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God Keep Me From Ever Completing Anything: Problems of Writing and Identity in Four American Narratives.

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"GOD KEEP ME FROM EVER COMPLETING ANYTHING": PROBLEMS OF WRITING AND IDENTITY IN FOUR AMERICAN NARRATIVES

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in
The Department of English

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between writing and American identity in four works — William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, Herman Melville's *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life*, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun: Or The Romance of Monte Beni* — by illuminating the difficulty that the narrator of each work has in constructing and maintaining his vision of American identity. For Bradford and Franklin, the analysis centers on their attempts to confront the historical complexities of American society — Bradford confronting the economic realities of colonialism, Franklin confronting the difficulty of organizing governance after the American Revolution. For Melville and Hawthorne, the analysis centers on their ironic but historically-based presentation of American identity through a self-interested or naive narrator, and on their texts' subsequent comments on the problems of American expansionism and slavery.

Though not strictly a Bakhtinian analysis, this study employs Mikhail Bakhtin's categories of monological and dialogical discourse as a reference for showing how language and history help destabilize written constructions of American identity. In each work, a narrator creates American identity by suppressing or ignoring elements of American experience that subsequent events, or even events contemporary to the narrators, have proved to be of essential importance. When read retrospectively from our own
point in time, these elements show their hidden presence in the narratives by disrupting their schemes for American identity. The appearance of these elements proves instructive about the works themselves, their times, their authors, and their relationships with each other.

Each chapter addresses the problem of writing and American identity by describing a literary and historical basis for each construction of American identity, by identifying the suppressed elements of American experience in each construction, and by showing how knowledge of these elements affects both the narrator's construction of American identity and the way in which we read the narratives. Each chapter ends with a conclusion that attempts to resituate the works in relation to the increasing emphasis on social and political consciousness that affects American literary studies.
Introduction

"God keep me from ever completing anything": Problems of Writing and Identity in Four American Narratives

About a quarter of the way into Moby-Dick, Ishmael launches off on a dissertation about whales by saying that he will not be able to finish it. When he finally gives up, he says that failure is simply the sign that he was right to begin with. With that, he begins to make a virtue of incompleteness, finally crying "God keep me from ever completing anything. This whole book is but a draught — nay, but the draught of a draught" (148) as an invitation for the next person to take up where he left off. What Ishmael sees in the middle of his labor, that somewhat excuses his evasive behavior, is the difficulty in writing out identity. It is the sense that no matter how hard one tries, something always gets left out and makes the whole construction problematic, and that the effort passes along to another writer. Ishmael's insight in this passage, ostensibly about whales, can serve as a window onto the field of writing about American identity — a field that includes the examinations of American communities and American individualists found in William Bradford's historical narrative Of Plymouth Plantation, Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography, Herman Melville's travel narrative Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life, and
Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Marble Faun: or, the Romance of Monte Beni*. Above all, these are texts worth our continued rereading for the way in which they expose and enact the paradoxes and problems inherent in composing American identity.

**Context**

Writing is always reflection; but up to the Civil War, writing about America always carried an added burden of being a founding. Myra Jehlen writes that America was created in "agreements and covenants, ... dates, surveys, measurements and identifications." In short, America is "a matter of language," not history (6). Likewise, Bainard Cowan observes that America was created in a "collective performative act of writing" (19).

This is not to say that writing was the only force in the creation of America as a place or a nation. When the young United States purchased the Louisiana territory from France, it did so against the strictures of the Constitution, which did not allow the executive branch of government to engage in buying land. And while much of the gunboat diplomacy practiced by America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been attributed, either by governmental officials or historians, to the outlines of the Monroe Doctrine, that document has never held legal status. It is not a law or a statute, but a policy paper that sought to define American interests as separate from European colonial interests. Because the Monroe Doctrine lacks legal status, it can be argued that the consequences resulting from its application are
the consequences of actions taken singly by the American government, not actions extending from the sort of legal papers that Jehlen describes.

These are only two widely known and notorious examples of actions taking precedence over writing in the formation of America. But the will to expansion that stands behind those actions is one of the consequences of the effort to construct a written American identity not only worth preserving, but deserving of preeminence. Such unforeseen, non-writerly consequences only emphasize further that writing still stands as a potent force in determining what America is, and what it is to be American.

Edmundo O'Gorman's study of the "invention" of America shows that the writings of Columbus, as well as the writings of later explorers, and the criticisms of Columbus' writings made by scholars in the early sixteenth century, had as much to do with how the New World was constructed in European consciousness and by European cultural practices as did the physical acts of early discovery and exploration (11-86). When the large area that became "America" was divided into colonial parcels, writing often determined how the land was to be used and how the colonial inhabitants were to comport themselves while they lived there. The Mayflower Compact, written and signed aboard ship before the Pilgrim colonists landed and began building their plantation, is only a well known example. Later, when the colonies rebelled against British rule, a series of documents, from state
constitutions to the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution, preceded the formations of state alliances and, finally, of nationhood. The process of moving from one governing document to another was not easy or at all times strictly legal. The convention that produced the Constitution, for instance, had originally been called to work out difficulties in "a vexing little local spat over the oyster fisheries of Chesapeake Bay" (Mee 8). But it is important to see that writing played an integral part in forming and shaping America, and that this role can be called characteristically American.

Jehlen points out that the ideas behind the American nation were not particularly new (3). But the way in which they were expressed was, for American identity tends not to be gathered up after the fact (Jehlen 6). Rather, it is often put literally on the table as a written proposal in documents like the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution. Because it is not always, or often, a product solely of history, American identity calls attention to itself through its regular appearances in texts—through its immediate presence in writing (Jehlen 6-7; Cowan and Kronick 19).

Any literary construction of American identity can be seen as an accompaniment to founding documents like the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution, because it more or less imitates the process by which the American nation came into being. At the same time, it is an opposition, because it necessarily presents a
different form of identity than the founding documents. It may, for instance, attempt to press documents like the Declaration or the Constitution for a broader definition of the term "people," as women did during the Revolutionary period or abolitionists did during the period before the Civil War. Or it may use the language of these documents to define a special place for Americans in the world, as the Young America movement did in the mid-nineteenth century, or, in turn, use it to justify isolationism, as the America Firsters did in the early decades of this century.

Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*, predating these efforts, shows that the founding documents themselves are also a part of a larger dialogue about American identity that began when European colonists began to create versions of America in their writings. Whatever a document of American identity does, it places itself in a position relative to the founding documents; and, by simultaneously accompanying and opposing them, it continues the writing and rewriting of "America" and "Americans." This dynamic attempts both to extend and erase American history. Each literary construction extends the general discussion of identity through time, yet attempts to overwrite what has come before it in its new attempt to represent American identity. Thus the interest in literary constructions of American identity is an interest in cultural ritual (the founding of the American self in writing), in cultural history (the changing of American identity over time),
and in cultural reformation (the continual rewriting of American identity). In short, the interest is in what Americans do to "make" themselves in writing, as this is one way of performing a characteristically American act.

For Jehlen, the interest in investigating literary constructions of American identity is to show how many writers tie American identity to American land, and thus make "the physical fact of the continent" a basis for American self-perception (2-3). For Milton Stern, the interest is in showing how American writers invoke idealistic figures to describe themselves and their country, and how these figures characterize America as "a golden promise of unlimited openness" (Contexts 20-22). The intent of this study is to show how American narrators create American identity by suppressing or ignoring elements of American experience that subsequent events — and sometimes even events contemporary to the narrators — have proved to be of essential importance. Nor is the absence or suppression of these elements merely a mark against these narrators, a debit or surd presence. Rather, when read retrospectively from our own point in time, these elements show their hidden presence in the narratives by disrupting their schemes for American identity in ways that prove instructive.

The conflict between making and unmaking American identity has specific consequences for the way in which we read American narratives. It shows that writing is not the overarching
structure for American identity. Rather, it shows that writing and history act together to produce it. History provides the conditions and events that make American identity a possibility; yet these conditions and events always disrupt schemes for American identity, making American identity always provisional. Writing articulates this possibility at different historical points, acting both as a construction of American identity and a record of how that identity fails to hold. American identity is bound up in writing; but writing is only one component in the process of structuring and unstructuring it.

A theoretical development for this argument can be found in Mikhail Bakhtin's terms for discourse. According to Bakhtin, discourse appears in written works in two forms — monological and dialogical. For Bakhtin, both forms are "ideologically saturated" (271), which is to say they pull in different directions. Monological (or "unitary") discourse tends to pull things toward a center and establish them in a subordinate relation to that center (270-271). As Malini Schueller puts it, "Ideas different from the author's 'are either polemically repudiated, or else they lose their power to signify directly'" (95). Conversely, dialogical discourse tends to pull things away from a center, establishing the free play of ideas and allowing ideas to "relate to each other as do rejoinders in a dialogue; ... it is a dialogue between points of view, each with its own concrete language that cannot be translated into the other" (Bakhtin 95). When I say that the four
narrators in this study suppress or ignore important parts of American experience in constructing their versions of American identity, I am pointing to their attempts to construct what Bakhtin would call a monological discourse. Likewise, when I say that the suppressed or ignored experience arises in the narratives to complicate these versions of American identity, I am pointing to the emergence of dialogism in each narrative — the free play of voices or ideas that reveals the center-directed efforts of monologism.

For Bakhtin, monological discourse is "always in essence posited" (270), which is to say that the tendency toward centering happens in an open field — within an array of possibilities, a center is created, and a series of subordinating relationships are established. Yet because it is always posited against a broader field of ideas, monological discourse is always being undone by the other ideas that it tries to bring under its sway. As Bakhtin writes, "alongside ... centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and deunification go forward" (272). In Bakhtinian terms, the process of making and unmaking American identity is inevitable. While monological discourse is not a given, the play of voices that signals dialogism will confront monological discourse wherever it appears. For Bakhtin, dialogical discourse will always interrupt and contend with monological discourse. In this fashion, literary constructions of American identity will always undo themselves, despite the efforts of their narrators.
The works in this study date from 1630 to 1860, a time that marks one period in the dialogue among constructions of American identity. From early colonization to the Civil War, writers treated American identity as if it were a thing to be constructed. It could be built in various ways, but it would be built, as all the narrators in this study will try, in negotiation with their own historically defined terms of religious purity, privileged governance, national progressivism, or myth making confidence. After the Civil War, American identity could be divided, often violently, along lines that presented themselves as preexisting to their proponents.

This does not mean that the dialogue between literary constructions of American identity fades away after 1860. Rather, it has intensified since the Civil War, but has taken a new direction. Only a few writers, like Abraham Lincoln during the war or Henry James after the war, could behave as if internal fragmenting had not happened. Lincoln, for instance, never referred to the country as a divided entity in any of the speeches that he wrote for presentation during the war. In his public discourse, Lincoln gave the impression that the country remained a Union, despite the ready evidence that people in both the northern and southern states considered the nation irrevocably torn. James created an American identity that could be both clearly seen and, in Lambert Strether's case in *The Ambassadors*, escaped, if one
could go to Europe and look at it from the outside in. James was able to avoid the idea of fragmentation within American identity; but the fact that American identity had failed so publicly at one point meant that the fragmentation could be understood and avoided.

Both *Typee* and the *Marble Faun* anticipate James' international novels by using the device of the American abroad to present a perspective on American identity. Hawthorne's narrator explicitly employs the formal structures that James would refine - a third-person narrative that describes the actions of Americans in foreign places in order to show American identity through contrast with others. Melville's narrator accomplishes the same end implicitly, presenting a first-person narrative in which he reports his own actions, revealing American identity in the gap between those actions and the rhetoric he employs to justify them. Unlike James' novels, however, *Typee* and the *Marble Faun* end with their narrators confused or imprisoned by American identity, not able to define and escape it, as Strether does.

For writers other than Lincoln and James, the Civil War was a breaking point. Like Walt Whitman, they give the impression that they are trying to pick up the pieces of something that was once whole; or like Theodore Dreiser, they give the impression that they are trying to expose the rough and abrasive seams that appeared more vividly in American culture once the breakdown of American identity was acknowledged. The Civil War provided
writers with the opportunity to investigate American identity through fragments and relations in a way that was not open to earlier writers, who were intent on forcing literary constructions of American identity to be internally coherent—even though that might mean leaving all sorts of subjects (and people) out of any individual work.

Despite the many changes that colonialism and nation building entailed, one basic assumption about American identity did not really change for the two hundred and some odd years that this study encompasses. It is certain that the dialogue about American identity endured a major shift during this period. Writers had to position their constructions of American identity in relationship to a nation, not a land, once documents like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution transformed "America" from a geographical to a national term. But this is less the sort of paradigm shift that the Civil War provided than a shift in emphasis. Early on, writers like Bradford had defined America as a place separate from Europe rather than an extension of it; the founding documents simply refine that definition, though they accomplish it in a unique fashion.

Content

The authors of the four works addressed in the following chapters have been central to American literary studies in general, and to study of literary constructions of American identity in particular. I plan to advance my readings of their
works into these fields of study by throwing light on the difficulties that the narrator of each text has in constructing and maintaining his vision of American identity. For Bradford and Franklin, this analysis centers on each writer's attempt to confront the historical complexities of their societies — Bradford in confronting the economic realities of colonialism, Franklin in confronting the difficulty of organizing principles of governance after the American Revolution. For Melville and Hawthorne, this analysis centers on each writer's ironic but historically based presentation of American identity through a self-interested or naive narrator. In these four texts, history and autobiography presume an author who is also the narrator of the book; travel narrative and romance presume an author who is separate from the narrator and who uses the narrator's character to advance his exploration of American identity.

Each narrator to whom I have devoted a chapter is specifically concerned with American identity. This is not hard to see in a work like Franklin's Autobiography, where Franklin accepts the task of providing a model for American national behavior and morals, or in a work like Hawthorne's Marble Faun, where the narrator spends a number of passages describing nineteenth-century conceptions of American womanhood and Puritan daughters. It is more difficult to see, perhaps, in a work like Bradford's Of Plymouth Plantation or Melville's Typee. The Pilgrims sailed to America before it became a country, so
Bradford's narrative obviously lacks the nationalistic sense of identity that Franklin's and Hawthorne's narratives have. In fact, as Andrew Delbanco points out, Bradford expresses strong feelings about being an Englishman in his work (194). Still, being in America was important to Bradford, because it provided him with a physical and historical separation from Europe. In America, Bradford's band had travelled about as far as it could from the repressive religious policies of England, and equally important, from the squabbles that plagued its own sect. As Anthony Kemp has shown, this splitting away from impure groups is vital to Bradford's vision of Pilgrim identity (113). And as America was the place to which the Pilgrims finally went, the Pilgrim identity that Bradford chronicles quickly becomes an American identity. Melville's book has a more subtle version of the arrangement found in Bradford's. Tommo, Melville's narrator, spends most of his time attempting to investigate the identity of non-Americans - a tribe of Marquesan islanders called the Typee. Still, as Mitchell Breitwieser observes, Tommo is "typically American" ("False Sympathy" 400-401), and often refers back to his nationalistic sense of Americanness in order to describe how tribal culture differs from the Western society he has deserted. As well, Tommo consciously uses his identity as an American to provide plausible motives for the disruptions that he brings to Typee culture. Like Bradford, Tommo does not begin his narrative with the idea of illuminating American identity. But by the time
his narrative is well underway, Tommo finds himself referring to America in order to show what makes him different from the people he has been describing. Like Bradford, who deliberately creates a sort of Americanness by removing himself from Europe, Tommo consciously defines himself as an American by removing himself from the Typee. Thus, while there are clear differences between Franklin's and Hawthorne's books and Bradford's and Melville's books, there is one important similarity - the concern with American identity.

Within the dialogue structured by these four books, two points of reference appear - communal and individualist visions of American identity. Roughly speaking, two books go with each reference. Bradford and Hawthorne reveal the problems of communal American identity at different points in American history, while Franklin and Melville reveal the problems of individualist American identity, even though Franklin at first appears to be focused on communal identity. None of the books is able to offer a solution to the problems that it presents. As each one becomes dialogized by the elements of American experience that each narrator tries to suppress or ignore, it presents American identity - both communal and individualist - as a construction that creates more ambiguity than certitude within its confines.

The usual critical reading of Bradford's Of Plymouth Plantation identifies a division between an earlier, unified portion and a later, disoriented portion. The earlier portion is
identified as the part of the text that Bradford wrote in early 1630, when he started the work, which accounts for the first eight to ten chapters of the book. The later portion is identified as the part of the text that Bradford finished in late 1630 and that he continued in annals thereafter, which accounts for the rest of the book. It is in this later portion that critics find Bradford's vision of American identity coming apart under strain exerted on it by the American wilderness (Bredahl 8-20), by the depredations of colonial living (Delbanco 194-195), or by time itself (Kemp 113-116).

But it is actually in the early portion of the book that Bradford's vision of exemplary communal identity becomes complicated and the process of dialogization begins. In the first four chapters of the narrative, Bradford details the legal preparations that the Pilgrims undertook in order to secure their claim in the Massachusetts colony. During these chapters, Bradford attempts to avoid discussion of the Pilgrim's financial interest in the colony in order to keep the Pilgrims from being confused with the "adventurers" that Bradford describes — merchants and laborers who joined the voyage strictly for profit. One reason for Bradford's holding to this limitation is that Protestantism gathered momentum and definition as a movement against financial extortion by the Church of Rome. To admit any common interest or common practice with the adventurers would mean that Bradford would have to revise dramatically or give up
altogether his metanarrative vision of the Pilgrim congregation as an exemplary community, bound together by its affiliation to the Separatist church, not by its pursuit of economic gain. Despite these efforts, references to finance and to the Pilgrims' bickering over economic interest begin to appear in the first four chapters of the narrative, finding their way in letters that Bradford copies into his history, ironically in an attempt to bolster his metanarrative claim that the Pilgrim congregation is centered clearly around spiritual interests.

Bradford's attempt to suppress the degree of the Pilgrims' financial interest in the colony and the determination with which they were prepared to pursue personal profit comes back to haunt the last chapters of the narrative. Here, in the late 1630s and early and mid-1640s, Bradford is forced to describe the breakup of the colony and the Plymouth church, as the colonists move closer to the booming markets in Boston. Once the church is broken and the colonists dispersed (though of their own volition), Bradford lapses into silence, his metanarrative broken, and his narrative trailing off into empty entries.

As a construction of communal American identity, Bradford's text begins with the metanarrative proposal that his fellow Pilgrims are formed around a religious purpose in America, a new land that allows them to see themselves as set apart from the religious impurities of other Protestant churches in England, from the materialistic practices of the Catholic church, and from the
ambitions of strictly-for-profit business, an activity that Bradford's Separatist congregation would have rejected as sinful. At the end of Bradford's narrative, there is no answer to the dilemma that the Plymouth colonists faced - either remain true to Bradford's vision of the church and starve in the narrow spit of land that they had settled in on Cape Cod, or move out and break that vision in order to prosper. There is only the sense that Bradford's construction of exemplary communal identity had been complicated from the start, and that Bradford was enough of a modern to know ambiguity when it appeared. The move toward Boston had effectively erased the distinction that Bradford had drawn between Pilgrims and adventurers; and Bradford was unable to recover, at least in a literary way, from the shock.

Bradford's intent is to make the voice of others equate the voice of God, speaking through a part of created nature suddenly deprived of its own will. Sailors, Native Americans, and financiers outside Bradford's community become oracles pronouncing the destiny of the elect. But the voice of practical finance proves to be an unfortunate choice for Bradford, because finance reverses the relationship and makes the elect speak with its voice, despite their professed purposes. Recording the voices of others is part of a strategy for defining Puritans - "Separatists" - by differentiating them from other groups who are portrayed in Bradford's narrative as wielding more earthly power, but not being true to Christian principles. This scheme of "othering" to
promote cohesion and a sense of mission within the group begins to unravel not because chosenness and capitalism cannot coexist. Rather, it begins to come undone because the Puritans' strategy of definition was diametrically opposed to the contact and commerce necessary to sustain a colonialist economy. In Bradford's narrative, communalism has to face the elements that have given it birth—othering, and the denial of the profit motive and the moral neutrality that profit requires.

Bradford's narrative is important in itself, in that it shows how the hard economic realities of colonial life complicate the metanarrative vision of American community that Bradford had intended to promote when he began writing his history of the Plymouth colony. But it is also important in that it presents the community as an early locus of American identity—an arrangement that Benjamin Franklin attempted to come to terms with in his Autobiography.

Bradford's and Franklin's narratives do not describe a clean progression of thought in constructions of American identity. Franklin did not, for instance, encounter Bradford's book in his copious reading and respond to the vision of communal identity that Bradford attempted to construct and maintain throughout his text. Though Bradford's narrative was used as a source for many Puritan histories of New England written during the late 1600s and early 1700s (Morison "Introduction" xxviii-xxx), the book is not mentioned by Franklin in any of his writings; and by 1767, four
years before Franklin began writing his *Autobiography*, the sole manuscript of Bradford's narrative had disappeared from the New England Library, in which it had been housed, not to reappear in full until the mid-1800s (Morison "Introduction" xxx-xxxii).

While they are not related in an easy literary progression, the two narratives still intersect at revealing points in the larger historical dialogue about American identity. Bradford's emphasis on communal identity, for example, echoes in many passages from Franklin's narrative. In fact, many studies of Franklin's text identify Franklin's definition of "American" with a focus on industry and community (Barnes 228; Breitweiser *Representative Personality* 2, 8; Dauber "Franklin" 255; Schueller 96). At the same time, they point out that Franklin's portrait of Americanism is based in the act of writing (Beidler 257; Fichtelberg 204; Patterson 21; Seavy 45; Warner 111). But Franklin's identification of writing with American identity, in conjunction with his concerns about how to govern the young nation of America, turns his narrative away from a vision of communal identity to an American identity based on a collection of individuals.

Franklin began writing the *Autobiography* in 1771 as a letter addressed to his eldest son. He left it unfinished at his death in 1789 as a public document designed to provide a model for American behavior and morals. Much of this model is based in writing, which acts in the narrative as a stabilizing force that
allowed Franklin to bring the raw and disputatious character of
his youth under control and act more fully and effectively in his
personal and professional life. Despite Franklin's obvious wish
to express this scheme for identity in terms of group behavior,
his emphasis on writing and the self causes his definition of
"American" to be much more narrow in scope. A comparative reading
of Franklin's Autobiography and Olaudah Equiano's Interesting
Narrative shows the degree to which Franklin's connection between
life and writing is more a function of his later social and
economic position than of his entry into society and the
marketplace. Franklin's equation of life and print, and his call
for Americans to live their lives inside that equation, is more
appropriate for a narrow audience of men in post-Revolutionary
America who had already secured their place in the new culture,
not those who were struggling to negotiate it.

As the Autobiography proceeds, Franklin's ultimate location
of American identity in individuals or small groups, not in the
larger community, becomes more clear, especially in his
description of the Junto, the private club that Franklin and a
small group of close friends formed in order to influence
Philadelphia politics. While the Autobiography begins as a
document meant to locate American identity in a community, as
Bradford's narrative did, it ends as a document that plans for
extraordinary individuals or powerful small groups to determine
the new direction that American would take in independence. In
short, Franklin spends a great deal of time encouraging helpful communal behavior in the Autobiography; but at the same time, he makes it clear that individuals and small groups that stood outside the community would actually define its identity. Those who remained in the community would not really be Americans, an arrangement that causes self-recognition by the non-elite to be more difficult.

Franklin's construction of American identity is based on people who leave the community in order to guide it. In this sense, Franklin's narrative is much different from Bradford's. It locates the discussion about literary constructions of American identity in a new point of reference — the individual instead of the community. In another sense, the two narratives have an important similarity. Like the financial interest of the Plymouth colony in Bradford's narrative, the trust in individuals and small groups rises up in Franklin's narrative to undo the theme of community that Franklin announces in the work's opening section. Franklin's answer to the problem of post-Revolutionary American identity is complicated and contradictory — a sign of the difficulty that Franklin faced in trying on the strength of his own wits to make sense of a newly free but essentially formless society.

The two points of reference defined by Bradford's and Franklin's narratives — communal identity and individualist identity — would be taken up by Melville and Hawthorne, who used
them to critique the individualist and communitarian views of American identity that complicated the pursuit of Manifest Destiny and the process of expansionism. Here, the progression of thought in literary constructions of American identity is more clear. Melville had in his own copious reading come into contact with most of the important texts of the American Revolution; and while Franklin's Autobiography was not published in an authoritative form until late in the nineteenth century, Melville had enough contact with Franklin's writings and enough of an opinion of Franklin's participation in the Revolutionary effort to make Franklin a prominent though slippery character in Israel Potter. While Typee is not a direct response to Franklin's life-narrative, it certainly focuses on the trust in the individual directing the community from outside — the strain of argument that dialogizes Franklin's narrative. Likewise, though there is not any direct evidence that Hawthorne read Bradford's manuscript of Of Plymouth Plantation, it is more than likely that he encountered the ideas and interpretation of events from Bradford's narrative that other writers like Cotton Mather, with whom Hawthorne was very familiar, put into their own works. And again, while the Marble Faun is certainly not a direct response to Bradford's narrative, it does address the dangers of investing in an exemplary communal identity based in Puritan tenets of communal purity and isolation.

Bradford's and Franklin's narratives grappled with day-to-day realities of community and governance. Melville's and
Hawthorne's narratives move into the realm of the imagination; but they do so with a sense of what might be called moral realism—a speculation on what might happen if the versions of American identity found in Bradford's and Franklin's texts were taken to their extremes. Melville's and Hawthorne's narratives also move into the realm of the non-American, by using settings in the South Pacific and in Europe create dramatic encounters between Americans and others. By doing this, the texts invert Emerson's denunciation of travel in "Self-Reliance." Emerson had written in 1841 that "[t]ravel is a fool's paradise," insisting that trips abroad were destined to end in "indifference" (Selected Writings 149). Instead of losing himself in the "intoxica[tions]" of unfamiliar lands, Emerson says, "My giant goes with me wherever I go" (Selected Writings 149). Yet the idea that wherever Americans go, their Americanness follows is exactly the point in Melville's and Hawthorne's narratives. Isolated on foreign shores, American identity is revealed more clearly; the problematics of its construction become easier to see. By setting their books in different places, Melville and Hawthorne cast new light on the same sorts of questions about American identity that Bradford and Franklin encountered in their narratives. This relationship between the four books in this study shows that the visions of American identity with which Bradford and Franklin grappled were to recur in texts about American identity, and that those older visions continued to be problematic in new historical contexts.
**Typee** was written in the early 1840s as a travel narrative describing the adventures of a young American seaman who deserts a whaling voyage to live among a tribe on an island in the South Pacific. Yet both Franklin's themes of the individual who directs a community from outside and the connection between life and writing appear in the narrative, rediscussed and critiqued in the portrait of the book's narrator, Tommo. John Samson observes that Melville read widely in travel literature (3), enough to know that travel writers were expected to remain outside the foreign places and cultures about which they reported (Giltrow 19-20). But Melville was also aware of the difficulties that travel writers encounter — that they are tempted to participate in things that they ought to be simply observing, that they tend to represent fiction as fact or cast a self-interested slant on events that they write into their narratives. And when Tommo finds a conflict between his duty to observe and his desire to participate, **Typee** shows Tommo engaging in self-interested manipulating and reporting of island culture — actions that show the consequences of Franklin's formulations taken to their extremes.

In **Typee**, American identity is invisibly imposed on others as a lack. Tommo shows both the prejudice of enlightenment and the myopia of the Romantic. In the first, he illustrates the assumption that others' reason, if it exists, will have the same outlines as one's own. In the second, he shows the failure to detect valid order in preliterate, less centralized societies. He
sees in them only "nature," a blank page on which to express his own conception of true liberated inner selfhood.

When Tommo encounters tribal practices that frustrate his desire to participate in Typee society, he sets out to "reform" the recalcitrant practices, employing the rhetoric of liberation and natural rights to validate his actions. Melville makes these episodes as difficult as possible, both for Tommo himself and for the literary construction of American identity that Tommo represents. To assert the rights of women, as Tommo claims to do at one point during his narrative, is certainly a valiant action. Tommo appears to be doing good work by introducing republican ideals to Typee culture; and he appears to be the right person to do this, as he is in the Franklin-esque position, outside society and yet the one to give it shape and direction. But once this episode is over, Tommo's achievements made in the name of group liberty smack more of self-interest. They become short term measures that benefit only him, and only for a short time. In such episodes, Tommo achieves both what Franklin describes as the most efficient functioning of government and what Franklin wished for in the opening section of the Autobiography — a chance really to live life as a written text, revising badly lived or uncomfortable times as a writer would a badly written or obscure passage. In Typee, both themes go out of control; and Tommo is left trying to escape both the Typees and the memories of his experiments among them.
Typee shows that the American abroad, and the American at home, has two sides. One speaks the language of equality and progress (Samson 6). The other acts in self-interest at the expense of those over whom it has influence (Mitchell 191-192). Trying to reconcile the two is more than Tommo can do. When he attempts to justify his reforms of Typee culture, he begins to fabricate images of the tribe, going one step further than Franklin by making writing stand in for life. It is when these images fail that Tommo flees from the island. As the individualist outside the community, Tommo is unable to bring the society that he has adopted up the smooth ascending curve of achievement and stability that Franklin projects in the Autobiography; the relationship between writing and life becomes a delusion rather than a help. In Typee, the tension between the rhetoric found in Franklin's writing and the actions that Americans take is too complicated for Tommo's narrative to settle — and possibly too much for writing to address at all.

Hawthorne began writing the Marble Faun in the late 1850s, reflecting on the people and ideas that he had encountered during diplomatic service in Europe, and also on a home that he saw as riven by the issues of expansionism and slavery. Nancy Bentley writes that the Marble Faun represents Hawthorne's response to the social and political difficulties that beset America after the boom years of Manifest Destiny (918). As such, Bentley argues, the book expresses Hawthorne's anxiety over social disorder and
the consequences it would have for the nation (902; 918). The solution to this anxiety, Bentley concludes, is the narrator's construction of "an America of 'human promise'" — a place of hope and certitude that contrasts with the exhaustion of Italy (Europe), where the novel takes place (931-932). In constructing this identity, Hawthorne's narrator, and the artist Hilda, whose voice corresponds most closely to the narrator's in this matter (Stern Contexts 123-136), specifically rejects violence as an American quality. As Milton Stern shows, Hilda reacts to violence by rejecting anyone associated with it (Contexts 126). Even violence in history is upsetting to Hilda, leading to condemnations and swift judgments about others. This rejection of violence, based in a model of exemplary communal identity, ignores America's past and present just as surely as Bradford's emphasis on the religious purity of the Plymouth colony ignores the hard realities of colonial economics. In the Marble Faun, suppression of the past and the present leaves American identity always deferred to the future. This is a dangerous arrangement, the narrative implies, at a time when a clear sense of history is needed to confront the problems of expansionism and slavery.

Hawthorne himself had a deep and analytical knowledge of American history, especially of violent conflicts like the Revolutionary and Mexican wars that had helped define the politics and geography of the country. As well, he had a clear sense of the regional factionalisms that drove different areas of the
country apart and made expanding the Union a process steeped in violence. This contrasts with the idyllic version of American identity constructed by the narrator of the *Marble Faun* — a distillation of what Stern calls nineteenth-century America's morally superior perception of itself (*Contexts* 117). The narrator's construction of America as an exemplary moral community rooted in communal New England Puritanism covers over the violence and factionalism that accompanied the nation's movement from colonies to Confederation to Union. But in his use of a naïve narrator and American characters that refuse to address the issue of violence, Hawthorne calls into question his own responses to the national difficulties of the 1850s. The critique of American complacency that appears in the *Marble Faun* highlights Hawthorne's own difficulties in resolving the issue of slavery, making the plural meanings in the text a reflection not only of Hawthorne's difficulties, but of the unsettledness of the age.

In the *Marble Faun*, American identity errs in equating the Old World with history and violence, defining its own new space as free from history and violence. The multiple perspectives of romance form allow the image of a half-animal, half-human character rising up to commit an act of violence to show an image of people fighting for freedom from an oppressive past. But the American characters in the book see the act only as a murder — a perspective that signals an American unwillingness to confront history. Implicit in this attitude is the text's suggestion that
an unwillingness to confront the violence inherent in expansionism and slavery would possibly result in a slave revolt and internal war. Like Bradford, the narrator of the *Marble Faun* offers a literary construction of American identity based on an exemplary community; and like Bradford, the narrator of the *Marble Faun* attempts to ignore an important strand of American experience. As Bradford's vision of American identity comes undone when it is confronted by the economic system of colonialism, the vision of American identity created by Hawthorne's narrator is threatened by history itself when it is confronted by the same sort of violence that gave America itself a national shape.

Neither Melville's nor Hawthorne's texts offers an easy solution to the problems raised in *Typee* or the *Marble Faun*. Operating in the realm of public life, Bradford could not reconcile the breakup of the Plymouth church; and Franklin could not comfortably balance power between the community and the individual. Operating in the realm of the imagination, Melville's narrative offers no sense that there is a better way to conceive of American identity than in terms of individualism and writing. It only points out the consequences of taking Franklin's formulations too far. Likewise, Hawthorne's narrative offers no sense that a communal conception of American identity is wrong. It simply reveals how it might blind Americans to the problems of expansionism and slavery in the 1850s. Exceptionalism defined in terms of freedom from taboo or freedom from history and violence
is a mistake to which American writing and politics have been prone. But neither Typee nor the Marble Faun offer any insight as to how it can be avoided.

Bradford’s and Franklin’s narratives serve as founding myths, setting forth originating visions of two powerful components of American identity — communalism and individualism. Melville’s and Hawthorne’s narratives, in a next stage of development of American writing and identity, are concerned with "foreign relations." They qualify their assertions of Americanness by placing them in the minds of characters, rather than simply being asserted by the authors; and they accentuate the "ground" against which the "figure" of this identity is drawn by placing their characters in foreign settings, where the unspoken, unconscious elements of American identity, whether conceived as individualism or communalism, can emerge clearly. At end, these four writers show that the two opposed notions of communalism and individualism are inescapable, and inevitably problematize each other, even as the constructions of each notion inevitably reveals its own blind spots.
Chapter One

Rewriting History: Communal Identity
in *Of Plymouth Plantation*

In 1630, William Bradford began writing a history of the Puritan colony at Plymouth, weaving the opening strands of his narrative into tales of persecutions and schisms among those whom Bradford calls "the first Christians" — the people who adopted the new religion while still ruled by "heathen" Roman emperors (3-4). ¹ By the end of 1630, Bradford had nearly caught up to his present, spanning about fifty-seven years of English church history and about twelve years of colony history with this narrative tapestry fairly well intact. According to Bradford himself, the rest of the manuscript was "pieced up at times of leisure afterward" (351); and critical histories show that Bradford wrote sporadically until 1646, the year the history ends, and added in extra material until about 1650 (Morison "Introduction" xxvii; Bredahl 20). This "pieced up" manner of composition is important to reading the history; for the further Bradford caught up to the actual point in time where he was writing, the less his narrative looks like the continuation of a Christian chronicle (Bredahl 20-21; Delbanco 193-195; Kemp 114-116).² While most studies suggest that Bradford's text begins to unravel in the later chapters that
detail Pilgrim life in the American wilderness, close reading reveals that the difficulties of adapting a vision of the Chosen People in the Promised Land to the processes of colonialism had made Bradford's metanarrative structure untenable almost from the start, and that this difficulty further complicates the communal identity that Bradford tries to sustain throughout his text.

In discussing Bradford's work, it is important to distinguish between the narrative in the text — the recounting of events that involved the Pilgrims in Europe and America — and the metanarrative in the text — Bradford's design for the work. In pursuing this metanarrative design, Bradford interprets the events of the narrative in such a way that they support his belief that the Plymouth colony was to be a more successful version of the Biblical search for perfection in the Promised Land. It is this metanarrative design that presents Bradford with his greatest challenge as a historian, for it is the grand vision of the Pilgrims as new Israelites that Bradford cannot sustain.

Bradford saw the difficulty in his metanarrative vision toward the end of his writing, which helps explain the increasingly bitter tone that appears in later chapters of the history, and which would place Of Plymouth Plantation firmly in the mold of Sacvan Bercovitch's "American Jeremiad" — a text that allows an author "to mount criticisms, even condemnations, of American society while at the same time drawing on the ideals (largely mythic) of the American past and affirming the goals of the American future" (Reising 83). Much of what dismayed Bradford
about the later years of the colony was the colonists' emphasis on economic endeavor. Trade, minor manufacturing, individualized farming, and other activities would cause the settlement to expand and succeed; but they would cause many settlers to forego religious devotions and communal relations, thus diminishing the power of the Plymouth Church. Yet this dynamic is present in the text all along, not just in the later parts, and appears most clearly in a series of letters that Bradford copied into the early chapters of his narrative in order to support his claims for the colony's spiritual purity. In short, an important element of Bradford's narrative breaks off and becomes disruptive. What Bradford sees as a strength of the colony at the beginning of his metanarrative becomes a weakness by the end of it; and the identity that Bradford proposes for the colony - an identity based on living in America in a unified, spiritual community - becomes undone almost from the beginning of its formulation by the Pilgrims' involvement in colonial economics, not in their encounters with the American land, as is generally accepted.

Bradford was writing a providential history - a chronicle designed to reveal the presence of God's grace in human history. According to Bercovitch, such histories fall into two types for Puritans. One is the history of common providence, which follows the self in what Bercovitch calls "its mundane needs, its political involvements ..., its social guises." The other is the history of "God's acts of wonder," which follows the soul in its "embattled course to an other-worldly perfection." Bercovitch
calls the first kind of history a chronicle of "secular providences" and the second kind a chronicle of "figural providences." This division leaves secular providence to show God's grace in specific temporal events, while allowing figural providence to show how "God's acts of mercy and privilege extend to the elect alone," and eventually show "the work of redemption" operating in the fabric of Puritan history (Puritan Origins 40-41). Bercovitch identifies Bradford's text as a history of common providence, and the Plymouth colony as "a secular experience from which [Bradford] tried to infer the meaning of providence," in order to distinguish it from a text like Cotton Mather's Life of John Winthrop. Mather's work, he explains, is planned to show God's redemption in human history, and offers its central figure as a symbol of "his society at its best." Bradford's work, by contrast, simply "chronicles the fate of a wholly temporal venture" (Puritan Origins 44-46). Yet Bradford's history is not strictly common or secular. For throughout the narrative, Bradford works to present the Pilgrim community as an example of an elect group that he expects will show God's redemption at work in its new life in America; and through this presentation, Bradford attempts to construct a communal American identity for the Pilgrim community.

As Bercovitch makes clear, Bradford's narrative is generally read as recounting the Pilgrims' backsliding from their mission in America. Yet Bradford's metanarrative aspires to a more figural meaning, seeing in the Pilgrim enterprise the same type of
exemplary figure that appears in Mather's life of Winthrop. In Bradford's text, the exemplary figure is the community itself, rather than a single figure in it. To be sure, members of the community might themselves prove wanting, or people who attached themselves to the community might turn out to be impure of spirit. But it is the community at large, as a religious institution, that Bradford privileges and makes the center of his metanarrative design.

In the short preface that opens his narrative, Bradford promises to tell the colony's history "in a plain style, with singular regard to all the simple truth in things, at least as near as my slender judgment can attain the same" (3). For a Puritan writer, the plain style meant an emphasis not on a particular rhetorical structure or strategy, but an attempt to show the meaning in events clearly, without relying on the stylistics of a writer like John Donne. As Perry Miller explains, Puritans considered stylized writing to be dangerous, leading to a veneration of language rather than a close observance of the spiritual truths that lay in events (344-345, 354-355). Bradford's emphasis is on how "God's blessing" followed the American Pilgrim community from its beginnings in England through its trials in Holland to its settlement in Plymouth; and, in main, he achieves this not by resorting to rhetorical flourish, but by showing how God's grace in the community is attested to by non-colonists. In short, having identified himself as a Puritan writer pursuing a spiritual truth, Bradford turns his attention to
showing through his metanarrative design how God's blessing on the Pilgrim group is told by people who live both physically and spiritually outside it.

One example of this is the episode of the arrogant sailor, related by Bradford in chapter seven of his narrative, the section that describes the Pilgrims' attempts to set sail for America. As the colonists sailed from Dartmouth, England, to the New World, Bradford reports that "many were afflicted with seasickness" (58). To add insult to injury,

There was a proud and very profane young man, one of the seamen, of a lusty, able body, which made him the more haughty; he would always be contemning the poor people in their sickness and cursing them daily with grievous execrations; and did not let to tell them that he hoped to help cast half of them overboard before they came to their journey's end, and to make merry with what they had; and if he were by any gently reproved, he would curse them and swear most bitterly.

Of course, sailors are the usual antagonists of Christians at sea. The freed African slave Olaudah Equiano, for instance, tells even a century and a half later of a strikingly similar incident, in which a profane tar deliberately violates "Christian" rules of discourse (43); and John Samson has shown that by the nineteenth century, the division between sailors and religious folk had become so deep that it was bounded by separate meanings in language (24-27). But this episode ends in the young sailor's unspoken testimony that the colonists are God's favored people after all:

But it pleased God before they came half seas over, to smite this young fellow with a grievous disease, of which he died in a desperate manner, and so was
himself the first that was thrown overboard. Thus his
curses light upon his own head, and it was an
astonishment to all his fellows for they noted it to
be the just hand of God upon him. (58)

Bradford opens the anecdote with his own opinion on the
matter ("And I may not omit here a special work of God's
providence" [58]); but he allows confirmation of God's favor to
come from the mouths of the sailors themselves. The lusty sailor
participates by announcing to the colonists a fate that will
instead become his own. In the process, his own words become a
testament to God's aid for the Pilgrims. Still more confirmation
of the colonists' blessing comes from the other sailors. The crew
in general is not particularly inclined toward the colonists. A
paragraph later, the remaining sailors argue about scrapping the
whole voyage in the face of bad weather and damage to the ship;
only a piece of equipment provided by the colonists allows the
trip to continue (58-59). Yet they also are able to point out the
hand of God when it seems to appear and point to the Pilgrims.
Bradford writes that the episode was an "astonishment" to them, a
term that in contemporary English translations of the book of
Deuteronomy, a text Bradford cites many times, often signified the
holy nation of Israel (Deut. xxviii. 37). By testifying to the
living hand of God, the crew shows that the colonists are indeed
the chosen people, and that the whole affair is an "astonishment,"
a real sign of the colonists' favor. For Bradford, the "simple
truth" of God's election is carried in the sailors' discourse,
which itself contributes to his metanarrative design.
Later, the same sort of thing happens. During the first few months that the voyagers attempted to gain a foothold on the Massachusetts coast, more than half the company died from exposure, disease, and hunger (77-79). Bradford reports that at first, any real sickness seemed confined to the colonists, creating an edgy mood aboard the Mayflower, where most of their people were quartered. The sailors, according to Bradford, "hasted" as many passengers as they could off the ship, in order to save the ship's beer ration, which they favored over water. When Bradford himself falls ill and begs for "but a small can of beer," he is told "that if he were their own father he should have none" (78). Immediately, the sailors are beset by the same sickness as the passengers. Bradford reports that half the crew died; and the ship's master, "something strucken," sends word to Bradford that "he should send for beer for them that had need of it, though he drunk water homeward bound" (78). Caught by disease, the sailors begin to turn on each other, rather than on the colonists. Bradford writes that the sailors took to the maxim "'if they died, let them die,'" and left each other to the care of the remaining passengers, who "showed them what mercy they could" (78). Not only is this behavior by the Pilgrims a direct contrast to the ship's master's, it is shown to be holy conduct by the ailing sailors themselves. Bradford tells that

the boatswain ... was a proud young man and would often curse and scoff at the passengers. But when he grew weak, they had compassion on him and helped him; then he confessed he did not deserve it at their
hands, he had abused them in word and deed. "Oh!" (saith he) "you, I now see, show your love like Christians indeed one to another, but we let one another lie and die like dogs." (78)

Again, it is the sailors, the non-colonists, who provide the very words that contribute to Bradford's metanarrative.

When the congregation is well off the boat and in the process of establishing its settlement in Plymouth, it is the secular members of the colony and the local Native American tribes who take the place of sailors in these testifying constructions. In the entry for 1623, Bradford brings in words from the hard-luck "adventurers" — non-religious investors who bought into the Plymouth voyage — to emphasize the special grace apparent among the Separatists. These men had a rough go of it at first, and in the words of one critic, "cadged provisions from the Pilgrims in order to stay alive and eventually ended up weak, starving, and working for fishermen or serving Indians for their keep" (Marsahall 161-162). Bradford concludes his description of these events by writing,

This was the end of these, that some time boasted of their strength (being all able, lusty men) and what they would do and bring to pass in comparison of the people here, who had many women and children and weak ones amongst them. And said at their first arrival, when they say the wants here, that they would take another course and not to fall into such a condition as this simple people were come to. But a man's way is not in his own power, God can make the weak to stand. Let him also that standeth take heed lest he fall. (118-119)

Again, the voice of others shows the blessedness of the colonists. Where the secular fools boast and falter — and have their own
words thrust back on them by their poor condition - the Pilgrims thrive by virtue of God's grace.

Such episodes appear throughout the work, even in the later parts where, as many commentators have noted, Bradford has a great deal of trouble making his history anything but the long tale of woe and futility that, according to Bercovitch, characterizes narratives of common providence (Puritan Origins 40-42). For long stretches, things do happen with only phrases like "It pleased the Lord" to account for the Pilgrims' misery. But in accounts of years like 1634, called by Bradford "one of the saddest ... that befell them since they came" (262), he still is able to report that the Native Americans "thankfully acknowledge" the Pilgrims were blessed by God because the Plymouth congregation had avoided the depredations of smallpox (270-271). In this entry, Bradford uses Native Americans in the same way that he uses sailors in earlier passages. Though the colonists eventually came to fairly friendly accommodations with some of the tribes that located in and around Cape Cod, and though such helpful figures as Squanto first appear in Bradford's chronicle as "a special instrument sent of God for [the colonists'] own good beyond their expectation (81), Bradford never really deserts the position that Native Americans were mysterious heathens. At one point, he refers to their religious practices as "conjurations ... held in a dark and dismal swamp" (81). For Bradford, the Native Americans were even more profane than the white sailors, but nonetheless were able to
add their voice to the metanarrative design that testifies to the exemplary nature of the Plymouth community.

These narrative episodes call attention to the colonists as a group example of Puritan virtue — the sort of example that Winthrop, as an individual, provides for his community in Mather's work. The Scrooby congregation — the group of Separatists that Bradford had joined in his youth and that formed the core of the Pilgrim band that sailed to America on the Mayflower — was the last remnant of a much larger group that had been scattered by ideological differences and geographical distances. For Bradford, that remnant had become an exemplary figure in itself, because it continued to work toward its spiritual goals together while other groups had fallen by the wayside (Kemp 113). Bradford's belief was supported by a more general Puritan faith in the sanctity of Puritan religious institutions. Puritans might doubt the salvation of any individual — in fact, Bradford himself calls into question the holy character of a number of Separatists, like John Lyford, an Anglican cleric who converted to the Pilgrim church in America, but who was called to account and exiled from the community for having written disparaging letters about the colonists to associates in England (147-163). But, as Miller writes, the character of any Puritan institution was considered to be unquestionable (416-421, 430-431). By turning a collection of individuals into a group, Bradford is able to identify the Pilgrims as a people distinct from other Separatist congregations, and is able to draw on the strength of Puritan institutions in
order to refer to them as a holy church — things that allow the Plymouth community to become an exemplary figure in the narrative and form the basis for Bradford's vision of communal American identity.

The most visible but most difficult practice of this strategy appears in Bradford's use of letters copied into the text of his history. Bradford transcribed a great many letters — letters to and from members of the Separatist community, the colonists' agents in Britain and Holland, and the colony's financial partners in Britain — all with the same intent as his transcriptions of speeches by sailors and Native Americans: to bolster his metanarrative design by showing the hand of God on the colony through the words of others. These letters are especially important to Bradford's metanarrative purpose. They allow Bradford to bolster his vision of exemplary Pilgrim identity, and at the same time allow him to feel as if he is writing a true history. Bradford writes that "letters are by some wise men counted as the best parts of histories," and that events are better shown from their participants' views, "by their own letters" (41). Twice, he calls special attention to the authoritative power of letters in historical narrative, saying that personal letters "give light" to historical events (31, 34). Yet it is clear that Bradford viewed the letters that he copied in as support for his vision of Pilgrim identity. He writes that
through his use of personal letters in his history, "the passage of things will be more truly discerned" (41) — a clear reference to what Bradford himself saw as the truth of his metanarrative.

In using passages from these letters, Bradford expands his rhetorical strategy to include the language of business — a discourse that Bradford and most other Puritans considered as "outside" a voice as those of cursing sailors or unlettered heathen. By offering the words of British statesmen and colonial merchants in his narrative, Bradford again works to show that Pilgrim unity was exemplary by turning the worldly voice of commerce back against itself. Yet it is in the use of these letters that the processes of colonialism begin to take their toll on Bradford's narrative and undermine his construction of American identity. In fact, the very letters that he copies into the history in order to contribute to his metanarrative become the letters that begin to undo that metanarrative design.

To be sure, Bradford has the same sort of success early on with letters as he does with spoken words. The first letter he presents, copied into chapter five of the narrative, which details the bureaucratic preparations that the Pilgrims made in Britain and Holland for the voyage to America, is from Sir Edwin Sandys, the treasurer of the Virginia Company of London, the body that the colonists had ultimately decided to petition for a patent to operate in the Virginia territory. This first letter actually supports Bradford's metanarrative. In response to the colonists' continuing requests for patent rights — inquiries directed to
royal and ecclesiastical authorities having already failed twice, by Bradford's account (29-30) - Sandys writes on 12 November 1617 that their chances finally seem good, the Separatist messengers having subscribed the colonists' names to a set of articles of faith, which would have made them acceptable in the eyes of the royal court and the English church (31). In closing, Sandys adds that the whole enterprise seems a sound and holy one: "And so I betake you with this design (which I hope verily is the work of God), to the gracious protection and blessing of the Highest" (32). The Pilgrims' answer to Sandys, written a month later by John Robinson and William Brewster, the Separatists' representatives to the Virginia Company, accepts the hopeful message and adds a series of articles that insists the colonists are ready to pursue this "work of God" with all due speed: that they are confident that God will "graciously prosper our endeavors"; that they are ready for the rigors of travel and colonization, especially since they will have very little to return to; that they will be no trouble once they have been allowed to get underway; and above all, that they "are knit together as a body in a most strict and sacred bond and covenant of the Lord" (32-33). In short, the two letters act as a metanarrative set piece, the first providing an institutional admission of the Pilgrim's holy work, and the second confirming that admission with the words of the colonists themselves.

Again, the arrangement in these first letters is the same as with the sailors or adventurers or Native Americans. Bradford
ducks out of the way as a narrator by saying, "here it will be requisite to insert a letter or two that may give light to these proceedings" (31), echoing the earlier mention of his "slender judgement." The letters begin to say for themselves that the colonists' enterprise is a blessed endeavor. Sandys, speaking for the institution that had twice before held out hope of a patent in as many years, only to have such hopes "proved all in vain" (30), suddenly reports that everything will be fine, as the colonists have been spiritually approved, and that, to boot, they seem indeed to go with God. His writing is a version of the spoken discourse of the sailors or adventurers or Native Americans that Bradford reports in other passages — words that indicate the Pilgrims, having showed great perseverance in difficult circumstances, show God's grace at work. The letter by Robinson and Brewster acts as Bradford's metanarrative voice in closing the incident. It confirms the exemplary nature of the Separatist group by having its five articles performing the same function as a statement like "it was an astonishment to all his fellows." Of course, some circumstances are different here. For one, Sandys, though he was indeed an official of the Virginia Company, and therefore an official of the crown and the church, was also "a Puritan sympathizer" (Plymouth 29n), and therefore not so far outside the Puritan company as the sailors or Indians. For another, the two letters also represent a negotiation between the colonists and the patent company — a way of making sure, on the one hand, that the colonists would remain under what Bradford
calls "the King's broad seal" (30), while on the other, that they would be able to operate "according to their desires" (30). Still, no mention of anything outside spiritual character and destiny is made in either letter; and the first letter is written under the aegis of the strangely impenetrable Virginia Company, which guards access to the king's lands abroad. Sandys' letter is indeed an institutional confirmation of the colonists' exemplary character; and Robinson and Brewster's letter is the metanarrative comment on that discourse.

The letters that follow simply reinforce the exemplary and unified character of the whole enterprise. Bradford copied in whole or in part five letters that describe the Pilgrims' dealings with the Virginia company. Each mentions nothing of "business" — i.e. the money or financial arrangements that are at the heart of colonial projects. Rather, even the letters addressed to people with little religious interest are composed in spiritual terms. And again, the metanarrative arrangement is much the same. After the reply from Robinson and Brewster to Sandys, Bradford comments, "For further light in these proceedings see some other letters and notes as followeth" (34).

Here, Bradford calls attention to his transcriptions as aids to seeing the truth that he perceived at the heart of his narrative. As Miller writes, any Puritan discourse had only one aim — revealing God's hand at work (359). So again, Bradford is pointing up how the colonists' exemplary community will be shown in the words of others. But he is also calling attention to which
voices he plans to highlight. For now Bradford moves away from Puritan sympathizers like Sandys to men whose main focus was commercialism and profit, and whose words continue to contribute to Bradford's metanarrative.

The first collection of correspondence that shows this change is a letter and two short notes, written in January 1618, when the Pilgrim company was trying to assure other members of the Virginia Company and members of the British government that their religious doctrines would not lead the colony into a spiritual rebellion against British authority. All of it is addressed to Sir John Wolstenholme, who is identified by Samuel Morison, editor of the authoritative version of Bradford's text, as "one of the greater merchant adventurers of the period; an incorporator of the East India Company and member of the Council for Virginia" (Plymouth 353n), and says nothing about money. Rather, it is a plea for Wolstenholme to see that the colonists are of an exemplary character, and that any delay in granting them a patent and orders to sail would be "unjust" (353). The writers, again Robinson and Brewster, cast Wolstenholme's efforts on the part of the Separatists as holy work: "Our prayers unto God is that your Worship may see the fruit of your worthy endeavours, which on our parts we shall not fail to further by all good means in us" (353). The two notes following Robinson and Brewster's letter to Wolstenholme are simply delineations, sent for Wolstenholme's approval, of how the Pilgrim church planned to administer the
spiritual and public life of the colony — how ministers and other church officials would be chosen, where their authority would extend in public and private actions (353-354).

In the correspondence that follows the letters to Wolstenholme, Bradford introduces more written texts that accomplish the same purpose as the spoken words of sailors and Native Americans — a testimony to the Pilgrims' exemplary identity in the discourse of others. The next letter that Bradford cites was written in February 1618, by Sabine Staresmore, a member of the Separatist congregation that had delivered the above correspondence to Wolstenholme, in order to apprise the Pilgrims of Wolstenholme's reaction to their entreaties. In this letter, Staresmore writes that the process the Pilgrims proposed for choosing their ministers — "the power of making was in the Church, ... It must either be in the Church or from the Pope, and the Pope is Antichrist" (355) — did not sit well with Wolstenholme, and so was not shown to the ecclesiastical authorities, who would have been of much the same mind. Wolstenholme chides the colonists, saying "what the Pope holds good (as in the Trinity) that we do well to assent to. But,' said he, 'we will not enter into dispute now'" (355). Even Staresmore seems upset with his fellows for having taken such a divisive stand and not having told him about it before having him deliver the letters to Wolstenholme: "I could have wished to have known the contents of your two enclosed, at which he stuck so much, especially the larger" (355). Yet despite the dissension from Wolstenholme, the
closing of the letter is greatly hopeful. Staresmore writes, "I asked his Worship what good news he had for me to write tomorrow. He told me very good news for both the King's Majesty and the bishops have consented. He said he would go to Mr. Chancellor, Sir Fulke Greville, as this day ..." (355). Staremore's letter casts Wolstenholme in a politically powerful variation on the role of the arrogant sailors – upbraiding the Pilgrims for their practices, yet at end approving of them and soliciting the approval of others, supporting Bradford's metanarrative slant.

These letters and notes that Bradford copies allow him to have others testify to the special identity that the Pilgrim community would try to live out in America; and the cap on this correspondence is no different – a long piece transcribed into the chapter by Bradford from a letter by Robert Cushman, another member of the congregation, addressed to the Pilgrim church at Leyden, Holland, and written in May 1618, after the negotiations begun by the letters to Wolstenholme had proceeded through what Bradford calls much "agitation, and messengers passing to and again" (355). This last letter is especially important because it shows the exemplary unity of the Pilgrim community in clear contrast to men who have allowed the lust for profit to overcome them. At first, it seems that Cushman has bad news. Delays in negotiation, what Bradford calls "rubs that fell in the way" (355), had allowed the Virginia Company to fall into "dissentions and factions" over the fate of a previous band of patentees, which had resulted in the Pilgrims' case being neglected (356-357). The
previous case, Cushman reports, was of a group undone by too much business sense. The colonists, led by a Francis Blackwell, "were packed together like herrings" aboard ship, and "had amongst them the flux, and also want of fresh water, so as it is here rather wondered at that so many are alive, than that so many are dead" – 130 dead out of 180 passengers and crew (357). The uproar over this disaster caused such "extreme quarrellings" that the Virginia company appeared to Cushman to become paralyzed, unable to act on any further requests for patents (357). But the Blackwell disaster becomes yet another focus for comments about the exemplary nature of the Separatist congregation. Cushman writes, "As we desire to serve one another in love, so take heed of being enthralled by any imperious person [i.e. Blackwell], especially if they be discerned to have an eye to themselves" (357); and Bradford comments at the close of Cushman's letter that Blackwell, though he had once been a religious official in the Separatist church at Amsterdam, had before his voyage denied his faith, delivered a member of his congregation into the hands of authorities in order to save himself from persecution, and insinuated himself into the company of London bishops and curried their favor (358). The antiparallels between the ill-fated expedition led by Blackwell and the expedition hoped for by the Pilgrims are readily apparent. Where Blackwell deserted his faith, the new colonists refuse to desert theirs, even in the face of chaffing from important governmental officers like Wolstenholme. Where Blackwell's company was centered around the
figure of Blackwell himself, the new company emphasizes "the Church," with its sense of community and anti-papist communal authority. Where Blackwell erred in packing his ship with people to get more mass for his money, the new group is far more concerned with spiritual than financial means and arrangements, as shown in the very letters and notes that precede the report of Blackwell's voyage. As Bradford concludes, "It is much better to keep a good conscience and have the Lord's blessing, whether in life or death" (357), implying that the Pilgrims are on the better side, as attested to by Sandys, Wolstenholme, the King, the bishops, and the reports of the Blackwell incident — all voices from outside the Pilgrims' Separatist community.

In short, the letters and notes copied into this point in the narrative perform the same function as Bradford's anecdotes about sailors and others — they reveal the chosen nature of the Pilgrims through the words of others and emphasize the unity of the congregation. In this case, the "others" are secular authorities in business or government, adding official validation to the Pilgrims' efforts. By pointedly not compromising themselves in negotiations with the government, and not following false and commercially-minded leaders, the Separatists appear in Bradford's metanarrative to be above the control of colonial financial concerns and determined to pursue their vision of a united community in America.

But as these documents appear in the text, Bradford begins to lose control of his metanarrative design, in that around the
copied writings begin to appear references to "strangers" or "adventurers" — words that denote the colonists' undertaking as a voluntarist one, whatever spirit of covenant Bradford insists on applying to it. Before the December 1617 letter to Sandys comes an admission that the Pilgrims' representatives to the Virginia Company were also charged with approaching "such merchants ... as had manifested their forwardness to ... adventure [i.e. come along only for profit] in this voyage" (31). Indeed, by chapter six of the narrative, Bradford is describing "strangers" who have to be added to the Pilgrim company (44), and is referring to Thomas Weston, who became a bankroller for the expedition and came to represent the worst of the Separatists' efforts to remain a united religious community (37). As Morison writes,

Thomas Weston, citizen and ironmonger of London, was an "Adventurer" (promoter and capitalist) somewhat below the great men of the Virginia and Massachusetts Bay companies; a man of enterprise, eager to reap quick profits from the new world, and not very scrupulous as to means. ... The need of the Pilgrims and other groups for money to finance emigration gave Weston and his associates a new opportunity for speculative investment. He and his group ... are, according to the usage of the day, called by Bradford the Adventurers, in contrast to the Colonists or Planters. According to Captain John Smith's General Historie of Virginia ... about 70 men, "some Gentlemen, some Merchants, some handy-crafts men," were associated with Weston in this enterprise .... Weston, after squeezing all he could out of the Pilgrims, became a planter and burgess in Virginia, whence he made fishing and trading voyages to the Maine coast. (Plymouth 37n)

Bradford's use of the terms "merchant" and "adventure" are allusions to men of Weston's stamp — in with the colony for money, not for "liberty in religion," the banner under which Bradford
writes that the expedition was to be led (29). Even after the letter from Cushman that showed the deadly foolishness of following a commercial bent in the example of Blackwell, the same words reappear. Bradford refers to "such merchants ... as should ... adventure with them," and adds "especially ... those on whom they did chiefly depend for shipping and means" (35); in a footnote, Bradford writes that "those" means "Mr. Thomas Weston, etc." (35n). At end, the letters that do so much to play up the exemplary communal identity of the voyage are surrounded by admissions that make identity increasingly a matter of point of view — an irony, since the letters are inserted by Bradford in an attempt to erase the problem of point of view and bolster his metanarrative design.

Indeed, by chapter six of the narrative, Bradford winds up almost completely off the warp and woof of his metanarrative. The Pilgrims are unable to secure arrangements with the patent company and have to fall back on Weston's support, promised to them as a full bill of shipping and capital for provisions (37). The chapter is full of articles and letters inserted by Bradford that detail the bargain struck in 1620 between the colonists and adventurers, usually saying that the colony as a whole ought to be occupied in labor like fishing and trading, not in building large or expensive houses (40-44). These documents are not particularly damaging to Bradford's metanarrative bias. For instance, Bradford writes at the end of the chapter that his history of the ins and outs of dealing with Weston and other adventurers is simply a
lesson given so that "[the colonists'] children may see with what difficulties their fathers wrestled in going through these things in their first beginnings; and how God brought them along, notwithstanding all their weaknesses and infirmities" (46). In other words, the passage is meant to show how the spirit of the Pilgrims eventually shines through the haggling over houses and financial shares. In chapter five, Bradford had added words to the effect that any description of financial negotiations only showed "A right emblem ... of the uncertain things of this world, that when men have toiled themselves for them, they vanish into smoke" (35). According to Morison, "This last sentence was written later than the rest of the chapter" (Plymouth 35n); and indeed, it seems almost to foreshadow the fathers-and-children lesson proposed in Bradford's tale of the Pilgrims' coming to terms with the adventurers.

But in among the letters in chapter six is another from Robert Cushman, which Morison notes is undated, but is unquestionably a reply to other correspondence written in early June 1620 by congregation elders (Plymouth 361n), that tells the colonists to stop complaining about the processes of colonization and look to their material interests — an argument that clearly raises the problem of point of view and begins to undercut Bradford's metanarrative thrust. Bradford and other elders of the Leyden congregation had raised objections to how the colony was to be divided up between the Pilgrims and the adventurers after a period of time had elapsed, to how many days were to be allotted
each family for work on its own farmland, and to the proposition that the adventurers be allowed to bring along servants—a measure that would fill up the ship without bringing the extra investment the expedition needed to provision itself (360). While the objections are plainly stated, though the writers of the letter admit that they are objecting to things they have heard through third parties, not through direct communication from Cushman or the other Separatists delegated to negotiate with the adventurers (360-361), the letter ends with the usual formula of leaving everything up to God's will:

Thus beseeching the Almighty, who is all sufficient to raise us out of this depth of difficulties, to assist us herein, raising such means by His providence and fatherly care for us, His poor children and servants, as we may with comfort behold the hand of our God for good towards us in this our business which we undertake in His name and fear ... . (361)

Cushman's reply to Bradford and the others' attempt to cover financial interests in spiritual rhetoric is blunt and telling. Obviously nettled, Cushman writes that he has taken the congregation's objections as a sign of "great discontents and dislikes" over his terms with Weston and company (361). After a short and haughty apology, Cushman launches into a harangue of the Pilgrim's attitudes, not only refuting their objections but adding such phrases as "Charity hath its life in wrecks, not in ventures"; "Our riches shall not be in pomp but in strength"; "Brethren, look to it, that make profit your main end"; "Ventures are made by all sorts of men and we must labour to give them all
content if we can" (363-364). The implication in Cushman's letter is that capitalism is morally equalitarian in value - a levelling of distinctions that contrasts with the Puritan moral hierarchy.

In all these lines, Cushman denounces the Separatists for expecting material support as if it were their special due, rather than acting like common-sense businessmen engaged in a partnership, which now was visibly the case. The admonition about charity, for instance, comes in a passage where Cushman takes the congregation to task for complaining about having to make any conditions between themselves and the adventurers. Cushman tells them that what they have been involved in is a business venture - that the voyage is not about "alms but furnishing a storehouse" (363) - and that they had better see this clearly. In short, he says the Pilgrims ought to begin acting like businessmen, not like charity-cases.7 The rest of Cushman's advice runs in the same vein. Grand houses ("pomp"), he says, are not the way to make such an expedition successful. Rather, like good capitalists, "if God send us riches we will employ them to provide more men, ships, munition, etc." (363). Cushman's point of view on religious application is different from the one that the church elders had held; and Cushman presses his vision home. The Pilgrims ought to act more like the adventurers with whom they have thrown in their lot - "Our friends with us that adventure mind not their own profit ... . Then they are better than we, who for a little matter of profit are ready to draw back ... " (363). Thus the Leyden elders, who were becoming squeamish about how much money
the adventurers would make out of their part in the voyage, need to pay attention to their own business — to "make profit your main end." Finally, Cushman admonishes them to understand clearly the financial world as it is, and make do with it like everyone else. "Ventures are made by all sorts of men," he tells the Leyden elders. If they want their venture to be successful, Cushman insists, they will stop complaining and make the sort of accommodations any smart business company would in securing its own self-interest — especially if their partners hold most of the purse strings: "we must labour to give them all content if we can."

The letter makes it clear that the Pilgrims are involved in a business partnership — that it must be looked at as a financial matter, and executed with a mind toward profit and future investment. Of course, the voyage had been a financial matter all along. Any patent issued by such a body as the Virginia company would have details not only about self-government but about trade and other economic endeavors (Bruce II 290-294; Andrews I 128-33). But in reporting the Separatists' negotiations with the Virginia company, Bradford lets all this become submerged beneath signs of the colonists' exemplary character, and gives the impression that finance has in no way played a part in realizing a communal identity in America.

There was good reason for Bradford's being unwilling to acknowledge the economic side of the Pilgrims' colonial venture. As Anthony Kemp writes, and as the previous examples of sailors,
Native Americans, and British officials show, Bradford's method of defining Pilgrim identity is based in separating the colonial congregation from other groups (113). In the early chapters of Bradford's narrative, the two groups from which Bradford is at pains to separate the Pilgrims are Blackwell's group and the Plymouth adventurers. Blackwell provides a point for metanarrative contrast not only because his voyage was unsuccessful, but because Blackwell's spiritual faltering is associated with his concern for monetary gain. The report of Blackwell's voyage that Bradford copied into the narrative lays Blackwell's greed and the resulting disaster directly to a lack of religious purity. The adventurers serve as a continuing metanarrative example of what the Pilgrims ought not to be, in their pursuit of success.

Cushman's letter is the first real challenge to the strength of Bradford's metanarrative construction of Pilgrim identity—a sign that questions about the economics of colonialism have at least as much weight in directing the expedition as questions of religious liberty. It is also the first real sign that the spiritual identity that Bradford had been fashioning in his metanarrative was beginning to unravel. For this letter of Cushman's blurs the lines between categories like "colonist" and "adventurer." We had better become like them, he says, if we are to make this voyage happen.

As well, it shows that the Pilgrim fathers had been engaged in the political economy of colonialism for some time, and had
been clothing the resulting financial talk in religious language. Cushman's long rebuke of the colonists is a response to a series of heavy-handed financial demands made by Bradford and the others on the non-colonists — that the Pilgrims ought to get more than half the houses and land once the time came to divide the plantation up between colonists and adventurers, that a significant portion of the week be given up to working in private yards rather than in the common stock (something that would benefit the Pilgrims, who had more and larger families than the "strangers"), and that adventurers should not be able to bring along servants, who would entitle their masters to extra shares in the enterprise (360-361; 40-41). It is as if the Scrooby elders had decided to preserve their theocratic vision of the colony in the concrete structures that would house its inhabitants. In short, the measures that Cushman considered equitable are referred to by the Leyden elders in the early June correspondence as "unreasonable courses" of negotiation (360). They refer Cushman "to our pastor's former reasons, and then to the censure of the godly wise" (360) — indicating that Cushman's attempt to come to a settlement with Weston and the adventurers, the action that prompted the early June letter, is a step off the path of righteous conduct, and that Cushman had better come to his senses. The Pilgrims had not hesitated before to make large demands on the people supporting them, as Staresmore's 1618 letter to Robinson and Brewster shows. But the demands being reported in this sixth chapter are purely financial ones, cloaked in a rhetoric of
exemplary spiritual conduct. It takes the bald statement of
financial involvement and purpose written by Cushman to reveal the
Pilgrim fathers playing at a money game.8

In retrospect, it is clear that religion and finance could
not escape being intertwined in the Pilgrims' colonial endeavor.
In order for the Separatists to have a political identity ensured
by the British government on what was then considered British
land, and for the prospective colony to achieve self sustenance,
the voyagers' religious principles would have to become wedded to
profit making measures. To move too far in this direction,
however, would put the Separatists in too close a relation with
profiteers like Blackwell or Weston — or worse, with a religious
institution like the Catholic church, which in the Puritan view
had become too zealous in its pursuit of financial gain.

At end, all this financial wrangling is doubly damming,
because it has come from the mouths of congregational members.
While Bradford shows outsiders testifying to the exemplary
character of the enterprise, the Pilgrims themselves are busy
erasing the metanarrative distinction between colonist and
adventurer by beginning to pursue profit with as much
assiduousness as they had attributed to their partners. Yet this
is not simply a problem of rhetoric — a question of whether
Bradford and the Pilgrim fathers had expected too much from the
language that they had employed to explain their aims. Instead,
it is a problem of point of view — a difficult contrast between
Bradford's narrative and Bradford's own metanarrative design.
It has been pointed out that distinctions between an exemplary spiritual character and a financially centered one were not completely clear in Protestant sects. Max Weber writes that Puritanism - and particularly the Puritanism to which the Pilgrims ascribed - lent itself to profitmaking. Weber argues that Puritanism encouraged its adherents to pursue their business interests with the same intensity that they pursued their spiritual interests, on the premise that work was part of their larger spiritual "calling" (88-89, 98-128).

But Weber does not take into account how difficult it was for people like the Pilgrims could pursue financial interests without stepping over the line between spiritualism and materialism. James Henretta and Malcolm MacKinnon write that the Pilgrims could not be seen pursuing profit, as success in finance was supposed to extend naturally from their spiritual pursuits (Henretta 335; MacKinnon 216-217) - economic practices that were shaped by Puritan understandings of such sacred passages as "The just man shall flourish like the palm tree" from the book of Psalms. In fact, as Henretta reports, colonial Puritans who accumulated too much money were quickly censured and often cast out of their communities (335). This attitude became so entrenched that, in rural areas, grievances against profitmaking merchants were voiced regularly for the next hundred years - a time when city people had begun to relax their opposition to pursuing profit for its own sake (337-341). As MacKinnon
observes, too much emphasis on finance for its own sake signalled the presence of "Mammon," which in turn signalled a violation of Puritan notions of political economy (221-223).

There were rich Puritans, of course. But their money was to be perceived as secondary to their spiritual pursuits, not put before or equated with them. As Henretta argues, Puritan spirituality and riches existed in a cause and effect relationship. Wealth was to proceed from religious purity as a sign of God's grace. It could not be demanded or pursued without first calling individual souls into question and then damaging the religious community, for the greedy would have made their money from commerce with congregation members (332-335).

In short, however easily Puritanism might have been able to accommodate capitalist pursuits, it was greatly important that Puritans not be seen focusing on finance. As Bradford points out, only people like Francis Blackwell or the adventurers did that, and to their ruin. This example extends even to the historical divisions between Protestants and Catholics. In the opening paragraph of his history, Bradford mentions "the gross darkness of popery which had covered and overspread the Christian world" (3) — a reference not just to bad religion, but to the Catholic Church's practice of extorting huge sums of money from countries under its sway. As William Manchester writes, the Protestant Reformation became a populist movement once Martin Luther made it clear to the middle class and the peasants in Germany that Rome was taxing them too dearly, and for its own gain (166-168). Manchester argues
that it was the continuing abuse of financial power, as much as
the question over who ought to hold spiritual power, that made
Protestantism possible (166-206). Such historical background
shows itself again in Bradford's pointing out how chasing after
money leads to disaster in the Blackwell voyage and his
disparaging use of such terms as "merchant" and "adventurer."
Together, it all makes a strong case for why Bradford would want
to present the Pilgrims as a group without a sharp eye on money.
They would be characterized instead by a sense of community.

Thus the June 1620 letter from Cushman that Bradford copied
into his narrative in order to bolster his vision of Pilgrim
identity begins to unravel the text's metanarrative design. The
history of a people manifesting God's grace and plans for
redemption in their escape to the New World quickly becomes a
catalogue of business dealings - so much so that money matters
appear to become Bradford's greatest concern. As John Griffith
writes in his study of the economic rhetoric of Bradford's text,
the narrative begins to follow the Pilgrims' attempts to buy
themselves out of Europe, and then changes to their efforts at
trade and industry in the New World (233, 237-240). Griffith
argues that on the strength of those passages, the later part of
"Bradford's history is primarily the story of how the Pilgrims
triumph by obtaining economic sufficiency" (232). But these later
parts show that such successful adaptation to the profit-centered
economy of colonialism would finally undo the exemplary communal
identity that the June letters from Cushman and the Leyden elders
had already undermined. As the Separatist community begins to
grow beyond its original bounds, Bradford begins to voice doubts
that the financial gains his people have made are indeed wholly
beneficial. In his entry for the year 1632, Bradford writes,

Also the people of the Plantation began to grow in
their outward estates, ....... And yet in other
regards this benefit turned to their hurt, and this
accession of strength to their weakness. For now as
their stocks increased and the increase vendible,
there was no longer any holding them together, but now
they must of necessity go to their great lots. ... By
which means they were scattered all over the Bay
quickly and the town in which they lived compactly
till now was left very thin and in a short time almost
desolate.

And if this had been all, it had been less,
though too much; but the church must also be divided,
and those that had lived so long together in Christian
and comfortable fellowship must now part and suffer
many divisions. (253)

Over a decade later, Bradford's worst fears are realized
when the remaining colonists agree to move from their original
location to Nauset, an area that provided them with more farmland
and better access to the market-trade that had begun to boom in
the port of Boston, and from there to other towns when it became
clear that Nauset would not hold even what was left of the
original community (Plymouth 333n, 334n). In 1644, Bradford
writes,

And thus was this poor church left, like an ancient
mother grown old and forsaken of her children, though
not in their affections yet in regard of their bodily
presence and personal helpfulness; her ancient members
being most of them worn away by death, and these of
later time being like children translated into other
families, and she like a widow left only to trust in
God. Thus, she that had made many rich became herself
poor. (334)
In short, as the Plymouth colony succeeds in adapting to the processes of political economy that will ensure the continued survival of its members, the exemplary communal unity that Bradford feels it was built on crumbles. In the first passage, Bradford writes of hurt and weakness, scattering and desolation. The place where the colonists had once made their stand becomes "thin," a word that carried great weight for Bradford and the other church members who had lived through the many famines that plagued the colony. Even the laws that had bound the community together come asunder. Bradford's phrase "lived compactly" can be read in two senses — one of small space, for it is true that the strip of land the Pilgrims first settled on the neck of Cape Cod was a close and narrow one, but also one of public agreement, for it was the town that was first governed by the Mayflower Compact, a document that Bradford calls "the first foundation" of the colony (75). The breakup of the town becomes a sign of injury, starving, and lawlessness. Worse, the Pilgrim church cracks into splinters — Bradford speaks of divisions twice in a short paragraph — and is destined to "suffer," its members no longer "comfortable." Bradford returns to the wreck of the church in the second passage, where the images of pain and discomfort deepen to images of abandonment and death. Again, there are terms of dispersal and poverty — Bradford's reference to "children translated into other families," and to the church becoming "poor." As well, the church has become personified as a mother
"forsaken of her children," and shortly thereafter becomes a "widow." The images of lack become those of death — orphans, a widow, an empty home.

Bradford writes painfully about the diminishing and abandoned Plymouth church. But his passages on the dissolution of the original Pilgrim community, and thus of his metanarrative purpose, also show that the breakdown began insidiously, in the early chapters of the narrative. In later chapters, like the entry of 1644, Bradford laments that the problem in keeping the town together was that the churchmembers' produce had grown and become salable in the large markets in and around Boston. Yet this can be seen as a simple extension of the stance suggested by Cushman and enacted by the church fathers in chapter six of the narrative, which details events occurring in 1620 before the voyage to Plymouth had begun. Until the sharp exchange between Cushman and the elders, the history of the Scrooby congregation had been written by Bradford as the story of a communal identity forming in Europe and realized in America. Negotiations with the Virginia Company, for instance, were a way of defining how the small band of Separatists would see themselves in contrast to other institutions and to other sects in their own denomination. But once the exchange occurs, things begin to change. Cushman tells the elders to begin behaving more like the adventurers, blurring distinctions between colonist and non-colonist identity. The church fathers, for their part, at first act in such a greedy
manner that even a daring speculator like Weston begins to shy away from them.

Later, after the elders tone down their demands, they indeed begin acting more like the adventurers, finding a realistic and much more practical compromise between themselves and their financial partners. But the metanarrative identity that Bradford attempts to create for the Pilgrim church is one based on not compromising (Delbanco 193-194; Kemp 110-113), so this signals an important change in the way that identity evolves. And as the narrative progresses, such distinctions begin to disappear altogether. Bradford begins to write more and more of economic concerns, worrying the subject of the Pilgrims' debts as a dog does a bone (Griffith 234). The colonists even go in for chicanery and exploitation, "stealing Indian trade from the Dutch" and "operating on the naïve assumption that the Indians' raison d'être is to provide profits for Plymouth Plantation" (Griffith 238). So, toward the end of the narrative, when the congregation members have finally gotten themselves out of debt and find themselves with the means to sell and expand their products, having mastered the political economy of colonialism, it seems only likely that they will do just that. As Griffith writes, Bradford's emphasis on economy can make it seem as though the ultimate triumph in the book is the colonists' mercantile success (232). Indeed, as Bercovitch writes, much effort in the decades after Bradford stopped writing would be spent by American Puritans in allowing church "ideals" to be weighted more equally with the
"new conditions" of colonial economics (American Jeremiad 27). But the time of religious and financial compromise was still some time off; and Bradford's metanarrative focus is on unity within the Scrooby congregation, not on growth outward through capital gain. When it comes time to reconcile the economic success of the colony with the loss of the mother church, Bradford cannot cause the two to come together. Instead, he leaves the church — the original center of his narrative — lying abandoned amid images of death.

The June 1620 letters from Cushman and the church elders anticipate the spiritual desolation that Bradford finally admits in the last few years of his annal writing. Cushman's admonition that the colonists act more like the adventurers, and the Pilgrim fathers' demands that the colonists get more than the adventurers, prophesied only the end of Bradford's beloved church, and shortly thereafter, the fitful end of his narrative. After the 1644 annal, in which Bradford describes the remaining Pilgrims' plan to move to Nauset and other towns, the history contains only two more real entries — a long one on negotiating a temporary truce with the Narragansetts, and a shorter one on the appearance of pirates in the town and the departure of Edward Winslow, one of the original Pilgrim colonists. The passage about the pirates contains the sort of material that earlier would have provided Bradford with a subject for one of his anecdotes contrasting the exemplary character of the American colonists with other people. It is the story of a cruel pirate captain who kills one of his
crew with the hilt of his sword, and then years later dies after falling accidentally on the same hilt. Instead, Bradford is noncommittal: "Some observed that there might be something of the hand of God herein; that as the forenamed man died of the blow he gave him with the rapier hilt, so his death was occasioned by a like means" (346; emphasis mine). The pages following these entries bear only the words "Anno 1647. And Anno 1648" (347).

The unity of the church that had come to America, not the profit-making success of the plantation, had been the center of Bradford's history from its outset. With the bitter death of the church, and consequently the loss of a redemptive image for the narrative, Bradford's chronicle trickles off and dries up. The metanarrative distinctions that Bradford had tried to hold between an exemplary communal identity in America and the money-hungry Catholics, Francis Blackwells, and Thomas Westons of the world, come crumbling down as the Scrooby congregation forsakes its communal center to go after individual profit. Because the colonists further their material interests at the expense of the church, Bradford loses his metanarrative center.

At end, no voice is left to testify to the exemplary nature of the Pilgrim's enterprise — not the voices or letters of others, not the voice of Bradford himself. Even Bradford's attempt at a Jeremiad sermon ends unsuccessfully. The passages on the material growth of Plymouth and the death of the mother church, for instance, certainly qualify as the condemnation that Bercovitch describes. Both passages mount criticisms of American society by
drawing on mythic images of the past — the little town centered around the church and organized by the Mayflower Compact, a document that hearkens back to the exemplary unity that Bradford saw in the colony's early stages; the church as both a communal body and a nurturing figure. As well, the "mother church" passage holds out the future hope so important to Bercovitch's version of the Jeremiad. Bradford's comment that the Pilgrims had left the church in "presence" but not in "affection" (334) seems to prophesy a reunification of the church's body and spirit. Still, the morbid feeling of the "mother church" passage undermines the hope that Bradford tries to evoke, leaving the Jeremiad to end on a note of despair, and then silence.

This is not the silence of a writer who began his history knowing "the essential lesson of providential history, that this world is a house built on sand" (Bercovitch Puritan Origins 46). Rather, this lapse into silence is all the more striking for its image of Bradford's helplessness — not only in what Griffith calls Bradford's struggle "to keep economic concerns subsidiary to spiritual ones" (239), but in the effort to create meaning in his text. Bradford was unable to take refuge in absurdity, what Hayden White in Metahistory calls the historian's "apprehension of the ultimate inadequacy of consciousness to live in the world happily or to comprehend it fully" (10). As Howland Kenney writes, the Puritans' belief in the meaning of actions and events "prevented them from finding the human situation 'absurd'" (7). Bradford had begun his history confident in the strength of his
American community — a strength based on what he saw as an exemplary character that would be able to shine forth in the American wilderness. Without this communal identity intact, Bradford is unable to make out meaning in the events of his history, and his writing simply stops.

Conclusion:

The beginning of the end for *Of Plymouth Plantation* comes in the first four chapters of the book, much earlier than other studies of the work have shown, and for a different reason. Most writings on the book see Bradford begin to lose control of his narrative at or after the time that the Pilgrims make landfall at Plymouth — places where the colonists move irrevocably from familiar to unfamiliar physical and spiritual terrain. These studies make the Pilgrims' encounter with the American land itself, not the process of confronting the political economy of colonialism, the stumbling block for Bradford's metanarrative.

Carl Bredahl, for instance, argues that Bradford's problems with his metanarrative begin when the Pilgrims physically attempt to establish a community on the New England coast — the point where Bredahl sees Bradford having trouble divining God's plan in things that happened to the colonists. Bredahl writes that most European voyagers looked to the new continent of America as a place where visions of freedom and progress would be realized (8). The Puritans were no exception to this, and came up against the same challenge that other explorers and colonists did — the "wilderness" of the new land, which put unexpected stresses on
idealistic visions and eventually shook them apart (19). For Bredahl, the only part of Bradford's vision that has real coherence is the early one:

Because the story of man's redemption and salvation by God was the most complete of stories, the individual or group included in that story would find narrative coherence in the events of life. When Bradford wrote the first part of his history, he was clearly convinced that Plymouth was part of an action shaped by God's hand. The narrative has chapters (evidence of sequential continuity), cause and effect, and conclusion. Human struggles exist within an overarching plan, and thus Plymouth comes into being. (19-20)

When Bradford comes up against the wilderness, he loses his bearings and his text, both as a metanarrative and as a narrative comes undone:

The result is a breakdown of earlier form. Of Plymouth Plantation's second part becomes a chronicle, a listing of major occurrences. Earlier shape is gone and with it the confidence that marks Part 1. ... Bradford's narrative ... cannot carry the enclosing vision into the physical and human wilderness of America. (20)

Andrew Delbanco writes that Bradford's difficulties begin earlier than that. Delbanco argues that Bradford began his narrative on the premise that the Separatists were escaping adversity in England, so when they encounter even worse conditions in America, Bradford loses his focus. According to Delbanco, the text "begins to chase illusory meanings," and finally "falters before the reality of tolerationist England" (195). Because Bradford could not reconcile what he describes early on — a flight from adversity — with what he describes later — a flight into
adversity - the book becomes more a history of Bradford's own ambivalence than a history of the Plymouth colony:

As it proceeds, the texture of the history feels more and more like patchwork, and Bradford, as in the famous landfall passage, gives vent simultaneously to doubt about the future fealty of the young and to ringing certitude about his own national identity: "May not and ought not the children of these fathers rightly say: 'Our Fathers were Englishmen which came over this great ocean and were ready to perish in this wilderness; but they cried unto the Lord, and He heard their voice ...'" (Delbanco 194)

Anthony Kemp, to add a last example, sees trouble begin when Bradford changes to annal writing once the Pilgrims settle down in Plymouth and establish a common-house. Kemp writes that the first part of the history seems "confident" and "completed" (115) because Bradford wrote it as a saga. According to Kemp, the early section of the narrative describes "removal after removal of an ever-diminishing company" - the continuing story of the Scrooby congregation as it splits into smaller groups (some stayed in England, others in Holland), until Bradford is left with the little band that sailed on the Mayflower (113). Once Bradford begins to detail things by year, the story gets lost. The narrative falls under what Kemp calls "the order or rule of time," a measure that prevents Bradford from constructing an overarching story line (116). Writing as someone with an old story to tell, Bradford is able to give some "perspective" to his narrative (Kemp 115). Writing as someone with a grab-bag of immediate events to sort through, Bradford loses his perspective and, therefore, control over his text (Kemp 116).
The letters from Cushman and the Leyden elders in 1620 rub up against these readings, both in the readings' timing and their focus on the American land. The letters indicate that Bradford's difficulties in maintaining a unified metanarrative begin long before the Pilgrims set sail for the New World. What Bredahl calls the "most comfortable" and "recognizable" part of the history (20), in which Bradford details the colonists' preparations for the voyage to America, turns out to be not comfortable or familiar after all. Instead, because of the damage that economic concerns do to Bradford's metanarrative design, it becomes a harbinger of the discomfort and alienation that Bradford gives voice to in the "mother church" passage. This is not to say that Bradford was simply a poor historian, unable to recognize that he could not expect every piece of evidence to support his view. Rather, it is to say that Bradford encountered difficulty from the start in maintaining the exemplary communal identity that he had envisioned for the center of his metanarrative. In this, Bradford is not the historical prisoner of narrative style that Bercovitch describes, relentlessly pursuing a story of human futility. Instead, he is the sort of writer who not only has a vision, but realizes when that vision turns out to be something different than he had thought it was – a quality of self-criticism that is highly modern in its self-consciousness. The Pilgrim enterprise came upon unfamiliar territory much earlier than writers like Bredahl, Delbanco, and Kemp recognize. In the wilderness of colonial finance, at a time when the Pilgrims had
not yet left for America, Bradford's attempt to maintain a communal identity for his Separatist congregation meets its first difficult challenge. When Bradford recognizes this later in his narrative, at a time when the mastery of colonial finance by the colony had become a threat to Bradford's mother church, he panics and lapses into a silence that shows he realizes that his exemplary community has dissolved in the conflict between differing points of view.

At end, Of Plymouth Plantation really is all "pieced up." Both sections of the narrative are collections of voices that Bradford tries to control in order to support his metanarrative design - the exemplary American identity that he proposes for the Scrooby congregation. But even the early part of his narrative shows that Bradford's attempt to maintain this communal identity is under the sort of strain that Bredahl, Delbanco, and Kemp see at work in the later part of the book. Seeing this tension throughout the narrative makes Of Plymouth Plantation a more complex and dynamic study in American identity, and makes Bradford himself a more complex writer - one who understands when his vision of American identity comes apart.

Notes

1References will be to Of Plymouth Plantation, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Knopf, 1976).

In Equiano's narrative, a young sailor damns someone's eyes "in a wicked tone, common on shipboard." Immediately afterward, "some small particles of dirt fell into his left eye," which Equiano reports became infected and had to be removed about a week later. Like Bradford, Equiano refers to the incident "as a judgment of God" (43).

For instance, Samson notes that both sailors and missionaries in the South Pacific referred to native islanders as "savages" (38), but did so in different contexts. For sailors, the word denoted humans less far along the technological and social scale than themselves - versions of Rousseau's noble savage. For missionaries, though, the word denoted uncivilized brutes in need of redemption (24-27). While Samson comments that both uses of the word opened the islanders up "to ideological and actual appropriation by the whites" (38), he also declares that sailors and missionaries felt that they saw and referred to native cultures in very different ways.

A seemingly small detail like this should not be underestimated. Floyd Ogbum, Jr., for instance, writes that while Bradford's prose style owed much to readings of "classic" authors like Cato or Seneca or Pliny (41), painstaking analysis of Bradford's prose reveals that typeology provides not just a theme for Bradford's narrative, but a deep "intrasentence" structure (38). Of all Bradford's literary influences, in fact, Ogbum strongly suggests that the Bible, both in syntax and vocabulary, provided Bradford with his strongest model and word-trove (41). The use of a word like "astonishment," then, could certainly be read in its strongest biblical sense - more so because the citation from Deuteronomy is itself considered a typological reference.

Though most of the negotiations for patents were being undertaken in England, the majority of the colonists had by now fled to Holland, from where they planned to leave for Virginia.

Morison reads the "charity" line differently, explaining that Cushman meant that "charity should not be expected to enter into a business deal and the Leyden committee's complaints of the conditions may make a wreck of their enterprise" (Plymouth 363n). My reading, based on what seems to be a theme in Cushman's correspondence with the Leyden congregation - that of encouraging the Separatists by reminding them exactly where they are at any given point - indicates that Cushman seems to mean that the Pilgrims have not come near disaster yet (as the Blackwell expedition had, for instance), and had no need to cower and cry "'Poor, poor, mercy, mercy'" as yet (363). Rather, they ought to "Consider whereabouts we are" - i.e. at the beginning of a business deal - and therefore act like it. Cushman could be complaining that grousing from the Leyden elders might scotch the deal (which in itself could also indicate that finances were beginning to become the center of the Pilgrims' concerns, though
Morison does not make note of this); but it seems more in Cushman's character to remind them that they are not fit for charity yet, and so shouldn't expect any.

8The usual perception of the Pilgrims is that they lacked experience and savvy in financial dealings (Usher 238). While it seems true that the church elders did not understand the ins and outs of mounting sea voyages or establishing colonies, it also seems true that they were hard-nosed negotiators. Just as they did not back off from asking the religious moon from Sandys and the Virginia Company, they do not back off from asking for as much benefit as they can get for their colonists — no matter what consequences their terms seem to have meant for the adventurers. As James Henretta points out, Bradford, in his position as governor of the Pilgrim colony, made sure that the Separatist families got "ample land, in the location of their choice, and the nonelect had to settle for smaller plots on marginal soils" (334). In other words, what the Pilgrims lacked in knowledge about financial details, they seem to have made up for in an audacious approach to striking general terms.

9The change might not have been prompted by Cushman's letter, as Bradford seems unsure whether it was actually delivered to Leyden or read by the proper people there (365). Still, it appears that a short time after Cushman insisted that the Pilgrim fathers take a more reasonable line, they did.

10The exception to this "disunity" argument is Griffith, who maintains that while Bradford's history does seem to lack for structure, the theme of economic striving comes to dominate the narrative, and even to appear in Bradford's rhetoric (232-237). Yet this reading is tenable only if one discounts the early and late chapters that I have pointed to. The theme and rhetoric that Griffith analyzes do occupy much of the history; but they do so by usurping what seems to have been Bradford's original metanarrative design. Thus the real moment of truth in Of Plymouth Plantation is not when Bradford describes how the Pilgrims cleared their debts, as Griffith suggests (234), but when Bradford realizes what this has done to his colony and church.
Chapter Two

Walking in the Papered Self: Writing and Authority in the Life-Narrative of Benjamin Franklin

William Shurr's recent writing on Franklin's Autobiography goes a good way toward disfiguring "the mythic Franklin who seems to rise from its pages" (345). In the Autobiography, Shurr argues, an informed reader will find a venal and nasty Franklin, one who begins his autobiography by soliciting political aid from his eldest son, but once support from that son seems unneeded, then twists his life-narrative into a series of vicious insults directed at the son's illegitimate birth. As Shurr writes, this is "a very different Franklin from the revered figure of legend" (345). Such studies add needed dimension to the general portrait of Franklin. But they take attention away from his narrative, which describes a much narrower picture of American identity than Franklin criticism will admit — not because the Autobiography is a disingenuous construction, but because it ties American identity to writing.

What is read today as Franklin's life-narrative is actually a version of an unfinished manuscript begun by Franklin in 1771, when Franklin was in his sixties, and continued in fits and starts of writing and revising until his death in 1790. Franklin
obviously meant to publish an edition of the manuscript at some point, but never did. Instead, he left to posterity a handwritten account of his life up until 1757 – a text that can be read as an autobiography or memoir, but that a number of critics have read as a plan for American identity.

Franklin's life-narrative has become an important autobiographical text because it reflects current definitions of life-writing, which stress the autobiographer's attempt to construct meaning. James Olney writes that autobiography is not "neutral and passive" but "creative and active"; it uses memory to create "the significance of events [by] discovering the pattern into which those events fall" (149; emphasis original). Louis Renza writes that autobiography "transforms empirical facts into artifacts" (2; emphasis original), and quoting John Barret Mandel, argues that autobiography provides life-events with "'interpretation, direction, significance, life'" (3-4). Such statements find resonance in Franklin's claim that his text is not a "repetition" of his life, but a "Recollection" of his life put down in "Writing" (1: 2; emphasis original).

Indeed, the Autobiography lends itself to this sort of analysis, both in individual passages and larger structures. For instance, when telling of his leading a group of boys who stole stones from a building site in order to construct a wharf from which they could fish, Franklin prefaces the story with a phrase that transforms it from a tale of boyhood larceny to a sign of a future career in public service – "I was generally a Leader among
the Boys, and sometimes led them into Scrapes, of which I will mention one Instance, as it shows an early projecting public Spirit, tho' not then justly conducted" (i: 7). And later, when his relationship with a boyhood friend, John Collins, ends in a brawl aboard a boat crossing the Delaware River, with the result that Franklin heaves Collins into the water, carrying through the violent and irrational threat Collins had made toward him, Franklin tries to dismiss his own misconduct by saying, "I knew he was a good Swimmer, and so was under little concern about him" (i: 33). The remark implies that Franklin was in control of the situation and acting rationally, circumstances that his own words deny. Franklin admits he is motivated to act against Collins by his own "soured" disposition, and stands guilty of having imitated exactly the poor behavior Collins promised (i: 33). Whatever their level of success, both instances show Franklin undertaking the autobiographical task by narrating not just the events of his life, but the significance contained in those events. Even the whole form of the Autobiography shows the life-writer's search for meaning. Robert Sayre, for instance, questions Franklin's success in finding a clear form for presenting his life, but still argues that

[t]he problem Franklin unconsciously illustrated was the problem of the man whose life and character was one of change and discontinuity. ... The scientist's life is in disorder right up to the time at which it is written. ... the informing identity is discovered on the way. (16-17)

In the long list of studies that consider Franklin's writing in
these contexts, most of the attention is focused on how Franklin's text comments on writing itself. Renza, for instance, quotes Olney to show that autobiography should be thought of as a picture of "'the self at a moment and in a place'" (4), and uses this definition to demonstrate that autobiography is "self-referential expression" (22-23). In the process, he uses Franklin's Autobiography as an example of self-referential writing (12).

This use of the Autobiography is valid, but privileges the self-referential qualities of Franklin's writing over the original public function that Franklin had intended. Franklin wrote the book as an exemplary autobiography (Barnes 277; Fichtelberg 208; Nielson 46-47; Seavey 72) – the narrative of a good life fit to be emulated, which had been a fairly popular literary form during his time (Barnes 226-227). Following the suggestions of friends who had read the first part of his manuscript, Franklin began to use his narrative as a place to propose a model of behavior and manners for "tho Public" (ii: 75). He is at pains, for instance, to point out how as a young man his industry and acumen set him above his fellows. By arranging his schedule just so, and by cutting his personal indulgences to a minimum, he rises quickly in his job at a London printing house, leaving behind those workers who sot themselves with drink and take days off (i: 45-57). Such examples continue until they culminate in the last part of the narrative with the complaint that seacraft are often not "known" until they are tried out.4 (In other words, though many boats may have been made from the same design, the performance of individual

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boats varied to such an extent that one could not predict whether a boat would be a good one simply on the basis of its design or builder.\) The solution is simple: rig "a Set of Experiments ... to determine the most proper Form" for things and standardize production and sailing practices. "This is the Age of Experiments," Franklin admonishes in the narrative, urging the seafaring community to follow his example of systematic thinking and progressive methods (iii: 163-164). Even the tale of the stolen stones or the story of Collins' swim in the river is evidence of this public purpose, showing how the narrative is structured to protect the exemplary figure from accusations of inappropriate behavior. In both instances, the text presents Franklin's actions as helpful and reasonable, not as delinquent or splenetic. As Mitchell Breitwieser explains,

In his writings as well as in his dealing with his contemporaries, [Franklin's] personal being is in the largest sense rhetorical, an evocation and cultivation of characteristics he felt were in accord with what the age demanded, and a discouragement or concealment of those he felt were not. (Representative Personality 171; emphasis original)

Because the narrative stresses public service and rational thinking, the idea of youthful crime at the construction site and bad temper in the boat on the river are downplayed. What is to shine through is not simply the meaning in Franklin's life — the pattern of civic involvement or the characteristically thoughtful response to a dangerous dilemma — but the example that such events could provide for Franklin's public.
A number of recent studies have begun to address this public function of the *Autobiography*, most often by pointing out that the narrative offers an exemplary portrait of the American self based on industry and community (Barnes 228; Breitweiser *Representative Personality* 2, 2; Dauber 255; Schueller 96). While these studies are accurate in identifying the work ethic that Franklin's narrative attributes to the American character, they do not explore how Franklin's emphasis on writing complicates the concept of community for the American self. For close reading of the text shows that writing is fundamental to Franklin's portrait of the American self, and is responsible for making "American" a narrow rather than communal concept in the narrative.

Writing occupies a difficult place in the *Autobiography*. On the one hand, Franklin was devoted to using writing as an instrument for structuring society, participating in what Michael Warner calls "a print ideology — a cognitive vocabulary within which print was perceived and used, and within which, moreover, print played an active role in the constitution of power" (112). The many times in his narrative that Franklin values the written word over the spoken leads Warner to conclude, "The calculating rationality for which Franklin is famous ... should be seen as part of a project of supplanting speech and immediacy with writing and generality" (115; see also Patterson 8 and Seavey 69). On the other hand, there are a number of instances in the *Autobiography* that show that Franklin is aware that writing is more of a problem. An example would be Franklin's comments on the Dunkers,
a Pennsylvania religious sect that refused to publish a creed, on the grounds "that if we should print our Confession of Faith, we should feel ourselves bound and confin'd by it, and perhaps be unwilling to receive farther Improvement" (iii: 115). Franklin remarks on this refusal to commit to paper as "a singular Instance in the History of Mankind" - not that it is singularly foolish but singularly wise, the Dunkers having admitted to their limitations by not insisting that they possessed absolute truth and so ending, like other sects, in a theological fog of their own making (iii: 115-116). Philip Beidler calls Franklin's treatment of the Dunkers "perhaps his warmest praise in the whole Autobiography" (265). The narrative even contains a short sermon on the dangers of writing, in Franklin's long description of George Whitefield, the traveling evangelist of the Great Awakening. Whitefield, says Franklin, was a powerful and effective preacher, whose only real mistake in creating a religious sect was having written out and then printed his doctrines. The printed works came under attack, causing Whitefield a great deal of trouble, including his being refused entry into Anglican churches (Tyerman 1: 151-152). Franklin points out that relying on spoken sermons alone would have let Whitefield explain or modify difficult and even "erroneous" points of doctrine as he went along: "I am of the Opinion, if he had never written any thing he would have left behind him a much more numerous and important Sect" (iii: 107). Some irony is evident here in Franklin's implication that Whitefield was further round the bend than most evangelicals in
parts of his theology; and Franklin says that Whitefield's critics had "so much Appearance of Reason" on their side. Yet the central point of both these examples remains: writing is permanent, and permanently damning, if one is not careful.

Writing was indeed both powerful and daunting; and Franklin's narrative acknowledges of this in its systematic attempt to tie American identity to writing. Criticism on the Autobiography is full of equations between identity and writing, all created from Franklin's willingness to link the two. Beidler, for instance, observes that the narrative "create[s] intentional confusion between living and writing and vice-versa" (257), while Mark Patterson explains that as the Autobiography ends, "we see Benjamin Franklin as he exists in the projects he has instituted and supported ... in the constitutions of his societies and institutions" (21; emphasis original). Patterson's emphasis on "constitutions" communicates that Franklin the autobiographical subject is progressively more visible as a function of the written records of his time than as a physical presence. Warner comments that in the Autobiography and other writings, Franklin "treats print and life in equivalent terms: to live is to be published" (111); and Joseph Fichtelberg concludes that "The life of the text itself becomes Franklin's most powerful prescription" (204). In a sense, Franklin's attitude was only a product of its time. As Ormond Seavey writes, "the eighteenth century believed, writing creates the self. ... So important did the act of writing become
in the Enlightenment that it seemed to take a logical priority over life itself" (45; emphasis original).

Some connections between identity and writing in the narrative have to do with Franklin's feelings about his personal history. For instance, Franklin opens part one of the work by likening life to a book, reflecting on the idea that he "should have no Objection to a Repetition of the same Life from its Beginning, only asking the Advantage Authors have in a second edition to correct some Faults of the first" (i: 1), and later calling these faults "errata," a term borrowed from the printer's vocabulary. But he quickly says that this thinking is only wishful, and "is not to be expected" (i: 2).

Other connections, however, are more concrete and immediate in Franklin's life, shaping his emphasis on moral character and business sense. For instance, the narrative details Franklin's "bold and arduous Project of arriving at moral Perfection" — a series of virtues written into a weekly calendar, by which Franklin could track his moral conduct. It is clear that this example responds to the public function that Franklin had in mind when composing the Autobiography:

I concluded at length, that the mere speculative Conviction that it was our Interest to be compleatly virtuous, was not sufficient to prevent our Slipping, and that the contrary Habits must be broken and good Ones acquired and established, before we can have any Dependance on a steady uniform Rectitude of Conduct. (ii: 78).

The collective pronouns in the passage signal that Franklin is speaking publicly — that "our Interest" and "we can have any
Dependence on a steady uniform Rectitude of Conduct" refer to a large group, not just to a past self. In fact, Franklin deliberately crossed out "my" twice and added "our" (ii: 78). But it is also clear that Franklin relies directly on writing to secure this public interest and promote good moral conduct. Having gathered a list of helpful virtues from his reading, Franklin wrote up a list of thirteen essential character traits, which he then turned into "a little Book" that he could use each day to see how well he had resisted the temptations of excess. Without such writings, Franklin admits that he tended to fall prey to one temptation while he was busy resisting another, or that old bad habits would reassert themselves while he was not paying close attention to his behavior, or, worse yet, that he would give into impulse (ii: 78).

In this instance, writing is not simply an aid. Rather, it becomes the very form for Franklin's moral character. Like many of Franklin's projects, this one has much to do with method. Franklin gives a close description of how he codified the virtues and eventually transcribed the whole text onto a series of erasable tablets in order to chart his progress more efficiently. But the importance of writing in shaping both the project and the moral character that the project produced is unmistakable. Writing not only makes the project possible and more efficient, it replaces the slack self with a more rigorous one until the new moral habits become ingrained. Even after Franklin stopped using
the book, which he admits to, the character he retained is one made by writing. The new moral habits have come from written texts.

The same can be said for Franklin's work at structuring his professional endeavors. Motivated by the principle that "every Part of my Business should have its allotted time" (ii: 83; emphasis original), Franklin added to his book of virtues a chart that divided his day clearly into periods allotted to work, sleep, recreation, and reflection. Individual instances show Franklin's physical energy to be part of his success in business. The time that he spent all night reassembling broken printing forms is the most famous of these. But Franklin stresses that following the daily schedule, as he did the pages of his virtue tablet, made him able to make the best use of his time for work and for other activities, like reading, that supported it.

Submitting to these written texts was not easy. Franklin complains that it is easier for a regular worker to organize and keep to a set schedule. As the owner of a print house, he feels hard pressed to keep to his plan, or even to put papers back in their proper places (ii: 86). In particular, the moral project gave Franklin trouble. Not only did it cause Franklin to observe that he had more character flaws than he had thought, it showed that whatever progress he made was slow and unsteady. As he writes, "I was almost ready to give up the Attempt, and content myself with a faulty Character" (ii: 86). Still, he insists that "the Endeavor made a better and a happier Man than I otherwise
should have been, if I had not attempted it" (ii: 87). The
description of the project ends in a metaphor drawn from writing –
that by imitating models, a student's handwriting is helped, and
clarity is achieved (ii: 87).

Indeed, Franklin's close involvement with writing echoes
throughout the text, in all sorts of contexts. He attributes his
disputatious youth, for instance, to habits he had "caught from
his father's books, as if books were capable of transmitting
behavior-modifying diseases (i: 12). On reading a volume of
Xenophon, he becomes attached to the Socratic method of inquiry,
and in an act of self-reinvention "adopted it, dropt my abrupt
Contradiction, and put on the humble Enquirer and Doubter" (i:
15). His conversion to Deism is a result of reading books about
it (i: 58-59). He even improves his ability to swim by studying a
monograph on the subject (i: 49). When he talks about his family,
he does so in examples that revolve around writing. The first
anecdote about the Franklin family centers around a bible hidden
from Catholic authorities in England (i: 5). The first relative
that Franklin says he can remember, outside his immediate family,
presents him with an acrostic made from his name, designed to
provide him with guidelines for living a good life (i: 4). The
presence of writing in his life was not limited to books and other
common forms of prose. It is important to remember that the
experiment in moral perfection eventually became a series of marks
on a solid tablet – a sort of code invented to save paper – and to
realize that Franklin even wanted an advertisement that he had
placed in order to provision military wagons reprinted in the Autobiography because it was a record of his social and political achievement.

Because the metaphor of the book as life is so striking an expression of Franklin's intellectual environment, it is easy to miss how much of Franklin's actual life is structured by writing. It is not simply that "books seem to have created [Franklin's] real intellectual context" (26), as Seavey suggests, but that books, and all other sorts of writing, from grease marks on a tablet to advertisements, have created Franklin in all sorts of dimensions: they dictate his moral character and business schedule, orient his religious faith and his social image, even direct the motions of his body.

In short, the American identity that is constructed in the Autobiography is formed through encounters with writing. For all its promise of a public future, the boyhood image of Franklin is a raw and untutored one — fighting with his father and brother, running away from home to avoid the future that his family had planned for him (i: 10-21). It takes a series of writings to bring that sprawling existence into a shape that allows Franklin to identify the moral and economic dimensions of America. The constant presence of books and writing in the narrative is a hint of this; but it is the clearly formative experiences — the project on moral character, the business schedule, the religious and social orientations — that show Franklin's model of the American to be based fundamentally on writing.
Yet this same emphasis shows the limitations of Franklin's scheme for American identity. Franklin shows writing to be a stabilizing force. It gives shape to human character and provides that character with a structure that holds the shape together. But encounters with other texts of the time show that written texts often had little or no power in a life, and that Franklin's connection between print and life is simply a part of his later existence, rather than a force that determines all of it.

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One such text is the Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, first published in 1789, the year before Franklin died. Equiano's narrative recounts the life of an African tribesman kidnapped from his homeland and enslaved by various cultures, first by African and Arab traders, and then by British and colonial military men and merchants, later to be freed and allowed a place in British society. It was written during the last decade of Franklin's life,6 and gives an African's view of the institution and practices of slavery, and also of the various white cultures of Britain, the American colonies, and the territories of the West Indies.

Of course, there are great differences between Franklin's narrative and Equiano's. As we have already seen, Franklin's narrative is engaged in defining American identity. Equiano's narrative, on the other hand, is engaged in reporting the abuses of slavery (Olney 150), and in establishing a common ground between blacks and whites by questioning the racial categories
that had become so firmly accepted in Europe and then transferred to America (Marren 94-95). Where Franklin is interested in creating a uniquely American discourse, Equiano is interested in creating a more international discourse in order to show that people of color were the intellectual and moral equals to white men of any nation.

Yet there are also important similarities between the two works, both on the surface and in their deeper structures. For instance, Equiano's narrative provides an interesting commentary on Franklin's writing, as it occasionally deals with places and practices described by Franklin. When Equiano writes of his longing to leave the West Indies, where African slaves were treated abominably, for Philadelphia, where the Quaker presence made life somewhat safer (89), the Philadelphia to which he refers is Franklin's chosen home — the Philadelphia of the early 1760s. And when he describes his experiences in the Georgia colony, a place where brute force and lawlessness reigned, his narrative expands Franklin's disparaging remarks about the region being a place of "broken Shopkeepers and other insolvent debtors, many of indolent and idle habits, taken out of the Goals" (iii: 104). As Susan Marren writes, one of the tasks for Equiano's narrative was to establish common ground between blacks and whites by showing that blacks could have values in common with whites (100-101). These passages show Equiano privileging law and progress, represented in both narratives by Philadelphia, over
anarchy and degradation, represented in both narratives by Georgia.

As well, Equiano's narrative echoes the themes of personal industry and economic success found in Franklin's text. As Houston Baker writes, Equiano's book "can be ... considered as a work whose protagonist masters the rudiments of economics that condition his very life. It can ... be interpreted as a narrative whose author creates a text which inscribes these economics as a sign of its 'social grounding'" (32-33). For Baker, Equiano's narrative is a story of personal formation based in mercantile success — a figuration that describes at least part of the Autobiography's portrait of the self.

Even the rhetorical style that Equiano uses finds resonance in Franklin's narrative. Baker notes that

[Equiano] "writes in ledger-like detail. ... Rather than describing a spiritual multiplication of "talents" in providential terms, ... transactions are transcribed as a chronicle of mercantile adventure. [Equiano] becomes a trader, turning from spiritual meditations to canny speculations on the increase of a well acquired and husbanded store. (34-35)

Franklin also uses the ledger-like method to detail his business dealings and his accounts of public projects, making occasional references to providential happenings, but for the most part demonstrating how success in the marketplace is attributable more to materialistic practices. Religion is certainly an important part of both narratives — Equiano, for instance, uses religion as a way to establish common ground with whites (Marren 102-103), while Franklin tends to move away from traditional religious
conventions in order to emphasize the power of the self (Breitweiser Representative Personality 239, 262). But the underlying style of each work is remarkably similar in the way it takes account of its narrator's economic endeavors.

Most important, Equiano's narrative provides a counterpoint to Franklin's text by questioning the power that the Autobiography attributes to writing. This counterpoint can be seen first in how Equiano's narrative makes writing central to Equiano's description of his own identity, and then in how quickly written texts are shown to have only provisional and limited authority in his life.

The value that Franklin's Autobiography places in writing pervades Equiano's narrative. As a former slave, Equiano, more than most whites, wrote to create a place for himself in society. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr., observes,

> After Descartes, reason was privileged, or valorized, among all other human characteristics. Writing, especially after the printing press became so widespread, was taken to be the visible sign of reason. Blacks were "reasonable," and hence "men," if — and only if — they demonstrated mastery of "the arts and sciences," the eighteenth century's formula for writing. (53-54; emphasis original)

Print helped the former slave escape what Gates calls a "nebulous realm of liminality," the slave's assigned position outside white society. In response to white values, "The slave wrote not primarily to demonstrate humane letters, but to demonstrate individual membership in the human community" (52). Indeed, Equiano himself expresses a great awe for writing. Even before he could read, his experiences with whites convinced him that books
could teach him "how all things had a beginning" (62). Later, he risks blowing up a ship by sneaking a lit candle into a storeroom full of explosives, the only place he can find to sit undisturbed, to write in his personal journal (Marren 104). As often as he can, Equiano refers to the power and importance of print, and the impact of print in his life.

The most telling passage centers around Equiano's manumission, the document that released him from slavery. After a number of cruel setbacks, Equiano was able to buy his freedom in 1766. His joy is great — when his master gives permission to have the papers drawn up, the words sound "like a voice from heaven" (102); and Equiano travels to the registrar's office on feet "winged with joy; and, like Elijah, as he rose to heaven, they 'were with lightning sped as I went on'' (103). The manumission itself, though, receives special attention. Equiano first comments that the paper "expresses the power and dominion one man claims over his fellow" (103), and then, like Franklin with a document he felt important, has it inserted into the narrative.

Equiano does not say much afterward about the manumission, but its importance to him is clear. For one, it shows that slavery is not simply service, as might have been assumed by some readers. The language of the manumission makes readily apparent that slavery is the loss of selfhood, and that the master retains all personal, commercial, and political claims to a slave (103-104). Reprinting the document makes certain that Equiano's audience cannot miss the fact that a slave possessed nothing of
himself. More important, it shows how a document promises a radical transformation— in this case removing possession of rights from the master and passing it to the former slave. A paper that simply freed Equiano from King's control would have allowed him to escape the dominion of one man. But Equiano's manumission, as Baker observes, transfers his rights to himself, making him his own master (36-37). In effect, the manumission is a promise of self, a paper that creates a place in society for a person theretofore left outside. As Angelo Costanzo writes, the manumission makes Equiano "a new man as he is reborn into a society where he can operate on a free plane of existence" (45).

The power that Equiano sees in his manumission is apparent in the passage immediately following the reprint. Here Equiano notes, with some amusement, that "Some of the sable females, who formerly stood aloof, now began to relax and appear less coy" (104). More seriously, he receives an offer of work from his former master, who now must approach Equiano with requests instead of demands: "'We hope you won't leave us, but that you will still be with [us]'" (104). The change is dramatic. Equiano even has to grapple with one of the difficulties of freedom— deciding what to do next. Should he sail straight for Britain, as had been his desire for some time, or should he stay for a while and help out his former master? The choice, he complains, leaves him "struggling between inclination and duty" (104). All this— becoming his own master, being noticed within his own community, being entreated for his skills as a worker— is especially
significant in light of the many times whites had promised Equiano freedom, only to go back on their words, or the times Equiano had thought, to his great disappointment, that good treatment by a master would lead quickly to his release. In Equiano's description of the manumission, writing prevails where promises or actions fail.

Like Franklin, Equiano occasionally voices ambivalence about the power of writing. But Equiano's doubts end up going much deeper than Franklin's; and his examples of print's powerlessness are more of a problem for the life that he describes in his text. For instance, while laboring as a slave in Monserrat, waiting for his master to finish business and sail for Philadelphia, Equiano witnesses "a very cruel thing" on board his ship:

There was a very clever and decent free young mulatto man, who sailed a long time with us; he had a free woman for his wife, by whom he had a child, and she was then living on shore, and all very happy. Our captain and mate, and other people on board, and several elsewhere, even the natives of Bermudas, all knew this young man from a child that he was always free, and no one had ever claimed him as their property. However, as might too often overcomes right in these parts, it happened that a Bermudas captain whose vessel lay there for a few days in the road, came on board of us, and seeing the mulatto man, whose name was Joseph Clipson, he told him he was not free, and that he had orders from his master to bring him to Bermudas. The poor man could not believe the captain to be in earnest, but he was very soon undeceived, his men laying violent hands on him; and although he showed a certificate of his being born in St. Kitts, and most people on board knew that he served his time to boat-building, and always passed for a free man, yet he was forcibly taken out of our vessel. ... And the next day, without giving the poor man any hearing on shore, or suffering him even to see his wife or child, he was carried away, and probably doomed never more in this world to see them again. (89)
The story is similar to many others told by Equiano in order to show how barbarously whites treated Africans, or any person of color - certainly an important theme in a text written to show the brutality of slavery. But this story makes specific reference to a paper that fails to keep its bearer safe. Clipson's certificate signifies freedom, an important part of his identity, as it is mentioned three times in the first two sentences of the passage. Yet the certificate fails to keep Clipson free once he is subjected to the immediate physical force of the slavers. In short, writing is shown to be provisional and limited in a way that it is not in Franklin's Autobiography. To be sure, writing has some power over life in Equiano's narrative. It takes an overtly brutal act to overcome a written declaration of legitimacy. Yet the limits of that power are clearly seen when Clipson's paper is ignored by the captain and the young freeman is carried off.

Lest this incident be thought of as an irregularity of the lawless West Indies, Equiano reports "I have heard of two similar practices even in Philadelphia" (89). His horror at all this leads him to an uncomfortable conclusion:

Hitherto I had though slavery only dreadful, but the state of a free Negro appeared to me now equally so at least, and in some respects even worse, for they live in constant alarm for their liberty, which is but nominal, for they are universally insulted and plundered, without the possiblity of redress ... . (90)

The story of Joseph Clipson, and Equiano's reaction to it, casts into doubt the faith Equiano himself seems to place in
writing. However happy he seems about his own manumission, the pall of Joseph Clipson's kidnapping lies over his description of the proceedings. As the story of Clipson and the depth of Equiano's reaction to it appear only a few pages before, Clipson's fate inevitably colors any reaction that Equiano has to attaining his own freedom. Equiano admits that any paper-written freedom is only "nominal," and is therefore open to challenge. Sure enough, once freed and travelling in Georgia, Equiano finds himself in danger of suffering Clipson's fate:

... one day, while I was a little way out of the town of Savannah, I was beset by two white men, who meant to play their usual tricks with me in the way of kidnapping. As soon as these men accosted me, one of them said to the other, "This is the very fellow we are looking for, that you lost," and the other swore I was the identical person. On this they made up to me, and were about to handle me; but I told them to be still and keep off, for I had seen those kind of tricks played upon other free blacks, and they must not think to serve me so. At this they paused a little, and one said to the other - it will not do; and the other answered that I talked too good English. I replied, I believed I did, and I had also with me a revengeful stick equal to the occasion, and my mind was likewise good. Happily, however, it was not used; and after we had talked together a little in this manner the rogues left me. (122-123)

Equiano's quick tongue and revengeful stick keep him free, not his certificate of manumission, which by now he does not even bother to mention. Through his experience as an African among whites, Equiano comes to understand the limitations of writing, even while the faith that white culture attached to it is evident throughout his narrative. Franklin admits to such ambivalence only rarely, only in stories about his own youth or in stories about others, and never in such a dramatic and disturbing fashion.
Equiano's narrative invites us not to make the easy observation that the life of an African former slave was far more difficult than the life of a white business man, though this is certainly true, and important. Rather, it invites us to look more closely at Franklin's assumptions about print — to see that in Franklin's narrative, print does more to shape life after the self is firmly established in society than it does to provide any entry into it.

This new relation of writing and life is apparent in Franklin's account of his first trip to Britain, undertaken at the behest of Sir William Keith, then the royal governor of the Pennsylvania colony — an incident that leaves Franklin completely bereft of papers. Keith had been impressed by Franklin's skill and knowledge of the printing business, and, though Franklin was at the time only sixteen, had promised to set him up in a print-house of his own. Franklin, only recently released on bad terms from indenture to his brother James, a printer in Boston, and able to secure work only at an operation he considered slipshod, reports that he responded eagerly to Keith's overtures (i: 34) and went happily off to Britain, certain that Keith would send with him letters of introduction and credit to finance the purchase of enough supplies to provision his business (i: 40-41). Once there, he finds out that Keith has sent no such papers, and probably never intended to. A friend tells him "that no one who knew
[Keith] had the smallest Dependance on him, and he laughed at the notion of the Governor's giving me a Letter of Credit, having as he said no Credit to give" (i: 41).

The judgment that Franklin passes on the story is clear: the missing letters are a direct reflection upon Keith's character. Christopher Looby argues that "Having no credit to give, Keith was yet able to promise letters of credit. That is, he was able to use words to represent himself as having the credit he actually lacked" (i: 41). In reality, Keith is unable to come up with the words that count - the written words that would carry weight and allow Franklin to accomplish his mission. He is pictured throughout the story by Franklin as a trickster, a man of uncertain identity (i: 34), the sort who takes advantage of "a poor ignorant Boy!" (i: 42). As it does so many times in the Autobiography, print seems to equal life, the missing letters showing Keith for what he really was - a man without substance.

Yet the whole business also shows that writing is not at the heart of the matter, at least for someone like Franklin. It is important to remember Franklin's position as a character in this anecdote: he is under age, in a foreign country, without social standing or financial resources thanks to Keith - in essence, without papers. For Equiano, such circumstances would have been deadly. Even with papers, his position would have been tenuous at best, subject to direct assault by those who decided to force the issue past the point where written words held their own. For Franklin, things work out quite differently. He is told simply to
get a job and improve himself while he is stranded. This he does, and by his own description "immediately," securing a place with a firm that he calls "a famous Printing House" (i: 42). In the narrative, Franklin feels Equiano's experience only once, when as a teenager he traveled between New York and Philadelphia in search of work in printing houses. Franklin explains that a sea-passage between Staten Island and the New Jersey shore ended badly, leaving him and the rest of the passengers to shift for themselves once they were able to wade into shore from storm-toossed waters. Tired and bedraggled, Franklin finds himself in a bad place at the first inn that he tries, presenting "so miserable a Figure ... that I found by the Questions ask'd me I was suspected of being some runaway Servant, and in danger of being taken up on that Suspicion" (i: 22). Like Equiano, Franklin has to rely on the good will of the innkeeper, with whom he establishes a long-lasting intellectual kinship after the man finds out that Franklin is a reader (i: 22-23). A year later, when Franklin was considered an up and coming young businessman by such important men as Keith, such a difficult situation does not present itself.

If writing is as essential to defining a place in society as Franklin suggests throughout his narrative — not just in the eighteenth-century sense of writing the self in essays or books, but writing the self in instructional manuals, in daily lists of activities, and in daily score-keeping on morals — then both episodes should have been tough scrapes for him. Instead, the time when Franklin has no commercial connections is difficult,
while the time when he has established himself as a journeyman printer is much easier. True, he does not arrive in England in the guise of a young entrepreneur, monied and well-referenced. But he does not fall between the social cracks or find himself abducted, either. Instead, the old factors of gender, class, and race, and the newer one of a marketable skill, have more to do with living than does print. The story of Franklin's trip to Britain shows in its treatment of Keith just how closely Franklin identified writing with life; but it also shows in its treatment of Franklin himself just how little writing actually mattered to the life of one who as already in a secure place.

At end, writing is not as central to Franklin's life as his narrative suggests. Franklin could afford to have print inform his later identity, for that identity was already assured in large part by his birth and his ability to acquire and trade on skills that were in great demand. This may have been something that Franklin discovered late in life; but it was something that had affected him since his early years. Franklin's opportunity to learn a trade at all was a result of his birth; no woman or person of another race or culture or of a lower class would have had such an open chance. Franklin's prescription of the life of the text is a prescription made to a narrow audience — those who already had enough cultural security to undertake projects like self-revision or personal experimentation. For those whose places were less secure, like Equiano, the life of the text was much more problematic. On the one hand, writing enabled Equiano to
negotiate a position in a society that traditionally ignored Africans. On the other hand, print often shows up in Equiano's narrative as a false promise, an illusion of stability.

That print is not at the heart of Franklin's identity is equally clear in Franklin's comments on financial success. The Autobiography is famous for the many tales of industry and money-making that appear in its pages, often with Franklin as the example of a patient and wise man who reaps large returns from his investments. The marketplace Franklin describes is open, a forum where any man from humble beginnings—even a boy who enters Philadelphia short of cash, without friends, and festooned with rolls—can make a place for himself.

Franklin's own success as a printer is described as a steadily ascending curve. From friends, Franklin and his partner receive work; and from the excellence of the work Franklin earns enough money to buy out his slothful partner and continue the business himself. From friends again, he continues to receive work, including the profitable jobs of printing paper money for the Pennsylvania and Delaware colonies; and through more patronage and hard work, he ends up the owner of a stable printing house and a stationer's shop, each staffed by good workers and apprentices (i: 62-68). The account is full of small details emphasizing Franklin's work methods and ability to see a job through. Having gotten a printing job from the local Quaker assembly, Franklin indulges in a minute discussion of the proceedings:
Brientnal particularly procur'd us from the Quakers, the Printing 40 Sheets of their History .... It was a Folio, Pro Patria Size, in Pica with Long Primer Notes. I compos'd of it a Sheet a Day, and Meredith work'd it off at Press. It was often 11 at Night and sometimes later, before I had finish'd my Distribution for the next days Work: For the little Jobbs sent in by our other Friends now & then put us back. But so determin'd I was to continue doing a Sheet a Day of the Folio, that one Night when having impos'd my Forms, I thought my Days work over, one of them by accident was broken and two pages reduc'd to Pie, I immediately distributed and compos'd it over again before I went to bed. (i: 62)

The printer's jargon does not obscure the basic structure of the anecdote. Business is gotten through patronage or peers, and finished by steady work, any mishaps dealt with immediately. This structure is the paradigm for Franklin's depiction of the marketplace. Any lack of success is due to some fault of character.

This presentation, though, shows again that Franklin is writing from a position of privilege. Success, in Franklin's formula, first presumes close and profitable social ties, and then the fortunate ability to work undisturbed. The only thing that hinders Franklin in his pursuit of gain is, ironically, extra work. The accident that ruins a day's work is simply set to rights before bed. Success may demand some effort, but it is comfortable and comes with the help of Franklin's friends.

This is a great contrast to the marketplace described in Equiano's narrative. For Equiano, success is always a tenuous thing. Failure is not the result of sloth or inattention, but of the power of white men to take whatever they want whenever they
want. To be sure, slavery is the most glaring example. But Equiano also offers highly detailed accounts of his own economic ventures. Even though a slave, he was allowed to sell goods on the side, so long as this did not interfere with his duties; and his narrative shows him no less determined to succeed than Franklin:

After I had been sailing for some time with this captain, at length I endeavored to try my luck, and commence merchant. I had but a very small capital to begin with; for one single half bit, which is equal to three pence in England, made up my whole stock. However, I trusted to the Lord to be with me; and at one of our trips to St. Eustatius, a Dutch island, I bought a glass tumbler with my half bit, and when I came to Montserrat, I sold it for a bit, or six pence. Luckily we made several successive trips to St. Eustatius (which was a general mart for the West Indies, about twenty leagues from Montserrat), and in our next, finding my tumbler so profitable, with this one bit I bought two tumblers more; and when I came back, I sold them for two bits, equal to a shilling sterling. When we went again, I bought with these two bits four more of these glasses, which I sold for four bits on our return to Montserrat. And in our next voyage to St. Eustatius, I bought two glasses with one bit, and with the other three I bought a jug of Geneva, nearly about three pints in measure. When we came to Montserrat, I sold the gin for eight bits, and the tumblers for two, so that my capital now amounted in all to a dollar, well husbanded and acquired in the space of a month or six weeks ... . (84)

In a number of respects, the passage is similar to many in the Autobiography. It focuses on how the narrator, from humble beginnings, invests wisely and patiently, and thereby grows in wealth and wisdom. In terms of style, it pays close attention to numbers, and to other intellectual constructions like geography and monetary exchange rates. In short, it is Equiano's own
Franklinesque plan for financial success, set out in ledger-like detail.

Certain elements of Franklin's structure are missing, though. For one, Equiano has to rely on Providence, which has occasion to seem unsteady in its practices, not faithful friends, for opportunities to work. He begins in business on complete speculation, not by working into an established market; and he continues his investments largely on luck, not by help from contractors and apprentices. He labors outside the established commercial community that guarantees Franklin so much of his success. He communicates clearly how much his success depends on the decisions of others, in particular of his master, who decides where the ship will go next. For Equiano, failure is not a result of poor character, but a consequence of being unable to direct his own life. This is thrown into sharp relief a page or two after the passage on glasses and gin, when he attempts to turn a profit by selling fruit, only to have the goods taken from him by white men who refuse to pay. His complaints of injustice are answered only by punches and kicks:

They still therefore swore, and desired us to be gone, and even took sticks to beat us; while we, seeing they meant what they said, went off in the greatest confusion and despair. Thus in the very minute of gaining more by three times than I ever did by any venture in my life before, was I deprived of every farthing I was worth. An unsupportable misfortune! (85).

Fate, not fault, makes or breaks a man in Equiano's world; and in Equiano's world, fate often looks like a capricious white man.
Like his experiences with print, Equiano's misfortunes in the marketplace call into question the assumptions laid out in Franklin's narrative, and show again that Franklin is writing as a privileged man. The wherewithal to go into business is not so easy for everyone. More is packed into Equiano's explorations of business than just this, of course. Like writing, entrepreneurship was considered a constitution of the self—hence Franklin's dogged treatment of it. By demonstrating skill in the marketplace, Equiano makes again a case for Africans being afforded a place in white society, even as he brings home another example of how poorly white men treat others who worship the same god and participate ably in the same pursuits as they. But the harshness of Equiano's experiences—the blind trust to luck, the depredations by whites, the beatings—strikes against the smoothness of Franklin's experiences with a loud and jarring note.

This reading of Franklin's and Equiano's texts shows a more narrow Autobiography than mainstream criticism has admitted. Where many studies point out that one of Franklin's friends had recommended that Franklin direct his narrative "both to sons and fathers" (Genetic Text 186; emphasis original) instead of just the son Franklin addresses at the opening of part one (Fichtelberg 208; Nielsen 46-47; Patterson 20; Seavey 72; Schueller 100-101), few emphasize how select an audience even that expansion actually would have been, based on the picture of Franklin that appears in the text. Fathers and sons who could emulate Franklin's life of the text or succeed in business simply by trying hard were men
much like Franklin himself — already central to society, not having to negotiate and renegotiate their relationships to it. If, as Breitwieser argues, the Autobiography attempts to describe a common cultural ground (Representative Personality 2), it is a common ground on which only a few could really stand. If Franklin had begun the Autobiography attempting to locate American identity in a community, as Bradford had in Of Plymouth Plantation, by the end of the text he had relocated it in individuals who stood outside that community.

For us to present a fuller picture of Franklin's narrative, we must pay more attention to rhetorical devices like Franklin's conflation of life and print, or his judgments about the marketplace. And if we consider Franklin to be the figure for a nation — "the beginning of any uniquely American studies" (Dauber "Franklin" 255) — we must also consider the narrow way in which such statements define "American."

**Conclusion:**

Equiano's narrative helps to reveal the assumptions of gender, race, class, and marketability that underlie the Autobiography's portrait of the American self, inviting us to reexamine the relationship between Franklin and his audience and to resituate the exemplary figure described in the Autobiography in a clearer cultural context.

The relationship between Franklin and his audience was as complicated as the relationship that the Autobiography proposes between writing and life. On the one hand, there is the theme
pointed out by so many studies of the text — the instruction of young men in proper behavior and morals, in order to produce an American sense of community (Barnes 227-228; Breitwieser Representative Personality 2; Dauber 261). On the other hand, there are a number of passages in the Autobiography that show Franklin placing trust in individuals or small groups, rather than the growing American populace. It is these individuals or groups that determine the direction of American society, not the "rising men" to whom the Autobiography is ostensibly addressed.

A telling example of this is Franklin's description of the Junto, the private club through which Franklin and other important men worked secretly to influence public government in Philadelphia. In 1727, Franklin and a group of friends founded a discussion circle, where each week one person would bring an essay on an assigned topic to spark friendly debate and an exchange of ideas (i: 61-62). Early on, the circle provided Franklin with a place to work out his own ideas on such public issues as the use of paper money, a topic of great concern in Philadelphia in 1729 (i: 66-68). Later, the circle was expanded into an arrangement of satellite clubs, each unaware of the others' existence, and all but the original members of the Junto unaware that the satellite clubs were used to funnel information and policy outward from Franklin's original group to the general public (iii: 101-102). The Junto scheme provided good public service, being instrumental in reforming the Philadelphia night watch and in establishing a city-wide band of fire-fighting companies in the late 1730s (iii:
In 1743, Franklin and several members of the Junto founded an ambitious private school that twenty years later became the University of Philadelphia (iii: 108-109, 117-119).

The Junto was indeed helpful to municipal life in Philadelphia, but did its work by defining the grounds on which issues would be raised, or would be approved or disapproved. In the proposal to reform the night watch, for instance, Franklin's measures were shaped in Junto sessions and passed secretly to the other clubs, eventually making their way into the public consciousness and into law under secret Junto sponsorship. As Franklin writes, this made ideas on governance seem "as arising" of their own accord in different places (iii: 102), but actually to have their shapes predetermined by an élite group.

This arrangement is a problematic version of the plan for government proposed by James Madison in the Federalist debate. In the face of suggestions that the new country be run as a democracy, Madison responded in 1787 that countries governed by the masses were usually "spectacles of turbulence and contention" - threats to personal and public rights, and liable to be violent and short-lived (Federalist 20). Instead, he argues, America ought to be run as a republic, with governing power delegated "to a small number of citizens elected by the rest" (Federalist 21). The number of representatives, Madison continues, would be set so that governance would not fall under the sway of either "the cabals of the few" or "the confusion of a multitude" (Federalist 21). This scheme, which would be put into law under the
Constitution, distributes power throughout the population. As Madison points out, while representatives would wield direct legislative authority, they would still be accountable to their constituents through elections (Federalist 21-23). Franklin's plan differs from Madison's in the visibility of its process. The Autobiography describes a mostly invisible process, where proposals for policy are created and debated in private, and then made to appear as if by magic among society at large. If, as John Warner writes, "the task of republicanism" is to take power from established classes and give it to the populace at large (110), then Madison's Federalist letter approaches the task in a manner designed to distribute power between representatives and represented. Franklin's Autobiography, on the other hand, places its trust in an élite group to shape policy before it is subjected to popular approval, and then to guide the people in their acceptance of it. As Franklin writes, one of the strengths of the Junto approach was that the process worked by "preparing the Minds of People for ... Change" (iii: 102), shaping not only the way in which policy would be proposed, but the way in which it would be accepted.

Shurr insists that the Junto procedure is "authoritarian", and that Franklin's support of it should call for a closer look as his character as a statesman (448). Yet the Junto is not illegal or unjust. Nor is it treason or a way to subvert republican processes of government. Rather, the Junto is important because
it shows how an elitist bias can be maintained within a democracy - by a small group holding itself apart from the populace, using its ideas and influence to define the terms of communal progress.

This pattern appears in other sections of the text. In the passage on shipbuilding reform, for instance, Franklin does not propose a communal effort in order to make sure that boats be built to a universal standard. Rather, he makes it clear that he is addressing "some ingenious Philosopher" (iii: 165) who will pursue the endeavor on his own. In a discussion about women's education, Franklin can only be speaking to men who made decisions about how to pursue social policies like women's empowerment. He tells of having sent a journeyman printer to South Carolina in 1733 to set up shop, expecting to receive from this franchise one third of its profits. To Franklin's irritation, the man, Louis Timothée, proved to be unlearned in bookkeeping: "tho' he sometimes made me Remittances, I could get no Account from him, nor any satisfactory State of our Partnership while he lived" (iii: 95). Timothée's wife, Elizabeth, raised in Holland and skilled in ledgering, which Franklin reports was taught to women there as a normal part of their education, upon her husband's death rendered a full account of the books. To Franklin's great satisfaction,

... she not only sent me as clear a State as she could find of the Transactions past, but continu'd to account with the greatest Regularity & Exactitude every Quarter afterwards; and manag'd the Business with such Success that she not only brought up reputedly a Family of Children, but at the Expiration of the Term was able to purchase of me the Printing House and establish her son in it. (iii: 95-96)
Franklin ends the anecdote by saying that women ought to be educated in such areas, as they often found themselves without means or marketable skills after the deaths of their husbands (iii: 96). But this suggestion would have little to do with the up and coming businessman, who was not yet in a position to enact sweeping social reform. Rather, it was the small group of Franklin's peers — powerful businessmen and politicians already entrenched in American culture — who would be interested in such things and were able to make them happen. The anecdote is evidence of Franklin's reliance on individuals or small groups to organize and move society forward, and evidence of how closely he identified such people with America itself.

In short, while Franklin spends a lot of time encouraging proper behavior and a sense of American community, he also shows that he expects private individuals and small groups to run the country — an arrangement that makes self-recognition by the non-élite more difficult. Men in powerful social or financial positions could easily identify with the exemplary figure depicted in the Autobiography, and thereby identify themselves as Americans by participating in the same sort of private and public activities that Franklin describes in his narrative. Men who had not reached such positions, though, are not quite Americans. They may live inside the physical borders of the new nation; but they were not in a position to join in the network of policy-making and cultural manipulation that make up Franklin's version of American identity.
This formulation has consequences for the way in which criticism has described the exemplary figure that Franklin presents in the Autobiography. For it shows that in order to be "American" in the way that Franklin was American, one had to rise out of the community and gain control over it. This is a great difference from a formulation like Bradford's, where the community itself was the operating definition of "American." Franklin's version of American identity is based on the people who guide the community, rather than on the community itself.

In order to resituate the Autobiography's exemplary figure in a clearer cultural context, we must place it outside what we would generally call American society. Though Franklin seems to be firmly fixed in his community, involved in bettering its people and giving them a national identity, he wrote from a position that very few in his community occupied, or could ever hope to attain. This places the exemplary figure beyond the aspirations of the common man that the Autobiography appears to celebrate. As Cathy Davidson observes,

Franklin's formulation draws a crucial distinction between the novel and the other print forms such as biography and history typically recommended over fiction. While biography and history might be "true," they posit a wide gulf between the subject and the reader ("the great man" or the "great event" versus the ordinary reader and his or her uneventful life) and also between the author and the reader (the author proclaiming, the reader receiving wisdom and moral edification). (52)

Dana Nelson writes that the Autobiography has been read too often in company with its fellows (247-248) - a spiritual
narrative by one of the Mathers, an autobiography by Jefferson, and so on. While these works do have some differences (no love was lost between Franklin and the Mathers, for instance; and Franklin wanted little to do with spiritualizing experience, or with many of Jefferson's principles), they all proceed from the same levels of class and privilege. Reading them together, as they have been in so many studies of American literature, serves only to flatten perceptions of eighteenth-century America and the problems of its culture by presenting a collection of ideas about power written by powerful men. Reading Franklin's narrative through a work like Equiano's gives more dimension to the terms that Franklin used to sort out his vision of American identity, and makes the scheme he created for it look at once more complicated and more provisional and limited.

Works like Equiano's narrative allow the familiar formulas of Franklin's text to be seen differently — as more narrow and exclusive than criticism has been willing to admit — and calls to the fore the gestures that separate the exemplary figure in the Autobiography from the society that it has been taken to represent. This method of reading is especially important for the Autobiography, since Franklin's narrative is so meaningful to most critics' perceptions of what defines "American" and what constitutes "American literature." To see the Autobiography as only one voice in a larger dialogue about what it means to become American is to come closer to a clearer conception of America.
Notes

1 Scholars today believe Franklin composed his text in four flurries of activity. Lemay and Zall, editors of the authoritative versions of the Autobiography, claim that the first part of the text was written in late July and early August of 1771; the second sometime in 1784, though exactly when is unclear; the third in mid to late 1788, with some substantial additions made in early 1789; and the fourth in late 1789 and early 1790, the last lines possibly written in April of 1790, the month Franklin died (Genetic Text xx-xxiii). Referring to the text as a collection of parts stems from research of this type: each part corresponds to an historical period of writing, not to any clear plan of division Franklin drew up. Hence a confusion over how many parts the narrative actually has. Critics writing before Lemay and Zall's findings were published refer to three parts of the Autobiography, assuming parts three and four are actually one unit because Franklin gives no notice, as he does at the beginnings of parts two and three, that he has changed location and that time has passed since he last worked on the project. Critics writing after Lemay and Zall refer to four parts, accepting analyses of handwriting and inks as proof that Franklin left part three alone long enough to have the few pages he wrote in late 1789 and early 1790 considered a separate stage of composition.

2 Actually, Franklin would have been unfamiliar with the term "autobiography," and would probably have called his book something else. Shurr notes that the word itself would not be used until almost a decade after Franklin's death, and even then "as an odd pedantic neologism" (435). Benjamin Vaughn, a friend of Franklin's writing in 1783, referred to the work in progress simply as a "Biography" (Genetic Text 185).

3 References will be to The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin: A Genetic Text, eds. J.A. Leo Lemay and P.M. Zall (Knoxville, TN: U of Tennessee P, 1981). Manuscript divisions (parts one through four) will be indicated by small-case Roman numerals. Where material intended by Franklin to be inserted in the narrative but not contained in his original manuscript appears, or where I have cited research described in Lemay and Zall's notes and introduction, I have listed the name of the Genetic Text in the parenthetical notes.

4 This is the last incident in the text that has a semblance of closure. The pages following describe a series of political actions, but whether Franklin had completed outlining them is open to question.

5 The acrostic does not appear in the manuscript, though Franklin left directions in the text for it to be added later (4).
Equiano's narrative was published in Britain in 1789, and in America two years later (Davidson 206). (Equiano himself was born about 1745, and wrote the narrative between 1780 and 1788 [Edwards x-xi].) It was an extremely popular book, printed in a number of editions and in a number of languages during the late seventeen- and early eighteen-hundreds (Bontemps xiv; Costanzo 42; Edwards ix-x). Modern criticism has identified the work most often and most strongly with slave-narrative, the body of works written by former African slaves and first published, most often through sponsorship by abolitionist organizations, between 1740 and 1865, though it has also been regarded as an example of the picaresque (Costanzo 46-49; Hedrin) or simply as an autobiography written in English by an African (Bontemps).

References will be to The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African as it is edited by Arna Bontemps and reprinted in Great Slave Narratives (Boston: Beacon, 1969).
Chapter Three

Reading and Writing in the Marquesas: Typee and the Problems of Travel Narrative

*Typee* was first published in 1846 as the true account of a young seaman's adventure among cannibals in the South Seas. The book immediately became the subject of debate, reviewers disagreeing first on whether it was truth or fiction, and then on whether its comments about missionary work in the Pacific were accurate or inflammatory. Recent studies have changed these arguments. Instead of truth or fiction, the question has become how much Melville relied on sources — from travel books to Milton's poetry — to flesh out his narrative. And whether it is simply accurate or inflammatory, the question has become how severe Melville's criticism of Western culture actually is. Yet the old question of truth is still useful for interpreting the work. For examining truth-telling in travel narrative brings out an important message of *Typee*: that truth in travel writing should be recognized as the self-divulgence of the travel writer — a critique that forms around an indictment of the rhetoric of the American Revolution.

*Typee* looks like an exciting turn on nineteenth-century travel books. Disgusted by six fruitless months at sea aboard a
whaler, and disgusted further by the prospect of more months under
the same inept and capricious captain, Melville's narrator, Tommo,
decides to jump ship when the crew is given liberty in the
Marquesan Islands, a chain in the South Pacific. Tommo
accomplishes his plan in company with a shipmate, and despite
injury (he is stung on his right leg, which swells horribly) he
arrives in an island valley inhabited by the Typee tribe—a group
he desperately hopes is not cannibalistic. The rest of the book
is given to the narrator's experiences and observations among the
Typees. In a short, melodramatic section at the end, Tommo, who
has become afraid the Typees are fattening him for a ritual
dinner, is rescued from the island by the crew of an Australian
ship.

Despite Tommo's final flight from the islanders, Typee is
often read as a narrative sympathetic to the plight of non-Western
cultures during European and American expansionism in the
nineteenth century. While there seems little doubt that Melville
found as much to dislike in island societies as he did in American
or European cultures (Herbert 172; Samson 51), his portrait of
life in the Marquesas has led a number of writers to view him as a
defender of threatened peoples. Michael Rogin, for instance,
argues that with the publication of Typee, "Herman Melville
entered literature as a spokesman for the aboriginal victims of
Manifest Destiny" (48); and Lee Mitchell and Faith Pullin describe
Melville's early books, Typee especially, as works that protest
the destruction of non-white societies by whites who forced Western behavior on them (Mitchell 198; Pullin 15). With the exception of Wai-Chee Dimock, who considers Melville to have drawn the islanders in the book as an allegory of the "perfect community" America foolishly aspired to become (29, 36), critics seem to agree that Typee is a fascinating study in cultural relativism.

Yet Typee is also a fascinating study in cultural exploitation, by way of the language that supported the ideals of the American Revolution and that had a large part in defining Americans' conception of themselves in the late eighteenth and early to mid-nineteenth centuries. Tommo is no conquering hero, overcoming the tribe and reorganizing it as a colonial territory; and he is no fanatical missionary, converting the islanders and reaping from them a harvest of souls. But Tommo is still intent on employing the islanders for his own benefit. As Mitchell Breitwieser writes, Tommo is determined to justify his flight from the West, symbolized by the whaling ship, and is willing to use the Typees as materials from which to build his excuses. His use of island culture is selective, pointing up the parts that make Americans and Europeans look bad by contrast and ignoring the rest (Breitwieser "False Sympathy" 404). Instead of the usual crimes, Tommo is guilty of what Breitwieser calls "imaginative imperialism" — a restricted exploitation of the Typees in his narrative rather than in the jungle ("False Sympathy" 398). But a
closer reading of the book shows that Tommo is an exploitative figure both on and off the page, and that his "imaginative imperialism" acts as a cover not just for his mutiny, but for the disruptions and dislocations that he inevitably brings to the Typees during his stay with them. In other words, Tommo's own effect as an agent, not just as a narrator must not be ignored; and special attention should be paid to the actions that show Tommo behaving in a manner similar to Franklin's American individualist. It is in a reading based on this awareness that the critique of American identity in Typee begins. At end, the authentic level of truth in a travel writer's first-person narrative can only be self-divulgence.

This is not to say that Tommo can be faulted for not being more sensitive to the islanders. Rather, it is to say that the way in which Tommo encounters the Typees is instructive, for it shows Tommo projecting his American identity as lack on the tribe. We do not read a series of criticisms about Tommo's inability to understand an alien culture in Typee. Rather, we read a series of criticisms of the limits of revolutionary rhetoric and about the availability of truth in travel writing.

Recent writings on Melville's narrators show that Melville separates himself from Tommo, both as an American and as a writer, giving him space in which to mount a critique of Tommo's Americanist self-interest. James Duban argues that Melville composed even his early works with an eye toward the
contradictions that lay within the conduct and rhetoric of "self-proclaimed liberal narrator[s]" (346). According to Duban, Melville regularly set up self-interested talkers like Tommo in order to expose their cultural biases, and then to point out where those biases led (344-348; see also Breitwieser "False Sympathy" 399-401). As John Samson observes, Tommo simply does what many white voyagers to the Pacific did in the nineteenth century — insisted on applying their own social values and terms to cultures that they did not know or understand (55). Again, Samson states that Melville was not blind to the difficulties in non-Western cultures (51); but neither was he willing to let his fellow sailors and explorers escape examination, and he spent most of his first book rewriting their works in order to show their damaging assumptions of cultural superiority (32, 54-55). In short, the criticisms that appear in Typee do not line up in neat ideological categories like bad whites and good natives. Still, they do take white men like Tommo to task for taking the moral high ground in whatever situation they faced, and for the small good that came from their actions — especially the way in which their self-interest obscured the representation of the cultures that they purported to investigate.

It is increasingly acceptable to say, with Duban and Samson, that Melville is actively and intentionally behind the criticism of American identity and writing that appear in Typee. Here, however, it is enough to say that in creating the encounters that
he describes between Tommo and the Typees, Melville simply remains
ture to a narrative pattern that progressively reveals the limits
of American rhetoric and the limits of travel writing. Though
Melville is indeed not Tommo, it is the text itself, not
specifically Melville, that drives the two important critiques.

Many studies of Typee call the book a novel, which is the
same as calling it a parody of travel books (Herbert 14-15; Samson
53). The implication is that travel books, while they may have
some difficulties being factual or truthful about their narrators' experiences in alien cultures, are at least pointed in the
direction of accurate representation; and it is their failure to
work it all out that becomes the subject for novels that parody
them. Of course, some travel narratives deliberately fail to be
"truthful"; and this disingenuousness has been the source of
parody, too. Indeed, these "false" travel narratives are written
as self-conscious fictions, though their writers claim them to be
just the opposite. In other words, it is accurate to say that
"Typee was, in fact, neither literal autobiography nor pure
fiction. Melville drew from his experiences, his imagination, and
from a variety of travel books when the memory of his experiences
failed him or when his personal observations were inadequate"
(Hayford, et al. "Historical Note" 291). But doing so does not
mean that Melville has not written a real travel narrative, which
is a form that swings erratically back and forth between fact and
fiction — with some of the larger swings pointed in the direction
of fiction. Calling *Typee* a travel book is not a way of calling it non-fiction. Rather, it is, as I hope to show, a way of calling travel narrative a form that uses "fact" and fiction indiscriminately, and often at the same time, to benefit not its subject or its audience, but its narrator.

It is important to remember that Melville is not Tommo—that Tommo's descriptions and observations in *Typee* are a way of opening American identity and writing up to investigation and criticism. In most modern studies of *Typee*, Tommo acts as a general symbol of the West—an everyman of white culture adrift in the alien Pacific. Breitwieser, however, shows that Tommo aligns himself with eighteenth and nineteenth-century descriptions of American identity—specifically, Tommo's rebellion against tyrannical authority, which Breitwieser says echoes both the early part of Franklin's *Autobiography* and the Declaration of Independence ("False Sympathy" 400-401). But Tommo's affinity for Americanism extends to the language that he applies to his dealings with the Typees—language borrowed from revolutionary America in order to justify the self-interested actions that Tommo undertakes during his stay with the islanders. Samson argues that Melville felt "[t]he writings of the Revolution promote[d] the causes of egalitarianism, democracy, and improved conditions for all Americans, yet they actually [led] to the enshrinement of a self-serving political elite that does little to meliorate the poverty of the common American ..." (10). In *Typee*, it is easy to
see that the language of the American Revolution could be turned quickly to self-interested acts as America moved its cultural influence into new lands, both on the North American continent and abroad, in the mid-nineteenth century.

This critique, and the general critique of travel writing, is developed in a four-part structure that runs through the narrative. In the first part of this structure, Tommo presents himself as an objective observer, dedicated to the Enlightenment ideal of discovering commonalities beneath surface differences. In the second, Tommo moves from observer to participant, engaging with the Typees' social practices and projecting his Americanism on the tribe. In the third, both Tommo's objectivity and his participation in the tribe begin to be affected by his attempt to delve into questions about the character and personality of the tribe. Finally, unable to make sense out of the deepening mysteries of Typee behavior, Tommo escapes the island.

This four part structure does not have clear divisions that can be identified with individual chapters. In fact, the divisions tend to overlap each other. But they can be roughly drawn into these dimensions. The first part runs from the opening of the book through Tommo's initial contacts with the Typees, and ends when Toby, Tommo's companion in mutiny, leaves the tribe's valley to return to white civilization. The second part encompasses the time that Tommo spends engaging himself with the tribe. At first depressed but then unencumbered by Toby's
absence, Tommo embarks on a program of trying out local customs and trying to improve the tribe's social practices. In the final event in this section, Tommo momentarily dismantles a tribal taboo. The third part begins at about the same time that Tommo confronts the taboo and makes his own alterations in it. This passage of text continues through a number of chapters that show Tommo leaving behind observations of the tribe's physical behavior in an attempt to define the very heart of Typee culture. The fourth section begins when Tommo has to confront the Typees' cannibalism, an event that causes him to run from the tribe and from his efforts to understand it.

In the second part of this structure, we can see most clearly the criticism of American rhetoric. Take for example the way in which Tommo shows himself breaking a taboo. The taboos that structure Typee behavior give Tommo no end of trouble while he lives with the tribe. Annoyed, he reports that "For several days after entering the valley I had been saluted at least fifty times in the twenty-four hours with the talismanic word 'Taboo' shrieked in my ears, at some gross violation of its provisions, of which I had unconsciously been guilty" (221). By this time, Tommo has made it clear that he cannot grasp even the Typee language — listening to it for any length of time gives him a headache. Tommo never comes to understand how the taboo system works, nor does he really want to. As he explains, "I have in several cases met with individuals who, after residing for years
among the islands in the Pacific, and acquiring a considerable knowledge of the language, have nevertheless been altogether unable to give any satisfactory account of its operations" (221). In fact, no satisfactory account of how taboos work or how they originated appear anywhere in the book. It is the one cultural practice that Tommo claims never to understand, despite the confidence that he displays in his powers of observation and objectivity in the first two parts of the narrative. But it is not explained by the tribespeople, either, for Tommo cannot report their description of it. Taboos are mysteries in the narrative, highlighting the manner in which Tommo encounters and confronts cultural practices different from his own.

A drop in the swelling in his leg allows Tommo the opportunity "to diversify my time by as many enjoyments as lay within reach" (131). One of these enjoyments is swimming with Typee women in "the waters of a miniature lake" located within the valley. Much playfulness ensues, Tommo and the "nymphae" ducking each other, until the women's presence is banned by Tommo's request that a boat be launched on the lake. Boats, according to Typee tradition, are not for women. Therefore, "The prohibited craft, guarded by the edicts of the 'taboo,' extended the prohibition to the waters in which it lay" (132).

These conditions do not stop Tommo from pushing to get what he wants from the islanders. "I not only wanted the canoe to stay where it was," he announces, "but I wanted the beauteous Fayaway
[Tommo's companion, a Typee woman] to get into it, and paddle with me about the lake" (132). Determined to get his way, even over the protests of his tribal servant Kory-Kory and his great friend the tribal chief Mehevi, Tommo insists his case be brought before the local religious authorities: "although the 'taboo' was a ticklish thing to meddle with, I determined to test its capabilities of resisting an attack" (132). The taboo does not stand inviolate for long, the Typee priesthood evidently giving way to Mehevi's authority, which itself is brought to bear by Tommo's insistent exploitation of his friendship with the chief. Self-satisfied, Tommo concludes, "Such an event I believe never before had occurred in the valley; but it was high time the islanders should be taught a little gallantry, and I trust that the example I set them may produce beneficial effects" (133).

The structure of this anecdote imitates what Samson has described as the method by which Americans and Europeans introduced industry to island cultures: "they set up the operation, allowed the islanders to do most of the work, and rationalized their 'interest' as 'good-will'" (39). Here, Tommo set up his operation by involving himself in a cultural practice about which the Typees obviously have strong feelings. Despite the disparaging remarks Tommo makes about the taboo system ("It is imposed upon something to-day, and withdrawn to-morrow" [224]), and despite its ultimate quality of mystery in the text, the islanders respond quickly and vehemently to the presence of the
boat. The women flee at the first sign of the canoe hitting water. Kory-Kory is "bewildered" and then "horrified" by Tommo's wish to have Fayaway in the boat. Mehevi tries to explain at length why women and boats cannot be together (132-133). Whether the Typees themselves understand all the machinations of the taboo, or simply obey them without asking, it is obvious from their reactions that Fayaway in the canoe is Tommo's desire entirely, not a compromise that can be reached between Tommo and Typee culture. The process does not produce an industrial product, of course; but it does produce the same sort of cultural disruption that Samson alludes to, and is covered over by the same sort of language.

Indeed, Tommo is quick to use the same sort of "imaginative" rhetoric on his own actions that Breitwieser says he is disposed to use on the Typees. At the heart of Tommo's breaking the taboo is obviously a selfish end — to have his "sport" continued. Yet most of his account hides this end under appeals to science and progress. While he admits at first to attacking Typee culture by forcing the bounds of the taboo, Tommo quickly mixes his terms to give his actions a more objective, disinterested quality that attempts to recall his observer status from the first section of the narrative. He claims to "test" this taboo of the Typees, implying that he means to investigate rather than dismantle cultural practices. As he goes on, he even separates the taboo out from Typee culture, making it seem like an organism that has a
life of its own and that, like an odd animal, can be dissected and examined in and of itself — "I determined to test its capabilities of resisting" (132; emphasis mine). Later in the book, Tommo echoes this by describing the taboo as an active agency, something almost above the islanders themselves: "The savage, in short, lives in the continual observance of its dictates, which guide and control every action of his being" (221).

In with these appropriations of scientific language are appeals to humanitarian progress. Tommo initially confesses to selfish interest in breaking the taboo; but as the telling progresses, he leans more and more on the language of republican action for support — the same language that threaded through the American Revolution. He changes to phrasing that has more an egalitarian ring, the tones of classlessness and freedom: "... for the life of me I could not understand why a woman should not have as much right to enter a canoe as a man" (133). Fayaway's dispensation from the taboo becomes an "emancipation"; and Mehevi's grudging agreement to bring Tommo's case before the religious council becomes the act of a "rational" person (133). Finally, the incident is closed with the language of the social dogooder: "I ... produce beneficial effects" (133).

But none of the rhetoric is enough to cover the narrowness of Tommo's intentions — and this is the point in Typee about truth, travel writing, the self-interest of travel writers, and its implications for American identity. The ticklish question of
women's rights raised by the taboo is never really engaged by Tommo in the way that Tommo first indicates that he will. Instead, Tommo is content to satisfy himself, and nobody else. His use of republican American rhetoric indicates that he is prepared to make the issue a large one - "a woman" certainly meaning all women in Typee society, and "emancipation" certainly carrying heavy political connotations, indicating that Fayaway's freedom is a victory over an oppressive government. What comes of the whole case, however, is much less than a large statement. Again, the point is not Tommo's lack of cultural sensitivity, but the way in which Tommo projects his American identity on the Typees. Tommo's interference in the taboo does not produce wide or even lasting effects. For all the rhetoric addressing equal rights to boats, only Fayaway is allowed access to the canoe. Other Typee women, and all Typee men, are stuck with the original proscription. Indeed, though Tommo takes a number of cruises with Fayaway, he later reports as an example of a widespread and inviolable taboo among Marquesan societies "the law which forbids a female to enter a canoe" (224). Tommo is guilty of manipulating his relationships with the islanders for his own benefit, justifying his actions with the same "imaginative" language that Breitwieser shows he awards to Typee behaviors that seem Tommo-friendly. If the question is whether Tommo is able to gain anything for the people he claims to champion and represent, the answer from Typee seems to be a resounding no - a critique not of
Tommo himself, but of travel writing and travel writers, and by implication a critique of the extent of the performative power of language that helped create America as a political and moral identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Indeed, Tommo's posture and rhetoric recall Franklin's formulation for the American self in his Autobiography. First, there is the appeal to the language of science and systematization that is apparent in Franklin's anecdote about the boat-building industry—a passage in which Franklin castigates boatwrights for not holding their building practices to an efficient standard (165). Tommo plans to "test" the social fabric of the Typees, and to mend it if it does not meet his American standard. Second, there is the language of Franklin's "outside" self—the man who directs the community while not being part of it. In this way, Tommo is Franklin's American self taken to an extreme in geography and application, governing the community in the outside way that Franklin presents throughout his narrative.

Once the taboo is broken, Tommo embarks on a project that shows how easily the use of Americanist rhetoric can lead to acts that dehumanize members of "primitive" cultures. The affair seems at first to be a victory celebration for having won the battle of the taboo:

The first day after Fayaway's emancipation I had a delightful little party on the lake—the damsel, Kory-Kory, and myself. My zealous body-servant brought from the house a calabash of poee-poee, half a dozen young cocoa-nuts—stripped of their husks—three pipes, as many yams, and me on his back a part of the way. Something of a load; but Kory-Kory was a
very strong man for his size, and by no means brittle in the spine. We had a very pleasant day; my trusty valet plied the paddle and swept us gently along the margin of the water, beneath the shades of the overhanging thickets. Fayaway and I reclined in the stern of the canoe, on the very best terms possible with one another; the gentle nymph occasionally placing her pipe to her lip, and exhaling the mild fumes of the tobacco, to which her rosy breath added a fresh perfume. (133)

Eventually, as Tommo and the two islanders return again to the lake, games are devised. Fayaway, using her tappa robe, provides a human mast and sail, propelling the canoe speedily through the water and onto the lake's shore. According to Tommo, all are delighted, and "Many a time afterwards was this feat repeated" (134).

But the little party, and the repeated visits to the lake, can be seen as Tommo's attempt to create a place where he runs things according to his own desires - something Tommo does to make up for the wrongs he suffered as a crew member on a commercial voyage. Tommo's desertion from the whaler, for instance, is prompted by lack of fresh food, pleasant surroundings, good company, and a structure that gives him privilege. It is difficult to say whether Tommo's criticisms are meant to include white society as a whole. After all, the ship is out on the farthest reaches of white culture; and Tommo, unlike Conrad's Marlow, does not spend much time talking about what home was like. Still, the opening chapter catalogues only dissatisfaction, and in a close detail that Breitwieser says is a "self-conscious
"revision" of the part of the Declaration of Independence that voiced America's complaints against England's George III ("False Sympathy" 401):

Weeks and weeks ago our fresh provisions were all exhausted. There is not a single sweet potatoe left; not a single yam. Those glorious bunches of bananas which once decorated our stern and quarter-deck have, alas, disappeared! and the delicious oranges which hung suspended from our tops and stays — they, too, are gone! ...

Oh! for a refreshing glimpse of one blade of grass — for a snuff at the fragrance of a handful of the loamy earth! Is there nothing fresh about us? ...

There is but one solitary tenant in the chicken-coop, once a gay and dapper young cock, bearing him so bravely among the coy hens. But look at him now; there he stands, moping about all day long on that everlasting one leg of his. He turns with disgust from the mouldy corn before him, and the brackish water in his little trough. ...

The usage on board of [the whaler] was tyrannical .... (21) .... the greater part of the crew were as coarse in person as in mind. (32)

It is important to note how closely the lake party itself is the opposite of Tommo's picture of life aboard the whaler. The shipboard famine, for instance, is replaced by Nukahevan bounty, even to the point where the food, rather than quietly disappearing, is ostentatiously brought out. The blasted, sickly environs of the sailors and the poor cock are changed to the verdant shore and picturesque lake. Even the odor turns from stale to lovely, the tobacco and Fayaway's breath twisting together into "perfume." As well, and perhaps most important, the abusive captain and coarse crew are cast aside for the obedient Kory-Kory and romantically pleasant Fayaway. The island man is "zealous" in Tommo's service, attentive to his body to the point
of carrying him part of the way to the lake — an action that is completely unnecessary, as Tommo's infected leg seems to have healed by this time. Also, Fayaway's accessibility to Tommo is a direct contrast to affairs aboard the "Dolly," where the cook has no hens and the sensitive Tommo has nobody to bond with. It is all certainly far from life on the whaler, which, Tommo tells, was lived beneath "the butt end of a hand-spike" (21). By breaking the taboo with the rhetoric of American Revolutionary ideals, Tommo actually succeeds in becoming captain of his own ship and reaping the bounty thereof — even the privileges of having someone else provision and propel the ship, of cruising the shore rather than the endless open sea, and of landing the boat as many times as he wishes, not once every six months. As Tommo writes, "I thought I had been transported to some fairy region, so unreal did everything appear" (134).

The affair echoes oddly, though unintentionally, the book-as-life metaphor that opens Franklin's Autobiography. In the Autobiography, Franklin expresses the wish that his life would be like a written text, so that he could have the power later in life to rewrite some of what he calls "errata" — errors in judgement or action that he committed when he was a younger man (1). Here, Tommo seems to be taking the metaphor to heart — treating his life as if it were indeed a written text, one that can be revised to his liking. What happens, though, is that he rewrites his life by using Typee culture as paper, inscribing new passages over it. In
short, Tommo is not just guilty of using the Typees to justify his actions among whites, as Breitwieser suggests. Rather, he is guilty of using the rhetoric of America against the Typees to justify actions he takes on the Typees themselves — blaming them for having to have their culture disrupted, and then using that line as a cover for exploiting them further. It is inevitable that Tommo would bring disruption to the tribe; but it is also instructive to see how Tommo's revolutionary rhetoric, and his projection of American identity on the Typees, structures this conflict.

That Tommo is seen to be active in this is of utmost importance. Throughout criticism of *Typee*, Tommo is referred to as a passive sort of traveller. He does not seek to establish a colony or win souls, the two usual pursuits of nineteenth-century explorers in the Pacific, so he is lumped in with the rogues' gallery of Melville's *isolatoes* — those who live on the margins of whatever society they encounter, sitting apart and observing rather than acting. To Milton Stern, writing in the mid fifties, Tommo was a "mode of consciousness" (*Hammered Steel* 53), a receptor and interpreter of events, not a participant. To Rogin, writing in the mid-eighties, Tommo is a child, waiting for pleasure to come to him and therefore giving up any power to act on his own (44). In the years between, and those since, the picture of Tommo has pretty much been that of the observer, the non-participant. Only Breitwieser indicates that Tommo is engaged
in some sort of project, and only after the fact, when Tommo is writing his narrative as a defense for deserting the whaler.

To be sure, Tommo is an *isolato* of sorts, as he is uncomfortable in both white and island cultures; but at the same time, he is imperially active—both at the moment in Typee culture when he breaks the taboo and later, when he uses the rhetoric of the American Revolution to justify his conduct. Indeed, the taboo incident shows Tommo acting forcefully with Typee culture by interfering with its social structures and religious practices, disregarding its values, revising its meanings, and forcing change for his own pleasure, all with the backing of Americanist language. Unsuccessful as he is in making any lasting mark on Typee culture, Tommo is still actively the imperialist who views alien places and peoples as the raw materials to fashion a new place for himself—not simply in his narrative, but in his actions among the tribe as well.

*Typee*'s critique of American identity is centered around the radical individualism of Franklin's *Autobiography*—an identity based in the individual's ability to influence or recreate the social structures that surround him. It is not that the text privileges the communal identity that a writer like Bradford proposes over the individualist identity that Franklin describes—saying, for instance, that the Typee tribe is a better institution than Tommo's self-created society. Rather, it is that Tommo's rationalizations reveal the language that in large part defined
American identity, from the beginning of the republic to the time that Melville began writing, to be easily turned to selfish and dubious ends. It is in this question of the "truth" of Americanist language that the critique of travel writing apparent in the narrative begins to form.

In its best intentions, travel narrative is a complete report of a foreign place or culture. As Janet Giltrow writes, travel narrative is in theory a "comprehensive rather than selective notation" - a text in which first-hand observation and authoritative research combine to let nothing about another place or culture go unremarked (19-20). Of course, such intentions do not work out in practice. Travel narrative too often looks like a "re-presentation" of alien identity - an interpretation of a foreign place or culture, created for the most part (or even wholly) from its writer's own cultural biases (Herbert 19; Miller 6; Said 21; Samson 5-6, 52). As Herbert writes, travel narrative is a report of how Western "schemes of interpretation make sense, make nonsense, and wreak havoc" in "native" cultures (159). In short, travel narrative often shows more about the self-interest of its narrator than it does about new places or non-white societies.

For indeed, Typee shows that the result of Tommo's work as both a writer of and an agent among the tribe is that the islanders' culture undergoes transformations that say more about the limits of American rhetoric than they do anything about Typee
culture. On the page, Typee culture is reduced to a series of irrational, enslaving acts by the rhetoric of progress. When Mehevi defends the integrity of the taboo, Tommo hears only noise—the chattering language he cannot understand. Yet when Mehevi tries to communicate that he will, for the sake of his relationship with Tommo, try to get the island priests to void the law (a complicated message), Tommo suddenly perceives him as "a little more rational" and seems to have no trouble understanding him. As an islander firmly rooted in his own culture, Mehevi is perceived by Tommo as irrational and incoherent. As a servant of Tommo's will, guided by the republican American rhetoric that Tommo brings to bear on the situation, Mehevi becomes a rational and helpful creature. In short, Tommo implies that all Typee culture is irrational, as he reports that the system of taboos forms the base for all Typee social structures (221). Only when Typee culture breaks and reforms around a center that fits his rhetoric, Tommo suggests, will it gain value or coherence. Something like this happens to Fayaway's status in and outside the taboo. Once she is allowed to ride in the canoe, Fayaway becomes emancipated, implying that she was a slave before, when she lived wholly by the dictates of her own culture. Again, it seems that the only way for Typee culture to signify, to have merit and value and coherence, is for it to imitate Tommo's vision of how white culture should operate—at which point it is no longer Typee culture, but a reflection of Tommo's own wishes.
The same sort of cultural transformation happens off the page, so to speak, in the actions that make up the visits to the lake. Kory-Kory, for instance, seems to degenerate once Tommo takes charge. Before Tommo forces his "fairy region" into being in the second part of the narrative, Kory-Kory reacts very strongly to the suggestion that a taboo be broken. He is "bewildered" and "horrified" and more: "He inveighed against it, as something too monstrous to be thought of. It not only shocked their established notions of propriety, but was at variance with all their religious ordinances" (132). Yet afterward, Tommo describes Kory-Kory's actions at the lake in terms of eager servitude. The islander is "zealous" in his labor, carrying not only a large amount of food to the site, but also Tommo, who would have been quite capable of carrying himself. Throughout, he plays the role of the "trusty valet," paddling the boat like a gondolier (133); and when Fayaway leaps up to act as a mast for the boat, Kory-Kory, "who had watched all our manoevres with admiration, now clapped his hands in transport, and shouted like a madman" (134). Kory-Kory goes from being someone with a distinct sense of social and religious boundaries to someone who looks like a fool. Rather than being someone fixed in a defining cultural code, no matter how mysterious, he becomes someone impressed by simple, temporary physical displays - the "manoevres" on the lake. Rather than someone who can mount a spirited argument in defense of his tribal beliefs, he becomes reduced to someone who caws and cavorts like a
looney. The dissonance that Melville creates between the pre- and post-taboo Kory-Kory is loud and telling. Though Tommo claims more than once that, in his opinion, Typee religious practices "were at a low ebb" and represented little more than "a sort of childish amusement" (174), his own descriptions of the taboo and of the cultural institutions that proceed from it create a contrast to those statements. As Thomas Scorza writes, "[t]he Typean state of nature is political, hierarchical, and restrained by law" (236-237) - which is to say that Tommo often refers to the Typees in terms of the rankings among their men, and that he comes to experience much of their society by rubbing up against the many proscriptions of the invisible and mysterious taboo. So when Kory-Kory changes dramatically from "horrified" opponent to "trusty" ally, contained in that change is the dissolution of Typee culture. It is a breakdown in the islanders' social boundaries and values, driven by Tommo's American self-interest.

The lake party scenes describe both in their language and their actions a deliberate transformation by Tommo of Typee culture. For like Kory-Kory's initial resistance to Tommo's idea, all vestiges of Typee culture disappear, save those that please Tommo. Those that do remain are reformed around a Western center, which in this case is Tommo's desire to command. On the lake, Tommo indeed becomes master of his own ship. As I have pointed out, he commands the vessel like a captain. And he also creates a miniature society, with himself as the head, and Kory-Kory and
Fayaway as the obsequious subjects. That Tommo creates a new set of social relations during his stay with the Typees has been pointed out before, but always in terms of Tommo trying to establish a Marquesan family for himself. As Samson writes, Tommo "flees the family of the ship — the captain his 'father,' the ship 'Dolly' his 'old lady,' and the crew his brothers — ... but finds in Typee another family — Marheyo [an older island chief] his father, Tinor [Marheyo's wife] his mother, and Fayaway his potential wife" (40-41). But on the lake, no such familial relations exist. Kory-Kory and Fayaway do all the work for a relaxing Tommo. Kory-Kory carries a healthy Tommo around as if Tommo were a caricature king, and loyally paddles the boat while Tommo takes his pleasure with Fayaway. Even Fayaway takes up this kind of labor as she becomes part of the boat by making herself a human mast, thereby becoming another of Tommo's trophies. Tommo writes,

> With a wild exclamation of delight, she disengaged from her person the ample robe of tappa which was knotted over her shoulder (for the purpose of shielding her from the sun), and spreading it out like a sail, stood erect with upraised arms in the head of the canoe. We American sailors pride ourselves upon our straight clean spars, but a prettier little mast than Fayaway made was never shipped a-board of any craft. (134)

Fayaway performs what Tommo calls her "freak" a number of times, providing enough resistance to speed the canoe along the wind and onto shore, a game that pleases Tommo. Like Kory-Kory, Fayaway is recreated in Tommo's narrative consciousness as a servant,
providing him the use of her own body as a mode of transport. And Kory-Kory is there to validate the use Tommo is making of Fayaway (and, thereby, of himself) by applauding the whole event. On the lake, Tommo is not the member of a family, or even the head of a family. Rather, he becomes by his own hand the ruler of a self-centered empire; Kory-Kory and Fayaway are transformed in his narrative patterning into adoring and approving subjects.

At this point, Tommo has become an allegorist gone out of control. Walter Benjamin writes that in allegory, "any relationship can mean absolutely anything else," and that this arrangement devalues things by making them a set of undifferentiated details (175). Still, Benjamin argues that objects used by the allegorist to signify something else suddenly become taken out of the "profane" (regular) world and set apart. In short, the things on which the allegorist works become "both elevated and devalued" (175). Such a dynamic shows in Tommo's treatment of Kory-Kory and Fayaway. First, the two islanders represent the alienness of island culture — Kory-Kory's difficult language and Fayaway's open sexual lure. Then, they quickly come to represent something else — Kory-Kory as the hidebound traditionalist opposing Tommo's attempts at social reform and Fayaway as the politically oppressed waiting to be free. Finally, they become signs of Tommo's power within Typee social structure — Kory-Kory gleefully giving into Tommo's lake parties, and Fayaway acting as a sort of prize. But at each turn, the process shows
that Tommo dehumanizes the islanders. He does "elevate" them in a way, but only in the sense that he puts them to his own use. Kory-Kory and Fayaway become simple details, devalued because Tommo exerts complete control over them in his text. The islanders become valuable to Tommo when they can be used as a set of signifiers. Otherwise, they walk around, devalued, in the "profane" world. Again, the text shows that Tommo's literary treatment of island culture reveals the narrowness of his "liberal" cultural bias and the narrow and unrepresentative use that republican American rhetoric can be put to in Tommo's self-interest.

On the lake, Tommo succeeds in escaping both white culture and island culture, picking convenient parts of each — from white culture, white authority; from island culture, free labor and sensual delight — and arranging them around a new center: himself. The lake is indeed a "fairy region," removed from the realities of Tommo's other worlds. But it is also an imperial space, created by disrupting Typee culture. Most important, it is a space created by writing and physical action, with one supporting and encouraging the other, not simply one revealing the other between the lines. The lake scenes show that Tommo is ready and willing to alter the uncomfortable parts of his life — the events of his narrative, the fabric of another culture, it matters not — to suit his own ends, and that the urge to alter is bound up in the
practice of writing, and of writing travel narrative especially. For the changing and rearranging Tommo indulges in are themselves the hallmarks of travel writing — characteristics that appear in Typee as a critique of the accessibility of truth in travel writing, and of the republican stance that Tommo presumes to take in his narrative.

James Jubak writes that the veracity in travel narrative is always subject to strain, because a travel book is always "a journey of an individual perceiving mind," in addition to being a record of events. On one level, travel narrative "struggles toward an objective, nonpersonalized record of what actually happened." On another level, however, it "slides toward the subjective — a record of events true only to the individual perceiving mind — and the creation of a pattern that is but a reflection of that single observing mind" (128). In other words, travel narrative is as much about its writer as it is about its subject. This arrangement appears in Typee as a problem. Again, it is not simply that travel narratives tend to be representations or interpretations of other cultures — that American or European travellers found Western ways of thinking inadequate to understand or explain non-Western societies (Herbert 19), or that white writers were conditioned to see "native" peoples as stereotypes (Samson 24-27, 33). Rather it is the notion that appears so absurdly in works throughout Melville's writing career — that one person in the field would successfully be able to
arrange and communicate a reliable body of information about an alien culture.

This critique of the narrative consciousness in travel writing shows up in the very structure of Tommo's anecdotes about Typee culture. Like the beginning portions of the stories about the lake, Tommo's early reports on the Typees tend to be self-assured pronouncements about his own ability to see through the islanders' culture, especially in the first part of the narrative. For instance, Tommo's first real attempt at to describe one of the islanders is as much a paean to his own skill at divining the essence of the tribespeople as it is a portrait of an alien figure, and is worth quoting in full:

... a superb-looking warrior stooped the towering plumes of his head-dress beneath the low portal, and entered the house. I saw at once that he was some distinguished personage, the natives regarding him with the utmost deference, and making room for him as he approached. His aspect was imposing. The splendid, long drooping tail-feathers of the tropical bird, thickly interspersed with the gaudy plumage of the cock, were disposed in an immense upright semi-circle upon his head, their lower extremities being fixed in a crescent of guinea-beads which spanned the forehead. Around his neck were several enormous necklaces of boars' tusks, polished like ivory, and disposed in such a manner as that the longest and largest were upon his capacious chest. Thrust forward through the large apertures in his ears were two small and finely shaped sperm-whale teeth, presenting their cavities in front, stuffed with freshly-plucked leaves, and curiously wrought at the other end into strange little images and devices. These barbaric trinkets, garnished in this manner at their open extremities, and tapering and curving round to a point behind the ear, resembled not a little a pair of cornucopias.

The loins of the warrior were girt about with heavy folds of a dark-colored tappa, hanging before and behind in clusters of braided tassels, while anklets and bracelets of curling human hair completed
his unique costume. In his right hand he grasped a beautifully carved paddle-spear, nearly fifteen feet in length, made of the bright koar-wood, one end sharply pointed, and the other flattened like an oar-blade. Hanging obliquely from his girdle by a loop of sinuate was a richly decorated pipe, the slender reed forming its stem was colored with a red pigment, and round it, as well as the idol-bowl, fluttered little streams of the thinnest tappa.

But that which was most remarkable in the appearance of the splendid islander was the elaborated tattooing displayed on every noble limb. All imaginable lines and curves and figures were delineated over his whole body, and in their grotesque variety and infinite profusion I could only compare them to the crowded groupings of quaint patterns we sometimes see in costly pieces of lacework. The most simple and remarkable of all these ornaments was that which decorated the countenance of the chief. Two broad stripes of tattooing, diverging from the centre of his shaven crown, obliquely crossed both eyes — staining the lids — to a little below either ear, where they united with another stripe which swept in a straight line along the lips and formed the base of the triangle. The warrior, from the excellence of his physical proportions, might certainly have been regarded as one of Nature's noblemen, and the lines drawn upon his face may possibly have denoted his exalted rank. (77-78)

The passage is written in praise of sight, which, for the first part of the narrative, Tommo considers to be his only tool for understanding the Typees. The encounter takes place in perfect silence, Tommo gaining his first clue that something important is happening by a motion from the crowd. Even the troublesome Typee dialect is absent — the islanders' relation to the warrior is described by "regarding," a verb of sight. And when Tommo finally begins his sketch of the warrior, all terms are limited strictly to the visual. Objects are thick or thin, short or tall, straight or curved. Precise distances are named, angles
are given particular characters or shapes — the pipe hangs "obliquely," the striking tattoo of divergences and obliques is quickly resolved into a triangle. Even things that should seem enigmatic are turned into devices of sight. The odd earpieces, for instance, become cornucopias — the horns that blow out objects rather than sound; and the striking tattoo is described so that the warrior's eyes are prominently featured in it. Tommo's comments on the warrior's spirit, that the man must be a version of the noble savage, are drawn purely from visual clues. Simple "physical proportions" constitute the needed proof. The method that surrounds all these expressions is structured to reflect the moving eye, working from top to bottom and outside to inside. In short, it is a triumph of sight over any other sense.

But the passage is also an affirmation of the single organizing narrative consciousness — the power of one person in the field to find meaning in an alien landscape. "Regarding the chief attentively," Tommo writes,

I thought his lineaments appeared familiar to me. As soon as his full face was turned to me, and I again beheld its extraordinary embellishment, and met the strange gaze to which I had been subjected the preceding night, I immediately, in spite of the alteration of his appearance, recognized the noble Mehevi. (78)

Mehevi is the Typee chief whose first meeting with Tommo was entirely disconcerting. His "fixed and stern attention" makes Tommo very uncomfortable — "Never before had I been subjected to so strange and steady a glance; it revealed nothing of the mind of
the savage, but it appeared to be reading my own" (71). Mehevi turns out to be rather nice, offering Tommo and his companion food on that first night (72), taking as a joke "the effect his barbaric costume had produced" on the timid whites (78), and later becoming Tommo's great friend and advocate. But the upshot of this passage is that Tommo is able to take a series of unfamiliar signs—the apparel and ornaments of the warrior—and turn them into something friendly and recognizable. The power of sight is evident even in the island culture, Tommo having felt his own mind opened to a "savage" simply by dint of that reader's eyes. But the great triumph is Tommo's, as he is able to remake the "imposing" figure of the warrior into a familiar face. Look long and deeply enough, the passage seems to suggest, and one can make sense of even the most foreign and frightening thing—perceive the Mehevi behind the mask, as it were.

The longer Tommo stays with the tribe, though, the more his narrative shows him adding speculations to his observations. As Tommo becomes comfortable in the Typee Valley—about the time he feels safe enough to create his fairy region on the lake, which would be about the time that the narrative moves from the second to the third part—his remarks begin to be tied less to what he sees and more to what he extrapolates from what he sees. A case in point is the story Tommo tells about helping to shave the head of Narmonee, one of the Typee warrior chiefs. In order to clear their heads for tattooing, the Typee men usually employed a
shark's tooth, which Tommo reports "is about as well adapted to the purpose as a one-pronged fork for pitching hay" (122).

Tommo's razor is not much better, being so dull that Tommo will not even use it on himself. To Naromonee, however, it looks like just the thing; and Tommo is finally convinced to employ it as a "personal favor" to the islander. Still, the process is extremely trying. Tommo begins "scraping away at a great rate," only to find that Naromonee "writhed and wriggled under the infliction, but, fully convinced of my skill, endured the pain like a martyr" (122). It would be easy to write Tommo's tone off as condescending. Only a few paragraphs earlier, he reports having repaired "a soiled and tattered strip of faded calico" for another tribesman, only to see him clap it around his waist and emerge from Tommo's hut "like a valiant Templar arrayed in a new and costly suit of armor" (121-122). But more often than not, Tommo uses the Typees as foils for European foppery, asking whether the islanders are not happier in their "free" and "childlike" state than peoples like the French are in their encumberances and ties. So at the end of his encounter with Naromonee, when he concludes, "Though I never saw Naromonee in battle, I will, from what I then observed, stake my life upon his courage and fortitude" (122), the same sort of disjunction that marks his presentation of the pre- and post-taboo Kory-Kory appears. The image that Tommo grants the islander at the end of the anecdote is jarringly different than the one he began with, the Typees becoming a sort of cultural
putty in Tommo's grip. In short, as Tommo's stay with the tribe grows longer, his observations become more like speculations than anything resembling reports.

This becomes more marked later, well into the third part of the narrative, when the text shows that Tommo actually composes a Typee culture based on a series of things he has not seen. In the chapter titled "The social Condition and general Character of the Typees," for instance, Tommo remarks,

During my whole stay on the island I never witnessed a single quarrel, nor any thing that in the slightest degree approached even to a dispute. The natives appeared to form one whole household, whose members were bound together by the ties of strong affection. The love of kindred I did not so much perceive, for it seemed blended in the general love; and where all were treated as brothers and sisters, it was hard to tell who were actually related to each other by blood.

(204)

Here is an important passage in which Tommo claims to summarize and give a hard shape to an elusive concept — the character of an alien society. Yet it is formed mostly by what he has not seen. In other words, in this passage Tommo changes the narrative style of the first two sections of the book by abandoning the reliance on what has been seen in order to make a report. Instead of the prior emphasis on close observation — peering, looking closely, watching, and the other phrases Tommo uses early in the book to describe his own actions — he offers just the opposite. He writes now about things he "never witnessed" or "did not ... perceive." Instead of sticking to the corporeal, as he did in the first two sections, Tommo moves to the vestigial: things "appeared" to be,
though it was "hard to tell." But it is not simply that in the absence of certain behaviors, Tommo allows himself to make some claim about a general condition. Rather, it is that even when things are in front of his face — islanders acting out their everyday relations to one another — he finds it hard to tell what is going on. In contrast to his earlier confidence, Tommo must rely ever more heavily on his own speculations to produce an image of the tribe. The Mehevi behind the mask becomes obscured, because even the mask appears to be less visible to Tommo than before. Tommo does not admit to this, and continues to write on, deliberately altering things for his own benefit.

In Jubak's terms, Tommo's narrative begins to slide more toward the subjective, Tommo's patterning mind picking up where his observations leave off. Tommo is quick to supplement his material once he runs into trouble dealing with it. The narrative shows that Tommo will substitute his own speculations for hard evidence about the nature of Typee culture. And as time passes in the third section of the narrative, Tommo sees less and less while claiming to look deeper and deeper. It is not just that Tommo plays up some behaviors of the Typees and plays down others, as Breitweiser argues. Rather, it is that the narrative shows Tommo to be ready and willing to make things up in order to cover over places where he cannot clearly organize and relate what he has seen. Gaps in knowledge are patched by speculations that Tommo creates out of things he has not seen.
The critique comes full circle in the fourth part of the narrative, when Tommo finally has to admit that the Typees are indeed cannibals — a thought that had terrified him since the beginning of his adventure — and at the same time has to admit that the evidence for this has literally been in front of his face for weeks:

I have already mentioned that from the ridge-pole of Marheyo's house were suspended a number of packages enveloped in tappa. Many of these I had often seen in the hands of the natives, and their contents had been examined in my presence. But there were three packages hanging very nearly over the place where I lay, which from their remarkable appearance had often excited my curiosity. Several times I had asked Kory-Kory to show me their contents; but my servitor, who in almost every other particular had acceded to my wishes, always refused to gratify me in this. (232)

The packages contain "three human heads" — two of the three belonging to islanders and the other, to Tommo's "horror," belonging to "a white man" (232-233). Shortly after this discovery, Tommo visits the tribe's Taboo groves, the site of Typee religious festivals, where he spies "a curiously carved vessel of wood"; and "prompted by a curiosity I could not repress," Tommo lifts its lid to find "disordered members of a human skeleton, the bones still fresh with moisture, and particles of flesh clinging to them here and there!" (238). In short, Tommo ends up finding a very different Mehevi behind these masks — a Mehevi he cannot reconcile with the jolly Mehevi in the warrior description from the first part of the narrative, or with the tribe he has created out of his own actions and speculations in
the second and third parts. So he becomes frightened and anxious to escape; and when he finally accomplishes this, the final glimpse he takes of the islanders is of a hostile, impenetrable mystery. Rowing away from the island in a boat manned by the crew of yet another whaling ship, Tommo fends off a Typee chief by smashing him in the face with a boat hook: "I had no time to repeat my blow, but I saw him rise to the surface in the wake of the boat, and never shall I forget the ferociousness of his countenance" (252). This image is indeed the final one - Tommo faints dead away, eyes rolling up and limbs falling back into the arms of white men. But the blow and the faint are just physical manifestations of Tommo's behavior as a travel writer: *Typee* shows that Tommo's narrative consciousness - the single organizing mind - fails spectacularly to get to the heart of anything, and, so far as Tommo himself is concerned, leaves the Typees in much the same state as he believes he found them - figures of inexpressible savagery, mysteries to the Western mind.

Like the fairy region of the lake, Tommo's larger description of the Typees is something built in air. To be sure, some of these difficulties in representation stem from the habit Western travellers had of collecting "native" peoples into convenient stereotypes - the prejudice that Herbert, Samson, and the others point to. But much of it stems from Tommo's own conscious altering of his material and his insistence in applying the rhetoric of American revolutionary politics to Pacific island
cultures — the freedom the travel writer has to supplement a
narrative with whatever is to hand. It is this freedom that
allows Tommo first to create a figure of the tribe, just as his
self-awarded freedom to alter Typee culture allows him to create
the fairy region on the lake. But it is also this freedom that
causes him to have that figure come crashing down once he realizes
that he has not gotten his subject tidily covered. Again, the
problems between cultures extend not from Tommo's own degree of
cultural sensitivity, but from the limits of the American rhetoric
that Tommo brings to his encounter with the Typees. In the text,
this critique of travel writing extends not just to the effects
that travel writers had on their subjects, as Tommo inevitably had
on the Typees, but to the practice of travel writing itself — the
practice that so easily made travel books into instruments of
exploitation.

Conclusion

Typee is not simply the unconscious confession of a travel
writer who uses a non-white culture for his own ends. Rather, it
is a simultaneous criticism of Americanist rhetoric and the
American identity drawn from it, and of how travel narrative can
be turned to justify the narrator's self-interest.

The wide compass of this criticism is difficult to accept
from Melville. After all, though he found writing difficult and a
bad way to make a living, Melville seems to have viewed writing
finally as a positive and generative thing. His correspondence
certainly supports this. Even after he had begun to feel that his first books — *Typee* included — were "botches" (*Letters* 128), and that it would be embarrassing to be remembered in the literary world as "'a man who lived among the cannibals'" (*Letters* 130), Melville still considered the act of writing to have been fundamental to his life. Remembering the year he had written and published *Typee*, Melville wrote to Hawthorne, "Until I was twenty-five, I had no development at all. From my twenty-fifth year I date my life" (*Letters* 130). The words are still commonly taken as Melville's signature statement about what writing makes possible. And indeed, composing and publishing *Typee* at age twenty-five seemed to give Melville everything — an identity, a purpose, a way of life, and even the promise (never really filled) of some money. While profits from the British and American publications of *Typee* were never what he might have hoped (Hayford, et al. "Historical Note" 284-299), still it is evident that writing the book influenced Melville's view of himself more than a little. Not only did he later date his life from his first year as a published writer, but at the time of *Typee* he embraced the exotic image of the Westerner who lived outside Western culture — a figure of mystery, one who occupies the discomforting space between societies. As Herbert writes, the young author Melville took to himself the identity of the beachcomber, the person who somehow lives there, on the boundary line between two incompatible realms. He is a ... distressing figure ... because he loses his [Western] identity without
going mad, thus suggesting that the civilized self is not grounded upon the absolute structure of things.  

The marks of the beachcomber were in Melville's writings, and even on his face. In his books, he managed to project the image of a man intimate with South Sea cultures, and he became cited as an expert authority by writers who debated the impact that Christian missions had on Pacific societies (Hetherington 31). In his appearance, he cultivated a long beard, such a forward sign of outlandishness that even his brother protested against it. At twenty-five, Melville seemed made anew; and it seemed as though writing was the vehicle for his transformation. To see writing as something destructive or dangerous in a book of Melville's, especially in an early one, would appear to fly in the face of Melville's own view of writing.

Still, there is enough in Typee to call into question the power that writing held for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century white audiences — that is, that objectivity and truth were possible in observation and writing, and that a writer would always want to tell the truth about his or her travels (Giltrow 26); and there is enough to implicate writing, and travel writing in particular, in pursuing self-interest rather than truth.

What this may lead to is the idea, at least as shown in the narrative of Typee, that an "other" culture is fairly well inaccessible to voyaging white writers, no matter who the narrator is or what sort of observations are made. That Tommo is
identified so clearly by Melville with the rhetoric of Americanism heightens the effect of this critique. In Tommo's narrative, the ideals that were supposed to have granted freedom to one population are shown to disrupt and hinder another population. Tommo's "revolutionary" acts are short-lived and self-serving, and do more to limit the possibility of his understanding the Typees than they do to benefit the tribe. Typee begins to state what would become both Melville's view of America and his view of writing. The latter is expanded in later works of Melville's, and shows Typee to have been the beginning of a long critique of the availability of "Truth" — something that Melville always capitalized in his books and letters, but something that, as he often lamented, lay beyond reach.

In Melville's third book, Mardi, for instance, Tommo's inadequacies are written large in the hand of another narrator, Taji. The two stories share some common elements — there is a whaling voyage that ends in desertion and flight to an island, and a long report on the odd customs and things discovered there. And there is a shared style of narration. Yet the center of focus for Mardi changes. The ostensibly representational ethic that is at the heart of Typee becomes exaggerated into a fantasy romance and satire, taking as its subject the narrator's inability to read social status. Taji, for example, employs the same strategy of taking information or observations and extrapolating conclusions like the "General Character of the Typees" from them. In
describing the sailor who will accompany him on his mutiny, for instance, Taji writes,

Jarl hailed from the isle of Skye, one of the constellated Hebrides. Hence they often called him the Skyeman. And though he was far from being piratical of soul, he was yet an old Norseman to behold. His hands were brawny as the paws of a bear; his voice hoarse as a storm roaring around the peak of old Mull; and his long yellow hair waved round his head like a sunset. My life for it, Jarl, thy ancestors were Vikings, who many a time sailed over the salt German sea and the Baltic; who wedded their Brunnhildas in Jutland; and are now quaffing mead in the halls of Valhalla, and beating time with their cans to the hymns of the Scalds. Ah! how the old Sagas run through me! (12)

The tone of the passage is exaggerated and hyperbolic. Jarl is not a pirate, of course; but this does not stop Taji from making him part of an undying pirate culture, linked to immortals who drink and carouse in the ether. Likewise, though Jarl is a common sailor, by the time Taji is through, he becomes part of the sky, the storm, the sunset. Indeed, Jarl has not just hands, but the paws of a bear. Taji, for his part, becomes an ancient saga-sayer instead of the teller of a modern sea-story. Still, the narrative method is basically what unfolds in Tommo's text — a bit of geographical information or personal observation taken past the physical, and for the narrator's own benefit (if Jarl looks like a hero, their desertion looks more like an epic action).

Even the local color brought to Mardi by "native" speakers comments on the narrowness of the narrative consciousness in a book like Typee. In one passage, Taji is told about an island king who sends out agents "to seek out every thing that promised
to illuminate him concerning the places they visited, and also to collect various specimens of interesting objects; so that at last he might avail himself of the researches of others, and see with their eyes" (248). The king and his agents, in other words, are embarking on a group project in travel writing. Yet when the project is finished, the king is dismayed because two of his most credible observers contradict each other over the color of a coral reef that surrounds the island. When specimens of the reef are brought to him, the king becomes enraged, because one sample is red and the other is white. Expecting the reef to be either red or white — it is both, but in different places, something nobody had counted on — the king cries, "For me, vain all hope of ever knowing Mardi!" (250). The same sort of cry might be attributed to Tamo at the moment he discovers the shrunken heads and again when he strikes at Mow-Mow's head. It is the cry of a narrator who has all the material in front of him, in a place he ought to know, and yet cannot make head or tail of it all. Later, Taji hears a bit of Mardian history, a tale about an island version of the pony express — just the sort of curiosity that might appear under a heading like "Process of Making Tappa" or "Mode of distributing the Fish," both of which appear in *Typee*. The story centers around the buskins worn by a Mardian postman named Ravoo, specifically describing their makeup and care, and detailing exactly how they were employed by Ravoo on his rounds. Yet when someone asks, "Now to what purpose that anecdote?" the only answer
available seems to be, "naught else, save a grin or two" (351-352). Both anecdotes are a sort of summary of the limits to a book like Typee. Other things or other cultures may provide some puzzles or some entertaining moments, but travel writing does nothing to uncover any larger truths or connections that lie within them.

At end, Taji is no better off than Tommo — and neither are many of Melville's other narrators. Taji has travelled to many places and seen many things, but has not found what he is after (a mysterious woman, who appears as an allegory of "Truth"); and so he deserts Mardi for the open ocean, leaving behind a book that runs into countless narrative dead-ends, just as Tommo leaves behind a book that Samson has accurately described as only a frightened "Peep" at island culture (27). Melville's works are littered with narrators who throw up their hands at enigmatic and finally unreachable subjects. Ishmael cries at the end of his long essay on whale-science, "This whole book is nothing but a draught — nay, but the draught of a draught" (Moby-Dick 145); the "inside" narrator of "Billy Budd," after ransacking the discourses of everything from ship's gossip to medical science, finally leaves the last word on Budd to the "rude utterance" of an illiterate "tarry hand" ("Billy Budd" 1434).

Even in works that are set on land, the same configuration appears. The Wall-Street officer arrives in the prison-yard just in time to watch the frustrating and impenetrable Bartleby the
Scrivener die (Piazza 44-45); the narrator of "The Piazza" travels to a "fairy-land" up a nearby mountain, only to find it contains a misery he cannot fathom or cure, and finds it safer to "stick to the piazza" and leave the unknown to itself (Piazza 12).

All these works are self-consciously written texts. Tommo and Taji make no bones about having written their sea tales, while Ishmael and the narrator of "Billy Budd" call attention to the writerliness of their texts by copying into their narratives different forms of discourse, like plays or poems. Even the narrator of "Bartleby" admits that he is writing a "biography" of his subject (Piazza 13). Samson writes that "[e]ach [of Melville's narrators] attempts to counteract ... isolation by narration, hoping through it to reaffirm and strengthen his connection with his audience and with his own past, lost experiences" (10). Tommo may indeed have made some connection with his audience by playing deliberately to colonialist fantasies, or with his past by rewriting Typee culture. But these connections are false, and at end simply exploitative. They show that Tommo is not able to approach, much less know his subject through writing, especially through the Americanist discourse that he adopts. The more Melville's narrators write, the less they are able to tell about what they find, but the more they tell about their own orientations.

The criticism in Typee is not just of Tommo's self-interested presentation of American Revolutionary rhetoric or the
way in which that rhetoric played out in the expansionist decades that preceded Melville's book. It is true that Melville is "highly skeptical of the traditions, institutions, and values of his culture" (Samson 11-12); but his own book is also highly skeptical of the vehicle that presents others to that flawed and dangerous culture — writing, and travel writing in particular. This calls for a darker reading of Melville. Nina Baym writes that "the kind of work Melville perceived Typee to be did not long continue to satisfy his enlarging aspirations" (909); but what came after Typee seems to get Melville's narrators no nearer the Truth about their subjects. If Melville indeed "engaged in one continuous process of evolvement, ... like someone making alterations in a single garment", as Ann Douglas has suggested (290), then what comes of his labor is the sense that the garment is never an adequate covering. The subject of narrative — the other culture, the other person, the other class, the other in general — remains beyond writing.

Whatever this may have meant to Melville himself is difficult to say. But it is clear that an important direction in the criticism of Melville's work may need to be rethought. Those who are quick to see the young Melville as a champion or defender of endangered cultures — and this is an attractive stance, for it gives American letters at least one more clear head amid all the brutally nationalist and racist thinkers of the nineteenth century — may need to revise their vision to include the dirge about
writing that seems to underlie Melville's narratives. Melville's style may serve to "problematize" nineteenth-century encounters between whites and non-whites, as Herbert argues (14-15); but it also makes problematic the very place in which such encounters were played out for the public - the written texts of travel narratives, in which narrators like Tommo claim to present the "truth" about cultures in foreign lands, and the self-interested rhetoric that helped construct those texts. If Melville documented in his early books the "vanishing" of non-Western cultures, as Mitchell says (191-192), his own books identify such travel narratives, and their narrators, such as the American Tommo, as agents that helped cause those cultures to disappear.

Notes

1References will be to Typee: A Peep At Polynesian Life, eds. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1968).


3Mardi seems to most critics to be almost completely without structure - so much so that Harold Beaver has called the book "a farrago, a mess" (28).
Because it is Hawthorne's last major work, the *Marble Faun* is often read as Hawthorne's last statement about himself as a writer. Some recent studies, however, have begun to connect Hawthorne's examination of identity in the *Marble Faun* with his concerns about America and Americans. For instance, Nancy Bentley writes that the book expresses Hawthorne's anxiety over social disorder in America (902, 918). Milton Stern writes that Hawthorne's main effort in the book is constructing an American identity that will please his middle-class readers (*Contexts* 107-110). Conflict and American identity are indeed concerns in the *Marble Faun*; but close reading shows that the American identity constructed in the narrative is based in mythical, pre-national terms that are contrary to Hawthorne's own understanding of nationalist identity. These terms cause the narrative to become a nexus of questions about Hawthorne himself, and about Hawthorne's perceptions of the future of the United States.

Hawthorne began writing the *Marble Faun* as a romance. While most studies have treated the work as a romance, more recent writings, like Bentley's and Stern's, have called it a novel.
Bentley, for instance, refers to the book as a novel by using "novel" as a broad term (931); and Stern calls the Marble Faun a bad mix of both romance and novel (Contexts 125-133). Still, it is useful to read the work as a romance. As Stern notes, romance allows for a plurality of meanings. For nineteenth century writers and readers, the novel was a book of realism. Romance, however, was

an impulse toward dream, toward transcendent actions and characters in fiction, larger than the metonymic actual, encompassing all human history as open metaphor, mythic, allegorical, symbolic, metaphysical ... (Contexts 75)

The open-ended nature of romance allowed it to be used as a series of questions. As Walter Herbert writes, romance "permits alternative ways of viewing experience" that "undermine the vision of authority that the orthodox ascribed to their moral vision" (152-153). As a romance, Hawthorne's last major work presents a portrait of naïve American character against a backdrop of Italian art and violence, illuminating the difficulties that the United States faced in determining its future course, and highlighting Hawthorne's own ambiguous response to those difficulties.

The Marble Faun is basically the story of how four people try to cope with a murder. Two of the characters, Hilda and Kenyon, are Americans living in Italy, where the narrative is set. Both are working at being artists. Hilda is a copyist, a painter who reproduces the famous works that hang in Rome's art galleries and museums. Kenyon is a student, a sculptor looking for a style that suits him. The third character, Miriam, is of uncertain
nationality and race. Like Hilda, she is a painter, though unlike Hilda, she tends toward more original work. The fourth character, Donatello, is a young nobleman visiting Rome from rural Tuscany. Donatello is presented as an innocent—a fey and gentle person who resembles a woodland faun.

In a strange turn of events, Donatello commits the murder that provides the climax of the narrative, killing a former model of Miriam's who is stalking her. Donatello murders the model in the firm belief that he is protecting Miriam, with whom he has fallen in love. But the act has hard consequences for everyone, and the rest of the book is spent sorting them out. Donatello and Miriam are driven apart by guilt and grief. Hilda is horrified, and rejects Donatello for committing the murder and Miriam for inciting it. Kenyon, who for a long time is unaware that Donatello has done anything wrong, spends fruitless weeks trying to pull Donatello out of despair. At end, Donatello is put in jail and Miriam is left to wander in misery. Hilda, who never really gets over the crime, sails for America, taking Kenyon with her. The book contains a great deal of other material, like descriptions of Italian art, or descriptions of Rome and the surrounding countryside, drawn mostly from journals and notebooks that Hawthorne kept during a trip through Italy early in 1858,¹ the same year that he began writing the first drafts of the narrative (Simpson "Introduction" xix–xx; Stewart 181). But the main focus for the characters is the murder and its aftermath.
For Hawthorne, according to a number of critical studies, the *Marble Faun* was a place for expressing his feelings about his writing and career at a difficult time in his life. As Judy A nhorn writes, the book was composed during a time when Hawthorne felt out of the mainstream of American letters (24-25, 35-37; see also Stern Contexts 107-108) and was suffering poor health and financial problems (35n). Despite his great success with earlier works, Hawthorne seemed to be growing more insecure about his ability to produce important literature. As Anhorn and Stern report, the *Marble Faun* was begun at the end of a dry spell — a period of six years in which Hawthorne, absent from America while pursuing diplomatic service in England (Simpson "Introduction" xix), had begun four large works but had not been able to finish any of them (Anhorn 24; Stern Contexts 107). Because of these circumstances, writings on the *Marble Faun* often address similarities between Hawthorne and his characters. Anhorn, for instance, writes that "Hawthorne gives his characters [the lessons that] his own life was teaching him" (25), and argues that Hilda and Kenyon's return to America is Hawthorne's pastoral attempt to regain a connection to the country he loved and deeply missed (28-41). Carol MacKay writes that Hilda, the copyist, provides a figure who sanctions the large portions of the narrative that Hawthorne copied from his personal papers (93).

But a number of recent studies have begun to situate the work in the context of Hawthorne's concerns about America and Americans, and from there to show that Hawthorne uses his last
romance as a place to create an American identity. Bentley writes that the *Marble Faun* represents Hawthorne's response to the social and political difficulties that beset America after the boom years of Manifest Destiny. For Bentley, the book puts to the test America's perception of itself as a leader among nations - a perception that was "under strain" in the fractious 1850s (918). As such, Bentley argues, the book expresses Hawthorne's anxiety over social disorder in America and the consequences that it would have for the nation (902, 918). The solution to this anxiety, Bentley concludes, is the narrator's construction of an "America of 'human promise'" - a place of hope and certitude that contrasts with the exhaustion of Italy (Europe), where the narrative takes place (931-932). For Bentley, the book becomes an allegory for Hawthorne's political consciousness - a story that Hawthorne uses to construct a triumphant version of American identity.

Stern writes that the *Marble Faun* represents Hawthorne's response to the expectations of his middle class readers. After the unproductive years in Europe, Hawthorne had decided to move back to America, an event that Stern says was fraught with professional difficulty, as Hawthorne had not published any large works in the mid and late 1850s (*Contexts* 107). Evidently, Hawthorne felt that he needed a book that would allow him to reenter the American literary scene with his large reputation intact. Stern argues that Hawthorne tried to accomplish this by writing a narrative that contrasts the bright moralism of America with the dark decay of Europe (*Contexts* 108-110). In short,
Hawthorne was pandering to his audience. As Stern writes, Hawthorne's readers tended to see themselves as historically different and morally better than Europeans; and Hawthorne played to this perception by having the Marble Faun's narrator construct an American identity that expresses only "moral uplift, betterment, sunshine, spirituality, religion, and moonlight prettiness" (Contexts 117). Stern concludes that this version of American identity ruins the book. The Americans, he says, never really become involved in other people's lives or learn anything about themselves (Contexts 125-135). But he does admit that Hawthorne's estimate of his audience is sharp, and that Hawthorne's first task in writing the Marble Faun was to construct a morally overbearing version of American identity (Contexts 108-111).

While these assessments go in different directions — one to examine Hawthorne's political consciousness, one to explore his commercial consciousness — they do agree that one of the most important aspects of the Marble Faun is the construction of American identity amid the upset and ruin that Americans generally saw in Europe. But neither addresses how specifically Hawthorne's narrator, and Hilda, whose voice corresponds most closely to the narrator's in such matters (Stern Contexts 123-136), rejects violence as an American quality — even though this reaction contradicts American history as Hawthorne knew it. Yet this is exactly what happens when Americans encounter violence in the
narrative, even when they encounter it in art; and this reaction sets off the questions about the country's future that appear in the plural meanings of Hawthorne's last romance.

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Social disruption in Hawthorne's writing is often referred to explorations of sin and guilt that pervade Hawthorne's major works. The Marble Faun indeed participates in Hawthorne's long struggle to decide whether a fall from innocence into knowledge is a good thing. But it is instructive to bracket violence out of the general discussion of sin in the Marble Faun. Jean Yellin writes that Hawthorne "characteristically defines as sinful the effort of one human being to usurp the will of another" (89). Violence certainly falls under this definition; but it takes on another dimension in the romance of the Marble Faun. In the alternative ways of viewing experience that romance allows, the Marble Faun presents violence as a location for debate over the construction of American identity. It is in encounters with violence that American identity becomes clear in the narrative; and it is in relation to violence that the difference between Hawthorne and the American characters in the book becomes most pronounced. While violence should be part of any discussion of sin in the Marble Faun, for examination of the book's relation to nationalist concerns, it is useful to look at violence as a location in the narrative where American identity is constructed, and as a location in history where that construction is called into question.
In the book's early chapters, Hilda, Kenyon, and the rest of the characters spend much time discussing paintings that depict violent subjects. In the chapters that introduce Hilda, for example, the narrator devotes a long section to an interchange between Hilda and Miriam over a copy that Hilda has made of Guido Reni's portrait of Beatrice Cenci—a sorrow-faced young woman who was beheaded for conspiring to kill her abusive father (Pann 64-67). Later, Kenyon, Miriam, and Donatello view a preliminary sketch and the finished version of Guido's "Archangel Michael"—a portrait in which the warrior angel is shown treading victoriously on a demon (138-141, 183-185). In both instances, the narrator shows violence to be something that the Americans cannot identify with, or even comfortably address, foreshadowing Hilda and Kenyon's rejection of Miriam and Donatello, and eventually of Italy itself, in their return to America.

The talk about Guido's portrait of Beatrice occurs in Hilda's apartment, a tower that rises above the streets of Rome. The scene is an introduction to Hilda's talent as a copyist. Miriam reports that no artist has been able to make a good copy of the picture, so Hilda has done the impossible by reproducing not just the painting, but also the immense sorrow felt by its subject (64-65). But it is also a dialogue about violence—one in which Hilda completely rejects the murderous actions that produced the expression she has captured so well on canvas. Amazed that anyone has been able to reproduce Guido's work so clearly, Miriam says,
"But here is Guido's very Beatrice ... Hilda, can you interpret what the feeling is, that gives this picture such a mysterious force? For my part, though deeply sensible of its influence, I cannot seize it."

"Nor can I, in words," replied her friend. "But, while I was painting her, I felt all the time as if she were trying to escape my gaze. She knows that her sorrow is so strange, and so immense, that she ought to be solitary forever, both for the world's sake and her own; and this is the reason we feel such a distance between Beatrice and ourselves, even when our eyes meet hers. ... She is a fallen angel, fallen, and yet sinless; and it is only this depth of sorrow, with its weight and darkness, that keeps her down upon earth, and brings her within our view even while it sets her beyond our reach."

"You deem her sinless?" asked Miriam. "That is not so plain to me. If I can pretend to see at all into that dim region, whence she gazes so strangely and sadly at us, Beatrice's own conscience does not acquit her of something evil, and never to be forgiven." (65-66)

Miriam and Hilda have greatly different reactions to the portrait. Miriam says that she is "deeply sensible" to the picture and that it has an "influence" on her. Later, she talks about venturing into Beatrice's world through imagination or desire. In both comments, she draws a relationship between herself and Beatrice. First, she shows that the picture reaches out to her, making deep inroads into her and casting a hold over her. Next, she shows that she is able to reach into the picture, seeing Beatrice and coming to understand her. Shortly after, she cries, "if I could only get within her consciousness! If I could but clasp Beatrice Cenci's ghost, and draw it into myself!" (66-67). Hilda, however, says that Beatrice tried to duck her glance while she painted, and that Beatrice seems to be "solitary forever." There is a "distance," she says, between Beatrice and
the rest of society. At end, she calls Beatrice "beyond ... reach." This difference becomes more pronounced when Miriam reminds Hilda of Beatrice's crime. The murder, Hilda says, is "terrible ... inexpiable," and concludes by saying that Beatrice should "forever vanish away into nothingness" (66).

The same reactions occur during the viewings of Guido's "Archangel." Miriam connects with images of violence, while Hilda rejects them outright. Shortly before the murder happens, Miriam, Hilda, and the two men visit the apartment of an art collector. Browsing through an old portfolio, Hilda finds a sketch that she believes to be a preliminary drawing of Guido's painting:

"The composition and general arrangement of the sketch are the same with those of the picture; the only difference being, that the Demon has a more upturned face, and scowls vindictively at the Archangel, who turns away his eyes in painful disgust." (139)

Miriam replies that the angel's expression is too squeamish, suggesting that there is something effete and deficient in people who cannot look evil in the face (139). Stung, Hilda accuses Miriam of attacking not only Michael, but Hilda herself, as she has made it known that she considers the angel to be "the most beautiful and the divinest figure that mortal painter ever drew" (139). Though Miriam apologizes and defers to Hilda's judgment, the line between the two women is drawn again. Hilda points out the separation of goodness from violence — the angel looking away from the attacking demon as it looks up at him — while Miriam calls attention to the need for connection, as she makes savage
fun of the angel for not being able to accept the presence of his foe.

This pattern of Hilda taking one side and Miriam the other continues when the group goes to the Church of the Cappacini to view the finished portrait. (The murder has happened between viewings. Hilda has begun to avoid Miriam and Donatello, who have no idea that Hilda has seen the killing. Kenyon has no idea that anyone has done or seen anything.) With Hilda absent, Miriam starts her tirade again, claiming that if Guido really wanted to depict the relationship between good and evil, he would show it in violence, with Michael battered and bloody, his foot barely holding down a still-fighting demon. Instead, she complains, the angel looks untouched and untested, placing a haughty foot on a dead beast (184). Kenyon, speaking for Hilda, says just the opposite — that the beauty of the picture lies in the angel's victorious face. Reciting Hilda's views, for, as he notes, Hilda "has studied and admired few pictures such as this," Kenyon says,

"What an expression of heavenly severity in the Archangel's face! There is a degree of pain, trouble, and disgust at being brought into contact with sin, even for the purpose of quelling and punishing it; and yet a celestial tranquility pervades his whole being." (183)

Once again, Miriam emphasizes the connection between things. For her, the battle ought to continue into the present moment of the picture, with a struggle that would emphasize the relationship between the two forces. "[The angel] should press his foot hard down upon the old Serpent," she insists, "as if his very soul
depended upon it, feeling him squirm mightily, and doubting whether the fight were half-over yet, and how the victory might turn!" (184). For Miriam, the relationship between good and evil should be shown in violence, because that state shows the tension she perceives between the two forces. But Hilda's view, when it is brought to the scene by Kenyon, emphasizes the separation between things. In Hilda's view, the most important part of the picture is Michael's face — the part that rejects and negates the fallen evil at Michael's feet. This focus allows the viewer to avoid what the demon's pose implies — a violent struggle ending in death — and to direct a definition of beauty and divinity to the parts of the picture that erase the idea of violence — Michael's disapproving expression and unrumpled clothing. Hilda's view, reported by Kenyon, finds beauty in the good, but primarily in a good that shows no signs of violence.

This retreat from violence and violent images is not Hawthorne's. Though Bentley and Stern note that Hawthorne's romances often suppress violent or disorderly images (Bentley 910-916, 932-934; Stern Contexts 143-144), Hawthorne's personal writings show that he grappled with the same subjects that Hilda rejects. His notebook writing in Italy reveals that his own perceptions were scattered through all the characters in the narrative. His viewing of Guido's Beatrice, for instance, shows that he has both Hilda's and Miriam's reactions to it. Like Hilda, he says that the distance between Beatrice and the viewer is "unfathomable" (Notebooks 92). In the same sentence, he says
that "the sense of [the picture] comes to you" (Notebooks 92). In other words, Hawthorne's own response combines the separation that Hilda desires and the connection that Miriam wants. In the next sentence, he feels that Beatrice's sorrow "removes her out of the sphere of humanity," but then is sure that Beatrice is "within our reach" (Notebooks 92-93). His response to the picture is indeed complicated and difficult — enough to make him wish that he did not have to work through it:

I wish, however, it were possible for some spectator, of deep sensibility, to see the picture without knowing anything of its subject or history; for no doubt we bring all our knowledge of the Cenci tragedy to the interpretation of the picture. (Notebooks 93)

Much the same thing happens in Hawthorne's own treatment of Guido's Archangel. Hawthorne sees the beauty in the angel's face, and copied the passage from his notebook almost verbatim into what Kenyon attributes to Hilda's view in his fictional narrative (Notebooks 521). As well, he votes for a more vital connection between the two figures in the painting. Until he had seen the version hanging in the Capuchin church, Hawthorne had been familiar only with a mosaic copy on display in St. Peter's. Once he observes the painting, he takes a line that later comes from Miriam's mouth. The copy is too "finical," Hawthorne complains, because the angel seems to be stepping too "daintily" on the demon, as if he did not want to get his feet dirty (Notebooks 521). An angel needs to step readily into confrontation with evil, Hawthorne comments, not act like a "celestial coxcomb" (Notebooks 521). Likewise, Kenyon's varying opinions on the
"Dying Gladiator," a statue on which the four characters comment in the opening chapter of the *Marble Faun*, come from different entries in Hawthorne's Italian notebooks. One says that Hawthorne was "more impressed by it than by anything of marble that I ever saw" ([Notebooks 102](#)); and another says that Hawthorne was in a bad temper and points to this as the cause of the long diatribe, repeated later by Kenyon, about how sculpture is often aggravating ([Notebooks 510-511](#)). But this complicated response to violence is Hawthorne's. Hilda immediately rejects violence and violent images.

No surprise, then, that Miriam finds herself cast out when she tries to see Hilda after the murder. When Miriam wanders past Hilda's tower, Hilda hears her and shuts the curtains (177). Hilda begins to think of Miriam as someone who does not exist anymore, and starts to lock the door when she hears Miriam on the stairs outside (206). When they finally meet, Hilda almost physically pushes Miriam away:

[Hilda] put forth her hands with an involuntary repellent gesture, so expressive, that Miriam at once felt a great chasm opening itself between them two. They might gaze at one another from the opposite sides, but without the possibility of ever meeting more ... . (207)

Hilda's art criticism reappears in each passage— the separation of the good from violence, the need to have violence put out of sight. The two women are held apart by a curtain, a door, and a chasm, with Miriam finally occupying the same sort of outcast region as Beatrice or the demon—unreachable, away from the...
beautiful face. Finally, Hilda tells Miriam that they cannot see each other again because Miriam and Donatello's deed has "darkened the whole sky," and turns her face away (212).

Encountering the violent murder scene leaves Hilda speechless and blind. Her voice breaks off when she tries to tell Miriam what she saw (210), and fails altogether when she finally manages to stammer it out and tell how it has affected her (212). At the end of the conversation, Hilda has to cover her eyes when Miriam refuses to leave (212). In short, the killing has rendered Hilda's finer senses mute and useless. When Hilda is first introduced in the book, Hawthorne's narrator says that her "perceptions of form and expression were wonderfully clear and delicate" (7) — a quality he points up so often that it becomes a basis for her character. And when Hilda speaks, people listen and bend to her will. Miriam, for instance, takes back her criticism of the Archangel portrait when Hilda protests it (139); and Kenyon is forced to recant when he suggests that Donatello's crime might have been the first step in the young nobleman's spiritual education (460-461). So when her time with Miriam leaves her without voice or vision, Hilda is telling what she understands to be the truth: she simply cannot abide violence because it goes against her nature (208, 210-211). Hilda is certainly Hawthorne's character, but not a voice for Hawthorne himself.

Hilda's reaction to violence in art and violence in life are equally important, because for Hilda, what goes in art goes in life, at least in Italy. Her case is strengthened by Hawthorne's
narrator, and then by the rest of the characters, who consistently blur the line between art and life in Italy. The first conversation in the book is about Donatello's likeness to a statue. The narrator reports that Miriam calls Donatello "the very Faun of Praxiteles," and that Hilda says, "the resemblance is very close, and very strange" (7). This curious question about Donatello is pursued throughout the narrative. The characters continue to call him "faun"; and at the end of the book, Hawthorne's narrator finally asks Kenyon whether Donatello has pointed ears, to which Kenyon replies that he will not tell (467).

Boundary-blurrings between life and art happen throughout the text. When Donatello looks through a portfolio of Miriam's paintings, for instance, he keeps finding a figure whose "face and form had the traits of Miriam's own" (46). Later, Miriam equates Kenyon having sculpted a model of Hilda's hand with Kenyon having established a love-relationship with her (121). In the next scene, the narrator says that Kenyon's clay model of Cleopatra "might spring on you" (126). The list goes on — both Miriam and Hilda at different times look like the Cenci portrait (67, 205), the face of Miriam's model appears in the Archangel sketch (140), Donatello insists that a violent-looking model of his face is "alive with my own crime" (272), a papal statue seems ready to stand up and act (314), Miriam and Donatello make their final appearances artfully dressed up like peasants (426-451), the narrator says that an unfinished bust of Donatello started his involvement in the story (381). In Italy, art may as well be
life, as each intrudes regularly on the other. All this makes Hilda's speeches about painting more than just aesthetics or a preparation for her reaction to the killing. Rather, it forms a web of references that shows her unable to countenance violence in any form.

This reaction is important, for it shows that America in the Marble Faun is unable to countenance violence, because Hilda is so closely identified with the country. Hawthorne's narrator emphasizes Hilda's New England origin (7, 351) and her Puritan faith (54, 351), and distinguishes her from the Europeans in the local art community - "the wild-bearded young men, the white-haired ones, and the shabbily dressed, painfully plain women" (62-63) - by both her looks and her skill (57-58, 62-63). And to stop anyone from comparing Hilda's copy-work to contemporary understandings of Oriental industry and imitation, he vows that her paintings are not at all like a "Chinese copy" (58). Whether Hilda is truly the vision that Americans had of themselves in the nineteenth century (Stern Contexts 108-111, 117) is almost beside the point. So far as Hawthorne's narrator is concerned, Hilda is America - it is "her native land ... her own country" (55) - and her reactions signal traits of national character. When Hilda rejects violence, it is a sign that America in the Marble Faun cannot be associated with violence, either.

In these passages, Hawthorne's narrator locates American identity in an exemplary community, whose best representative is Hilda. Bradford occasionally offered individual examples of
Puritan sainthood in passages like his sermon on the death of Elder Brewster (324-330). But for both Bradford and Hawthorne's narrator, American identity lies inside the group. For Bradford, the Pilgrim band was exemplary in its pursuit of spiritual good. For Hawthorne's narrator, Americans are exemplary in their rejection of the violence that characterizes European actions. While Hilda is so large a character that at times she threatens to overwhelm the narrative, it is important not to lose sight of the larger American community to which Hawthorne's narrator relates her.

Kenyon and Hawthorne's narrator stand in for this community by emphasizing the construction of American identity proposed in Hilda. Kenyon, for instance, complains about a statue that depicts violence (16), and will not let Donatello's bust wear a murderous expression, even though Donatello wants it to (272-273). When Hawthorne's narrator describes Miriam's paintings, he challenges the ones that have violent subject matter, claiming that Miriam does not have the moral sense for handling it (44). Violent acts, he says, are perpetrated by the "simplest and rudest natures" (90-91). After the murder, he calls Miriam "guilty, bloodstained" (173), and shows Donatello talking gloomily about penance and sin (237).

As well, these passages show that Americans also cannot even be held responsible for violence. For example, Kenyon's model of Cleopatra is a dangerous thing - a "tigress" that "might spring upon you and stop the very breath that you were now drawing,
midway in your throat" (126). But when Miriam asks Kenyon how he created it, Kenyon replies that he "know[s] not how it came about" (127). Later, when Kenyon models the violent image on Donatello's bust, Hawthorne's narrator says that he did it "[b]y some accidental handling of the clay, entirely independent of his own will" (272). Such statements resonate in Hilda's talk about the Cenci portrait - "'Ah,' replied Hilda, shuddering, "I had quite forgotten Beatrice's history" (66), when Miriam points out that Hilda has treated a violent subject.

Hawthorne would not have forgotten history so easily. However much he may have wanted to avoid responsibility for judging the painting of Beatrice, for instance, his sense of history stands in the way - "no doubt we bring all our knowledge of the Cenci tragedy to the interpretation of the picture" (Notebooks 93). While it might be more comforting to look ahistorically at Beatrice, Hawthorne's statement insists that this cannot happen. Everyone brings knowledge into interpretation, he says, meaning that history is inescapable.

As the Beatrice passages from his notebooks shows, Hawthorne was well aware that history makes itself felt in the present. Even if much of the notebooks did not show Hawthorne's preoccupation with history, his earlier travel writing would bear it out in specific reference to events like the American Revolution. Dennis Berthold writes that "Old Ticonderoga," a travel sketch that Hawthorne made in the 1830s, "demonstrates American superiority and reminds the reader of America's
successful revolution against British dominance" (136). Part of
the sketch focuses on a New England town square, showing both the
industry and vitality of the new American country. Berthold
points out that Hawthorne uses a group of war heroes to represent
the essence of Yankeeess (136), and then creates a striking image
of two coins jumbled together in one pocket to indicate America's
wartime victory over England (136-137). This sentiment followed
Hawthorne to Italy, where he reports that viewing battlefield
scenes there inexorably reminded him of massacre-sites in
Massachusetts and Revolutionary battlegrounds in New York and New
Jersey (Notebooks 266-267). Hawthorne did not complain about any
of this. In fact, he pursued his historical questions and
reflections with a great deal of effort. Unlike Hilda, Hawthorne
was not ready to forget history, even the disturbing parts.

Yet Hilda's rejection of violence and history continue to
appear in the narrator's discourse. For instance, the narrator
avoids describing the murder by putting responsibility for viewing
the scene on Miriam and Donatello. While the act is in progress,
the narrator refers to it only as "noise" that happens in a
"breathless instant" (171). There is a "loud, fearful cry," but
the narrator is not sure who screamed, or whether they screamed
before or after Donatello dropped Miriam's model (171). By the
time the narrator has regained his sight and his bearings, Miriam
and Donatello are "alone" (172). When readers finally catch a
glimpse of the dead body, they do so through Donatello and
Miriam's eyes:
They both leaned over the parapet, and gazed downward as earnestly as if some inestimable treasure had fallen over, and were yet recoverable. On the pavement, below, was a dark mass, lying in a heap, with little or nothing human in its appearance, except that the hands were stretched out, as if they might have clutched, for a moment, at the small, square stones. But there was no motion in them, now. Miriam watched the heap of mortality while she could count a hundred, which she took pains to do. No stir; not a finger moved. (173)

Europeans, not Americans, reveal the results of violence; and Miriam's long counting relieves Hawthorne's narrator of responsibility for lingering on the scene. Avoiding violence is indeed the narrator's pattern throughout the book. He describes Miriam's violent paintings only when Donatello is looking at them (43-44), and lets Miriam describe the violent parts of Guido's Beatrice and Archangel (65-67, 183-184). That Hawthorne's narrator plays this strategy out is important, because he is as visibly American as Hilda or Kenyon. He associates himself with America by phrases like "our native New England" (63) or "our families" (119). Late in the book, he reminds readers that describing Italy in detail does not mean preferring it - "[n]ot that, after all, we like the fine Italian spirit better than our own" (442) - and that America is home for him - "the years, after all, have a kind of emptiness, when we spend too many of them on a foreign shore" (461). Again, Hilda is only the most prominent example of American identity in the Marble Faun; she is clearly connected to a larger American community signified by Kenyon and the narrator.
The American rejection of violence is given emphasis by the European response to violence — which is to investigate it and make it part of the self. Donatello, for instance, offers to kill Miriam's model (90-91), and then does it (171), only to find out that killing makes him into something more than a simple soul. As the narrator reports, "It had kindled him into a man; it had developed within him an intelligence which was no native characteristic of the Donatello whom we have heretofore known" (172). Violence becomes an inward part of Donatello, altering his character. And it is important to note that Donatello's passage to manhood sends him straight to jail — a circumstance that confirms the general American impression that violence is bad, and that relieves Hawthorne's narrator of responsibility for having suggested that violence can do anyone any good. For her part, Miriam is drawn to violence in art (43-44, 66-67, 184-185); and during the murder, violence radiates from within her. Her eyes, Donatello says, told him to kill the model (172). Later, Hilda confirms this by telling Miriam that

"A look passed from your eyes to Donatello's — a look — ... It revealed all your heart, Miriam! ... A look of hatred, triumph, vengeance, and, as it were, joy at some unhoped for relief! ... I all passed so quickly — like a glare of lightning! ... But that look!" (210)

Where Americans are unable or unwilling to confront violence, Europeans are immersed in it. In contrast to Hilda and the narrator, Miriam is more than willing to talk about violence. In fact, she insists on meeting it face to face, saying that confronting violence is the only way to deal with it (184-185).
As well, she and Donatello are willing to accept responsibility for violence, both in life and art, while the Americans shrink from all of it. Of course, Miriam and Donatello do not run the streets, cutting people's throats. Donatello, for instance, is frightened at Miriam's violent paintings (44); and Miriam shows horror at Donatello's offer to harm her model (91). At end, though, they become foils for the Americans, showing clearly that violence cannot be associated with America.

No surprise, then, that Hilda and Kenyon leave Italy for America. Italy is steeped in violence, and begins to threaten the American character. Kenyon, for instance, falls momentarily under an Italian influence and wonders whether violence might be productive after all, because it has added a new dimension to Donatello (460). He receives a furious answer from Hilda, who shows that prolonged contact with violence empties her vision of the American self:

"Do not you perceive what a mockery your creed makes, not only of all religious sentiment, but of moral law, and how it annuls and obliterates whatever precepts of Heaven are written deepest within us? You have shocked me beyond words!" (460)

It is not the affronts to religion and law that are important here. Rather, it is the sense that violence empties what is "within us" — the inward sense of Americanness that is identified with the Americans' Puritan, New England past. When characters like Hilda use "we" and "us" early in the text, it is easy to take the references as universal. But as the book runs its course, it becomes obvious that "we" and "us" refer only to Americans, who
are different from Europeans, inside and out. This is repeated almost immediately by Hawthorne's narrator, who says that Americans feel "emptiness" when they spend too much time away from home (461). In Italy, boundaries are too blurry, and firm American convictions are leached away. In America, qualities are more solid and centered. Rather than languish in European isolation, where the mind is liable to roam "wild and wide" (460), Hilda and Kenyon "go back to their own land" (461) before they lose their bearings and become emptied. As Bentley points out, America is presented as the land of "human promise" (932); but Hilda and Kenyon's return to it is clearly a retreat from the threat that the "Pictorial land" represents to the idealized American character represented by Hilda, Kenyon, and the Hawthorne's narrator — though not by Hawthorne himself.

The American rejection of violence shown by Hilda, Kenyon, and the narrator creates a truncated and finally difficult version of American identity. Because the Americans in the novel will have nothing to do with violence, they can have nothing to do with past or present American history — both of which are characterized by violence on a large scale. America had separated itself from England by violent revolution, and had expanded its territory through border wars with Mexico. Hawthorne was intimately acquainted with both instances. His paternal grandfather had been a Revolutionary hero; and his friend Franklin Pierce had served in the Mexican War — an event that Hawthorne had treated in his
political biography of Pierce. Hawthorne had written about the first conflict in his early short story "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," among other works, and had emphasized the depth of knowledge that his audience had about it by saying that the "train of circumstance" that led to the American rebellion need not be repeated as a backdrop to the events of his story (Snow Image 208–209). He had dealt with the second conflict in print, but only in helping Pierce become president (Casper 215–220). In private, however, Hawthorne admitted to a deeper awareness of the Mexican War – not just of its causes, but of its effects on American society. As James Mellow reports, Hawthorne's observation of British public support for England in the Crimean War made him lament the dissent that marked American opinions about the Mexican campaign: "'in America, when our soldiers fought as good battles in the Mexican war, with as great proportionate loss, and far more valuable triumphs, the country seemed rather ashamed than proud of them!" (449).

In Hawthorne's consciousness, such conflicts were defining events in American national development; and his focus on such events was not uncharacteristic in the American literary community. Thoreau's "A Plea for Captain John Brown," written at about the same time that Hawthorne was finishing the Marble Faun, makes extensive reference to the violence that surrounded abolitionism in the Kansas Free State controversy – enough that violence becomes a defining force in deciding the identity of new American territories (Other Writings 686–688).
Yet Hawthorne's narrator in the *Marble Faun* suppresses all references to violence in America's historical past and present. Instead, he refers to American characters in geographical and religious terms that skip over violent events. First, by calling Hilda a resident of New England, the narrator neatly avoids the troublesome topic of expansionism and its attendant wars, which had been taking place far to the south and west of the original colonies. These conflicts primarily involved the Mexican government over the disposition of the Texas territory and the lands to the west and north of it. They also involved the British government over the question of the Oregon territory, and local territorial governments over the question of slavery and admission to the Union. But Hawthorne's narrator never refers to New England as being only a part of the United States; and he never refers to the United States, or any individual state, at all. For him, New England is America. The rest of the country does not seem to exist. Then, by calling Hilda a Puritan, he avoids mentioning the colonial rebellion against England. Historically, many important leaders of the revolt were anything but Puritan. Franklin was variously a Deist and a Quaker, Jefferson and Samuel Adams were Unitarians, Patrick Henry was an atheist, and so on. America had been reasonably Puritan at one time, but only in places where English colonists lived, and long before the Revolution. Even then, Puritan influence had been fairly limited, as shown by the antics of Thomas Morton, the Plymouth pest, and by the success of Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams in Providence.
By identifying Hilda with New England and Puritanism, Hawthorne's narrator cites a past that is tied to vague constructions of geography, genealogy, and religious ideology, not to defining national events. Hilda and the other Americans in the narrative are almost pre-national characters—an odd and jarring portrait of America. By the time that Hawthorne had begun writing the *Marble Faun*, the nation had stretched its boundaries into the deep South, the lower Ohio Valley, and the burgeoning West. All of these areas had distinct regional and political identities. If, as Bentley suggests, "[t]he task of the novel is to structure a past that confirms America's future" (931), then the past that the narrative constructs is a paper-thin myth.

Because it ignores history in this way, the American response to violence in the *Marble Faun* makes an American past and present inaccessible. The book's preface calls Italy a "poetic or fairy precinct, where actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon, as they are, and must needs be, in America" (3). But Hawthorne's narrator actually makes America the fantasy land. From its inception, the United States was obviously not New England or Puritan. Virginians like James Madison were behind the genesis of the nation; New Englanders followed their lead. As Charles Mee's narrative history of the 1787 convention that would produce the Constitution shows, the tensions that ran through the composition of the Constitution were regional. Northeast, mid-Atlantic, and southern states jockeyed for position and power at one turn (217-219), northern and southern states argued over the
disposition of slavery at another (247-255), and even the contentious northern and southern states paused to form a coalition of eastern states opposed to the then unincorporated western territories (216-217).

These differences had not emerged full blown in the attempt to write a national document. As Edward Countryman's analysis of class, gender, and race in pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary America shows, regional and state-to-state differences descended from each area's colonial identity (9-41). And as Richard McCormick's study of party politics in the mid-1800s demonstrates, even later attempts to unite different regions behind national political organizations tended to fall apart into separate factions, divided by geography or culture instead of by party ideology (330-332). By Hawthorne's time, regional factionalism had become a great difficulty. The main sticking point was slavery - not simply whether it should remain an institution, as had been the question during the 1789 convention, but whether it should be allowed in territories attempting to become states and whether any territory that allowed slavery could be admitted to the Union.

American identity had been a variegated thing from the start and, historically, had not even begun in New England. Virginia and New Jersey, both mid-Atlantic states, had proposed the competing plans that eventually contributed to the American Constitution (Mee 67-72, 168-171, 203). New Englanders had participated in the convention, and had taken part in debates,
particularly the ones over slavery, that had occupied the country ever since. But New England was only one region among an increasing number. It certainly could not be called the center of American identity by anyone who knew the nation’s history or understood anything about its present.

In the face of all this information, which both Hawthorne and his audience possessed, the narrator of the *Marble Faun* would be unable to invoke any historical event or nationalistic title without his scheme for American identity falling apart. In the same way, Bradford's exemplary communal identity falls apart when the economic interest of the Plymouth colony makes its way into *Of Plymouth Plantation*. Any reference, past or present, to a historical reality of the United States would inevitably lead to one of the violent events that created or expanded the nation—not just the Revolution, but the border wars with Spain and Mexico, and even the small-scale violence and revolt that surrounded the abolitionist movement in places like the Kansas territory. This refusal to acknowledge a large and more historically accurate version of American identity is reflected in Hilda's and Kenyon's personal lives. Hilda's parents are dead, something that is brought up twice (55, 201). Kenyon does not have even that much of a past. All that Hawthorne's narrator will say about Kenyon's life in America is that Kenyon sculpted busts of some "illustrious" men there (118). Kenyon himself helps to diminish the importance of history. At Monte Beni, he tells Donatello that in America, "each generation has only its own sins
and sorrows to bear. Here, it seems as if all the weary Past were piled upon the back of the Present" (302). For Kenyon, the past is tired and burdensome. Like Beatrice's story, it is something that Americans would just as soon forget. In contrast, Miriam and Donatello have long and intricate family histories. For the Americans in the *Marble Faun*, the past is inaccessible or readily forgotten. The present, with its violence and unstable boundaries, is a threat.

Only the future is left available, and is the place to where American identity is deferred. By the end of the book, Hilda and Kenyon are fed up with Italy and are ready to leave. Hilda says that she is tired and drained (461). Kenyon says that he cannot find his bearings and has no guide to help him (460-461). Stern writes that this is just petulant tourism - they decide to go away "only when 'Ruin' has spoiled Europe for them" and they begin to think of America with "increasing nostalgia" (Contexts 109). Yet Hilda and Kenyon are not recapturing anything by coming to America, because they have no past to pick up there. Hilda is an "orphan ... without near relatives" (55), while Kenyon has even less. As Hawthorne's narrator makes clear in a passage about portrait sculpture, nothing lasts long in America:

> But it is an awful thing, indeed, this endless endurance, this almost indestructibility of a marble bust! Whether in our own case, or that of other men, it bids us sadly measure the little, little time, during which our lineaments are likely to be of interest to any human being. It is especially singular that Americans should care about perpetuating themselves in this mode. The brief duration of our
families, as a hereditary household, renders it next to a certainty that the great-grandchildren will not know their father's grandfather . . . . (118-119)

Hilda and Kenyon become figures of the future as they begin to pull themselves out of dangerous Italy. Hawthorne's narrator says that "Hilda was coming down from her old tower, to be enshrined and worshipped as a household Saint, in the light of her husband's fireside" (461). First, the passage contrasts the tower, both a past place because it is in Rome and a present place because it is where Hilda currently lives, with phrases that indicate the future. Hilda, for instance, is "to be"; and the references to a husband and a marital home are all future terms, as Hilda and Kenyon have just gotten engaged. Then, the narrator says that the planned marriage makes life seem to be full of "human promise" — another future term, as a promise can be fulfilled or reneged only in the future. As Bentley observes, America is different from Italy because it is in the future rather than the past (919). Indeed, all the past and present terms in the passage are identified with Italy; all the future terms are identified with America. There were good reasons for Americans breaking with the past — avoiding the centuries of religious wars in Europe, discarding the subject of which colonial families had been Tory supporters during the Revolution, or not addressing other uncomfortable parts of history that the process of self-making in America could obviate. But the break with the past in the Marble Faun is almost complete. Aside from the references to
a pre-national Puritan identity, nothing substantial from historical or contemporary America appears in the narrative. In contrast to the past and present, the future is stable and assured, a place where America can really be seen. The "human promise" of the Marble Faun is not an array of possibilities. Rather, it is a smooth trajectory of getting married and living happily in America, continuing the exemplary community. Throughout the narrative, the past and present are marked by instability — art and life bleed over into each other, arguments over the value of things flare up over and over, and few people, including Hawthorne's narrator, and eventually his audience, are sure what is going on at any given point. Only the future in America has clear locations and values. Hilda is to be in the house, and is to be a "Saint." Kenyon is to own the house, and is to be the husband and Hilda-worshipper. The future is different from the past and present not only in time, but in quality and integrity. It promises a peaceful union within set boundaries, both of which are identified with America.

Stern argues that the emphasis on America as the land of salvation signals a Millennialistic bent in the narrative (Contexts 110-111). Yet the Millennialist view gives place and value to everything in the past and present, as all of it points toward the coming utopia. Because nothing in the past or present is stable or accessible in the Marble Faun, however, the Millennialist scheme is denied two-thirds of its pieces. So far as the narrator is concerned, the future is the only place where
Hilda and Kenyon can solve their difficulties and firmly establish their relations. It is the only place where the Americans are able to escape the chain of violent images and acts that threaten to bear them down. But Stern does point out that neither Hilda nor Kenyon is able to keep balanced in Rome (Contexts 110). So only in America, can the two find themselves happily upright. And in the Marble Faun, American identity is always deferred to the future – the safe place, free from confusion, and particularly from violence.

Conclusion

The Marble Faun describes Americans who are untethered to national history and who cannot countenance violence. Yet these qualities conflict with Hawthorne's understanding of American national identity. For critics like Anhorn, Bentley, and Stern the conflict between Hawthorne and his characters is settled by Hawthorne having held his historical knowledge in abeyance in favor of a pastoral return to America, a picture of American as a land of hope, or a connection with self-satisfied middle-class readers. But if the Marble Faun is considered truly as a romance, with its narrative open to a plurality of meanings, the text can be seen to escape whatever Hawthorne's intention may have been and to make its own comments on American identity and the difficulties that beset the nation at the time the Marble Faun was published. In this light, the narrative becomes a nexus of questions about American chauvinism and slavery, two subjects that were problems for Hawthorne.
All the time that he travelled in Italy, Hawthorne was well aware of what was going on in his own country. Pierce was president, so Hawthorne's diplomatic post in England was a result of his success in presenting Pierce's Mexican War service in the 1852 political campaign. As well, Hawthorne's letters during his overseas stay show that he had a real grasp not simply of the troubled connection between slavery and expansionism, but of the real trouble broiling between the northern and southern states. As early as 1858, he had noted that "[t]he states are too various and too extended to really form one country," suggesting that regional factionalism was putting a strain on governance (Letters 8). As the Marble Faun was being published, Hawthorne, who had come to see the north-south struggle in terms of a mandate over slavery, wrote to his publisher-friend William Ticknor, "I long to be at home, and yet I can hardly anticipate much pleasure in returning, when I consider the miserable confusion in which you are involved. I go for a dissolution of the Union; and on that ground, I hope the Abolitionists will push matters to extremity" - meaning that he felt a smaller Union without the troubles surrounding slavery was finally more desirable than a larger Union vexed by internal dissension and new territories baptized in bloodshed (Letters 227). Politically, Hawthorne had been a Unionist; and he had maintained the Unionist stance that Pierce represented even after the campaign biography had been published and the election won, despite the damage that it dealt to his standing in the American literary community (Casper 203-204). For Hawthorne to support
dissolution of the country was a strong sign that he felt the nation had come to an insurmountable point in its historical development.

In short, Hawthorne does not closely resemble his narrator or the other American characters in the *Marble Faun*. He has too much of what the text would call the European in him—a sense of history tied to violence, and, as the last letter to Ticknor shows, a determination to take strict and extreme action in following what he considered to be the most effective political course. Bentley constructs her interpretation of Hawthorne based on what she sees as his anxiety over social disorder (902). Yet Hawthorne's own early writings, and his notebooks and letters of the *Marble Faun* period, show that while Hawthorne did not revel in disruption, he did not shrink from it, either. All this suggests that Hawthorne was not allied with American chauvinism as closely as Bentley and Stern suggest.

Yet even if Hawthorne had decided not to apply his own understanding of national identity and historical knowledge to the construction of identity in the *Marble Faun*, the text itself carries through an implicit critique of American complacency and an implicit comment on slavery in America. In the same way that *Typee* may have preceded Melville's full intentions, the *Marble Faun* may precede Hawthorne's view, tentatively voiced in the early 1860s, that America needed to come to a deeper knowledge of the damage that slavery had done to it (Yellin 96).
The narrative shows that Hilda and Kenyon do not learn a thing about themselves or anyone else in the events that befall them. They simply turn and run once the going in Italy gets too tough. More important, being cut off from their real American past makes them unable to appreciate the revolutions that occur right in front of them—problematic versions of the American Revolution that Hawthorne had studied so closely. Hilda is unable to see Beatrice's participation in her father's murder as a rebellion against a repressive authority, nor is she able to see Donatello's violence as a way to free Miriam from bondage to the past. Both of these actions recall motives behind the American Revolution. Late in the book, Kenyon wanders through an Italian carnival and participates unwittingly in a pageant that Bentley says represents "political rebellion and riot" (933). It is just the sort of term that could be used to describe the early acts of the Revolutionaries, complete with a blow struck against some servants of empire by "an impious New Englander" (443). Because they have no real connection to American history, only a connection to bankrupt American myths, neither Hilda nor Kenyon can explore the plurality of meanings in these situations. Instead, they fall back on the historically incorrect formula that says Americans cannot abide violence, and then travel off to hopeful certainty in the future. In its focus on the Americans' failure to grapple with Donatello's crime and Miriam's misery, the narrative is as much about the cost of Hilda and Kenyon's
unwillingness to engage in complex issues as it is about Miriam and Donatello's struggle to deal with the murder.

The narrative casts a disparaging light on Hilda and Kenyon's complacent Americanism. By doing so, it casts the same light on the complacent Americanism of Hawthorne's audience, whom Stern insists that Hilda, in her attitude toward conflict and history, was designed to reflect (Contexts 117). The book is a warning that those who do not remember the violence in history are doomed not to understand the violence lurking in the present. In the preface to the narrative, the reader is introduced to an "Author," the narrator of the work, who looks much like Hawthorne himself — a few years unpublished, a few years abroad (1-2). Quickly, he enumerates a series of "American" qualities. Americans, for instance, like history and hard facts, and because of this enjoy "common-place prosperity" (3). They probably would object to having so many foreign objects like paintings and statues in their books because they would take away from the plot (3). For Hawthorne, these are contradictory qualities, as his emphasis on history always leads to exploring the significance of historical objects. When he took his children to museums in Rome, Hawthorne wrote that "nothing refining can be really injurious" and that any exposure to such things was especially important to people who spend their lives "where there are no pictures, no statues, nothing but the dryness and meagreness of a New England village" (Notebooks 230). Hawthorne is certainly not the narrator of the Marble Faun. He studied history and saw value in it. But
he also realized that most of his public did not; and the *Marble Faun* presents this flaw in a satirical light, through the narrator's naive construction of American identity.

The attack on American complacency buried in the narrator's attitudes returns at the end of the book, where Hawthorne had to add an extra chapter in order to satisfy his readers' curiosity. Originally, Hawthorne ended the *Marble Faun* so raggedly that readers complained about not being able to tie all the strings of the narrative together. Though he did not want to, and even complained about it, Hawthorne added a new chapter to later editions of the book, ostensibly to clear up what his audience had seen as great confusions in the story (Simpson "Introduction" xxx-xxxii). The "author" questions Hilda and Kenyon about events, but receives answers that are "clear as a London fog" (465). Finally, he writes at the end of the postscript that the whole point of the book is not what happens, but how things look once they are inside a narrative. The question of whether Donatello is really a faun loses all its importance when he is dragged "into the actual light of day" and "classified" (463). Behind these confusions is not simply Hawthorne's irritation with obtuse readers. Rather, there is a clue to the plurality of meanings in romance and the importance of seeing plurality in characters and situations in the narrative. As Donatello may look like just a man when pulled out of the pages of a romance, the acts by Beatrice and Donatello and Miriam look like murders once they are brought into a courtroom and subjected to legal definition. But inside a romance, with
attention called to history by the American characters' appalling lack of historical consciousness, they take on greater significance - as implicit echoes of the American Revolution, and as rumblings of a conflict to come over the issue of American slavery.

While introducing Miriam, Hawthorne's narrator mentions that she might have "one burning drop of African blood in her veins" (23). As Stern notes, the remark usually draws accusations of racism (Contexts 130). Yet it also opens the door to including slavery in the allegory of political violence that appears in the rhetoric surrounding the model's murder. In her analysis of Hawthorne's 1862 travel writing, Bentley notes that Hawthorne comes across a group of escaped slaves heading northward. He immediately transforms them into characters who look strikingly like Donatello - "'so picturesquely natural in manners ... primeval simplicity ... akin to the fauns and rustic deities of olden times'" (qtd. in Bentley 901). Bentley argues that Hawthorne uses the fauns in the travel sketch, and Donatello himself, to contain "American anxieties about a 'social system thoroughly disturbed'" inside a non-threatening figure (902). But it can be argued that because Donatello and the fauns in the travel sketch are "betwixt man and animal" (Faun 13) or "'not altogether human'" (qtd. in Bentley 901), that they occupy the same marginal or liminal space in Hawthorne's writings as they did in the slavery debate - with the abolitionists on one side claiming that Africans were human, and the slavers on the other
side claiming that they were brutes. Perhaps Hawthorne did not panic when he saw the runaway slaves. The descriptions of Donatello in the *Marble Faun* implicitly signify the liminal condition of slaves in American culture.

All the presentations of revolt in the narrative show an oppressed figure striking out at authority, echoing the American Revolution. One presentation, however, lends itself to describing another revolt—a uprising of slave against master, a violent act that, if it were large enough, would present the nation with an internal war. Miriam's first conversation with the model shows that she is held in "thraldom" by him (97). She begs to be given independence (98), only to be told that she will have to obey the model until one of them dies (96-97). Later, after the murder, Miriam likens the act to a political revolution (176). Such details in the *Marble Faun* indicate where the conflict over slavery would finally come to a head—in the actions of the slaves themselves, should a political solution be slow in coming. Such an overflowing of meaning in the image of Donatello killing the Model—revolution in the past, revolution to come—is more easily seen in Italy, where boundaries between art and life, or past and present, are notoriously unstable.

While the narrative's questioning of American complacency can be seen to stand in line with Hawthorne's perception of American national difficulties in the 1850s, this implicit comment on slavery is more problematic. Unlike *Typee*, which is often read as the first in a line of narratives that champion the racially
oppressed, Hawthorne's romances avoid the issue of slavery altogether. Jean Yellin writes that Hawthorne's understanding of slavery was both broad and deep. As a resident of Salem, Hawthorne had come into contact with a number of blacks who had been held as slaves (81-83). Before he married Sophia Peabody, Hawthorne had read letters that Sophia had sent to her family in Salem from Cuba, where Sophia had gone to repair ill health in the mid-1830s. According to Yellin, Sophia's correspondence had recounted the miseries of West Indian slavery with an attention to detail that rivalled the abolitionist publications of the time (84). In the late 1840s, Hawthorne had even encouraged and edited a book that concerned efforts to end the slave trade and repatriate slaves to Africa (84-85).

Yellin argues that despite these exposures to the horrors of slavery, Hawthorne had deliberately chosen not to address the issue in any of his romances. Hawthorne's decision might be put down to his dislike of abolitionists or the methods that they employed in attempting to win freedom for blacks (89-91), or to his cultural orientation, which caused him to consider blacks to be less than human (92-93). Yellin writes that whatever the motivation for Hawthorne's disengagement, the attitude that Hawthorne assumed in the 1830s had held until the early 1860s, when Hawthorne's essay "Chiefly About War Matters" proposed a possible kinship between whites and blacks (95-96). She concludes that until Hawthorne's Civil War essay, Hawthorne held fairly
closely to the belief that slaves should tolerate their lot and that slavery ought to continue for the peace and prosperity of the country (78-79).

Hawthorne had a great deal invested in toleration — not just his friendship with Pierce, but his governmental career, which had from its beginning depended on politicians who sought avenues other than abolitionism in dealing with slavery (Brancaccio 24; Yellin 84-85). As well, Hawthorne's general conservative demeanor supported a tolerationist stance. Many Americans were either anti-slavery or pro-slavery; but a large portion of the population was ready to accept slavery as a necessary evil in order to protect the Union and the prosperity of middle and upper-class businessmen. The depth of this latter sentiment showed in Pierce's presidential campaign, when the country engaged in one of its rare shows of political solidarity, electing Pierce in a landslide after the Democratic party officially accepted the Compromise of 1850, with its refiguring of the Fugitive Slave law. For better or worse, slavery had been a part of the United States' economic and social fabric since the drafting of the Constitution, when the delegates had voted to defer addressing it (Mee 247-255); and Hawthorne was in populous company when he continued to support its toleration.

Yet in the *Marble Faun*, American identity mistakenly equates Europe with history and violence, while defining its own new space as free from history and violence. In the Civil War, this error would pose a number of problems. The Southern patriarchy would be
generally unable to see its institution of slavery as violence; but it would demonize the specter of violent slave uprisings as monstrous outbursts to be suppressed at all costs. The North, in turn, would be able to rationalize its aggression toward the South as "truth marching on" rather than violent invasion. The *Marble Faun* both exposes and participates in this characteristically American masking of a participatory economy of violence.

The discord between Hawthorne's own view of slavery and the comment on it implicit in the *Marble Faun* makes the narrative a nexus of questions about America and about Hawthorne himself — especially about the strength of Hawthorne's intentions in writing the *Marble Faun*. If Hawthorne had indeed meant to compose the *Marble Faun* as an affirmation of America and American identity, the criticism implicit in the truncated and willfully disengaged version of American identity that appears in the narrative undercuts that affirmation. Yet if Hawthorne had meant to expose American complacency and the detriment to self-knowledge that comes through the denial of history, his own unwillingness to address slavery in his last major romance undermines the strength of that criticism.

It would have taken an alert nineteenth century reader to see all the differing dimensions in the narrative — not the sort that was ready to take the "common-place" or mythic versions of American identity at face value. Even today, it is difficult to sort out how closely Hawthorne himself can be identified with the plural meanings in the *Marble Faun*. In its presentation of
American characters, and in the idealized, communal American identity that they define among themselves, the narrative implies that America's reflection of itself in Hilda is a bankrupt image. It cannot contain the difficult complexity of America's past and present, and cannot recognize its own historically defining moments repeated in different forms and different places, like a Roman hilltop or a Southern plantation. At end, the *Marble Faun* is a reflection of its own time and of its author's own difficulties— a collection of contradictory attitudes and messages about the future course of America, and an unresolved debate between narrator and narrative over the importance of history in constructing American identity.

Notes

1Edgar Dryden reports that "As Thomas Woodson has observed, the novel is pervasively indebted to *The French and Italian Notebooks*. Nine-tenths of its chapters include material taken directly from the *Notebooks*, and some consist almost entirely of such material" (57).

Works Cited


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Vita

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