The American Claimant Theme in the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James and Mark Twain

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Abstract

The notion of Americans laying claim to British titles and estates has been widely treated by authors on both sides of the Atlantic, a literary conceit often imagined as a legal phenomenon but seldom pursued beyond the pages of imaginative literature. This dissertation considers the aesthetic, psychological and historical resonance of the American 'claimant' theme in the published and abandoned work of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James and Mark Twain, with reference to other nineteenth-century authors who explored the same thematic ground.

In Hawthorne's writing, the revolutionary's aspiration to transcend cultural determinism and establish a new cultural tradition frequently vies with the conservative enticement of the Old World's apparently timeless certainties and rich cultural heritage. In *The American Claimant Manuscripts, The Elixir of Life Manuscripts, English Notebooks* and in *Our Old Home*, Hawthorne depicts and reveals the New World's crises of originality and identity. Similar dilemmas identified with the American condition would imaginatively engage both James ("A Passionate Pilgrim", *The Sense of the Past*) and Twain (the Colonel Sellers fictions from *The Gilded Age* to *The American Claimant, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, Is Shakespeare Dead?: From My Autobiography*) and persist as a recurrent trope of Anglo-American fiction. Travel is central to the claimant trope, and the trope in turn may be seen to shape many narratives of transatlantic journeys: Hawthorne's *Our Old Home*, James's *The American Scene* and Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* are considered in this context as 'claimant' narratives.

The questions of cultural inheritance and legitimacy raised in these texts continue to resound in the heated contemporary debates surrounding the construction of national identities, multicultural studies and the traditional canon. The thesis interrogates the intertextual relationships among these works and considers the position of each in relation to the discourse and dynamics of national identity current in mid-to-late nineteenth-century British and American culture.
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Preface

The odd persistence of the American claimant in nineteenth century fiction first came to my attention while reading for the MA in Anglo-American literary relations at University College London. The basic plot of an American protagonist who returns to the Old World to claim an inheritance superficially suggests a reactionary and sentimental fable. Such genealogical family dramas imply a search, contrary to civic sentiment in post-Revolutionary America, for confirmed privilege and priority. Claimant narratives were perhaps unsurprising when presented as a wish-fulfilling fantasy for popular magazines, but more curious when taken up in earnest by such major authors as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James and Mark Twain, writers who self-consciously sought to assert and examine cultural difference.

At first glance, the trope seems uneasily positioned in opposition to the century's dominant national discourse about establishing an emphatically American literature and cultural identity. Reviewing critical considerations of the American claimant fictions, I became aware of a common, seemingly extra-literary critical assumption about the authors of these works. Time and again, these narratives have served to reinforce anxious critical interrogations into the "divided loyalties" of their authors. It is a phrase which seems to privilege a national and political evaluation of canonical American authors, calling into
question their allegiance to republican principles. Such studies as Marius Bewley's *The Complex Fate: Hawthorne, Henry James and Some Other American Writers* (1952), Howard Baetzhold's *Mark Twain and John Bull: The British Connection* (1970) and Frederick Newberry's *Hawthorne's Divided Loyalties: England and America in His Works* (1987) are just a few of many critical texts which over the past fifty years have insistently identified as ambivalence about nationality what might perhaps more appropriately be seen as ambivalence about nationalism.

Because the question of national loyalty seemed to me too reductive and divisive, I wanted to examine the literary career of the American claimant within the context of recent discussions about nationalism, evaluating the trope's participation in or resistance to an ongoing nationalist discourse. Such disparate works as Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, Jean-François Lyotard's "Notes on Legitimation" and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* all privilege the role of language and literature in creating the conditions of culture for emerging, post-colonial societies. In this respect, these texts seem to affirm Percy Bysshe Shelley's early nineteenth-century assertion in *A Defence of Poetry* (1840) that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (1951, 583) and to reflect back upon even older discussions about
mimesis and whether art merely imitates life, or whether, in certain instances, life may sometimes imitate art.

In *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, the historian Eric Hobsbawm challenges such exclusive emphasis on language and literature, asserting that language "was merely one, and not necessarily the primary way of distinguishing between cultural communities" (Hobsbawm 1990, 58-59). He is moreover sceptical of the concept that nationalism is an innate and necessary process in the development of a culture. "Nationalism," he maintains, "requires too much belief in what is patently not so." (12). Such scepticism is presumably what historical narratives responding to a nationalist discourse must attempt to subdue.

I was curious to see how these recent contentions were supported or challenged by the literary experience of nineteenth-century America in general and by the American claimant plot in particular. What is the function of the obviously conflicted nationalist discourse manifested in the American claimant theme?

In some respects, my inquiry attempts to respond to Said's challenge to the "cultural intellectual":

...not to accept the politics of identity as given, but to show how all representations are constructed, for what purpose, by whom, and with what components (Said 1993, 380).

My own Anglophone migration would seem in some ironic sense to confirm the contentions of Said and Benedict. As an American
studying American literature in England, I am focusing on narratives reflecting a transnational experience which, in terms of cultural influence rather than genealogical inheritance, in some respects parallels my own. I acknowledge my own predisposition to cultural assumptions shaped by English literature as well as by American literature which engages with an experience of Europe and Great Britain. I was intrigued by the opportunity to study this thematic category of American literature at one remove from its national context but more generally within the arena of transnational cultural comparison, an exercise which hopefully has helped to generate less heat and more light than might otherwise have resulted.

My own critical perspective remains one of responsiveness to the intertextual and cultural connections between authors and texts produced under varying social conditions and for different audiences, I am sceptical of the absolute value of any single critical theory or method. My study considers the historical, biographical and intertextual influences upon the primary texts taking up the theme of the American claimant and the cultural problems these works address and reflect. I have also focused on related travel literature in which the traveller is depicted as a type of cultural claimant, providing an occasion to consider and relate experiences of cultural difference. These experiences are further expanded and personified in the claimant fictions. In some respects, the subject is one of successful travelogues and failed
fictions, yet in this instance ambitious failure may be as instructive and interesting as the more satisfying travel narratives. While the claimant theme seems to invite a Freudian reading of Oedipal influence in the relevant works and life of each author, the achievements of previous critics and biographers working in this vein would make similar reassessment superfluous; I acknowledge in passing valid aspects of Freudian interpretation but shall not pursue an extended Freudian or neo-Freudian analysis of the claimant trope.

As the American claimant theme seems so immediately to address concerns about cultural influence and originality, I propose to examine what these texts suggest about the conditions of American culture, and consider what effects such works have had as cultural terms engaged in the nineteenth century's discourse on nationalism. The conclusions I have reached are more descriptive than diagnostically prescriptive, which seems most appropriately in line with a heterodox critical approach.

Over more years than originally anticipated, my research has benefitted from discussions with a considerable number of individuals on both sides of the Atlantic. Preliminary versions of some of the following chapters were presented in graduate seminars at University College London. In particular, I am grateful to my supervisors Philip Horne and Daniel Karlin for their patience and sustained interest, their rigorous attention to defects of style or logic, their generosity in sharing aspects of their own research, and for
numerous suggestions and notes of literary comparison along the way. Dan Jacobson was instrumental in helping to initiate this project, and has continued to offer generous encouragement and support. James Winchell's American enthusiasm for the project and his wide-ranging knowledge and interest in both Old and New World literatures helped inspire and sustain my own commitment to the complexities of a multicultural thematic study. The advice of Charlotte Mitchell and Millicent Bell was particularly helpful in the early stages of my research. My work has benefited from Beverly Haviland's astute assessment, based on her own extensive research into Henry James's late American travelogue, *The American Scene*. Tamara Follini, Doris Francis, Cynthia Kraman, and Alice Hiller have all served as sounding boards whose interest, suggestions and unflagging friendship have served to enrich both the process and the product of my research.

Special thanks must also go to the librarians and staff of Harvard's Houghton Library, the Beinecke Library at Yale, the Butler Library at Columbia University, the Pierpont Morgan Library, the New York Public Library's Berg Collection and its Rare Books and Manuscripts Division. All were particularly indulgent in permitting me to cast my research nets wide enough to accommodate a thematic study involving a diverse assembly of authors over an extended period of time. The staff of Oxford University's Bodleian Library and English Faculty Library as well as the British Library, University College Library and Senate House Library were instrumental to my research over a number of years.

In practical terms, my work was made financially feasible by a full studentship
award from the British Academy. It has been further enhanced by research travel stipends from the British Academy and from the Department of English at UCL.

Greatest personal encouragement and technical support has been provided by my husband Paul, with whom I continue to explore the subtleties and occasional absurdities of Anglo-American cultural difference. Finally, I also wish to acknowledge the enriching influence upon this study of my son Samuel, a rewarding and welcome diversion from long-term scholarly pursuits.
Chapter I

INEXPERIENCE AND IDENTITY: THE ANOMALY OF THE AMERICAN CLAIMANT IN NATIONAL LITERARY DISCOURSE

The incandescent achievements of nineteenth-century American literature both reflected and helped to shape the young society's quest for a coherent national identity, a history and a literature describing a distinct American experience. In the 1830's such prominent authors as William Ellery Channing, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow called stridently for a national literature to record and to validate the experiment of American society.¹ This discourse of national identity has been perpetuated by generations of critics who have sought to define the character of American literature; it appears that the American quest for a distinct national persona (and by implication, legitimacy) continues to the present day. Special attention in this regard has been paid to the American novel, which has been presented as a recurring narrative of the individual's flight from society, or a study in

¹ Longfellow expressed this issue as an urgent cultural priority first in his commencement address at Bowdoin College in 1825 and again in a critical essay on Sidney's Defence of Poesie for the North American Review in 1832. William Ellery Channing extended the discussion in his "Remarks on a National Literature" (1834), and Emerson persuasively restated these views in his own well-known manifesto "The American Scholar", published in 1837.
narcissism, or a flight from the rational realm into the irrational wilderness of romantic sensation. American fiction is epic, or Promethean, or obsessed with its own Edenic innocence and supposed loss of that innocence. Whether or not such generalisations are interesting or helpful, all are founded on pre-existing literary models, the traditional mode of literary historicism.

Rather than attempting to add yet another broad definition of character to the study of American literature, the chapters which follow will consider a single theme which both attracted and ultimately defeated some of the most prominent figures of nineteenth-century literature. To some degree, this intertextual approach is informed by the structuralist aesthetic summarised by Frederic Jameson:

Such a notion of a grammar of plots suggests that as in the history of ideas so in literature also we may see the work of a generation or of a period in terms of a given model (or basic plot paradigm), which is then varied and articulated in as many ways as possible until it is somehow exhausted and replaced by a new one. Such a notion has the advantage of grounding the idea of novelty and of innovation (of which we have seen how essential a motor of the literary process the Formalists thought it to be) in the very structure of the literary object itself, rather than in the psychology of its creators (1972, 129).

The theme of the American who travels to Europe to claim an inheritance emerged out of such eighteenth-century treatments as Voltaire's *l'Ingénü*, translations of which appeared in English as

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2 The Classiques Larousse edition of *l'Ingénü* contains
early as 1768, and Robert Bage's *Hermsprong, or Man as He is Not*, written in 1796. In both these works the protagonist returns to the Old World to claim his inheritance after a childhood spent among Indians in America. Voltaire's work is an expression of revolutionary philosophy; Bage's novel, inspired by the radical views of William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (originally titled *Things as They Are: or the Adventures of Caleb Williams*) aimed its barbs at the aristocracy and clergy but stopped well short of advocating a complete change in the established social order. *Hermsprong* may have directly influenced Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* but proved unpopular in an anti-Jacobin cultural climate and was seldom reprinted.

Discarding the conceit of the American as a man of nature shaped by native American influence, William Makepeace Thackeray took up the claimant theme in *The Virginians*, his cumbersome sequel to an English

an editorial digression on the work’s thematic predecessors, citing Maubert de Gouvest's *les Lettres iroquoises* (1752) and Joubert de La Rue’s *Lettres d’un sauvage dépaysé à son correspondant en Amérique* (1746) as examples of works in which a ‘savage’ comes to France to gain a first-hand familiarity with French morals and then departs with his curiosity satisfied:


3 Marilyn Butler discusses the possibility of the novel's influence upon Austen in *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975, 85).
claimant novel, *The History of Henry Esmond*. Composed and issued in serial numbers throughout 1857, 1858 and 1859, *The Virginians* is probably the most formless and desperately digressive of his major works. One frequently repeated though possibly apocryphal anecdote suggests that Thackeray himself declared the work to be the worst novel he ever wrote.4

Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, the American claimant theme would prove to be as great a literary stumbling block for America's leading writers as it had been for Thackeray. Undeterred and possibly even stimulated by increasingly disappointing instalments of *The Virginians*, Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1858 sketched out a legend-based variation of the theme for a novel set in England which he envisaged as "the crowning achievement" of his career. Upon his return from Europe to the U.S. in 1860, he took up the theme in earnest. The American claimant continued to haunt him through subsequent extended drafts for three separate projects, but full development proved elusive, he never completed another fictional work.

Henry James seized upon the theme at the beginning and end of his career. Over the years he would write, rewrite and revise his early tale, "A Passionate Pilgrim," five separate times for new editions. *The Sense of the Past*, a novel treating the claimant trope as a supernatural experience in time travel, remained unfinished at the time of his death.

Samuel Clemens approached the theme in an 1883 stage collaboration with

4 Thackeray's reported observation is included in John Sutherland's *Thackeray at Work* (1974, 89).
William Dean Howells; Clemens's subsequent revision of the play in his novel The American Claimant appeared in 1892. He attempted another, more fantastic variation on the theme in A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court, published in 1889. All three efforts are broadly comedic in tone, yet each creates a hollow, formulaic impression in comparison with such works as The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

In addition, all three authors also wrote travel narratives in which the traveller is presented as a type of cultural claimant, both courting and resisting the influence of his immediate surroundings. Hawthorne's Our Old Home, James's The American Scene and Clemens's The Innocents Abroad are all compelling and immediate depictions of the traveller as would-be cultural inheritor, the trope employed more successfully as a reflection on travel experience than when translated into a literal inheritance fiction.

While acknowledged masters of nineteenth-century British and American literature foundered on this seemingly irresistible question of Anglo-American inheritance, a more middle-brow writer, Frances Hodgson Burnett, scored an enormous success in 1886 with her sentimental children's tale Little Lord Fauntleroy, which relates the fortunes of a seven-year old American orphan summoned to England by an aristocratic grandfather and the tonic moral and emotional effect of the boy's democratic and open, affectionate nature upon the English earl. Burnett later revisited the claimant theme in The Shuttle (1907) and T. Tembarom (1913), two neglected novels focused
on adult American heirs. The burgeoning market of Anglo-American middle-brow literature embraced the American claimant trope from the mid-nineteenth century onward. An American claimant subplot is developed in the second half of Charlotte M. Yonge's *The Pillars of the House* (1873) and its much later sequel *The Long Vacation* (1895). In Yonge's *Lady Hester* (1874) the would-be heir is a woman. In popular fiction the American claimant survived into the twentieth century and seems to have found a comfortable niche as women's magazine fodder in such tales as "Her Hero" (1914), a very overstated short tale by the British popular fiction writer Ethel M. Dell. Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) inspired a spate of subsequent claimant detective stories featuring long-lost, though not necessarily American, heirs. Kipling also invoked the claimant formula. In his story "An Habitation Enforced" (1909), the English land seems to claim back an American, who has not actively sought the inheritance.

What is the fateful allure of a theme that overmastered the likes of Hawthorne, James and Twain, the literary masters seemingly most self-consciously aware of their position as cultural initiators? Within the American claimant's scope lie all the unresolved teleological paradoxes of creation: questions of authority and legitimacy, cultural relativism and cultural determinism, representation and transformation. The theme bears
with it the potential psychological charges of loss and exclusion, transgression and guilt, fragmentation and forgetting. The American claimant interrogates the potential for validation of self from external or original sources, weighs the established values of being versus the uncertain aspirations of becoming, asserts difference from the very other to which he would seek to trace his identity. The trope affords the occasion for a consideration of aesthetic potential and value. For Hawthorne and his literary heirs, the American claimant narrative provided a fertile site for post-Enlightenment anxieties, a vein of contradictions which proved difficult to reconcile or aesthetically resolve. By examining the challenges that the claimant theme presented to each of these authors, this study hopes to identify some of the boundaries and limitations of their cultural and aesthetic New World project.
The Claimant's Contexts

As Emerson observed at the outset of "Nature", the essay which would become his manifesto of Transcendentalism:

Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? (Emerson 1982, 35).

In this short opening salvo Emerson both romanticises the past as an heroic Golden Age and suggests the impetus of nineteenth-century historicism. In an era of accelerating cultural change, narratives of national and racial identity were under construction in both Europe and America which would assume and describe distinct boundaries between cultures. Within such disciplines as archaeology, art history, philology and anthropology, the historians of both the Old and New World sought escape from uncertainties regarding cultural and moral authority and origin, uncertainties engendered at least in part by the escape of the New World experiment from its inventors.

In the destabilised dynamic between Europe and America, almost everything could seem up for grabs. Unsettled future farmland and Californian gold might be had merely by staking a claim to new territory. Populations remained transient, as emigrants and prospectors sought fresh opportunities. A London Times report from
California on September 25, 1855 suggests the vast scope for such
claims in the western United States. The *Times* correspondent notes
the value of gold shipments over four "steamer days" at almost
$2.5 million per shipment. "The 'yield' of gold," the reporter
enthuses, "exceeds all calculation" (*The Times*, 25 September 1855,
8, e-f). The correspondent goes on to report on a different type of frontier
speculation, the problem posed by the sensational "Lemantour claim" made
by a Frenchman living in Mexico City. Lemantour apparently held a grant
to the greater proportion of the city of San Francisco, a claim he had allowed
to lie dormant until roughly half the city had been erected upon 'his' land.

This American climate of rampant speculation was symptomatic
of a more widespread sense of cultural and social dislocation, a condition
aesthetically appropriated and personified in the bastard narrative form of the novel,
which by the late eighteenth century was already awash with picaresque tales of
lovable, illegitimate rogues who turn out to be of noble blood. Fielding and Dickens
were both enamoured of genealogical mysteries and populated their fictions with
English claimants; the social outcasts of the eighteenth-century narratives were
genteelly reformed as the pathetic orphans of Victorian fiction.

American literature is rife with references to claims and
claimants, the language of a new society attempting to establish
a rule of law. At the time of the American revolution, the
former colonies adopted the common and statute law of England as
it stood at 19 April 1775, insofar as it was found suited to
American conditions; by 1840 English common law was firmly established as the basis of U.S. law. The practice of such law, however, was far from straightforward, as the vast majority of trained legal practitioners had returned to Britain at the time of the revolution. Prior to 1850, the educational requirements for admission to the American Bar have been described as ranging from lax to non-existent. The American Bar Association was not formed until 1878; a canon of professional ethics was adopted thirty years later (Walker 1980, 1263).

The development of the American legal system within an era of widespread and largely unrestricted speculation gave rise to a new and rather litigious popular legal consciousness. Under the rule of American law, legal redress was to be made readily available to all. In a land where almost anyone could be a self-appointed legal practitioner and each and everyone with a claim or grievance could become a participating 'claimant' in the secular ritual of the legal process, the language of the courtroom soon spread into general public use.

The etymology of "claimant" - a specialised legal term used to describe those individuals who resort to law to restore or establish justice - suggests that such individuals are a relatively recent formal manifestation of much older and fundamental concerns about order and authority, ownership and
identity derived from a common vernacular source. The *Oxford English Dictionary* traces the philological origin of the legal term 'claimant' through the much earlier verb form 'to claim' and subject form 'claim'. As a verb, the word descends from the Latin: "clama -re: to cry out, call, proclaim, declare aloud, call upon" through the Old French: "claime - accented stem of clame -r (claime -r): to cry, call, appeal, claim".\(^5\) An extensive entry - including six separate definitions detailing nuances of long obsolete meaning - serves to suggest the importance accorded this action and places it among the most fundamental of speech acts. The transitive verb was also used around 1300 in the sense "to call, name, proclaim." [Emphasis added.] Prior to 1884, one *OED* lexicographer discerned a degree of distinction between British and American usage: "Often loosely used (esp. in U.S) for: 'Contend, maintain, assert'. (F. Hall)" The earliest citations in English make use of the term in the context of inheritance, as Sir Beues is reported to have written around 1300: "He...come...And cleime...his eritage." By 1704 John Locke was using the word in teleological speculations upon the origin of political and social structures: "How the first ruler, from whom any one claims, came by his authority."

The New World added new meaning to the subject form derived from the verb. According to the *OED*, references to "that which is claimed [...] e.g.] a piece of land allotted and taken, esp. for mining purposes" as a "claim" is a signification particular to the United States and Australia.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, published in 1851, makes early reference to the villainous Colonel Pyncheon as the "claimant" in a disputed inheritance case concerning the lost deed to a vast American property (Hawthorne 1983, 356). The *OED* entry under 'claimant', "A quasi Law term, on the analogy of appellant, defendant, etc..." observes that in general British usage the word was particularly applied to the notorious Tichborne 'claimant' case of the 1870's, during which 'claimant' came into common use in Victorian drawing rooms.

The Tichborne case - actually two cases which intermittently occupied the High Court from May 1871 to the end of February 1874 - became a cause célèbre which generally divided along class lines, a claim reported in countless newspaper columns and pamphlets, the subject of caricatures and long-forgotten music-hall sketches. Although no Americans were directly involved, the case exhibited some mysterious New World complications, the implications of which were of considerable interest to such writers as Samuel Clemens.

Roger Tichborne, the heir to the Tichborne baronetcy, disappeared on a ship sailing from Rio to Mexico in 1854. In 1865 Arthur Orton (alias Tom Castro),
a bankrupt butcher, wrote from Australia in response to an advertisement for the
missing heir placed by Tichborne's mother. In 1874 the claimant, convicted of
perjury, was sentenced to 14 years of penal servitude. Released ten years
later, he supposedly "remained determined to press his claims", travelled to
the U.S. and died in poverty in 1898, his death reported as accompanied by a final
confession of his imposture.  

The British Library's collection of seventeen pamphlets supporting
the soi-disant Baronet's claim reflects an increasingly desperate bid to provide
conclusive proof of identity. Among the many 'proofs' itemised for public
consideration are stereoscopic photos providing a "Facial Test",
handwriting comparisons and a bizarre tract entitled The Tichborne
Malformation (intended for the Perusal of Men Only). This sensational
document reveals that according to medical witnesses the claimant had a most
unusual distinguishing feature - an abnormally retracting penis.

Publisher Chatto & Windus obviously sought to capitalise
on interest in the Tichborne case in an anonymous work which
further historicises the claimant phenomenon. Celebrated Claimants:
Ancient and Modern (1873) relates the purported histories of
thirty-four claimants - most ultimately thought to be impostors -
from 1450 to the 1860s. Among these 'historical' cases only three
have any American connection and in each case the New World only

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6 Michael Gilbert details the Tichborne claimant's trial and
subsequent career in The Claimant (1957).
coincidentally provides a place of exile or the source of a
property dispute; none involve individuals of known American
origin laying historical claim to the Old World estates and
titles of their ancestors. One of the more fantastic cases of
disputed identity highlighted within this peculiar compendium is
that of Eleazar Williams, a missionary to American Indians,
first presented by an article in *Putnam's Magazine* as a pretender
to the title of Louis XVII. The article's romantic premise,
somewhat reminiscent of Voltaire's *L'Ingénu* and quite possibly the source,
decades later, of the Dauphin in *Huckleberry Finn*, suggests that the
infant heir to the throne of France had been brought covertly to
America where he was raised by an Iroquois chief. This claim
was not plucked from the annals of legal history but was initially
presented within the pages of a new magazine trying to boost its
circulation; the exiled heir was reported to have nobly renounced any
claim to royal inheritance.

The prospect of coming into unforeseen fortunes left by
unknown ancestors is in many ways a more enticing fantasy than
that of striking gold or gaining wealth in any other sudden
fashion; it implies outside recognition and appointment, the
confirmation of the individual's inherent, unearned and
enduring value, an historical connection with a distinguished
bloodline. For the uprooted and displaced of the New World, the
fantasy affords a gratifying and reassuring sense of certainty about the past and those family bonds severed by emigration, as well as providing an *a priori* confirmation of individual worth, an illustrious tribal identity and position firmly secured for the future. Thus do the certainties of social determinism appeal to even the staunchest democrat, from self-made man to n'er-do-well, assuming that the lineage so determined places one among the foremost ranks of feudal society. A mere century after the American Revolution, this wish-fulfilling fantasy must have seemed only remotely plausible to many Americans, even though the majority would have known or suspected that for their immigrant ancestors all opportunity lay in the future. The emigrants' motivating certainty, the bleakest of convictions behind their profound upheaval and dislocation, was that the society of their ancestors no longer afforded more than a faint prospect of improving their lot. Within a few generations, perhaps even within the immigrant's lifetime, this conviction might be cast into doubt. Isolated from historical certainties and an established *status quo*, Americans could begin to speculate upon the prospects of the past as well as those of the future. The search for national and personal identity would be retrospective as well as progressive.

It seems reasonable to suppose that just as modern American tourists continue to trace their genealogies in quest of heraldic
crests and family seats, so the fantasy of inheriting a ready-made position and British identity proved a popular daydream in nineteenth-century America. The public response to such popular claimant fictions as *Little Lord Fauntleroy* would seem to reinforce this view. Yet idle fantasies of heraldry and castles are one thing, legal claims to British titles and estates quite another. The American claimant as rightful heir had very little prospect of successfully prosecuting a claim, so it is doubtful that many such suits were initiated. Although Hawthorne, recalling his period as U.S. consul in Liverpool, would both describe and denounce "this diseased American appetite for English soil" (Hawthorne 1970, 20), his notebooks record only three encounters with potential American claimants in more than three years of official dealings with his countrymen and women in Britain. No coverage concerning any such claims, cases or successful prosecutions appeared in *The Times* of London throughout the years of Hawthorne's residence in England. Had an American been granted title to any significant British property, either in or out of court, the case would almost certainly have aroused press attention on both sides of the Atlantic.

As an imaginary construct, the would-be recognised heir to an English inheritance emerges time and again in nineteenth-

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7 Of 240 reports on claimants which appeared in the London Times from July 1824 to September 1898, the vast majority concern the Tichborne claimant, while 54 cover other claims. Of these, only two had any American connection (Palmer's Index to The Times 1790-1905, 1995).
century American literature. As an historical figure, the American claimant remains a phantom whose dream of inheritance was discouraged by the acts and actuality of British law. Dampening the aspiring heir's enthusiasm in the first instance would have been the actual time and expense involved in bringing such a suit. In *Bleak House*, Dickens memorably satirises the financially ruinous pace of a disputed inheritance case brought to languish for generations in the Court of Chancery. In the mid-nineteenth century, British testamentary law was reformed to transfer jurisdiction over wills of real estate from the Ecclesiastical Courts to the Court of Chancery, which already presided over the probate of wills of personal estate. The proposed reform attracted considerable criticism, perhaps most succinctly expressed in a letter to the Editor which appeared in the *Times* on 10 March 1854 from a reader identifying himself only as "A Trustee and Executor". The writer concludes:

One thing, however, is certain: if the proposed bill becomes law, the whole real and personal property of the nation will have got into the Court of Chancery as soon as the present generation has passed away; but another thing is by no means certain - that the next generation will not also have passed away before it has got out of the Court of Chancery (*The Times*, 10 March 1854, II, c.).

The American claimant's attempt to realise a British patrimony through the legal system was doomed to failure for another, even more definitive reason: it was against the
letter of British inheritance law, which prior to 1914 conformed to the common law decree that no descent could be traced through an alien ancestor (Halsbury's Laws of England 1952, 504).

As aliens, Americans might still be entitled to legacies of personal estate, including the proceeds of the sale of land specified by a testator's will as devised upon trust for sale. But legal obstacles precluded the possibility of the sort of entitlement and recognition of kinship which the American claimant desired.

Before 1870 British subjects were legally discouraged from naming aliens as beneficiaries of real property:

Where a trust of freehold lands was, before 1870, created by will in favour of an alien, the beneficial interest passed to the Crown and the Court of Chancery would enforce such a trust in the Crown's favour (Ibid., 504).

There was however a rare exception to this ruling:

American citizens who held lands in Great Britain on the 28th October, 1795, and their heirs and assigns, are, under the treaty of 1794 between Great Britain and America, and the Act 37 Geo. 3, c. 97, at all times to be considered in respect of such lands as native subjects of Great Britain (Chitty's Annual Statutes 1914, 10).*

Some potential scope remained for the American claimant, but only for those whose ancestors had preferred the rigours of existence in

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* The text refers to specific applications of the treaty in the case of Sutton v. Sutton (1830) (Russ & M. 663); and Doe d. Stansbury v. Arkwright (1833) (5 C.&P., 575).
the newly formed United States to the more amenable life of most property holders in Britain, presumably only an exceptional few would have continued to hold real assets in Britain nearly two decades after the Revolution.

Given the legal restrictions placed upon their prospects, it is perhaps understandable that American claimants are notable by their absence within the volumes of British legal case histories. A precedent-making instance in which an American claimant did emerge from the legal thicket is the case of *Rittson v Stordy*, considered by the court in 1855 and on appeal in 1856. An American, Thomas Harrison, was entered as the defendant in a case brought by a distant English relation, Elizabeth Rittson and further complicated by the claim of the British trustee Stordy. All claimed to be entitled to real estate in England specifically devised to the testator's "heir-at-law of my heir-at-law now in America, his heirs and assigns, for ever."

The American claimant, although acknowledged by the court as the individual clearly indicated in the testator's will, was found unable to inherit because his father, born in Philadelphia in 1773, had continued to reside in the United States until his death. "John Harrison," the court reasoned:

> was an alien, and therefore had no inheritable blood in him; and if he could not take, much less can his son, the Defendant, Thomas Harrison, inherit ("Rittson v. Stordy" 3Sm & Giff, 230; reprinted in *English Reports* 1906, 65, 638).

The defendant's claim was thus easily disallowed, the true difficulties of the case residing in resolving whether the Crown,
the trustee or the surviving English heir were entitled to the
estate. The Court concluded in the first case that the Crown had
no right to benefit by the trust in favour of an alien, that the
trustees were not legally entitled to benefit and that the result
was that of an intestacy, in favour of the English heir-at-law.
This result was upheld on an appeal by the Crown (The Jurist, New
Series 1857, II, part I, 410). The American claimant of no inheritable
blood was ordered to bear his own costs in a case which had taken
twenty-nine years to resolve.

If American fantasies of British inheritance were sometimes
encouraged by unscrupulous or inexperienced practitioners of
American law, British law clearly prevented such claimants
from inheriting any real property in Britain, even when the
claimant was the appointed heir in his British ancestor's will.
Where no ancestral testament supported his claims, the chances of
inheritance effectively went from nought to nil. What evidence
there is suggests that the American claimant's dream of English
inheritance remained a fantasy more frequently pursued in fiction
than in fact.

The American claimant was truly dispossessed, by circumstance and by
statute, having no inheritable blood. American and English authors would
imaginatively rescind that law, constructing narratives which offer suggestions of
origin and heritage to the otherwise disinherited. The following
chapters will consider the appeal and the problems inherent in the theme and the difficulties the American claimant as a trope of national literature poses for these authors and for Anglo-American culture.
Decades before Samuel Clemens and Henry James Jr. marked important junctures in their literary careers by renaming themselves Mark Twain and Henry James, Nathaniel Hathorne began to toy with an alternative, older spelling of his surname, scribbling the signature Hawthorne as well as Hathorne in his father's notebooks. Around the time that *Fanshawe*, his first romance, was published anonymously, the author changed his family name to the more immediately symbolic, and according to Hawthorne's biographer Edwin Haviland Miller, more antique spelling. This self-authorship was further legitimated by his mother and sisters, who also adopted the 'original' spelling and became Hawthornes (Miller 1991, 84).

Through the process of self-invention implied in the act of renaming themselves, America's most prominent men of letters did not simply don a literary mask or disguise, although that must be considered a significant part of the gesture. They also announced to themselves and to the world the emergence of a self-consciously new cultural order.

The challenge they inherited from the nationalistic fervour of Jacksonian America was bold and largely bluff but nonetheless
problematic: the rudimentary and pragmatic condition of the young American society provided little of aesthetic interest to those Americans schooled in European tastes and sensibilities. For the earliest of prominent American authors, including Emerson, Irving, Cooper, Poe and Melville as well as Hawthorne, the problem of establishing a new literary tradition was particularly acute. None were perhaps as reticent as Hawthorne in expressing the generally perceived need for a national literature.

In his introduction to *The Marble Faun*, published on the eve of the American Civil War in 1860 and set in history-laden Italy, Hawthorne reflects (most probably with a considerable degree of irony) upon his young nation's lack of imaginative possibilities:

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 is 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 (Hawthorne 1983, 854-855).

Although he deftly applauds the nation's narrow range of experience as a social strength, throughout his authorial career Hawthorne would invoke history - both European and American - to suggest a wider frame of cultural significance and potential meaning. In working with the thin stuff of American
material, he would consistently contrive to infuse his settings
with a semblance of antiquity, an historical feeling of
permanence and of generations long passed away. His tales were
never original but always 'Twice-Told'; his American 'Old Manse'
takes on the crumbling aura of a Tudor manor. Within his vision
passages of time expand elastically; decades create the impression
of centuries, centuries do the work of millennia. His fictions
of America are instant antiques. Having scant American tradition
to draw upon, Hawthorne in effect becomes his own ancestor,
imagineing the tales they would have written, had they his benefit
of hindsight, as well as his potential audience of middle-class
readers.

On one level, Hawthorne relies upon this historical sleight-
of-hand to validate the work of a new culture and a new author.
Yet his historicism is more than a shallow authorial pose; it is
also a distancing technique, an explanatory narrative attempt to
objectify - and to create - his cultural position. His aesthetic
lens is always tinted with the hoary patina of imagined, largely
imaginary time. Nina Baym has observed that the author
consistently employed the term "romance" in referring to his
fictions at a time when the terms "novel" and "romance" were used
interchangeably, although "romance" was the description
inevitably associated with older works (Baym 1984, 437).
Hawthorne's historicism has misled such critics as Frederick Newberry, Michael Colacurcio, and Sacvan Bercovitch into narrow interpretations of his works as subtle and scholarly representations of the American Puritan past. Such all-too-literal readings attempt to distil a complex, laborious analysis of specific historical developments from the content of Hawthorne's fictions. They disallow the author's own estimation of his historical scholarship, noted in a letter to Longfellow in 1837:

You give me more credit than I deserve in supposing that I have led a studious life. I have, indeed, turned over a good many books, but in so desultory a way that it cannot be called study, nor has it left me the fruits of study (Hawthorne, *The Letters, 1813-1843*, 1984, XV, 252).

Both Nina Baym and Richard Chase support the view that Hawthorne's historicism is more aesthetic than scholarly. As Chase observes in *The American Novel and its Traditions*:

Hawthorne often gives the illusion of a systematic intellectual prowess, and this has led many readers to find in him an important moralist, political thinker, or theologian. It is an illusion, compounded of his hard-headed sagacity and his scepticism, his observance of elemental human truth. But the unities of his conceptions are first of all aesthetic unities, and Hawthorne tended to take an art-view of the world in so far as he took any consistent view at all. He stubbornly insisted that one could take such a view even in a democracy which appeared to have little use for aesthetic values (Chase 1957, 74).

This "art-view of the world" includes frequent use of literary history. Hawthorne's fictions are inhabited by characters

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9 Baym specifically notes Hawthorne's "lack of interest in the theological niceties" of Puritan history (Baym 1976, 105-112).
reminiscent of myth and fairy tale, motifs and passages alluding
to Dante or Shakespeare, Spenser or Milton or Marvell. Although
these influences are often neglected in studies emphasising
Hawthorne's originality, his works are richly interwoven with the
stuff of European literature. In his recent biography of
Hawthorne, Edward Haviland Miller has observed that at a time
when such contemporaries as Emerson, Thoreau and Melville sprinkled
their prose with the cultural badges of apt, attributed
quotations from the literary canon, Hawthorne avoids any such
direct attribution. Hawthorne embeds (or buries) his influences -
both literary and personal - rather than identifying them. This rich
mixture of textual influences may also help to account for what J. Hillis
Miller has detected as the pattern of catachresis and undecidability
characterising Hawthorne's early tales, which often take the form
of fractured allegories. Yet in such enigmatic tales as "The Minister's
Black Veil", "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" and "Rappaccini's Daughter"
the author is not only "unmasking ideology", as J. Hillis Miller suggests
(1991, 89). By methodically unleashing conflicting cultural signs, Hawthorne
does more than reveal their inherent ideological basis; in his flux between
alternatives resides the suggestion that the antiphony of signifiers might generate a
new (admittedly unstable) signified, which can only be identified and confirmed
by the independent reader. Hawthorne constantly positions and provokes the
reader into making such uneasy decisions, selecting and so ordering his own

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reality from the flux of symbolic narrative alternatives which resist any single-minded reading, be it historical, psychological or mytho-poetic.

It is frequently supposed that Hawthorne's abandoned American claimant project was directly inspired by the wandering, would-be inheritors he encountered in his capacity as U.S. consul in Liverpool, fellow citizens seeking legal acknowledgement of their claims to British rank and property. Hawthorne largely created this impression in an essay recalling his "Consular Experiences", written after his English romance project had been abandoned.

In fact, the consul's immediate encounters with such characters merit only two entries in Hawthorne's English Notebooks, documenting three separate instances of meetings with potential claimants. On December 31st, 1853, four months after taking up his position as consul, Hawthorne observed:

The other day, there came to me, with an introduction from Governor Crosby of Maine, a Mr. John A. Knight, who had come across the Atlantic in attendance on two ladies, claimants of the Booth estate in Cheshire. His information on the subject seems to be of a very vague character; and, no doubt, the claim is wholly untenable. The ladies assume [sic] to be of royal blood, and are apprehensive that the English lawyers will be the less willing to allow their pretensions from a disinclination to admit new members into the royal kin. I think I recorded the visit, a short time ago, of the lady who claims the most valuable part of Liverpool, including the exchange and docks (Stewart 1941, XIII, 43).

If claimants were beating a path to the consulate, Hawthorne does
not record any further visits from similarly deluded individuals
until his *Notebooks* entry of July 8th, 1855, which describes an
interview earlier that week with a Connecticut shopkeeper:

> Besides his desire to see the Queen, he has likewise
(like so many of his countrymen) a fantasy that he
is one of the heirs of a great English inheritance.
[...] I had never such a perception of a complete
booby before in my life; it made me feel kindly to­
ward him, and yet impatient that such a fool should

Although Hawthorne seems to have concluded that the American's
English inheritance fantasy was a common phenomenon, no further
claimant cases are mentioned in the *Notebooks*; only one
previously unrecorded case is added to his claimant roundup
in "Consular Experiences", where he would presumably have wished
to include the most vivid anecdotal specimens of this American
delusion. The phenomenon he observed may have been more
fleetingly entertained than diligently pursued.

The imaginative genesis of Hawthorne's late fiction project
can be traced to a much earlier entry in the young author's
*American Notebooks*, in which he habitually jotted down ideas for
future fictional development: "To Inherit a great fortune. To
Thematic considerations of inheritance and identity are already
uppermost in one of Hawthorne's earliest major tales, "My
Kinsman, Major Molineux", set in pre-revolutionary America.
The historical witness at the center of this early tale is a country boy who comes to town in search of the 'kinsman' who has promised to help him get on in life, only to find that his would-be patron's personal fortunes have been overtaken by historical circumstance - the kinsman has an appointment from the Crown resented by the populace. The young man is a shocked yet passive spectator at the public tar and feathering of his potential benefactor. Robin at the tale's end is free to choose his future situation. He may elect to abandon the microcosm of an urban society in which the overthrow of external authority impairs communication, a society in which language is no longer fully functional in expressing agreed truths. Or he may stay, perilously advancing on his own merits rather than the favours of past authority. In either case, he is the reader's witness to the repression of the Loyalist past. A Freudian interpretation of "My Kinsman" is imperfectly persuasive, for there are unresolvable elements within the tale which both invite and resist such a reading. First published in the annual periodical *The Token* in 1831, the story was excluded from the first two published volumes of Hawthorne's tales and did not reappear in print before the publication of *The Snow-Image and Other Twice Told Tales* in 1851. As Baym has observed, two decades of neglect may indicate some authorial dissatisfaction with the tale.

The theme re-emerges within a contemporary American context in Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*. The plot revolves around American inheritance and property issues, yet the decline in family prosperity provokes Hepzibah Pyncheon to speculate on
"some harlequin-trick of fortune" which would grant her a new life amidst the more enduring prosperity of her English relations:

Or the member of parliament, now at the head of the English branch of the family - with which the elder stock, on this side of the Atlantic, had held little or no intercourse for the last two centuries - this eminent gentleman might invite Hepzibah to quit the ruinous House of the Seven Gables, and come over to dwell with her kindred, at Pyncheon Hall. But for reasons the most imperative, she could not yield to his request (Hawthorne 1983, 407).

In his abandoned English romance, Hawthorne would attempt to develop Hepzibah's escapist fantasy into a fully realised plot, resurrecting from *Seven Gables* both the premise of an ancestral claimant involved in an inheritance dispute, and the suggestion of a missing deed buried in an ancestral grave. He recast the drama within an Anglo-American context, affording his protagonist access to the established and enduring institutions of his English ancestry, the opportunity to acquire more history - and more justification - than that contained within the American experience.  

10 American fantasies of Old World inheritance were not restricted to Anglo-American claims. Contemporary with Hawthorne was Herman Melville's older cousin Priscilla, with whom the future author of *Israel Potter* and *Moby Dick* spent time in 1848:

French-born, French-speaking in childhood, four when her mother died in backwoods Massachusetts in 1814, Priscilla now pursued, year after year, what was referred to as the "French claims," repeatedly asking Judge Shaw to depute travellers to Paris to seek out her unknown kindred and establish her right to an inheritance (Parker 1996, 593).
In an *English Notebooks* entry dated 9th October (1854), more than a year after his arrival in England, Hawthorne would express his own personal identification with the theme:

My ancestor left England in 1635. I return in 1853. I sometimes feel as if I myself had been absent these two hundred and eighteen years - leaving England just emerging from the feudal system, and finding it on the verge of republicanism. It brings the two far separated points of time very closely together to view the matter thus (Stewart 1941, 92).

Paradoxically, the author both celebrates and challenges the enduring strength of British custom which has allowed him this sense of *déjà vu*. Having become his own ancestor, he returns as a harbinger of change. Hawthorne made some modest but futile attempt to trace his English ancestry while in Liverpool; his *Notebooks* also record the location of a "Hawthorne Hall" and his desire to find an English tombstone bearing his own name.¹¹

These rather feeble efforts are in marked contrast with similar research recorded in *The American Notebooks*. In 1837 Hawthorne

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¹¹ Perhaps while in England Hawthorne had hoped to trace an even more illustrious ancestor than those revealed by his previous research. A generation earlier, similar research had been conducted by Herman Melville's father, who was politely informed by the present earl at Melville House that the estate "was entailed and unavailable to American claimants". Allan Melville wrote home:

...it appears we are of a royal line in both sides of the House - after all it is not only an amusing but a just cause of pride, to resort back through the ages to such ancestry, & should produce a correspondent spirit of emulation in their descendants to the remotest posterity (Parker, 10).
observed:

The family seat of the Hawthornes is Wigcastle, Cigton, Wiltshire. The present head of the family, now residing there, is Hugh Hawthorne. William Hawthorne, who came over in 1635-6, was a younger brother of the family (Simpson, ed. 1972, VIII, 153).

And while his later notebooks express a desire to locate ancestral graves, his American notebooks indicate that he had long since found them. In 1836 he noted:

Memorials of the family of Hawthorne in the church of Dundry, Somersetshire, England. The church is ancient and small, and has a prodigiously high tower of more modern date, being erected in the time of Edward IV (Ibid., 21).

As Hawthorne would observe in the introduction to the sketches of English life collected in Our Old Home, his English Notebooks had been compiled to provide background for an English romance. The essays, written after Hawthorne's return to the U.S. and first published in the Atlantic Monthly between October, 1860 and August, 1863, were largely composed after the author had given up work on his 'claimant' fiction drafts. In order of composition, "Consular Experiences" was the penultimate of his English essays and was written specifically to act as a provocative introduction to Our Old Home, which takes its title from the essay's conclusion. It was the only essay of the series not previously published in the Atlantic Monthly. The sketch

\[12\] A publishing history of the essays compiled for Our Old Home is detailed by Claude M. Simpson in his introduction to Our Old Home (Hawthorne 1970, V, xiii-xxxi).
serves to introduce the author in his official capacity and explains his prolonged presence in England. Anecdotes about particular Americans encountered in the course of his duties lend authority to his Anglo-American comparisons, and to the generalised, highly idiosyncratic impressions contained in the remaining essays. "Consular Experiences" in fact functions in much the same way as "The Custom House" in *The Scarlet Letter* or the various prefaces written by Hawthorne for the collections of his tales. The essay serves to mediate between ostensible public and private realms, objective and subjective impressions, blurring the boundaries between literal fact and fiction.

"Consular Experiences" appears to be an imaginative blend of heightened fact and fancy, which Hawthorne has enlivened with a number of surplus plots left over from his abandoned claimant romance. If his English experience in certain instances was less than anticipated, the romance author had no compunction about filling in the gaps. The claimant cases mentioned in the *English Notebooks* are briefly recalled without further elaboration. These anecdotes are interspersed with details of more colorful consular visits by Americans similarly bent on enlisting the consul's assistance, meetings curiously transformed from the original impressions documented in Hawthorne's notebooks.
Among the consular experiences he chooses to highlight in
the essay, there now emerges a series of encounters with an
elderly American printer who for twenty-seven years has been
trying to get home to 92nd Street in Philadelphia. Years of
English poverty have so changed the man's manners and accent
that the consul wonders whether he might be an impostor,
but the man's persistence convinces him of the beggar's veracity:

Possibly he was an impostor, one of the multitudinous shapes
of English vagabondism, and told his falsehood with such
powerful simplicity, because, by many repetitions, he had
convinced himself of its truth. But if, as I believe, the
tale was fact, how very strange and sad was this old man's
fate (Hawthorne 1970, 28).

Hawthorne denies him assistance in securing his homeward passage,
convinced that the man would be crushed to find his original surroundings
so utterly changed. As in his fiction, Hawthorne attributes to decades the
historical weight of centuries, imagining a situation reminiscent of Irving's
"Rip Van Winkle". He himself directly compares the printer's plight to that
of Melville's "excellent novel or biography" of Israel Potter, His Fifty Years
of Exile (1855), implicitly seeking to shift any question of truth or fiction back
onto Melville's work.13

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13 Melville claimed to have based his narrative upon a published
memoir he discovered while in London. Under the author reference
"Potter, Israel Ralph", The British Library Catalogue to 1975 lists
among its holdings two editions of "The Life and remarkable adventures
of I. R. Potter (a native of Cranston, Rhode Island) who was a soldier in the
American Revolution, etc. [An autobiography] Providence, 1824." A
second edition totalling eighty-three pages was published in The Magazine
of History, etc., (1905, 16) and issued separately in 1911. I. R. Potter's
The original version of the anecdote, as recorded in *The English Notebooks*, tells quite a different story. A simple change of emphasis puts the printer's situation in a completely new light. In the *Notebooks* account, Hawthorne categorically disbelieves the beggar, whose seeming sincerity is compromised by "a large and somewhat red nose", physically suggestive of a liar and an alcoholic: "His manner and accent do not convince me that he is an American, and I tell him so..." (Stewart 1941, 562).

The consul denies the man's request because the supplicant is not an American; the author is nevertheless charmed by his story's possibilities.

Hawthorne adds to his essay account an American world traveller not previously documented in the *Notebooks*. Born at sea, this fantastic spinner of exotic tales believes that he and another infant were switched at birth and that his true identity is that of an English nobleman. His delusion is seemingly encouraged by his resemblance to a portrait of his supposed ancestor. His history so captivates the consul that his absence from the *Notebooks* is a curious omission; given the licence taken with other reports, it is perhaps not unreasonable to suspect that the seafaring claimant is pure fiction, a romanticised Hawthornean *Doppelgänger*.

If these incredible figures did not already represent a catalogue of literary 'claimant' motifs, Hawthorne finally

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biographical dates are given as 1744-1826. (*British Library Catalogue*, 264, 26). So it would seem that Melville's narrative was justified in purporting to have some 'historical' basis; *Israel Potter* could be construed as Melville's own version of an historical 'Twice Told Tale', which gains veracity through repetition.
introduces into the essay's gallery of American misadventurers a Doctor of Divinity who so loses his personal identity in English debauchery that the consul fails to recognise him one week after the reverend's arrival in Britain. Here is the very character whose spiritual authority Hawthorne has repeatedly and convincingly challenged in tales and romances ranging from "The Minister's Black Veil" to The Scarlet Letter, the representative of organised and orthodox religion, conveniently come to reveal his personal and spiritual weakness to an American public official.

George Putnam Lathrop's introduction to the 1912 Riverside edition of Our Old Home highlights initial sceptical responses to "Consular Experiences", an emphasis which implies a certain unalleviated degree of editorial incredulity on Lathrop's part as well as that of his predecessor:

Of the story told about an erring doctor of divinity in the "Consular Experiences", the author wrote to Mr. Fields, "It is every bit true (like the other anecdotes), only not told so darkly as it might have been for the reverend gentleman" (Hawthorne 1883, V, 11-12).

The incident of the wayward minister, so tellingly Hawthornean as to arouse the reader's suspicions, was a fairly accurate transcription from English Notebooks entries of May 24 and 31, 1855, concerning the Reverend Dr. Richards of New Orleans. Once again, a slight shift of emphasis is all that is required to make a singular impression and drive home Hawthorne's ironically stern
moral warning to any American contemplating a return to "our old home."

In the original account, Dr. Richards is not so changed by his week on the tiles as to be beyond all recognition, he simply thinks he is because Hawthorne doesn't immediately recognise him, having taken little notice of the man's appearance during their first interview. More significantly, his disgraceful conduct cannot be attributed solely to the disinhibiting influence of England upon an unblemished Puritan soul. *The English Notebooks* reflect the doctor's reputation, prior to his arrival in England:

> From the Captain's communications, I learned that the Reverend Doctor was a man of rather sad experience, having been divorced from his second wife, and having been in a lunatic asylum, and being also liable to fits of terrible intemperance. (Stewart 1941, 113).

The extent of creative licence encouraged by Hawthorne, at least in connection with travelogues, is specified in a letter written to Horatio Bridge when Bridge was preparing his own African travel adventures for book publication:

> I would advise you not to stick too accurately to the bare fact, either in your descriptions or narrations; else your hand will be cramped, and the result will be a want of freedom, that will deprive you of a higher truth than that which you strive to attain. Allow your fancy pretty free license, and omit no heightening touches merely because they did not chance to happen before your eyes. If they did not happen, they at least ought - which is all that concerns you. This is the secret of all entertaining travellers (May 3rd 1843, Woodson, Smith and Pearson, eds.1984, XV, 686-687).

Ever the romance writer, Hawthorne was consciously content to
reinvent actualities which did not live up to his anticipation of an imagined event. The reader of his fiction is frequently invited to participate in and ultimately to complete this gesture toward an ideal realm. Yet in the context of such writing as "Consular Experiences", the author seemingly departs from his collaborative relation to the reader: he appears to present a single puritanical and nationalistic interpretation from a privileged point-of-view. The limited perspectives of those transient Americans invented or encountered in his consular office are clearly unreliable, and the impression upon the reader is one of comic or pathetic irony. No obvious alternative interpretations are signalled; the text seems assuredly stable. The author lures all but his most sceptical readers into accepting as actual what are in fact privately retouched images supporting a mocking caveat to the reader. For these Americans, the consul laments, any genuine sense of identity is imperilled rather than enhanced by returning to their ancestral homeland.

In this respect "Consular Experiences" is Hawthorne's last 'claimant' fiction and his most deeply ironic late literary effort. The author now seems to be satirising his own official position and consular view, quietly undermining the representation of his own experience as authoritative. Only Hawthorne's most initiated readers would realise that one should never take this author at face value and that the first publicly confirmed master of American literature scorned to distinguish between empirical and romantic truth.
Chapter III

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF DELIA BACON: HAWTHORNE'S "RECOLLECTIONS OF A GIFTED WOMAN" UNVEILED

Before writing "Consular Experiences", Hawthorne composed and published a posthumous tribute to another American 'claimant'
he had encountered in England, his fellow New England author Delia Bacon. His "Recollections of a Gifted Woman" are expressed in an essay that is part travel sketch, part eulogy, but most particularly a public explanation of his involvement with this quixotic scholar in her extraordinary attempt to revise English literary history. It is the only essay among the English travel sketches which includes an extended portrait of a contemporary figure based on a personal encounter, a distinction even more remarkable insofar as that individual was an American whose chief literary project had become a source of embarrassment to Hawthorne.

Recalling a trip to Stratford-upon-Avon provides the occasion for linking her reputation with that of Shakespeare and for revisiting her views in a setting sympathetically read as casting doubt on history's noble portrait of the Bard.

Delia Bacon's scholarly claim challenged the identity and cultural title of one of the most cherished and established icons of English cultural history. She initiated the published debate about the authorship of the works attributed to Shakespeare,
introducing what is now generally described as the Baconian Theory.

Her sensational, enigmatic assertion that a cabal of Elizabethan reformers including Francis Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh, Edmund Spenser and Michel de Montaigne were responsible for the collected works of Shakespeare was based upon her interpretation of the texts, in which she found internal, sometimes cryptogrammatic evidence of Baconian rhetoric and science. Much of her work consisted in illuminating potentially subversive social and political references and situations within *King Lear*, *Coriolanus* and *Julius Caesar*. Further readings suggested to her that in England she would find historical proof of her theory in the form of documents concealed in one or more illustrious tombs, including that of Shakespeare.

Of all the sketches in Hawthorne's last and least read narrative, the most thoroughly neglected is his curiously personal, elliptical and humorously bizarre portrait of Delia Bacon in England. Hawthorne himself seemed to feel that the sketch was an oddity that required some special pleading. His letter accompanying the original magazine submission of "Recollections of a Gifted Woman"

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14 So tarnished and dim has Delia Bacon's reputation become in the canon of American literature that the sketch has been purged of its "Gifted Woman" in a drastically reduced version of purely descriptive travelogue retitled "Shakespeare Country" which appears in one of the few modern American editions of *Our Old Home*. (Strout 1965).
to James T. Fields of the *Atlantic Monthly* begins:

Don't reject this article merely because I have evoked poor Miss Bacon's melancholy ghost in it. The narrative of her abode in Stratford reads like a page of high romance, and is every word of it true. (November 1862 letter to James T. Fields, Woodson, Rubino, Smith and Pearson, eds. 1987, XVIII, 507).

In response to an initial letter from Delia Bacon in May, 1856, Hawthorne visited her at her modest London lodgings on June 26th of that year. Their interview lasted around an hour and was to prove their only meeting. That evening, Hawthorne entered in his journal an extensive, detailed description of the encounter, including his resolution to become her literary champion and personal protector:

Her book is a most remarkable one, and well deserves publication; and towards that end, she shall have every assistance that I can render. Her relatives are endeavoring to force her home, by withholding from her all means of support in England; but in my opinion, if taken from England now, she would go home as a raving maniac, and I shall write to them and suggest this view of the case. Meanwhile, as she must be kept alive, it devolves upon me to supply her with some small means for that purpose (Stewart 1941, 388).

Almost obsessively, Hawthorne describes her room, her books, every detail of her dress and conversation, a near-clinical portrait, complete with diagnosis: Bacon is clearly a "monomaniac". Soon he would be sending her modest amounts of money, writing to her brother Leonard in Connecticut as her only friend in England and arranging for the publication of her voluminous manuscript, without ever
expressing any conviction of the historical truth of her theory.

His notebook entry of their meeting concludes:

   It is really more wonderful that she should have fancied this philosophy, than if she had really found it (Ibid., 388-389).

   Delia Bacon arrived in England in 1856, ostensibly determined to find physical evidence to support her theory.

   Early enthusiastic supporters of the project included Emerson and Hawthorne's sister-in-law, the influential Transcendentalist Elizabeth Peabody. Bacon believed herself to be working in a long scholarly tradition extending back as far as St. Jerome, on a question of authorial attribution. Announcing her 'discovery' in the January, 1856 issue of Putnam's Monthly magazine, she describes her work as similar in spirit and intent to contemporary historical investigations into works attributed to Homer.

   In the struggles and misfortunes of this notorious woman, there was much with which Hawthorne might sympathise and even identify. She was the child of a New England minister who gave up missionary work among the Indians to found a short-lived agrarian utopia in the forests of Ohio. Like Hawthorne, she experienced the death of her father at an early age, a death which curtailed any semblance of normal family life. Struggling to support herself from the age of 15, she taught and had some early literary success with her short stories, including her collected
Tales of the Puritans, published anonymously in 1831.

In "Recollections of a Gifted Woman", Hawthorne employs his most subtly persuasive arts to represent her case, to affectionately commemorate and rationalise her efforts and in doing so, to justify his own involvement in her project. His profile of Bacon presents the reader with an enigmatic facade on two levels. The first challenge to today's reader is the degree of topicality, or familiarity with Delia Bacon's background assumed by the author/narrator. The second level of elliptical reference evades any coherent account of Hawthorne's active collaboration in Bacon's venture; the narrative raises questions which remain unanswered within the text.

In 1863, Hawthorne could be confident that his core readership needed no introduction to the meteoric rise and fall of Delia Bacon. In the intellectual circles of New England and New York, this now seemingly eccentric figure was well known as a dynamic public lecturer on classical history, a published fiction writer and the aggrieved party in a sensational romantic scandal, which had resulted in an ecclesiastical trial reminiscent of The Scarlet Letter. (The case against a young theological student for misrepresenting his lack of matrimonial intentions to Miss Bacon and subsequently defaming her character was prosecuted on her behalf by her brother Leonard, a Congregational minister, and
Bacon lost. Initiates considered her the intellectual heir to Margaret Fuller, the bluestocking who had inspired Hawthorne's portrayal of Zenobia in the *Blithedale Romance*. In England, Bacon became a virtual recluse, focused exclusively on her Shakespeare project. With English publication in mind, she attempted to enlist further supporters in Thomas Carlyle and Hawthorne. Carlyle found her personally impressive but rejected her project as preposterous and withheld any professional assistance. Hawthorne, although he remained sceptical of the theory, seemed to feel the validity of the claim was less important than the spirit in which it was produced. He convinced himself that in America at least, the book would find a receptive audience and continued to express this view long after the American publisher William Ticknor predicted a complete financial loss. It may be indicative of the place they projected for her in the future American literary pantheon that Hawthorne and Emerson kept her letters for posterity, while Carlyle seemingly did not.  

Soon after her meeting with Hawthorne, Delia Bacon's project suffered a number of severe setbacks. *Putnam's Monthly* withdrew from

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15 Correspondence from other writers to Carlyle has appeared in published collections. Letters from Emerson to Carlyle are collected in *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson 1834-1872* (1883), edited by Charles Eliot Norton. Letters from such British compatriots as Thackeray (Ray 1946, II, 775; IV 147, 157; Harden 1994, I, 68; II, 905) and Browning (Hood 1933, 16, 26, 33, 34, 35-36, 43, 180, 186) have also been included in major collections of letters by these authors.
their agreement to serialise the work after publication of only
one article,\(^{16}\) and the remaining chapters were mishandled and
lost *en route* back to Emerson, who now began to express his own
doubts about her theory. A rival British Shakespeare scholar,
William Henry Smith, had meanwhile published a pamphlet arguing that
historical evidence alone sufficed to cast doubt on Shakespeare's
authorship.\(^{17}\)

What remains unacknowledged in Hawthorne's narrative
portrayal is his instrumental role in securing the publication of
Delia Bacon's unwieldy, ambiguous text. Having committed himself
to finding a publisher for the work, he reached an agreement with
the firm of Parker in which he personally guaranteed the publisher's
printing costs, but stipulated that Bacon was not to know of this
provision. Eventually, he wrote to Ticknor in New York, belatedly
informing his U.S. publishers that he had committed them to half

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\(^{16}\) As previously mentioned, the magazine had increased its
circulation with a sensational article by the Reverend Charles
H. Hanson, asserting that Eleazar Williams, a white
missionary raised by American Indians, was in fact Charles
Louis, the "lost Dauphin" and heir to the throne of France.
Reporting the magazine's defection to Hawthorne, Bacon herself
acknowledged, "They supposed when they took it up it was another
'Dauphin affair". (Delia Bacon to Hawthorne, July 23 1856,
Delia Bacon Papers, Hopkins 1959, 330, n. 57).

\(^{17}\) A fifteen page pamphlet, *Was Lord Bacon the Author of
Shakespeare's Plays? A letter to Lord Ellesmere*, by William
Henry Smith "of Harley Street, London, writer on Shakespeare",
was published in September 1856, some eight months following
Delia Bacon's published speculations in *Putnam's Monthly*
(Woodson, Rubino, Smith and Pearson 1987, 491).
the 1,000 copy print run.

The publishing history of Delia Bacon's *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded* was fraught with tension and temperament on all sides. Hawthorne balked at Bacon's choice of title and initial introduction and chafed at the publisher's insistence that he write a preface for the book, with his name to appear below the author's on the title page. After stalling for some three months, Hawthorne finally drafted a preface consisting primarily of quotations from the version of Bacon's introduction he had insisted be withdrawn from the book. He took the opportunity to protest that an English pamphlet writer (William Henry Smith) had presented Bacon's theory "as his own original conception, without allusion to the author's prior claim" and noted that the work she had wanted to publish in America had ultimately to be published in England (Hawthorne's preface, Bacon 1857, xiii).

Hawthorne's own description of the work fell far short of an unconditional endorsement:

> What I claim for this work is, that the ability employed in its composition has been worthy of its great subject, and well employed for our intellectual interests, whatever judgement the public may pass upon the questions discussed. And, after listening to the author's interpretation of the Plays, and seeing how wide a scope she assigns to them, how high a purpose, and what richness of inner meaning, the thoughtful reader will hardly return again - not wholly, at all events - to the common view of them and of their author (*Ibid.*, xv).

Bacon initially rejected such an equivocal preface; impassioned
letters were exchanged. On February 19th Hawthorne wrote to her offering "to burn the Preface at once" and fuming that in relation to this book "I have a right not to be known", corrected in the margin to "no right to be known" (Woodson, Rubino, Smith and Pearson, eds. 1987, XVIII, 24). Having had more than enough of authorial temperament, Parker withdrew as publisher; a new publisher was found. The book was finally published in March, 1857 and launched upon the American market in April to dismissive reviews which pointedly questioned why Hawthorne had involved himself in such a publication. While Hawthorne absorbed the critical buffeting and the financial loss and wrote a public letter to William Henry Smith acknowledging "the originality and early date" of the views on the Shakespeare plays expressed in Smith's pamphlet, the impoverished and isolated Bacon suffered a complete mental collapse. Before leaving England for the Continent in January, 1858, Hawthorne would arrange for her transfer from her lodgings in Stratford-upon-Avon to a private sanatorium in Henley-in-Arden. Escorted back to the United States by a nephew that April, she was institutionalised in the Hartford Retreat until her death on 2nd September 1859.

"Recollections of a Gifted Woman" is both a personal revision and a public explanation of Hawthorne's role in Delia Bacon's Shakespeare project. He invokes the eccentricity of her
designs on Shakespeare's tomb and in a masterstroke of imaginative narration, manages to reinvent and invest the scene with both humour and dignity. He describes Shakespeare's birthplace as in no way equal to the visitor's expectations, an impression calculated to contextualise Bacon's doubts about the poet and playwright. It does not seem to be an environment in which genius might grow or flourish, nor has genius left any mark upon the town:

The Shakspere [sic] whom I met there took various guises, but had not his laurel on (Hawthorne 1970, 99).

Although emphasising his "sturdy unbelief" in her theory, Hawthorne steadfastly defends the value of the work, based on her sensitive interpretations of Shakespeare's plays and the rich ambiguity of the texts themselves. Seemingly describing the aesthetic criteria he would wish applied to his own work, Hawthorne notes:

Whatever you seek in him you will surely discover, provided you seek truth. There is no exhausting the various interpretations of his symbols (Ibid., 106).

The publication of such a work is implicitly justified on the grounds of its merit despite Bacon's injudicious thesis:

It was founded on a prodigious error, but was built up from that foundation with a good many prodigious truths (109).

Hawthorne's evaluation of Bacon as a "monomaniac" was jotted in his notebook on the day of their first -- and only -- meeting. His later portrait plays down Bacon's obvious mental instability,
observing that his initial impression of her "New England orderliness" and "sturdy common sense" was vindicated insofar as she did not actually vandalise Shakespeare's tomb; her assault, he suggests, was not extended to the material realm. More duplicitously, he chooses to conceal his initial confidence in the publishing venture and his naive reliance upon the receptivity and interest of American readers. Once out of Miss Bacon's presence, he now suggests modest hesitation and uncertainty:

I felt it would be a difficult and doubtful matter to advocate the publication of Miss Bacon's book. Nevertheless, it did finally get published (110).

In conclusion, Hawthorne would take the opportunity to emphasise that he had read very little of the work, and observed that he believed that on either side of the Atlantic the book had found only one appreciative reader. Although he thus includes himself in the midst of those neglectful readers, Hawthorne substantially identifies with Bacon. The deliberately delayed main thrust of the essay is his complaint to American scholars and critics, those readers who have refused to suspend their disbelief and accompany the author in her consideration of an

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18 In response to an enquiry from a Shakespeare scholar, William D. O'Connor, Hawthorne had already forwarded a slightly revised transcript of the impressions of Bacon entered in his notebook, along with the bundle of letters he had received from her. O'Connor did not complete the appreciative work he had apparently planned, and subsequently handed Bacon's letters on to her nephew.
alternative to received ideas. They have not lived up to his expectations:

From the scholars and critics of her own country, indeed, Miss Bacon might have looked for a worthier appreciation, because many of the best of them have higher cultivation, and finer and deeper literary sensibilities than all but the very profoundest and brightest of Englishmen. But they are not a courageous body of men; they dare not think a truth that has an odor of absurdity, lest they should feel themselves bound to speak it out (115).

Hawthorne's barbs are here directed not only at Miss Bacon's critics and readers but also his own. The readers who rebelled at the immoderate ambiguities of The Marble Faun had not collaborated with him in creating a new tradition. They wanted authoritative, realistic scenarios, untainted by any "odor of absurdity." Hawthorne, whose affinities with Shakespeare had been hailed by such American authors as Herman Melville and James Russell Lowell, could at least conceive of doing away with founders and founder-figures entirely.19

19 Herman Melville's ecstatic review of Hawthorne's Mosses from an Old Manse in the 17 August and 24 August 1850 issues of the Literary World applauded the work as a masterpiece and the author as a genius worthy of comparison with the finest England might offer:

Now I do not say that Nathaniel of Salem is a greater [sic] than William of Avon, or as great. But the difference between the two men is by no means immeasurable. Not a very great deal more, and Nathaniel were verily William. (Melville, 17 and 24 August 1850, vii, 125-7, 145-7, cited in Crowley 1970, 119).

In an April, 1860 Atlantic Monthly review of The Marble Faun, James Russell Lowell observed "...it is not extravagant to
Like much of his fiction, Hawthorne's literary treatment of Bacon is a coded document for an exclusive audience, filled with significance for those New England intellectuals who were personally familiar with the unstated details of Bacon's background and Hawthorne's efforts on her behalf. To those who are not initiates, the essay presents a quasi-sentimental, quasi-macabre, enigmatic facade, a portrait of an American scholar sandwiched in amidst a travel sketch of Stratford. To those who can provide the subtext, it reads as a courtroom closing statement for the defence of Hawthorne's own romantic idealism.

Given the depths of the obscurity to which she has since been relegated, one might be forgiven for assuming that Hawthorne's careful eulogy was American literature's last word on Delia Bacon and her Elizabethan conspiracy theory. Such extinction might seem the most suitable end for a scholarly eccentric and "monomaniac" who had ended her days in a madhouse and whose improbable suggestions and dubious intent had been roundly dismissed by the literary critics of her day. Yet debate about her theory and her life persisted as something of an American literary obsession for more than fifty years, well into the early decades of this century.

In 1888, the degree of surviving interest in Bacon's life and work was apparently substantial enough to warrant the British say that Hawthorne has something of kindred with Shakspeare" (Lowell 1860, V, 509-10, cited in Crowley 321).
and American publication of a full length biographical sketch by Bacon's nephew Theodore. Although the unstated premise for the biography seems to be a vindication of the biographer's father Leonard in his treatment of his younger sister Delia, the preface suggests that Delia Bacon's reputation had remained a subject of ongoing speculation and reconstruction:

...because the world is determined that it will speak of her as if it knew her, supplying its lack of knowledge with conjecture or with fable, I purpose to tell it something of Delia Bacon: of what she was, from inheritance and environment, and what she did.20

Once initiated by Delia Bacon, the question of Shakespeare's authenticity as a cultural paragon became the focus for a discourse on cultural influence, authority and the author-reader relationship which was hardly the exclusive domain of literary cranks. Walt Whitman reflects the experience of a reader's growing suspicions in his short verse "Shakespeare - Bacon's Cipher", first published in the 1890s edition of Whitman's Leaves of Grass. James and Clemens too would seemingly entertain doubts about Shakespeare's authorship.

20 Deha Bacon's work has not been particularly well served by her biographers. Her nephew Theodore claims not to have read her book and seems unaware of her early prizewinning tale "Love's Martyr", which took first prize in a Saturday Courier competition. Upon the centenary of Bacon's death in 1959, her only scholarly modern biographer Vivian Hopkins produced a 'dramatised' account of her life but relegated a discussion of Bacon's Shakespeare text to the back of the book, where the implications and effects of her theory were generally neglected.
Whether viewed as a deluded literary martyr or an inspired cultural sceptic, Delia Bacon's reputation and influence became a subject of literary homage for her own and subsequent generations. Longfellow sentimentally eulogises her as:

-Sweet as the tender fragrance that survives
-When martyred flowers breathe out their little lives

in "Delia", part of his work "Flight the Fifth", first collected in *Keramos and other Poems* in 1878 (Longfellow 1886, 123-124).

The Shakespeare scholar is similarly portrayed as a tragic visionary in "Delia Bacon", a highly conventional quatrain by Gerald Massey, collected and published in *My Lyrical Life: Poems Old and New* in 1889.\(^{21}\)

Among advocates of the Shakespeare question, her influence was particularly enduring. In the context of his own heretical study, *The Great Cryptogram: Francis Bacon's Cipher in the So-Called Shakespeare Plays* (1888), Baconian theorist Ignatius Donnelly would commemorate and canonise Delia Bacon as "the greatest American yet born". The much-derided work which Hawthorne had assisted her in publishing was the first book requested by a reader when the New York Public Library opened on 24 May 1911.\(^{22}\)

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\(^{21}\) I am grateful to Daniel Karlin for discovering this poem among the contents of the *English Poetry Full-Text Database* (Chadwyck-Healey 1994).

\(^{22}\) S. Schoenbaum recounts the incident, also observed by Vivian Hopkins in her biography of Bacon, as evidence of Bacon's
The earliest and most vivid tribute, which undoubtedly contributed to the persistence of interest in her life and theory, was Hawthorne's sketch for *Our Old Home*. "Recollections of a Gifted Woman" was first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in January, 1863, more than three years after Delia Bacon's death and nearly six years after the critics' disdainful reception of her massive and incredible work. By then, even that small sector of the public who were aware of her publishing failure and tragic end might have more or less forgotten her. Hawthorne had nothing to gain by reawakening interest in events which cast his own acts and judgement in a rather questionable light. Yet in this essay Hawthorne seems to invite critical judgement of his own aesthetic convictions. In an account which provokes comparison with *The Scarlet Letter*, he stands beside Delia Bacon on the public platform of his own creation and accuses her detractors of dismissing out of hand the rare if absurd cultural prospect she sought to offer them. As Delia Bacon herself described the implications of her interpretative method:

> If you dissolve him do you not dissolve us with him?  
> If you take him to pieces, do you not undo us, also? (Bacon 1856, 5).

For Hawthorne, an author seeking to reform the cultural tyranny of

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enduring influence. When Charles Alexander Montgomery, the would-be borrower, found that the new library did not possess a copy of *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded*, he donated one inscribed with his own poetic tribute to Bacon (Schoenbaum 1991, 394).
the English past and the American present into a new American
literature, such dissolution and dismemberment remained a highly
attractive metaphorical proposition.
Chapter IV

HAWTHORNE'S CLAIMANT FICTIONS

The Delia Bacon fiasco may have shaken Hawthorne's confidence in the ultimate outcome of his aesthetic idealism. His later works reflect an intense, explicit consideration of his own technique and aesthetic - and betray a growing insecurity about the results. *The Marble Faun*, initially published as *Transformation* in England in February 1860, places increasing emphasis on the subjectivity of interpretation, and readers were left perplexed as to exactly what had happened and why. Writing in 1879, Henry James observed that Hawthorne's Italian romance "lapses into an almost fatal vagueness" (James 1967, 155), a charge which others (with somewhat less justification) would subsequently level at James's own later fiction. Hawthorne had agreed to write an almost equally evasive explanatory postscript for the second edition, but observed that he did so reluctantly:

...Because the necessity makes him sensible that he can have succeeded but imperfectly at best, in throwing about this Romance the kind of atmosphere essential to the effect at which he aimed. He designed the story and the characters to bear, of course a certain relation to human nature and human life, but still to be so artfully and airily removed from our mundane sphere, that some laws and proprieties of their own should be implicitly and insensibly acknowledged (Hawthorne 1983, 1239).

Hawthorne then turned to the English romance which he had
long envisaged as "the crowning achievement" of his career.

In Italy, from March to May of 1858, before beginning work on
*The Marble Faun*, he had already sketched out rough ideas
for *The Ancestral Footstep*. This short 'claimant' draft was
conceived as an imaginary sequel to a legend he had come across
in England concerning the allegedly bloodstained imprint of a
foot on the threshold of an English country manor. The new
romance would self-reflexively both echo and contain the older
tale as key to the American hero's English ancestry. In addition
to preliminary sketches and studies, the theme of an American
claimant returning to his ancestral estate in England was
developed in three separate drafts now collected in volume XII of
the Centenary Edition. The theme was by no means new and
Hawthorne may have encountered such eighteenth-century
treatments (previously mentioned on pages 12-13) as Voltaire's *l'Ingénu*,
and Robert Bage's *Hermsprong, or Man as He is Not*. Hawthorne was
almost certainly aware of Thackeray's treatment of twin American

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23 *In Hawthorne's Reading 1828-1854: A Transcription and Identification of Titles Recorded in the Charge Books of the Salem Athenaeum* Marion L. Kesselring notes that Hawthorne read widely in French literature, including Voltaire and Rousseau. From 1829-31 he borrowed numerous volumes of Voltaire's *Oeuvres Complètes*.

24 In his biography of Hawthorne, Arlin Turner does not mention Bage but notes Hawthorne’s youthful enthusiasm for William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* (Turner 1980, 27). As previously mentioned on page 13, *Hermsprong* was a more obscure work inspired by similar radical views, responding to Godwin’s novel of 1794, originally titled *Things as They Are: or the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (Turner 1980, 27).
claimants in *The Virginians*, which began appearing in numbers while Hawthorne was consul in Liverpool.

Hawthorne's statement that he had kept his *English Notebooks* for future use in the composition of his English romance suggests that the author intended a work based upon his experiences in Britain, but this appears not to have been precisely the case. Although his manuscripts indicate that he did refer to these notebooks, the English experiences recorded there only seemed to inform the fiction insofar as these experiences echoed (and so confirmed) fantasies and reflections already expressed in his *American Notebooks* and earlier fiction. In England, he had many such moments of recognition, discovering independent 'historical' variations of his youthful obsessions and literary fantasies.

One key motif which would recur through all his later narrative experiments is the legend of Smithills Hall, explaining the impression of a (supposedly) bloody footprint which appears on the threshold of a country manor. Hawthorne was intrigued enough by the legend to make his own examination of the footprint - he thought it more naturally discoloured than bloodstained. The original Hawthornean version of this symbolic manifestation of visible guilt is found in his 1843 *American Notebooks*, where he describes a potential narrative mystery: "The print in blood of a naked foot to be traced through the street of a town" (Hawthorne 1972, VIII, 239).

The 'claimant' theme of disputed inheritance and its corollary, the unrecognised heir's dread of ancestral influence, jointly
provide the premise for Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, published in 1851. The dispossessed heir's most chilling outburst in that novel is largely a transcription of an 1844 *American Notebooks* entry:

To represent the influence which Dead Men have among living affairs; - for instance, a Dead Man controls the disposition of wealth; a Dead Man sits on the judgement-seat, and the living judges do but repeat his decisions; 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 (*Ibid.*, 252).

In *Seven Gables*, Holgrave is similarly moved to exclaim:

"Shall we never, never get rid of this Past!" cried he, keeping up the earnest tone of his preceding conversation. - "It lies upon the Present like a giant's dead body! In fact, the case is just as if a young giant were compelled to waste all his strength in carrying about the corpse of the old giant, his grandfather, who died a long while ago, and only needs to be decently buried. Just think, a moment; and it will startle you to see what slaves we are to by-gone times - to Death, if we give the matter the right word! ... a Dead Man, if he happen to have made a will, disposes of wealth no longer his own; or, if he die intestate, it is distributed in accordance with the notions of men much longer dead than he. A Dead Man sits on all our judgement-seats; and living judges do but search out and repeat his decisions. We read in Dead Men's books! We laugh at Dead Men's jokes, and cry at Dead Men's pathos! We are sick of Dead Men's diseases, physical and moral, and die of the same remedies with which dead doctors killed their patients! We worship the living Deity, according to Dead Men's forms and creeds! Whatever we seek to do, of our own free motion, a Dead Man's icy hand obstructs us! Turn our eyes to what point we may, a Dead Man's white, immitigable face encounters them, and freezes our very heart! And we must be dead ourselves, before we can begin to have our proper influence on our own world, which will then be no longer our world, but the world of another generation, with which we shall have no shadow of a right to interfere. I ought to have said, too, that we live in Dead Men's houses; as, for instance, in this of the seven gables!" (*Hawthorne* 1983, 509-510).
Hawthorne's gothic-romantic ambition is essentially a dramatic renewal of such sentiments as Shelley's revolutionary exclamation in *Hellas*:

> The world is weary of the past,  
> Oh, might it die or rest at last! (Shelley 1950, 337).

Hawthorne would address the inherited influence of the past first in the American setting of *Seven Gables*, re-examining the theme in the broader cultural context of Anglo-American history in which he set his American claimant narratives. In both situations, a young protagonist would address himself to the historical injustice which has deprived him of his true identity and inheritance.

Hawthorne attempts to enfold his romance in the "lightsome and brightsome" quality of a children's tale. His early tales had reassessed and undermined the historical platitudes of Jacksonian American discourse. Now he returned to a simple, somewhat antiquated didactic style of legend, in an apparent effort to construct a definitive parable of American experience and difference. Collections of folk legends were an offshoot of a rising tide of nationalism that swept nineteenth-century Europe as well as America, and the author worked both within and against that tradition, exploiting the form, and the tone of legend as well as the appetite for trusty folk wisdom, although the historicised content was more imagined than found. Hawthorne's American

Post-modernist short fiction writer Donald Barthelme seems to have lifted the premise for his tale "The Dead Father" directly from Holgrave's statement.
claimant was seemingly conceived as an extended "Twice Told Tale", with the residual knowledge of the legend on either side of the Atlantic serving to establish the hero's true identity and bridge the gap between his lost English past and lonely American present:

"I suppose," said he to the old man, "the settlers in my country may have carried away with them traditions, long since forgotten in this country, but which might have an interest and connection, and might even piece out the broken relics of family history, which have remained perhaps a mystery for hundreds of years. I can conceive, even that this might sometimes be of importance in settling the heirships of estates but which now, only the two insulated parts of the story being known, remain a riddle, although the solution of it is actually in the world,[...]" (Hawthorne 1977, XII, 5-6).

Such a narrative synthesis would of course rely upon a structurally problematic metaphorical parallel, with the authentic English past fragmented and relocated in the American present, while England itself remained static, embalmed in historical tradition. In Hawthorne's English romance the past is literally another country, but one which can nevertheless be visited and potentially possessed by the claimant. The American's triumph and ultimate rejection of his English patrimony was a foregone conclusion: preliminary studies and plot summaries for all draft versions indicate that the young heir was to gain his English inheritance only to renounce it in favour of returning to an uncertain, self-made future in America.

When he took up the project in earnest in October 1860, Hawthorne had already compiled a collection of auto-instructions
and ideal demands regarding the work, mostly written in the future imperative and future conditional, with scant technical elaboration on how to achieve his design. He expanded these notations further throughout the "The Ancestral Footstep" and "Etherege" drafts, interspersed amidst the developing narrative.

The narrative's stated intention was lofty, and somewhat vague:

The moral, if any moral were to be gathered from these paltry and wretched circumstances was, "Let the past alone, do not seek to renew it; press on to higher and better things - at all events to other things; and be assured that the right way can never be that which leads you back to the identical shapes that you long ago left behind. Onward, onward, onward!" (Ibid., 56).

Further notes for this ideal fiction concerned the tone:

...there should be a tinge of the grotesque given to all the characters and events... It must be a humorous work, or nothing (58).

And on further reflection, he almost immediately adds:

The tragic, and the gentler pathetic, need not be excluded by this tone and treatment. If I could but write one central scene in this vein, all the rest of the Romance would readily arrange itself around that nucleus (58).

In "Etherege" he continues to place unworldly and abstract demands upon his imaginative and technical skills:

The narrative must be pitched in such a tone and enveloped in such an atmosphere, that improbable things shall be accepted; and yet there must be a certain quality of homely, common life diffused through it, so that the reader shall feel a warmth in it (126).

He becomes impatient with his own descriptive powers, breaking the narrative with the parenthetical command: "(Describe, in rich
poetry, all shapes of deadly things))” (339). The author continued to charge himself with the performance of hyperbolic, impossible narrative feats, without elaborating on how such literary effects might be accomplished. Similarly vague, ambitiously superlative notes for Hawthorne's supreme fiction are lavished throughout the "Footstep" and "Etherege" drafts.

As the narrative developed, Hawthorne would repeatedly return to the image of a large, exotic spider, strategically positioned within the text as a self-reflexive narrative device. The creature busily spinning and casting out its line becomes a metaphor for the author's persistent attempt to fasten on to what is invoked as a new consciousness or aesthetic tradition, an altered state occasionally glimpsed in certain disoriented moments which seem to occur out of time.

"Etherege" metaphorically assigns to England all history, experience and possibility of identity, while post-revolutionary America is isolated in the present and as such lacks any character but that which the narrative may provide. Such metaphorical assumptions impose an interpretative dilemma upon the narrative's chronological duration, in which the hero passes from dreamlike childhood to manhood and travels from America to England. Once the symbolic link between nation states and specific temporal conditions has been established, the hero's journey to
England should become a venture into the past, a transition which
would rupture the fable's thin facade of realism. By keeping
his hero in the narrative present, Hawthorne defies his own
symbolic logic. The resulting contradictions between the meta-
phorical and literal levels of interpretation, or, in linguistic
terms, between the signifier and the signified, can only be
escaped in fleeting moments in which experience cannot be
contextualised and the present is mysteriously filtered into
the past. The wounded protagonist's delirium in "Grimshawe"
illustrates this ideal of temporal transfusion:

He, meanwhile, would willingly accept the idea, that
some spell had transported him out of an epoch, in
which he had led a brief trouble, of battle, mental
strife, success, failure, all equally feverish and
unsatisfactory, into some past century, where the
business was to rest; to drag on dreamy days, looking
at things through half-shut eyes; into a limbo where
things were put away; shows of what had once been
now somehow parted, and still maintaining a sort of
half-existence, as serious mockery; a state likely
enough to exist just a little apart from the
actual world, if we only know how to find our way into
it (453).

The confusions accompanying the encroaching age of some characters
also induce the possible interweaving of time past and time present, as in
the previous draft a pensioner encountered by the injured hero explains:

"An old man," said the pensioner quietly, "grows
dreamy as he waxes away; and I too am sometimes at a loss
to know whether I am living in the past or the present, or
whereabouts in time I am - or whether there is any time
at all. But I should think it hardly worth while to
call up one of my shifting dreams more than another" (258).
More specifically alluding to Hawthorne's aesthetic concerns, "Grimshawe" reflexively suggests that Dr. Grimshawe's fantastic stories may have a similar transforming effect on emerging consciousness in the susceptible minds of Elsie and Ned, his young, isolated wards:

So they lived a good deal of the time in a half waking dream, partly conscious of the fantastic nature of their ideas, yet with these ideas almost as real to them as the facts of the natural world, which are at first transparent and unsubstantial to children (367).

The problem which the author has set himself is logically unresolvable within a consistent metaphorical structure. The missing proof of the hero's personal identity is located in the past, yet that English past must be thoroughly differentiated from the American present in order to establish a new national (and individual) identity. It seems that Hawthorne was attempting to suggest a dialectical synthesis of time present and time past from which an imagined new tradition might emerge. A convincing structure for this ideal fiction remained imaginatively elusive.

The hero's lament for so-called lost possibilities helps foreclose against the past in any attempt to define national character. Etherege describes and judges tradition as a passive and seemingly detached observer, innocent of any act of personal transgression or rejection:

"All this sort of thing is beautiful; the family
institution was beautiful in its day," ejaculated he aloud to himself; not to his companion; "but it is a thing of the past. It is dying out in England, and as for ourselves, we never had it. Something better will come up; but as for this, it is past" (187).

In *The American Jeremiad*, Sacvan Bercovitch identifies similar passages in Hawthorne as expressing "the familiar [American] jeremiadic formula of affirmation through lament" employed by New England Puritans in political sermons, an ideological form of address used to inspire social consensus and submission to authority (Bercovitch 1978, 157). Yet Hawthorne's relationship to any national myth of consensus is much more problematic and ambivalent than Bercovitch implies. In his designation of all "classic American authors" as American Jeremiahs, Bercovitch would seem to be organising his own myth of national identity, affected by the very impulse he proposes to examine.26 There is a distinct undertone of political sermonising in his own exposition. The 'ejaculation' of Etherege - "ejaculation" being an awkward, aggressive term suggesting self-assertive virility, here curiously at odds with his statement's pretence of objective passivity - is not specifically endorsed by the author. The voice of Etherege is not equivalent to the voice

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26 Bercovitch's generalisation manifests the general critical impulse to systematise, coincidentally an impulse Hawthorne seemed to reject in the previously cited letter to Longfellow (1837) in which he denied having led a studious life. His pronounced approach to historical interpretation was "desultory" and romantic rather than rigorous. Unlike Bercovitch, he shrugs off any consistent critical agenda.
of Hawthorne.

The American claimant's fixation upon the past is obliquely expressed in certain "Footstep" passages which entertain the possibility of revealing the secret buried in the ancestral grave, a plot motif directly reminiscent both of *Seven Gables* and of Delia Bacon's macabre, material search for an ideal 'truth'. In "Etherege", the grave which may contain secret proof of the heir's identity is more specifically embedded in the plot, and located in England:

...I have tried to keep down this yearning, to stifle it, annihilate it, with making a position for myself, with being my own past, but I cannot overcome this natural horror of being a creature floating in the air, attached to nothing; nor this feeling that there is no reality in the life and fortunes, good or bad, of a being so unconnected. There is not even a grave, not a heap of dry bones, not a pinch of dust, with which I can claim connection, unless I find it here (Hawthorne 1977a, XII, 258).

Despite their being couched in the rhetoric and tone of legend, both "Footstep" and "Etherege" are political tales set in the present day of their composition. In "Grimshawe", his third and most dynamic draft, Hawthorne shifts back into the historical past, with the possible heir Edward Redclyffe arriving in England on the eve of the War of 1812. At last Hawthorne's narrative seems to have found its own momentum, and is broken by only one further extended memorandum speculating on story management, compared to nine in the "Etherege" draft.
The character's names, many of which seem to have had multiple biographical, symbolic and rhetorical meaning for Hawthorne, shifted frequently over the three manuscripts.

In "Grimshawe", the character introduced as Doctor Grim swiftly becomes "grim Doctor Ormskirk" before finally settling into Doctor Grimshawe. In Hawthorne's early tale "My Kinsman, Major Molineux", the hero's moment of self-realisation is accompanied by an explosive 'haw'; so in this much later fiction the appearance of a 'haw', in particular a 'Grimm's haw' could be a playful suggestion that the author (Haw/thorne) is identifying himself with the fairy-tale-like doctor, who is also adjectivally 'grim'. Further word play surfaces in the characters of the schoolteacher Seymour, who literally 'sees more' when he seems to recognise the subject of a mysterious portrait. And the future claimant is known throughout his childhood as Ned, a childish anagram for the 'end' of an ancestral line.

The now established Baconian-Seven Gables motif of the grave containing secret evidence has been transplanted from English soil to America. Dr. Grimshawe and Ned receive an English visitor named Mountford who believes that papers pertaining to a disputed English estate are buried nearby, beneath a slate gravestone bearing the impress of a foot, a symbol related to the legend of a bloody footstep on the threshold of the ancestral
home. A silver key is later discovered near the recently-opened grave.

Criticising Grimshawe, the narrator almost seems to be reproaching Bacon for her *idée fixe* or attacking the form of historical legend (and authorial repetition) itself:

This sense of fixedness, stony intractability, seems to belong to people who, instead of hope, which exhalès everything into an airy, gaseous exhilaration, have a fixed and dogged purpose, around which everything congeals and crystallizes (*Ibid.*, 352).

In his recent critical work on Hawthorne, Charles Swann suggests that in "Grimshawe" Hawthorne had solved the plot problems he was wrestling with in earlier drafts (Swann 1991, 170). Yet the manuscript breaks off barely half way into the narrative structure developed in "Etherege", shortly after the young American's arrival in England. Having transported his hero into the metaphorical past, Hawthorne found no convincing way to get him out again with his identity and integrity intact.

Hawthorne gave up on his English romance without actually abandoning the American claimant theme. In his last fiction project, the theme of Anglo-American inheritance remains a subplot submerged within the legendary quest for eternal earthly existence. When the scholar hero Septimius Felton is told he may be a "plausible claimant" to a great aristocratic English estate, he is unimpressed, responding, "It is
of no permanent importance" (Hawthorne 1977b, XIII, 145).

In order of composition, the first two of the three *Elixir of Life* manuscripts and preliminary studies are plotted around an Anglo-American inheritance mystery involving an antique, cryptic document which may contain a formula for a potent, life-prolonging elixir. "The Dolliver Romance", which Hawthorne worked on until shortly before his death, adds a new twist to the theme: the protagonist is an elderly chemist, and the elixir was to make him progressively younger. The initial elixir narrative developed in "Septimius Felton" and "Septimius Norton" is an historical romance set at the outbreak of the American revolution. "Felton" proceeds with a confident story line, which begins to sag in the more expansive "Norton" under a mass of additional narrative digressions, further character development and causal explication.

After Hawthorne's death, "Felton" was edited by his daughter Una with the assistance of Robert Browning and published in 1872. Scant critical attention has been paid to *The Elixir of Life Manuscripts*, especially considering the innovative nature of the experimental metafiction Hawthorne seems to have been attempting. Such neglect may stem from a protective deference to Hawthorne's reputation as a prominent canonical author, and an eagerness to overlook the manuscripts' unworldly but troubling 'demon' of racial difference; Hawthorne's refusal to condemn slavery was not so
quietly deplored by the American Transcendentalists at the time of the U.S. Civil War. In both "Felton" and "Norton", the narrator complacently and repeatedly insists that Septimius's heretical nature results from the diabolical mixture of his blood (Septimius is part Indian, part Anglo-American). Such provocative, seemingly naive use of the spectre of miscegenation could certainly be read, in a literal fashion, as disturbing evidence of Hawthorne's racial prejudice. It is possible that Hawthorne might instead have been calling the abolitionists' bluff by introducing a taboo aspect of the racial issue from which many otherwise broadminded intellectuals continued to recoil.

Briefly considering "Septimius Felton" in his critical study of Hawthorne, Henry James found the fragment disappointing:

I suppose the answer to my criticism is that this is allegorical, symbolic, ideal; but we feel that it symbolises nothing substantial, and that the truth - whatever it may be - that it illustrates, is as moonshiny, to use Hawthorne's own expression, as the allegory itself (James 1969, 163).

Although James's criticism seems apt in terms of the texts' irresolution, the "Septimius" manuscripts make fascinating reading, as Hawthorne brings his own aesthetic and aesthetic problems into the plot. The work is an attempt to dramatise the act of reading and the interpretation of texts. Septimius abandons his studies for the ministry and turns his attention to decoding antique documents
that may reveal the secret of earthly immortality. Reading is portrayed as a dangerous, life-or-death activity, and the young man's obsession with the manuscript is characterised as a product of the revolutionary times. Even before the documents come into his possession, Septimius has begun to doubt his former convictions:

"It has seemed to me," observed Septimius, "that it is not the prevailing mood, the most common one, that is to be trusted; this is habit, formality, the shallow covering which we draw over what is real and seldom suffer it to be blown aside. But it is the snake-like doubt that thrusts out its head, that give us a glimpse of reality. Surely such moments are a hundred times as real as the dull quiet moments of faith - or what you call such" (Hawthorne 1977b, XIII, 11).

Septimius, the reader as heretical anti-hero, is fleetingly engaged in the War of 1812, a figure who may be able to bridge the cultural gap, which is no longer posited as merely a literal divide between nations, or even between past and present, but between past and future. The cultural authority of the present is challenged by the sceptical reader, who gains access to experience beyond his own immediate context. Septimius comes to see truth as a collaborative cultural construct, enduring but also continually redefined from text and legend. Authors and readers are interdependent in the creation of a culture. Septimius expresses this dynamic contingency during a story-telling session:

"Yes, I shall like to hear the legend, if it is a genuine one that has been adopted into the popular belief, and come down in chimney comers, with the smoke and soot that gathers there; and incrusted over with humanity, by passing from one homely mind to another. Then, such stories get to be true,
in a certain sense; and indeed, in that sense may be called true, throughout; for the very nucleus, the fiction in them, seems to have come out of the heart of men, in a way that cannot be imitated of malice aforethought. Nobody can make a tradition; it takes a century to make it" (92).^27

The reflection that texts and legends acquire their value and their reality-shaping influence over time acquires a new, self-searching emphasis in "Norton", pointedly disparaging the teleological authority of the originator:

"Yes, I shall like to hear the legend,... if it is a genuine one that has come down in chimney corners from time immemorial... and so, by passing from one homely mind to another, has gained a truth that it did not begin with. No single man can make a fireside legend; it takes a century, at least, of successive narrators to make it, and it is only good when its originator is long dead buried" [sic] (333).

Further self-reflexive instruction in the Hawthornean aesthetic is occasioned by Septimius's struggle to interpret what is

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^27 This passage is as close as Hawthorne would ever come to a direct comment on his contemporaries' call for an American literature. Rather than an affirmation of this demand, he suggests a deferral. He was far from alone in his sense of legend evolving into cultural truth. Folkloric research associated with rising nationalism throughout Europe and in particular the collections of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm had been in circulation since the early decades of the nineteenth century. An English translation of the Grimms' fairy tales was published in 1823 as German Popular Stories.

By mid-century, a number of authors shared Hawthorne's romantic interest in initiating eventual cultural truths as well as his 'metafictional' concerns. Septimius's observation here bears a close resemblance to passages in Robert Browning's The Ring and the Book, published in 1868-1869, some four years following Hawthorne's death. Hawthorne associated with the Brownings during his sojourn in Italy in 1858-59.
potentially a dangerously empowering text:

Septimius took it for granted that this more obvious meaning was of comparatively no importance, and that they doubtless had a symbolic value, which he should by and by discover, and also what tendency and force they had towards his great object of earthly immortality (319).

Allusions to Delia Bacon are everywhere apparent, not only in Septimius's attempt to decipher the secrets locked in the manuscript, but also in the prominent importance of an English soldier's grave over which a strange, pale girl named Sybil comes mysteriously to brood and which she claims as her property.

In the "Felton" draft, the narrator's mask momentarily falls away as the author refers directly to "my poor friend Miss Bacon" (163); the "Norton" manuscript introduces a legendary nobleman who served as partner to Francis Bacon's ancestor, Friar Bacon and who may be due credit for discoveries attributed to the Friar. Elsewhere, separate English and American fragments of the "Ancestral Footstep" legend reappear as tell-tale evidence of an Anglo-American familial connection. The significance of motifs explored in *The American Claimant Manuscripts* continued to absorb the author, as though by repeated examination he might eventually strike an ideal solution to the social contradictions and aesthetic challenges they posed.

Avoiding the temporal antithesis which had plagued

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the American claimant project, Hawthorne now invokes reading as the instrument which calls reality into question. Influenced by wild legends, Septimius reflects:

And then, the frame-work of his mental life being thus shaken, the solid substance of what he knew to be actual seemed to grow fragile along with it;... If part of his life, and that which seemed as solid as any other, was an illusion, then why not all (353-354).

Travel stirs similar doubts, as a brief venture into Dr. Portsoaken's scientific, empirical realm in Boston provokes a fleeting, vertiginous sense of his project's - and his own - unreality:

What a potency there is in change of place! [...] with every step that he took, it seemed as if he were coming out of a mist; out of an enchanted land, where things had seemed to him not as they really were, where impossibilities looked like things of everyday occurrence, out of some region into which he had wandered unawares, and dreamed a life-like dream, most life-like in its force and vividness, most unlifelike by its inconsistency with all that really is, with men's purposes, fates, business; into such a misty region had he been, [...] but now the mists were thinning away, he was passing the witchlike boundaries, and might never find his way over them again (129).

The return journey, however, restores the young scholar's convictions and squelches doubts about "the old enchanted land" of his subjective experimentation. In both the "Felton" and "Norton" versions, the narrator relates the hero's crisis of confidence to the insecurities and uncertainties confronting any would-be maker or creator, and most particularly the writer of Romance. Reality is contextual; truth and beauty
only find existence in the "proper atmosphere."

*The Elixir of Life Manuscripts* suggest a ferment of Faustian ideas and symbolic meanings which grew in number and complexity as the project progressed. In "Norton", the second, much more elaborate draft, any prospect of a coherent narrative synthesis of diverse themes and variations is defeated by the author's seeming refusal to restrict and prioritise the potential meanings and interpretations running riot through the text. Writing in 1949 on Hawthorne's last manuscripts, Edward H. Davidson, evaluating the texts according to the criteria of realistic fiction, concludes that Hawthorne faced insurmountable problems in defining plot and character motivation (Davidson 1949, 153-155).

The editors of the Centenary Edition, Davidson among them, reiterate the view that motivation was a significant stumbling block to completion. Despite these problems, both Henry James and Nina Baym detect a move toward literary realism in Hawthorne's attention to narrative explication of causality and motivation. They overlook the fact that this gesture toward realism is almost invariably accompanied by a corresponding increase in the occurrence of the fantastic and inexplicable. Could an even remotely realistic narrative be predicated on the fratricidal murder of an English soldier by his unknown relation, an American anti-war theology student, who thus unwittingly avails himself of the cryptic secret
of eternal life?

Rather than foundering on the problems of realistic
motivation or plot, the "Septimius" manuscripts seem most
pointedly to articulate the epistemological, moral and creative
paradox which Hawthorne was exploring in all his late narrative
experiments. How could his literal and metaphorical American
claimant make something new and original from old material?
Closure proved an insurmountable problem. Unlike Delia Bacon,
he had no unified grand theory with which to replace the
conventional view of the past. While he supported her attempt to
undermine the prevailing narrative of cultural history, his own
work suggests a self-conscious struggle to reinvent as well as to
rediscover the past. The late unfinished works reflect
Hawthorne's restless, repeated attempts to enact a self-
validating experience, to forge an individualistic alternative to
the prevailing messianic rhetoric of national identity. His chronic
tendency to 'historicise' American experience suggests a legitimising
authority ambiguously vested in the past. The author's aesthetic notations
and specific advice to such friends as Horatio Bridge (see page 47) suggest
that history for Hawthorne was something to be fabricated, overlooking
"what happened" for what "ought"; his legends and instant antiques of
American history were created to lend the author and his country a sense of
established tradition, of shared experience that had not yet been accumulated
or acquired. Increasingly grappling with relativism, he evaded the suggestion of any single, authoritative interpretation of events; the *Elixir Manuscripts* explicitly detail the interpretative collaboration he sought from his ideal future reader. His growing contemporary audience demanded less ambiguity, to which he responded in cryptic, ironic postscripts and expository fictions that pose as essays, as well as copious drafts for a supreme fiction of identity, beleaguered by too many images, ideas and plot possibilities. Had there been time, he might have tried them all. His American literary descendants would inherit a more moderate degree of his uncertain, anxious historicism. As he had foreseen, after Hawthorne, there was Hawthorne to look back upon.
Chapter V

CONSIDERATIONS OF CULTURAL INFLUENCE
IN HENRY JAMES'S "A PASSIONATE PILGRIM"

By the time "A Passionate Pilgrim" appeared in the March and April, 1871 issues of The Atlantic Monthly, Henry James Jr. was already well on his way to establishing a literary career as a critic, travel writer and author of short stories. His serialised tales had begun to be published in American magazines in 1864,\(^{28}\) readers of both The Galaxy and The Atlantic Monthly were increasingly familiar with the distinctive style and worldly tone of James's fiction. The moral complexities of inheritance and identity issues would often be combined with the complication of cross-cultural comparison in James's later tales, novels and plays; "A Passionate Pilgrim" marks his earliest treatment of a transatlantic syndrome of uncertainties and desires, here personified in the figure of a sensitive, tubercular and darkly doomed American claimant, Clement Searle.\(^{29}\)

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\(^{28}\) Coincidentally, the year of Hawthorne's death.

\(^{29}\) Although Richard Brodhead has remarked that the earlier tale "Travelling Companions" was James's first treatment of the International theme, the European element in that story mainly provides a picturesque setting for the developing relationship of two American tourists. While the title "Travelling Companions"
Predictably, the story was well received by James's young American friends and acquaintances such as Grace and Charles Norton and W.D. Howells, readers who had both the leisure and the wealth to linger in Europe, the better to cultivate an aesthetic sensibility seemingly unnurtured in the commercial, 'ahistorical' atmosphere of their homeland. An initial review of the tale in *The Nation* on 6th April 1871 was more critical, observing that the portrayal of certain key characters - the American Searle and his English cousin Richard - "taxes credulity" and finding "the main incidents of the story improbable, and two or three of them needlessly clumsy in their improbability" (James 1978, 643, reprinted from *The Nation*, 6 April 1871, XII, 242-243). More recent critics have tended to dismiss the tale as belonging to the author's self-acknowledged apprenticeship period, although James was nearly twenty-eight years old when the story, probably completed some months earlier, appeared could just as aptly apply to "A Passionate Pilgrim", the drama of this tale results from the involvement of the American travellers with Searle's English relations, thus providing the occasion to explore and contrast national characteristics and identities.

30 Such aesthetic wanderlust was not restricted to Americans. Simultaneously, the rise of the British middle class was accompanied by a similar tourist dynamic, as affluent Britons equipped with guidebooks sought sanctuary from the industrialised source of their wealth in the pre-industrialised culture, artefacts and ruins of the Continent, especially those of Greece and Italy. (Barthes 1972, 74-77; Buzard 1993, 30-43).
Whatever the initial critical reception, James seems to have retained a lifelong interest in revisiting and reinventing "A Passionate Pilgrim" to a degree unusual even for this most obsessive of literary revisionists. As Maqbool Aziz, editor of James's collected tales, has noted in his introduction to the 1871 text of the story, James went on to revise the text before each appearance in three subsequent collections, including *A Passionate Pilgrim* (1875), a Continental edition entitled *The Siege of London* (1884) and *Stories Revived* (1885). Aziz further emphasises that the tale was extensively rewritten for inclusion in volume xiii of the New York Edition, published in 1908.

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31 In his recent biography of James, Fred Kaplan concludes: "Despite minor merits, the story is partly a tourist narrative, partly a clumsy series of coincidences and unexplored subjectivities" (Kaplan, 1992, 130). More positively, R.W.B. Lewis in *The Jameses* considers "A Passionate Pilgrim" "the most ambitious of the new stories" James produced following his first year of independent travel in Europe, but perhaps "too ambitious for its own literary good" (Lewis 1991, 219). Richard Brodhead ponders why James featured the tale as the title story of his 1875 collection:

It is not the best written of the stories he included (many would consider it the worst), it is not the first written ("The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" is three years older), it is not, as it is often said to be, James's first treatment of the International theme (the unadopted "Travelling Companions" preceded it); nor is it the tale in the volume that best represents his mature handling of this theme ("The Last of the Valerii", "Madame de Mauves", and "Eugene Pickering" could all be argued to do so better (Brodhead 1986, 133-134).

Brodhead suggests that for James the enduring attraction of the tale was its thematic development of the American claimant phenomenon mentioned by Hawthorne in his "Consular Experiences" introduction to *Our Old Home* (Brodhead 1986, 133-134).
By including the work as the earliest in a selection which overtly seeks to arrange and explicate his own literary posterity, James seems to be indicating that readers searching for the 'essential' James should begin here. I would go even further and suggest that much that is characteristic of the author's mature work is already present here in embryo, and that the unfinished projects of his final years, including *The Sense of the Past*, *The Ivory Tower*, his 1888 essay on "London" which recalls his first impressions of the city, and even the autobiographical fragment *The Middle Years* are fundamentally further variations of this much earlier American claimant tale.

The story unfolds as an exuberant amalgam of literary allusions and associations supported by James's own tourist impressions. Autobiographical excursions and experiences in England descriptively recorded in letters home reappear as the itinerary of the claimant and his narrator-companion in "A Passionate Pilgrim", as they, like James, venture out to Hampton Court and Bushy Park, explore the Malverns and linger in Oxford, where Clement Searle's pilgrimage comes to its tragic if predictable end. (H. James letter to Mother, March 26th [?], 1869, Edel 1974, I, 102-105; H. James letter to William James, *Ibid.*, 108-114). In his

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32 The Malvern Hills, backdrop to the original site of Clement Searle's ancestral home, Lockley Park, in Herefordshire, is
retrospective New York Edition preface to the tale, James would recall:

I had in the spring of 1869 and again in that of 1870, spent several weeks in England... and had, perceptively and aesthetically speaking, taken the adventure of my twenty-sixth year 'hard', as 'A Passionate Pilgrim' quite sufficiently attests (639).

Upon 're-reading', (not to mention re-writing) James discovers the tale, along with the somewhat later composition of "The Madonna of the Future" as being:

...in the highest degree documentary for myself... The deep beguilement of the lost vision recovered, in comparative indigence, by a certain inexpert intensity of art - the service rendered by them at need, with whatever awkwardness and difficulty - sticks out of them for me to the exclusion of everything else and consecrates them, I freely admit, to memory (640).

Although "A Passionate Pilgrim" may seem more overtly 'autobiographical' than much of James's early fiction, James was not only relying upon his immediate tourist impressions as a picturesque setting for imaginary situations. The tale both acknowledges and strives to interact with a grand tradition of previous artistic and literary works associated with England's historic, culturally laden sites. There is a temptation to read the young author into the story (James practically invites us to

the area in which James spent the spring of both 1869 and 1870, undergoing hydrotherapy at a fashionable spa in an attempt to improve his health. In the course of subsequent revisions the Searle manor was repeatedly relocated to more abstract and imaginary counties, including Middleshire (1875), Slantshire (1884) and Slopeshire (1885). In the New York Edition James returns to the 1875 variant, referring to the house as Lackley in Middleshire.
do so) as though his self-confessed reflection that the tale is
"documentary for myself" is an admission of autobiographical
identification with the claimant and/or narrator. James's
correspondence around the time of the story's composition suggests
that rather than an exuberant, indiscriminate confirmation of
literary associations, the tale was a highly conscious manipulation
of tropes and traditions, calculated to appeal to a particular
audience of transatlantic travellers, his peers and precursors,
whom James nevertheless viewed and represented in a critical, even
satirical light. First among the precursors (and first of all
among James's readers) was his father, Henry James Sr., whose
self-described "vastation", a psycho-spiritual identity crisis
precipitated by a visit to England in 1844, was legendary in the
James family. An account of this "ghastly condition of mind"
(finally relieved by the revelations of Swedenborg) appears in
the father's Society the Redeemed Form of Man (1879) in a section
headed "My Moral Death and Burial" and was included by William James
in the posthumously published edition of The Literary Remains of

33 In his unfinished autobiographical volume The Middle Years,
James would similarly reflect on how his aesthetic ambition
was fired by "the great sought out compositions, the Hampton Courts
and the Windsors, the Richmonds... ":

...there were truly moments at which they seemed not to answer for it that I
should get all the good of them, and the finest -- what I was so extravagantly, so
fantastically after -- unless I could somehow at once indite my sonnet and prove
my title. The difficulty was in there being so much of them -- (James 1956, 568).
The anecdote concludes:

It was impossible for me, after what I have told you, to hold this audacious faith in selfhood any longer. When I sat down to dinner on that memorable chilly afternoon in Windsor, I held it serene and unweakened by the faintest breath of doubt; before I rose from table, it had inwardly shrivelled to a cinder. One moment I devoutly thanked God for the inappreciable boon of selfhood; the next, that inappreciable boon seemed to me the one thing damnable on earth, seemed a literal nest of hell within my own entrails (Matthiessen 1948, 166).

From the distance of a generation in 1870, the father's crisis could be somewhat more objectively viewed as part of the phenomenon of nervous breakdown and mental stress afflicting American 'pilgrims' whose sensibilities were seemingly overtaxed by the cultural stimuli of European travel, a liability ironically observed by Hawthorne in "Consular Experiences" (Hawthorne 1970, 6-40). Yet it could also be seen as a more wholesale rejection not simply of a secure American sense of self, but of any and all quests to establish an independent rather than historically predetermined and culture-bound identity. To some degree, "A Passionate Pilgrim" may both commemorate the father as an acute example of a cultural claimant (his American idealism proving no match for the realities of Old World materialism) and simultaneously celebrate his spiritual escape from that dilemma of identification with the past through which the tale's claimant seals his own doom.

Another 'pilgrim' who may have inspired James to take up the claimant trope was his beloved cousin Minny Temple, more
explicitly fictionalised by the later James as Milly Theale in

*The Wings of the Dove*. The young, vivacious but tubercular Minny

longed for European travel; the cousins entertained a vague plan

for a reunion in Rome during James's year abroad in 1869-1870.

Instead, upon his return to England in the spring of 1870, James

learned of her untimely death. Reflecting upon her loss in a

letter to his brother William from Malvern on March 19, 1870,

James is already speculating upon the imaginative capital to be

gained from the situation:

One thought there is that moves me much - that I should

be here delving into this alien England in which it was one

of her fancies that she had a kind of property. It was not,

I think, one of the happiest.... The landscape assents

stolidly enough to her death: it would have ministered but

scantly to her life. She was a breathing protest against

English grossness, English compromises and conventions - a

plant of pure American growth. None the less tho' -- I had

a dream of telling her of England and of her immensely

enjoying my stories. But it's only a half change: instead

of my discoursing to her, I shall have her forever talking
to me (Matthiessen, 262-263).

Minny Temple may have served as muse for "A Passionate

Pilgrim", James privately acknowledged that he wrote the tale

with other Americans of his social class and generation in mind.

Responding to a letter from Grace Norton, he asked her on July 16th,

18[71?] to thank her brother Charles:

...for his generous estimate of my *Passionate Pilgrim*. I wrote it,
in truth, for him & his more than for anyone, and I'm glad to find it
going so straight to its address. And while you are about it, dear
Grace, just take yourself by the two hands and shake yourself
handsomely, with the ardor of appreciated genius. My writing may be
good but your reading is quite a match for it. If you could only be
infinitely multiplied into my public! -- At all events, I shall write
in future for you -- as much better and better as I can -- and the
"public" may take what suits it (Edel 1974, I, 257).

There is some underlying ambiguity and perhaps affectionate
mockery in the distinction between the appreciative reading of
Grace Norton and the "generous estimate" of her brother Charles,
and his circle, the tale's acknowledged targets. R.W.B. Lewis
notes James's ambivalence toward Charles Norton's "companionship
and increasingly moralistic views on art. (Charles, Henry remarked to
the family, takes art so hard)" (Lewis 1991, 207-208).

34 Norton's approach to Old World culture was that of a
particularly zealous pilgrim. In his biography of Edith Wharton,
Lewis notes:

It was from Ruskin that Norton imbided his lifelong
dedication to the moral - one might almost say the
virtuous - aspect of great art; and it was this aesthetic
approach that he promulgated in a series of articles in
the newly founded *Atlantic Monthly* beginning in 1857 and as
co-editor, with James Russell Lowell of the *North American
Review* from 1863 to 1868 (1975, 138).

As Professor of Fine Arts at Harvard, Norton apparently:

...condemned everything written or constructed since the
late Middle Ages, everything American from the beginning,
all modern architecture and especially that of Harvard
University. It was said that when Norton died and went
to heaven, he would recoil and exclaim: "Oh! Oh! So
garish! So Renaissance! (Ibid., 138-139).

James did not share Norton's estimation of Ruskin, who he
described in the previously mentioned letter to his mother,
following a dinner with the Nortons at Ruskin's, as:

...weakness pure and simple... to see him only confirms
the impression given by his writing, that he has been
scared back by the grim face of reality into the world of
letter to his mother in which he had described the itinerary he would later reflect in "A Passionate Pilgrim", James observed:

I see the N.'s constantly; they are invaluable. I don't find myself much en rapport with Charles - altho' he's very kind; but I lounge & gossip with the ladies, who are one & all charming" (March 26th [?] 1869, Edel 1974, I, 105).

Some six months after his reply to Grace Norton, James directed a letter to Charles which might seem to underscore the ironic possibilities of "A Passionate Pilgrim":

It's a complex fate, being an American, and one of the responsibilities it entails is fighting against a superstitious valuation of Europe (2 February 1872, Edel, I, 273-274).35

unreason and illusion, and that he wanders there without a compass and a guide... (March 26, 1869, Lubbock, I, 20).

Unlike Norton, James did not allow his reverence for the aesthetic accomplishments of the past to overshadow a pronounced interest and investment in modern culture and society. His progressivism is in marked contrast to Norton's historical connoisseurship.

35 This epigrammatic, Emersonian excursion into the sonorous rhetoric of nationalist discourse is often quoted as an example of James's youthful patriotism. Marius Bewley elevates James's remark into the title of The Complex Fate: Hawthorne, Henry James and Some Other American Writers, a study of what he deems "The American Problem", which is one of cultural antagonism rather than comparison:

The problem is basically the problem of Europe versus America, and conjointly with that, the problem of past versus present, and both the past and present versus the future, the time problem being only another aspect of the geographical one (Bewley 1952, 56).

This description of the American's "complex fate" seems too narrow an interpretation of James's really quite ambiguous statement. (The American is after all fighting against his own superstition rather than asserting opposition to or differentiation from European culture; the struggle is all within.)
Although the suspect whiff of fatalism introducing this observation clouds the subject of American identity in an interpretative fog and suggests yet another potentially ironic twist to the young author's own valuation of the International theme, the conclusion seems to refer back to the recent object lesson of James's first passionate pilgrim. Clement Searle is a romantic, pathetic, even laughably tragic example of one American who succumbed without a struggle to his own wishful "superstitious valuation" of the land of his ancestors. (Searle's very name may be a

Bewley similarly detects no shades of irony in what he describes as "Hawthorne's compulsive affirmation of American positives" (57).

James was clearly preoccupied with the mythic, even allegorical, disputably Shakespearean term of his tale's title. Passionate pilgrims reappear throughout his works, a description James applied to wandering American characters from the fictional Isabel Archer to the lost Minny Temple. If his personal letter to Charles Norton already contained a veiled reminder of a work admired by Norton, James embedded an explicit reference to his earlier fiction in the conclusion of a travel article on "Chester" written from England and published in The Nation in 1872:

It takes passionate pilgrims, vague aliens and other disinherited persons to appreciate the 'points' of this admirable country (James 1993, 66).

Here the term serves to remind the reader of James's fiction and endorse the romantic tale's verisimilitude while encouraging the reader to further associations between James and Shakespeare. It is essentially a rewriting of Hawthorne, whose essay "Up the Thames" in Our Old Home contains a near-identical assertion:

It is well that America exists, if it were only that her vagrant children may be impressed and affected by the historical monuments of England in a degree of which the native inhabitants are evidently incapable (Hawthorne, 1970, 253).
playful compression of the knighted 'Sir' and the artistocratic 'Earl'.

Beyond an affectionate personal parody by which James differentiates his sensibility from that of his contemporaries' cultural zealotry and attempted appropriation of Europe, several public events of the period reinforced the attraction and topicality of the claimant theme. The most immediately compelling was the Franco-Prussian War, which tarnished the tourist view of the high-cultural values of civilisation in the combatant countries. By contrast, a traditional and by now somewhat anachronistic view of Britain's staunch historical stability could seem all the more appealing, encouraging those travellers questing after cultural identity to substitute England for Europe as the foremost representation of western civilisation on their itinerary. Another development highlighting the interest of mysteries involving Old World-New World inheritances was the advent of the Tichborne claimant trial in London. Tichborne, like the ancestor of James's fictional claimant, had disappeared at sea (in Tichborne's case, while indulging in lovelorn travels about the Pacific, after his desire to marry his cousin met with family resistance.) Clement Searle's ancestor was supposedly lost en route to America in defiance of a maternal dictate as to who he should marry, and the latter day American claimant becomes infatuated with his English cousin.
Although the Tichborne case would not come before the high court until May 1871, the claim contained sufficient romantic and sensational elements to warrant considerable preliminary interest. Given James's presence in London and the striking parallels of romantic mystery surrounding the legitimate identities of both the purported Tichborne and the fictional Clement Searle, it is possible that James was capitalising on the 'germ' of a social drama inherent in the Tichborne case, a situation he would have been correct in foreseeing as a popular cause célèbre.37

“A Passionate Pilgrim” is unusual in the James oeuvre in so transparently combining the autobiographical with the

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37 James's article on "An English Easter", written in 1877, refers to the Tichborne claimant's supporters:

...on the day the Queen went to open Parliament, when in Trafalgar Square, looking straight down into Westminster and over the royal procession, were gathered a group of banners and festoons inscribed in big staring letters with mottoes and sentiments which might easily have given on the nerves of a sensitive police department. They were mostly in allusion to the Tichborne claimant, whose release from his dungeon they peremptorily demanded and whose cruel fate was taken as a pretext for several sweeping reflections on the social arrangements of the time and country. These signals of unreason were allowed to sun themselves as freely as if they had been the manifestoes of the Irish Giant or the Oriental Dwarf at a fair. I had recently come from Paris, where the authorities have a shorter patience... I was therefore the more struck on both of the occasions I speak of with the admirable English practice of letting people alone — with the frank good sense and the frank good humour and even the frank good taste of it (James 1993, 120).

Whatever his thoughts on the sensation, in 1877 he clearly was not among the claimant's remaining sympathisers.
fictional. Yet the richest and certainly most insistent influences upon
the narrative are not topical and personal but literary and
artistic associations by which James seemed at once to contrive
the tale's aesthetic pedigree and to comment on the imaginative
tradition of the claimant plot. Hawthorne's impact upon James
has been widely noted (by Eliot's "The Hawthorne Aspect"
in the *Little Review*, 5 [August, 1918], 52-53 and by Robert
Emmet Long's critical study *The Great Succession: Henry James and
the Legacy of Hawthorne* (1979) as well as by Bell, Brodhead,
Kaplan, Lewis, Matthiessen, and others). 38

Yet the literary debt most conspicuous to the reader in the pages and
the very title of "A Passionate Pilgrim" is not an homage to Hawthorne.
In a tale containing so many specific references to literary works and authors
of the past, it is noteworthy that all direct associations with Hawthorne are

38 The persistent influence of Hawthorne throughout James's
career has been most persuasively traced by Richard Brodhead,
who notes that in "A Passionate Pilgrim", James was taking up
a theme left uncompleted by Hawthorne: "...Clement Searle's
laying claim to an Old World title images not just James's
imaginative appropriation of Europe but also his appropriation
of Hawthorne" (Brodhead 1986, 133-134). Most critics, including
Brodhead, assume that the James story is imaginatively
founded exclusively on Hawthorne's fragmentary claimant sketch
from the essay "Consular Experiences" in *Our Old Home*. In
fact, the tale echoes sentiments, opinions and scenes
scattered throughout Hawthorne's English travelogue. If only
by hearsay, James may also have known of Hawthorne's late,
uncompleted *American Claimant Manuscripts*, which were not yet
published but which may have been a subject of gossip in
Boston's literary circles. James was certainly in touch with James T. Fields,
Hawthorne's publisher and, until his retirement in 1870, editor of *The Atlantic
Monthly*, to which James, like Hawthorne before him, contributed.
unattributed, even suppressed. There are direct references to Austen
and Cervantes and Thackeray, but these are simply cultural grace
notes, establishing the narrator's (and perhaps the author's)
literary credentials, exemplifying a cultivated sensibility.

39 The tale's indebtedness to Hawthorne's *Our Old Home* has
already been mentioned. James also seems to have his predecessor in
mind as the narrator describes his journey down to Lockley with Searle.
The travellers come across a picturesque farmhouse which appears to have
been transplanted from *The House of the Seven Gables*:

> It is cruelly complete. Poor sacred superannuated home!
> Its bended beams and joists, beneath the great burden of
> its many gables, seem to ache and groan with memories and
> regrets (60).

In later versions this house is reached by striking through "a narrow lane,
a green lane, dim with its barriers of hawthorn" (603) whereas the same
lane in 1871 is merely "dim with its height of hedges" (60).

Such irrepressible but unacknowledged echoes of Hawthorne
throughout the tale suggest the complex dynamic of admiration,
imitation and competition which were involved in dealing with
a more immediate influence than Shakespeare. James's debt to
Hawthorne was observed by his brother William in a letter
written to Henry in England on January 19, 1870, around the time
of the composition of "A Passionate Pilgrim":

> ...I enjoyed last week the great pleasure of reading *The
House of the Seven Gables*. I little expected so great a
work. It's like a great symphony with no touch
alterable without injury to the harmony. It made a deep
impression on me and I thank heaven that Hawthorne
was an American. It also tickled my national feeling not
a little to note the resemblance of Hawthorne's style to
yours and Howells's, even as I had earlier noted the converse.
That you and Howells with all the models in English literature
to follow, should involuntarily have imitated (as it were) this
American, seems to point to the existence of some real American
mental quality (Matthiessen, 319).

R.W.B. Lewis notes that James replied to this fraternal compliment with the
remark that he intended "to write as good a novel one of these days (perhaps)
as the House of the Seven Gables" (Lewis, 221).
Like its tragic hero, the text is highly volatile and open to derivative suggestion, at various moments echoing Tennyson, Shakespeare and Hawthorne, recalling Poe's dialectic between a rational narrator and an irrational situation focused on an irrational protagonist. At various moments Searle is even bandied about as something of a Christ, Faust or Adam figure, tempted in the garden of Lockley Park and persuaded to visit the house of his forefathers (to him, a kind of heaven) on the third day (61).

The tale is riddled with imaginative allusions to poetry and drama - allusions which pointedly seem to inspire the tale's tone and structure. This influence insistently manifests itself in the form of quotations and motifs from Tennyson's "Locksley Hall", a poem written in 1837-38 and published in 1842, in which "the heir of all the ages" explores similar themes of aristocratic degeneration and the disinheritance/rejection by that class of any 'self-made' meritocracy. The demeaning effects of exile, the tyrannical frustration of a love match that would cross boundaries of class and dilute the concentration of material wealth held by the privileged aristocracy, a repressive and provocative act, complete with tragic consequences which perpetuate

40 "A Passionate Pilgrim" seems to be exploring techniques and thematic territory already evident - excepting the International element of cultural comparison - in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher". Later passages in which the narrator identifies with the sleeping Searle are reminiscent of the narrator and his imitative double in Poe's "William Wilson".
social injustice, are all contained in Tennyson's dramatic monologue.

Even more pointedly, "A Passionate Pilgrim" represents an obvious and repeatedly emphasised rewriting of Shakespeare, the text fairly bristling with its own indebtedness to Shakespeare's poetry and drama. In associating his tale with the persistent echoes of more historically established literary genres, James seems to suggest that his fiction should also be read in the context of high art, as a dramatic prose poem rather than popular fiction. His 'poetic' tale recapitulates relevant thematic material from poetry, drama and fiction in order to ascend to the level of his literary precursors.

Much of the tale's allusive effervescence may be attributed to the enthusiasm of a youthful writer-as-reader, who has recently witnessed scenes vividly evoking those of Shakespeare's dramas and poetry. (Like Washington Irving before them, both Hawthorne and James toyed with the conceit that for an American, to visit England was to experience English literature brought to life. Some of the literal quotations from Shakespeare may

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41 Irving introduces the trope of American literary pilgrimage in his Sketchbook chapter on "The Boar's Head Tavern, East Cheap: A Shakespearian Research" in which, while turning over the pages of Shakespeare's Henry the Fourth, he is struck by a sudden inspiration:

"I will make a pilgrimage to East cheap," [sic] said I, closing the book, "and see if the old Boar's head [sic] Tavern still
seem sophomorically gratuitous or artlessly confusing. In the
original text, Searle's angry and highly uncharacteristic response
to the lawyer Simmons comes enclosed in unattributed quotation marks
alerting the reader to a borrowing from *The Merchant of Venice*
(Shakespeare 1980, Act 4, Scene 1, line 340, 235): "Yes, I'm
afraid! "I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word!"") (48).
In the play, this vehement sentiment is expressed by Gratiano, who just
prior to this has hailed Portia as "a second Daniel"; the 'word' he seemingly
refers to is "justice". This melodramatic conjoining of the merchant Shylock
with the lawyer Simmons is left to fester without further development;
the quotation was finally deleted by James in his revision for
the New York Edition. Transported by a different sort of passion
during his visit to Oxford, Searle once again resorts
to quotation - this time from *The Tempest* - in expressing a
heightened sense of the city's significance:

Isn't it all, he [Searle] demanded, 'a delightful lie?
Mightn't one fancy this the very central point of the
world's heart, where all the echoes of the world's life
arrive, only to falter and die? Listen! The air is thick
exists. Who knows but I may light upon some legendary
traces of Dame Quickly and her guests;..." (Irving 1983, 844).

Although he "sought in vain for the ancient abode of Dame Quickly"
(845), Irving is imaginatively gratified by a modern equivalent,
the Mason's Arms, and its landlady Dame Honeyball, along with a
few dubious 'relics' of the old Boar's Head.

In *Our Old Home*, Hawthorne makes a similar pilgrimage to Uttoxeter,
scene of Dr. Johnson's act of penance in Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*.
Hawthorne is however disappointed rather than gratified in his search for
surviving traces or knowledge of the literary act.
with arrested voices (91).  

The reader is left in perplexed contemplation of Searle as a latter-day Caliban, a Shakespeare-spouting 'savage' whose "gentlemanly weakness, indeed, seemed expressed in his elegant person" (44), as the narrator initially introduces him, a most unlikely figure to identify with Shakespeare's barbarian slave. The inconsistency of this trope as applied to the character of Searle begins to indicate some of the aesthetic problems of an overly influenced text. Not only Searle but almost every character serves as a repository of signifiers, metaphors and previous literary identities, many of them contradictory.

Few readers could overlook the Shakespeare connection of "A Passionate Pilgrim", the tale's literary indebtedness is emphatically proclaimed from the outset with a title adopted from a lesser known collection of Shakespeare's poetry, verses written on the fickleness of earthly affections and the transitory

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42 Searle's reverie paraphrases Caliban's report of the isle's enchantment to Stephano in Act 3, Scene 3 of The Tempest:

Be not afeard--the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not;
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometimes voices,
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again... (lines 136-142, 31).

Oxford has been recommended to Searle by the narrator as "the best thing in England".

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nature of physical attraction and desire. This collection seems to have been intent on demystifying the sentiments of more conventional verses composed on the subject of true love. Of course it is possible that James simply liked the title and thought it appropriate to the American claimant plot. (The notion that pilgrims come not just to worship or to woo but to take material -- as well as carnal -- possession is a new socio-psychological insight into the character of the romantic, other-worldly Elizabethan wanderer. In his literary journey from sacred to secular, James's symbolic pilgrim has developed some distinctly mixed, even capitalistic motives.)

James's first published tale, "A Tragedy of Error" similarly appropriates the title of a more familiar work by Shakespeare, imposing a (possibly playful) inversion upon the title of A Comedy of Errors. "A Passionate Pilgrim" is a more subtle transformation, as Shakespeare's definite article gives way to

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43 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow redefined the concept of pilgrimage in a cultural and secular context which was somewhat sentimental, relatively didactic and almost entirely devoid of irony in Outre-Mer: A Pilgrimage Beyond the Sea, his Continental travelogue which appeared in book form in 1835 following serial publication, with some parts published anonymously, in 1833. Earlier excerpts had appeared as part of The Schoolmaster, published in New England Magazine in 1831-1832. Closely contemporaneous with James's "Passionate Pilgrim", Samuel Clemens's The Innocents Abroad, or the New Pilgrims' Progress (1869) presents an irreverent and satirical view of Old World pilgrimage, and of his American fellow-travellers, whom Clemens insistently depicts as 'pilgrims'. The terms have a peculiar and particularly American resonance, inescapably invoking the founding image and accepted history of the 'Pilgrim Fathers'.

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James's indefinite, suggesting that the tale to follow is but one of many possible or another in the (Shakespearean) tradition. James's title, while akin to its literary predecessor, is more of a category label and less an identifying characteristic. As Shakespearean allusions go, "The Passionate Pilgrim" is certainly a more obscure choice to play on, based on slighter work than "A Comedy of Errors".

J. C. Maxwell's introduction to the Cambridge text of this "miscellaneous collection" of Shakespeare's poetry suggests that *The Passionate Pilgrim* was not even named by Shakespeare but instead was given its title by the collection's publisher, William Jaggard (Shakespeare 1980, 1083). It is however rather doubtful that James was aware of this.

It is somewhat more likely that James had come across a new edition of the poetry, published in 1870, titled *The Passionate Pilgrime, a collection of fugitive poetry published under the name of Shakespeare* and including a preface by C. Edmonds which challenges Shakespeare's authorship of two of the poems. James might well have been prompted by contemporary interest in the new edition to adopt the title of the disputed work as his own.

Throughout his adult life, James maintained a lively interest in Shakespeare and the debate concerning Shakespeare's identity and authorship. His 1903 tale "The Birthplace" and an introduction to *The Tempest* written by James for a 1907 edition of *The Complete*
Works of Shakespeare both emphasise the relative unimportance of authorial identity in comparison to the works; a letter to Violet Hunt written in 1903 finds James "haunted by the conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practised on a patient world" (August 26, 1903, Lubbock 1920, I, 424-425). According to Lubbock, a letter written by James to Bruce Porter suggests both knowledge and scepticism concerning further investigation of the Shakespeare authorship question. The letter mildly rebukes Porter for "your misguided search for a sensation" and suggestively elaborates:

44 "The Birthplace" reflects a variation on the Shakespeare question in the growing scepticism of a former schoolmaster appointed to be caretaker of the eponymous literary shrine. After hours, Morris Gedge is impulsively moved to confess his doubts to a sympathetic pair of visiting Americans:

"...It's all I want—to let the author alone. Practically"—he felt himself getting the last of his chance—"there is no author, that is for us to deal with. There are all the immortal people—in the work; but there's nobody else" (James 1964, II, 439).

The American couple conclude with Gedge that if there is no author, there shouldn't be a house, but as the caretaker depends on this institution for his living, they cheerfully encourage him to "keep it up" by perpetuating the hoax.

In his "Introduction to The Tempest", James makes a similar point:

The secret that baffles us being the secret of the Man, we know, as I have granted, that we shall never touch the Man directly in the Artist. We stake our hopes thus on indirectness, which may contain possibilities;... (James 1984, 1220).

James thus attempts to lead the reader away from the mysteries attending the cultural construction of the Stratford author and back into the works themselves.
...I hate to see you associated (with my firm affection for you) with the most provincial bêtises, and to have come so far to do it - to be it (given over to a, to the Bêtise! [sic] in a fine finished old England with which one can have so much better relations, and so many of them... ([August 1910], Lubbock 1920, II, 165).

As previously noted in relation to Hawthorne, the published literary-historical debate as to who wrote the works attributed to Shakespeare was opened by Delia Bacon in 1857 with her overextended, innuendo-ridden *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded*, a study which sifts the internal evidence and detects the hand of Sir Francis Bacon and other literary Elizabethans at work within the texts. Although her thesis was mocked by critics and generally dismissed at the time, by 1870 the 'Shakespeare question' was fast becoming something of an intellectual growth industry, with camps of eccentric scholars and followers engaged in supporting or contesting each emerging theory of authorship.

Further new publications concerned with Shakespeare's authorship are announced in two separate issues of *The Bookseller* in 1870. The appearance of *The Sonnets of Shakespeare Solved, and the Mystery of his Friendship, Love, and Rivalry Revealed* is detailed in the magazine's February 3rd issue, while *Notes and Conjectural Emendations of Certain Doubtful Passages in Shakespeare's Plays* is listed in the April 1, 1870 issue (*The Bookseller: A Handbook of British and Foreign Literature*, February 3, 1870, CXLV, 101, and April 1, 1870, CXLVII, 335).
In his later years James may have come to deplore the Victorian obsession with the identity of the author Shakespeare rather than the works themselves, the younger writer of such early tales as "A Passionate Pilgrim" seems intent on reimagining Shakespeare's work as his own, all the while transparently pointing to evidence of his modern revision of the Bard. The single literary source most persistently haunting both the narrative structure and the psychological content of James's "Passionate Pilgrim" appears to be "Hamlet", another tragedy of a sensitive youth plunged by virtue of his disinheritance into a near-suicidal identity crisis. Both would-be heirs drive themselves beyond the outer reaches of sanity and see ghosts, with more than a little help from a close friend, whose motives are not entirely above suspicion. Just as the immediate foil of Hamlet is Horatio, it is the narrator who stirs the plot and determines the course of Searle's actions in "A Passionate Pilgrim"; with friends like these it is small wonder that the unfortunate Searle is, like Hamlet, doomed by an obsession with his dysfunctional family. He can neither escape nor assume his preordained

In his scholarly study of Shakespeare biography and heresy, Shakespeare's Lives, S. Schoenbaum observes:

By 1884 the authorship controversy had stirred France, Germany, and India, as well as England and the United States, and it had produced over 250 books, pamphlets, and articles. ...Alas, the ink had only begun to flow (Schoenbaum 1991, 404).
ancestral role. By way of contrast neither Horatio nor Searle's travelling companion are seen to have personal or family history or encumbrance; their pasts are largely opaque, lacking the entangling development of any relationships or responsibilities beyond the immediate scope of the present narrative. As the ultimate survivors of their respective narratives, they have undefined yet promising futures in which they seem likely to prevail.\textsuperscript{47} Through travel, James's characters not only escape from provincialism but achieve a form of self-definition rather than pre-ordained identity.

\textsuperscript{47} In \textit{Meaning in Henry James}, Millicent Bell notes that characters in James generally have a way of escaping their pasts:

> It is an unnoted effect of James's famous "international situation" that it introduces an American lately landed in Europe whose home conditions lie behind, never to be revisited, even by memory. ...James rarely resorts to the "flashback," an old as well as a modern way of recovering the past of one's personages; he never begins in the middle so that he must loop back again to recover the origins of his story, but takes one only forward (Bell, 19).

The seeming exception of "A Passionate Pilgrim" only serves to illustrate Bell's point. When James's characters have any past to speak of, they are generally doomed by virtue of their own history and thus banished to the periphery. Searle's demise is a foregone conclusion; the main character of "A Passionate Pilgrim" is the narrator, of whom we know only that he is an American who has spent some time travelling in Europe. (Strether in \textit{The Ambassadors} and the young sculptor in \textit{Roderick Hudson} are perhaps more complex examples of characters who deviate from Bell's general rule. Encumbered by their pasts, they nevertheless remain as the central consciousness of their respective narratives.) An even more striking exception to Bell's general observation is the unfinished \textit{The Sense of the Past}, in which the protagonist travels back through time, overtaking a history which is not his own but that of his ancestor. His assumption of a past (his ancestor's) is worked for chilling psychological effect.
In certain cases, this definition becomes so fluid according to circumstance that they would seem to relinquish any fixed form of characteristic identity.

I would argue that James has here for the first time 'improved' upon Shakespeare's model by foregrounding 'Horatio' as the teller of the tale, requiring him to rationalise his own actions toward Searle. The narrator of "A Passionate Pilgrim" is the earliest of a succession of James's suspect reflectors of consciousness, observers whose motives and character are of greater moral and psychological interest than the generally stereotyped object of their attention, whether it be a Searle, a Daisy Miller or a Milly Theale.

It seems that the text's most mystifying moments (perhaps the very incidents which the critic for The Nation found so "improbable") all centre upon the narrator's attempt to avoid calling attention to himself and his unexplained, often inexplicable actions. The narrator first notices Searle in the dining room of the inn where both are lodging, and proceeds shamelessly to eavesdrop on an interview between Searle and his lawyer Simmons. The transgression of the seemingly genteel, middle-class narrator in listening to a private discussion about personal business goes largely unremarked, yet though proclaiming his innocence ("...through no indiscretion of my own, a large portion of their conversation made
its way over the top of our dividing partition..." 44) the narrator is not only breaking a social code but inviting the reader to participate in this transgression. An even more puzzling deviation from conventional behavior is to come. Following a coincidental encounter at Hampton Court during which Searle confides his family history, present predicament, and short life expectancy, the narrator unaccountably accedes to Searle's impetuous wish that they should henceforth be inseparable "to the end" (57). This pledge is promptly given on no firmer ground than the narrator's previous observation that Searle was "weak and interesting", a description more befitting a victim than a romantic claimant. 49 Nor does the narrator always seem to be acting in the best interests of his impressionable friend's sanity, encouraging Searle to abandon his resignation to his disappointing prospects and imagine himself reinstated among his illustrious ancestors: "'Here you can wander all day,' I said to Searle, 'like a proscribed and exiled prince, hovering about the dominion of the usurper'" (62). Having encouraged Searle to visit Lockley Park and after organising a tour of the house himself, the

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48 In contrast with the social code disapproving such passive invasions of another's privacy, eavesdropping is itself a literary convention, a convenient means of providing a first-hand report of what was said.

49 James would again combine the issue of degeneracy and inheritance, somewhat more lucidly and without the New World complication of cultural inheritance, in *The Reprobate*, a play written in 1891.
narrator is instrumental in putting Searle in contact with his unmarried female cousin by adding the American claimant's name to his own visiting card. His motives in encouraging Searle's romantic fantasies may not be entirely altruistic. Ostensibly seeking to present Searle as a romantic figure to his cousin, the narrator only reinforces in her mind Searle's pitiful and pitiable situation:

...Let him like you, let him love you! You see in him now, doubtless, much to pity and to wonder at. But let him simply enjoy awhile the grateful sense of your nearness and dearness. He will be a better and stronger man for it, and then you can love him, you can respect him without restriction. (78)

Under the pretext of encouraging Miss Searle to romantically encourage Searle, the narrator persists in intimate and private exchanges with her, not content until he has extracted from her a promise to let Searle act out his fantasy (first suggested by the lawyer Simmons but equally encouraged by the narrator) of proposing that the inheritance dispute be resolved by their marriage.

The narrator may in fact be viewed as a corrupting influence rather than a dispassionate witness, prompting Miss Searle to deeper emotions than those which her cousin in his present condition might reasonably be expected to arouse. He may of course have no ulterior or sinister motive beyond his own sentimental voyeurism. Yet not only does the narrator succeed in verbally manipulating Searle and stage-managing Miss Searle, he also effectively controls most written communication (or lack of it) between the characters. A single exception introduces the dramatic
antagonist of the tale's second half. James suspended the first serial instalment with the arrival of an unexpected telegram from Miss Searle's brother commanding her to "Keep the American." The opening of the next instalment finds the narrator offering the mystified Searle (and the no less mystified reader) an all-too-ready explanation as to how Mr. Searle knew of his American cousin's presence at Lockley. Unable for once to dictate what is read, the narrator hastens to suggest what should be understood by the cryptic telegram.

The inscription of Searle's name upon his visiting card is only the first instance of the narrator's own epistolary liberties. It is the narrator who tears up Miss Searle's intercepted note to her cousin before it is read by her brother, or indeed anyone. And while Searle sinks into an exhausted sleep after his hostile rebuff by the heir of Lockley, the inexhaustible narrator "sat down to do some writing", although he gives no hint as to whom or what he might be addressing himself (86). This undefined writing by the narrator (be it a letter, a journal, or even the tale in question) is the metaphoric equivalent of Shakespeare's play within a play, a self-reflexive gesture that stimulates the reader to join in thinking about the commanding interpretative position of the writer/narrator.

Finally, attending Searle upon his death bed, the narrator honours Searle's request that word be sent to Miss Searle. But rather than despatch Searle's feverish message ("Write three lines, three words: 'Good bye; remember me; be happy.") he sends instead
a note in his own name: "Your cousin is rapidly dying. He asks to see you" (98).

This message has the desired effect in bringing Miss Searle back into the narrator's presence. Miss Searle's mourning clothes announce the death of her brother, and even before exchanging last words with the dying Searle, his cousin confides to the narrator the somewhat premature but obvious and perhaps desired result of this anticipated fatality: "O death, death!" said Miss Searle. 'You and I are left'" (100). Her dependency upon the narrator is physically expressed in the pressure which, in her distress, she puts upon his arm. Her final words to her dying cousin are a rhetorically open question reminiscent of Hawthorne: "And now - now - with what use for freedom?" (100). Miss Searle herself has already provided one obvious answer: ("Only you and I are left.") The narrative concludes with the image of the sobbing and bereft heiress at the bedside of a corpse, a figure freed from family obligations, proscriptions and protection, crying out for immediate consolation. A brief afterword suggests that one year later the narrator is still in contact with Miss Searle and that she has come out of mourning. The reader might conclude that there is no further impediment to her marriage, that she will marry, and that the man she will marry is none other than the narrator,
all other candidates being dead and buried.

However much is left to innuendo and the reader's imagination, it is certainly noteworthy that "A Passionate Pilgrim" employs many of the narrative devices familiar to readers of the later novels as characteristically Jamesian, from the point of view of the suspect narrator to the open innuendo of the ending, a tale turning upon the dramatic impact of written messages, the appearance of notes read and unread.

James might have smoothed over obvious narrative flaws in subsequent revisions of the tale. Instead, these later alterations serve to strengthen suspicion of the narrator's own opportunistic motives, and it may be that the author discovered the less innocent possibilities of the narrator as his career went on.

The narrator's first, unflattering impressions of Miss Searle are progressively softened to suggest that the observer finds her more attractive than in the 1871 version. Searle's romantic impression of his cousin remains unchanged throughout: "'You're a woman of the past. You're nobly simple. It has been a romance to see you'" (70; 611).

While Searle "gazed marvelling " at the entrance of his cousin, the narrator of the early text is coolly critical: "My first impression of Miss Searle was that she was neither young nor beautiful" (64). He remains untouched by her innocent demeanour:

"...Her glance and accent in addressing us were simple, too simple" (65).
In the 1884 and 1885 revisions Miss Searle has aged from thirty-three to thirty-five (473). The impression that she is "neither young nor beautiful" remains, but the description seems less harsh and more realistic in light of her somewhat more advanced years.

Beyond the subtleties of amended description, the changes wrought upon Miss Searle in the intervening thirty-seven years between the Atlantic serialisation and the New York Edition are further manifested in a startling change of incident in which Searle reports how his cousin has ultimately responded to the prospect of marrying her kinsman. In the 1871 version, Searle's fantasy of resolving his claim through marriage is left open, as Miss Searle retreats from the prospect, exclaiming "I must think, I must think!" (86). In the later version, Searle reports that his cousin (all the more maddeningly) has declared: "I love you, but I shall never see you again" (626). This paradoxical but definite rejection is more in keeping with the "hard part" the narrator has urged Miss Searle to "play" ("let him love you...") (619) than with the "nobly simple" heiress of the early text who had not yet given her word to the corrupting narrator. It is also more consistent with submission to her brother, who opposes her relation to the American claimant.

As Hamlet to the narrator's Horatio, Searle is infatuated
with a character who can be read as a compound of Ophelia and Gertrude. Miss Searle, particularly in the later editions, is unwittingly treacherous, serving as the object of both men's desire and the agent tipping the balance of Searle's mental instability, offering familial (maternal) recognition and acceptance, but nevertheless depriving her suitor cousin of his 'birthright' by refusing to marry him.

As a reworking of "Hamlet", it may be argued that "A Passionate Pilgrim" places new emphasis upon the Horatio subplot, and that the original Oedipal struggle with familial authority is subordinated to the narrator's efforts to intervene on Searle's behalf. The signs of the family struggle are still evident within the plot, but despite the title, the relationships of distant cousins and the introduction of a narrator suggest an attempt at a cooler, more objective narrative. The truly Oedipal drama of "A Passionate Pilgrim" resides in the self-reflexive aesthetic helping to shape the tale into a self-conscious, manifestly indebted study of creative and cultural influence. The presence of Shakespeare is signposted throughout, most superficially expressed in the frequent quotations which inevitably issue from the unsophisticated Searle. James's American claimant is essentially a parody of the young, would-be cosmopolitan Europhiles of his generation, those who would worship relics of an Old World past.
Drawn with more detachment and irony in the New York Edition, Searle is a cliché-ridden, tragic figure bordering on burlesque even in his earlier incarnations. Yet Shakespeare - and the idea of Shakespeare as a symbol of literary indebtedness, also informs the deep structure of the narrative and poses the problem of cultural and artistic inheritance which the tale sets out to examine and, by revision, resolve.

T.S. Eliot, who was acutely conscious of following in the transatlantic tradition of his predecessor Henry James, distinguishes between the achievement of literary works which manifest a heightened awareness of their aesthetic indebtedness and those which are content merely to manipulate recognised forms and motifs. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent", he observes:

...novelty is better than repetition.
Tradition is a matter of much wider significance.
It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must

50 In his Atlantic review of James's first collection of tales, W.D. Howells considers the title story of A Passionate Pilgrim "the best of all", rather tentatively endorsing the narrative's seemingly incongruous comic elements:

...Mr. James does not often suffer his sense of the ludicrous to relax the sometimes over-serious industry of his analysis, and when he has once done so he seems to repent it. Yet we are sure that the poetic value of 'A Passionate Pilgrim' is enhanced by the unwonted interfusion of humour, albeit the humour is apt to be a little too scornful (The Atlantic, April 1875, xxxv, 490-495; reprinted in James 1978, 644-648).
obtain it by great labour (Eliot 1950, 49). This rather protestant work aesthetic might be the moral of "A Passionate Pilgrim", which admittedly falls short of achieving a highly realised new synthesis, but manages to reflect with wit and insight upon its own juxtaposition of borrowed concepts, tropes and images. Better by far to actively "pick and choose" - and reconstrue - one's imaginative sources, than be a passive, dissipated and disappointed would-be heir like Clement Searle.

In its representation and revision of a traditionally 'heroic' identity quest, James's tale is often far more lucid and insightful than such recent contemporary psychological considerations of cultural influence as the subjective analysis afforded by Harold Bloom in *The Anxiety of Influence*, which rediscovers in sometimes scholarly, sometimes ineffably poetic terms the grounds and conditions James had explored two generations before:

All quest-romances of the post-!Enlightenment, meaning all Romanticisms whatsoever, are quests to re-beget one's own self, to become one's own Great Original. We journey to abstract ourselves by fabrication. But where the fabric has already been woven, we journey to unravel. ... the poet, in writing his poem, is forced to see the assertion against influence as being a ritualized quest

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51 Eliot's observations seem to reflect back and expand upon Hawthorne's brooding thoughts about culture and literary tradition in *The Elixir of Life Manuscripts*, previously noted on pages 82-83.
for identity (Bloom 1973, 68-69).

In James (as in Eliot) such quests for identity are more ambiguous, and may prove fatal. The hero is inevitably excluded by his supposed kinsmen and his claim on the past is unrecognised. The final part of "A Passionate Pilgrim" recounts Searle's rapid decline, lingering on with the narrator in Oxford. The family drama all but concluded, the tale now seems didactically determined to extend its message in Anglo-American terms, thereby discouraging any overt ideological or nationalistic interpretation. Both Searle and Miss Searle's brother have degenerate physical attributes. Mr. Searle is half a head shorter than his cousin, and his 'degenerate' appearance is emphasised in later versions of the tale (613). More emphatically, Searle's English 'double' is introduced in the character of Rawson, a former Oxford scholar now fallen on hard times, a vagrant who dreams of a fresh start in America. Rawson, a victim of Britain's law of primogeniture, is chided by Searle, who concludes that their respective failures did not result from any social injustice:

"It lies neither in one's chance nor one's start to make one a success; nor in anything one's brother [in N.Y. Edition: 'anyone's brother'] can do or can undo. It lies in one's will! [N.Y. Edition: It lies in one's character.] You and I, sir, have had none; that's very plain. [N.Y. Edition: "You and I, sir, have had no character - that's very plain"] (97; 634).

Searle of course would say that, being a self-confessed
conservative and a bit of a snob. Yet his statement, rather like a late, Damascene conversion, also argues against the idea that such weakness of character may be attributed to genealogical degeneration. Character is something the individual must make, not seek to acquire by inheritance, and it is perhaps this exclusion from an anticipated confirmation of genealogical identity that has led to Searle's and Rawson's degenerate condition. James would take up the theme of disputed or problematic inheritances and the unjust, tragic personal consequences of Draconian inheritance laws time and time again, from Washington Square, The Tragic Muse, and The Spoils of Poynton to his last published 'novel', an adaptation of his play "The Outcry". The claimant's only effective action within the narrative is to leave Rawson an 'inheritance' of personal effects, allowing the Englishman to emigrate to America, reversing the terms of Searle's pilgrimage.

In a tale already abundant with Searle's projected Doppelgänger and alter-egos, the late introduction of Rawson and the renewed question of degeneration is perhaps one subplot too many, a motif too overtly executed to be aesthetically credible. Having mentally succumbed to a state of almost complete identity with his ancestral namesake, Searle unaccountably reverts

52 Regarding Searle's mental deterioration following their arrival in Oxford, the narrator clinically observes:
to his own personality and recalls his own experience in his
dialogue with Rawson, one of the more glaringly unjustified
of the tale's many inconsistencies. Searle's encounter with Rawson
makes the creatively chaotic jumble of "A Passionate Pilgrim" even
messier. It suggests a young author ambitiously eager to
interrogate the predominance of genealogical nature over social
constructions of culture and identity, to challenge dichotomies
in which the Old World is exclusively concerned with
the past and questions of inheritance, while the New
World is viewed as progressive and focussed on the future.
In "A Passionate Pilgrim" James begins ironically to consider the
thematic material of Old World-New World comparison which had
often been mystified and rendered nationally self-serving in
the post-Enlightenment society contemporary with Darwin.

James entertained yet another rewriting of "A Passionate
Pilgrim" in his unfinished, novel length 'international' ghost
story, The Sense of the Past. He began work on the project in
the winter of 1900, urged by Kipling's publisher F. N. Doubleday
to do something along the lines of "The Turn of the Screw". When
Doubleday's casual enthusiasm did not develop into a contract,
James was reinspired by a similar request from W. D. Howells,

He had already taken a fancy to confound his identity with
that of the earlier Clement Searle; he now began to speak
almost wholly from the imagined consciousness of his Old
World kinsman (89-90).
who had also encouraged Samuel Clemens in his American claimant fictions. As James wrote to Howells on 29 June 1900:

I brood with mingled elation and depression on your ingenious, your really inspired, suggestion that I shall give you a ghost, and that my ghost shall be "international." I say inspired because, singularly enough, I set to work some months ago at an international ghost, and on just this scale, 50,000 words, entertaining for a little the highest hopes of him. He was to have been wonderful and beautiful; he was to have been called (perhaps too metaphysically) "The Sense of the Past", and he was to have been supplied to a certain Mr. Doubleday...

(Edel 1984, IV, 150).

Having suggested that the very piece Howells has in mind is well begun and only languishing for lack of a publisher (Mr. Doubleday having withdrawn his offer), James admits to doubts about the feasibility of the project:

The damnable difficulty is the reason; I have rarely been beaten by a subject, but I felt myself, after upwards of a month's work, destined to be beaten by that one. This will sufficiently hint to you how awfully good it is (Ibid., 150).

Among the formal challenges involved in producing an effective 'international ghost', he observed to Howells:

The difficulties are that it's difficult to be terrible save in the short piece and international save in the long (Ibid., 151).

After writing two of three projected parts, James abandoned the tale later that year, leaving his protagonist on the threshold of a journey into his ancestral past. He returned to the project in 1915, making revisions and further notes for completion, yet the novel remained unfinished at his death in February 1916. There is some reason to suppose that the novel is atypical of James's later works.
in seeking to appeal to a popular market with a markedly simpler
style, the basic plot machinations owing something to The Time Machine
(1895) by James's friend H.G. Wells if not to Clemens's A Connecticut Yankee,
with which it can profitably be compared. Nevertheless, James viewed the
potentially stale subject as uniquely challenging.

In the first two parts of James's project, the American protagonist
Ralph Pendrel is the unquestioned, legitimate heir to an uncle's house
in London. He foregoes a developing intimacy with the widowed
Aurora Coyne to travel to England. Once in England, and in the
London home of his ancestors, he realises that he has the
opportunity to change places with his ancestor, to step from the
twentieth century back to the early decades of the nineteenth
century. The matter of inheritance is no longer in question; it
is merely the donnée of a situation in which Ralph's freedom of
choice is repeatedly emphasised. Ralph elects to travel to
England; in his uncle's house he literally stands on the
threshold between his own era and that of his kinsman of 1820 and
makes the conscious decision to literally cross the threshold
from the present day into the English past. Pendrel is thus
positioned in marked contrast to Clement Searle as well as
to Hawthorne's Edward Redclyffe or to Clemens's Hank Morgan in
A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, all of whom are
compelled by circumstances beyond their control to confront
the England of an earlier day, the historical English past in
which they themselves are an anomaly. At this moment of
suspenseful choice James suspended his project in 1900. In
notebook entries regarding the early composition, James records
his sense of the difficulties he faced in effecting his "formula"
for The Sense of the Past and his intention to try some
"intense simplification" with a first person narrative (Edel and
Powers 1987, 189-191).53

In his "First Statement for The Sense of the Past" written in
November 1914, James recalls his appreciation of the difficulty of
making the transition from present to past, the point at which he
stopped in 1900:

I don't think I quite saw the bridge; I was groping my way to it
with difficulty -- and there it was at any rate, as I say, that I gave
up insisting (Edel and Powers 1987, 503).

James's more immediate observations in a letter of 5 October 1901
to Sarah Orne Jewett regarding her historical novel The Tory Lover
may further suggest some of the inherent obstacles James felt he
faced in constructing a narrative that was in part a portrait of the past:

...the real thing is almost impossible to do, & in its
essence the whole effect is as nought. I mean the evocation,

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53 Manuscript revisions to the typed draft of Book I and II now
in the archives of the Houghton Library at Harvard suggest that James
did attempt some stylistic simplification. These amendments stop far
short of any adjustment to the point of view, yet seem a notable departure
from the more characteristic complication and ambiguity of his late style
(James [1914-15], Houghton Library, Harvard).
the representation of the old consciousness, the Soul, the Sense, the horizon, the vision of individuals in whose minds half the things that make ours, that make the modern world were non-existent. You have to think with your modern apparatus a man, a woman - or rather fifty - whose own thinking was intensely otherwise conditioned. You have to simplify back by an amazing tour de force -- & even then it's all humbug (Edel 1984, IV, 208).

In his conclusion to The American Scene (1907), James would deplore the American appetite for tales of "aristocratic" figures and the unflagging interest in genealogical investigations linking any number of Americans to families of royal blood. The popularity of such "intellectual' pabulum" suggested to James a public that "fairly goes upon its knees to be humbuggingly humbugged" (James 1993, 730-731).

That he returned to his "international ghost" of an American claimant in 1914 might suggest that James himself could not resist the temptation to resurrect a theme which he felt to be egregiously popular, and that he wished to shift the focus of interest from the drama of an American seeking genealogical recognition in the Old World to a consideration of the modern American's cultural inheritance, a repositioning of the claimant's relationship with the past. No longer a supplicant like Clement Searle, Ralph Pendrel steps out of the future to take up his ancestor's role; his perspective is thus privileged and superior to his immediate surroundings. He knows more than his ancestors know, and his modernity unnerves them. In the competition contrived between the English past and American present, the modern American has a
decided epistemological advantage. Thus far Ralph Pendrel has chosen his fate, but once he steps into the past he is in fact trapped there, psychologically tormented by the knowledge that his ancestors are terrified of his modern difference and sensibility. In his notes for the completion of the novel, James outlined his thoughts on how to extricate his American heir from this difficult situation. The crucial thing was to effect Ralph Pendrel's convincing escape from the enticements and privileges of the past, to reorient and command his interests towards the future, as represented by his romantic attachment to Aurora Coyne. This James suggests would be effected by the emotional sacrifice of Nan, the woman of 1820 who is attuned to his uneasy situation, and cares enough to give him up, and to the modern Aurora Coyne, who would set aside her ultimatum and prejudice against Europe and go "more than half way" to meet him, coming to his rescue by arriving in London. The details of how Pendrel would effectively recross the millennial threshold were never worked out, but what James did seem set on was that rather than returning to modern America, Ralph Pendrel would strike a balance between two worlds, not returning to America but introducing his modern American heiress into his ancestral home in London. James thus suggested a resolution that was triumphantly comic rather than tragic, resisting narrow, nationalistic resolution. It entailed a modern, individual victory over cultural divisions and definitions. Ralph Pendrel's rebound from his relationship with the past would give comparative substance and meaning to his progressive, American modernity.
Chapter VI

HENRY JAMES AND THE DRAMA OF INHERITANCE

American characters appear in English inheritance plots late in James's numerous, largely unproduced and generally unread dramas. In two of his later theatrical efforts James takes a new view of the claimant plot: these Americans are not pilgrims or cultural identity seekers but scavengers and meddlers with powerful and disturbing effects upon the English society into which they enter.

_The High Bid_ reached the London stage (if only for five matinee performances) in February, 1909, after opening in Scotland in March, 1908. _The Outcry_, which was intended to play alongside such new work as Shaw's _Misalliance_, Harley Granville-Barker's _The Madras House_ and Galsworthy's _Justice_ in an ambitious London repertory season in 1909, was withdrawn from production and remained unstaged in James's lifetime. Together, these two projects constitute James's most seasoned work as a dramatist. They also represented his best fond hope for a late breakthrough into the glamorous and lucrative London theatre world. The American presence in these plays is I believe both interesting and significant in terms of understanding the development of James's own thought and feeling about cultural influence; American attitudes and actions occasion close examination of those social institutions which serve as the premise to his much-revisited, most mature authorial theme.

When he turned his creative mind to the dramatic form, James
returned again and again to a single problematic subject. Like so many variations upon a theme, the majority of his plays revolve around provocative questions of inheritance. With the exception of three early experimental fragments, a late dramatic monologue and adaptations of Daisy Miller and The American, all but two of James's remaining eleven dramas (Disengaged and The Other House) are based upon inheritance plots. Inheritance and its ill effects upon the heir or heir apparent is a major theme running through much of James's short fiction, from "A Passionate Pilgrim", "Washington Square" and "The Aspern Papers" to such lesser-known tales as "The Third Person" and "Flickerbridge". Early and late novels afford more elaborate explorations of the theme. James's second novel, The American (1877) contrasted the oppressive, self-destructive evil committed by an 'old' family bent on preserving the grandeur

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54 The Other House, in which the promise extracted by a dying mother effectively dooms her infant daughter, might also be said to exemplify the tragic consequences that result when the dying seek to impose their wishes upon the living. The play is influenced by James's pronounced admiration for and exposure to the dramas of Henrik Ibsen, which were introduced upon the London stage in the 1890's (James 1990, 677-678).

55 In "The Third Person" two elderly, spinster cousins inherit the ancestral home, only to find it haunted by the ghost of an ancestral smuggler. This criminal spirit cannot rest until his heirs have committed a similar (though ludicrously insignificant) offence, importing a forbidden book ("a Tauchnitz") in defiance of British law. In "Flickerbridge", a young American artist urges an elderly Englishwoman effectively to disinherit a distant American relation (the artist's fiancée) without ever meeting her. The artist believes that his betrothed, an American journalist and creative writer exemplifying the independent, American 'New Woman', will destroy the character of Flickerbridge and ruin the life of its present owner with undue publicity. The mere prospect of such an inheritance (and the owner's refusal to deny her kinswoman by declining to meet her) becomes the occasion for a broken engagement and the artist's departure from Flickerbridge.
of their name and property with the naive integrity of the
self-made American. James's late, unfinished novels

*The Sense of the Past* and *The Ivory Tower* depict two further,
contrasting variations upon the theme of Anglo-American
inheritance. *The Sense of the Past* has already been discussed
in some detail; the more fragmentary manuscript and notes for
*The Ivory Tower* reverse the terms of Anglo-American inheritance
and implied social criticism contained in *The Sense of the Past*.
The incomplete plot follows what happens when an expatriate
American returns as heir apparent to the bedside of his dying
uncle only to be menaced by the subtly savage, grasping schemes
of the wealthy American society which surrounds him.

Throughout the years (from 1890-1895) in which his creative
energy and ambition were primarily directed toward the stage,
James continued to write and to publish short stories on diverse
themes. His only two extended fiction projects of that
period reflect an insistent focus upon the subject of inheritance.
Published at the outset of his five-year, concentrated bid for
recognition as a dramatist, James's theatre novel *The Tragic Muse*
presents inheritance as an issue for would-be portrait painter
Nick Dormer, who must choose between his art and a bequest which
is contingent upon his pursuit of a political career.\textsuperscript{56}

In renouncing this potential fortune, Nick is the first of an intriguing line of characters in James's works who choose disinheritance rather than complying with the terms set by their would-be benefactors. \textit{The Spoils of Poynton} (1897), James's next extended fiction, was written in the aftermath of his traumatic experience with \textit{Guy Domville} (1895),\textsuperscript{57} and shows that James was far from weary of the subject he had been treating (and would continue to address) in so many of his dramatic works.

In attempting to place the issue of inheritance at centre stage in his drama as well as at the heart of so much of his fiction, James was repeatedly and explicitly representing in vivid emotional terms the dynamics of an intellectual debate dating back to the Enlightenment. One of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{The Tragic Muse} was serialised in \textit{The Atlantic Monthly} from January 1889 - May 1890. In May, 1889, James agreed to write a stage adaptation of his novel \textit{The American} for Edward Compton of the Compton Comedy Company, a touring and generally provincial repertory troupe. \textit{The American} opened in Southport on 3 January 1891 and in London on 26 September, 1891. Reviews were mixed and the returns were less-than-profitable, but James was launched on what he hoped would become a second career.

\textsuperscript{57} James brazened out his disappointment at the public and professional reception occasioned by his plays, critical responses which ranged from cool indifference to the humiliation of being driven from the stage by loud derision from some parts of the audience at the disastrous opening night of \textit{Guy Domville} on 5th January 1895. Following that evening's fiasco, James wrote defiantly to his brother William, "If the play has no life on the stage I shall publish it; it's altogether the best thing I've done" (letter to William James, January 9th, 1895, Lubbock 1920, I, 228).

It wasn't, and perhaps no one but James, defensively bristling in the heat of the moment, would contend that it was.
\end{quote}
earliest philosophical works was written in response to the Academy of Dijon's request for papers written on the theme of the origin of inequality among men. Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755) concludes:

> Il suit de cet exposé que l'inégalité, étant presque nulle dans l'état de nature, tire sa force et son accroissement du développement de nos facultés et des progrès de l'esprit humain, et devient enfin stable et légitime par l'établissement de la propriété et des lois. Il suit encore que l'inégalité morale, autorisée par le seul droit positif, est contraire au droit naturel toutes les fois qu'elle ne concourt pas en même proportion avec l'inégalité physique; distinction qui détermine suffisamment ce qu'on doit penser à cet égard de la sorte d'inégalité qui regne parmi tous les peuples policiés, puisqu'il est manifestement contre la loi de nature, de quelque manière qu'on la définisse, qu'un enfant commande à un vieillard, qu'un imbécile conduise un homme sage, et qu'une poignée de gens regorge de superfluïtés, tandis que la multitude affamée manque du nécessaire (Rousseau 1971, 145).^8

In Britain, where the *status quo* of primogeniture and monarchy was historically justified by intellectual and judicial presumptions

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^8 [It follows from this account that inequality, being almost non-existent in the state of nature, takes its strength and its growth from the development of our faculties and from the progress of the human spirit, and finally becomes stable and legitimate by the establishment of property and laws. It follows furthermore that moral inequality, authorised by positive law alone, is contrary to natural right whenever it is not matched in the same proportion with physical inequality, a distinction which sufficiently determines what one ought to think of the sort of inequality which rules among all civilized people, since it is manifestly against the law of nature, however one defines it, that a child should give orders to an old person, that an imbecile should lead a wise man, and that a handful of people should abound in superfluities whilst the starving masses lack necessities.]

In his notes for the 1971 French edition of Rousseau's *Discours* cited above, J.L. Lecercle detects "un souvenir des *Essais de Montaigne*: 'Des Cannibales', I, 31" in the comparative imagery of this passage (143, n.2). The French Revolution in 1789 propelled the debate about hereditary privilege into an Anglo-American context, with the publication of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) provoking Thomas Paine's egalitarian counterattack in *The Rights of Man* (1791).
of natural law, James sought to dramatise the social injustice preserved in British inheritance law. The plays and their kindred inheritance fictions constitute James's persistent attack upon hereditary ownership, a legal convention which seemingly inclines the favored few to despotism and degeneracy while condemning the majority of humanity to conditions of relative slavery and despair.

Son and namesake of a socialist father, James couched his own critique in the dramatic terms of characters and situations, of heightened experience, incident and emotion. The majority of the inheritance dramas and fictions were written for an English audience and set in England as well, where the holdings of the vast majority of wealth by a privileged (and not necessarily deserving) few was particularly pronounced, historically institutionalised and attractively embodied in the gardens and the statuary of stately homes. Within the public space of the theatre, James would attempt again and again to engage his audiences in a personal confrontation with a fundamental social sanction, indeed the very social sanction upon which, according to Rousseau, society itself was based.

Inheritance in James seems always to be attended by personal misfortune, yet the majority of James's inheritance dramas are in fact comedies, in the sense that human meanness and weakness is pointedly exposed, schemes and machinations of self-interest
fail, grievances are redressed and a balance of human relationships restored, a highly idealised triumph of the human spirit over material self-interest. James shaped his inheritance dramas in terms of comedy, the scourge of many forms of institutionalised hypocrisy, generally avoiding the conventions of classical tragedy as it was understood at the time.  

Tracing the historical reinterpretation of the concept of tragic drama through the centuries in his study *Modern Tragedy,*  

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59 James's contemporary Friedrich Nietzsche, influenced by the romantic dramatist and poet Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller and the deeply pessimistic philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, in 1872 published his first philosophical book, *The Birth of Tragedy, or Hellenism and Pessimism.* The title alone is a strong indication of how tragedy was being redefined. Nietzsche's work was written in an atmosphere of German nation-building which is reflected in his heroic characterisation of the "Aryan race" as Promethean transgressors, tragically heroic in comparison with the passive, mythic 'fall' from innocence of the Semitic race. The aesthetic and temperamental distance separating Nietzsche from James is adequately reflected in *The Birth of Tragedy's* treatment of Plato:  

In very truth, Plato has given to all posterity the prototype of a new form of art, the prototype of the novel: which must be designated as the infinitely evolved Aesopian fable.... Socrates, the dialectical hero in Platonic drama, reminds us of the kindred nature of the Euripidean hero, who has to defend his actions by arguments and counter-arguments, and thereby so often runs the risk of forfeiting our tragic pity; for who could mistake the optimistic element in the essence of dialectics, which celebrates a jubilee in every conclusion, and can breathe only in cool clearness and consciousness: the optimistic element, which, having once forced its way into tragedy, must gradually overgrow its Dionysan regions, and necessarily impel it to self-destruction - even to the death-leap into the bourgeois drama. (Nietzsche 1909, 109-110).
Raymond Williams has pointed out how closely Nietzsche's presentation of the idea of tragedy resembles the development of the theory of evolution, "a total vision of the cruel and indifferent but also immensely fertile 'law of nature and of life" (Williams 1966, 39). In a note discussing Darwin's theory of natural selection and the resulting concept of 'social Darwinism' as a convenient excuse for the social extremes of nineteenth-century capitalist society, Williams succinctly describes the very phenomenon that James's inheritance dramas repeatedly expose and emphatically revile: "...a version of the arbitrary and the brutal, drawn essentially from human social experience, and then projected and mystified as a 'natural law'" (Ibid., 40).

James may be thought by some to have abandoned all his customary aesthetic scruples and plunged into excessively sentimental melodrama when he began his theatrical career with the attempt to turn his successful tragedies - *Daisy Miller* and *The American* - into popular stage comedies. Alternatively, this departure might have been inspired by a somewhat awkward spirit of democratic excess, as he sought to engage an audience in a diverting theatrical experience that was also a consciousness-

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60 R.H. Ward put this general view most bluntly in a 1950 BBC radio production occasioned by the publication of *The Complete Plays*:

...But even the devotees will find it hard to accept those concessions which James made to his own times, those half-hearted condescensions and 'writings down' to the popular Victorian theatrical taste; by these concessions he may very well have spoiled his own future (Ward, 1950, 22).
expanding exercise.

In The High Bid, one of only two of James's plays written after the turn of the century which reached the London stage in his lifetime, he returns to the 'International' theme of Anglo-American influence that had characterised much of his early fiction, re-introducing the interest of cultural comparison to the inheritance plot. Earlier tales and novels as well as his impressionistic travelogue The American Scene had exploited and explored issues of Anglo-American inheritance; James now insistently attempted a further treatment of the theme, working and re-working material which began its creative life in 1895 as a one-act play entitled Summersoft, was transformed into the story "Covering End" in 1898 and was finally expanded into the three-act stage vehicle The High Bid in 1907. The High Bid enjoyed what Edel describes as a "succès d'estime" (James 1990, 552). It was James's crowning moment of critical acclaim as a dramatist, although far from the sort of popular success enjoyed by Wilde, Shaw or Harley Granville-Barker.

The acclaim was hard won. At the centre of the drama stands Covering, a British 'show-home' which is mortgaged to the hilt and which the heir Captain Clement Yule will lose if he is not prepared to sacrifice both his political and personal integrity to the mortgage holder, Mr. Prodmore. To raise his own social position, the wealthy businessman insists that the heir renounce his socialist affiliations
and stand as the conservative candidate for Parliament in his local constituency, financially supported by an arranged marriage to Prodmore's daughter Cora. As a symbol of British heritage, Summersoft and Covering End are continually referred to as "your old home" or "my old home", almost certainly a fond homage to Nathaniel Hawthorne's English travel essays, *Our Old Home*.  

Into this creaking melodramatic situation James introduces the play's heroine, an enchanting (and rich) American widow who 'saves' Covering from the clutches of Mr. Prodmore and rescues Yule and Cora Prodmore from an arranged marriage by paying off the mortgages on Yule's ancestral home. Not for the satisfaction of ownership, as she already has Covering, she declares, "in my head" (599, lines 49-50). The heir of Covering, who has only begun to appreciate the house as a reflection of Mrs. Gracedew's enthusiasm, is sufficiently bewitched to propose marriage to this "most Generous, ...the Noblest of women" (600, lines 87-88) and is graciously accepted by the American enchantress. Through the marriage of the

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Ironically, James found Hawthorne's title "rather infelicitious" when writing his critical study of Hawthorne in 1878. (James 1967, 138.) Hawthorne's sketches are troubled by visits to similar great houses in the English countryside. The democratic American is morally repelled by the scale and extent of such manifest privilege, but the artist admires the aesthetic attractions of what generations of wealth and leisure have wrought. The country house as a social microcosm proved an enduring site of inner conflict for thoughtful American travellers from the post-Revolutionary period in the late eighteenth century throughout the nineteenth century. Recent research by Alice Hiller traces the origins of this fundamental trope of Anglo-American travel literature back to the papers of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, who recorded their own similarly mixed reactions to country houses visited on a tour of England in 1786.
New World interventionist with the radical Old World aristocrat, a bit of British heritage is preserved and the ancestral line perpetuated. All seems breezy thematic sweetness and light, but for the audience some uncertainty remains as to whether this is a completely happy ending.

Although the idealistic Mrs. Gracedew is untainted by class or material interest, she is as manipulative as the businessman Prodmore and equally conservative, insisting that the heir renounce his socialist convictions and revert to the more authentic conservativism of his class.

Mrs. Gracedew's fervent appeal to the conservative instincts of both Yule and the audience misfires when positioned against Yule's socialist sympathies for Britain's homeless. This failure of the

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Mrs. Gracedew may have persuaded Captain Yule to "Look at this sweet old human home, and feel all its gathered memories" (581, lines 50-51) but it was Yule's response to this plea which won applause from the audience:

"I see something else in the world than the beauty of old show-houses and the glory of old show-families. There are thousands of people in England who can show no houses at all and (with the emphasis of sincerity:) I don't feel it utterly shameful to share their poor fate" (581, lines 66-72).

Yule's radical declaration so dismayed actress Gertrude Elliot in the role of the heroine that she asked James to consider amending the scene. Yule's ready abandonment of political principle for feeling (the appeal to family loyalty is flirtatiously enhanced by the charms of Mrs. Gracedew) was no less baffling to Leon Edel, who noted in his introduction to Summersoft:

One wonders, nevertheless, how a writer who had created Nick Dormer and his renunciation of Westminster for the artist's studio could entertain even for a moment Yule's renunciation of idealism for "property," and make him implausibly fickle to the social reform that is his way of life, even under the verbal witchery of Mrs. Gracedew (522).

Edel concludes that:
American widow's charm adds a sobering if baffling complexity to what would otherwise seem a fairy tale comedy of the *Little Lord Fauntleroy* school. James's staunch refusal to amend her awkward moments for the sake of an effective performance seems more indicative of intent than his observation to Miss Elliot that the original one-act play was (exceptionally for James) written for an American audience. The inheritance plot of *The High Bid* had after all been reworked by James three times in different formats. The more expansive three-act drama allowed James to bring Cora Prodmore's suitor into the dramatic action, and to add some suspenseful confusion on Yule's part about Mrs. Gracedew's marital status. (In the earlier, one-act version, she announces her availability as an American widow by way of introduction.) So James had ample opportunity to revise any unwanted contradictions in his heroine's character, choosing instead to portray her as a mixed blessing, an appealing but manipulative 'idealist' who insists on reforming her English heir into a hypocritical anachronism. Like the antique furnishings and ancestral portraits, Yule is Mrs. Gracedew's salvaged example.

James was prepared to sacrifice verisimilitude in his other characters so long as he could make Mrs. Gracedew consistent. Wasn't she the *raison d'être* of the play? (522).

Was she? The emotional conviction inherent in Yule's compelling empathy with the homeless might suggest that a quite different *raison d'être* could be located in the ardent expression of Captain Clement Yule, or in the dialectical dynamic of the couple's social convictions. In James's dramas it is always important and often surprising to note who has the best lines.
of British nobility, a fixture that goes with the house.

Although critics tended to overlook the more baffling elements of the play, the respectful notices accorded *The High Bid* must have given fresh incentive to James's theatrical aspirations. The years surrounding the 1909 production of this play were taken up with a flurry of theatrical projects (including *The Saloon* (1908), *The Other House* (1908) and *The Outcry* (1909)) and social contacts with playwrights and producers involved in a campaign against Britain's censorship laws. In company with Shaw, John Galsworthy, Harley Granville-Barker, Somerset Maugham, and John Masefield, James was invited to submit a play for a planned repertory season at London's Duke of York Theatre. In May 1909 he was savouring the belated but renewed prospect of theatrical success in a letter to his friend W.D. Howells.

Acknowledging positive comments on a performance of *Disengaged*, which, after languishing for nearly two decades, had been given a single professional performance at New York's Hudson Theatre in aid of a hospital charity, James modestly dismisses the produced play's importance in comparison with the theatrical prospect of *The Outcry* now before him:

...I can't but seem to see it [*Disengaged*] as an uncanny and unholy thing. The charity was very welcome to it, but I rather disliked the air it gave me of appearing disposed to play the theatric game with little old primitive cards -- so imperfect a pack. The theatre is really, as it happens, knocking at my door quite loudly in these days, and my fate seeming to call me -- after having waited till I totter on the edge of the grave to do so, but I must take up the
challenge with as new cards as possible, or at any rate work toward that as hard and as promptly (letter to W.D. Howells, May 1909, Houghton Library, Harvard).

So tantalising to James is the image of this late summons to the stage that in July, 1909 he repeats the auspicious metaphor in another letter to Howells:

The Theatre is knocking loud at my door, in definite (?) guise, & I am labouring to respond, both because of the intrinsic solicitation of the play & because of the absolute need that besets me to gain a few pence before I am further stricken. Something will, I think, come of it (letter to W.D. Howells, July 23, 1909, Houghton Library, Harvard).

But nothing did. A year later James's evident high hopes for the play were dashed as the production experienced the casting difficulties which always seemed to plague his theatrical projects. James himself may have been creating obstacles by insisting on his presence at the theatre and approval of the cast at a time when he was indisposed and unable to travel from his home in Rye to London. It was a year of "black depression" for James and he seemed to have suffered some sort of psychological crisis or nervous disorder. Although Edel's account tends to cloud rather than clarify events surrounding the collapse of the project, it is apparent that the play was withdrawn from production prior to the death of King Edward VII on May 6th, 1910, an event which precipitated the unforeseen closure of theatres throughout Britain and brought the Duke of York's ambitious repertory season to an abrupt end.
James responded to the latest resounding failure of his fond theatrical hopes by seizing upon the much-amended script, which he now claimed back in terms more appropriate to the body of a mutilated cadaver. The established playwrights Harley Granville-Barker and J. M. Barrie had prevailed upon James to make considerable cuts to the play's repetitious and effusively Jamesian dialogue. James wrote to his secretary Theodora Bosanquet asking her to re-type a new version of the script:

...in which the last awful cuts (thousands and thousands of words slashed out loathingly, by me in May, sick and suffering, and under Barker's and Barrie's even then urgent requisition) shall be embodied (James 1990, 765).

To this 'restored' version James would add further passages as, following the death of his brother William, he worked on a "bookform" of the play over the winter months in Boston. On December 12th, 1910 he wrote to his agent James Pinker:

I have my "bookform" of The Outcry almost ready to send you, am practically but awaiting the type copying of the last third. It will make, to my sense, a highly readable, not to say brilliant volume, of upwards of 75,000 words! (Letter to James Pinker, 95 Irving St., Cambridge, Mass., December 12th, 1910, Beinecke Library, Yale)

The 'novelisation' would enjoy a moderate success, published in several editions by Methuen in London and Scribners in the U.S.

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63 Writing to Granville-Barker to request the return of his manuscript in August 1910, James states his immediate intention to "rescue the cut copy of my ill-starred comedy... from the limbo of the vague. ...But my first course must be to get the cuts -- by which I mean the ensanguined corpse -- washed and layed out clean" (James 1990, 16).
But even prior to any publication agreement for what would in
fact be his last complete novel he was counselling Pinker to
safeguard the copyright, as "I don't want to close my door
against a still possible performance of the Play" (Letter to
James Pinker, January 2nd, 1911, Beinecke Library, Yale).

According to Edel, James himself composed the original
jacket copy for his "bookform" of *The Outcry*, as the prospectus
of the project submitted to the publishers was put to this purpose.
What may then be considered James's own synopsis of the project
seems to emphasise the topicality of a question of national
and personal heritage:

'The Outcry' deals with a question sharply brought
home of late to the conscience of English Society --
that of the degree in which the fortunate owners of
precious and hitherto transmitted works of art hold
them in trust, as it were, for the nation, and may
themselves, as lax guardians, be held to account by
public opinion. Mr. Henry James's study of the larger
morality of the matter, if we may so call it, and which
is the case of a lax rather than a jealous guardian,
becomes conspicuous and acute. Hence springs the
drama, almost a national as well as a personal crisis --
- a rapid, precipitated action, moving through
difficulties and dangers to a happy issue (Edel and

Elsewhere Edel notes that the specific heritage crisis inspiring
*The Outcry* was most probably that mentioned by James in a letter
to his friend Edmund Gosse:

The Holbein Duchess has been saved -- by a veiled lady who
has bought her off for £40,000. Can you lift the veil?
(Letter to Edmund Gosse, 4 June 1909, James 1990, 838).
While both James and Edel point out the topicality of the play, and Edel notes in passing a seemingly greater emphasis on social issues in all of James's late plays, there is nothing particularly new (as the play makes clear) in public indignation and family feuds occasioned by the sale and transfer of art objects from one country to another. The theme is no less appealing to our own press than it was to James's, if, for example, recent coverage of the threatened loss to Britain of Canova's *The Three Graces* or even Lucien Freud's *The Painter's Room* is any indication. As for high profile family disagreements concerning the disposal of heirlooms and artefacts that would otherwise descend to the next generation, the very public row between Princess Diana and her father Earl Spencer over his sale of paintings and artefacts from Althorp shortly before his death indicates what perennial public 'dramas' such aristocratic family battles can provide.

Superficially the plot of *The Outcry* may be described as the reverse of *The High Bid*, featuring an American art dealer who makes a business of scavenging the art treasures of a down-at-heel British aristocracy, buying up the family heirlooms for export and sale in the U.S.. The lurking menace of the brashly acquisitive Mr. Bender might seem the antithesis of the restorative good fairy Mrs. Gracedew in *The High Bid*. 

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Yet the American antagonist of *The Outcry* is little more than a plot device (albeit a more realistically depicted one) compared to the American champion of British heritage at the centre of *The High Bid*. Whereas the persuasive American widow is the main character of the earlier play and her noble act to 'save' Covering resolves the heir's dilemma, the dramatic tension in *The Outcry* is generated by the relationships between the widowed Lord Theign, his daughter Grace and their respective English suitors. The American Bender has no active role and no powers of persuasion, although his presence and his chequebook constitute an implied threat to Grace's inheritance and to what might be construed as a national treasure. And as James would later observe to his agent, Bender doesn't "score"; the novelist felt this might prevent the "bookform" doing well in the U.S.: "It's hard to please everyone," he worried, "-- on both sides" (letter to James Pinker, November 2nd 1911, Reform Club, Pall Mall, Beinecke Library, Yale).

Although James stretches the point of the play's topicality, *The Outcry* is really about a modern daughter standing up to, or crying out against, the whim of an arrogant father, who feels he may dispose of everyone and everything about him just as he likes. He is Lear to Grace's Cordelia, although his daughter's righteous protest is complicated by her romantic involvement.
with the young art connossieur Hugh Crimble (a character supposedly based on the author Hugh Walpole). The ardent Mr. Crimble calls into dispute the origin (and thus the commercial value) of a painting in the family collection, claiming that Theign's modest Moretto is really "a splendid Mantovano". This naturally triggers the American dealer's interest, and much self-righteous soliloquising on the part of the young connoisseur about the threatened loss of a supposed national treasure. However it soon turns out that Hugh and Grace's united passion is really more mutually amorous than impersonally aesthetic. By the third act it is clear that they could hardly care less about the eventual disposal of the Moretto -- or is it a Mantovano? It has served its purpose in uniting them against her father. Lord Theign wishes to give way to neither Crimble nor the American, but publicity (organised by Crimble) has so inflated society's view of the painting's importance to British culture that he is no longer free to do as he wishes with the work of art. To preserve his reputation (and to conclude the drama on a happily-ever-after basis) Theign donates the painting to the National Gallery and in relinquishing this worldly treasure, hints that he finally intends to marry his long-suffering companion, Lady Sandgate. He too, it seems, has learned to value intimate relationships more than property and the power accruing to inherited wealth.
James's final dramatic effort opens with a deft and effective introduction that is the stage equivalent of many transitional narrative moments in his novels. The reader/audience, exposed to a new and disorienting situation, is inclined to first one assumption and then another before discovering that all normative conclusions are wrong; the situation is quite other than what experience or convention might indicate. In the first act of The Outcry, the curtain rises upon a servant moving within the interior of a great English manor. The servant announces the arrival of a lord to a lady, and it is momentarily impossible to tell who is the visitor and who is the host. A considerable amount of dialogue ensues before the house can be assigned an owner and then it turns out that neither Lord John nor Lady Sandgate are residents of Dedborough Place, both are visitors, enjoying the free run of the house in the owner's absence. From such moments of dramatic sure-footedness the play eventually slides into the doldrums of repetitious dialogue laden with many confusing pronouns. Too often, dramatic flourishes and tantalising conceptual twists fail to further (indeed, often contradict) the logic of the plot. The ironic motif of the Anglo-American contrast represented by Bender seems almost completely extraneous to this comic, moral reformation of the British aristocracy. It
is Crimble, not Bender, who by virtue of his inferior (middle) class and superior (noble) sensibility is Theign's effective foil.

Yet James persists in sounding loud the American difference, even if the American antagonist is frankly peripheral to the plot. As in his earlier plays there are brilliant and effective moments in *The Outcry*, scenes which make the interludes of squandered dialogue and fiddling dramatic 'business' seem all the more exasperating.

Among the points James seems to be making in *The Outcry* is that the artefact in question has no objective, *a priori* value and can only be possessed or owned as intellectual property, by those (like Crimble) capable of ascribing an aesthetic value to the work. And even Crimble turns out to be wrong about the work's origin. The Mantovano which becomes a national treasure is, it emerges, probably just a fine old Moretto after all. So much, James would seem to imply, for the trappings of cultural heritage or national identity. Art transcends all categories of ownership and makes fools of those who would put it to such use. Yet when Theign agrees to relinquish his treasure to the nation in what appears to be the liberation of the work from the hands of the aristocracy, the gift is accepted by the Prince, a national figurehead who also personifies hereditary privilege. James may have conceived this as the play's ultimate irony, but it reads/plays more like a fairy tale ending and it is possible that
the playwright simply could not realistically indicate a way beyond
the conventions of class-bound inheritance.

It might be thought that less-than-sensitive editing by
Barrie and Barker and James's own eagerness to see the play into
production contributed to the seeming dramatic lapses
and contradictions of The Outcry. Yet the script reproduced
for The Complete Plays is the copy that Edel considers
James felt to be the definitive version -- the script assembled
after the project's theatrical demise, with many of the earlier
deletions restored.

Even as a somewhat more rarefied than popular theatrical work
(and the repertory season for which it was written was planned as an
ambitious and literary repertoire, placing rather sophisticated intellectual
demands upon its audience) The Outcry remains promising but
unfulfilled work, with concepts and motifs tugging in too many, and often
conflicting directions almost within the same sentence. Some may be put
down to James's desire for artistic inclusiveness, which he had memorably
expressed in an exchange of letters with George Bernard Shaw.64

64 In January, 1909, Shaw wrote to James regarding the rejection of his play
The Saloon, an English inheritance drama, by the Incorporated Stage Society.
The hero's tragic demise provoked Shaw to conclude:

People don't want works of art from you: they want help: they want, above all,
encouragement, encouragement, encouragement... (G. Bernard Shaw to Henry
James's insistence upon the artistic rather than ideological approach to drama, and his view that the drama must be made to "say as much as possible", leaving a wide scope for individual interpretation, suggest a dramatist with a great respect for the abilities of his potential audience and significantly modifies the view that James was consistently attempting to realise a fortune from his plays by writing down to the lowest common denominator of Edwardian taste. In other instances, particularly those of characterisation, the puzzling inconsistencies might be attributed to a more ragged sort of working method than James applied to his novels. Working with Barker may have placed too much emphasis on the disputed passages, the logic of which then came somewhat adrift from the whole. The loose ends are knitted in to a far greater extent in the "bookform" of the play, which is less dependent on dialogue.

Along with many clever and often brilliant observations about art, the business of...
of art and that archaic social institution, the British aristocracy, *The Outcry* seems most focused on the thesis that personal freedom and happiness can only be won by transcending social barriers of class and nationality, foregoing material aspirations in general and the unearned expectations of genealogically determined inheritance in particular. The benighted aristocrat must break free of the very institutions which define him in order to realise his fulfilment in human relationships. The synecdoche of the disputed art work as endangered birthright seems to be a more ambiguous and thus more interesting symbol of both cultural and personal inheritance than the collections of bric-à-brac, furniture and stone which represent the value of the ancestral past in James's previous inheritance dramas as well as in *The Spoils of Poynton*.

Vanquishing propaganda and received ideas with an aesthetic of often baffling inclusiveness, James's dramas frequently seem to be focused on the marginal rather than the central dynamic of the plot. They are nevertheless provocative and at times compelling literary works. As drama, the plays falter and lose momentum under the weight of their own aesthetic, the playful margin left open to the serendipitous possibility of other paradoxical discoveries and previously unrevealed moral considerations.

James continued to revise the inheritance plot in his unfinished novels, *The Sense of the Past* and *The Ivory Tower*. 
He persisted in involving the Anglo-American, 'International' theme of cultural comparison while varying the emphasis on positive and negative aspects of both cultures. Time and again, the author returned to the subject of inheritance in treatments that were at once philosophically challenging, socially glamorous and psychologically complex, almost as if he were single-handedly trying to write the institutions supporting social inequality out of existence by exposing the imprisoning effects of such conventions upon even the most privileged. In James's world view, the only property that enriches the individual is intellectual property, and in one of his fondest figures of speech the liberated individual is practically an outlaw in defiance of all social conventions regarding inheritance. Four years before composing "A Passionate Pilgrim", the neophyte author wrote to Thomas Sergeant Perry, a friend from his youth:

I think that to be an American is an excellent preparation for culture... it seems to me that we are ahead of the European races in the fact that more than either of them we can deal freely with forms of civilization not our own, can pick and choose & assimilate and in short (aesthetically &c) claim our property [my emphasis] wherever we find it... (Sept. 20th, [1867], Edel 1974, I, 77).

Years later, in an article for the January 1887 issue of the Century Magazine, James wrote of the French actor Henri Benoit Coquelin, who had recently left the Comédie Française:

...Jean Dacier is a part which, now that he is his own
master and may *claim his property where he finds it*, [my emphasis] M. Coquelin will consult the interests of his highest reputation by taking up again at an early day ("Coquelin", James 1949, 210).

Finally, in *A Small Boy and Others*, the extended memoir of his childhood published three years before his death, James retouches his phrase in a more assertive, even aggressive expression of the original concept:

I recall in particular... the window open to the English June and... the far off hum of a thousand possibilities. I consciously took them in, these last, and must then, I think, have first tasted the very greatest pleasure perhaps I was ever to know -- that of almost holding my breath in presence of certain aspects to the end of so taking in. It was as if in those hours that precious fine art had been disclosed to me -- scantily as the poor place and the small occasion might have seemed of an order to promote it. *We seize our property by an avid instinct wherever we find it*, [my emphasis], and I must have kept seizing mine at the absurdest little rate, and all by this deeply dissimulative process of taking in, throughout the whole succession of those summer days (James 1913, 291-292).

James applied his most ambitious social and moral theme to the public forum of dramatic performance. His American claimants were antagonists rather than returning prodigals, bringing further interesting complications to the question of heritage posed by his inheritance plays. Perhaps audaciously, and with more comic wit than forbidding polemic, he wrote his flawed and somewhat fragile but quietly revolutionary social dramas for an Edwardian middle class audience, inviting them to abandon further inheritance plots and begin to "claim our
property wherever we find it" as well. Ultimately, they were not persuaded to find it in the inheritance dramas of Henry James.
Chapter VII

TRANSNATIONALISM AND THE ALIEN IN THE AMERICAN SCENE

Henry James was a seasoned veteran of the travel genre and of transatlantic travel when, in his sixties and after living abroad for more than twenty years, he undertook to rediscover America in *The American Scene*. He did not go entirely alone on his journey; allusions and comparisons throughout James’s book of American impressions suggest that he was accompanied on his travels by the works and formidable creative presence of those Anglo-American literary predecessors who had made the transatlantic crossing into an imaginative cultural negotiation in the generation before him.

Yet whereas transatlantic literary tourists of a previous generation had explored territory that was new to them, the author’s journey marked a return to the once familiar, now vastly transformed land of his birth. Like his fictional claimant, the “passionate pilgrim” Clement Searle, James is frustrated in his bid to resurrect the conditions of the past, but in the land of his birth rather than his ancestral homeland.

Shortly after his arrival in the U.S., he wrote to his publisher that a preferred title for his American travel impressions would have been *The Return of the Native*, "if Thomas Hardy hadn't long ago made that impossible" (Letter to George Harvey, October 21, 1904, Edel 1984, IV, 328). Dismissing the previously claimed title, James finds himself "thinking of, and even liking better--The Return of the Novelist" (328), which pointedly recalls the earlier title yet substitutes an
imaginative vocation for the predetermined conditions of birth signified by Hardy's 'native'. James elected to tour his homeland, but as a novelist-observer rather than simply a nostalgic native. His position was a privileged one. He was prepared to be the outsider's insider, or, for an American audience, the detached yet not dispassionate insider.

In many significant respects, James's American travel narrative is a biographical consideration of views previously attributed to characters in his 'International' fictions, most explicitly in his tale "The Point of View", first published in 1882. In *The American Scene* James for the first time publicly presents many of these views as his own. Although the work does not, strictly speaking, follow the pattern or formula of an American claimant fiction, James does represent his travel experience as that of a cultural claimant who acknowledges the drama of other contending claims in his bid to describe and so influence the terms of American culture. The key question the text appears to be posing is: who will inherit the American future? For literary purposes, James reverses the terms of the American claimant plot, seemingly aligning himself at varying points with the descendants of the original

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65 This epistolary tale contains a number of views expressed by Old World visitors and by returning American expatriates on aspects of American culture which would be further articulated as James's own 'point of view' in *The American Scene*, including various reflections on American uniformity of character and the featureless "void" of the American landscape, the phenomenon of the American girl, the corruption of the English language in American speech, the American passion for royalty and the growing "oligarchy of wealth" in American society. Many of James's travel impressions would thus seem to be the product of long-held and developed opinions, a calculated and well-considered response rather than a spontaneous reaction to his immediate experience.
pilgrim founders, whose claim to New World ownership was based on a presumption of cultural priority and 'homogeneity', but also alternatively identifying with the modern condition of European immigrants who in the early years of the twentieth century would irrevocably change the composition and terms of American culture.

Some two decades previously, Samuel Clemens had undertaken a similar, though more narrowly focused American voyage, returning to the scene of his childhood and youthful apprenticeship on the Mississippi, a journey reflected in *Life on the Mississippi*, published in 1883. He too returned as the native-turned-novelist, the tourist with the unique double perspective of being intimate with the region's antebellum past and detached from its present condition two decades after the war. Clemens's river journey is largely autobiographical and reminiscent, while James generally restricts himself to a more impersonally objective, aesthetic focus, as implied by his adoption of a formal narrative persona, a third person figure most often called the "restless analyst" (James 1993, 365).

For both, the return to the haunts of their youth has an unnerving effect upon their temporal sense of identity, as the promise of renewing contact with formerly familiar individuals and landmarks gives way to a recognition of how much has aged, vanished or irrevocably changed. The visitor cannot reclaim his youth, or is momentarily tantalised by an impression of his boyhood, soon shattered by intervening
contradictions of the present day. Clemens vividly expresses his psychological disorientation during his return to his home town of Hannibal, Missouri:

During my three days stay in the town, I woke up every morning with the impression that I was a boy -- for in my dreams the faces were all young again, and looked as they had looked in the old times -- but I went to bed a hundred years old, every night -- for meantime I had been seeing those faces as they are now (Twain 1982, 550).

James too acknowledges the ravages time has wrought, as on his walk down once familiar Mount Vernon Street to Charles Street in Boston he finds:

...a perch for musing on the oddity of our nature, which makes us still like the places we have known or loved to grow old, when we can scarcely bear it in the people (555).

In an earlier chapter, "New York Revisited", he finds his strong associations with a building which has not aged gracefully equally hard to bear. In one of the few vehement personal statements in the narrative, he recalls his childhood impression of Castle Garden where, as "another large-eyed infant" himself, he heard "the infant phenomenon" Adelina Patti sing. In contrast, the rotunda today appears to him "shabby, shrunken, barely discernible", crowded out by "sky-scrapers and league-long bridges" (422). He sees this as "the point where the age--the age for which Castle Garden could have been, in its day, a 'value'--had come out." The drastic shift in confirmed cultural value "in itself
was nothing" he observes, and yet this moment of recognition
strikes him with a profound sense of cultural vertigo:

...the difference, from pole to pole, was so vivid
and concrete that no single shade of any one of its
aspects was lost. This impact of the whole condensed
past at once produced a horrible, hateful sense of
personal antiquity (422).

Aside from those moments when his recollections of
childhood are so completely frustrated, James is prepared to
make a great imaginative effort to wrest impressions of the
past from the present, generally with more sanguine results.

This juxtaposition of the immediate and the former American
condition extends interest and value to both. James's account of
his delighted, chance encounter with a modern American boy at
Hawthorne's birthplace is highly calculated and almost uncanny,
an invigorating narrative experience steeped in potential
significance. It exemplifies James's artful approach to his
travel experiences and their representation in *The American Scene.*

James returns, on "pilgrimage", to "Hawthorne's Salem", supposedly
hoping to retrieve a previous fond impression of "the New England
homogeneous" (573). He finds instead that the sights of
historic and cultural Salem are all but obscured by the presence
of the new and the alien. He seeks directions to Hawthorne's
House of the Seven Gables and in a passage which seems to combine
Hawthorne's disappointment at Uttoxeter in *Our Old Home* with
an echo of *The Marble Faun* is met by the "glared frank ignorance"
of a recent emigrant, "a remorseless Italian" (572). In the
following paragraph, revisiting a fondly remembered "noble
quarter" of Georgian houses requires the assistance of a passing
"civil Englishman", who compares the historic Salem houses to
Grosvenor Square. It seems that the once "New England homogeneous"
streets of Salem are now teeming with foreigners, or it may be
that James has acquired a taste and an eye for the foreign and
the alien, particularly in the midst of the "New England
homogeneous". He professes that "I had never bargained for
looking at them through a polyglot air" (573-574), but once
introduced into his impressions of Salem the "New England
homogeneous" is ruptured, and cultural comparison sets in.

Having twice sought directions from potential guides who
have only served to undermine "the edifice of my fond fancy"
(572), James is mentally preparing himself to view Hawthorne's
birthplace in an appropriately historical perspective ("The way

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66 At Uttoxeter, as mentioned in my earlier examination of *Our Old Home*,
Hawthorne is chagrined to find that a local boy he questions about Dr. Johnson's act of
penance in the market square, as reported in Boswell's biography, knows nothing of the act
Hawthorne reveres as legendary.

Prior to the murder of Miriam's tormentor in Hawthorne's Italian romance,
Donatello is romantically viewed by Miriam and her American friends as a living version
of the statue of a Faun by Praxiteles. As Miriam conjectures:

"...I suppose the Faun had no conscience, no remorse, no burthen on the heart,
no troublesome recollections of any sort; no dark future neither!" (Hawthorne
1983, 863).
to think of it evidently was in some frank rural light of the past...") (576) when he seemingly accepts the unsolicited services of a young American guide:

It [the past] kept at a distance, in fact, so far as my perception was concerned, everything but a little boy, a dear little harsh, intelligent, sympathetic American boy, who dropped straight from the hard sky for my benefit (I hadn't seen him emerge from elsewhere) and turned up at my side with absolute confidence and with the most knowing tips. He might have been a Weimar tout or a Stratford amateur—only he so beautifully wasn't. This is what I mean by my having alighted happily; the little boy was so completely master of his subject, and we formed, on the spot, so close an alliance. He made up to me for my crude Italian—the way they become crude over here!—he made up to me a little even for my civil Englishman; he was exactly what I wanted—a presence (and he was the only thing far or near) old enough, native and intimate enough, to reach back and to understand (576-577).

Who is this extraordinary boy? In a subsequent passage, James commends him as:

the very genius of the place, feeding his small shrillness on the cold scraps of Hawthorne's leaving and with the making of his acquaintance alone worth the journey (577).

In literary terms, the boy is introduced as a *deus ex machina* who appears out of nowhere, dropping "straight from the hard sky" for the hero's benefit. In his harsh native knowingness and opportunism, James's boy guide, "the very genius of the place" seems to share

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67 It is possible that James is again evoking comparison with a passage from *The Marble Faun*, in which Donatello descends from his tree top vantage point in the grounds of the Villa Borghese, landing beside the astonished Miriam:

"I hardly know," said she smiling, "whether you have sprouted out of the earth, or fallen from the clouds. In either case you are welcome" (915).
more affinity with Daisy Miller's brother than with Hawthorne, the provincial youth and future author of *The Scarlet Letter*. James's satisfaction with the encounter may owe something to seeing his fictional American boy Randolph brought to life, his brash modern character asserting a certain proprietorial dominance over the legend of Hawthorne, one of James's major creative influences. In terms of creative indebtedness, the boy's dependence on "the cold scraps of Hawthorne's leaving" might suggest the literary apprenticeship of a young American author, the very derivative author James might have remained had he not extended his literary and cultural horizons to Europe, surpassing the scope of the parochial "New England homogeneous". In essence, the Salem visit provides James with the opportunity to enter into fondly patronizing communion with his own reconstructed American boyhood, an identity perhaps never fully realised but long since shed in pursuit of more "polyglot" perspectives. The "presence" James summons out of "the frank rural light of the past" would become the future subject of his biographical memoir, *A Small Boy and Others*.

James's voyage was a return both to reclaim a sense of his own abandoned American youth and to analyse and record his impressions of a once familiar homeland now transformed almost beyond recognition. James also seemed to welcome the
restriction to outside observer status his project imposed upon him;
rhetorically if not in real social terms, the state of being the disconnected,
unknown alien which so discomforted other literary travellers before
him was to the much-travelled James a challenging but creative escape
from routine. His project forced reliance upon his own associations
and experiences two decades removed from recent American history.
His inexperience of modern America was an epistemological
restriction and an imaginative release, apparently welcomed by
James, from the current cultural assumptions and priorities of
both English and American societies. Never content merely to
write anecdotally about travel, at this point in his career
James was writing as the travel writer's travel writer,
consciously foregrounding the conditions and epistemology
of travel, analysing his method of writing in general and travel
writing in particular. He was seemingly as interested in
his creative method as in the immediate subject presented by
his itinerary. The literary challenge was to make his subject
memorable, that is, to make it cultural, by virtue of his
imaginative treatment. By his own acknowledgement and design,
he was inscribing as much as describing the polyglot
transformations of American culture.

Most travellers, and certainly all Anglo-American travellers,
experience occasional thrilling or spine-tingling moments of
identification with the alien, an impression of familiarity in
the midst of the strange. For many, including Hawthorne and
Clemens, to travel is to enter into the domain of previously read
literature. Comparison of the literary impression with its
native, material source either yields disappointment or a
sense of uncanny recognition. In *The American Scene* James is
generally focused on the strange in the midst of the once personally
familiar. What has vanished can only be reflected in a literary
commemoration of the loss. Such commemoration creates a telescopic temporal
sense of long-acquired cultural and personal history, as well as an impression of
societal and personal progress, the past’s provincial identities nostalgically lamented
but admittedly outgrown.

Much of *The American Scene* can be read within the context
of this progressive change, and of the intellectual debate
informing U.S. urban planning and architecture of the period.
While James was pursuing his career as an expatriate writer
in England throughout the 1880s and 1890s, in the U.S.
urbanisation and an accompanying cosmopolitan bias spread
throughout the country as the process of corporate, mercantile and
institutional consolidation increasingly redefined American society.

New York, James's birthplace and the city which afforded him
his earliest childhood experiences and memories, exemplified the
metropolitan restructuring that was sweeping the nation. In
1883, the completion of the Brooklyn Bridge encouraged urban pioneering beyond the shores of Manhattan. In 1898, Manhattan and the outlying boroughs were united in the municipal creation of Greater New York. Almost all of New York's major civic structures and cultural institutions (the American Museum of Natural History, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera, Madison Square Garden and the New York Public Library, to name but a few) had been founded and built in the years of James's absence. A recent study of New York architecture and urbanism from 1890-1915 describes this period as:

...the grandest manifestation of Metropolitanism in New York. Faced with the consequences of virtually uncontrolled social and physical growth, New Yorkers developed a new sensitivity to the role architecture and town planning could play in the quality of their day-to-day lives. By the mid-1890s a conception of the city emerged which James W. and Daniel B. Shepp described as "composite -- a city made up of men and women from the uttermost ends of the earth, with their own peculiar habits and customs, all blending together into a more or less homogeneous whole." The social ideal received its architectural expression in the revival of classicism known as the American Renaissance, and was most vividly articulated in the realm of urban design by the City Beautiful movement (Stern, Gilmartin and Massengale 1983, 18, citing James W. and Daniel B. Shepp 1893. Shepp's New York City Illustrated: Scene and Story in the Metropolis of the Western World, Philadelphia and Chicago: Globe Bible Publishing Co., 8).

James returned to a metropolis in which the New York City Improvement Commission of 1904-1907 was already at work, having a public mandate to create monumental, aesthetic public spaces,
carved out of the urban grid, at key points in the city. The Commission's plans were but one expression of the nationwide City Beautiful movement, a new concern with urban design which would influence the architectural landscape of most major American cities. The revival of classicism in art and architecture was encouraged by this movement as a style befitting the municipal and national heir of European civilization; it was the reconstruction at home of the type of monuments American tourists admired when abroad.

Rival styles of the period included the sort of non-historicising American modernism exemplified by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan and a progressive revision of classical architecture known as modern French style, an architectural approach much admired by James on his visit to Washington, D.C.. James certainly did not wish to see the aesthetic reconstruction of Europe on American shores, a sentimental, souvenir-veneration of the past he had treated so ironically in works as early as "A Passionate Pilgrim". Nor did

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64 Letters written during his American journey reflect with similar irony upon the recently constructed, 'French châteaux' in which he was entertained. These included Edith Wharton's The Mount, which James describes as "a delicate French château mirrored in a Massachusetts pond", hastening to add "(repeat not this formula)" to his correspondent Howard Sturgis (October 17th 1904, Edel 1984, IV, 325). He repeats this formula about The Mount himself in a subsequent letter to Jessie Allen, after writing of his visit to the country house of "Mrs. Gardner, near Boston," which is itself "full of the most delicious Venetian and Barbaresque associations". (October 22nd 1904, Ibid., 329). At Biltmore in North Carolina, the palatial country residence of George Vanderbilt, he writes to his
he embrace the technological formalism of American modernism. French
modernism, a foreign-born reinterpretation and modification of
classical European aesthetic principles for a new, pluralistic,
metropolitan society, selected from the Old World just those
intellectual elements that could express the romantic idealism of
the New World experiment. It was just the sort of "picking and
choosing" of one's intellectual property that James advocated
throughout his career. It was modern; it was American, but
French-inspired, deflecting the Jacksonian tendency to self-
congratulatory nationalism. The new civic monuments and
institutions designed in this style gave elegant encouragement and
some cause for celebration to the returning American claimant.
As an intellectual heir to the project of American culture, James
was asserting an aesthetic as well as personal priority and a
relationship with the modern in his survey of the once familiar,
now much-changed American scene.

In terms of James's literary _oeuvre_ and biography, _The
American Scene_ constitutes a short but significant interlude

nephew of the "huge freezing spaces and fantastic immensities of _scale_ (from point to
point) that have been based on a fundamental ignorance of comfort and wondrous
deludedness...as to what _can_ be the application of a colossal French château to life in this
irretrievable niggery wilderness" (Letter to Henry James III, February 4th 1905, _Ibid._,
344). To Edith Wharton, he writes of Biltmore, "It's in _effect_, like a gorgeous practical
joke—but at one's own expense, after all, if one has to live in solitude in these league-long
marble halls and sit in alternate Gothic and Palladian cathedrals... ...for a tasteful
Southern home, it merely makes me weep!" (Letter to Edith Wharton, February 8th 1905,
_Ibid._, 347-348).
in his later career: the author sailed for the United States on August 24, 1904 with his major late novels, his failed career as a dramatist and a recent biographical commemoration of the life of American expatriate artist William Wetmore Story all behind him. When, after an American pilgrimage of somewhat more than ten months, he returned to England in July 1905 to complete his book of American impressions, the prefaces to The New York Edition, a multi-volumed autobiography and a renewed bid for theatrical success lay before him. After The American Scene, his work became more concentrated on aesthetic and biographical recollection and revision, punctuated by renewed, generally frustrating forays into the public and popular genre of the drama. His exposure to twentieth-century America exerted a profound influence over all James's subsequent literary endeavors, including The Sense of the Past and The Ivory Tower.

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69 James apparently prolonged his stay in America beyond what he had originally anticipated. He had let his house in England for six months and immediately following his arrival in the U.S. wrote to his brother Bob that "I have come home (after twenty-two years since my last visit), to stay seven or eight months if possible... (September 4th, 1904 Edel 1984, IV, 320). Ten days later, in writing to his agent J. B. Pinker, he plans to extend his visit to nine months:

There is the matter of the Collective Edition— but mightn't that well stay over till the spring? I seem to descry that I shall stick it out here, till (about) June next, and am thinking of settling the matter, as soon as I get back to Boston, by taking my passage in a Cunarder from there, for the first week in that month (September 14th, 1904 Ibid., 323).

He lingered even longer in the U.S., sailing for England on 4th July 1905.
his two uncompleted 'International' novels in which, as previously discussed in Chapter Eight, inheritance plots provide the occasion for transatlantic travel and comparison.

There is evidence to suggest that James had been contemplating a return visit to American shores, ostensibly justified and funded by a book of his impressions, long before raising the possibility in tentative letters to his brother William in 1903.

In *The Cosmopolitan World of Henry James*, Adeline Tintner notes that *The American Scene* follows the general travel itinerary of a previous American travelogue, *Outre-Mer: Impressions of America*, (1895) written by James's friend, the cosmopolitan writer Paul Bourget.\(^{70}\) James's parting words to the U.S.-bound Bourget are cited in *Outre-Mer* and James notes in a letter of December 29th, 1893 to his brother William that he had written introductions for Bourget and his wife to "Mrs. Jack, Mrs. Whitman & the 2 Nortons" (Skrupskelis and Berkeley, 1993, II, 294); he thus appears to have been instrumental in helping Bourget to plan his journey of August 1893-April 1894.\(^{71}\) It seems reasonable to conclude

\(^{70}\) Tintner further asserts that James's "restless analyst" in *The American Scene* reflects back the character of Julien Dorsenne, described as the "inquiet chercheur" in Bourget's *Cosmopolis* and that this borrowed cosmopolitan persona first appears (unnamed) in James's *The Sacred Fount*. (Tintner 1991,10)

\(^{71}\) An early, shipboard entry in Bourget's book notes:

Saturday - Henry J. said to me when we parted in London, I am looking forward to your impression of the wooden docks of New York. "You will want to return
that Bourget drew on James's prior knowledge and suggestions in formulating his American travel itinerary and that the plan subsequently adopted by the author of *The American Scene* was originally James's own, an early, vicarious projection of his eventual pilgrimage.

James's southern journey would take him out of once familiar territory and often beyond the reach of family and friends. In his chapter on Richmond James reflects upon the reason for undertaking his latter-day American rediscovery, a physically demanding project for a 61-year-old cosmopolitan aesthete. James describes it as an irresistible quest:

It was American civilization that had begun to spread itself thick and pile itself high, in short, in proportion as the other, and foreign exhibition had taken to writing itself plain, and to a world so amended and enriched, accordingly, the expatriated observer, with his relaxed curiosity reviving and his limp imagination once more on the stretch, couldn't fail again to address himself. Nothing could be of a simpler and straighter logic: Europe had been romantic years before, because she was different from America; wherefore America would now be romantic because she was different from Europe. It was for this small syllogism then to meet, practically, the test of one's repatriation; and as the palpitating pilgrim disembarked, in truth, he had felt it like the rifle of a keen sportsman, carried across his shoulder and ready for instant use (James 1993, 655).

If the desire for an unspecified sort of 'difference'

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by the next steamer, as C- did" (Bourget 1895, 19).

William James, who entertained the Bourgets in Cambridge, reflects back to Henry his dislike of the Frenchman's dissipated and presumptuous manner and Henry apologetically nevertheless seeks to justify his interest in Bourget's character and his admiration for the resulting book, "the most literary & courteous book ever written on the U.S.—a very amiable one indeed" (Skrupskelis and Berkley 1993, II, 291-364).
(presumably social and cultural, probably personal, possibly psycho-sexual) is the recognised cause for most recreational wandering, rarely had it been so celebrated or consciously articulated outside the pages of one of James's own fictions. He was "a palpitating pilgrim" on the trail of "romance" rather than social documentary, a novelist in search of the imaginatively novel in this now strange land of his birth. The immediate project, a *tour de force* of travel writing and a unique contribution to the annals of literature on American society, was ambitious, perhaps even chaotic in its scope, and from the outset James's impressions are interlaced with an auto-interrogation of the method most appropriate to such work:

The subject was everywhere—that was the beauty, that the advantage; it was thrilling, really, to find one's self in presence of a theme to which everything directly contributed, leaving no touch of experience irrelevant. That, at any rate, so far as feeling it went, treating it, evidently, was going to be a matter of prodigious difficulty and selection—in consequence of which, indeed, there might even be a certain recklessness in the largest surrender to impressions. Clearly, however, these were not for the present—and such as they were—to be kept at bay; the hour of reckoning, obviously, would come, with more of them heaped up than would prove usable, a greater quantity of vision, possibly, than might fit into decent form, whereby, assuredly, the part of wisdom was to put in as much as possible of one's recklessness while it was fresh. (359)

James generally confined such soliloquising about work-in-progress to his notebooks; *The American Scene* is self-referential to a degree unprecedented in James's earlier travel writing and similar in
its aesthetic focus to the perspective of the prefaces to his collected works
for the authorised New York Edition which James began writing even as he was
completing work on his American travelogue. His persistent inclusion of such
reflections on method throughout The American Scene serves to emphasise
both the difficulty of the task in hand and to remind the reader that the view is
mediated by an authorial presence with a particular consciousness and agenda.
To be of literary value and interest, at least to James, the work would
of necessity be insistently, methodically subjective:

It was thus at any rate a question—as I have indeed already
shown—of what one read into anything, not of what one read
out of it;...(412).

Throughout the text, the reader is repeatedly nudged by James
on the degree to which his observations are an imaginative
construct. In Philadelphia, for example:

As a real, a moral value, to the general mind, at all events,
and not as a trumped-up one, I saw the lucky legacy of the
past, at Philadelphia, operate; though I admit that these are,
at best, for the mooning observer, matters of appreciation,
mysteries of his own sensibility. Such an observer has early
to perceive, and to conclude on it once for all, that there
will be little for him in the American scene unless he be
ready, anywhere, everywhere, to read "into" it as much as he
reads out (593).

And in the Confederate Museum at Richmond:

He was at his old trick: he had made out, on the spot, in
other words, that there was a pale page into which he might
read what he liked (669).

Elsewhere James is scrupulous enough to remind the reader
that he is performing his interpretative 'reading into' from an
individual perspective:

If there be strange ways of producing an interest, to the critical mind, there are doubtless still stranger ways of not producing one, and it was important to me, no doubt, to make "my" defunct and compact and expressive little Boston appear to don all the signs of that character that the New Land, and what is built thereon, miss. How could one consider the place at all unless in a light?—so that one had to decide definitely on one's light (559).

Intermittently, the text acknowledges conditions beyond the immediate subject which nevertheless make an impact upon James's experience and the resulting impression:

Two secrets, at this time, seemed to profit by that influence [the "breath of spring"] to tremble out, one of these to the effect that New York would really have been "meant" to be charming, and the other to the effect that the restless analyst, willing at the lightest persuasion to let so much of its ugliness edge away unscathed from his analysis, must have had for it, from far back, one of those loyalties that are beyond any reason (445).

Not only the weather, but James's personal history, his past associations and psychological predisposition are transparently admitted as influences upon the text, although beyond the immediate metereological conditions, all the influential personal details remain opaque.

James further observes the extent to which memory serves to heighten those impressions of places associated with his past:

I should have been at fault perhaps only in speaking of the interest in question as visible, on that large scale, to the "naked eye"; the truth being perhaps that one wouldn't have been so met half-way by one's impression
unless one had rather particularly known, and that knowledge, in such a case, amounts to a pair of magnifying spectacles (566-567).

This passage about Concord might today be suspected of a genteelly exclusionary elitism, affirming impressions of old New England with the provision that such interest might only be apparent to an initiate.

Yet James makes initiates of his readers by recording an experience rich in past associations, a literary locus with which, having read *The American Scene*, they have a history of associations too.

Despite a past which has equipped him to contrast the scene of his American youth with the modern and urbanised American present, James is eager to admit the discovery of much that his memory has overlooked, lapses in his own consciousness and past experience:

It is a convenience to be free to confess that the play of perception during those first weeks was quickened, in the oddest way, by the wonderment (which was partly also the amusement) of my finding how many corners of the general, of the local, picture had ancienly never been unveiled for me at all... That might make one ask by what strange law one had lived in the other time, with gaps to that number, in one's experience, in one's consciousness, with so many muffled spots in one's general vibration—and the answer indeed to such a question might carry with it an infinite penetration of retrospect, a penetration productive of ghostly echoes as sharp sometimes as aches or pangs. ...why had the inconvenience, or the disgrace, of early privation become an accepted memory? All doubtless, in the very interest, precisely, of this eventual belated romance, and so that adventures, even of minor type, so preposterously postponed should be able to deck themselves at last with a kind of accumulation of freshness (398-399).

This passage manifests a certain fateful, teleological
optimism, generally evident in James whenever he attempts to rationalise a loss, whether that of a significant personal landmark, as in preceding citations, the loss of his theatrical career following the failure of *Guy Domville*, or in his reflections upon the death of close friends and relatives such as Minnie Temple, Constance Fenimore Woolson and his sister Alice. A moral purpose is wrested from even such personally tragic events which serves both to comfort and reward the author by lending a potentially positive interpretation to the tragedy. For James, all personal losses must yield creative gains.

Aside from filling in the blanks in his own American past, there was at least one other, more radical historical conquest to be gleaned from past associations:

And did not indeed the small happy accidents of disappearing Boston exhale in a comparatively sensible manner the warm breath of history, the history of something as against the history of nothing?—so that, being gone, or generally going, they enabled one at last to feel and almost to talk about them as one had found one's self feeling and talking about the sacrificed relics of old Paris and old London... There was at least the gain, at any rate, that one was now going to be free to picture them, to embroider them, at one's ease--to tangle them up in retrospect and make the real romantic claim for them. This accordingly is what I am doing... (542).

James's announced approach to the vanished "relics" of his American past is to make them legendary, to reimagine them from a novelist's rather than a sociologist's perspective.

A text so self-reflexively concerned with its own working
method can be read as more than a little akin to William James's own philosophical theorising. *The American Scene* seems in part an avid demonstration of a consciousness intent upon uniting and contrasting past and present experience, and it is perhaps noteworthy that William James's *Pragmatism* and *The American Scene* both appeared in 1907. In a later work, *The Meaning of Truth*, the philosopher would abstractly define as 'radical empiricism' a theory which his brother seems to have applied in practice to his American travel experiences:

> The statement of fact is that relations between things, conjunctive as well as disjunctive, are as much matters of direct particular experience...[as]...the things themselves (William James 1909, xii-xiii).

Thus did William James distinguish between traditional and radical empiricism, rejecting both British empiricism and Kantian and Hegelian idealism. Henry wrote to his brother on October 31, 1909:

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72 Many commentators have observed the intellectual affinities between the brothers. In *The James Family*, F.O. Matthiessen has suggested and documented extensive similarities in conceptual development simultaneously reflected in the work of both William and Henry. Ross Posnock finds similar parallels and cross-fertilisation of intellectual influences in his more recent analysis *The Trial of Curiosity: Henry James, William James and the Challenge of Modernity*. In reference to *The American Scene*, he observes:

> ...Jamesian curiosity is a pragmatic historical practice suspicious of any discourse equating the social with fixed or finished forms" (Posnock 1991, 24).

Other critics such as Sharon Cameron, Mark Seltzer and Charles Caramello discount the importance of an emerging psychological theory of consciousness in James's work to emphasise the socio-political relevance of what may be viewed as authorial imperialism. For these readers, *The American Scene* represents a dystopic view of modern American society; Cameron refers to the text as James's "misrepresentation of America", rejecting the notion that James's consideration of consciousness in this and other works reflects any interest in psychology on his part.
...I find it [The Meaning of Truth] of thrilling interest, triumphant and brilliant, and am lost in admiration of your wealth and power. I palpitate as you make out your case (since it seems to me you so utterly do,) as I under no romantic spell ever palpitate now; and into that case I enter intensely, unreservedly, and I think you would allow almost intelligently. I find you nowhere as difficult as you surely make everything for your critics.... You surely make philosophy more interesting and living than anyone has ever made it before, and by a real creative and undemolishable making; whereby all you write plays into my poor 'creative' consciousness and artistic vision and pretension with the most extraordinary suggestiveness and force of application and inspiration. Thank the powers—that is thank yours!—for a relevant and assimilable and referable philosophy, which is related to the rest of one's intellectual life otherwise and more conveniently than a fowl is related to a fish. In short, dearest William, the effect of these collected papers of your present volume—which I had read all individually before—seems to me exquisite and adorably cumulative and, so to speak, consecrating, so that I, for my part feel Pragmatic invulnerability constituted. Much will this suffrage help the cause! (October 31 - November 1, 1909, Lubbock 1920, II, 140-142).

Literary meditations are not unheard of in the history of American letters, yet the 'poetics' of James's reflections in The American Scene are stylistically remarkable. When James rhetorically addresses the American countryside, the American girl or the American cityscape, the particular object or abstraction often talks back, rounding out a peculiar sort of dialectical discourse in which all the parts and all the voices are in fact James's own. So rampant a tendency to personification bemused

Cameron cites one irritable letter from Henry to William to support her claim that the brothers' intellectual interests and proclivities were entirely separate. Yet many other letters in their massive correspondence, including Henry's response to The Meaning of Truth, suggests quite the opposite.
even W.H. Auden, who could well compare the conceit with that of
the metaphysical poets. In *Thinking in Henry James*, Sharon Cameron
suspects that in *The American Scene* "...ambivalence is
externalized as ventriloquism so that James can voice both sides
of the dispute" (Cameron, 5). James's recurrent insistence
upon dialogue with the source of his reflection or representation
serves to heighten the impression of the traveller's isolation in
the midst of the alien, John Carlos Rowe considers *The American
Scene* "an extraordinarily lonely book for a novelist so committed
to relations among characters as his central subject in
fiction..." (Rowe 1985, 202). Alone in the urban wilderness of
hotels and skyscrapers, James is not just talking to himself but
responding to an antiphony of imaginary voices completely outside
the sphere of ordinary social relationships. Such heightened and
artificial dialogue with the animate and inanimate past, present
and future America was for James an obvious extension into social analysis
of what he referred to as his 'scenic method', the dramatising tendency,
"the dramatic way" he had salvaged from the disappointment of
*Guy Domville* and applied to all his later novels, from
*The Golden Bowl* to the uncompleted draft of *The Ivory Tower.*

Plotting what sort of book he intends to write, in the opening

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73 Auden's introduction to the 1946 Scribner's edition of *The American Scene*
oberves: "Outside of fairy tales I know of no book in which things so often and so
naturally become persons" (xi).
pages of *The American Scene* he considers the general approach and particular creative challenge of the project before him:

Yes; it was all actually going to be drama, and *that* drama, than which nothing could be more to the occult purpose of the confirmed, the systematic story-seeker, or to that even of the mere ancient contemplative person curious of character. The very *donnée* of the piece could be given, the subject formulated: the great adventure of a society reaching out into the apparent void for the amenities, the consummations, after having earnestly gathered in so many of the preparations and necessities. "Into the apparent void"—I had to insist on that, since without it there would be neither comedy nor tragedy,... What would lurk beneath this—or indeed what wouldn't, what mightn't—to thicken the plot from stage to stage and to intensify the action? The story-seeker would be present, quite intimately present, at the general effort—showing, doubtless, as quite heroic in many a case—to gouge an interest *out* of the vacancy,... Never would be such a chance to see how the short-cut works, and if there be really any substitute for roundabout experience, for troublesome history, for the long, the immitigable process of time. It was a promise, clearly, of the highest entertainment (366).

No matter the difficulties, James resolves that his American impressions shall constitute dramatic entertainment, which, as the previous chapter has argued, in James's writing generally implies an attempt to deliver a homiletic social message in melodramatic terms. And it is just when James strives hardest to dramatise his impressions by resorting to hyperbolic depictions and metaphors wrenched somewhat beyond their logical limits of association that his interpretations of modern America are most susceptible to
criticism. The problems with James's dramas, in which naturalism and logic are too often sacrificed to a more poetically abstract consistency, are reconstituted in *The American Scene*.

No sooner has he sounded his note of dramatic resolve than the prospect of dramatic failure begins to appear in the project, a failure not only of James's aesthetic vision but also a loss for

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Nowhere is this more readily apparent than in James's reflections on social equality and privilege, heredity and the "apotheosis of the family" in American life, all triggered by his discovery of a uniquely American institution, the country club. Clearly aware that membership in this domain was the privilege of an exclusive minority of white middle-class Americans, James argues defensively in asserting the (relatively) "universal eligibility" for membership in such clubs. Then comes the inadvertently damning observation which, to recent socio-political interpreters, seems to confirm James as holding anti-egalitarian convictions:

I may of course be asked what I mean by eligibility that is "universal"; but it seems needless to remark that even the most inclusive social scheme must in a large community always stop somewhere (621).

This is followed by a rather illuminating discourse on difference and equality which makes it quite clear that James is no supporter of an aristocratic order or a European class system. The pronouncement assuming a seemingly casual and callous elitism is atypical of James; both the general sense and phrasing are contradicted by him elsewhere in his work:

...for the restless analyst, there is no such thing as an unrelated fact, no such thing as a break in the chain of relations (611).

A similar assertion is found in a preface to *Roderick Hudson*, written some time after his return to England for his authorised New York Edition:

Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so (James 1935, 5).

While it might be argued that members of a country club are certainly related to those they exclude from membership and that such similarly worded pronouncements are no more explicit endorsements of social inclusiveness, they do seem to suggest that when it came to turns of phrase related to ethical meaning, this most consistent of authors was suffering a lapse of logic as well as idiom in his determination to present the country club as uniquely American.
American society. For James, reading so much into the void, the creative impression is capable of illuminating and subtly transforming its subject, and American society might realise an increase in cultural value from such treatment. Already, in those early autumn weeks in New Hampshire, James admits the possibility of future (tragic) failure as a source of immediate dramatic tension:

...the voice of the air had dropped as forever...all to the enhancement of this strange conscious hush of the landscape, which kept one in presence as of a world created, a stage set, a sort of ample capacity constituted, for--well, for things that wouldn't after all, happen: more pity for them, and for me and for you (368-369).

James's narrative would give multiform new speaking parts to the American air and landscape, insisting throughout the text on a dramatic approach to the project that transcends the merely descriptive:

So, therefore, one seemed destined a bit incoherently to proceed; asking one's self again and again what the play would have been without the scenery, sometimes "even such" scenery, and then once more not quite seeing why such scenery (in especial) should propose to put one off with so little of a play. The thing, absolutely, everywhere, was to provide one's own play; anything, everything made scenery for that, and the recurrence of such questions made scenery most of all. I remember no moment, over the land, when the mere Pullman itself didn't overarch my observations as a positive temple of the drama, and when the comedy and the tragedy of manners didn't, under its dome, hold me raptly attent (712-713).

In a work so self-reflexively concerned with its own aesthetic and creating a personal sense of the past in historical
contrast with modern America, the immediate subject of James's impressions can at times almost appear to be irrelevant to the literary labour at hand. Yet James is particularly clear and consistent about the primary subject of his attention: in an America which could now be experienced as both different from Europe and from its own past, an increasingly urban nation undergoing a cultural upheaval, the rising tide of immigration and the impact of those immigrants upon American society had become a major social issue. It was an issue which would preside throughout *The American Scene*:

...other impressions might come and go, but this affirmed claim of the alien, however immeasurably alien, to share in one's supreme relation was everywhere the fixed element, the reminder not to be dodged. One's supreme relation, as one had always put it, was one's relation to one's country—a conception made up so largely of one's countrymen and one's countrywomen (467).

For an artist acutely conscious of his own cultural origins and influences, the literary confrontation with the impact of recent immigration upon America's largely Anglo-American culture was a moral and aesthetic necessity. James depicts the challenge to the writer in dramatically exaggerated, positively gothic terms:

The man of letters, in the United States, has his own difficulties to face and his own current to stem—for dealing with which his liveliest inspiration may be, I think, that they are still very much his own, even in an Americanized world, and that more than elsewhere they press him to intimate communion with his honour. For that honour,
the honour that sits astride of the consecrated English
tradition, to his mind, quite as old knighthood astride of
its caparisoned charger, the dragon most rousing, over the
land, the proper spirit of St. George, is just this
immensity of the alien presence climbing higher and higher,
climbing itself into the very light of publicity (470).

James took up this literary challenge at a time when both
immigration and attendant anti-immigration sentiment in
the United States were rising to unprecedented levels.\(^\text{75}\)

At the turn of the century, just under 500,000 immigrants were
arriving annually in the U.S.; in 1905, the year of James's visit,
the numbers would soar to over one million; immigration continued
to increase annually through 1914. Between 1880 and 1914 over
twenty million immigrants would arrive in the United States.

Earlier generations of arrivals had come largely from Britain and
Northern European countries; the new influx of prospective
Americans came from Southern and Eastern Europe. They were
Catholics and Jews rather than Protestants, new Americans markedly
different in ethnic and cultural origins from their predecessors.\(^\text{76}\)

\(^{75}\) Placing perhaps too much emphasis on what he deems the "ideology of
assimilation" espoused in the melting pot metaphor, Ross Posnock's focus on the
intellectual history of the period seemingly neglects the far more hostile and polarised
populist attitudes towards immigration expressed by labour unions, eugenicists and
prominent politicians (Posnock 1991, 281). Adverse to the loss of ethnic and cultural
difference in a vast, featureless American landscape of sameness and standardisation,
James was most problematically allied with the anti-immigrationists in opposing
assimilation, but for quite different, non-xenophobic reasons.

\(^{76}\) Data on U.S. immigration is found in the *Statistical Yearbook of the
Immigration and Naturalization Service 1987*, cited in Pedersen
and Landau 1992, and in *Political Facts of the United States Since 1789*,

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In 1882 Congress had capitulated to labour union and general anti-immigrationist fears about the growth of a low paid Asian labour force in passing the Chinese Exclusion Act. In 1904 this law was further reinforced by Congress with the introduction of the Deficiency Act, which barred Chinese labourers indefinitely.

On January 16, 1905, James was conducted on a personal tour of the Senate by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, James's Boston "cousin" and the intimate political ally of the President, Theodore Roosevelt. Lodge had recently presented to the Senate a notable eugenicist argument for a complete bar against further immigration, observing that the new influx of immigrants since 1880 was jeopardising the best "amalgamation of stocks", which Lodge felt the United States had already achieved (Pederson and Landau 1992, 1652).

There is nothing to suggest that Henry James felt any sympathy with his kinsman's views.\textsuperscript{77} It is however quite likely that he was aware of them and thus highly sensitised to the fact that immigration, the very dynamic upon which the nation had been constituted, had become a highly contentious national issue.

\textsuperscript{77} During an evening with Cabot Lodge and his family in London seven years before James's return to America, James was more diverted by "Cabot Lodge's big, ugly, pleasant son, whom I dined with at the Hays..." "I can't," he confessed, "swallow Senator Cabot (though I am afraid he is cousin) but I much liked his clever and civilized and withal modest and manly, young son." (Letter to Frances Rollins Morse, 34 De Vere Gardens, June 7th 1897; Edel 1984, IV, 46). While in Washington, James was entertained by Mrs. Lodge and her son Bay, and continued a friendly though not intimate correspondence with the Senator's wife following his return to England. The Lodges' hospitality to James in Washington is briefly noted by Fred Kaplan in his recent biography (Kaplan 1992, 489).
With the closing of the frontier in the 1890s, Americans had begun to realise that the land of opportunity (even with the admission of certain imperialist adventures and ambitions) was finite, and to suspect that there might not always be land, jobs and wealth enough to share with newcomers, without reducing their own material opportunities and aspirations.\(^7^8\)

Without ever engaging in descriptive narrative, James conveys his own strong impression of a visit to Ellis Island as an American rite of passage, a journey from innocence to experience self-consciously consistent with a Miltonic Fortunate Fall. James's rhetorical 'warning' of a life-transforming initiation serves as both temptation and a challenge to any American who would know what it means to be an American:

I think indeed that the simplest account of the action of Ellis Island on the spirit of any sensitive citizen who may have happened to "look in" is that he comes back from his visit not at all the same person that he went. He has eaten of the tree of knowledge, and the taste will be forever in his mouth. He had thought he knew before, thought he had the sense of the degree in which it is his American fate to share the sanctity of his American consciousness, the intimacy of his American patriotism, with the inconceivable alien; but the truth never came home to him with any such force. In the lurid light projected upon it by those courts of dismay it shakes him—or I like at least

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\(^7^8\) On April 30, 1904 the Louisiana Purchase Centennial Exposition opened in St Louis; days later, on May 4th, the Panama Canal Zone legally became the property of the United States (*Chronicle of America* 1989). The proximity of the two events invites ironic comparison between the older purchase which vastly increased the size of the nation and the much more ethically and politically controversial acquisition of the tiny, strategically important Canal Zone.
to imagine it shakes him—to the depths of his being, I like
to think of him, I positively have to think of him, as going
about ever afterwards with a new look, for those who can see
it, in his face, the outward sign of the new chill in his
heart. So is stamped, for detection, the questionable
privileged person who has had an apparition, seen a ghost
in his supposedly safe old house. Let not the unwary,
therefore, visit Ellis Island (426-427).

Such an admonition is strangely, strongly reminiscent of the
language in which Hawthorne had couched a consular warning to his
fellow citizens as to the all-but-irresistible moral dangers of
foreign travel. Such sententious and sensational warnings may
be ironically calculated to entice. If European comparison was
once the formative and dangerous essential element in the making
of a nineteenth-century American sensibility, James suggests that
the focus has shifted. The polyglot influence, multiculturalism
had arrived on American shores as the predominating, often chaotic

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79 Some thirty years earlier, in his "Consular Experiences" essay in Our Old
Home, Hawthorne had ironically assumed the demeanor of a patriarchal puritan to offer
would-be travellers some tantalising discouragement:

It may be well for persons who are conscious of any radical weakness in their
caracter, any besetting sin, any unlawful propensity, any unhallowed impulse,
which (while surrounded with the manifold restraints that protect a man from that
treachorous and life-long enemy, his lower self, in the circle of society where he is
at home) they may have succeeded in keeping under the lock and key of strictest
propriety—it may be well for them, before seeking the perilous freedom of a
distant land, released from the watchful eyes of neighborhoods and coteries,
lightened of that wearisome burden, an immaculate name, and blissfully obscure
after years of local prominence—it may be well for such individuals to know that,
when they set foot on a foreign shore, the long imprisoned Evil, scenting a wild
license in the unaccustomed atmosphere, is apt to grow riotous in its iron cage. It
rattles the rusty barriers with a gigantic turbulence, and if there be an infirm joint
anywhere in the frame-work, it breaks madly forth, compressing the mischief of a
lifetime into a little space (Hawthorne 1970, 24-25).
chorus of America's cultural future. The primary challenge to the American intellectual was to attempt to come to terms with the alien, non-Anglo-American others, the new Americans whose influence would irreversibly alter the project of creating an American culture.

James was in no doubt about his position in relation to the immigrants he observed on Ellis Island and in New York:

The combination there of their quantity and their quality—that loud primary stage of alienism which New York most offers to sight—they have nobody to thank for; so that unsettled possession is what we, on our side, seem reduced to—the implication of which, in its turn, is that, to recover confidence and regain lost ground, we, not they, must make the surrender and accept the orientation. We must go, in other words, more than halfway to meet them; which is all the difference, for us, between possession and dispossession (427).

The acknowledgement of this condition of "unsettled possession" or "dispossession" returns James to the familiar ground of the inheritance plot, the subject of so much of his fiction and drama of the 1890s. In these works, dispossession inevitably emerges as the more interesting and honourable condition. It is of course also the original position of the American claimant, dispospossed of his European inheritance, and of the new immigrants, who were the new generation of American claimants, though in a more immediately materialistic than conceptual and ideal sense. James recognises the alien condition as the original American condition and accepts it as his own, although his immediate
confrontation with the immigrants' anxious grappling after American prosperity deprives his impression of any semblance of historical romance:

The great fact about his companions was that, foreign as they might be, newly inducted as they might be, they were at home, really more at home, at the end of their few weeks or their year or two, than they had ever in their lives been before; and that he was at home too, quite with the same intensity; and yet that it was this very equality of condition that, from side to side, made the whole medium so strange (460).  

The validation of the new American immigrant by James, the cultural emigrant, makes history out of the displacement of colonial America's cultural dependency, creating a transaction in which the United States irretrievably loses "the luxury of some such close and sweet and whole national consciousness as that of the Switzer and the Scot" (428) yet gains a recognisable, powerfully haunting past.  

To follow through James's metaphor about the American writer charging in on the back of an old tradition to

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80 A recent article by Beverly Haviland takes a similar view of James's identification with the alien and sense of cultural dispossession. James, she finds, "creates a bond of solidarity with all those who have been dispossessed of their heritage" and observes him "wondering at the process of creating a national identity" (Haviland 1995, 257).  

81 More than a few critics, including literary historian Marcus Cunliffe, have interpreted James's reflections on Ellis Island as an unmediated, negative expression of regret regarding his own cultural dispossession (Cunliffe 1970, 221). Such readings overlook the positive moral value consistently assigned to dispossession and disinheriance in James's work. As for James truly regretting the loss of the provincial "luxury" of a "whole national consciousness", the reader may want to keep in mind James's previous, rather disdainful reference in The American Scene to Switzerland and Scotland as mere "show' sections of the earth" from which "populations with money to spare may extract a vulgar joy" (374).
confront the alien 'dragon' of multiculturalism, in James's new mythology the dragon would finally triumph over the old cultural influence of England. However, consigned to the past as a lost or vanishing heritage, colonial culture would be canonised as the inescapable foundation of American 'post-colonial' cultural developments.\(^\text{82}\)

It has been suggested by some recent critics that once beyond his personally significant haunts in New England and cosmopolitan New York, James's travel narrative runs steadily downhill into dystopic disappointment. The critical distance between James and the subject of his impressions seems to increase; without the benefit of personal past associations, the author appears to grow detached from his former enthusiasm for the American scene. Some of this distance can be accounted for by the way in which the book was written and intended for initial serialisation by James. Most of the articles included in *The American Scene* were first

\(^\text{82}\) Some political interpreters have taken James's decision to be 'naturalised' as a British subject after the start of the First World War as confirmation of the author's ultimately negative verdict on immigration and *The American Scene*. This judgement fails to take into account the historical context in which James took his formal decision. When James submitted his application to become a British citizen in June, 1915, America was determined to maintain her neutrality to the European hostilities. Anti-immigration sentiment in the United States had become so powerful that by the time the U.S. did enter the war, in April 1917, Congress overrode a presidential veto to pass a law refusing entry to illiterate peasants of southern and eastern Europe. Immigration was consequently reduced by more than 90 percent, with only 110,000 immigrants gaining entry to the U.S. in 1918. At the same time, Britain, although contending with the economic uncertainties of the war and domestic supply shortages, had opened her doors to refugees from the Continent, a decision hailed by James in letters and articles of the period, and supported in his charitable work for Belgian refugees.
James routinely attempted to maximise his income and assert his transatlantic, transnational relevance by actively seeking serial publication in both the U.S. and Britain. He had returned to England before the majority of the articles were written, and it seems that in at least two instances the essays were composed for prospective British serialisation, and with a British audience in mind. Both James's chapter on Richmond and another on Baltimore were sent by James to the British *Fortnightly Review*, and the Richmond article was published by the *Review* in November 1906.\(^4\)

In both these essays there occurs a profound pronoun shift which is seemingly accounted for by the author's acknowledgement

\(^3\) Four chapters, including one on the new Jewish character of New York's Lower East Side, "The Bowery and Thereabouts", "Concord and Salem", "Charleston" and the concluding chapter on "Florida" were unserialised. The final section of the "Florida" chapter, including a last, long and exasperated apostrophe of accusation addressed by James to the monotonous American landscape, was excluded from the first US edition of *The American Scene*, appearing only in the English edition published by Chapman and Hall in 1907:

"I see what you are not making, oh what you are ever so vividly not; and how can I help it if I am subject to that lucidity?—which appears never so welcome to you, for its measure of truth, as it ought to be!..." (734).

\(^4\) "Baltimore" was serialised in the *North American Review* in August, 1906. It appears not to have been accepted for publication by the *Fortnightly Review*. A very helpful chronology detailing the composition and publishing history of *The American Scene* in both serial and book form has been compiled by Philip Horne from over 200 letters included in the Scribner material at Princeton and from correspondence with James's agent J.B. Pinker in the Beinecke Library at Yale University. (Horne 1990, 325-357). Michael Anesko's *Friction with the Market* includes details of publisher's payments to James for the rights to serial installments of *The American Scene* (Anesko 1986, 177).
of his immediate intended audience. In the majority of his impressions James's pronouns are personally inclusive, with "us" and "we" referring to American society. So in his impressions of "Concord and Salem", James assumes an American persona in his meditation on the humble relics of cultural 'origins':

...old contemporary things—contemporary with the doings of our race; simplifying our antecedents, our annals, to within an inch of their life, making us ask, in presence of the rude relics even of greatness... from what barbarians or from what pigmies we have sprung. There are certain rough black mementos of the early monarchy, in England and Scotland, there are glimpses of the original humble homes of other greatness as well, that strike in perfection this grim little note; which has the interest of our being free to take it, for curiosity, for luxury of thought, as that of the real or that of the romantic, and with which, again, the deep Concord rusticity, momentary medium of our national drama, essentially consorts (570).

But in those chapters James submitted to The Fortnightly Review, the shift to personally exclusive pronouns creates an impression of estrangement from the objects to which they refer. Thus in "Baltimore" he observes:

...as Nature abhors a vacuum, so it is of the genius of the American land and the American people to abhor, whenever may be, a discrimination. They are reduced, together, under stress, to making discriminations, but they make them, I think, as lightly and scantily as possible (604-605).

Less caustically but no less distantly, he shifts his ground from "here" to "there", reflecting later in the same essay:

One could imagine, somehow, under the summer stars, the

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mystic vigil of these mild heroes; and one could
above all catch again the interesting hint of the
term on which, in the United States, the consecration
of time may be found operating. It has a trick there
all of its own, thanks to which the effect
of duration is produced very much as before the foot-
lights, the prestidigitator produces the effect of
extracting a live fowl from a hat. This is a law under
which, the material permitting, the decades count as
centuries and the centuries as aeons (612-613).

By the third section of this four-part installment the pronoun
shift is complete. James refers to the interest of his American
material to "suffice; suffice, that is, for producing unaided,
impressions of a sort that make their way to us in 'Europe'..."
(618). In both the "Baltimore" and "Richmond" essays, what appears
to be a subtle shift of national allegiance may in fact be attributed to
James's bid for a wider, transatlantic audience and additional royalties.

Undeniably, there is some further sense of incomplection
and dissatisfaction which clings to the later chapters of

*The American Scene*. When James wandered beyond the haunts of his
American youth into less familiar territory, he found it increasingly
difficult to "gouge an interest out of the vacancy" of so much
apparent uniformity, punctuated only by the constant permutations of
the "materially possible":

The sense of the size of the Margin, that was the name of
it--the Margin by which the total of American life, huge as
it already appears, is still so surrounded as to represent
for the mind's eye on a general view, but a scant central
flotilla huddled as for very fear of the fathomless depth of
water, the too formidable future, on the so much vaster lake
of the materially possible. Once that torch is at all vividly
lighted it flares, for any pair of open eyes, over every scene, and with a presence that helps to explain their owner's inevitable failure to conclude. He feels it in all his uncertainties, and he never just escapes concluding without the sense that this so fallacious neatness would more or less absurdly have neglected or sacrificed it...
The fact that, with so many things present, so few of them are not on the way to become quite other, and possibly altogether different, things, conduces to the peculiar interest and, one often feels tempted to add, to the peculiar irritation of the country (684).

If the subject of American society was as yet too indeterminate or too latent adequately to assess in the course of James's aesthetic tour, the author also begins to perceive problems with his impressionist method as well:

These representative values and constructive connections, the whole of the latent vividness of things, not only remain, under expression, subject to no definite chemical test, no mathematical proof whatever, but almost turn their charming backs and toss their willful heads at one's poor little array of terms and equivalents. There thus immediately rises for the lone visionary, betrayed and arrested in the very act of vision, that spectre of impotence which dogs the footsteps of perception and whose presence is like some poison-drop in the silver cup (606).

Attempting to complete the work retrospectively upon his return to England, he found:

It fades, it melts away, with a promptitude of its own almost, any random reflection of the American picture, and though the restless analyst has arts of his own for fixing and saving it--as he at least on occasion fondly flatters himself--he is too often reduced to wondering what it can have consisted of in a given case save exactly that projected light of his conscience (664).

The overall failure of James's project consistently "to gouge an interest out of the vacancy" or to predict the American future, which James
clearly saw as prophetic for the future of all western civilisation, should not be taken as reflecting any cumulative authorial opinion about the success or failure of American society. The difficulties inherent in the project did not after all affect his fascination with immigrant New York as the emerging centre of twentieth century cosmopolitanism. New York is the locus for his reflections on the future transformation of Anglo-American culture and the tradition he ambivalently claims as his own. The potential impact of the alien upon the American sensibility is suspensefully considered by James on the occasion of an afternoon performance of an American play performed by a "Hebrew" company to an "oriental" audience on the lower East Side:

Were they going to rise to it, or rather to fall to it--to our instinct, as distinguished from their own, for picturing life? Were they to take our lesson, submissively, in order to get with it our smarter traps and tricks, our

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83 A projected second volume of impressions dealing with James's travels in the American west was seemingly never begun as, once back in England, James increasingly involved himself in the enormous task of revising and writing prefaces for the New York Edition. Perhaps prompted by his recent exposure to the vast American appetite for the popular arts, he once again turned with some considerable enthusiasm to his theatrical endeavours. As mentioned in the previous chapter, The High Bid (1907), The Saloon (1908), The Other House (1908) and The Outcry (1909), four inheritance dramas set in England, were all written in the aftermath of his first and final exposure to modern American culture. In such short stories as "Cappy Cornelia", "A Round of Visits" and "The Jolly Comer" he gave imaginative expression to his recent American experience, and began a more extended fictional treatment of an expatriate's return to Newport, Rhode Island society in The Ivory Tower. His enthusiasm for the travel genre was apparently undiminished. James's early travel writing on London had been collected in English Hours, published in London by Heinemann and in Boston by Houghton, Mifflin in 1905. In 1909 a collection of his early articles on travel in Italy was published in London by Heinemann, once James had finished "re-touching and retitivating them as much as possible, in fact, not a little re-writing them, with expansions and additions to trick the book out further," as he confided in a letter of May 3rd, 1909 to his friend W.D. Howells (Home 1990, 354). Seemingly undaunted by the American project which had to some extent eluded him, in 1909 he began to plan a new book on London "with hopes for high sales to tourists", as he wrote to his brother William on July 18th (Home 1990, 355).
superior Yankee machinery... Or would it be their dim intellectual resistance, a vague stir in them of some unwitting heritage--of the finer irony, that I should make out, contrary, as withstanding the effort to corrupt them, and thus perhaps really promising to react, over the head of our offered mechanic bribes, on our ingrained intellectual platitude? ...I needn't say that when I departed--perhaps from excess of suspense--it was without seeing the balance drop to either quarter, and I am afraid I think of the odd scene as still enacted in many places and many ways, the inevitable rough union in discord of the two groups of instincts, the fusion of the two camps by a queer, clumsy, wasteful social chemistry. Such at all events are the roundabout processes of peaceful history, the very history that succeeds, for our edification, in not consisting of battles and blood and tears (519).

With such descriptions, James makes analytically suspenseful if unromantic drama of the alien influence and its potential impact upon "our ingrained intellectual platitude." Despite the ambiguity of the passage, James's ironic conclusion seems to endorse the "queer, clumsy, wasteful" cultural dynamic which "succeeds" in producing an alternative to history's customary social upheavals. For all its ironic overtones, the rhetorical flourish of James's "peaceful history" sounds the poignantly optimistic notion that in post Civil War America, such a figure might not yet be considered an oxymoron.

Much of James's sharpest criticism is reserved for the state of the arts in America and what this might imply about the American sensibility. An unfortunate suggestion of sour grapes seems to flavour James's depiction of the popular taste and cultural marketplace which had increasingly marginalised him. Yet he aptly perceives that popular culture in America, which had not appreciably 'thickened' since Hawthorne so memorably described it as thin, seemed content to produce and consume its own ersatz European art, as though genuine aesthetic activity was somehow a property exclusive to Europe:
...the nation is almost feverishly engaged in producing with the greatest possible activity and expedition, an "intellectual" pabulum after its own heart. ...the novelists improvise, with the aid of the historians, a romantic local past of costume and compliment and sword-play and gallantry and passion, the dramatists build up, of a thousand pieces, the airy fiction that the life of the people in the world among whom the elements of clash and contrast are simplest and most superficial abounds in the subjects and situations and effects of the theatre, while the genealogists touch up the picture with their pleasant hint of the number, over the land, of families of royal blood (730).

James is irritated by the New World democracy's continued appetite for feudal fantasy and identification with a regal, rather than a revolutionary past and democratic present. He deplores the continued hold over the American popular imagination of the backward-looking American claimant theme which he has himself gone to such great lengths to rewrite.

James's most candidly critical observations about American society only serve to reinforce his celebration of pluralism and cultural difference. It is homogeneity and vast, dreary, indiscriminate standardisation, whether of social institution or of landscape that he condemns. His journey to Florida brings him into uncomfortably close contact with American travelling salesmen, to

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\[86\] Throughout the New York chapters of *The American Scene*, James finds preferable a repeated comparison between Venice and New York as intensely interesting, even though commercial, republics:

...my vision had a kind of analogy; for what were the Venetians, after all, but the children of a Republic and of trade? (507).
James a distinctly repellent society unto themselves. Reflecting on the inescapable vulgarity of this strictly masculine company who accompanied James as principal patrons of the Pullmans and hotels throughout the southern states, James concluded:

Wondrous always to note is this sterility of aspect and this blight of vulgarity, humanly speaking, where a single type has had the game, as one may say, all in its hands. ...No kind of person—that was the admonition—is a very good kind, and still less a very pleasing kind, when its education has not been made to some extent by contact with other kinds, by a sense of the existence of other kinds, and, to that degree, by a certain relation with them (705).

Diversity, and an awareness and allowance of difference, were vital to the humanitarian spirit of liberal progressivism which James consistently upheld throughout his life and work. If there was much to deplore in American society, and much that had vanished into the provincial, more Anglocentric past, this constant renewal of the now increasingly cosmopolitan scene by foreign influence was the promising if baffling wild card of the American future. 

James had done what he could to "gouge a meaning out of the void" and if he could not predict what social value would be served by irrepresible multiculturalism, he nevertheless found it a

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87 Considering immigration, James turns the metaphor of the melting pot into an overheated washtub which fades the characteristic colour from any "stuff" immersed therein. No colour is absorbed in the process, nothing and no one "begins to tint with its pink or its azure his fellow-soakers in the terrible tank" (462). This seems a comic parody of the politically and socially expedient melting pot myth, but presumably some individuals and possibly some distinct cultural types would prove resistant, emerging from the "terrible tank" with some colour remaining. James is particularly fascinated with the resilience of the Yiddish culture he finds on New York's Lower East Side (515-527).
fascinating and invigorating prospect. James's effort to reclaim
America in a literary travelogue was not entirely successful,
as he had set himself the impossibly ambitious task of delivering
both an historic romance of the Anglocentric American past and a
dramatised enquiry into the present and future of polyglot transnationalism,
suggesting what it means to discover that one's "supreme relation"
with a society and culture actually is circumscribed by time
and physical presence. As "the restless analyst", James sought to
maintain the valued perspective of cultural difference,
necessitating distance, while his pronouns slipped from "us" to
"them" and back again. As usual, the creator of the scenic method
was rehearsing all the roles.
Chapter VIII

CREATING AN AMERICAN 'CLASSIC':
MARK TWAIN AND THE COLONEL SELLERS FICTIONS

Nowhere in nineteenth-century literature is the claimant theme more prevalent than in the works of Mark Twain, the literary pseudonym of Samuel Langhorne Clemens. False and unrecognised heirs to English titles inhabit Clemens's travel writing, essays and autobiographical reminiscences as well as his notebooks. They populate his fiction from the early "Awful, Terrible Medieval Romance" (1871), a preposterous, vaguely Shakespearean parody in which the recognised ducal heir is really a daughter raised as a son, to the impersonations in The Prince and the Pauper (1882) and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884), which features those notorious con men the Duke and the Dauphin, obvious adventurers whose feeble sham has some success with the gullible inhabitants of towns along the Mississippi. Finally, in The American Claimant, (1892) Clemens transformed a popular figure from his first novel, an irrepressible speculator on the future of frontier America, into a more senior salesman of the American dream, now prospecting on his own noble English past. The novel takes its title from the provocative and by then much-mined thematic vein Clemens had been working throughout his writing career.

A larger-than-life, self-deceiving and eternally optimistic
frontier speculator and promoter, Colonel Sellers emerged from
Mark Twain's first novel as the affectionate portrayal of all that
was most idealistic - and most problematically delusional - in post Civil
War American society. As depicted by Clemens in The
Gilded Age: A Tale of Today, a collaborative satire written with
Charles Dudley Warner and published in 1873, Sellers was a repre­
sentative figure who reflected, in an endearing and comic guise, the
nation's own blind and seemingly boundless frontier ambitions.
Colonel Sellers was further popularised in a long-running and
frequently revived stage version of The Gilded Age which took its
title from that of its most unforgettable character, broadly and
memorably portrayed by a leading American comedian,
John T. Raymond.88

The Colonel thus presided over both Clemens's first novel and
a highly successful theatrical debut; the character would later
reappear at other crucial moments in Clemens's career. In the
midst of writing Huckleberry Finn, a Burlesque 'Hamlet' and
Life on the Mississippi, in 1883 Clemens collaborated with

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88 In Mark Twain and the Gilded Age, Bryant Morley French
details the popularity of this largely neglected play:

One of the most successful plays of its decade, it was
revived numerous times — in August, 1875, for a six-
week run and almost annually from 1876 to 1888; and in its
first year it toured the country, playing in cities as widely
separated as Boston, New Orleans, and Chicago (French,
1965, 242).
W. D. Howells on *Colonel Sellers as a Scientist*, a virtually slap-stick stage comedy taking up the Colonel's later career as an inventor. This play, which introduces the Colonel's claim to an English earldom, was later extensively reimagined and developed by Clemens in his novel *The American Claimant*, at a time when his business and publishing ventures were rapidly eroding his personal fortune, propelling him towards the bankruptcy he would confront in 1894.

These four projects comprise the genesis and complete trajectory of the character of Colonel Sellers in Mark Twain's fiction. All four were written swiftly and none is generally counted as among Clemens's best work; *The Gilded Age* and the plays, moreover, were collaborative undertakings. Yet despite their unevenness, the Colonel Sellers fictions are pivotal to an understanding of Clemens's developing social, philosophical and aesthetic thought. Through the fictional career of Colonel Sellers and the autobiographical sources suggesting Clemens's own identification with the character, it is possible to detect reasons for his abiding attraction to the problem and imaginative potential of the vexing claim to noble birth.

For Clemens, the figure of the Colonel seems to have been a sort of literary talisman. False heirs and sham nobles are pathetic rogues or figures of derision recurring in much of his work, and Colonel Sellers is the most vivid and appealing of an otherwise
rather unsavoury lot. Clemens seemed intent on keeping the character's profile before the public as well as vividly present in his own creative consciousness. An autobiographical reminiscence about the introduction of Sellers was written in 1897-1898. This detailed recollection, and at least one public reading of the Colonel's most affecting scenes from *The Gilded Age* long after he had written other - and better - books, begins to suggest some conviction of the character's enduring appeal and importance.89 At times he appeared to encourage the public to identify the character of Sellers with the author Twain and his speculative business ventures as Samuel Clemens. His first biographer, Albert Bigelow Paine, his friend, editor and collaborator W.D. Howells, even his wife Olivia recognised aspects of Clemens in the character (See French, 172, n. 115, 116, 117). Typically disallowing any credit for originality, in his autobiography Clemens claimed a literal kinship with the Colonel as a character based on his mother's brother James Lampton:

Many persons regarded Colonel Sellers as a fiction, an invention, an extravagant impossibility, and did me the honor

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89 Preparing for a reading from his works some sixteen years after the novel's publication, he entered a memorandum in his notebook for May 1889-August 1890: "Read something from Col. Sellers. Turnips" (*Mark Twain Notebooks* 1979, 3, 551).

The scene in which the Colonel presents a frugal family dinner of turnips and water as a gourmet health fad occurs in Chapter 11 of *The Gilded Age*. In his later autobiographical writing, Clemens asserts that this meal actually took place at the home of his uncle: "In fact, I was myself the guest who ate the turnips" (*Mark Twain* 1959, 19).
to call it a "creation", but they were mistaken. I merely put him on paper as he was; he was not a person who could be exaggerated. The incidents which looked most extravagant, both in the book and on the stage, were not inventions of mine, but were facts of his life; and I was present when they were developed... (Twain 1959, 19).

Clemens seems to have had his uncle in mind as prime source material for a fiction even before embarking on his career as a novelist. In November 1872 he wrote to his sister Pamela, asking her to elicit details of family history from their brother Orion's wife Mollie (née Mary Eleanor Stotts):

I wish you would get all the gossip you can out of Mollie about Cousin James Lampton & Family without her knowing it is I that want it. I want every little trifling detail, about how they look & dress, & what they say, & how the house is furnished--& the various ages & characters of the tribe. Mollie does up gossip mighty well. I have preserved the other letter she wrote you about that gang. I wish to write the whole thing up--but not publish it for a great many years. That is, if the story I write from it could be recognized by him or the family (French 1965, 166).

This letter coincides with Clemens's collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner on *The Gilded Age*. Although Clemens was familiar with his mother's genealogical connection with the ennobled English Lambtons, it was probably not until 1875 that his involvement in an active claim to the title Earl of Durham was sought by a distant American cousin, Jesse M. Leathers, second cousin to his uncle James Lampton. Leathers, a native of Kentucky, wrote to the successful

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90 Of his mother, he once wrote:

...privately she was proud that the Lambtons, now Earls of
author seeking financial support for a legal suit on the title
and Lambton estates in England, offering to divide any profits
realised with Clemens.\footnote{These letters (from Leathers to SLC, Louisville, 27 September, 21 October 1875; New York, 25, 29 November 1879) are included in the collection of Mark Twain Papers and cited in the \textit{Mark Twain-Howells Letters} (Smith and Gibson, eds. 1960, II, 869).}

Clemens did not believe the suit would prove successful and
to Leathers denied any interest in the claim, although his
knowledgeable response indicates he had studied the matter in
some detail. His personal papers at the time suggest some
creative interest in his distant cousin's quest to be recognised
as the rightful heir. Included in a list of potential literary
projects entered in his notebook on or around 23 November 1877 is
the idea to "Publish scraps from my Autobiography occasionally"
followed (with one intervening project notation) by the brief
entry "Leathers, Earl of Durham" (Anderson, Salerno and Stein 1975, 2, 51).

Following further correspondence from his cousin, in 1881 he encouraged
Leathers to write his own autobiography and asked James R. Osgood and
W.D. Howells to consider the resulting manuscript "An American Earl" for
publication in a new magazine.\footnote{In a letter to Howells from Hartford on March 4 1881, Clemens wrote:

\begin{quote}
Now, here is my little game: I won't have this tramp under
\end{quote}}

Durham, had occupied the family lands for nine hundred
years (Mark Twain Papers, DV 206, 12, cited in
Smith and Gibson, eds., II, 871 and in Twain 1959, 28).
magazine were ever brought before the public.

The extent to which Leathers's claim fired Clemens's imagination is further reflected in a memorable incident which occurred in August 1877. The author was on holiday at his sister-in-law's Elmira, New York residence, Quarry Farm. Clemens, who had been daydreaming beneath a tree, turned to his wife with an imaginative hypothesis:

"Suppose I should live to be 92," he once said to Livy, "and just as I was dying, a messenger should enter and say—" "You are become the Earl of Durham!" she broke in... (Kaplan 1966, 195).

Clemens's many and varying autobiographical accounts reflect a wide range of imaginative and emotionally colored responses to his own ancestral origins. He worked on a variety of autobiographical

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my roof, nor on my hands; yet at the same time he is a perfectly stunning literary bonanza, & must be dug up & put on the market. You must get his entire biography out of him, & have it ready for Osgood's new magazine. Even if it isn't worth printing you must have it, anyway, & use it one of these days in one of your stories or in a play. Yes, & you must SEE him & talk with him, too—not at your house, but at Osgood's store (or in the Earl's quarters in N.Y.—which is better still, if it could be managed.) You would point out to him places in his MS where from self-love he had left out interesting stuff—hadn't entered into detail sufficiently, etc (Smith and Gibson, eds., I, 358).

93 This exchange, including background details of the Lambton family history and the American claimant, was described by Clemens in May, 1878 in his article "Mental Telegraphy", which remained incomplete and unpublished until 1891. He observes:

That is truly what I was going to say. Yet until that moment the subject had not entered my mind or been referred to in my hearing for months before ("Mental Telegraphy", Twain 1992b, 42).
sketches intermittently throughout his career and left a vast body of diverse material which can be loosely characterised as autobiographical. In a short, fictionalised (Burlesque) Autobiography published in 1871, he lampoons the recitation of bloodlines as a literary device invoked to legitimise one's own authority. Instead, he asserts a claim to illegitimate origins:

Ours is a noble house and stretches a long way back into antiquity. The earliest ancestor the Twains have any record of was a friend of the family by the name of Higgins... Why it is that our long line has ever since [the 11th century] borne the maternal name (except when one of them now and then took a playful refuge in an alias to avert foolishness) instead of Higgins is a mystery which none of us has ever felt much desire to stir. It is a kind of vague, pretty romance; and we leave it alone. All the old families do that way (Twain 1871, 3-4).

94 In a chronologically arranged volume which over-turns the compositional sequence Twain insisted upon for the initial two-volume Mark Twain's Autobiography edited by Clemens's first biographer, Albert B. Paine, Charles Neider summarises Clemens's autobiographical endeavors:

Around 1873 he wrote a brief autobiographical sketch for his friend Charles Dudley Warner; in 1877 he recalled the early days in Florida, Missouri; in 1885, on the death of General Grant, he dictated a series of recollections of his meetings with the General; in 1890 he set down the Paige typesetting machine episode, that fiasco of his middle years, and his memories of his mother, in 1897-1898, while in Vienna, he wrote the brilliant chapters on the early days spent on his uncle's farm; in 1899 he composed an autobiographical sketch for the use of his nephew, Samuel Moffett, on the basis of which Moffett wrote a biographical essay for the uniform Edition of Mark Twain's works, issued the same year; in 1904 he wrote the notes on the Villa Quarto and the memory of John Hay while living on the outskirts of Florence; and in 1906 he undertook the sustained series of dictations which added so greatly to the Autobiography's bulk (Twain 1959, p. x).

A good deal of the autobiographical writing, perhaps some twenty-five percent, remains unpublished.
The remainder of his history recalls a litany of thieves, highwaymen, pirates, deserters and convicts, including one John Morgan Twain, who came to America with Columbus and became the first white man to be hanged there -- a far from illustrious collection of fictitious Twain ancestors. With what now seems an excess of Freudian zeal, Clemens's modern biographer Justin Kaplan deplored the sketch:

...hostility and self-hatred are so nakedly displayed that what was meant to be a joke ends up being genuinely unpleasant (Kaplan 1966, 124).

Perhaps the joke falls a little flat, but the point seems to have been to achieve a certain creative distance and individual freedom from the predetermined facts of ancestral history.

A letter written to Howells on September 20 1874, following the theatrical debut of Clemens's Colonel Sellers, refers to his origins in much the same backhanded manner:

Do tell Aldrich that he has made Mrs. Clemens (née Langdon) the happiest & proudest woman in the land by digging up & glorifying her ancestor Governor Langdon of Portsmouth. I think she would let Aldrich walk off with anything in the house, now, but the cubs. But don't you know, I don't feel so grateful about it; for I have no ancestor but an Injun, & he was not a chief. I shall have this old swell flung at my head often enough, I promise you (Smith and Gibson, eds. I, 26-27).

In an autobiographical sketch of his family and childhood written in 1897-98, Clemens elaborates upon his paternal genealogy in a fashion curiously reminiscent of the much earlier burlesque history
of his fictional house of Twain:

Back of the Virginian Clemenses is a dim procession of ancestors stretching back to Noah's time. According to tradition, some of them were pirates and slavers in Elizabeth's time. ...It was a respectable trade then and monarchs were partners in it. In my time I have had desires to be a pirate myself.... Later, according to tradition, one of the procession was ambassador to Spain in the time of James I, or of Charles I, and married there and sent down a strain of Spanish blood to warm us up. Also, according to tradition, this one or another--Geoffrey Clement, by name--helped to sentence Charles to death (Twain 1959, 15-16).

With the historical disclaimer "according to tradition"

emphatically invoked twice within a single paragraph, Clemens suggests a certain authorial scepticism as to the accuracy of his account as well as a personal reluctance to distinguish details of historical fact from those of fanciful family narrative.

Most critics seem to accept Clemens's autobiographical revelations suggesting that Colonel Sellers was initially descended from his uncle James Lampton and latterly from his distant cousin, the soi-disant earl from Kentucky. Yet there is another very obvious autobiographical source for Colonel Sellers which is generally overlooked.  

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95 In Mark Twain and The Gilded Age', Bryant Morley French perpetuates a frequent error of compositional history which attributes the Colonel's name to the inspiration of Charles Dudley Warner:

Though the character Colonel Sellers is thus intimately associated with Clemens' family and with his own
Coincident with the publication of *The Gilded Age* in 1873, Clemens described the circumstances of his own literary self-invention in a sketch written for his friend and collaborator Charles Dudley Warner. Here he reveals an authorial rather than familial antecedent to Colonel Sellers - and to Mark Twain. While serving as an apprentice steamboat pilot on the Mississippi in the years immediately preceding the Civil War, the future Mark Twain became aware of a Captain Isaiah Sellers who wrote paragraphs for the *New Orleans Picayune* which, Clemens observes:

...he signed 'Mark Twain'; it is a leadsman's term & signifies a depth of two fathoms of water. In his articles he always spoke of his present high water mark being higher than he had ever seen it before, or lower than he had ever seen it before, since 18-- always naming a date so long before any other man on the river was born that he was an aggravating eyesore to a hundred river men who wanted to be considered veterans. And he was always referring to islands nobody had ever heard of before; & then he would add

personality, the name was contributed by Charles Dudley Warner (French 1965, 174).

Following the first edition of *The Gilded Age*, a certain amount of confusion and interest was generated by the changes made in print to the Colonel's first name. Under the threat of litigation, the name was changed from Eschol to Beriah, and finally to Mulberry. In his autobiography, Clemens credits Charles Dudley Warner with proposing the name of a former rustic acquaintance named Eschol Sellers, yet Clemens's actual recollection is that Warner "proposed a change of Sellers's Christian name" and was not responsible for the character's allegorically humorous surname, presumably established by Clemens "When I introduced Sellers into the book" (Twain, 20). It seems that neither author was willing to relinquish the name of Sellers, despite the unanticipated protest of individuals sharing aspects of the Colonel's character, personal history and in some cases his family name as well.
in an exasperatingly naive way that they had washed away during such and such a remote generation. My first literary venture was a communication of a column and a half to the L.A. True Delta, over a fictitious signature in which I ante-dated him about sixty years, recalled high water and low water which "laid over" his most marvelous recollections, introduced islands which had joined the main land & become States & Territories before he was born--& thus won the gratitude of all the other veterans & Capt. Sellers's undying animosity. He never wrote again (undated MS, Morgan Library, N.Y.).

Clemens became city editor of the Virginia City Enterprise in Nevada during the winter of 1862-63, an experience he also recounts for Warner:

Wrote a letter every Saturday to sum up results, & therefore needed a signature. In the nick of time Capt. Sellers's death came over the wires & I "jumped" his nom de plume before the old man was cold (Ibid.).

This incident, in which the young aspirant boldly proves himself the better at boastful hyperbole, outmanoeuvres his literary predecessor and eventually poaches his pen name, is also recalled by Clemens a decade later in Life on the Mississippi (1883), but with a notable change of emphasis. The heroic posture is transferred to the older observer of the Mississippi. In Chapter Fifty of Life on the Mississippi, titled The "Original Jacobs", Captain Isaiah Sellers is far more elaborately and respectfully reconstructed as a grand old man of the river, "that real and only genuine Son of Antiquity" (Twain 1982, 518).

Clemens's journalistic burlesque of the captain is here recast as a regrettable transgression rather than a heroic act of popular defiance:

It was a great pity; for it did nobody any worthy service,
and it sent a pang deep into a good man's heart (Ibid., 519).

The pen name triumphantly confiscated as a trophy in Clemens's sketch for Warner is taken practically in penance and certainly with some sense of homage tinged with self-reflexive irony in the later version:

I was a fresh new journalist, and needed a *nom de guerre*; so I confiscated the ancient mariner's discarded one, and have done my best to make it remain what it was in his hands—a sign and symbol and warrant that whatever is found in its company may be gambled on as being the petrified truth; how I have succeeded, it would not be modest in me to say (Ibid., 519).

There is no documented evidence that Sellers ever did use the pen name "Mark Twain" aside from Clemens's own repeated assertion, both in private documents and in his American travel narrative, that this is how he came to acquire the name. *Life on the Mississippi* includes a short example of one of the captain's news items which is signed "I. Sellers".

A letter from Clemens to his publisher concerning the publication of *Life on the Mississippi* requests that a 2/3 or full page picture of "Capt. Isaiah Sellers" Monument in Bellefontaine Cemetery be prepared, presumably to illustrate the relevant chapter in the book. Clemens offers his publisher an explanation consistent with both the sketch prepared for Warner and with the forthcoming travelogue:

I stole my nom de plume from him, & shall have
considerable to say about him, for out there he was "illustrious" (Letter from S.L. Clemens to James R. Osgood, July 19, 1882, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut).

Whether Clemens appropriated Isaiah Sellers's literary identity or is reflecting his own nom de plume back on Sellers, he consistently describes his literary career as issuing from a competitive literary relationship with the captain, a regional veteran and historian with hyperbolic rhetorical tendencies whom Clemens would promote to the honorary rank of colonel in *The Gilded Age*.

Another spur to Clemens's enduring fascination with questions of inheritance was the trial in London, contemporary with the publication of *The Gilded Age*, of the Tichborne claimant. The imaginative possibilities as well as social documentation surrounding the New World claimant's trials and subsequent fate remained of abiding interest to Clemens, an interest he exploited most fully in the later delusional pretensions of Colonel Sellers.

In London to secure copyright publication of his collaborative novel with Warner, Clemens's notebooks reflect his desire to explore and document the details and the public sensation surrounding the case. A rough shorthand transcript of testimony by Colonel George Greenwood given at the claimant's trial for perjury on 10 June 1873 was recorded by Clemens's secretary S.C. Thompson and entered on the first 2 1/2 pages of his notebook, written during June-July 1873. It appears that Thompson, possibly accompanied by Clemens,
attended the trial on that date. Clemens later hired his friend, the poet Charles Warren Stoddard, to compile six large scrapbooks of newspaper clippings from the *London Standard*, including daily transcriptions of the Tichborne trial from 23 April 1873 to 13 October 1873. It seems likely he was amassing material with some as yet unformed future literary project in mind. Around the end of June, he recorded in his notebook the division of public opinion and testimony as to the claimant's authenticity and rehearsed the narrative potential of alternative scenarios:

Tichborne's plight as the unacknowledged rightful heir, and the seemingly equally thrilling possibility of his impersonation by a brilliant impostor.96

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96 Following a review of conflicting opinions considered as evidence, Clemens briefly outlines two alternative plots:

If he is the man this is the most pathetic case in history. Poor devil could have gentle tender heart. Overturned by his matrimonial project. He shall go wandering [away life time], finally he [three words] to savage lands by the sea. And then taking [ship] again to be cast away at sea. Suffer 3 days and nights. Insensible <3> of his rescue. Then life [nobody] knows out in the wilds of Australia, 14 years. Then coming back [healed, wealthy] easy for life. Finds the world arrayed against him. Finally after having seen his estates torn away from him and given to another, had been brought up on a charge of perjury, 3 months. Result probably 20 years in penal colony. And if he is an impostor, [the bravest, the brightest] that ever lived. ...Knew he'd have to describe things that he never had seen, and people--another man's handwriting—copy another man's inaccuracies. New inaccuracies would not do, must be those of the person he impersonated (Anderson, Frank and Sanderson, eds. 1975, 1, 551).
Clemens responded with renewed interest in 1887 when Arthur Orton, still maintaining his claim to the Tichborne baronetcy, approached Clemens's publishing concern, Webster & Co. about publishing his autobiography, although apparently no publication resulted from the discussions (Mark Twain, Businessman, 380-381, qtd. in Baetzhold 1970, 354, n. 7).

In a later autobiographical recollection and in Following the Equator (1897), Clemens would recall his own firsthand impression of the Tichborne claimant, formed in 1873 at a formal London reception given in support of Orton. Clemens's travel narrative account is occasioned by his arrival at Wagga Wagga in Australia, most notable to Clemens because "the Tichborne Claimant had kept a butcher-shop there." Briefly recapturing the drama of the London courtroom, Clemens admits: "The fiction-artist could achieve no success with the materials of this splendid Tichborne romance" (Twain 1897, 156).^97

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^97 A more extensive recollection of the Tichborne claimant is found in the English edition, titled More Tramps Abroad. Clemens's American publisher Elisha Bliss apparently cut a considerable manuscript section out of this chapter, possibly on the assumption that the case was no longer of any real interest to American readers. Clemens's reminiscence concerning the then-recent deathbed admission of Arthur Orton, a cockney butcher from Wapping, to his impersonation of Sir Roger Tichborne, is curiously linked in the same chapter with an account entitled "My Stock Mystery", prompted by a note of condolence from an acquaintance, one Henry Bascom, to Clemens's wife concerning her husband's reported death during a lecture tour of Australia. Clemens assumed that Bascom (and all Australia) had been deceived by an impostor, but Bascom himself died without further explanation, and when in Australia Clemens himself could not uncover any evidence of an impostor's lecture tour — or record of the funeral of Mark Twain in
In 1873 Clemens may have compared his mother's family's claim upon the earldom of Durham favorably with the Tichborne case, although important differences distinguish the two claims. The Tichborne estate was claimed by a person purporting to be the formerly missing heir, but who in reality was almost certainly an impostor, whereas the Lampton claim was asserted by an individual who seems to have actually believed he was the rightful heir, due to the claimant's own interpretation of hereditary law and genealogical descent.

There is some indication that Clemens discussed the relative merits of the two cases. Another distant relative from Kentucky, Colonel Henry Watterson, editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal, was in London that summer and met frequently with Clemens. In his recollection, Clemens associated the public trial with the Lampton family claim in a distinctly competitive way:

During the Tichborne trial Mark and I were in London and one day he said to me: 'I have investigated this Durham business down at the Herald's office. There is nothing to it. The Lamptons passed out of the earldom of Durham a hundred years ago. There were never any estates; the title lapsed; the present earldom is a new creation, not in the same family at all. But I'll tell you what; if you'll put up $500, I'll put up $500 more; we'll bring our chap over here and set him in as claimant, and, my word for it, Kenealy's fat boy [the counsel for the obese Tichborne Claimant was Dr. Edward Kenealy] won't be a marker to him'" (Paine 1912, 497, cited in Anderson, Frank and Sanderson 1975, 1, 546).

Melbourne. This anecdote seems recently to have been revived and reshaped by Julian Barnes in his short tale "Gnossienne", a travel mystery involving a contemporary English novelist (Monsieur Clements) and the discrepancy between his public persona and personal identity (Barnes, "Gnossienne", Cross Channel, 1996).
Whether or not there is any substance to Watterson's recollection (and in his autobiographical writing Clemens himself suggests that entertaining anecdote was often preferred to factual accuracy in "family tradition") it has become a critical commonplace to puzzle over Clemens's attraction to inheritance issues and claimants, considered as anachronistic literary devices even in his own day. Referring to *The American Claimant* in the 1920s, Van Wyck Brooks observed:

> The shadowy claim of Mark Twain's mother's family to an English earldom is not sufficient to account for his constant preoccupation with this idea (Brooks 1934, 236).

Clemens was keenly aware that his own colorful family background was potentially material for many a fiction; the sensation created by the Tichborne trial demonstrated to what extent the seemingly anachronistic issues of noble birth and inheritance could still grip the public imagination. Finally, perhaps more than any other nineteenth-century American author, Clemens was committed to exploring those Enlightenment principles which expressed the literary origins of American society in documented rights and principles rather than cultural tradition and the contradictions to egalitarian ideals he saw manifested in both American and European societies. To what extent was an individual free and to what extent was his life predetermined by his genealogical and cultural past? His characters generally seek freedom from a condition established in the historical past,
with unanticipated and often unfortunate consequences. The personal, the popular and the conceptual all seemed to intersect in the claimant theme, particularly as he developed it through the character of Colonel Sellers.

When Clemens made his first trip to England in 1872, it was with the declared intention of collecting material for a satirical English travelogue. Instead, upon his return to America he collaborated with neighbour Charles Dudley Warner upon a savage and highly topical satire focused on speculation and corruption in U.S. society. The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today reflects the fever of speculation occasioned in the U.S. by the selling of the frontier to accommodate railroad expansion and land promotion. The government was involved in a great give-away of national resources to business interests. The plot broadly enfolds real events and thinly disguised public officials, including a detailed depiction of congressional corruption in Washington. Clemens had spent time in Washington as a journalist and, very briefly, as secretary to a senator.

The representation of congressional wheeling and dealing within

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a capitol that has become an amoral no-man's land carries
conviction. Beyond reflections of current national and civic
scandals and a sensational murder trial was an underlying
criticism of the American public's indifference or inability to
govern themselves in an informed and rational manner, to select
competent and worthy government representatives or even to serve
the cause of justice within a jury system with an unbiased adherence
to the rule of law. It is a thoroughgoing critique of American
society which questions the effectiveness of its political and
judicial institutions and by implication, the democratic premises
upon which they are based.

In a preface which burlesques the negative catalogues of
Hawthorne and James regarding the "thinness" of American society
as a source of imaginative fiction, Clemens and Warner jointly
recognise and attempt to refute this established American literary
excuse for diversions into history and romanticism. Preparing the
reader for the broadly satirical ironies of The Gilded Age,
they assert:

It will be seen that it deals with an entirely ideal
state of society, and the chief embarrassment of the
writers in this realm of the imagination has been the
want of illustrative examples. In a State where there
is no fever of speculation, no inflamed desire for
sudden wealth, where the poor are all simple-minded and
contented, and the rich are all honest and generous,
where society is in a condition of primitive purity and
politics is the occupation of only the capable and the
patriotic, there are necessarily no materials for such a
history as we have constructed out of an ideal commonwealth (Twain and Warner 1969, xxi).

Among a considerable cast of characters caught up in the rampant fever of speculation is the novel's protagonist, Colonel Sellers. A letter from the Colonel brings the Hawkins family out of Tennessee to Missouri at the outset, and from that point on the Colonel is ever at work encouraging the family and others in any number of ventures as he follows the path of the future railway through the West and eventually descends upon Washington as a lobbyist for his schemes. Mrs. Hawkins's own reflection upon the arrival of the Colonel's letter to her husband serves to introduce the character:

He's an honest soul, and means the very best in the world, but I'm afraid, I'm afraid he's too flighty. He has splendid ideas, and he'll divide his chances with his friends with a free hand, the good generous soul, but something does seem to always interfere and spoil everything. I never did think he was right well balanced. But I don't blame my husband, for I do think that when that man gets his head full of a new notion, he can out-talk a machine. He'll make anybody believe in that notion that'll listen to him ten minutes—why I do believe he would make a deaf and dumb man believe in it and get beside himself, if you only set him where he could see his eyes talk and watch his hands explain (Ibid., 29).

Sellers seems to have few scruples about the nature of his speculations, having been involved in an ante-bellum scheme to corner the market in the sale of Negroes from the northern slaveholding states (where slaves were generally used as household servants) to plantations in the deep south (where
conditions of labour were brutal and often fatal). The possibility of realising millions from mules, land, slaves, or a perpetual motion machine are all the same to him. He single-mindedly pursues the profit motive for himself and others, convinced he is serving the course of progress. Wheeling and dealing on a grand scale, he meets ample catastrophe and little success. Yet his infectious enthusiasm and unquenchable optimism carry all before him.

Generally speaking, the authors divided the plots and characters between them: the eastern, more genteel and morally more conventional characters were developed by Warner, and the ill-fated schemes of the western upstarts, including the Hawkins family and the Colonel as well as relevant southern politicians were vividly depicted by Clemens.99

99 In his study *Mark Twain and the Gilded Age*, Bryant Morley French traces the novel's topical allusions and characters to their real-life counterparts to support his contention that *The Gilded Age* is a *roman à clef*: "a running commentary on the period" (French 1965, 141). Summarising the collaboration (variously documented by Charles Warren Stoddard, Clemens's biographer Albert Bigelow Paine and Clemens himself), French observes that Clemens was responsible for the initial story idea and wrote the first eleven chapters "out of his early childhood experience" (French, 59). Warner wrote the next twelve chapters and after that, the writing was assigned according to the division of characters and plot:

...Twain produced the principal socially critical, satirical parts of the novel, while Warner, though contributing a lesser share of satire, handled the more obviously melodramatic elements and provided the love interest (French, 63).
The principal focus of *The Gilded Age* is not so much on the machinations of Colonel Sellers as on the moral contrast between Laura Hawkins, a wronged woman and, eventually, a murderess, and Ruth Bolton, an aspiring, self-made, modern woman and medical student. In the highly artificial, moral denouement imposed by Clemens, Laura, acquitted of murdering the bigamous Colonel Selby, abruptly perishes of heart disease while Ruth Bolton escapes a near fatal illness and admits her love for Philip Sterling, accepting the primacy of marriage even as she insists on continuing her career. With all his dreams of government appropriations in ruins, Colonel Sellers declares his intention "to begin again, too."

Influenced by his recent observation of the criminal defense attorney in Laura Hawkins's trial for murder, he declares, "I shall begin the study of law" (Twain and Warner, 426).

In its scope and implications, the novel was unprecedented as a biting satire and indictment of American society. Its topicality made it a popular best-seller long before the fictional muckraking genre of journalistic social criticism had begun. English critics almost unanimously panned the book, but observed that the novel confirmed the views expressed previously.

In the 1960's the dilution of Clemens's talent in a collaborative fiction was felt to be so regrettable that Charles Neider, editor of *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, extracted Twain's portions into a separate volume entitled *The Adventures of Colonel Sellers* (1965).
only by English travel writers. Unrelenting satirical treatment
of American society in American fiction was seemingly a new
phenomenon and a sign of growing literary and intellectual
confidence within American culture.¹⁰⁰

One unanticipated response to the novel was the number
of individuals who felt that their own lives had been lampooned
in the character and pursuits of Colonel Sellers. In his
preface to The American Claimant and somewhat less accurately in
Chapter Forty-Seven of Life on the Mississippi, Clemens recalls how
the name was changed from Eschol to Beriah and finally to
Mulberry Sellers to satisfy at least two potential litigants.
Apparently Warner had been responsible for the selection of
Eschol:

I do not remember what his first name was, in the
beginning; but anyway, Mr. Warner did not like it, and
wanted it improved. He asked me if I was able to
imagine a person named "Eschol Sellers." Of course I said I
could not, without stimulants. He said that away out
West once, he had met, and contemplated, and actually shaken
hands with a man bearing that impossible name. ...He
added,—

"It was twenty years ago; his name has probably carried
him off before this, and if it hasn't he will never see the
book anyhow. We will confiscate his name. The name you are

¹⁰⁰ French surveys other novels contemporary with The Gilded Age
which took political and economic corruption and speculation
as their setting. Primarily they were sensation novels, in
which the fate of individual heroes and heroines far outweighs
the social issues exposed; the settings tended to be local color
microcosms rather than a panorama of national scope.
using is common, and therefore dangerous; there are probably a thousand Sellereses bearing it, and the whole horde will come after us; but Eschol Sellers is a safe name—it is a rock” (Twain 1982, 504).

Warner admitted suggesting the name but both publicly and privately maintained that he had never met the potential litigant, George Escol Sellers. His Eschol Sellers had been a farmer and not, like George Escol Sellers, a businessman, inventor and something of a speculator in property development. By the time the Colonel had acquired the stage name of Mulberry, new individuals were coming forward wherever the play opened to claim and to boast that they had been the model for the character. Clemens's portrait had struck a nerve, accurately reflecting a not uncommon colorful entrepreneurial type in American society. Rather than critical satire, Colonel Sellers on stage became something of a self-congratulatory American sensation.

Colonel Sellers was not in the first instance propelled onto the stage by Clemens, but by the popularity of The Gilded Age, which resulted in an unauthorised stage production opening in San Francisco. The dramatisation had been written by G. B. Densmore, a drama critic for the San Francisco Golden Era, and the play opened on April 22nd, 1874 with the celebrated comic actor John T.

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101 Details of the public identification with Colonel Sellers and the onslaught of potential claimants experienced by Clemens, Warner and John Raymond are included in French's account of the historical background to The Gilded Age (French 1965, 211).
Raymond in the leading role. Due to the popularity of his performance, the novel's name was dropped and the play assumed the title of the character. On April 30th Warner, who had been reading the San Francisco papers, wrote to alert Clemens to the infringement of their dramatic copyright. From the newspaper reviews he deduced:

...The story is mainly that of Laura--leaving out the political parts that would create a row (French, 242).

Clemens obtained an injunction prohibiting further performances of Densmore's adaptation, agreed to purchase the drama critic's version of the play and then supposedly rewrote his own dramatization. Apparently he made few alterations to Densmore's script beyond the excision of some dialogue which had not appeared in the novel. The drama critic had grasped at the tragedy involving Laura and eliminated most of Warner's characters and subplots. The satirical edge had all but disappeared -- and Colonel Sellers was brought forward, into the limelight.

The play opened in New York on September 16, 1874, and proved a popular success, running until January 9, 1875. It

102 Much confusion and some controversy resulted when the only slightly revised play re-opened with Mark Twain credited as the author. Responding in an unpublished letter to the Hartford Post, Clemens observed: "I entirely re-wrote his play three separate & distinct times... I do not think that there are now twenty sentences of Mr. Densmore's in the play, but I used so much of his plot that I wrote and told him that I should pay him about as much more as I had already paid him in case the play proved a success. I shall keep my word... Most of the plot or skeleton was furnished by Densmore..." (Smith and Gibson, eds. II, 862).
toured widely and was frequently revived. On September 20, 1874 Clemens wrote to W. D. Howells:

I worked a month at my play & launched it in New York last Wednesday. I believe it will go. The newspapers have been complimentary. It is simply a setting for the one character, Col. Sellers—as a play I guess it will not bear a critical assault in force (Smith and Gibson, eds., I, 26). The satirical tone and the underlying burlesque of the sentimental genre are abandoned in the novel's transition to the stage.

Muted, yet still inherent in the melodramatic play is a pretence of moral, hyper-rational analysis with certain affinities to Poe as well as to such later authors as Kafka, Borges and Calvino.

More comfortably accommodated by the novel, Clemens's narrative environment of prevailing frauds and hoaxes is shaped by an absurd logic and hyperbole which marries rather incongruously with Warner's conventional style of melodramatic naturalism. As refined and repeatedly exploited by Clemens, the style owes something to the American oral tradition of the tall tale. It was to become a hallmark of Mark Twain's fiction.

Previously, Clemens had written to Howells:

I welcome you to the dramatic field—where I myself am browsing, now. I have taken my characters in the Gilded Age & worked them up into a 5-act drama entitled "Col. Sellers." I don't think much of it, as a drama, but I suppose it will do to hang Col. Sellers on, & maybe even damn him. He will play tolerably well, in the hands of a good actor (July 15 [25? July 1874], Smith and Gibson, eds. I, 20).

Colonel Sellers would prove more enduring than Clemens then seemed to anticipate.
The play departs most radically from the novel in its foreshortened conclusion in the courtroom, upon the delivery of a verdict. In the denouement of *The Gilded Age*, Laura is exonerated by a soft-hearted jury, only to perish abruptly of "heart disease" after an abortive attempt at launching a lecturing career. Surviving copies of the play suggest that Clemens, perhaps even as the production was in rehearsal, was still debating whether to conclude with a "guilty" or "not guilty" verdict. A pencilled amendment to the original script in the prompter's copy of the play replaces "guilty" with "not guilty". In an opening night speech made just before the trial scene, Clemens would suggest that in writing his play he had suspended his own judgement, leaving his jury to decide upon the verdict according to their own feelings. Certainly in the literal sense of spontaneous decision this was not the case -- the prompter's copy documents what must have been a foregone even if belated conclusion. But in a wider context, in which Clemens might consider not only the actors but also the audience or his readers as constituting his jury, the author's speech seems to express a desire to suspend authorial closure, or to seem to defer to the judgement of his audience, a conceit of narrative instability which would become characteristic of much of his later fiction.\(^{104}\)

\(^{104}\) As reported in *The Chicago Tribune* on September
The depiction of Colonel Sellers in this play is consistent with the protagonist as introduced in The Gilded Age. The character presented by Clemens is a profoundly ambiguous mixture of innocence and ambition, idealism and casual, post-bellum racism, all presented in a comic guise. This ambiguity would become even more pronounced in Clemens's later treatments of the character, with Sellers promoted out of his influential but secondary supporting role to become the central focus of narrative interest.

Always representative, indeed bordering on the allegorical and lacking any hint of psychological development, the character nevertheless did not remain static over time. Colonel Sellers would move beyond the frontier to acquire more global ambitions. In Colonel Sellers as a Scientist he has begun speculating on the past as well as the future, asserting his claim to the title of

27, 1874, Clemens began his opening night speech with the following remarks upon the trial scene:

I thank you for the compliment of this call, and I will take advantage of it to say that I have written this piece in such a way that the jury can bring in a verdict of guilty or not guilty, just as they happen to feel about it. I have done this for this reason. If a play carries its best lesson by teaching what ought to be done in such a case, but is not done in real life, then the righteous verdict of guilty should appear; but if the best lesson may be conveyed by holding up the mirror and showing what is done every day in such a case but ought not to be done, then the satirical verdict of not guilty should appear. I don't know which is best, strict truth and satire, or a nice moral lesson void of both. So I leave my jury free to decide (Chicago Tribune, September 27, 1874, DeLancey Ferguson, "Mark Twain's Lost Curtain Speeches," South Atlantic Quarterly, XII, 262-263; French, 108).
Earl of Rossmore and planning to reap vast profits by selectively materialising the dead.

In the later part of his career, Twain was not averse to reviving popular characters from successful previous works in sequels, and the return of Colonel Sellers, an experiment in the 'rematerialisation' of a character from an earlier novel, may be seen as the earliest instance of this tendency. Had the later Sellers play or novel met with the success accorded *The Gilded Age* and *Colonel Sellers*, additional Sellers comedies might have been forthcoming.

Over the years of Clemens's relationship with Howells, the possibility of a creative collaboration between the two authors had been a recurrent topic of their correspondence. The specific idea for their eventual collaboration on the play *Colonel Sellers as a Scientist* seems to have been introduced to Howells by

105 "Tom and Huck among the Indians" was written in 1885 but remained unpublished; *Tom Sawyer Abroad* was published in 1894, *Tom Sawyer, Detective*, appeared the following year. In 1898, 1899 and again in 1902 Clemens worked on "Tom Sawyer's Conspiracy"; in 1891 he recorded in his notebook an idea later taken up in 1902 in which Tom and Huck return to Hannibal after an absence of some 50 years:

Huck comes back, 60 years old, from nobody knows where - & crazy. Thinks he is a boy again, & scans always every face for Tom & Becky & C. Tom comes at last, 60 from wandering the world & tends Huck, & together they talk the old times; both are desolate, life has been a failure, all that was lovable, all that was beautiful is under the mould. They die together (Notebook 25, TS, 14, Mark Twain Papers, cited in Smith and Gibson, eds., II, 748, n. 1).
Clemens in a letter written on September 5th, 1881:

Osgood says something about your projecting a play. Now I think that the play for you to write would be one entitled "Col. Mulberry Sellers in Age" (75) -- with that fool of a Lafayette Hawkins (aged 50) still sticking to him & believing in him, & calling him "my lord" (S. being American earl of Durham) -- & has cherished his delusion until he & his chuckle-headed household believe he is the rightful earl & that he is being shamefully treated by the house of Lords. He is a "specialist" & a "scientist" in various ways; makes collections of pebbles & brickbats & discourses garrulously & ignorantly over them & projects original geological "theories" &c. (A selfish old hog & hypocrite, surrounded by sap-headed worshipers.) Has a lot of impossible inventions, which cost somebody a good deal & then blow up & cripple disinterested parties, or poison them. Let the patent for his earldom actually arrive from England just as he is dying (Smith and Gibson eds., I, 372).

As further enticement, Clemens reminded Howells of the financial success of Sellers's previous stage career:

Your (delicate) refined people & purity of speech would make the best possible back ground for this coarse old ass. And when you were done, I could take your MS & re-write the Colonel's speeches & make him properly vulgar & extravagant. For this service I would require only 3/4 of the pecuniary result. (How liberal, how lavish I seem to grow, these days!) And I would (give) let the play to Raymond, & bind him up with a contract that would give him the belly-ache every time he read it. (I made $70,000 out of that devil with the other play) (Ibid., 372).

Discussions about the project ensued, with the collaboration variously referred to as The Steam Generator or Orme's Motor, but the pair did not actually get to work on a script until October and November 1883. Over the course of his career Clemens

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106 The Howells-Twain correspondence contains various earlier references to the project of a collaborative play. On June 2, 1878, Howells vowed:
would embark upon many collaborations. Although unsuccessful as a play, *Colonel Sellers as a Scientist* was clearly the most enjoyable of these ventures, so much so that soon after completing the drama he enthusiastically goaded Howells:

"...Now, let's write a tragedy" (December 20, 1883, Smith and Gibson, eds., II, 455). Howells responded with alacrity:

"...when we get the comedy on its legs I shall be ready to go in

...I shall tackle the Steam Generator at the earliest opportunity" (Smith and Gibson, eds., I, 232). And on January 21, 1879 Clemens had written to Howells:

"I have always been sorry we threw up that play embodying Orion which you began. It was a mistake to do that. Do keep that MS & tackle it again" (Ibid., 246).

In 1870 Clemens persuaded his fellow journalist-adventurer James Henry Riley to embark for the recently discovered diamond fields of South Africa, with the idea of writing a book of vicarious travel adventures based on Riley's prospecting experiences. Financially backed by Clemens, Riley undertook the journey, proposed as the first of many such projects in which Riley was to do the travelling and Mark Twain to do the writing, and he returned prepared to recount his adventures. But Clemens procrastinated, Riley became mortally ill, and the project was ultimately abandoned (Kaplan 1966, 124-128).

Clemens's most successful collaboration was the first he actually completed, with Charles Dudley Warner, which resulted in *The Gilded Age*. In 1876 he wrote a disastrously ludicrous play, *Ah, Sin*, with Bret Harte, a collaboration which effectively ended their friendship (Kaplan, 202-205). As late as the winter of 1898, during his financial 'exile' in Europe, he apparently attempted a collaborative drama with the Viennese journalist Siegmund Schlesinger (*Mark Twain-Howells Letters*, II, 671, n. 4).

His long-nurtured plan to realize a project of "skeleton novelettes" to be written by a number of prominent authors (first listed as a project concept in his notebooks along with the "Leathers, Earl of Durham" entry in November 1877) and his initial willingness to participate in W.D. Howells's and Elizabeth Jordan's collaborative serial fiction *The Whole Family* (Harper's Bazaar, 1907-1908) are further suggestions of a persisting interest in collaborative ventures. His reliance upon the editorial input of W.D. Howells and his wife Olivia can be seen as ongoing collaborative dialogues. Collaboration was further occasioned by the stage adaptations of most of his novels by more experienced dramatists. Clemens's penchant for collaboration and his frequent desire to publish anonymously works he considered controversial or philosophical departures from his early success as a Western humorist are two seemingly related impulses which, in contrast with the then predominant view of the romantic artist working in creative isolation, warrant further study. However flimsy his populist, everyman persona, Clemens was consistent in debunking the romantic myth of the creative artist as a solitary original.
for this tragedy, or that melodrama of the abolition spy"
(December 27, 1883, 459).

In later years Howells would recall in particular "a
jubilant fortnight" enjoyed by the aspiring dramatists while
jointly working out the absurdly fantastic and probably
unproduceable scenes of their Colonel Sellers play:

No dramatists ever got greater joy out of their creations,
and when I reflect that the public never had the chance of
sharing our joy I pity the public from a full heart. I
still believe the play was immensely funny; I still believe
that if it could once have got behind the footlights it
would have continued to pack the house before them for an
indefinite succession of nights. But this may be my fondness
(Howells, My Mark Twain, 22).

The playwrights met with initial resistance in attempting to
involve Raymond in the new Colonel Sellers production, and in
the interim Howells became more ambivalent about the play;
initially confident, he eventually grew alarmed at Clemens's
persistent efforts to see the drama produced. Given his own

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108 Following a cool initial reaction to the script from the
original stage Sellers, John T. Raymond, Howells wrote to
Clemens on December 3, 1883:

I hope you will keep a stiff upper lip with Raymond.
We've got a great play, and if he declines, we can make a
new Sellers out of some one else. He should agree to put
the play on at once (Smith and Gibson, eds, I, 453).

Objecting to a production starring another actor whose name "has been
connected with low flung burlesques", by February 15, 1884 Howells was insisting:

...The life of the play is (yours) Sellers, and Sellers is yours.
Pay me a sum outright for my work, when you've arranged with G.,
and let the play go to the public as yours solely and entirely; no one
predilection for naturalism and his prominent position amidst the literary establishment, it is odd that Howells became involved in such a project in the first place, and rather remarkable that he took such an interest in Sellers as the American Earl of Rossmore.\textsuperscript{109}

In his letter of March 13, 1884, Clemens encouraged Howells to tempt Raymond with the prospect of future productions:

...tell him our plan of repeating Sellers once or twice more & establishing him permanently as the American character, to be used be [sic] future generations of authors & actors as that Italian character is (Smith and Gibson, eds., II, 479).

The vagueness of Clemens's allusion to "that Italian character" would seem to indicate, as the editors of the \textit{Mark Twain-Howells Letters} suggest, that the culturally ambitious "plan" to install Sellers as a stock comic figure within an American theatrical tradition owes more to "Howells's own Sellers-like notion" and superior knowledge of similar characters established in Venetian comic theatre than to any desire or attempt by Clemens

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knows yet that I've helpt you" (II, 473).

This ultimatum had its desired effect in discouraging a production involving the actor Nat Goodwin. Following a subsequent attempt to revise the play in May 1886, Howells wrote to Clemens suggesting that further major amendments were required:

As it stands I believe the thing will fail, and it would be a disgrace to have it succeed (II, 557).

\textsuperscript{109} In editing the first instalment of Clemens's "Old Times on the Mississippi" for the Atlantic in November, 1874, Howells had reservations about the night watchman's story, which included his claim to noble birth. "It doesn't seem so natural and probable as the rest of the sketch," he noted. "--seems made-up, on your part" (Smith and Gibson, eds., I, 43).
to create a classic American equivalent (II, 479, n.2).\textsuperscript{110}

Certainly Raymond was not persuaded. He declined the role on the grounds that the aging Colonel depicted by Clemens and Howells departed from the character as originally portrayed, suggested radical alterations and eventually concluded that the play as written would not be successful.\textsuperscript{111}

Ultimately, Howells accepted Raymond's view of the play, observing to Clemens:

The real motive--the claimant business--isn't developed; and there is nothing in the play but the idea of Sellers' character, and a lot of comic situations (May 5, 1886, II, 556).

This impression seems fairly accurate. Perhaps due to the collaborative nature of the project the play is a collection of vivid comical impressions and some hilarious one-liners adrift in a plot lacking any dramatic suspense or momentum. Its frenetic displays of Sellers's pseudo-scientific inventions (from

\textsuperscript{110} The editors of the *Letters* suggest a similarity between Sellers and Pantalon or Arlecchino in the Venetian *commedia a braccio*, or "comedy by the yard" (479, n.2). Howells had served as American consul at Venice from 1861-1865, an experience recounted in his *Venetian Life* (1866).

\textsuperscript{111} On 1 September 1884 Clemens's publishing partner Charles Webster outlined Raymond's reaction for Clemens, reporting that Raymond:

...don't like the English Earldom idea, nor does he like the idea of materialization of dead bodies... He said Sellers while a very sanguine man was not a lunatic; no one but a lunatic could for a moment,—or at least but for a moment,—imagine that he had done such a work (New York, Mark Twain Papers, cited in Smith and Gibson, eds., II, 503, n.1).
fire-extinguishers and flying machines to phonograph recordings
of profanity for seafaring use by naval officers, "a little improvement
on the Nihilist bomb" and a device for materializing the dead)
might have lent itself to a cinematic production at a somewhat later
day. Finally, neither the characters nor the intellectual
juxtaposition of science and genealogy most vividly symbolised
in the heretical invention of a resurrection machine was fully
exploited in any logical or dramatic way.

Despite all discouragement, Clemens persisted in seeing
Colonel Sellers as a Scientist through to a modest, brief
provincial production in September 1887 with the elocutionist
A.P. Burbank apparently impersonating Raymond in the role of
Sellers. Rather than realising a fortune, Clemens was left to
pay outstanding production expenses.

Confronting theatrical resistance in September 1884, Clemens first
recorded in his notebook his idea to use instead Colonel Sellers as a Scientist
as the basis for a novel. And while such a disappointing collaboration might
have destroyed a less resilient friendship, four days after beginning The American
Claimant, on February 24th 1891, Clemens was confidently taunting
Howells:

Does this item stir an interest in you? Began a novel four days ago, & this moment finished chapter four. Title of the book:

"Colonel Mulberry Sellers, American Claimant of the Great Earldom of Rossmore in the Peerage of Great Britain" (Smith and Gibson, eds., II, 636-637).
In a subsequent letter, Clemens seems playfully to cast himself in the Sellers role and to attempt to involve his former collaborator in his new narrative project. Complaining of rheumatism, he asks Howells to locate and arrange to hire a phonograph into which Clemens might experimentally dictate the remainder of his novel. The request is a humorous reminder of one of the previously mentioned devices developed by the Colonel in *Colonel Sellers as a Scientist*, a cursing phonograph intended to help genteel sea captains roust their men to urgent action during a storm. Howells carried out his commission and the arrangements occasioned some further bantering correspondence between the two authors about the project, with Clemens finally concluding to Howells:

...you can't write literature with it, because it hasn't any ideas & it hasn't any gift for elaboration, or smartness of talk, or vigor of action, or felicity of expression, but is just matter-of-fact, compressive, unornamental, & as grave & unsmiling as the devil. I filled four dozen cylinders in two sittings, then found I could have said about as much with the pen & said it a deal better (April 4/91, Smith and Gibson, eds., II, 641).

In other words, the phonograph proved a poor substitute for his former collaborator, who would in time refer to the character of Colonel Sellers as "Mr. Clemens's supreme invention" (Howells 1967, 151).

Clemens finished the book in seventy-one days, racing through the work in a way which might be compared to the composition of his first novel or to *Colonel Sellers as a*
Scientist, and contrasted with the writing of *Huckleberry Finn*, *Life on the Mississippi* or even *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, projects which he worked at intermittently over a number of years. It might of course be argued that he used the play as an initial draft and that he had been considering the course of the narrative for over six years.¹¹²

Unlike *The Gilded Age*, *The American Claimant* was not a popular or critical success. The novel is almost universally considered to be one of Clemen's most uneven works, although by no means without interest.¹¹³ I would argue that the work is one of his most ambitious, although less than fully realised, political and philosophical fantasies.

What Clemens salvaged from the collaborative drama for his subsequent novel were precisely those elements to which Raymond (and perhaps eventually Howells) had objected so vociferously: a darker, more absurd depiction of Colonel Sellers and his delusional

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¹¹² "I think it will simply howl with fun," he wrote to his brother Orion on 25 February 1891, radiating enthusiasm for his new Sellers project. "I wake up in the night laughing at its ridiculous situations" (*Mark Twain Notebooks*, III, 573).

¹¹³ Clemens's biographer Justin Kaplan dismisses the novel as "one of the worst things he ever wrote" (195). Dennis Welland appraises it as too slapdash but promising: "Had he put more effort into *The American Claimant* it might materially have improved his fortunes" (156). Howard Baetzhold describes it as "a potboiler.... Its weaknesses are obvious but a consideration of its central 'message' is essential to any study of his developing ideas" (166). Referring to the book's "meager sale", the editors of *Mark Twain's Notebooks* characterise *The American Claimant* as "one of Clemens' most disjointed literary productions" (III, 574).
experiments with the materialization (actually reanimation or reincarnation) of the dead, a heretical notion likely to offend those of even vaguely religious sensibilities. Clemens and Howells had become interested in the social unrest and literature of pre-revolutionary, Czarist Russia; the Colonel's materialisation experiments may be something of a comic tribute to Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls* (1848). Almost certainly, the fantasy of the living dead owes something to Gulliver's encounter with the *Struldbrugs or Immortals* in Chapter Ten, Part Three of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (181-189). It was also a very pointed spoof on the late nineteenth-century vogue for table-tapping spiritualism, seriously entertained even by such Harvard intellectuals as William James. Whatever the origin, Sellers's belief that he has 'scientifically' conjured up the ancestor of a recently deceased criminal and

114 The editors of *The Mark Twain's Notebooks* point to Clemens's insistent repetition of "the farcical situation which had finally made the piece an embarrassment to Howells" (III, 573).

115 Clemens enthusiastically discussed his re-reading of *Gulliver's Travels* in a letter to his future wife, Olivia Langdon, dated 1 March 1869. Howard Baetzhold asserts the influence of Swift in general and *Gulliver's Travels* in particular upon many of Clemens's works, including *A Connecticut Yankee*, concluding:

Whether consciously or unconsciously, Clemens came to share Swift's view of man, and consciously or unconsciously made good use of *Gulliver's Travels* (Baetzhold, 268).

The Colonel's notions of rematerialising the dead in *The American Claimant* would seem to be yet another manifestation of Swift's influence upon Clemens.
has potential control over armies of illustrious dead generals, assemblies of the world's wisest former heads of state (to replace substandard contemporaries) and a permanent supply of cost-effective dead policemen, detectives and congressmen is the occasion for most of the novel's black humour and much of its funniest dialogue. Jettisoned was much of the more nonsensical Sellers gimmickry such as fire extinguishers and flying apparatuses, and many of Howells revisions, including an extensive, concluding interview between Sellers and a local reporter.\textsuperscript{116}

The most obvious, substantial difference between \textit{Colonel Sellers as a Scientist} and \textit{The American Claimant} is the development of the legitimate English heir, young Lord Berkeley, into a primary character in his own right, while Sellers, as in \textit{The Gilded Age}, serves as protagonist and misinterpreter in a competitive, comparative role. Berkeley's resolve to "begin my life over again", assuming a new identity as plain Howard Tracey in America, allows scope for much satirical cultural comparison as the

\textsuperscript{116} Whether or not the interview was entirely written by Howells, Clemens would later resurrect one of the better gags from this rejected passage, adopting it as his own response in June 1897 to a London correspondent of the New York \textit{Journal} to whom he memorably remarked, "The report of my death was an exaggeration" (Kaplan, 348). Reading his interview copy back to Sellers in the Barrett manuscript version of the play which is published as part of \textit{The Collected Plays of W. D. Howells}, the journalist Suckers notes that a recent report of Sellers's death "was greatly exaggerated" (1960, 237).
young Englishman finds himself ill-equipped to succeed as an
immigrant in late-nineteenth-century America. Unfortunately, in
order to resolve the claimant plot, Berkeley must fall in love and
marry Sellers's daughter Sally and this predictable romantic
entanglement drains all the interest and satirical life from the
character. Ultimately the novel presents a jumble of narrative
motifs (Sellers's megalomaniac sci-fi metaphysics, the social satire
of Berkeley's American impressions, and the sentimental melodrama
of the romance that resolves the new world's imaginary claim
upon the old) which Clemens fails to combine into a coherent
narrative in either fantastic or naturalistic terms.

Others have pointed to the intriguing development of
Berkeley's role as a social commentator, and to the greater
interest in cultural comparison and criticism occasioned by
the young Englishman's American experiences. The English

117 In recent years, such critics as Howard Baetzhold and
(jointly) Robert Pack Browning, Michael B. Frank and Lin Salarmo as
editors of Mark Twain's Notebook & Journals, volume three have
emphasised the more elaborate social commentary in the novel, tracing
the genesis of a speech on "The American Press" overheard by Berkeley
in the course of a debate at the "Mechanics' Club" in Chapter Ten of
The American Claimant to an address prepared by Clemens in response
to Matthew Arnold's lengthy criticism of American journalism in his
essay "Civilization in the United States". (The article had appeared in
London in the April 1888 issue of Nineteenth Century and in the New York
Evening Post on 9 April 1888.) Approached in April for a response to
Arnold's article, Clemens shortly after recorded in his notebook the
germ of a speech which he would later expand and position within his
own fiction:

Rede. By the absence of an irreverent press Europe for
heir is in fact deployed by Clemens in the manner of a travelling
cultural ingénu, a stock figure of eighteenth-century literature
fondly and frequently invoked by Hawthorne and James
as well as Clemens, who disingenuously claimed the persona
as his own in The Innocents Abroad.

What has gone unremarked is the nature of the antithetical relationship

*The American Claimant* constructs between Sellers and Berkeley,

now logically suggested as cultural alternatives within the same

social equation. Berkeley is the legitimate heir and Sellers the

illegitimate, or deluded, pretender to a noble title. Yet in his

attempt to "begin my life over again" in America, Berkeley will also

falsify his past, assuming an illegitimate identity as the curiously

English cowboy Howard Tracey. Either Berkeley or Sellers might be

considered the American claimant of the fiction's title -- Berkeley

claiming an American freedom from his hereditary rank and

predetermined identity while Sellers dreams of being recognised as

a British nobleman -- each claiming something beyond the immediate

1000 years has <been> existed merely for the advantage of
half a dozen 7th rate <folk> families called monarchs, &
some hundreds of riff-raff sarcastically called noble.
Our papers have one peculiarity — it is American — it
exists nowhere else — their irreverence. May they never
lose it & never modify it. It is irreverent toward what [?]Pretty much everything. But for where it laughs one good
thing to death, it laughs a thousand cruel & infamous shams &
superstitions into the grave; & the account is squared.
Irreverence is the champion of liberty, & its only sure
defence (*Mark Twain's Notebooks & Journals*, 3, 392).
scope of their own cultural experience. Such an obvious antithetical comparison seems broadly to imply that a falsification or rejection of one's own past is inherent in the American condition. Both Sellers as a pseudo-scientist and self-appointed diplomat and Berkeley as a new American immigrant seek to change or elude history, and the predetermined cultural terms enforced by established precedent. Yet the relationship between the noble, immigrant youth and the old pretender is ultimately unsatisfying and unresolved, with Berkeley subsumed into Sellers's family circle and Sellers alone remaining to preside over a messianic, unconventional narrative conclusion.

Besides the new emphasis placed on the young English heir in *The American Claimant*, the novel departs significantly from *Colonel Sellers as a Scientist* in the manner of its opening and concluding sequences, both of which depend upon narrative device rather than dramatic action or dialogue. It seems that Clemens is relishing his return from the more mimetic genre into the ambiguous realm of narrative wordplay and literary mutability. He celebrates this liberation of his imagination in a whimsical and seemingly facetious foreword concerning "The Weather In This Book" and the author's "attempt to pull a book through without weather". This disclaimer is then immediately contradicted three times in the first two paragraphs of the
novel, which opens on a "matchless morning", a "breezy fine
morning" for Berkeley's interview with his father, whose
"temperature is away up toward summer heat." Clemens thus
seems to be emphasising a discrepancy between what an author
may claim for a work and what he has in fact executed, both
feigning modesty ("The present author can do only a few trifling
ordinary kinds of weather, and he cannot do those very good."...)
and putting the reader on guard against even the most overt
authorial statements. He makes further metaphoric play of the
emotional 'weather' in the romance between Berkeley and Sellers's
daughter Sally:

Sometimes she was so in love with him that her love was
tropical, torrid, and she could find no language fervent
enough for its expression, then suddenly, and without
warning or any apparent reason, the weather would change,
and the victim would find himself adrift among the icebergs
and feeling as lonesome and friendless as the north pole. It
sometimes seemed to him that a man might better be dead
than exposed to these devastating varieties of climate
(216).

By calling attention to the weather as an aspect of literary
performance, the author seems also to be signalling (through
pointed denial) the narrative's imminent departure from realism
into the exaggerated incongruities of the tall tale, a tradition
which often stretches credulity with fantastic descriptions of
extreme weather conditions. Clemens's narrative prefaces almost

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118 In Mark Twain and the Art of the Tall Tale, Henry B. Wonham
always function by inversion, foregrounding an aspect of narrative artifice which is brought to the reader's attention in the form of an authorial denial or prohibition.

"The Weather in this Book" suggests a direct comparison between an author's narrative omnipotence in the selection of weather and the megalomania of the novel's main character in his ultimate 'scientific' scheme to manipulate (and market) climatic conditions throughout the world. In emphasising his own departure from narrative convention into hyper-rational fantasy, Clemens also seems to be distancing and differentiating himself from the character of Colonel Sellers, destabilising the relationship between the author and a character with whom he had often been identified.

In an exuberant narrative conclusion that exploits epistolary convention, (and seems once again to link author with character, foreshadowing Clemens's own 'exile' from America and his globe-trotting lecture tour) Colonel Sellers transcends his American condition and sets out across the Atlantic as a self-styled liberator, returning to the Old World to purchase Siberia from the Czar as a first step in bringing democracy to Russia. Having relinquished his claim to English nobility in favor of his son-in-law, he now seeks to effect a different sort of claim upon the continent of

traces the influence of the tall tale as oral tradition upon early American literature and the Western humorists, including Mark Twain. He notes that weather conditions are one of the most common subjects of tall humor (Wonham, 1993, 24).
Europe and eventually the world. The escape of Sellers, who
slips away from his friends and family, leaving only a note behind,
is reminiscent of Huck Finn's 'lighting out' for unknown territory
and seeking to distance himself from the constraints of American
civilization. And this time there seems no way back for the
self-deluded, former would-be noble:

I shall join all you happy people in England as soon
as I shall have sold out some of my principal climates
and arranged with the Czar about Siberia (246).

His materialization experiments having failed, he abandons his
attempts to control the past, seizing instead upon the "mighty
idea" of achieving some omnipotent, climatic control of the future.

_The American Claimant_ thus resolves the inheritance plot twice over,
once with the conventional resolution in marriage and ultimately
in a wildly exaggerated tall tale in which the desire to remake
the world to one's own plan and to one's own advantage is
exploded beyond the bounds of narrative credibility. The triumph
of New World values and culture over the Old World was a fantasy
entertained and worried over by Hawthorne and James as well as
Clemens. The reader's sympathy for and identification with
Sellers as a defining American archetype is effectively diminished,
as the character is figuratively laden with the conceptual baggage
of progressivism, rationalism, humanism and capitalism and all the
inherent contradictions implied within this broad philosophical
framework. Perhaps the Colonel's ultimate Old World liberation project signifies the return of the dispossessed, or repressed, suggested by poets such as Tennyson as well as psychologists like Freud, but here it is presented as something ludicrous, something which the reader cannot seriously entertain in a literal reading as anything but quixotic delusion. In an exuberant and highly imaginative conclusion, *The American Claimant* effectively ruptures any semblance of conventional narrative credibility, standing apart from the rest of the fiction as an anarchic authorial abdication in favour of the reader, who is left to ponder the implications of a Sellers operation on an international, even universal scale.

There is some indication that despite the ambition for Sellers, possibly inspired by Howells, of "establishing him permanently as the American character", to become a classic figure of American comedy, Clemens originally and perhaps simultaneously took a broader view of the Colonel as a representative type. In "Rogers", an early sketch published in 1874, he depicts an English variant of Sellers, with all the American colonel's false and transparent pretenses to leading a life of superlative privilege and inhabiting his own fictions. "He died at sea, last summer," the sketch concludes, "as the 'Earl of Ramsgate'" (Twain 1992a, 572). Whether the composition of "Rogers" antedates or postdates the introduction of Colonel Sellers in *The Gilded Age*, he is a less developed, more effete character, lacking any
semblance of vocation or ulterior ambition. Having considered both English and American versions of the impulsive speculator, the character who emerges from *The American Claimant* is a would-be *citoyen du monde*.

Clemens would return to the American inheritance theme in *Pudd'Nhead Wilson*, (1894) once again constructing a starkly humorous contrast between legitimate and illegitimate heirs. But in *The American Claimant*, the fantasy of a noble past and the speculative career of Colonel Sellers are satirically and finally surmounted by Clemens. Some interest was expressed in a stage production, but for once Clemens was unenthused at the prospect of any further treatment.
Chapter IX

NATION BUILDING, NATION LOOTING:
CLAIMANTS & IMPOSTORS IN THE WORKS OF MARK TWAIN

Just as Mark Twain claimed his literary 'descent' from the Mississippi pilot and sometime journalist Isaiah Sellers, in his comments about his own work as well as that of others he insistently derided any suggestion of creative or conceptual originality. Ideas were something mined from the field of one's own culture, both present and past.

Responding to a light-hearted charge of plagiarism launched by "F.B.P." of Boston to the editor of The Literary World following the publication of his burlesque-driven travelogue, The Innocents Abroad, Clemens scrawled a marginal note upon the journal page which carried "F.B.P.'s" letter. In a reply addressed to an unidentified "Dear Sir", quite possibly directed to the editor, he counter-charged that a book reviewed on the same page had borrowed at least one passage from his travelogue.\textsuperscript{119} Circling the suspect extract quoted by the reviewer as an example of "the author's pleasant humor, and her power of personal portraiture",

\textsuperscript{119} Page 106 from The Literary World is undated, but the book reviewed and thus conveniently summoned by Clemens for immediate indictment is Susan Coolidge's What Katy Did, first published in 1872.
Clemens asserts:

The other charge is playful,... but I'm not sure that
the author of this "boy's journal" hadn't been reading page
637 of the "Innocents Abroad" at some time or other
(Undated, signed letter to an unidentified correspondent,
Beinecke Library, Yale).

He then delivers his more salient observation:

...the truth is, a deliberate plagiarism is seldom made by
any person who is not an ass; but unconscious & blameless
plagiarisms are made by the best of people every day.
Considering the fact that billions of people have been
thinking of writing every day for 5 or 6,000 years, I
wonder that any man of the present day ever dares to
consider a thought original with himself (Ibid).

Clemens apparently had further reason for reflecting on
"unconscious plagiarism" at the time. In his autobiographical
memoirs he recalls that three years following the August, 1869
publication of The Innocents Abroad he was interrogated by
a Mr. Goodman of Virginia City "on whose newspaper I had served
ten years before". Goodman was visiting New York, and the pair
were strolling down Broadway when the western newspaperman
bluntly inquired: "How did you come to steal Oliver Wendell Holmes's
dedication and put it in your book?"120 (Twain 1959, 149-150).

120 A biographical directory included in the Mark Twain-Howells
Among his early accomplishments, he is described as having been:

Co-owner and publisher of the Virginia City Territorial
Enterprise in the early 1860's, when SLC began his professional
writing career as a reporter on this paper (vol II, 1960, 910).
An immediate comparison at a convenient bookshop of Clemens's dedication with that of Holmes's in *Songs in Many Keys* (1862) confirmed the validity of the charge and "astonished" the accused literary thief: "I could not remember ever having seen Doctor Holmes's dedication. I knew the poems but the dedication was new to me" (150). Interrogating his own memory, Clemens eventually recalls the situation in which he encountered the Holmes volume (in Hawaii, six years previously) and "read the book to rags".

Apparently a profuse letter of apology to Holmes followed:

I was new, I was ignorant, the mysteries of the human mind

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121 *The Innocents Abroad* is dedicated as follows:

TO
MY MOST PATIENT READER
AND
MOST CHARITABLE CRITIC,
MY AGED MOTHER,
THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
(Twain 1984, 2).

By comparison the Holmes volume is dedicated:

TO
THE MOST INDULGENT OF READERS
THE KINDEST OF CRITICS
MY BELOVED MOTHER
ALL THAT IS LEAST UNWORTHY OF HER
IN THIS VOLUME
*Is Dedicated*
BY HER AFFECTIONATE SON
(Holmes 1862, 2).

In the mid-nineteenth century, such sentimental expressions of filial gratitude do not seem particularly original in any case.
were a sealed book to me as yet, and I stupidly looked upon
myself as a tough, and unforgivable criminal (151).

As reported by Clemens, Dr. Holmes's kind reply to his confession:

...assured me that there was no crime in unconscious
plagiarism; that I committed it every day, that he committed
it every day, that every man alive on the earth who writes
or speaks commits it every day and not merely once or twice
but every time he opens his mouth; that all our phrasings
are spiritualized shadows cast multitudinously from our
readings; that no happy phrase of ours is ever quite original
with us; there is nothing of our own in it except some slight
change born of our temperament, character, environment,
teachings and associations; that this slight change differentiates
it from another man's manner of saying it, stamps it with our
special style and makes it our own for the time being; all the
rest of it being old, moldy, antique and smelling of the breath
of a thousand generations of them that have passed it over their
teeth before!

In the thirty-odd years which have come and gone since
then I have satisfied myself that what Doctor Holmes said
was true (151). 

All this may or may not be accurately reported; Clemens
seemed certain enough of his somewhat defensive view of
unconscious literary influence to repeat the offense in what
must have been a rather more conscious fashion. His marginal
note in the Literary World presents what was apparently Holmes's
recent observation as emphatically his own. 

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122 A distinct echo of Hawthorne's reflection on historical influence,
previously cited in Chapter IV, page 69, may be detected in this
representation of Holmes's observations.

123 Clemens prefaces his paraphrased account of Dr. Holmes's
response by observing: "I have lost his answer" (151).
However, the anecdote appears to be corroborated by Holmes's
biographer John T. Morse, who notes that Clemens spoke
publicly of the 'plagiarism' at a banquet for Holmes on
These early indications of Clemens's views on originality suggest that the mechanistic, behaviourist position he later elaborated in his 1883 essay "What is Happiness?" were well-formed convictions he expressed much earlier in his literary career. Such views precluded any concept of a 'new' American culture; indeed, they would seem to disallow any privileged place for literature in creating or even influencing cultural conditions. And yet from these views he produced a number of reform-minded works in which he more often than not seemed to be trying to escape his own utilitarian conclusions.

He put his materialist view bluntly in his 1908 letter to Reverend Christ: "No man's brain has ever originated an idea." To illustrate this proposition, several paragraphs later he relates an anecdote about the origins of his first 'historical' novel, *The Prince and the Pauper*:

The thought came to me from the outside—suggested by that pleasant and picturesque little history-book, Charlotte M. Yonge's "Little Duke." I doubt if Mrs. Burnett knows whence came to her the suggestion to write "Little Lord Fauntleroy," but I know: it came from reading the "Prince and

December 3, 1879:

When *The Innocents Abroad* appeared, it bore on its unblushing front a dedication which had already done the like service for the Doctor's *Songs in Many Keys*. Mark Twain referred to the incident humorously at the Atlantic Breakfast, told how indignant he was when a friend charged him with the act: how penitently, when he found the charge to be true, he had written to Dr. Holmes; and how kindly the Doctor had replied, saying that he believed that all writers at times worked over the ideas of others unconsciously, and conceiving the development to be their own (Morse 1896, II, 22).
"Pauper." In all my life I have never originated an idea, and neither has she—or anybody else (typescript letter to Reverend F. V. Christ, August 28, 1908, Beinecke Library, Yale, 1-2).

It is interesting to note Clemens's acknowledged debt to Charlotte Yonge's fiction, and even more so in that it precipitates his claim to having influenced the single most popular American claimant tale in nineteenth-century Anglo-American literature. *The Prince and the Pauper* was one of Clemens's best-selling works; Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* became a veritable industry not only in England and America but throughout Europe. There were innumerable translations, stage productions and touring productions, finally even film options. The basis for Clemens's assertion would appear to be a notebook entry in which the name "Frances H. Burnett" appears amidst a list of those people to whom the author planned to send inscribed copies of *The Prince and the Pauper* when the work was published in 1881 (Anderson, Salarno, and Stein, eds. 1975, 2, 385).

Lamenting the sentimental formula of *The Prince and the Pauper*, Justin Kaplan has noted that:

Even Howells, champion of naturalism, was willing to abet the transformation of his "sole and incomparable" Mark Twain into a practitioner of the art of Frances Hodgson Burnett (Kaplan 1966, 238-239).

The twentieth-century critic reflecting back upon the literary marketplace of the nineteenth century should not ignore Clemens's self-professed association with Burnett, a connection which
suggests a certain pride of priority not untinged with envy at
Burnett's commercial success.

It is noteworthy that Clemens views Yonge's historical
tale of Anglo-French comparison and Burnett's book of modern
Anglo-American distinction and reunification as similar to his
own work, which is historical, yet concentrated upon a single
culture. Or rather, concentrated upon the contrasting 'cultures'
within a single nation. It is singular among the fictions of
Mark Twain in being so well stocked with claimants, none of whom
is even remotely American.124 Although Clemens's first historical
novel is itself outside the scope of the American claimant theme, I
suggest that it warrants discussion here because of its relationship and
direct bearing upon Clemens's subsequent historical novel, *A Connecticut
Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

Clemens initially wished to publish *The Prince and the
Pauper* anonymously. His oddly utopian tale, "The Curious Republic

124 All the main characters struggle to have their rank and
identity publicly acknowledged. Edward Tudor, Prince of
Wales (later King Edward VI) is mistaken for his impoverished
counterpart when the two exchange clothes (literally, riches to
rags). Miles Hendon, his noble champion, who humours what he
supposes to be Edward's delusion, finds his own inheritance,
fiancée and noble title have all been usurped by a younger
brother when he returns to Hendon Hall after an enforced absence
on the Continent. The pauper Tom Canty (who has long assumed
a noble bearing and demeanor), finds his claim to being but
a beggar boy from Offal Court is taken as a certain symptom of
royal madness. The novel revels in the injustice experienced
by the unacknowledged claimants and culminates in the eventual
public recognition of their hereditary rank.
of Gondour" had appeared anonymously in the October, 1875 issue of the Atlantic Monthly. In 1906, What is Man?, a volume of philosophical reflections expanding upon the themes set forth in his earlier essay "What is Happiness?" would also be published anonymously in the U.S., supposedly because Clemens feared that readers would not accept such serious and refined works from the humorist Mark Twain. It seems likely that he viewed The Prince and the Pauper as similarly serious in its social significance and seriously genteel in its tone, intended for a readership that would include both children and adults.

Despite the improbable fairy-tale quality of the novel's basic premise, the fiction was historically researched by Clemens, who appends to his text historical notes that certainly were not intended for children. The harshness of Tudor law in a society overrun by ignorance and superstition is vividly emphasised; the novel's elaboration of unjust punitive measures would almost certainly disturb younger readers. Yet the tale of two boys, presented as virtually interchangeable beyond the most superficial of contrasting cultural trappings, suggests an egalitarian message that would have been unmistakable even to the very young. In The Prince and the Pauper Clemens both relishes lavish descriptions of court pomp and ceremony and assumes a narrative perspective which sees through these institutions from the superior vantage point of the future. Like Hawthorne before him,
Clemens seems at once to take great pleasure in the trappings and traditions of monarchy and also to deplore the social inequity resulting from monarchical absolutism and misrule. Should his readers fail to register the degree of social progress between that time and their own, Clemens appendes a "General Note" to the novel's historical end notes. This notation attempts to contextualise the harshness of Tudor law by introducing a singular Anglo-American comparison between repressive Tudor measures and the much-criticised "hideous Blue-Laws of Connecticut", a harsh puritan code which was slowly revised and repealed from the statute books:

...This humane and kindly Blue-Law code, of two hundred and forty years ago, stands all by itself, with ages of bloody law on the further side of it, and a century and three-quarters of bloody English law on THIS side of it. There has never been a time--under the Blue-Laws or any other--when above FOURTEEN crimes were punishable by death in Connecticut. But in England, within the memory of men who are still hale in body and mind, TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THREE crimes were punishable by death. These facts are worth knowing—and worth thinking about, too (Mark Twain 1994, 212).

This comparison suggests that social progress, at least as far as legal statutes are concerned, has been more far more pronounced in America than in an England still clinging to the vestiges of medieval codes.125

125 In an account which considers the literary and historical sources Clemens brought to bear upon The Prince and the Pauper, Howard Baetzhold acknowledges that some of the novel's motifs and implied social criticism foreshadow the broader social commentary of A Connecticut Yankee. Yet he disagrees
In 1886, Clemens began a new historical novel, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. The book was published in both England and the U.S. in 1889. In his memoir of the author, William Dean Howells would pronounce *A Connecticut Yankee* his personal favorite "of all the fanciful schemes in fiction" (Howells 1967, 151). Clemens himself reread the book in March 1910, shortly before his death and confessed himself still "prodigiously pleased with it--a most gratifying surprise" (Welland 1978, 144).

The project appears to have been inspired by Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*, which Clemens acquired and enthusiastically consumed in

with those critics, including Bernard DeVoto, who have considered the earlier novel as "attacking as much as he could manage of the 'modern perpetuation' of the harsh Tudor law." This view, he asserts:

...is warranted neither by Clemens' political and social attitudes at the time of composition nor by the book itself. First, the novel was conceived when Clemens' admiration for England, her traditions, and her government was at its zenith (Baetzhold 1970, 64).

Baetzhold seems to discount the essential elements of the plot as well as the "General Note". His critical commentary on Clemens's connection with Britain persistently assumes that the author's admiration for England would preclude criticism of its institutions. Yet admiration and criticism do not seem to have been mutually exclusive in Clemens's works.

Evaluating Clemens's literary achievements, Howells awards special, if somewhat curiously qualified accolades to the author's two most developed American 'claimant' characters:

If Colonel Sellers is Mr. Clemens's supreme invention, as it seems to me, I think that his *Connecticut Yankee* is his highest achievement in the way of a greatly imagined and symmetrically developed romance. Of all the fanciful schemes in fiction, it pleases me most...(Howells 1967, 151).
early December, 1884. Later that month, he recorded in his notebook a comical dream image:

Dream of being a knight errant in armor in the middle ages. Have the notions & habits of thought of the present day mixed with the necessities of that. No pockets in the armor. No way to manage certain requirements of nature. Can't scratch. Cold in the head--can't blow--can't get at handkerchief, can't use iron sleeve. Iron gets red hot in the sun--leaks in the rain, gets white with frost & freezes me solid in winter. Suffer from lice & fleas. Make disagreeable clatter when I enter church. Can't dress or undress myself. Always getting struck by lightning. Fall down, can't get up (Browning, Frank and Salamo, eds. 1979, 3, 78).

Clemens commented on the origins of the project both during its composition and in his autobiographical reflections written during the last years of his life -- although none of these comments should perhaps be taken as completely candid. He wrote to his friend and fellow Quaker City excursionist Mary Fairbanks on November 16, 1886:

...that the new book was not going to be "a satire peculiarly" but "more especially a contrast"... between "the daily life of the time & that of today" (Mark Twain to Mrs. Fairbanks 1949, 257, cited in Baetzhold, 105).

In 1906 press reports of severe and repressive measures by absolute rulers seemingly brought once again to mind the origin of A Connecticut Yankee. The novel, Clemens recalls:

...was an attempt to imagine, and after a fashion set forth, the hard conditions of life for the laboring and defenseless poor in bygone times in England, and incidentally contrast these conditions with those under which the civil and ecclesiastical pets of privilege and high fortune lived in.
those times. I think I was purposing to contrast that English life, not just the English life of Arthur's day but the English life of the whole of the Middle Ages, with the life of modern Christendom and modern civilization—to the advantage of the latter, of course. That advantage is still claimable and does creditably and handsomely exist everywhere in Christendom—if we leave out Russia and the royal palace of Belgium (Twain 1959, 271).\(^{127}\)

If progressivism was the spirit in which Clemens began the novel, that humorous satire launched against Britain's founding myth of Arthurian legend would rebound upon his champion of progress, time traveller and modern American entrepreneur Hank Morgan, as the plot unfolded.

As Hawthorne had attempted in his unfinished *American Claimant Manuscripts* and as Henry James would later in his similarly incomplete fiction, *The Sense of the Past*, Clemens's novel sends a representative American back to the England of his forefathers to explore the contrast between the English past and modern America. The ample scope for social commentary and the

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\(^{127}\) Clemens goes on to indicate the atrocities then currently being committed by King Leopold II of Belgium in the Congo, and to emphasize the "medieval" conditions that persist in Russia under the Czar. These are rather major exceptions — the atrocities in the Congo are perpetuated:

...by the silent consent of all the Christian powers except England, none of them lifting a hand or a voice to stop these atrocities, although thirteen of them are by solemn treaty pledged to the protecting and uplifting of those wretched natives (271).

The exceptions seem considerably to modify the claim for human and social progress in "modern Christendom and modern civilization."

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humorous potential of the situation were perhaps the elements
most clearly apparent to Clemens at the outset.

The Yankee does not travel of his own volition nor does
he choose his destination, but his travel impressions,
unrestrained by any thoughts of cultural relativism, cleverly
reverse the canonical terms of Old and New World contrast
established by generations of Anglo-American travel literature.
The debased prisoners the Yankee encounters are "white Indians"
(Twain 1994, 233); the nobles "measured by modern standards" are
"merely modified savages" (291). As previously mentioned, in
the preface to *The Gilded Age*, Clemens and Charles Dudley Warner
had taken a satirical swipe at the American tradition of assessing
the young nation's cultural deficiencies in the form of a negative
catalogue. Seemingly satirising the examples set out by Hawthorne
in his preface to *The Marble Faun* and in *Our Old Home* and by James
in his 1879 study of Hawthorne, Clemens's modern time traveller
deplores the lack of "conveniences, properly speaking" at the court of
King Arthur:

There was no soap, no matches, no looking-glass--except
a metal one, about as powerful as a pail of water. And not
a chromo....there wasn't anything in the nature of a picture
except a thing the size of a bed-quilt, which was either
woven or knitted, (it had darned places in it,) and nothing
in it was the right color or the right shape, and as for
proportions, even Raphael himself couldn't have botched them
more formidably...

There wasn't even a bell or a speaking tube in the
castle. ...There was no gas, there were no candles...
There were no books, pens, paper, or ink, and no glass in the openings they believed to be windows. But perhaps the worst of all was, that there wasn't any sugar, coffee, tea or tobacco. I saw that I was just another Robinson Crusoe cast away on an uninhabited island, with no society but some more or less tame animals, and if I wanted to make life bearable I must do as he did—"invent, contrive, create, reorganize things, set brain and hand to work, and keep them busy. Well, that was in my line (255-256).

Like Hawthorne's Etherege or James's Ralph Pendrel, Hank Morgan finds himself unaccountably transported to a distant time and nation. Yet he is not, as they are, surrounded by scenes from his own ancestral past, and this affords him an even greater sense of alienation and critical distance. Like them, he is forced to become an impostor, pretending to belong to the era in which he finds himself. He diverges even further from Hawthorne's and James's characters insofar as he does not identify with, nor does he claim any specific genealogical or ancestral inheritance from those about him. He decides rather to approach King Arthur's realm in the same spirit with which his ancestors claimed New England for the crown: he will attempt to reshape medieval England in the image of a nineteenth-century American style republic.

The Connecticut Yankee is in many respects a fictional account of a liberation movement, an attempt to create a new society that is doomed from the outset by the determining factor of history. All this might yet have been a light-hearted satire, but as the Yankee's project unfolds, incongruous complications arise which
reveal him in an increasingly unattractive, autocratic light.

The unforgettable comic image of Sir Launcelot and "five hundred mailed and belted knights" of the Round Table riding to the rescue of their king on bicycles in Chapter Thirty-Eight can be read as iconoclastic, deflating romantic reverence for the founding myth of Camelot and the seriousness with which that myth, legitimising British nationhood and modern imperialism, was culturally promoted in nineteenth-century Victorian Britain. The book was certainly viewed as a rather offensive attack on Arthurian legend and on the poet laureate Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* at the time of a popular Arthurian revival. The public appetite for Camelot and the knights

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128 The last in Tennyson's series of twelve connected poems, "Balin and Balan", appeared in 1885. Ten years later, as Henry James was experiencing his London theatrical disaster with "Guy Domville", and *An Innocent Abroad*, a farce in three acts by W. Stokes Craven was enjoying its U.K. debut at Terry's Theatre Royal in Belfast, a major Arthurian theatrical production was enjoying popular success in the West End. In January, 1896, Henry Irving assumed the title role in *King Arthur* by J. Comyns Carr at the Lyceum Theatre. The production featured sets by Burne-Jones (Hibbert 1896). The Arthurian revival in the arts, which accompanied the Victorian expansion of the British Empire and was at its height in the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s, is detailed in *The Arthurian Handbook* (Lacy and Ashe 1988, 28-29, 156-171).

Mark Girouard discusses the late nineteenth-century re-emergence of Arthurian legend and its connection with the rise of British imperialism in *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*. Among the era's Arthurian enthusiasts who moreover admired the paintings of Burne-Jones, a certain code of chivalry and courtly love were a "small but influential upper-class coterie presided over by Arthur Balfour" known as the Souls (Girouard 1981, 208). According to Girouard, this elite society "came together in the 1880s and flourished all through the 1890s." (208). He describes
of the Round Table coincided with the well-orchestrated pomp and pageantry of Victoria's Jubilee in 1887. It seemed to manifest English society's nostalgia for pre-industrial feudalism.

The gently irreverent, comic portrayal of the knights "a-tilting" into battle on bicycles is immediately subsumed by a far more disturbing scene which also serves to reveal the Yankee as profoundly more sinister than a resourceful capitalist turned social reformer. In a tournament contest against the knights, he challenges all to come against him, then proceeds to pick them off with nineteenth-century revolvers:

The day was mine. Knight-errantry was a doomed institution. The march of civilization was begun. How did I feel? Ah, you never could imagine it (501).

This is something more than a satirical dig at the vulnerability of Arthurian legend. Because the victims are symbolic champions of England's glorious past, the representation of their slaughter by one modern individual armed with superior

the group as firmly imperialist in their outlook: "They believed in an empire, and in themselves as providing an inner elite to run the empire" (208). From amidst their youthful ranks, "[Lord] Curzon became Viceroy of India, [Alfred] Lyttelton Colonial Secretary, [St. John] Broderick Secretary of State for India, [George] Wyndham Secretary for Ireland, and [Arthur] Balfour Prime Minister." (209). This group of outspoken young opinion shapers, actively aspiring to power and position during Clemens's composition of *A Connecticut Yankee*, were "united in respect and affection for their leading member Balfour, whom they liked to refer to as 'King Arthur'" (225). Clemens kept himself well informed on current events in Britain and it is possible that some of his satirical barbs in *A Connecticut Yankee* are aimed at the influential Souls.
technology is incongruously violent and shocking.

The comic cultural 'contrast' is suddenly ambushed by a modern comparison the reader is completely unprepared for, as Clemens seems to take aim at his era's acceptance of social Darwinism as justification for even the most callous acts committed in behalf of the British empire.

Clemens met Darwin in 1879 and his reading of Darwin's *The Descent of Man* appears to have influenced much of his work and certainly his philosophical reflections, from the paper "What is Happiness?" to *What Is Man?*, published anonymously in 1906. His appreciation of evolutionary theory, however, apparently did not apply to its distortion into generalisations about races or cultures. From *The Innocents Abroad* to *Following the Equator* and most stridently in his anti-imperialist autobiographical writings, Clemens the professional travel writer persistently rejected, ridiculed and deplored the patronising and biased views which served to justify the concept of social Darwinism as the premise for colonialism and other imperialist adventures. In an author so inconsistent in most attitudes and opinions, this seems certain evidence of a firmly held conviction, contrary to the prevailing view of the day.

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129 Howard Baetzhold has pointed out that Clemens's copy of Darwin's *Descent of Man* was marked with marginal notes he would later expand and expound in his own writing (Baetzhold, 56).
As the historian H.C.G. Matthew has noted:

In the 1880s and 1890s the influence of social Darwinism began to take a different form. The struggle for 'the survival of the fittest' began to be seen less in terms of individuals in the market-place and more in terms of competition between nations. ... The popular form of social Darwinism readily became a facile assumption of racial superiority, linked to imperialism, as the popular press reported the successes of the many small-scale colonial military expeditions (Matthew 1986, 511).

Viewed from this perspective, the Yankee narrative has much in common with such expeditions. "Popular reporting of these" Matthew observes:

emphasized the importance of individual daring, character, and initiative, 'deeds that won the Empire', rather than the enormous technical disparity between a disciplined European army armed with rifles and from the 1890s the occasional machine-gun, and local forces relying on massed use of spears or, at best, sporadic musket fire (511).

Both nineteenth-century America and Britain would remain generally indifferent to the slaughter of other races resisting the course of Empire, or, in the case of the United States, 'manifest destiny'. But when the 'savages' are the heroic icons bound up with Anglo-American cultural identity, the full horror and inequity of such an act rebounds upon the reader. This, the narrative implies, is the harsh result of Yankee ingenuity, an indictment which extends to both American and British societies. The Yankee presents himself as a liberator with a social alternative but leads his band of loyal boys into a cataclysmic battle, culminating in the total destruction
of both camps.

The prevailing view of Clemens's Anglophobia during the 1880s composition of *A Connecticut Yankee* is almost entirely based on entries in his notebooks detailing extremely harsh instances of British law, some inspired by George Standing's *The People's History of the English Aristocracy* (1887), a work much admired by Clemens, and his notations and public comments in response to Matthew Arnold's article, "Civilization in the United States", which appeared in the April, 1888 issue of *Nineteenth Century.*\(^\text{130}\)

Dennis Welland has persuasively challenged the prevailing assumption that the *Yankee* was inspired by Anglophobia, pointing to other activities which suggest the author's appreciation of British society and culture during the same period (Welland 1978, 127-132). Critical evaluations of Clemens's admiration and antipathy for other nations often appear too intent on interrogating the author's national allegiance by assigning many of his ever-shifting views

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\(^{130}\) Arnold's essay, as previously mentioned on page 243, n. 117, attacked what he detected as the spirit of "irreverence" in American society, a deviation from British tradition for which he held the American press and American humorists largely responsible. "Matthew Arnold's civilization is superficial polish," was Clemens's initial, hardly vitriolic response to Arnold's criticism (Browning, Frank and Salarno 1979, 3, 383). If Arnold's commentary was xenophobic, Clemens did not forget that Standring was an exemplary, although perhaps all-too singular British critic of British society: "Englishmen on America: Lepel Griffin, Matthew Arnold, Dickens, Trollope, &c." he records in his notebook. "An Englishman on England: George --" (*Ibid.*, 467).
to a biographical chronology. This approach neglects the fact that in his notebooks, letters and even public addresses, the former Western journalist was quite capable of entertaining opposing views and arguments at one and the same time.

Superficially, *An American Yankee in King Arthur's Court* was an imaginative attempt to retake and remake the Old Country by an intrepid American, an attempt historically and in many respects aesthetically preordained to failure. Yet the contrast of an enlightened modern republic with Arthur's court (playing one idyllic image off against another) appears to have initiated a much more savage, satirical comparison of feudal history with modern British and American industrial culture, and leads inexorably to the conclusion that the American difference was after all not different enough. The parallels with modern situations are generally left to the reader's imagination, but they were strong enough to have suggested many caricatures of both prominent American and British public figures to illustrator Dan Beard.

Despite some attempt by Clemens to generate an Anglo-American controversy about the book, *A Connecticut Yankee* was not a popular success on either side of the Atlantic.\(^ {131} \)

\(^ {131} \)Clemens publicly implied that he struggled to have the book published in Britain, and that offending passages had been deleted by the publisher. In his study of Clemens's literary career in England,
Clemens persisted in believing that the novel would appeal to the masses, presumably because of its suggestion of the savage effects of unchecked industrial and business interests upon both British and American society.

From Germany, two years following the novel’s initial release, Clemens would write to Fred Hall at his American publishing house, C. L. Webster & Company:

It has long been and still is, my darling desire to see the Yankee issued in paper covers, without pictures, (cheap paper) at 25¢ a copy...

I suppose it would cost 3 cents or possibly 4, on cheap paper, after the plates were struck. You could sell by peddlers, & to the trade (at [?] to 25 off?) & to labor organizations at 20c apiece when 10 or more are ordered at one time.

Through George Warner you can get at Hotchkiss, & through him at all the labor organizations in America. [Privately, there's a chapter or two in the book which will make it a good Democratic campaign document next year.] It could be sold in batches to Democratic Clubs. It is a book that is working its way along in Germany, & I hear its praises in surprising places—from thinkers born to title and nobility...

Dennis Welland has demonstrated that this version of events, corroborated by Clemens’s first biographer, Albert Bigelow Paine and since accepted as publishing history, lacks any substantial foundation (Welland 134-144). The charge was seemingly an attempt by Clemens to generate additional publicity for his book and perhaps to distract from its implied criticism of modern American society.

A year after publication, sales stood at just over thirty-two thousand in the U.S. and new orders were falling sharply (Browning, Frank and Salarno 1979, 3, 481). In Britain, total sales of the book to 1st July 1890 totalled 9,964 (Welland 1978, 147). By comparison, the Innocents Abroad enjoyed total U.S. sales of seventy thousand in its first year of publication, and sales reached eighty-five thousand in the first sixteen months. Sales would eventually exceed 100,000 (Kaplan 1966, 105). U.K. sales of 94,700 copies from 1870-1873 compare favorably with U.S. sales, but are not directly equivalent as the ‘first’ edition in the U.K. was issued in two separate volumes, released in close succession (Welland 1978, 232-233).
Nationalist Clubs were formed & they bought 300,000 "Looking Backward"--but here are your Labor Clubs already formed, & numbering a million men, & they have no Gospels thus far except very serious ones & sometimes dreary.

We don't want a 50¢ book but a 25¢ or a 15¢. My books have all got to be brought down to 25¢ as soon as we can stand it (Letter to Fred Hall, December 1, 1891, Berg Collection, N.Y.).

Clemens's view of *A Connecticut Yankee* as a potential "gospel" for the American labor organizations is a compelling indication of his own lingering impression of the book's socio-political relevance, even though mixed up with so much wishful, wistful thinking of how he might boost his own sales. Discouraged by his publisher from pursuing cheap editions, he soon abandoned the notion.

In the *Yankee*, Clemens had allowed himself to indulge in a cultural fantasy shared by Hawthorne and to some extent by James: the transformation of British society by the formerly

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132 Square brackets in the second paragraph of this letter are mine; the square brackets in the fourth paragraph are Clemens's. Clemens describes his book as an alternative to Edward Bellamy's popular utopian romance, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*, published in 1888. Bellamy depicts an American future in which social engineering controlled by the state has resulted in a just and beneficial society for all. The Nationalist Party and Nationalist Clubs were formed to promote the principles of the book.

In a letter written to his English publisher, Andrew Chatto, prior to the British publication of *A Connecticut Yankee* in 1889, Clemens had previously asserted that "the book was not written for America, it was written for England." It attempted, he maintained, "to pry up the English nation to a little higher level of manhood..." (Welland, 135).
dispossessed American. But the implications of that egalitarian 'modernisation' were more candidly disturbing than anyone, including Clemens, seemed prepared to recognise.

In *The Prince and the Pauper* and in the Colonel Sellers fictions, Clemens focused on legitimate or delusional claimants. Yet false claimants, or impostors, are a characteristic feature of his literary works, and appear both within and beyond the bounds of his novels, extending into both his autobiographical and travel writing. Hank Morgan is undoubtedly the most extreme representative of this generally motley and conniving group. In Clemens's American travel narrative, *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), the false claims and deceptions of pretenders are recurring motifs which serve to unify a diverse stream of anecdotal material. As previously suggested in my consideration of James, this text can be profitably compared to *The American Scene* insofar as each documents a return to the locus of the writer's youth after a prolonged absence, and each is reflecting on aspects of American life and culture that have been overtaken by post-Civil War industrialisation.133 James's interest in the

133 Both Clemens and James comment on the modern fate of the house in which they passed their youth.

In *The American Scene*, James locates his former home in Boston's Ashburton Place, deeming it "a conscious memento, with old secrets to keep and old stories to witness for" (164). Returning a month later, he finds the house has been levelled: "if I had often seen how fast history could be made I had doubtless never so felt that it could be unmade still faster" (James 1987, 164-165).

In his hometown of Hannibal, Missouri, Clemens observes:
modern and all that it presages for American society preserves his
text from becoming an exercise in nostalgia; Clemens's book lacks the
interest provided by New York's hordes of immigrants, but instead
describes a transient culture of frauds, impostures and the
occasional claimant, the most prominent of whom is the author himself.
The night watchman and false claimant Howells had found so improbable
seven years earlier in "Old Times on the Mississippi" is preserved
here in the same cameo role.

Not only does the narrator Twain relate how he usurped his
literary identity from Isaiah Sellers. He explains how, at the
outset of his journey and after an absence of twenty-one years,
he decided that "from a business point of view, it would be an advantage
to disguise our party with fictitious names" (Twain 1982, 361).

He is almost immediately recognised by the desk clerk at
a St. Louis hotel when he attempts to register under his alias.
It is, he remarks:

An unpromising beginning for a fraudulent career.

On my way through town to the hotel, I saw the house
which was my home when I was a boy. At present rates, the
people who now occupy it are of no more value than I am;
but in my time they would have been worth not less than five
hundred dollars apiece. They are colored folk (548).

Despite their stylistic divergence, (in Clemens's case, the
observation resounds with paradoxical irony, as the ex-slaves monetary
devaluation is a direct result of their new status as free individuals rather
than chattels) both these passages seem to reflect on the pace of 'progress',
changing values, and the sometimes dismaying, seemingly diminishing effect of
these changes upon the individual.
We started to the supper room, and met two other men whom I had known elsewhere. How odd and unfair it is: wicked impostors go around lecturng under my nom de guerre, and nobody suspects them, but when an honest man attempts an imposture, he is exposed at once (363).

Late in his journey Clemens returns to reminiscences of his former years as a pilot's apprentice on the Mississippi. In Chapter Fifty, entitled The "Original Jacobs", he relates the history of Isaiah Sellers and acknowledges him as the original "Mark Twain". After some intervening "Reminiscences" in Chapter Fifty-One, a chapter entitled "A Burning Brand" details the history of a "remarkable" fraudulent letter, supposedly written by an illiterate ex-con to a prisoner who has inspired the former inmate's reform:

...you no I was brought up in a poor ouse until I run away, & that i never new who my father and mother was & i dont no my rite name, & I hope you wont be mad at me, but i have as much rite to one name as another & i have taken your name, for you wont use it when you get out i no, & you are the man i think most of in the world, so i hope you wont be mad...(531).

In following up the social history of this document, the narrator asserts that the letter was proclaimed from many a pulpit as evidence of the power of Christian example to affect a total reform and conversion of character. Ultimately, it was discovered to be "a complete swindle", written by the prisoner to whom it is addressed in an attempt to start a popular movement advocating his release from prison.
The parallels with the account of how Clemens acquired his pen name are striking, with the 'evidence' in both cases resting upon a written document. The false pretense of assuming another's name is reiterated as both a clever and a criminal act.

In the record of his contemporary journey following the earlier recollections, the narrator becomes increasingly involved with the idea of burial practices as he confronts the various influences of the South's multicultural past. In a passage omitted from the published version of the chapter entitled "Hygiene and Sentiment", he opts for burning rather than burial in what seems a metaphorical bid to thoroughly eradicate the cultural stranglehold of the past upon the post-Civil War American South:

Leaving sentimentality out--and the unreasoning and unreasonable prejudices got by inheritance--the arguments are all on the side of cremation, none in favor of inhumation (Twain 1984b, 308).

Several chapters on, the narrator's consideration of cultural tradition turns to Mardi-Gras, and from Mardi-Gras and revolution to romantic literature, particularly to the "enchantments" of Sir Walter Scott, who is indicted as having had:

...so large a hand in making Southern character, as it existed before the war, that he is in great measure responsible for the war (501).

Scott's novels alone, Clemens contends, were sufficient to affect the ante-bellum South with a "Sir Walter Scott sham civilization" which in part persists as the "jejeune romanticism of
a past that is dead, and out of charity ought to be buried" (500).

The characters of two sham foreigners, the *soi-disant* Duke of Bridgewater and the Dauphin in *Huckleberry Finn* (1884), are perhaps too well-known to warrant full discussion here, except to note that their portrayal as colorful Shakespearean rogues is an early occurrence in Clemens's works of the impostor motif appearing in conjunction with Shakespeare's texts. This theme would be more fully explored in *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, an 'autobiographical' fragment published in 1906.

*Is Shakespeare Dead?: From My Autobiography* is at once a joke and an irresolvably vexed question about cultural inheritance, variations of which Clemens began telling and asking in *The Innocents Abroad*. In that early travel narrative, Clemens's band of irreverent 'dissenters' from the pilgrim ranks hit upon a joke with which they tirelessly bedevil their tour guides. Standing before a bust of Columbus, an Egyptian mummy, or the skull of a monk in a Capuchin convent, the "boys" deflect the guide's encouragement to participate in the customary tourist veneration of cultural artefacts with the disingenuous question: "Is--is he dead?" (Mark Twain 1984a, 231-233; 239).

That American joke, expressing resistance to being subsumed by European culture, must have come to Clemens's mind again when, after living in Paris for a period, he worked up "Is He Living or Is
"He Dead?", a tale about the Barbizon School painter François Millet, first published in the magazine *Cosmopolitan* in September 1893.

H. W. Janson's *History of Art* describes Millet's style as derivative, a "diluted and sentimentalized version" of Honoré Daumier's, who painted social scenes of modern life as well as depicting such romantic literary figures as Don Quixote. Millet instead concentrated on landscapes and scenes of rural life (Janson 1969, 484-485). Louis J. Budd's notes for the tale in the Library of America edition of Twain's *Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches & Essays* record that the market value of Millet's paintings was inflated by his death. In 1889, an American dealer purchased Millet's 'Angelus' -- one of the artist's most admired paintings and one specifically mentioned in the Twain story -- for five hundred and fifty thousand francs, a fact which almost certainly had not escaped the author's attention (Twain 1992b, 1022).

Clemens's fictional history describes Millet's career as a fraud perpetrated by a group of neglected artists upon a fickle public. Millet and his friends launch what is essentially a marketing coup and a hoax death:

Yes, one of us must die, to save the others - and himself. We will all cast lots. The one chosen shall be illustrious, all of us shall be rich (113).

The tale is related by one of Millet's co-conspirators, who
begins his revelation by drawing the narrator's attention to a
story by Hans Christian Anderson in which a caged bird dies,
neglected by a thoughtless child, and concludes:

...it isn't children only who starve poets to death
and then spend enough on their funerals and monuments
to have kept them alive and made them easy and
comfortable (110).

Written at a time when Clemens himself was beset by debt,
the story seems a thinly veiled reproach to the reader from a
'poet' or 'artist' who is feeling unloved and neglected by his
public. Yet the tale also explores issues of originality and
indebtedness and suggests that factors other than aesthetic
merit determine the negotiation of an artist's place within
the cultural canon. Clemens apparently adapted this tale
in a stage comedy entitled "Is He Dead?" which according to

a Times Weekly edition report was to be "produced simultaneously
in London and New York" (London, 4 February, 1898, 77).

He subsequently wrote to the advisor directing his chaotic business
affairs, Henry Huddleston Rogers, asking him for undisclosed reasons
to burn the manuscript (Smith and Gibson, eds., II, 671, n. 4).

The title of his 1906 essay also resonates with Clemens's
own observations to the press in 1897 that reports of his death

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134 A number of thematic comparisons about the intersection of the
art world, the art collector and the public may be drawn between
Clemens's story and dramatic project and James's later play and
subsequent novelisation "The Outcry".
were "an exaggeration"; the title might even reflect an implicit acknowledgment that at some point in the near future he would no longer be alive to dispute such questions as "Is Mark Twain Dead?".

Clemens's framing of the Shakespeare question in the format of his much repeated 'American' joke about cultural influence and canon construction suggests that *Is Shakespeare Dead?: From My Autobiography* should not be taken as entirely straightforward.

Clemens's contribution to the question of Shakespeare's authorship moves the nineteenth-century discussion on from the issue of attribution to a more wide-ranging deconstruction of how authors acquire their cultural authority. This emphatically satirical essay humorously and hyperbolically attempts to analyse the motivation behind the clamour of all previously expressed doubts about Shakespeare's authorship. In a carefully contrived recollection which illustrates and emphasises the social dynamic involved in the construction of literary authority, Clemens skilfully mocks both the Baconian and Shakespeare camps in their vociferous attempts to vest a singular, legitimising cultural authority in a largely unknown figure painstakingly constructed over the centuries following his death.

Clemens establishes his own credentials as someone whose interest in the Shakespeare authorship question may be traced back to his years of apprenticeship on a Mississippi steamboat:
"It is an interest which was born of Delia Bacon's book - away back in that ancient day..." (Twain 1909, 4). He questions the lucidity of his own reading of Shakespeare, acknowledging the indelible influence of a previous reader, Mississippi pilot George Ealer, whose oral readings were interspersed with navigational commands: "...I have never since been able to read Shakespeare in a calm and sane way" (6). Clemens facetiously describes his own conversion to the Baconian Theory, born of this desire to distract Ealer, an argumentative and fierce Shakespearean:

Then the thing happened which has happened to more persons than to me when principle and personal interest found themselves in opposition to each other and a choice had to be made: I let principle go, and went over to the other side. Not the entire way, but far enough to answer the requirements of the case. That is to say, I took this attitude, to wit: I only believed Bacon wrote Shakespeare, whereas I knew Shakespeare didn't. Ealer was satisfied with that, and the war broke loose. Study, practice, experience in handling my end of the matter presently enabled me to take my position almost seriously; a little bit later still, lovingly, gratefully, devotedly; finally: fiercely, rabidly, uncompromisingly. After that, I was wedded to my faith, I was theoretically ready to die

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135 Clemens features Ealer in "Old Times on the Mississippi", later included in *Life on the Mississippi*:

While we lay at landings, I listened to George Ealer's flute; or to his readings from his two bibles, that is to say, Goldsmith and Shakspeare; or I played chess with him..." (Mark Twain 1982, 353).

There is no mention of the fierce debate on the Shakespeare question which Clemens recalls so vividly in 1906.

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for it, and I looked down with compassion not unmixed with scorn, upon everybody else's faith that didn't tally with mine. That faith, imposed upon me by self-interest in that ancient day, remains my faith to-day, and in it I find comfort, solace, peace and never-failing joy. You see how curiously theological it is (10-11).

Viewed through Clemens's satirical eye, Delia Bacon simply did not go far enough. In challenging Shakespeare's authorship, she merely transferred authority from one supreme cultural icon onto the backs of an illustrious collective. She took her own individual and well-informed but idiosyncratic reading much too seriously, as an irrefutable cultural truth. Clemens broadly includes Shakespeare in a roll call of false claimants, historically ranked with the likes of Satan, Louis XVII, Arthur Orton and Mary Baker Eddy. In a section of his article entitled

136 Clemens begins his autobiographical fragment by suggesting the existence of an even greater body of his claimant material:

Scattered here and there through the stacks of unpublished manuscript which constitute this formidable Autobiography and Diary of mine, certain chapters will in some distant future be found which deal with "Claimants"—claimants historically notorious: Satan, Claimant; the Golden Calf, Claimant; the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan, Claimant; Louis XVII., Claimant; William Shakespeare, Claimant; Arthur Orton, Claimant;... Eminent Claimants, successful Claimants, defeated Claimants, royal Claimants, pleb Claimants, revered Claimants, despised Claimants, twinkle starlike here and there and yonder through the mists of history and legend and tradition—and oh, all the darling tribe are clothed in mystery and romance, and we read about them with deep interest and discuss them with loving sympathy or with rancorous resentment, according to which side we hitch ourselves to. It has always been so with the human race. There never was a Claimant that couldn't get a hearing, nor one that couldn't accumulate a rapturous following, no matter
"Irreverence", Clemens imagines a proliferation of authoritative readers posing idiosyncratic new challenges to Shakespeare's authorship and ironically protests:

We can't have that: there's enough of us already. If you go on widening and spreading and inflating the privilege, it will presently come to be conceded that each man's sacred things are the only ones, and the rest of the human race will have to be humbly reverent toward them or suffer for it. That can surely happen, and when it happens, the word Irreverence will be regarded as the most meaningless, and foolish, and self-conceited, and insolent, and impudent and dictatorial word in the language. And people will say, "Whose business is it, what gods I worship and what things hold sacred? Who has the right to dictate to my conscience, and where did he get that right?" (136-137)

Clemens thus proleptically describes what in fact was an ever more acutely perceived crisis of cultural and national legitimation throughout an increasingly secular and multicultural world. 'Foreseeing' the dissolution of cultural consensus, he facetiously advocates a crackdown on potential new truth claims and authorities:

We cannot afford to let that calamity come upon us. We must save the world from this destruction. There is but one way to do it, and that is, to stop the spread of the privilege, and strictly confine it to its present limits: that is, to all the Christian sects, to all the Hindus, and me. We do not need any more, the stock is watered enough, just as it is. It would be better if the privilege were limited to me alone (Ibid., 137).

In the aftermath of World War I, the Shakespeare question how flimsy and apparently unauthentic his claim might be (1-2).
Evidence of Shakespeare's influence upon Clemens and the American author's own indulgence in nineteenth-century Bardology has been extensively documented by such critics as Howard Baetzhold and James Hirsh. \(^{138}\) Clemens's notebooks and letters are a repository of references to Shakespeare, yet devoid of doubts about Shakespeare's authorship, and lacking any mention of Baconian theory. The first and last documented evidence of Clemens's supposedly long-held conviction is his highly satirical 'autobiographical' fragment. Clemens's first

\(^{137}\) In 1909, Eugene Angert challenged Clemens on his own terms in a satirical review of *Is Shakespeare Dead?* for the *North American Review*. As summarised by Justin Kaplan, Angert inquired:

>'Is Mark Twain dead?' and made out an amusing case for the probability that he had died in 1906 in an obscure village in Switzerland (Kaplan 1966, 383).

Further on in his article, Angert concludes:

...that the writer currently known as Mark Twain was as much an impostor as 'Mark Twain' said Shakespeare was (383).

Clemens would almost certainly have pleaded guilty as charged.

biographer, Albert Bigelow Paine, suggested that Clemens was in fact
an ardent Baconian, researching Baconian cyphers in Shakespeare's
texts, but perhaps he hadn't known him long or well enough to
suspect a joke\(^{139}\) (Paine 1912, III, 1466). Howells also
corroborates Clemens's conversion to Baconian theory, although
this may be Howells's own contribution to an irrefutable last hoax
by his old friend and literary colleague, something in the nature
of a final collaborative gesture.\(^{140}\) Clemens's true position in
relation to the Shakespeare question remains a vexed and open issue.
Sphinx-like, he seems to enjoy a view which takes in both sides of
the matter, and one which relegates Shakespeare to a fragment of his
own autobiography. For Clemens, all culture was theft and all
cultural authorities were frauds, claimants and impostors. He freely
criticised and consciously (when not unconsciously) 'plagiarised'
from English and French as well as black American culture. Clemens was
not a sham original, but like his version of Shakespeare, a real literary
impostor known as Mark Twain. Claiming to be a fraud was the closest
thing he could imagine to American cultural authenticity.

\(^{139}\) As Paine himself notes in the introduction to *Mark Twain's
Autobiography*: "It was in January, 1906 that the present writer
became associated with Mark Twain as his biographer" (Paine, ed.
1924, 1, ix).

\(^{140}\) In his memoir of Clemens, Howells describes some of Clemens's
work as "Shakespearian, or if his ghost will not suffer me the word, then
he was Baconian" (Howells 1967, 6).
Travel was Samuel Clemens's stock in trade, from his apprenticeship as a riverboat pilot on the Mississippi to his early forays into journalism, filing dispatches from Nevada, California, the Sandwich Islands, Central America, Europe and the Holy Land. He was Nevada correspondent for the San Francisco *Morning Call*, and subsequently a travelling correspondent for the *Californian* and the *Alta California*. His literary reputation was both made and secured through travel, as he first wrote about his travel adventures and then delivered them up on the lecture circuit. *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), his first book and first book-length travel narrative, remained his best known and best-selling work throughout his writing career. While this popular travelogue does not literally adopt the theme of Americans asserting their genealogical right to Old World titles and property, I would argue that *The Innocents Abroad*, in common with much of his travel literature, satirically strips away the pretentions of the American tourists' identification with the Old World to suggest the acquisitive, aggressive and often philistine nature motivating such determined cultural inheritors. In their eagerness to acquire the trappings of a cultural past, Clemens's pilgrims often disregard both the feelings and the proprietorial rights of the Old World's
present-day inhabitants. In a different genre and a radically different style, Clemens's travelogue, like James's closely contemporary tale "A Passionate Pilgrim", satirises the American tourist's exaggerated veneration and misguided identification with Old World culture.

Throughout his literary career, Clemens maintained a caustic regard for the motives and methods of fellow travellers and travel writers. In 1895, bankrupt and with such works as Roughing It (1872), A Tramp Abroad (1880), Life on the Mississippi (1883), and the epic fictional journey of Huckleberry Finn (1885) all behind him, Clemens set out on his own epic round-the-world lecture tour. The journey to repay his creditors would result in yet another work of travel literature, Following the Equator (1897), with a more extensive edition published in Britain that year as More Tramps Abroad.  

At the outset of that peripatetic year, preparing for his world tour and with his business interests driving him restlessly to and fro across the Atlantic, he nevertheless found time to lampoon Outre-Mer, an American travelogue by the French journalist, novelist and aesthete, Paul Bourget. "What Paul Bourget Thinks of Us" was published in the January 1895 issue of the North American Review. The project which Henry James had helped to nurture and, as previously noted, had

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141 Dennis Welland has detailed the significant liberties with and departures from the manuscript taken in the American edition, published by The American Publishing Company. He persuasively argues that "there is every reason to adopt More Tramps Abroad as the authentic and authorised text of this work, and Following the Equator as an abridged variant of it" (Welland 1978, 181-182).
privately praised as "the most literary & most courteous book ever written on the U.S." (see page 173, n. 71) struck Samuel Clemens as a subject for unrelenting satirical attack. This critical article is of particular interest because of what it so vehemently rejects in Bourget's view of America, but even more so because of the interpretative challenge implicit in Twain's burlesque, and what the piece suggests about his own approach to travel and travel-writing.

The essay by the American master of travel writing sounds its most positive note on *Outre-Mer* at the outset: "He reports the American joke correctly." (Twain 1992b, 164). Despite the tone of dispassionate objectivity which Clemens has seemingly contracted from his exposure to Bourget's text, the article initially appears to be little more than an exercise in nationalist pique, inspired by professional jealousy over the publicity Bourget's book has attracted. With a typically humorous mixture of exaggeration and irony, Clemens positions the perceived importance of Bourget's book:

I take a great interest in M. Bourget's chapters, for I know by the newspapers that there are several Americans who are expecting to get a whole education out of them; several who foresaw, and also foretold, that our long night was over, and a light almost divine about to break upon the land....

I was even disquieted myself, although I am of a cold, calm temperament and not easily disturbed. I feared for my country (164).

Turning the microscope on Bourget as, Clemens implies, Bourget had sought to place America under the microscope, the American
travel writer considers Bourget's method and, by implication, contrasts it with his own:

I saw by his own intimations that he was an Observer, and had a System — that used by naturalists and other scientists. The naturalist collects many bugs and reptiles and butterflies and studies their ways a long time patiently. By this means he is presently able to group these creatures into families and subdivisions of families by nice shadings of differences observable in their characters. Then he labels all those shaded bugs and things with nicely descriptive group names, and is now happy, for his great work is completed, and as a result he intimately knows every bug and shade of a bug there, inside and out. It may be true; but a person who was not a naturalist would feel safer about it if he had the opinion of the bug. I think it is a pleasant system, but subject to error (164-165).

Warming to his subject, Clemens demonstrates the appeal of national stereotyping, indicating the naked self-interest which is latent in Bourget's work so insistently that the satire seems about to sink into xenophobic prejudice:

M. Bourget, as teacher, would simply be France teaching America. It seemed to me that the outlook was dark, almost Egyptian, in fact. What would the new teacher, representing France, teach us? (165).

Having turned his criticism into the familiar pattern of a joke at the expense of a particular nationality or ethnic group, Clemens proposes and dismisses French superiority to the American system of railroading, steamshipping, steamboating, postal service, telegraphy, journalism, magazining, government, liberty, equality, fraternity, nobility, democracy, adultery, religion, morals, novel-writing and deportment. Of the French novel, he
observes:

M. Bourget and the others know only one plan, and when that is expurgated there is nothing left of the book (165).

Having dismissed "France teaching America" as an impossibility, Clemens modestly proposes:

There is only one expert who is qualified to examine the souls and the life of a people and make a valuable report--the native novelist (167).

This exaggerated and self-serving claim reflects pointedly back on the nationalist rant which precedes it and confirms the humorous intent of the exposition. Up to this point, the essay is either a burlesque or the author a megalomaniac (although admitting one does not entirely preclude the other). With this preamble concluded, Clemens proceeds to his more substantive argument, and to his serious critical objections to Bourget's book. He cites a passage from Outre Mer which concludes:

...I am therefore quite sure that this American soul, the principal interest and the great object of my voyage, appears behind the records of Newport for those who choose to see it. --M. Paul Bourget (168). [The italics are Clemens's, as are the square brackets in the following citation].

Clemens ripostes with ironic understatement:

[the italics are mine.] It is a large contract which he has undertaken.... We have been accused of being a nation addicted to inventing wild schemes. I trust that we shall be allowed to retire to second place now (168).

Having effectively skewered Bourget for nominating the
gilded elite of Newport as representative of a diverse nation,

Clemens proceeds to the most salient point of his arch offensive on

Bourget's American travelogue. Decrying both the search for and

the proposed discovery of the "American soul", he observes:

There isn't a single human characteristic that can be

safely labelled "American."...

Whenever you have found what seems to be an "American"

peculiarity, you have only to cross a frontier or two, or go
down or up in the social scale, and you perceive that it has
disappeared. And you can cross the Atlantic and find it
again (169).

Of M. Bourget's generalised assertions of a national

character, the consummate American travel writer observes:

M. Bourget collects a hatful of airy inaccuracies
and dissolves them in a panful of assorted abstractions,
and runs the charge into a mould and turns you out a compact
principle which will explain an American girl, or an
American woman, or why new people yearn for old things, or
any other impossible riddle which a person wants answered.

It seems to be conceded that there are a few human
peculiarities that can be generalized and located here and
there in the world and named by the name of the nation
where they are found. I wonder what they are. ...I think
that there is but a single specialty with us, only one thing
that can be called by the wide name "American." That is the
national devotion to ice-water (172).

This 'characteristic' beverage preference, Clemens concludes,
is soon dispelled by travel, thus satirically dismissing any

attempt to construct or construe a national identity. As if to

underscore the political incorrectness of Bourget's method, he

concludes his article with a blatantly spurious 'reminiscence' in

which Napoleon engages him in a seemingly endless exchange of
insults about ancestry posing as witticisms based on national traits. Throughout this essay, Clemens repeatedly turns the rhetorical tables on Bourget, deriving a certain satisfaction from stereotyping Bourget as typically French even as he denounces Bourget's seemingly ethnological attempt to define the American character. Clemens's exaggerations explode the appeal of Bourget's detached amusement to reveal the aggression and prejudice latent in nationalistic discourse, yet his broad burlesque of Bourget's style and method engages the reader through the very kind of national prejudice that Clemens seemingly deplores. Roasting the Frenchman with his own critical equipment seems an ingenious response to an ill-conceived project. Yet Bourget's 'study' is not at all smug or satirical in tone, and Clemens's obvious ire leaves the reader feeling queasy about the source of his literary pleasure and wondering where in one's reading of this essay the burlesque starts and stops.

Clemens had previously considered the American travelogues of European writers in *Life on the Mississippi*. He finds these

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142 Clemens's survey and critique of those travel writers of a previous generation (mostly British, but he includes DeToqueville) was largely omitted from the first edition of the book. These passages are included in the holograph manuscript of *Life on the Mississippi*, presented by Clemens to J. Pierpont Morgan in 1909 and now housed in the Morgan Library, New York. The 1984 Penguin edition annotated and introduced by James M. Cox restores these passages, following a precedent established by Willis Wager for the 1944 Heritage Press edition.
authors, as he would find Bourget, all too easily duped by the American propensity to entertain outsiders with tall tales dressed up as local history:

Unfortunate tourists! People humbugged them with stupid and silly lies, and then laughed at them for believing and printing the same. They told Mrs. Trollope that the alligators—or crocodiles, as she calls them—were terrible creatures, and backed up the statement with a blood-curdling account of how one of these slandered reptiles crept into a squatter cabin one night, and ate up a woman and five children. The woman, by herself, would have satisfied any ordinarily-impossible alligator; but no, these liars must make him gorge the five children besides (Twain 1982, 472).

In contrast with his assessment of Outre-Mer, this earlier account finds much to admire and endorse in the observations of previous travel writers:

The foreign tourists spoke, softly and politely, some dreadfully plain truths about us, but the facts were at hand to justify them (1984, 297).

From this generally admirable past procession of literary observers of American life, Clemens selects for particular criticism the "Author of Cyril Thornton, Etc., (no other brand given)", referring to a passage in which the author is repelled by the New York fashion for breakfasting on raw egg:

Existing documentary evidence is inconclusive as to whether this material was suppressed as being too sensitive, or was simply considered extraneous or surplus to requirement. Whatever the reason for the omission of these observations, the combined passages on foreign travel writers in America suggest a thorough and discriminating consideration of his literary predecessors in the genre.
That is one of the most human paragraphs that was ever written. It is full to the brim with the unconscious self-righteousness that is so big a part of our nature. Because this observer and his countrymen do not prepare their eggs in this way, it is necessarily "nasty!" It never occurred to him to doubt that this was an all-sufficient rule and test. His own breakfast would be "nasty" to a squirrel, that dainty creature; but he did not think of that, and would not have allowed it to soften his intolerance if he had 143 (1984, 223).

Clemens's later irritation with Bourget would seem to stem largely from what he perceived as similar shortcomings in Bourget's cultural comparisons and the French writer's failure to interrogate his own cultural assumptions.144 Challenging the

143 The author of The Youth and Manhood of Cyril Thornton (1827) is Thomas Hamilton (1789-1842), a Scotsman who, after a lacklustre academic career, embarked upon a military career. He was engaged in active service in the Peninsular War, and served in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick during the American War of 1812. According to the editor of a recent edition, his largely autobiographical novel, a vivid and popular tale, was kept "more or less in print until the 1880s" (Hamilton 1990, ed. Maurice Lindsay, xiii). A friend of Walter Scott, Hamilton undertook an extended tour of the U.S. in 1831, including a journey down the Mississippi from Louisville to New Orleans, in order to write Men and Manners in America, a harshly critical book which Lindsay observes complains:

...of governmental corruption, the differing constitutions of the member States, their penal and scholastic systems, the dress and appearance of American womenfolk in the more remote areas and what he regarded as their linguistic barbarities (ibid., xiv).

144 As Dennis Welland has observed, Bourget's position as an outspoken anti-Dreyfusard would have sufficed to arouse Clemens's hostility. The unacknowledged issue of the Dreyfus case (1894-1906) may thus have influenced the disturbingly vehement tone of the essay. In Paris, Twain was outraged at the attack of the French press on Dreyfus and proposed to write a highly topical book on the issue. In a letter to his British publisher Andrew Chatto, Clemens described the Dreyfus Affair as "The first real-
preconceptions and institutionalised prejudices of American culture was the essential rockbed of Twain's characteristic style of satirical humour, a tendency so compelling that it saturated all his writing, from his sprawling autobiography to his fiction and travel narratives. The author of *Life on the Mississippi* contextualises his criticism of the "author of Cyril Thornton, Etc." by pointing out that such culturally blinkered judgements were the exception rather than the rule, at least for an earlier generation of travel writers:

> I am only quoting from him because he is amusing. His book differs from the books of most of the other foreign tourists of that day, in this - that it is not dignified, not brave, and not tolerant. One respects Mrs. Trollope, because she stands to her guns with such good soldierly pluck and honest purpose; applies the match with disrelish sometimes, and even pain - but applies it, nevertheless (1984, 223).\(^{145}\)

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\(^{145}\) A generation earlier, Washington Irving was much less sanguine in his estimation of "English Writers on America" which appeared in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* in 1819-20. In this chapter, Irving observes:

> They are capable of judging only of the surface of things; of those matters which come in contact with their private interests and personal gratifications (Irving 1988, 44).

Although he concludes in customary fashion by extolling England as "a perpetual volume of reference... wherewith to strengthen and to embellish our national character" he fiercely attacks the English writers' "national prejudices":

> They are the inveterate diseases of old countries, contracted in rude and ignorant ages, when nations knew but little of each other, and looked beyond their own boundaries with distrust and hostility (48).

Clemens, generally far more critical of English culture than Irving, seems in this instance, albeit with the benefit of some sixty years additional history and
Rather than produce his own similarly ill-informed studies of alien cultures, Clemens's travel writings focus on the traveller rather than the cultural itinerary as the true subject of the book. As its title suggests, The Innocents Abroad is not so much a book about European and near eastern travel as it is a portrait of American tourists on a package tour marketed as a cultural pilgrimage. Ultimately, like the best of Clemens's travelogues, it is presented as autobiography couched in the genre of a travel narrative, with the narrator as anti-hero exploring his personal difference not only from foreigners with outlandish customs, but also from his American travelling companions. These 'pilgrims', as Clemens describes them, seem to dismiss the Old World's present inhabitants as inconvenient, comic foreigners. These denizens are either ignored or mocked by the Americans, who are intent upon taking possession of Europe's literary past.

commentary, to have adopted a broader and more balanced view. Yet the comments of English travellers continued to rankle. In 1878 he resolved to "Write an Englishman's Tour of America" (Mark Twain's Notebooks and Journals, 2, 68). The idea was possibly rekindled for Clemens by Matthew Arnold's "Civilization in the United States", as in his journal of August 1890 - June 1891 he returned to the seemingly inexhaustable market for: "Impressions of America"... Information obtained from 2 sources - personal observation and some other flitting Englishman." (Mark Twain's Notebooks & Journals, 1979, 3, 605). In The American Claimant Clemens finally puts his idea into practice, as young Lord Berkeley arrives in the United States and begins writing up his own "Impressions of America".

146 The lecture Clemens delivered on an extensive American tour following his six-month excursion on the Quaker City was more pointedly entitled "The American Vandal Abroad" (Fischer, Frank and Salarno, eds.1995, 4, 512 and Twain 1992b, 964).
Critical opinion of *The Innocents Abroad* and of Clemens and his views at the time of writing the book has undergone radical reevaluation in recent years. For scholars, taking Twain seriously has often resulted in literal and unified interpretations which disallowed Clemens's characteristic humour as a 'low' and popularising element or reduced it to a psychoanalytic symptom of the author's insecurity. Justin Kaplan, Clemens's leading biographer in the latter half of the twentieth century, depicts the author of *The Innocents Abroad* as an intellectually unsophisticated and unquestioning promoter of the American way of life:

Clemens had gone to Europe and the Holy Land on the *Quaker City* a representative democrat certain of the moral and material superiority of the American present to the historical past, of the New World to the Old (1966, 154).

This construction allows Kaplan to promote Clemens's intellectual, political and artistic development as an author in subsequent works.\(^{147}\)

Certainly *The Innocents Abroad* is a satirical attempt to

\(^{147}\) Kaplan's interpretation owes much to Clemens's frequent representations of the narrator as a naive primitive, a proxy for the common reader, whose first reactions to new experiences are often exaggerated and unreflecting rejections of cultural difference. It overlooks the narrator's revisions of these first impressions as he looks beyond his own prejudices to assess the truth or error of his own cultural preconceptions. It also allows him to locate Clemens's first extended, rigorous cultural criticism within the more aesthetically esteemed genre of the novel. Kaplan's passage continues:

In the five years since, his attitude had become more troubled, less simplistic, an index of his growing bewilderment by America in *The Gilded Age* (Kaplan 1966, 154).
deflate American reverence for Old World culture and provide his readers with a less pious, more discriminating attitude to European cultural influence. Yet it is not a text in which the United States and its self-styled emissaries, the American tourists, are portrayed as superior to their surroundings and circumstances.

In the earliest chapters, Clemens persistently invokes that most hallowed of national symbols, the American flag, in ironic contexts which do little to suggest or encourage self-congratulatory patriotism. On the rain-swept day of the Quaker City's departure: "The gallant flag was up, but it was under the spell, too, and hung limp and disheartened by the mast" (25).

A potentially stirring send-off proves equally anti-climactic:

...and we were off--the pic-nic was begun! Two very mild cheers went up from the dripping crowd on the pier; we answered them gently from the slippery decks; the flag made an effort to wave, and failed; the "battery of guns" spake not--the ammunition was out (25).

The American flag figures prominently in a description of the scene on shipboard when the Quaker City sails into the Straits of Gibraltar. With the coast of Spain for the first time in view on one hand and Africa on the other, the passengers are instead distracted by an approaching vessel:

She came speeding over the sea like a great bird. Africa and Spain were forgotten. All homage was for the beautiful stranger. While everybody gazed, she swept superbly by and flung the Stars and Stripes to the breeze!
Quicker than thought, hats and handkerchiefs flashed in the air, and a cheer went up! She was beautiful before -- she was radiant now. Many a one on our decks knew then for the first time how tame a sight his country's flag is at home compared to what it is in a foreign land. To see it is to see a vision of home itself and all its idols, and feel a thrill that would stir a very river of sluggish blood! (51).

In sight of the very cradle of civilization, the latter day 'pilgrims' are instead enthused by a familiar symbol of their homeland, which conveniently serves to extricate Clemens from the necessity of vying with the guidebooks for an appropriate description on this occasion. Any indications of irony in this passage are confined to such distancing turns of phrase as "many a one" rather than "we" and the calculated implication of false worship in the flag's national representation not merely of "home itself" but "all its idols". The author's own emotional position in the Straits of Gibraltar is impossible to locate, and it is possible that he enjoyed the overwhelming "thrill" of nationalism and yet managed to mine the incongruous irony of the occasion at one and the same time.

The narrator's next stirring glimpse of his country's flag occurs in the suburbs of Paris, where he and a travelling companion have gone to seek out a pleasure garden renowned as a favorite trysting spot, and where such dissipated dances as the can-can are performed nightly. Amidst the grounds of this garden in Asnières, the narrator is astonished by the sight
of "the Star Spangled Banner of America" floating over all, which
"nearly took my breath away" (107). Demanding explanation, he
learns that the owner of the place is an American -- a New Yorker
-- who is turning quite a profit in his popular Parisan night-
spot:

Crowds, composed of both sexes and nearly all ages,
were frisking about the garden or sitting in the open air
in front of the flag-staff and the temple, drinking wine and
coffee, or smoking. The dancing had not begun yet (107).

In this instance, the association of the revered national symbol
with exotic sensuous pleasures, proudly conjoined in one American's
pursuit of international profit, seems an explicitly satirical
glimpse of New World exploitation of and participation in Old World
dissipation, requiring no further comment or commitment on the
part of the narrator.

After so much flag waving in the first hundred pages of
The Innocents Abroad, the Stars and Stripes fade from view,
the only further reflection on this symbol of national identity
occurring in the course of the group's tour of Jordan, when the
American tourists receive welcome shelter and hospitality from
the hermit monks of Mars Saba, and then it is the monks' stoicism,
including their absence of fealty to any flag that is noted, initially
with considerable antipathy:

All that is lovable, beautiful, worthy, they have put
far away from them, against all things that are pleasant
to look upon, and all sounds that are music to the ear, they
have barred their massive doors and reared their relentless walls of stone forever. They have banished the tender grace of life and left only the sapped and skinny mockery. Their lips are lips that never kiss and never sing; their hearts are hearts that never hate and never love; their breasts are breasts that never swell with the sentiment, "I have a country and a flag." They are dead men who walk (478).

Clemens effectively restates the conventional horror of the convent as a living tomb, which is a motif linked to protestantism and enlightenment narratives, perpetuated in the nineteenth century in many gothic romances and consciously manipulated as a gothic device by such American writers as Edgar Allan Poe and Clemens's contemporary Henry James. Yet the narrator immediately sets to work to revise his gothic first impression, noting:

One's first thought is not likely to be strictly accurate, yet it is no crime to think it and none to write it down, subject to modification by later experience (478).

Upon reflection, the narrator's 'horror' turns to warm admiration and gratitude for those men who have renounced all ephemeral allegiances in the interest of a greater humanity:

They knew we were foreigners and Protestants, and not likely to feel admiration or much friendship toward them. But their large charity was above considering such things. They simply saw in us men who were hungry, and thirsty, and

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148 In James's *The American* (1876-1877), Christopher Newman is deprived of his fiancée, the aristocratic Claire de Cintre, who withdraws to a convent rather than marry him in opposition to her family, or marry a wealthy aristocrat she does not love, in keeping with her family's designs.
tired, and that was sufficient. They opened their doors and gave us welcome (478-479).

Despite himself, the narrator is moved to respectful admiration for this transnational, Catholic institution:

I have been educated to enmity toward every thing that is Catholic, and sometimes, in consequence of this, I find it much easier to discover Catholic faults than Catholic merits. But there is one thing I feel no disposition to overlook, and no disposition to forget: and that is, the honest gratitude I and all pilgrims owe, to the Convent Fathers in Palestine. Their doors are always open, and there is always a welcome for any worthy man who comes, whether he comes in rags or clad in purple (479).

The American 'pilgrims' are the primary object of Clemens's satire and the incongruous juxtaposition of these New World tourists with the sites and associations of classical literature is the occasion for much of the book's humour:

We all stood in the vast theatre of ancient Ephesus -- the stone-benched amphitheatre, I mean -- and had our picture taken. We looked as proper there as we would look any where, I suppose. We do not embellish the general desolation of a desert much. We add what dignity we can to a stately ruin with our green umbrellas and jackasses, but it is little. However, we mean well (Twain 1984a, 333).

The pilgrims are in fact forever failing to live up to the occasion of their encounters with the Old World, and there is a certain loss of dignity (and gain in comic effect) attending upon travelling en masse. They frequently do not manage to make landfall, as the ship is quarantined at many a port on their itinerary. In Jerusalem, the narrator entertains and expands upon the saga of the Wandering Jew, contrasting his eternal journey with
that of the present excursion:

The old tourist is far away on his wanderings, now. How he must smile to see a pack of blockheads like us, galloping about the world, and looking wise, and imagining we are finding out a good deal about it! He must have a consuming contempt for the ignorant, complacent asses that go scurrying about the world in these railroading days and call it travelling (461).

The insistent use of collective pronouns in this paragraph confirms the narrator's identification with the party he is characterising as a "pack of blockheads", his imaginative and sympathetic portrayal of the Wandering Jew simultaneously invites the reader to distinguish the author-as-wandering-journalist from the group he is depicting, to assign to the author certain shared affinities with the legendary traveller.

On other occasions, the narrator more specifically differentiates himself from the group he characterises as "pilgrims", and the portrait of his travelling companions is not invariably humorous or affectionate. When the excursionists do actually reach their destinations, they routinely attempt to come away with souvenirs. Tourist vandalism reaches a fever pitch when the pilgrims reach the Holy Land:

The incorrigible pilgrims have come in with their pockets full of specimens broken from the ruins. I wish this vandalism could be stopped. They broke off fragments from Noah's tomb, from the exquisite sculptures of the temples of Baalbec; from the houses of Judas and Ananias, in Damascus; from the tomb of Nimrod the Mighty Hunter in Jonesborough; from the worn Greek and Roman inscriptions
set in the hoary walls of the Castle of Banias; and now they have been hacking and chipping these old arches here that Jesus looked upon in the flesh. Heaven protect the Sepulchre when this tribe invades Jerusalem (373).

Although there is humour in the exaggerated terms of the vandalism and the narrator's mock dismay in contemplating such desecration, the depiction of the pilgrims as a barbarian horde looting and pillaging from every scene and object of cultural interest is established as a vivid motif. The moral climate in which such trophy-taking is conducted will darken with every new transgression.

In the town of Nain in Syria, the group of excursionists visit the spot where according to the Gospel of St. Luke, Jesus miraculously raised a widow's son from the dead:

A little mosque stands upon the spot which tradition says was occupied by the widow's dwelling. Two or three aged Arabs sat about its door. We entered, and the pilgrims broke specimens from the foundation walls, though they had to touch, and even step upon, the "praying carpets" to do it. It was almost the same as breaking pieces from the hearts of those old Arabs. To step rudely upon the sacred praying mats, with booted feet—a thing not done by any Arab—was to inflict pain upon men who had not offended us in any way (432).

Clemens thus exposes not only the American "pilgrims" naiveté and ignorance, but also their selfish acquisitiveness and insensitivity to others outside their own cultural experience.

The narrator's impression of the sheepish, well-meaning group collected in the ancient amphitheatre of Ephesus just one hundred
pages earlier has taken on a more sharply satirical and critical
dimension.149

Locating the ruins of Beth-el, where according to the narrator
"Jacob lay down and had that superb vision of angels flitting up and
down a ladder", the vandals once again spring into action:

The pilgrims took what was left of the hallowed ruin, and
we pressed on toward the goal of our crusade, renowned
Jerusalem (442).

The tour, which began in a high-minded spirit of reverent
cultural worship, has somehow acquired an overtone of national
aggression and transgression, encountering the celebrated sites

149 Clemens apparently voiced a harsher opinion of the Quaker
City 'pilgrims' in a letter to Joseph T. Goodman, editor of the
Virginia City *Territorial Enterprise*, as reported by Goodman
in the 1 December 1867 issue of that newspaper:

In a private letter to the editor of this paper, dated
"Cadiz, Spain, October 24, 1867" "Mark Twain" says:
"Between you and I, (I haven't let it out yet, but
am going to,) this pleasure party of ours is composed of
the d_deest, rustiest, ignorant, vulgar, slimy, psalm-
singing cattle that could be scraped up in seventeen States.
They wanted Holy Land, and they got it. It was a stunner.
It is an awful trial to a man's religion to waltz it
through the Holy Land." (Smith, Bucci and Salerno, eds. 1990, 2, 101).

A general account of Clemens's antagonistic relationship with
the Quaker City tour group is included in the notes for this
letter *(Ibid.,* 102-103, n. 2-4).

Filing a final report for the New York Herald immediately
upon his return, he described the tour as "a funeral
excursion without a corpse", a description calculated, he
told his family, to "make the Quakers get up & howl."
Writing to J.R. Young on November 22, he once again
privately lambasted "the Quaker City's strange menagerie of
ignorance, imbecility, bigotry & dotage" *(Lauber 1985, 215; 288-289, n. 2).*
of Western civilization becomes the occasion for mock cultural
conquest and coincidental material devastation.

Clemens makes great play of the Americans' efforts as
an invading force, albeit a rather timid and ineffective
one. His description of the 'taking' of Athens and the Acropolis
by a small landing party who covertly slip ashore off the
quarantined ship is one of the most infectiously hilarious
passages in the book:

Xerxes took that mighty citadel four hundred and eighty
years before Christ, when his five millions of soldiers
and camp-followers followed him to Greece, and if we
four Americans could have remained unmolested five minutes
longer, we could have taken it too.
The garrison had turned out—four Greeks. We clamoured at
the gate, and they admitted us. (Bribery and corruption) (273).

When the narrator turns his attention from the pilgrims to
impressions of the Old World, the experience invariably reflects
more tellingly upon American culture than the older civilization,
and any serious attempt at cultural comparison is resisted, even
rejected as requiring an unobtainable degree of cultural
objectivity. Clemens in fact makes a joke of the effects of
cultural determinism on the part of "the old masters" in their
visual narrations of cultural history:

Any one who is acquainted with the old masters will
comprehend how much the Last Supper is damaged when
I say that the spectator can not really tell, now,
whether the disciples are Hebrews or Italians. These
ancient painters never succeeded in denationalizing them-

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Dutch painted Dutch Virgins, the Virgins of the French painters were Frenchwomen—none of them ever put into the face of the Madonna that indescribable something which proclaims the Jewess, whether you find her in New York, in Constantinople, in Paris, Jerusalem, or in the Empire of Morocco (153).

When he does attempt to compare the familiar with the foreign, the narrator of *The Innocents Abroad* facetiously seeks to confine himself to a crude consideration of geophysical aspects. Arriving in northern Italy, he deliberates at considerable length over whether Lake Como is finer than Lake Tahoe. The similarity of the names may have had much to do with the association. That this is just the sort of seemingly acultural consideration a philistine American tourist would delight in, concluding that the lake of one's homeland is by far the finer, could not have escaped his attention. The subject is mined for satirical effect, and the comparison turns out to be inescapably cultural after all.

Clemens begins his chapter with a curious tirade against the working-class policeman who had fumigated the arriving tour group "to guard themselves against the cholera, though we hailed from no infected port" (157). Taking umbrage, Clemens maligns the cleanliness of the Italian officers, castigating them in his most gleeful, maliciously bigoted fashion as "fumigating, macaroni-stuffing organ grinders" (158). The association of these malodorous primitives with the beauty of the alpine lake affects the narrator's deliberations. Just
as his reasoning has reached the point at which, in comparison with Lake Tahoe, "the conviction comes strong upon me again that Como would only seem a bedizened little courtier in that august presence", the origins of the name "Tahoe" and the spectre of the aboriginal namers of the lake appear permanently to distract him from any final judgement:

"Tahoe means grasshoppers. It means grasshopper soup. ...I am satisfied it was named by the Diggers—those degraded savages who roast their dead relatives, then mix the human grease and ashes of bones with tar, and "gaum" it thick all over their heads and foreheads and ears, and go caterwauling about the hills and call it *mourning*. These are the gentry that named the Lake (161)."

The cultural parallels constructed by the narrator are between the Italian policemen as heirs and guardians of Lake Como and

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150 According to *The Concise Dictionary of American Place Names*, "Tahoe" simply means "lake" in the Washo language. (Stewart 1970, 471). A recent edition of the *Nevada Handbook*, which includes an account of Clemens's visit to Lake Tahoe in July 1861, specifies that the Washo "spoke a Hokin dialect, separating them ethnologically from their Paiute neighbours" and that the Washo called the lake "Da Ow A Ga, meaning 'edge of the lake'." The guide speculates that "Tahoe" might derive from the Spanish "tajar, meaning 'sheer cliffs.'" The editor adds that "at contact there were an estimated 3,100 Washo people", descendents of those who had apparently "gathered on the northern shore each spring for at least 5,000 years to harvest the teeming trout" (Castleman 1995, 168).

Rhetorically anticipating objections to his demeaning translation, Clemens's narrator insists:

"People say that Tahoe means "Silver Lake" -- "Limpid Water" -- "Falling Leaf." Bosh. It means grasshopper soup, the favorite dish of the Digger tribe -- and of the Pi-utes as well" (Twain 1984, 161).

Trout soup might have been a more accurate depiction.
the American Indians as the original inhabitants of the shores of Lake Tahoe. Whereas the Italian lake can thus be seen as the Italians' birthright, the white American is superceded in his identification with the natural resources and splendours of America by the prior possession and claim of the native Indians. The proof (and to an immigrant culture, the reproof) resonates in the name.

Nationalism is a complex issue for a society with no legitimising, traditional claim to its own land. The narrator's supposed boastful comparison becomes instead an irritable acknowledgement of illegitimate ownership and false possession, and the narrator suspends his judgement accordingly.

_The Innocents Abroad_ holds in common with Hawthorne's _Our Old Home_ the recurrent discovery that when destinations long celebrated in western literature are finally reached, the resulting impression is one of disappointment. The narrator repeatedly expresses his surprise at the size of the Holy Land, that "exceedingly small portion of the earth from which sprang the now flourishing plant of Christianity" (379). The world of western civilization and, in particular, the Christian world, appear to be shrinking before his eyes. The River Jordan is only ninety miles long. The Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea are "neither of them twenty miles long or thirteen wide." The effect is iconoclastic:
Travel and experience mar the grandest pictures and rob us of the most cherished traditions of our boyhood. Well, let them go. I have already seen the Empire of King Solomon diminish to the size of the State of Pennsylvania; I suppose I can bear the reduction of the seas and the river (477).

In the very room in which the Annunciation supposedly transpired, the narrator can no longer suspend his disbelief in the miraculous, founding event of the Christian faith. "Imagination labours best in distant fields" he concludes, in a phrase reminiscent of Hawthorne's disillusioned comment on a pilgrimage to Uttoxeter (Twain, 420). Clemens's response seems more calculated and less personal than that of his literary predecessor, his 'disappointment' is itself a literary convention utilized by the narrator to cast a sceptical pall over the events and sites of the Holy Land.

Dismissing the canonical settings of European literature and history as already exhaustively described by the guide books or else failing to live up to their literary representation, the narrator's imagination is drawn to more natural, geophysical

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151 Clemens observes:

I saw the little recess from which the angel stepped, but could not fill its void. The angels that I know are creatures of unstable fancy - they will not fit in niches of substantial stone (420).

152 Finding no sign and no local knowledge of the act of penance recorded in Boswell's biography of Johnson, which inspired his visit to Uttoxeter, Hawthorne observes:

It but confirms what I have been saying, that sublime and beautiful facts are best understood when etherealized by distance (Hawthorne 1970, 138).
resources in search of his own literary discovery. While the
pilgrims are busy acquiring shards and slivers of Old World
relics, only once in *The Innocents Abroad* does the narrator
express a desire for possession. On a steep and rocky path to
the ancient citadel of Smyrna, he notices three distinct layers
of oyster shells in the bank of the mountainside, cut out of the
stone. Describing these as veins in a potential mine, the
narrator imagines himself staking a claim to this lode,
and to the inexplicable mystery of how the oyster-shells
came to be there:

My first instinct was to set up the usual—

**NOTICE:**

"We, the undersigned, claim five claims of two hundred feet each,
(and one for discovery,) on this ledge or lode of oyster-shells..."

They were such perfectly natural-looking leads that I
could hardly keep from "taking them up" (328).

The narrator does "take them up" in what is clearly a
literary spoof of the nineteenth-century dispute over geological
evidence challenging the Biblical account of creation. He
considers and dismisses a succession of theories, only to
conclude:

It is painful -- it is even humiliating -- but I am reduced at last to
one slender theory: that the oysters climbed up there of their own
accord. But what object could they have had in view?...I have hunted
up the guide-books, and the gist of what they say is this: "They are
there, but how they got there is a mystery" (329).
It is the prospect of unexplained mysteries and hidden laws of nature rather than the traditional interpretations and artefacts of historical events which provokes and imaginatively stimulates the wandering narrator. This anecdote, which seems a singularly personal attempt to define the narrator's own position and designs in relation to his Old World cultural inheritance, was apparently deemed too peripheral an observation to be included in such recent editions as the much-abridged Century edition, published in 1988. The editor presumably judged that the chapter subsection entitled "The Mysterious Oyster Mine" diverged too far from the conventional itinerary of the Grand Tour.

In what may be a necessary overcorrection to readings which position The Innocents Abroad within the mainstream of the travel genre as the work of a broadly humorous and patriotic philistine, it has now become quite customary to interrogate every turn of phrase in Twain's first travelogue for some tell-tale shade of irony. Such an otherwise incisive Twain scholar as James M. Cox follows this line, implying that Clemens was consistent in his travel burlesque and that a single reading (burlesque) may be ascribed by the literary insider, even to those passages which seem sincere in their transports of enthusiasm.153

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153 In Mark Twain: The Fate of Humor, James M. Cox considers the troublesome issue of "what is burlesque and what is serious?" in The Innocents Abroad, selecting as an illustrative
Whereas earlier readers generally tended to take Twain at his literal word unless satire was explicitly signalled by the author, among many of today's critics virtually everything Clemens wrote is assumed to be deceptive unless and until the historical accuracy of his account can be independently verified; the author is 'satirical until proven serious'.

example of the nuanced difficulty of such judgement a description of the Sphinx. In Cox's view this passage is a "remarkable impersonation of the most genteel travel rhetoric" (58):

...The Sphinx is grand in its loneliness; it is impossible in its magnitude; it is impressive in the mystery that hangs over its story. And there is that in the overshadowing majesty of this eternal figure of stone with its accusing memory of the deeds of all ages, which reveals to one something of what he shall feel when he shall stand at last in the awful presence of God (1984a, 503).

Cox neglects to add that this straight-faced description serves to set up the more explicitly satirical humour of the subsequent paragraph:

There are some things which, for the credit of America, should be left unsaid, perhaps, but these very things happen sometimes to be the very things which, for the real benefit of Americans, ought to have prominent notice. While we stood looking, a wart, or an excrescence of some kind, appeared on the jaw of the Sphynx. We heard the familiar clink of a hammer, and understood the case at once. One of our well-meaning reptiles—I mean relic-hunters—had crawled up there and was trying to break a "specimen" from the face of this the most majestic creation the hand of man has wrought (503).

154 Cox enters into the recent critical consensus of disbelief regarding Clemens's own account of the origins of his pseudonym, asserting that "patient research has disclosed that this, in all probability, is false" (23). Although it has long been established that Clemens often fictionalised his autobiographical anecdotes, there is no evidence that Isaiah Sellers did not at some point use the pen name "Mark Twain" for columns submitted to the New Orleans Picayune, even if those columns
Perhaps because he is himself a travel writer, Jonathan Raban celebrates the inconsistency of Clemens's descriptive passages, detecting irony only where it is explicitly signalled by the author with such phrases as "(Copyright secured according to law)" appended to a floridly romantic scene. (Mark Twain 1988, 16). He suggests that rather than apprentice work, *The Innocents Abroad* is "uniquely experimental" and may be viewed as "a deliberate exercise in literary anarchy" (*Ibid.*, 16).

*The Innocents Abroad* is characteristic of Clemens in that the text is notoriously unstable: no consistent single emphasis (burlesque or naive, sentimental imperialism) is viable, though such readings have often been attempted. What now seems more generally agreed is that the book is a repository of the themes and oppositions Clemens would explore throughout his literary career.

The author of the *Innocents Abroad* may initially have harboured feelings of literary inexperience and cultural inferiority which that survive (including Clemens's own example of a Sellers report reprinted in *Life on the Mississippi*) are signed "Sellers" rather than "Twain". If this claim to 'literary' descent rather than originality was one of Clemens's many "stretchers", he perpetuated the deception not only in his early autobiographical account written expressly for Charles Dudley Warner and in a subsequent version included in *Life on the Mississippi* but also in private correspondence to his publisher James R. Osgood, prior to the publication of his Mississippi travelogue. (See letter of July 19th, 1882 to Osgood, previously cited on pages 215-216. The letter is signed "Yours truly, S.L. Clemens", a form so conventional it hardly seems that any shade of irony would have occurred to the original, intended reader.
contributed to the book's dissident position within the travel
genre. Yet even as a more mature and worldly author, he remained
consistent in rejecting the conventions of the travelogue and
resisting all inherently patronising, 'serious' forms of cultural
comparison, straightforward impressions or descriptions of one
culture as observed by the representative of another. His pro-
visional satire of English life remained unwritten, and when he
came to record his autobiographical first impressions of England,
the view was self-reflexive, focused on how England would take to
Mark Twain and *The Innocents Abroad*. On the train from London
to Liverpool, Clemens is distracted from his rapturous view
of the rural English countryside by a fellow passenger intent
on reading a book which turns out to be the English edition
of *The Innocents Abroad*:

I could not look out at the scenery any more,
I could not take my eyes from the reader and his
book. I tried to get a sort of comfort out of
the fact that he was evidently deeply interested
in the book and manifestly never skipped a line
but the comfort was only moderate and was quite
unsatisfying. I hoped he would smile once --
only just once -- and I kept on hoping and
hoping, but it never happened. (Autograph typescript,
enclosed with letter to Mr. MacAlister, February 21st,
1907, Berg Collection, N.Y. Public Library).

Dennis Welland has noted that Clemens's dictated
memoir was a variation of an anecdote he had delivered from the
podium some thirty years previously, describing a journey from
London to Liverpool and a passenger absorbed by Twain's *Roughing It* (Welland 1978, 49-50). However contrived and fictionalised the anecdote, Clemens neatly turns the occasion for expressing his first impressions of the British into a situation suggesting his own anxiety at what they will think of him.

The author's resistance to the conventional role of cultural arbiter and authority within the travel genre may be viewed as simply another instance of Clemens's authorial evasiveness, his overriding tendency to leave moral judgement open to the reader's own interpretation. But it may also be seen as a position based on a much-travelled author's keen awareness of cultural relativism. What the author most consistently burlesques in the era of empire and colonialism is the attitude of reverent subservience to a master culture, a culture with which some Americans aspired to identify in order to assert their own cultural superiority.

What Clemens's authorial differences with the established genre of the travelogue best express is a recognition of the paradoxical desires and designs inspiring nineteenth-century travel and the consumption of travel literature. These ironic contradictions are most explicitly expressed in Clemens's long-nurtured fictional travelogue of a journey to the ultimate tourist destination. "Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven" was
begun in 1869 and worked on intermittently over some thirty-eight years before its first appearance in Harper's Monthly in December 1907 and January 1908. The major substance of the tale assumes the form of a satirical dialogue, as Captain Stormfield, a new arrival in the afterworld, is advised and instructed by an angelic bald tour guide named Sandy. Captain Stormfield's surprise that people in heaven retain their individual, cultural and historical distinctiveness is the springboard for their discussion and Sandy's 'angelic' explanation:

...That is the main charm of heaven--there's all kinds here--which wouldn't be the case if you let the preachers tell it. Anybody can find the sort he prefers, here, and he just lets the others alone, and they let him alone. When the Deity builds a heaven, it is built right, and on a liberal plan (Twain 1992b, 847-848).

This is all very well as long as one is continuing to enjoy the exoticism of travel. The problems of multiculturalism and social difference emerge with the decision to settle in one place and enter into society with the heavenly throng. The trouble, as Sandy presents it, is that certain American districts of heaven are not terribly comfortable places for latter-day Americans, the heirs of a colonial culture. The California district is particularly to be avoided, because, according to Sandy:

...It swarms with a mean kind of leather-headed mud-colored angels [sic] -- and your nearest white neighbor is likely to be a million miles away. What a man
mostly misses, in heaven, is company -- company of his own sort and color and language (859).

One's own cultural prejudices, the angel implies, are inescapable even in heaven. Yet privileging that prejudice as some ultimate cultural authority is avoidable, especially when one takes a view back in history from the vantage point of eternity. It seems that the English section of heaven is no more comfortable in terms of offering a homogeneous society. As Sandy observes:

You see, every country on earth has been overlaid so often, in the course of a billion years, with different kinds of people and different sorts of languages, that this sort of mongrel business was bound to be the result in heaven (859).

The methodology and perspective Clemens adopted in his earliest travel narrative admitted, even seemingly celebrated the limitations of his own national preferences and prejudices. He recognised that he could not escape cultural bias, and yet directed his cultural criticism at the standards by which other authors and scholars, anthropologists and colonialists of the period would attempt to measure and interpret the differences between cultures. Travel afforded Clemens the critical distance to reflect satirically on the prevailing myths of a national culture he had not entirely left at home.
Chapter XI

DISPUTED IDENTITIES:
THE AMERICAN CLAIMANT'S BID FOR CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

As Clemens seems to have grasped all too well, claimants of any nationality are rare and romantic creatures who can easily seize hold of the popular imagination. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the American claimant was almost completely absent from the public domain beyond the pages of imaginative literature.

Yet as the century waned, Clemens and James were still captivated by the Enlightenment issues of aristocratic privilege and class distinction explicitly reflected in the claimant formula. In 1891, Clemens recorded in his notebook the argument that "Only birth makes noble. So it follows that if Adam was noble, (we) all are; if he wasn't none are." (Browning, Frank and Salarmo 1979, III, 606). The American claimant fictions position as cultural contrasts distinctions which are largely historical and economic, based on priority and material inequality.

It might be argued that by the late nineteenth century, similar distinctions of class and social privilege had long since become

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155 Clemens’s all-inclusive notion of ‘inheritable blood’ repudiates the exclusive distinctions of national boundaries and class divisions established by British law, as noted in my introduction (28-30).
institutionalised in the United States. To some extent the claimant fictions transfer back onto the Old World issues of social difference which might well have been explored in a purely American context. The social criticisms inherent in *A Connecticut Yankee* as well as in James's English inheritance dramas were more acceptable to an American readership when ostensibly directed at English society, suggesting that inequality is something that happens elsewhere, acquiring an even safer critical distance when relocated to the English past. Yet implicit in these works is an even harsher view of the lack of American cultural distinction, a satirical attack on aspects of a social system that appeared increasingly to be not so very different from its British predecessor.

For Hawthorne, as for James and Clemens, the attractions of the Old World were practical and pragmatic, as well as imaginative and aesthetic. There were sound financial reasons for lingering in Europe, particularly in England, in order to achieve copyrighted publication in both the American and British markets. Hawthorne's official position as U.S. consul at Liverpool was more lucrative than any he had held at home. For all three writers, the cost of living in Europe was cheaper than maintaining a similar standard in America. Their experience and appreciation of foreign

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156 In some passages of *A Connecticut Yankee*, the link to America is much clearer, as in the sequence in which the King and Hank become slaves.
culture was developed well beyond the populist nationalistic sentiments of their respective generations and their literary ambitions extended beyond national boundaries to international themes and an Anglophone audience.

The foreign residence which might encourage critical distance from political winds and current events as well as from the prevailing national rhetoric had its literary uses, but also its drawbacks. Upon occasion, all three authors would be reproached for falling out of step with the proprieties of American literary society. For the publication of *Our Old Home* (1863), issued in the midst of the Civil War, Hawthorne resisted indirect pressure from Emerson, Longfellow and Ellery Channing and more direct solicitation from his sister-in-law Elizabeth Peabody as well as his publisher James T. Fields to omit the dedication to his old college friend and patron, former President Franklin Pierce. Unionist fervor had encouraged popular denunciations of Pierce, whose anti-abolitionist position was well known.\(^{157}\) Although it has been suggested that in some respects Hawthorne shared Pierce's sentiments, the American

\(^{157}\) In his introduction to the Centenary Edition of *Our Old Home*, Claude Simpson observes:

Hawthorne evidently did not expect his dedication to go unchallenged, for Pierce was considered traitorous by Northerners who deplored his Constitutional opposition to the war and his attacks on the Lincoln administration (*Hawthorne 1970, V, xxv*).
literary establishment of his own day seemed to feel that the author's offense lay in his stubborn insistence on placing personal friendship before a political issue on which he was apparently uninformed. The dedication itself is characteristically vague, even dismissive, on the matter of the author's own opinion, seemingly seeking to distance himself and his friendship with Pierce from Pierce the politician and his position on the public issues of abolition and the War: "I dedicate my book to the Friend, and shall defer a colloquy with the Statesman till some calmer and sunnier hour" (5). In refusing to accept the advice of his publisher and his literary associates, Hawthorne placed himself outside the circle of Concord society, and the primary audience which had supported his early career.

If Hawthorne resisted pressure to conform to prevailing political sensitivities in launching Our Old Home, James and Clemens seem not to have been consulted on the deletion of potentially offensive passages from the American editions of Following the Equator and The American Scene. Clemens's English

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158 As the editorial introduction to the Centenary Edition of Our Old Home makes clear, the prevailing political agenda of Hawthorne's contemporaries allowed them to condemn the act of the dedication but somehow excuse the man (Hawthorne 1970, V, xxvii-xxviii). Hawthorne's stature as an internationally recognised American author may have helped discourage any harsher reaction, as he was by now viewed as confirming the existence of a national literature.
edition, *More Tramps Abroad*, was extensively edited by his publisher Frank Bliss in preparing the American edition of *Following the Equator*. Similarly, both James's "carefully prepared" running titles and section vii of his final chapter, including the apostrophe of complaint to American society previously mentioned in my discussion of *The American Scene*, (194, n. 83) were omitted from the first American edition, even though the American edition appeared one week later than the English edition and was set from English sheets. These appear to be

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159 In *Mark Twain in England*, Dennis Welland has detailed omissions including two long passages of nearly five pages on the Tichborne Claimant from Chapter XV, and the reduction of many passages concerning the mistreatment of the native populations in Australia and South Africa, including some which suggest parallels and comparisons with the author's own country. Welland mentions a synopsis bound into the typescript of Chapter XXI (American) which serves to suggest the publisher's editorial position, abruptly noting:

A wearisome chapter on aboriginals
   Fr. B.       All dead now
(Welland 1978, 178).

160 A "Note on the Text" in a recent British edition concludes that these omissions were made "probably without James's knowledge" (James 1987, v). This suggestion is at least partially corroborated by two unpublished letters from James to his agent J. B. Pinker, in which James complains most pointedly about the Harpers handling of *The American Scene* and the omission of the intended page headings:

...they set the stamp to this whole attitude by printing the Book at last without the indispensable page-headings of the English volume sent them for copy, thereby grievously injuring the effect, & doing so without a word of appeal, apology or inquiry of any sort to myself (April 26, 1907, Beinecke Library, Yale, transcribed by Philip Home).

Just over a week later, he insists that Pinker express his disapproval to the Harpers:

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instances of editorial censorship exercised by publishers intent on avoiding controversy, preserving the reputations of established authors and encouraging sales of books written late in each author's career.

During a period which Van Wyck Brooks has memorably derided as one in which "this emasculated New England played into the hands of the business regime", James and Clemens, like Hawthorne before them, would emphasise their own ironic sense of fluctuating cultural possibilities and perspectives. At the same time that...

...kindly (or, rather, as sternly as you please!) bring home to them, as an illustration of their general extraordinary sans façon treatment of the same, that fact I have mentioned to you of their real mutilation of my volume by the perfectly wanton suppression of the page headlines... I think the proceeding fairly monstrous... (May 5, 1907, Beinecke Library, Yale, transcribed by Philip Horne).

James's silence regarding the less immediately visible deletion of part of his final chapter from the American edition is unlikely to indicate tacit approval; more probably he simply overlooked the omission.

161 Brooks suggests that the impact of business interests upon American culture in the late nineteenth century resulted in "a sort of unconscious conspiracy" which effectively "actuated all America against the creative life" (Brooks 1934, 95). Henry James's and Whistler's expatriate position and the anonymous publication of many works critical of American society, from John Hay's The Breadwinners to Henry Adams's novel Democracy, were all necessitated, he asserts, by a formidable social constraint:

...motives of self-preservation, motives that would certainly not have operated in men of a corresponding type before the Civil War, restrained them from impairing, by strong assertions of individual judgement, 'the consistency of feeling upon which the pioneers rightly placed such a high value' (96).

If today this view seems something of an overstatement, suggesting Brooks's contempt for the conformity with or without consensual feeling encouraged in his own era, it does suggest the exceptional degree of critical resistance to their own culture reflected in the works and lives of James and Clemens.
their American claimants emphasised ideological and cultural difference, they were aesthetically intent upon working within the larger, international arena of European literary tradition. If they were active agents of the culture in terms of literary production, they were also viewed as cultural representatives who would more or less willingly play a role in the construction of an American literary canon. They themselves were considered proof of an American sensibility, effecting the validation of American literature, and by implication, the American nation, that had been so insistently demanded by the anxious patriots of Emerson and Hawthorne’s generation. The fact that all three authors were admired and read in England, had lived abroad and had extended their narrative scope to include international themes and motifs served to enhance their standing as artists in the American marketplace. To varying degrees, all three encouraged and deplored the publicity attendant upon their celebrity, remaining highly ambivalent about their public personae.

Although he repeatedly satirised and derided the age of publicity, James sometimes gave interviews to journalists and, like Hawthorne before him, had his portrait painted. John Singer Sargeant was commissioned by private subscription to paint James’s portrait for his seventieth birthday and the completed canvas was installed in the National Portrait Gallery. James’s revisions for the New York
Edition, his autobiographical volumes, his incineration in 1909 and again in 1915 of his own personal archive, including selected correspondence, manuscripts, notebooks and photographs, can all be viewed as an attempt to control and shape his own posthumous reputation. Within his lifetime, he became a distinctive literary character, parodied, caricatured and quoted in fictions by other authors.

Clemens was his own self-publicist, who actively courted the press, then assumed a succession of aliases and published some works anonymously, presumably in order to distance himself from the Mark Twain industry. Letters to his friends and colleagues are variously signed "Mark" or "S.L.C.". To one of his oldest friends, Joseph H. Twichell, a letter written on the night of his wife Livy's death was signed "S.L.C.". But a subsequent letter written on the occasion of his daughter Jean's death was signed "Mark" (Letters to Joseph H. Twichell, 18 November 1868 - 27 December 1909, Beinecke Library, Yale).

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162 Ian Hamilton discusses James's ambivalent fascination with literary commemoration and canon construction in his recent study Keepers of the Flame: Literary Estates and the Rise of Biography (Hamilton 1992, 206-221).

163 I am grateful to Philip Home for referring me to Gertrude Atherton's The Bell and the Fog and Other Stories (1905), in which the character of Orth in the title story is based on James. He is also represented by J.K. Stephens in his comic poem "England and America", published in 1892.
To unknown correspondents or to business associates he was generally S.L. Clemens and to W. D. Howells he was almost invariably "Mark".

Perhaps it is only coincidence that *The American Scene* concludes in the American south, the region so memorably scrutinised by Clemens in *Life on the Mississippi*, and that both authors were intrigued by the theme of an American claimant. It is likely that James and Clemens regarded each other as competitors, far less likely that each ignored the other's work. They were after all contemporaries in the still fairly small domain of American letters. Despite their highly individualistic differences of style and manner, they were both regarded as interpreters and shapers of an American sensibility; they held in common with Hawthorne an ironic, sometimes exasperated awareness of their precarious dual roles as literary producers and living literary icons.

In the early decades of the twentieth century the theme of the American claimant continued to be invoked as a type of romantic wish fulfillment, the suggested resolution of Anglo-American marriage implying the reinvigoration of the British race, the refinement of American sensibility and the material enrichment of British society. Such sentimental treatments perpetuated the very formula that James and Twain had sought to eradicate, or at least revise.

More ambitious, later literary works continued to exploit the claimant theme. T.S. Eliot, who followed James's example as an
American aesthete residing permanently in England, sounds a non-narrative approach to the theme in his poem "East Coker" (1940), an interrogation of aesthetic and cultural influence as well as issues of personal and national identity.

More recently, Alison Lurie redeployes the trope in her novel *Foreign Affairs*, directly alluding to Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, and more generally to James (the academic American Fred thinks of himself as a hero in a Henry James novel) and Kipling (possibly a reference to Kipling's tale "An Habitation Enforced" and almost certainly reflecting Kipling's own experience of both cultures and his marriage to Caroline Balestier, the sister of his American friend, collaborator and agent Charles Balestier.) Yet despite Lurie's emphasis upon the literary pedigree of her plot, in *Foreign Affairs* the principal characters are all American; the London setting provides an international backdrop but the contrast is now between two distinct American cultures, personified by the cheerful, materialistic philistine Chuck Mumpson and the intellectually indebted, emotionally inhibited scholar Vinnie Miner. Vinnie inadvertently transforms the suggestible Mumpson into a latter-day claimant by loaning him a copy of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, which sets Mumpson off in quest of his own ancestral hall. Lurie's conclusion, with the resolution of Chuck and Vinnie's physical union undone by Chuck's untimely death, is no more successful a narrative solution.
than any attempted by Hawthorne, James or Clemens.

It should be emphasised that what began as essentially an
Old World thematic projection of cultural difference has had enduring
appeal for both British and American authors and bears directly upon
the idea of a 'special' Anglo-American relationship. If British
authors have been less demanding in their sentimental, all-in-the-
family revisions of the claimant plot, their narratives have often
proved more immediately popular and entertaining. The concept of a
'special' Anglo-American relationship is today more often
insistently extolled by British politicians, somewhat less
frequently by U.S. diplomats and State Department officials.

For Americans in the latter half of the nineteenth century the
American claimant theme was not merely a nostalgic fantasy of
reunion with one's ancestral past but focused the debate about
what forms of cultural influence would or should survive into the
future.

Revisiting his own short fiction "In the Cage" in his preface
to volume XI for the New York Edition, James defines his approach
to criticism as that of an intellectual claimant who fulfills his
youthful boast to T. S. Perry of the American's advantage in his
"preparation for culture":

To criticise is to appreciate, to appropriate, to take
intellectual possession, to establish in fine a relation
with the criticised thing and make it one's own. The
large intellectual appetite projects itself thus on many
things, while the small—not better advised, but unconscious
of need for advice—projects itself on few (James 1935, 155).164

In the early years of the twentieth century, both James and
Clemens became less ironically ambiguous and more explicitly
critical in their social commentary and response to the rhetoric
of American nationalism. James would write with a rare combination
of social conscience and searching candour about the changing
character of America in The American Scene, reserving for
the conclusion his sharpest attack on American society's "pretended
message of civilization" and the ominous "accumulation, on your hands,
of the unretrieved and irretrievable!" a general impression of
opportunities, including natural and human resources, ultimately and
shamefully squandered (735). "Within the Rim" and "The Long
Wards", essays written at the beginning of World War I, solicit an
Anglo-American commitment to the British cause, portraying England
as responding in an ideal 'American' fashion to the shattering of
European civilization and the plight of Belgian refugees while the
United States remained neutral in an attempt to preserve its own
economic interests.

164 Upon returning to England from his extended tour of the U.S.
in 1905, James began the enormous project of revision and
analysis of literary method comprising the authorised New York
Edition of his collected works, a project undertaken while he
was still at work on The American Scene. This statement might
thus also be read as a reflection of his rethinking of
nationality and identity.
Clemens too became increasingly critical, savage and grimly serious in his ironic indictments of imperialism and the excesses of both British and American societies. His autobiographical commentary on "the Anglo-Saxon race", and such sketches as "The War Prayer", "The United States of Lyncherdom" and "As Regards Patriotism" were all reserved for future readers, views he was probably justified in feeling were too controversial for his own era remained unpublished in his lifetime.  

In an age during which unhindered financial speculation and economic opportunity gave way to an increasing consolidation of power and resources in business and cultural institutions, American authors found the American claimant theme a provocative site for continued imaginative speculation on the future as well as on the past. Hawthorne seemed to consider the American claimant who renounces inheritance a possible route to a redefined legitimation myth while for James and Clemens the theme was more socially satirical, yet despite their differences none of the three ever entertained the notion of a 'happy' ending for their claimant, in which bloodlines and a sense

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165 Many of the sketches were included in *Europe and Elsewhere* (1923), edited and revised by Albert Bigelow Paine. Clemens's daughter Jean apparently discouraged him from attempting to publish "The War Prayer", observing that it was sacrilegious (Kaplan, 366-367). His indictment of Anglo-American imperialism, written in September, 1906, is included by Charles Neider as Chapter 72 of his chronologically ordered *Autobiography of Mark Twain* (Twain 1959, 345-349).
of social continuity are confirmed, the very resolution that the
trope demands in order to succeed as sentimental fiction. Their
critical sensibilities were founded in a rhetoric of ironic
resistance to the prevailing nationalist discourse. While they may
have struggled to create the conditions for culture (and to preserve
the possibility of new conditions) the culture was recreating them
as legitimising monuments whose reputations often overshadowed their
works. To a considerable extent, the fiction and the public position
of all three authors was one of dissent, reflecting yet resisting the
mainstream of nationalist discourse in a society demanding legitimising
identity and consensus.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said acknowledges the oppositional
perspective of some late nineteenth-century American authors:

Dissenting literature has always survived in the United States alongside
the authorized public space; this literature can be described as oppositional
to the overall national and official performance... there has always been an
opposition - one thinks of anti-imperialists like Mark Twain, William James
and Randolph Bourne - but the depressing truth is that its *deterrent* power
has not been effective (Said 1993, 347).

Said recognises the culture of opposition reflected in late nineteenth-century
American literature as a marginalised view; presumably a vestige of the more
general culture of dissent which had inspired the American War of Independence.

\[166\] Clemens actually invokes this formulaic resolution suggesting
social continuity in *The American Claimant*, but only as a rather
pale preliminary contrast to his ultimate climax, involving
Colonel Sellers and his futuristic, global aspirations.
Yet Said seems to be fudging his logic by suggesting a counter-culture that was purely anti-imperialist, for the American intellectual resistance to imperialism was also expressed in its resistance to the legitimising excesses of nationalism and to any wholesale rejection of pre-Revolutionary culture. The decline of resistance to a colonial master culture distresses Said and other advocates of national liberation movements, who generally insist that the American experience is an exceptional cultural dynamic due to the virtual eradication of native culture. Yet in terms of cultural differentiation and influence, this distinction would seem to be a matter of degree rather than category. New societies are of necessity informed by pre-existing cultural assumptions, and would thus appear to bear some inevitably close relationship to the society or societies from which they emerge.

Comparison of the American claimant literature of Hawthorne, James and Clemens seems to yield a new perspective on these three stylistically diverse and distinctive American writers, and in particular to highlight similarities between James and Clemens, who are often considered to have been antipathetic to each other's works and interests. All three authors sought to extinguish the theme's conservative endorsement of innate social privilege, yet maintain the relationship of American culture to British literature and British heritage.

The American claimant theme provided a narrative vantage point from which to consider questions of influence and the ebbing of America's Anglo-American colonial culture during a period of unprecedented multicultural immigration to the U.S., as
well as middle-class expansion and pressure for social reform in both Britain and America. Inevitably, due to the English setting of the basic plot, it tended to focus more on Britain and the past than a distinctive American present or future. Essentially an Old World projection, the trope proved resistant to adaptation as an expression of American cultural difference and distinction. In a period rife with dramatic and fictional inheritance plots expressing British as well as American social anxieties, the American claimant persisted as both sentimental fantasy and aesthetic challenge, reflecting a sometimes conflicted desire for continuity in an era of radical socio-economic and cultural change.

As long as society continues to redraw its maps, engaging in disruption and dispossession within and between nations, so long, in Rousseau's terms, as there is pronounced inequality among men, claimants will be among us.\textsuperscript{167} Today's European claimants are mostly citizens of Germany and Eastern Europe, asserting their rights to family estates and property lost

\textsuperscript{167} Opal Whitely (a.k.a. Françoise D'Orleans) [sic] was a remarkable twentieth century American claimant who purported to be the daughter of Prince Henri d'Orléans. After a childhood spent in the logging camps of Oregon, she became an overnight literary sensation on both sides of the Atlantic, when in 1920, at the age of 22, she published vivid diaries of her Oregon experiences, supposedly recorded between the ages of six and seven. She travelled to India and settled in England, where she is reported to have found many supporters for her claim. Nearly seventy years after Delia Bacon, she suffered disappointment in her subsequent literary projects and in 1948 was committed to a mental hospital where she remained for more than forty-three years, until her death on 17 February 1992 (See Ian Taylor's obituary, "Opal Whiteley", \textit{The Independent}, 24 February 1992).
in the upheavals and the aftermath of twentieth-century European
wars. Despite the technological assurances of DNA analysis,
the social drama of the self-proclaimed heir still possesses
narrative appeal and reveals considerable schisms of class and
culture in supposed egalitarian societies.

In the United States, the American claimant plot was recently
updated by the American dramatist John Guare, whose "Six Degrees
of Separation" premiered in New York on 19 May 1990 and opened
at the Royal Court Theatre in London on 11 June 1992. A film
version, with a screenplay by John Guare, was released in
the U.S. in 1993 and in the U.K. in 1994, with a prominent
Anglo-American cast, including Stockard Channing, Will Smith,
Donald Sutherland, Ian McKellen and Mary Beth Hurt. Despite
the transatlantic mix of the cast, in Guare's drama the
social inequities and cultural comparisons are all New York
American, and the claim is not to an English title but rather
a relation to a Hollywood film star, the American equivalent
of royalty. The play is based on a real incident involving
a young black male who initially claims to be the son of actor
Sidney Poitier, imposing on the hospitality of a wealthy New York
couple, their family and associates. Reflecting on 'their'
impersonator, who not only seeks to gain status and position by passing
himself off in their society but who confers a certain status on
them as well, the female lead Ouisa addresses the audience:

I read somewhere that everybody on this planet is separated by only six other people. Six degrees of separation. Between us and everybody else on this planet. The president of the United States. A gondolier in Venice. Fill in the names. I find that A] tremendously comforting, because we're so close and B] like Chinese water torture that we're so close. Because you have to find the right six people to make the connection. It's not just big names. It's anyone. A Tierra del Fuegan. An Eskimo. I am bound to everybody on this planet by a trail of six people. It's a profound thought. How Paul found us. How to find the man whose son he pretends to be. Or perhaps is his son, although I doubt it. How every person is a new door, opening up into other worlds. Six degrees of separation between me and everyone else on this planet. But to find the right six people (Guare 1990, 81).

Ouisa reflects both the solace of legitimising, genealogical identity and the daunting near-impossibility of establishing such a sense of connection and continuity in today's deracinated 'polyglot' world. Her observation is strongly reminiscent of James's repeated assertion that "really, universally, relations stop nowhere..." In Enlightenment and post-enlightenment literature, the American claimant is one such "new door", with which various authors have attempted to open up their own cultural position into "other worlds", preserving past traditions and future possibilities.
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