is true of "The Minister's Black Veil," "Young Goodman Brown," and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux."

45. Hawthorne's tale, "Alice Doane's Appeal" documents an artist's attempt to "assist the imagination in appealing to the heart" in his search for a tale which will elicit the desired effect (CW 11: 280).

46. Hawthorne writes about Aylmer: "It was the sad confession, and continual exemplification, of the shortcomings of the composite man--the spirit burthened with clay and working in matter--and of the despair that assails the higher nature, at finding itself so miserably thwarted by the earthly part. Perhaps every man of genius, in whatever sphere, might recognize the image of his own experience in Aylmer's journal" (CW 10: 49).

47. The past tyrannizes, according to Hawthorne. He writes in The American Notebooks: "Dead Men's opinions in all things control the living truth; we believe in Dead Men's religion; we laugh at Dead Men's jokes; we cry at Dead men's pathos; everywhere and in all matters, Dead Men tyrannize inexorably over us" (CW 8: 252).

48. Hawthorne comments about Owen Warland's achievement as an artist: "He had caught a far other butterfly than this. When the artist rose high enough to achieve the Beautiful, the symbol by which he made it perceptible to mortal senses became of little value in his eyes, while his spirit possessed itself in the enjoyment of the Reality" (CW 10: 475).

49. For example, Hawthorne's last line in The House of the Seven Gables Preface, states that the author "would be glad, therefore, if...the book may be read strictly as a Romance..." (CW 2: 3). His comments in both The Blithedale Romance and The Marble Faun Prefaces each argue for the romancer's latitude and that his audience likewise distance itself from actual reality in reading his fiction. His Preface to Twice-told Tales reads: "The Book, if you would see anything in it, requires to be read in the clear, brown, twilight atmosphere in which it was written; if opened in the sunshine, it is apt to look exceedingly like a volume of blank pages" (CW 9: 5).

50. Wilson 434.

51. Henry James, "The Art of Fiction," Critical Theory Since Plato ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971) 667. Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text using the abbreviation CP and the page number in parentheses.

52. The feminine, past participle "donnee" means either subject, motif, or theme.

53. Emily Budick, Engendering Romance: Women Writers and the Hawthorne Tradition 1850-1990 (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994) 107-13.

54. Ruland, Storied 450.

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